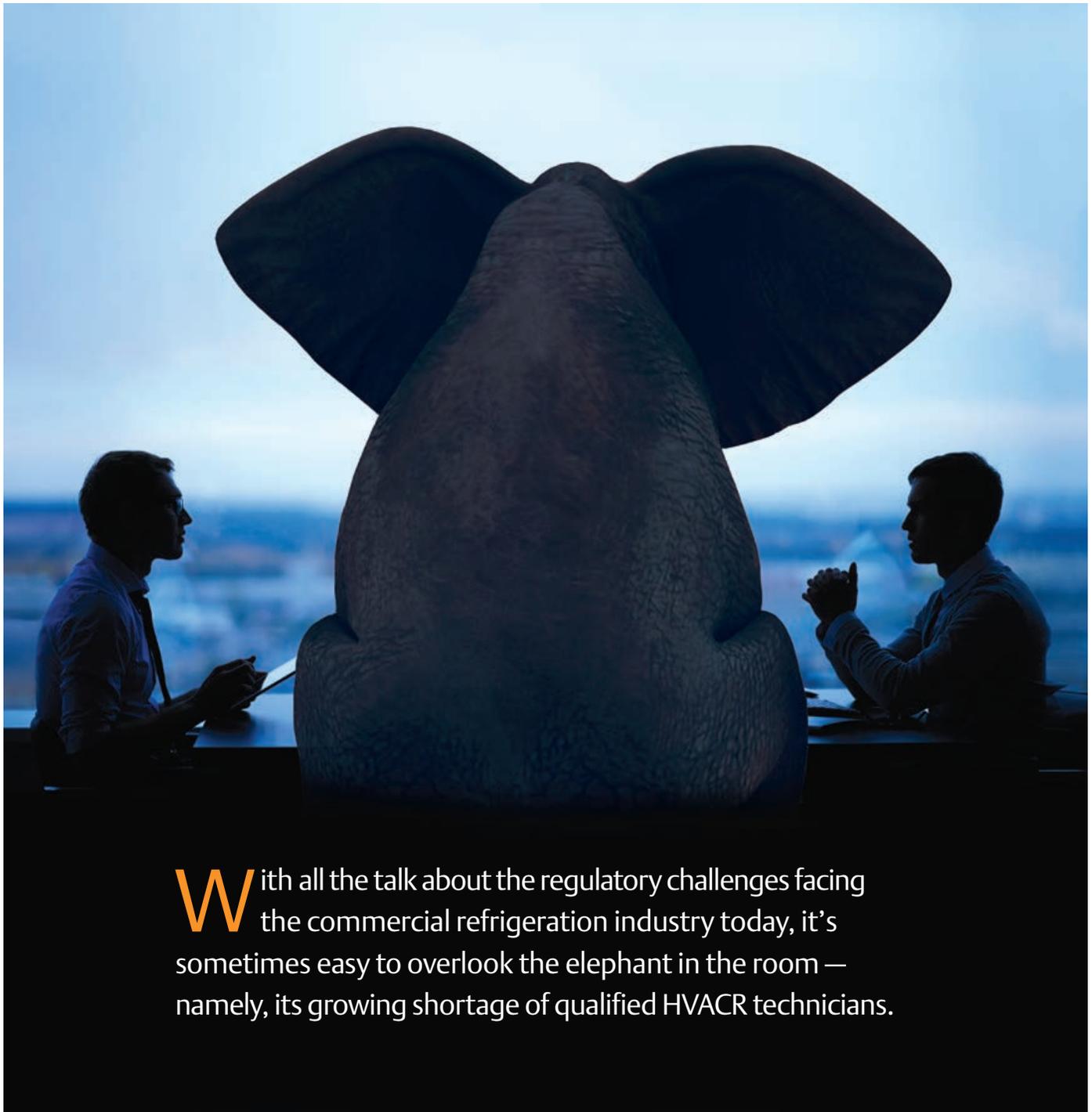




Mobilizing the Industry to Address the **Technician Shortage**



With all the talk about the regulatory challenges facing the commercial refrigeration industry today, it's sometimes easy to overlook the elephant in the room — namely, its growing shortage of qualified HVACR technicians.

While we've all been justifiably focused on understanding system design changes to reduce energy consumption and new refrigerants to lower our carbon footprint, no one in our industry has stepped forward to lead the charge on solving the technician shortage in a holistic manner.

In an era of widely varying system architectures, changing technologies, and reliance on emerging and natural refrigerants, the need for qualified technicians is greater than ever. At Emerson's annual contractor roundtable, the lack of qualified technicians was cited as the number one challenge facing contracting business owners. I would argue that it is perhaps our industry's most pressing issue.

We wrote about the severity of the technician shortage in a recent *E360 Outlook* article entitled, "Bridging the Refrigeration Gap," where we began to outline steps the industry can take to start addressing the challenge. This process will require not only the participation of industry stakeholders — including contractors, manufacturers, end users, wholesalers and trade associations — but also the perspectives of educators, outside industries and government agencies.

There is no quick fix to this situation. Finding a solution will take months, if not years, and require the commitment of a dedicated organization to drive this effort forward. Through our E360 platform, Emerson is committing to lead this important initiative.

First steps at E360 Forum

At our E360 Forum in Tucson, Ariz., we took our first steps toward defining the framework of this effort. The event assembled industry stakeholders and



vocational school educators for a half-day, E360 Industry Challenge session to examine the current state of the HVACR technician profession. Areas of focus included:

- **Awareness** — Do we understand what's at stake and agree on the problem?
- **Recruitment** — How can we attract individuals with aptitude?
- **Training** — How can these individuals receive training, and what should those programs look like?
- **Certification** — Which types of certification should be made available?
- **Retention** — How can we keep individuals engaged throughout their careers?

The group then broke into teams for ideation sessions, and each team was tasked with focusing on a specific objective. Results were then reported back to the group and documented as a baseline to help set the stage for the next step.

The next step — Forming a larger coalition in 2017

In 2017, E360 will host a larger Forum focused solely on addressing the technician shortage. This multi-day event will feature an interdisciplinary team dedicated to understanding the problem, defining a working road map for meeting the challenge, and

assigning specific actions to solve it.

In addition to industry stakeholders, we will seek insights from previously untapped resources. Other industries have already solved similar problems; learning from those lessons will be extremely valuable.

We will also seek the expertise of educators who have experience in developing curriculum and recruiting candidates. Our technical colleges, vocational schools and trade associations will all play key roles in shaping this piece of the puzzle. We may also benefit from government representatives and/or agencies who may be able to affect policy changes that can further our cause.

This larger event will pick up where we left off in Tucson, and assign small group breakout sessions to focus on specific objectives. As team results are shared with the large group, attendees will take on specific action items which can then be used as metrics for progress in future follow-up meetings.

Certainly, the current regulatory climate is a dynamic situation that will continue to impact us for years to come, and our E360 platform will remain dedicated to helping you navigate this changing landscape. But without qualified technicians to service the next generation of refrigeration equipment, our industry will have an even bigger challenge.

I believe that together we can solve the technician shortage. If you want to contribute to this effort or have ideas that may help, please reach out to us at E360. Stay tuned for updates on this topic.

Dr. Rajan Rajendran is one of the most respected, global authorities on alternative refrigerants and their applications across a variety of industries. As Emerson's Vice President, System Innovation Center and Sustainability, Rajan helps steer the company's strategic direction, research and product development.