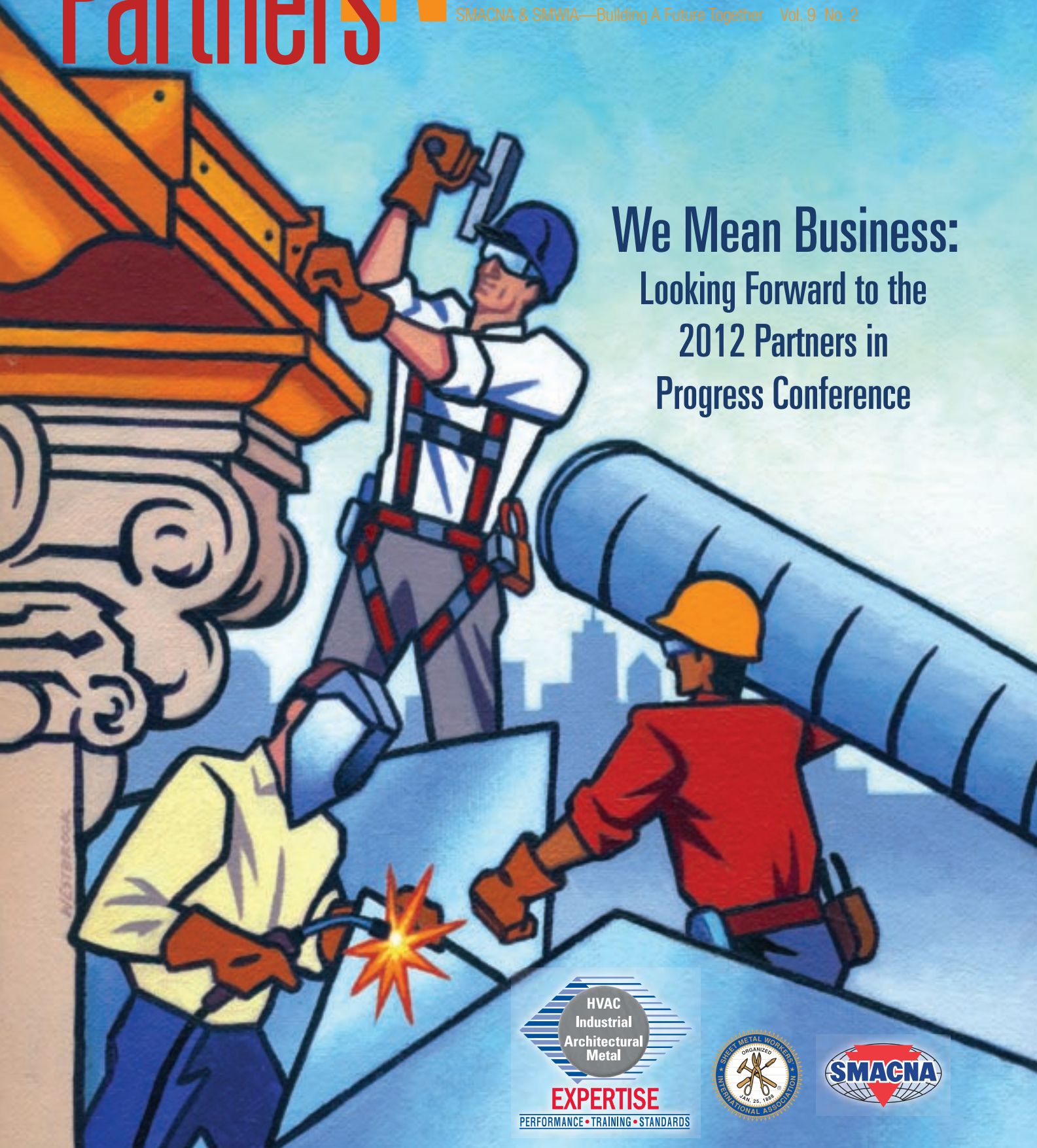


Partners **IN** PROGRESS

SMACNA & SMWIA—Building A Future Together Vol. 9 No. 2

**We Mean Business:
Looking Forward to the
2012 Partners in
Progress Conference**



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What Happens in Vegas... Affects the Industry

Hoping the economy will improve or hours will increase or market share will fall in your lap doesn't make it happen. Attending the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, from March 8-10, 2012, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas can help. Held in conjunction with the National Apprenticeship Contest, the conference theme is "We Mean Business."

The 2012 program emphasizes creative collaboration. Breakout sessions will be an ideal venue for apprentices, journeypersons, foremen, supervisors, contractors, chapter executives, business managers, training directors, and other members of the sheet metal industry to come together, share ideas, and find resourceful approaches to unique challenges.

Regional Breakout Sessions will bring new and future leaders together to identify challenges and opportunities common to each region. Because some problems are best tackled on an industry basis, new to this year's Conference are a separate set of Industry Breakout Sessions. These breakouts will foster collaboration and more targeted, in-depth solutions for Industrial, Architectural, Commercial, Residential, Service and Specialty Markets.

Does your region or industry have any distinctive problems or issues to be solved? *Partners in Progress* wants to know. Get a head start on the conference and e-mail issues or problems for your region or industry to pinconf@sheetmetallpartners.org. Do it now or at any time before the Conference.

Additional featured topics will cover best practices, the economy, and leadership. Nationally known and respected turnaround expert Dr. Tom Schleifer will discuss how to survive the recession and emerge even stronger. Schleifer has been warning the industry since 2008 that the recession and construction industry market downturn would be deeper and longer than the popular press was indicating and that the impact on the industry would be unprecedented. Schleifer will define and categorize market cycles and explain the difference between this and prior cycles which he says we have not seen since the great depression.

