

## Leveraging BuildingAdvice with Local Utilities to Break Through Legacy Contractor Agreements

# Control Contractors, Inc. Case Study

by the Building Advisor™



**Customer profile:**  
**Control Contractors, Inc.**  
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Kevin Smith of Control Contractors has broken new ground in partnering with Anchorage, AK-area local utilities and the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) to provide BuildingAdvice benchmarking and energy assessment services to the business residents of two utility companies as part of a study of energy usage in the Anchorage area.

As a result, Smith's BuildingAdvice unit has been booked from mid-February to August.

"We don't have energy rebate programs in Anchorage," Smith explains. Smith came up with an alternate solution: he became part of a grant proposal to AEA for a study of energy in the Anchorage area. AEA approved the grant proposal and BuildingAdvice became the commercial assessment vehicle.

### Thicker Than Water

Traditional marketing doesn't work in Anchorage, Smith reports. Smith has tried e-mail, direct marketing and advertising without palpable result. "It's a very small community in Anchorage," Smith says. "They would be very suspicious of you for making outlandish claims. I had to get more creative with my marketing."

Control Contractors, a 24-year-old company with six regional locations throughout the West Coast and Texas, had been doing HVAC service for Chugach Electrical Association for several years. But when MCAA member contractor Smith became a BuildingAdvice channel partner in 2009, his relationship with the member-owned utility gave him the idea to take the potential of BuildingAdvice further.

The AEA has had a longtime interest in studying energy usage in commercial facilities. AEA issued a formal grant request for proposal process to identify the right contracting company to execute such a study. BuildingAdvice helped Control Contractors to be selected as having the best process.

"Nobody could really compete with the capabilities of BuildingAdvice," says Smith of the proposal process. Many competitors' assessment costs ranged from \$5,000 to \$10,000 plus, per facility. Since BuildingAdvice is automated and fully integrated with Energy Star, Smith was able to keep assessments costs effective for both parties. Control Contractors was selected to be the contractor partner for the commercial portion of the grant.

## Working with Utilities

The AEA and Control Contractors then worked together to define the steps and processes of the survey, which has been modeled on similar Building Operators and Managers Association (BOMA) surveys. Additional utilities Anchorage Municipal Light and Power, Enstar Natural Gas Company, Matinusca Electrical Association and Homer Electrical Association joined Chugach Electrical Association as study participants. The five utilities are comprised of government facilities, nonprofit organizations, and member-owned cooperatives. Control Contractors now has relationships with all of them.



Anchorage, Alaska

Energy assessments will be performed on approximately 1% of the Anchorage area's 4,000 commercial facilities. The facilities included in the survey represent a variety of square footages and types, including office, retail, and warehouse.

## BuildingAdvice Opens Doors in Tightly Knit Community

Partnering with utilities allowed Smith and Control Contractors an entry point into Alaska's tightly-knit community that it otherwise wouldn't have had.

Representatives from the utilities contacted approximately 60 building owners and managers to request participation in the study by undergoing energy benchmarking and assessment reports. "With the utility calling first, we've only had one person say no," Smith reports. "I'm getting my foot in the door with people who otherwise would be happy to stay with their current building controls or maintenance providers. They wouldn't have answered the phone before."

Smith's participation in the study began in March of this year. To date, Smith has performed assessment and benchmarking for about half of the buildings in the survey. With each of those 15 buildings, Smith has worked through BuildingAdvice report findings with facility managers, who find the BuildingAdvice reports to be easy to read and interpret.

After the benchmarking process is complete, the utilities will put forth a report on their findings and submit these reports to the AEA. Results on how a sample of Anchorage area buildings rate in energy efficiency will be published and available to the public at the end of August. Control Contractors will again benchmark the buildings after any improvements have been made as result of the study, to measure the energy and money saved.

## Taking Action

After the results of the study are published, the AEA will fund energy assessments to additional buildings at a discounted price, while Control Contractors' strategy with the buildings already benchmarked will come into play.

Smith and Control Contractors will contact buildings they've benchmarked to discuss the low- and no-cost adjustments found in the BuildingAdvice assessments. Smith estimates having a direct relationship with approximately 1/3 of the buildings they'll work with on the study. The other 2/3 have existing

maintenance programs, and in a town like Anchorage, longstanding, loyal relationships with those contractors.

However, Smith anticipates being able to identify a pattern of subpar building performance from the results of the study. “There are only five main mechanical contracting companies here,” Smith says. “Once we’re able to analyze a mass of data, we’ll be able to pursue opportunities with the low-performing 50% of buildings.”

“In either case, we build client trust with new prospects by providing them with the intelligence they need to take action,” says Smith, citing the client testimonials on the Control Contractors web site.

### **Going Forward**

The AEA hopes the government-funded program will help create awareness that will stimulate other businesses to take advantage of the discounted prices on energy assessments following the study.

“We’ve proposed a couple of projects to the buildings we’ve assessed already,” said Smith, speaking in late June. “And in those cases the existing provider came in to match the price, in order to keep the client,” says Smith. “But it’s still a win-win, because the BuildingAdvice reports provided by Control Contractors were the catalyst.” Smith has the client testimonials to prove it.

“The relationship with the utilities is where it all starts,” says Smith.

For more information about Control Contractors, visit [www.controlcontractors.com](http://www.controlcontractors.com)

#### **About AirAdvice and BuildingAdvice™**

AirAdvice is a Portland, OR company that is an acknowledged leader in developing cutting edge technology and programs for improving buildings’ energy efficiency and performance. The BuildingAdvice™ energy services program enables commercial HVAC professionals, energy consultants, and engineers to use automated benchmarks, assessments, and audits to deliver cost savings and greener buildings for their clients through energy efficiency.

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