

Starting an Independent HERS Rater Business in Massachusetts

Energy Raters of Massachusetts – 10/18/2011

1. Qualities of a good independent HERS Rater and entrepreneur:
 - a. Self-motivation and persistence
 - b. Ability to communicate abstract concepts clearly and patiently
 - c. Ability to master and communicate a wide range of building science and programmatic details
 - d. Focus on consistent high standards
2. Research your Business Plan and decide if this is the best career choice for you.
 - a. Becoming a certified HERS rater is not a resume builder, it is a full time-job.
 - b. Know your "price point."
3. Get trained locally. You will make important connections at a local training and learn more about local opportunities and meet others trying to get a start in the same local field. This should become an important network for you. Personal connections are key!
4. Buy your own equipment and practice using it at homes of friends.
5. Be sure you have considerable savings in the bank to help you deal with delayed income in your first year of business. Consider having at least 6 months of your total living expenses in savings as an initial balance. This will help you build your business the way you intend and not force you into a certain type of work out of desperation.
6. Focus on jobs with more immediate pay-outs in your first year. These would include existing single family home audits, code infiltration testing and duct testing, and "based-on-plans" ratings required for MA Stretch Code.
7. Network and outreach. Join local HBA's. Reach out to code officials. Write a column in the local paper on building energy.
8. Continue your education. Go to all of the local building energy events including state and regional meetings such as MA New Homes with ENERGY STAR Rater Meetings, Boston Building Conventions, ACI, local events sponsored by lumber yards, local events sponsored by green community groups.
9. Get good quality infrared training and purchase an infrared camera. This is a very helpful supplement to the basic HERS Rater training, and will help you understand and communicate the physics of building energy use with images.

10. Volunteer. Join local energy task forces or committees. They really need the informed input and perspective of a HERS Rater. Consider dedicating a day a month to "pro bono" work such a school or church or library. The "buzz" created by this should lead to many paying jobs and wide recognition of your talents and abilities.
11. Enjoy the work and pace yourself. There are many opportunities. Try to focus on what you find most rewarding and don't burn-out! Keep your long-term plan in mind.