Furthermore, communications expert Stephen Gaffney will show participants how to accurately assess situations to determine the best course of action, and an expert from FMI will present New Horizons study findings on the changing face of leadership. More of these sessions include leading from within, amazing marketing success stories, working together politically, making the case for new business opportunities, and entering new markets. Other educational opportunities will include a benefit funds education track for trustees and plan sponsors.

Early Bird registration for the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference is available until Jan. 6, 2012. Check out the brochure in this issue or visit the conference website at pinp.org/conf12. Don't miss this opportunity to take home the tools to make industry success happen. ■



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How to Survive a Recession... *and keep from being eaten by the bear.*

By Thomas C. Schleifer



Nationally known and respected turn-around expert Dr. Tom Schleifer will be a keynote speaker on how to survive the recession and emerge even stronger at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, March 8-10, 2012, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. He will define and categorize market cycles and explain the difference between this and prior cycles which he says we have not seen since the Great Depression. Schleifer, author of *Construction Contractors' Survival Guide*, joined the construction industry at age 16. His unique perspective gained from assisting with the resolution and salvage of hundreds of distressed or failed construction firms and projects will help not only contractors, but also their labor partners. For additional information or registration, visit pinp.org/conf12.

When a construction company's backlog falls off, the pressure is on, and it feels like a "recession," regardless of the actual definition of the word.

Prospering in cyclical markets and surviving a recession in the construction industry starts with recognizing what will happen in the marketplace as soon as a market softens. The result is totally predictable and has occurred, without fail, in every industry down-cycle for the last 50 years.

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Contractors resist—sometimes strenuously—any reduction in sales and fight vigorously for the fewer available projects, driving down prices—and increasing risk—for everyone.

Trying to maintain volume in a declining market is, in effect, an attempt to increase market share, and any increase in market share is “bought” at a cost. Thus, for a business to grow 10% in a market that is only growing 5% (or shrinking), that business must take away work from its competitors.

Ideally, in a shrinking market, all contractors accept proportionately less work so each business maintains the same market share.

Cooperating with the market—all contractors accepting proportionally less work; thereby maintaining the same market share—is appropriate management of the risks imposed through an environment outside of your control. What it comes down to is: We cannot control the market, but we can control our response to it.

Potential for profit, measured as a percentage of sales, is almost the same during a down market as in an up market—just more painful. A contractor’s responsibility is to react to and manage risks in either case.

Risk management is never easy. It may include downsizing and reducing overhead—sooner rather than later.

Cutting back on non-essential costs, such as subscriptions, bonuses, travel and entertainment is a place to

start and signals to employees a new attitude. The problem is that it rarely saves enough to affect anything.

Employee salaries—and the associated payroll, insurance, and benefits costs—are, by far, the largest overhead cost, which means that it’s necessary to cut back on management and administrative personnel to make a real dent in overhead.

Right Sizing

Contractors often tell me they can’t operate with 10% or 20% less work. They claim they have a “drop- dead” volume they have to maintain to be viable.

My typical response is: “As you grew your business from \$5 million or \$10 million to \$15 million—or from where you started to now—were you profitable along the way?” Most contractors were, and they celebrated their success at each step along the way.

Accordingly, any contractor can be profitable even though performing less work if the company is sized and configured properly. This includes reducing costs through selling or mothballing equipment no longer necessary.

There is a tendency to hold onto people and equipment in order to be prepared when business picks up. It’s especially hard to lose good people who are really hard to come by.

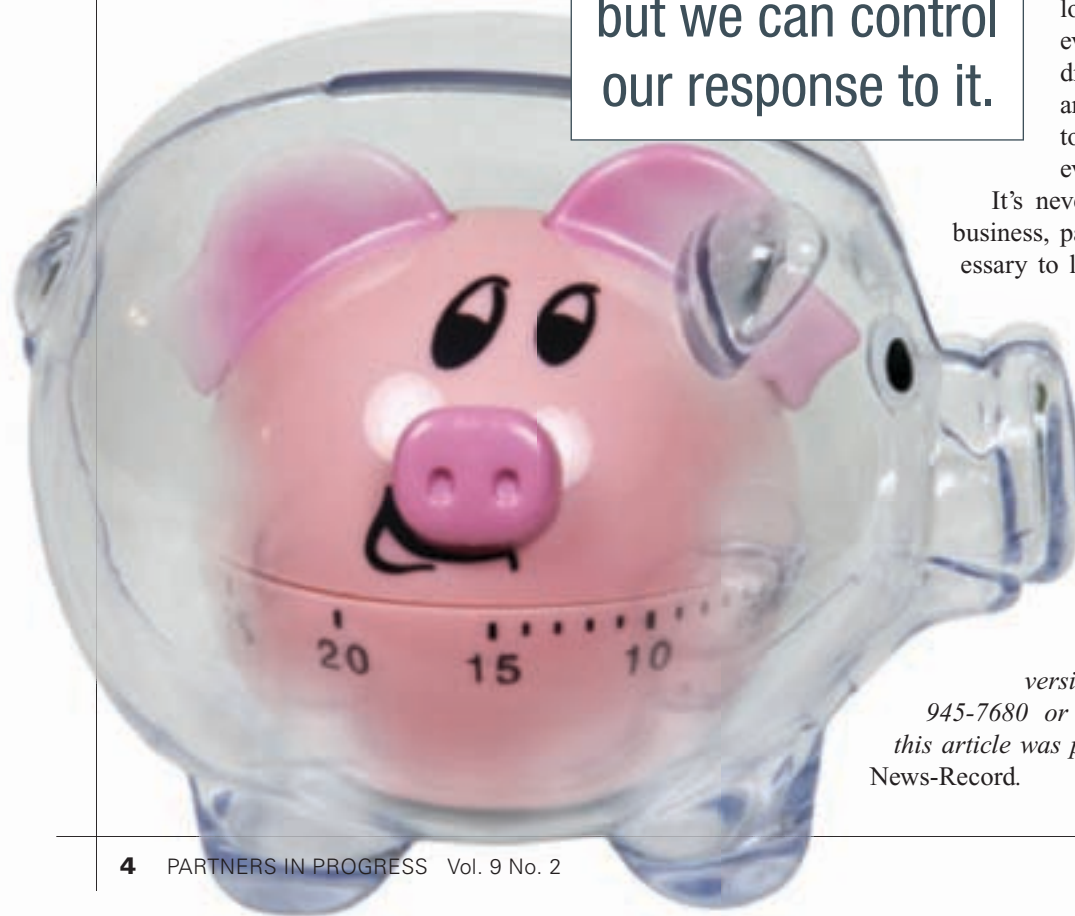
However, timing is critical because there are real and significant costs to reacting late and not much risk to acting early. Holding on too long to people or equipment that will eventually have to be let go anyway drains resources and destroys bank and bonding credit that could be used to finance recovery when rebound eventually occurs.

It’s never easy to separate emotions from business, particularly because it’s usually necessary to look people in the eye when laying them off. Nevertheless, managing risks to maintain profitability keeps the company in business and many more people gainfully employed. ■

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**What it comes
down to is:
We cannot control
the market,
but we can control
our response to it.**





Take the Wheel

Be in control of safety on
the job site.

By Ruth E. Thaler-Carter

Safety doesn't know how to tell time, it does know how to take it away from us when we least expect it. It's a philosophy that Dave VanCamp, president of Van's Industrial Sheet Metal in Hammond, Ind., takes to heart.

It's also the reason Gary Batykefer, administrator for the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust (SMOHIT), wants to spread the word that preventing on-the-job accidents and work-related injuries is mostly a matter of will. "In almost all instances, safety is under your control," he says.

Robert Zahner, a SMOHIT trustee and senior vice president with A. Zahner Company in Kansas City, Mo., agrees. "People have to take personal responsibility for safety because lives are at stake."

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Best Practices in Safety and Health Training is the topic of one of the breakout sessions at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, March 8-10 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Bob Hostinsky, apprentice coordinator for SMWIA Local 20, will be one of the panelists.

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He says that rule applies equally to himself and others in the company. “Even someone who has 30 years on the job can make a mistake. If I’m doing something unsafe on a job site, I would hope someone says something.”

Bob Hostinsky, winner of a SMOHIT Safety Matters Award and apprentice coordinator for SMWIA Local 20, believes the road to safety is pretty straightforward. “Workers need to wear the right gear, check their equipment, and slow down.”

Management has a responsibility not only to provide a safe environment and appropriate tools for the job, but also to emphasize the importance of working with safety in mind, agree both Hostinsky, who has served as his local’s safety director since 2005, and Scott Vidimos, president of Vidimos, Inc., in East Chicago, Ind.

“We work at a brisk pace, but expect the work to be performed in a safe manner. We do not ask our people to take risks,” Vidimos says. There are plenty of examples that safety saves money and improves productivity.

“Remaining accident-free is a matter of taking safety training and OSHA regulations seriously,” Hostinsky says. The difficulty is that no matter how many OSHA or SMOHIT training programs are available, how often safety committees meet, or how many times management or labor leadership urges workers to work safely, accidents and injuries still happen.

What’s the solution?

Sometimes rewards and incentive programs fit the bill, but every good safety director needs more tools at his or her fingertips. Hostinsky has found success employing scare tactics. “I tell stories constantly,” Hostinsky says, “and—sadly—some of them are my own.”

He draws on a lot of pictures and horrific movies. “I’m always looking for things to demonstrate the consequences of not taking safety seriously. You can preach all the rules in the world, but real-world experience really works.”

Enhancing safety is a matter of achieving a level of awareness. It works best when management and the union work together, says Lori Schmidt, executive director of the Northern Indiana SMACNA chapter.

“We’re in it together,” says Vidimos. “Unsafe work leads to higher insurance rates, which make a company less competitive, but it also costs workers wages.”

Local 20 is in the seventh year of an innovative safety program that involves a labor-management partnership. “Our contractors initiated the program and set up a separate fund to pay for instructors, equipment and materials, even reimbursing the guys for their time,” Hostinsky says.

Customers helped spur that commitment by requiring both craftspersons and contractors to take OSHA safety courses and be certified before they could step on site.

VanCamp has had a similar experience. “Our clients often develop rules that change the way we contractors think

Who is Your Safety Champion?

SMOHIT’s new Safety Champions program is an effort to identify a safety leader in every local. The Safety Champion can be a business manager, a coordinator, or an OSHA instructor. Currently, 30 champions are registered out of 160 locals, says Gary Batykefer, administrator for the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust (SMOHIT).

Becoming a Safety Champion involves receiving all safety information from SMOHIT to use in training, keeping workers safe, and showing them how to protect their bodies and lives in order to get home safe and sound at the end of every workday.

“This is something to advance the industry. We want to heighten awareness so we can protect our guys and reduce costs of insurance compensation,” Batykefer says. Plans call for annual recognition of an exemplary Safety Champion from each of SMOHIT’s six regions.

Chapters can register their own Safety Champions so their members will know about resources available locally. Contact Batykefer at gbatykefer@smohit.org.



Check out the latest edition of SMOHIT’s free health and safety podcast series for the unionized sheet metal industry at smohit.org.



www.istockphoto.com

about safety. Since we work in their facilities, we must follow their rules. These changes have been a good thing for us.”

While management has a vital role to play in a safe workplace—providing the right tools and training—personal responsibility is key.

“I truly believe that safety is under your control,” Hostinsky says. “Injuries and accidents are all, to some degree, preventable....We have safety glasses, gloves, hardhats—do we wear them? Do we take off rings and chains that might catch on something or conduct electricity?”

Making safety a conscious element of every job helps keep everyone safe, says VanCamp. “To remain safe on the job, our crew always needs to know what is in front of them,” he explains. “In other words, we must take the time to discuss the job to be done, even if it is a rush job or a small job.”

Vidimos shares that opinion. “The struggle continues to be making safety a part of the job and not something separate from the work,” he says. “A job is successful if it is done right, on time, within budget and *safely*.”

It’s all about taking the wheel instead of hoping that someone else is in control. “Each individual must take safety to heart,” Vidimos says. “Our craftspersons should work safely for their personal wellbeing, first and foremost.” ■

Ruth E. Thaler-Carter (www.writerruth.com) is an award-winning freelance writer, editor and proofreader. She has written for the St. Louis Labor Tribune newspaper, is a founding member of the National Writers Union and is married to a retired union steelworker.

Address Common Safety Issues

A safety program that can reduce the most common reasons for injury goes a long way toward sending individuals home each day to their families and friends. That’s why, under the Northern Indiana SMACNA contract, each member gets 12 hours of additional safety training after their usual work hours. What follows are some other ideas that have proven successful.

One of the most common safety issues for Local 20 is fall protection. “Our people do a lot of work at high elevations and on ladders and temporary work surfaces. They need to understand what to do, what to wear, proper procedures,” says Bob Hostinsky, Local 20’s safety director. Ways to convey the information include safety meetings, lockouts and tagouts, and simple experience.

Falls are also a concern at Van’s Industrial Sheet Metal in Hammond, Ind. President Dave VanCamp implemented fall protection rules that require wearing harnesses when working at heights. He also requires everyone on the job site to wear safety glasses. “Making safety a requirement had a dramatic effect,” VanCamp says. “Our eye injuries went from six per year to one every two years.”

VanCamp has created policies to reduce the danger from ‘pinch

points.’ “Press brakes, shears, and saws can all be extremely dangerous if misused. We implemented machine-specific training for each apparatus in our shop. Anyone using our machine must get the training before using a machine.”

A three-person safety committee reviews all close calls and accidents at Van’s and tweaks the safety program as necessary. The company relays safety concerns and issues through meetings with the foreman and crew and includes safety discussions in a weekly brief to the staff.

“It’s vital to involve *everyone* in safety training—from workers to designers, engineers and project managers,” concludes Robert Zahner, a SMOHIT trustee and senior vice president with A. Zahner Company in Kansas City, Mo.

“The most common safety issues at Vidimos, Inc. are cuts, strains, and eye injuries,” says Vidimos President Scott Vidimos. “Along with the safety training that is provided through the union, we require a ‘clear’ status in the industry’s drug testing program.”

“We also perform weekly toolbox talks with all craftsmen,” Vidimos says. Although content of the talks is discussed with management, the training is performed through key union members.





Get Personal

Non-traditional marketing methods help keep Canadian sheet metal workers busy.

By Cairine Caughill

Creating a marketing plan for an area spanning almost 365,000 square miles and encompassing large cities, small towns, wine regions, and rain forests is challenging.

“Mass marketing our services in British Columbia doesn’t really work because we’re not targeting the general public,” says Bruce Sychuk, SMACNA-BC’s executive director. SMACNA-BC’s main marketing tool is its *Sheet Metal Journal*.

The magazine is a big step up from the monthly newsletter the chapter used to produce. “Our newsletter had a circulation of about 150. Now we have a marketing list of 3,500 and make the magazine available online. It showcases the projects we’re doing or highlights an individual contractor and his business.”

Sychuk’s contractors don’t emphasize traditional marketing. “Hardly any of them have any glossy brochures,” he says. “Most of the work here is plans and specifications, which means contractors typically quote their sheet metal prices to mechanical contractors, and best price wins.”

That doesn’t mean contractors play no role in SMACNA-BC’s marketing efforts. Sychuk goes to trade shows with SMACNA manuals and a list of his contractors. “Rather than try to sell the technical standards, I try to give potential customers my membership list and try to impress upon them how ethical we are.”

Bruce Wendel, principal and general manager of Allied Blower and Sheet Metal Ltd. believes that knowing customers is the key to making the most of marketing dollars. “We have a good picture of what our target market looks like, so we can ‘rifle shot it’ as opposed to taking a more broad approach. Thus, if I’m trying to pitch customers in the forestry sector, I tell them about my forestry experience.”

That mindset led Wendel away from the idea of a single company brochure. Instead, he created a content folder that could be tailored to potential customers, and filled it with project profiles featuring various types of jobs the company has done.

Allied’s marketing plan follows the 4Ps: product, price, promotion and positioning. “We need to have a product that is targeted to our customers, it needs to be priced competitively, and our customers have to believe we will do it right,” says Wendel.

Although Wendel considers promotion to be the least important of the 4Ps, he doesn’t ignore it. Allied runs a couple of giveaways each year, and promotional items are things like mag lights and Swiss Army knives, with Allied’s company logo placed prominently.

SMWIA Local 280 doesn’t leave all of the marketing to SMACNA-BC. A few years ago one of the partnership’s joint marketing projects garnered public attention and a spot in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. When Austin Metal Fabricators of Burnaby, B.C., fabricated a 31-foot tall, 5-ton tin (steel) soldier for the Simon Fraser Society for Community Living, the local and chapter were two of the biggest contributors. (See



Amazing Marketing Success Stories are a featured breakout session at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, March 8-10, 2012, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Learn about some of the most successful programs developed by industry labor-management partnerships around the country. Get ideas on how to use marketing tools to maintain or increase market share in your area. For additional information or to register, visit pinp.org/conf12.

austinmetal.com/web/tinman.htm for additional details.) The Tin Soldier now stands by the Westminster Quay overlooking the Fraser River.

“It was a great opportunity to do something for the community, while, at the same time creating awareness about the sheet metal industry,” Local 280 Business Manager Jim Paquette says.

It’s no surprise to see SMACNA-BC and Local 280 working effectively side by side. They have a great relationship and have created a joint conference board with representatives from both camps. In their monthly meetings, matters like production agreements, manpower updates, and new programs are on the agenda. It’s also a chance to talk about what’s happening in the market.

A discussion at the joint conference board a few years ago identified the mining industry as a potential job opportunity for SMACNA-BC and Local 280. Though low commodity prices had kept the mines quiet for some time, things were starting to change.

The big question, then, was how to get a share of the work. “A lot of the players in the mining industry are international. They know some of the big international contractors, but they don’t know our contractors. Making connections is challenging,” says Dan Burroughs, assistant business manager at Local 280.

Since Burroughs takes several trips to industrial sites around the province each year, he suggested he contact potential customers in these out-of-the-way areas and drop off copies of SMACNA BC’s *Sheet Metal Journal*, along with brochures from SMACNA contractors.



Jiang Long

Burroughs looks at the big picture when it comes to marketing for contractors. “If contractors get work, it puts our members to work. It helps everybody.”

Though it’s not easy to track the results of his efforts, Burroughs believes they are paying off. “Mining is starting to become a key factor in work coming up in the province. We expect to see more out-of-town work in the next two to three years than we’ve had in over a decade.”

Paquette isn’t surprised that the personal approach is getting results. “When you have a mine out in the middle of the bush in a small-town community, where do you get a dust collection system? Now let’s say somebody drops off a magazine with pictures of a company that has the expertise to build that kind of system.” ■

Caughill (ccaughill@pinpmagazine.org) is a freelance writer based in Ontario, Canada.



By Joe Parron

Ti-Metal Fabricators has been through many changes since it first opened in the 1960s. Its Mobile Expandable Container Configurations are a great example of the many applications for sheet metal.



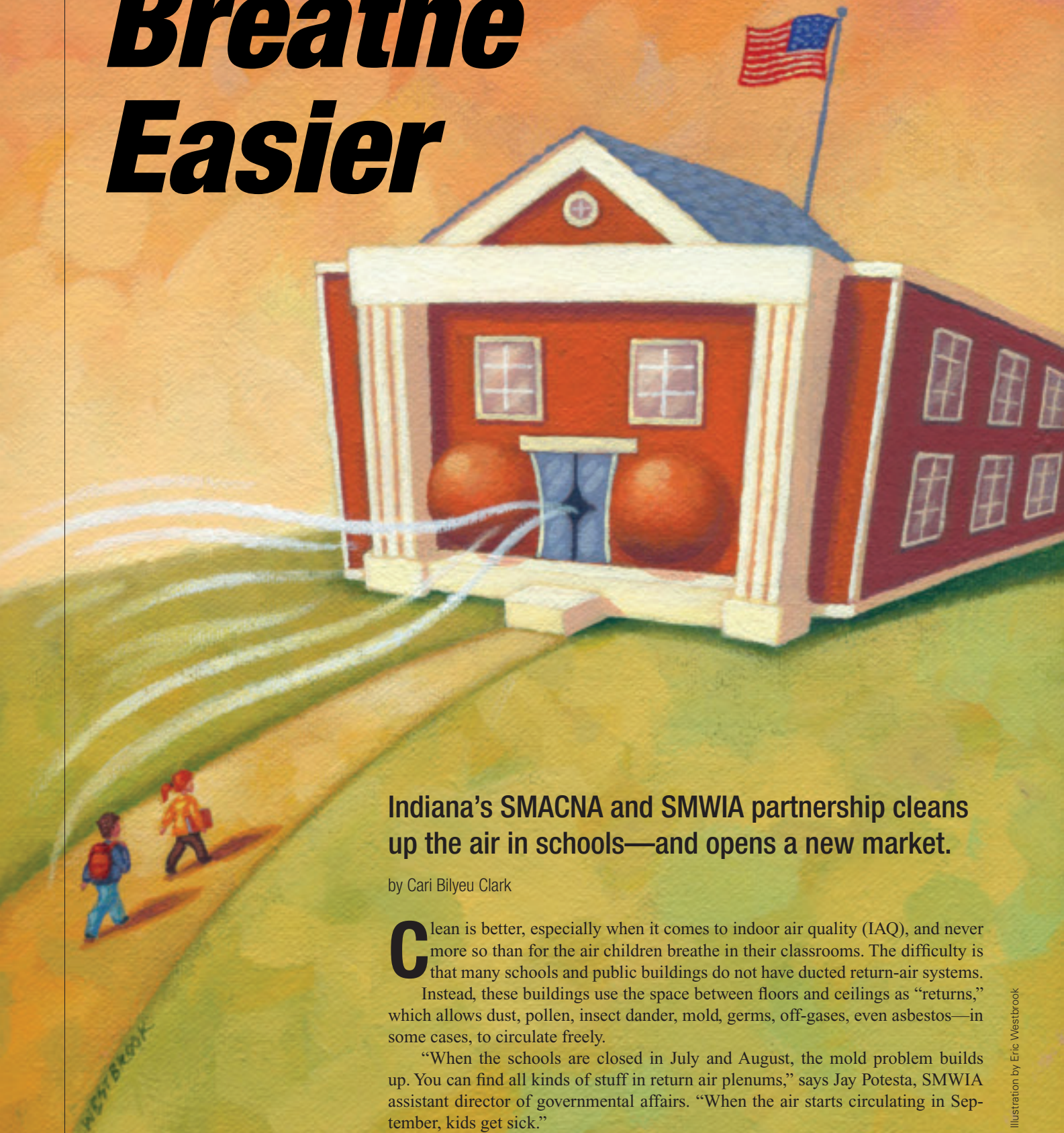
Photo by Joe Parron

Joe Toso is the president of Ti-Metal Fabricators and he is also the current president of SMACNA-BC. Joe has been in the industry since 1960 when he first started working for Ti-Metal. Those who know him, know him as passionate and dedicated to the industry. With his wife, Susan, he has a quiet confidence in the team of people that make up Ti-Metal. It would be easy to think that business comes easy for him and that he’s been lucky, but as anyone who is in business knows, the words “luck” and “easy” have very little to do with the price of tea in China. Ti-Metal Fabricators has been in continuous operation since 1963. There has been four incarnations of ownership, Joe Toso and his partners being the most current. The company started out in the sheet metal industry by manufacturing and installing ducting. Over the years the company also developed a successful line of oval aluminum 12” to 60” exhaust fans which continue to play an important role in the company’s product offering.



Photos courtesy Sheet Metal Journal

Breathe Easier



Indiana's SMACNA and SMWIA partnership cleans up the air in schools—and opens a new market.

by Cari Bilyeu Clark

Clean is better, especially when it comes to indoor air quality (IAQ), and never more so than for the air children breathe in their classrooms. The difficulty is that many schools and public buildings do not have ducted return-air systems.

Instead, these buildings use the space between floors and ceilings as “returns,” which allows dust, pollen, insect dander, mold, germs, off-gases, even asbestos—in some cases, to circulate freely.

“When the schools are closed in July and August, the mold problem builds up. You can find all kinds of stuff in return air plenums,” says Jay Potesta, SMWIA assistant director of governmental affairs. “When the air starts circulating in September, kids get sick.”

Illustration by Eric Westbrook

Indiana's strong SMWIA-SMACNA labor-management team helped bring the air quality issue to the attention of Indiana's state legislature in 2002, which passed a bill creating an IAQ Panel to set standards for schools. There are 292 school districts in Indiana.

"People spend 90 percent of their time indoors," says Phil Gillespie, executive director of SMACNA for Central Indiana and Fort Wayne. "We have to manage that air. We want to prevent problems from happening."

Indiana governor Frank O'Bannon appointed Potesta, who was—at the time—business manager for local 20, and Gillespie to the IAQ panel. Other panelists included members of labor unions, engineers, and the state's Health and Human Services department.

Working with the Indiana State Board of Health, the panel looked for ways to improve indoor air quality. "The codes were antiquated," Potesta says. "The most efficient and cost-effective answer was to add rigid ductwork."

In 2008, the regulations were expanded to include all state agencies in Indiana, including both new construction and remodeling work. They also included an amendment requiring all testing be performed by a certified technician or an industrial hygienist.

"It would be too easy for an unqualified person to deliberately contaminate ductwork," Potesta says. "It could never be traced."

During the past year, the Indiana Board of Health passed Title 410, a rule requiring that return air be ducted, and stipulating that there be no free returns through ceiling space.

"All supply and return systems should be ducted, no question," says Charles Austin, staff industrial hygienist for the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust (SMOHIT).

"If you don't have a way to clean the air, you have problems. It's very difficult to pinpoint the source of a problem in plenum returns. Ducts are easier to clean, to test and balance, and manage the air."

Gillespie agrees. "It costs more on the front end, and it's not very glamorous—it doesn't make things look nicer, but it adds up to savings in the long run," Gillespie says. "Plus, it keeps a lot of bad things from happening, such as sick-building syndrome, health problems, and lawsuits stemming from illnesses."

Joint action is necessary in a volatile political environment. Learn more about working together on legislative goals at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, March 8-10, 2012, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Another session will cover legislative goals and challenges in the multiemployer world on Capitol Hill. It will be an ideal venue for both labor and management to come together and share ideas. For additional information or registration, visit pinp.org/conf12.

Make It Happen

Why was IAQ legislation important to the signatory sheet metal industry? "It means about 35% to 40% more ductwork for any state building in Indiana," Gillespie says. "There are

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What's an Industrial Hygienist?

"An industrial hygienist is a person who recognizes, evaluates, and controls exposures to toxins in the work environment," says Charles Austin, staff industrial hygienist for the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust (SMOHIT).

Duties run the gamut of testing the air with instruments, interviewing workers and asking detailed questions, and developing protective gear and systems to remove and/or contain toxins, such as exhaust from a welder or respiratory irritants from a copy machine. "We take aggressive action to address a problem, then we test to make sure the changes are working," Austin says.

Austin studied biochemistry as an undergraduate. His friends went on to medical school, but when Austin's father got sick as a result of a hospital stay, he decided to take a different track. "I wanted to prevent people from getting sick in the first place," he says. Thus, he got a master's degree in Occupational Environmental Health.

Now he deals with subjects like Indoor Air Quality (IAQ), including OSHA's personal exposure limit (PEL) standards for chemicals, EPA research on off-gassing for materials used in buildings, and the half-life of chemicals and particulates.

For additional information, contact Austin at caustin@smohit.org or 703-739-7130, x627.

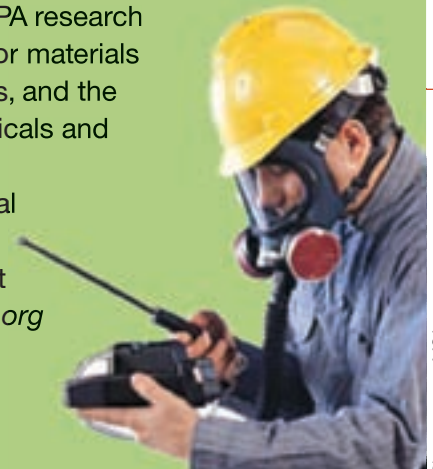


Photo courtesy MSA

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many opportunities just now, with energy audits, the green movement, and life safety certifications. It's our work to go and get."

Local 20 and SMACNA for Central Indiana and Fort Wayne had to create a strong labor-management partnership to make it possible. "These new rules are a great example of labor and management working together on a legislative item," says Nathan Dills, co-chairman of the SMACNA-SMWIA Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force and president of ACP Sheet Metal in Oklahoma City, Okla.

"It's a very deliberate process, and it differs from state to state," adds Marc Norberg, task force co-chairman and SMWIA assistant to the general president. "We need to continue to share information and talk about our success stories. People think they're working hard and not seeing any effect, but it does come about in incremental changes."

Gillespie claims the secret to success in the legislative arena is to treat partnership as top priority. "We have built great trust over the years, and we work hard to understand each other's point of view."

Potesta agrees. "Phil and I worked long and hard to develop the trust between management and labor within our ranks. Those in leadership positions must continually forge the working partnership and find common ground."

Other concrete efforts included hiring a lobbyist to work for the LMCC. "It takes a concerted effort to be involved—and not just when the legislature is in session," Gillespie says. "Political parties should not make a difference either—we work with both Republicans and Democrats. We can't take sides—these are industry issues, not labor or management issues."

It has also been important to get involved in the community. "Whether we're contractors or members of the local, we have to attend school board meetings to find out what's going on—some schools require air conditioning when they didn't in the past because they are open longer nowadays."

Additional steps include getting involved with the Board of Health, knowing the building codes, and meeting legislators. "Contractors tend to avoid these agencies, but they can have a huge impact on how we do business," Gillespie says.

There may be funds available from state, Federal, or private organizations to help fund the new installations or help educate customers and the public. "We got a grant from the National Energy Management Institute (NEMI) for testing equipment that allows contractors to lend their customers IAQ testing equipment," Potesta says.

"It's taken off," says Scott Parks, business manager of Local 20. "Our contractors also use the equipment to set a benchmark for the air quality in new construction, which makes future air testing and balancing much easier."

What it all comes down to is that working together means money in the pockets of both labor and management. ■

Clark (cclark@pinpmagazine.org) is a freelance writer based in Springfield, Va.

Create Success in a Competitive, Changing Market

SMWIA Local 20 and SMACNA of Central Indiana won Top Notch's Standard of Excellence Award in mid-2011 for their work on the legislation leading to the changes in the Indiana Mechanical Code requiring return air ducting, and initiating programs concerning energy conservation and indoor air quality.

Top Notch (topnotch.org) is an Indiana-based labor-management organization consisting of building trades unions and contractors. It promotes Union construction to customers and the community the association represents a wide variety of general and sub-contractors in 4,000 companies, and over 75,000 union tradespersons in 17 trades.

"Local 20 and SMACNA of Central Indiana are really in sync with one another," says Michelle Boyd, Top Notch executive director. "It's clear they have been building their partnership for a long time."

According to Local 20 Business Manager Scott Parks, the following five practices helped the partnership create success in a competitive, changing marketplace:

1. Develop a strong partnership—Remember, what's good for the contractors is good for the Local, and vice versa. "Our contractors recognize that their most important asset is their people. We all realize how much more productive and well-trained our workforce has to be in order to stay competitive," says Jay Potesta, former business manager for Local 20 and currently SMWIA assistant director of governmental affairs.

2. Identify ways to reach the target audience—In the case of legislation leading to changes in the Indiana Mechanical Code requiring return air ducting, that audience was engineers and architects. We needed to explain what poor HVAC performance can do to a project.

3. Increase product knowledge—We want our people to be cutting-edge technicians, whether it comes to installing ducts or becoming LEED certified.

4. Build Brand Value—Few people recognize SMACNA or SMWIA, but our motto 'Building a Green Indiana Together' gets customers to associate our partnership with the most efficient and environmentally-friendly building systems out there.

5. Expand Training—Spread the word about ways to capture energy savings through both management and labor members.



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2012 PARTNERS IN PROGRESS CONFERENCE

The 2012 Partners in Progress Conference takes some new twists and turns this year. A new program format makes this dynamic program an ideal venue for both labor and management to come together and share ideas and differing points of view. Please join us to collaborate and meet with peers to find creative approaches to difficult challenges.

NEW! PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

Thomas C. Schleifer, Ph.D.

Corporate Turn-Around Expert, Arizona State University



Tom Schleifer has been warning the industry since 2008 that the recession and construction Industry market downturn were going to be deeper and longer than the popular press was indicating and that the impact on the industry would be unprecedented. Global and national economic conditions are having a dramatic impact on the construction industry and affecting every size and type of business to the extent there are few safe niches; escalating and intensifying the competition between union and open shop contractors. Dr. Schleifer contends that effective, convincing and credible strategies need to be developed to protect and defend union construction. He will update his recovery projections; explain the significance of what has occurred and define current economic and industry developments in terms that are easy to understand and specifically directed to the union sheet metal industry.

Stephen Gaffney

Communications Expert



Stephen Gaffney's "Notice vs. Imagine" seminar shows you how to accurately assess situations to determine the best course of action and make the best decisions to boost teamwork, build remarkable relationships and get things done. One of the biggest obstacles to effective communication is the failure to distinguish what is "noticed" (the facts of the situation) from what is "imagined" (opinions, thoughts, evaluations, conclusions). Gaffney says, "this may sound simple, and it is, but just think how often people operate and make decisions as if their opinions are fact or said in another way, using this distinction, what they "imagine" is correct rather than finding out the truth." Gaffney will draw upon real-life examples from our industry to work on during the session ensuring real-world applicability. By the conclusion of the session there will be no doubt how to use what is learned as well as how to apply it to other current and future situations.

NEW!

INDUSTRY BREAKOUTS

At previous conferences, regional breakout sessions got the creative juices flowing resulting in a multitude of great ideas. This year new industry-specific breakouts will foster collaboration and more targeted, in-depth solutions for Industrial, Architectural, Commercial, Residential, Service and Specialty Markets.

NEW!

BENEFIT FUNDS EDUCATION TRACK

New educational opportunities are in store for our benefit funds trustees and plan sponsors. Education is critical to survival for benefit plan fiduciaries in these uncertain times. At this year's Partners in Progress Conference trustees, plan sponsors and JATC coordinators will discuss the latest in delinquency practices, audit preparation in addition to getting updates on legislative developments.

AND MORE!

CHECK OUT OUR SCHEDULE ONLINE

Best practices from our industry will again be showcased for all to learn from and improve upon. You'll get insider information on how to successfully work together politically to clear legislative roadblocks. Improve market share by finding common ground through interest-based bargaining techniques and implementing successful practices from other areas. Learn how the industry can emerge from this recession positioned to succeed. Also, learn where the dangers lie for market expansion.

Based on current economic conditions, our conference theme, "We Mean Business" is quite fitting. Both labor and management seriously Mean Business about:

- Flirting with Loss: Entering New Markets
- Changing Face of Leadership
- Interest Based Bargaining – It's Not Just for Contracts
- Breeze Through a DOL Audit Unscathed
- Trust Fund Best Practices: Dealing with Delinquencies

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Wednesday, March 7, 2012

Registration: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 8, 2012

General Session & Keynote Speaker Thomas C. Schleifer, Ph.D.: 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Breakout Sessions: 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Lunch: Noon – 1:15 p.m.

Friday, March 9, 2012

General Session: 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Regional Breakout Sessions: 10:00 a.m. – Noon

Lunch: Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Industry Breakout Sessions: 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Reception, Dinner and Apprentice Competition Awards: 5:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Entertainment – Mosaic

Saturday, March 10, 2012

Keynote Speaker, Stephen Gaffney: 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

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Please check the appropriate title below.

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- SMACNA Contractor—Please list Chapter Name _____
- ITI Staff
- JATC Coordinator
- JATC Trustee
- SMOHIT Staff
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- Monday, March 4th-Saturday, March 10th
\$159.00 per night (plus room tax of 12%)

CUT OFF DATE: All reservations must be made by Friday, February 10, 2012. Reservations made after February 10, 2012, will be accepted on a space and rate available basis. It is important that you reference "Partners in Progress" when making your reservation in order to get the special conference rate. All reservations must be accompanied by a non-refundable first night room deposit, plus tax. Reservations charged by a major credit card will be billed immediately. Check-in time is 4:00pm and check-out time is 11:00am.

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REGISTRATION FEES

Registration fee includes conference materials, daily continental breakfast and lunch Thursday and Friday, break refreshments and Friday awards dinner.

Amount Due

Early Bird Conference Package @ \$625 (September 30, 2011- January 6, 2012)	
Conference Package @ \$695 (After January 6, 2012)	
Non-SMACNA Contractor Conference Package @ \$925 (Valid September 30, 2011- January 6, 2012, \$995 after January 6, 2012)	
Friday, March 9th Additional Awards Dinner Tickets @ \$155 _____ # of Tickets (Please note 1 dinner ticket is included with the conference package) Please purchase additional tickets for guests not attending the conference.	
TOTAL PAYMENT	

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Cancellation Policy: All conference package registrations and/or additional dinner tickets purchased will be refunded in full prior to February 17, 2012. After February 17th, no refunds will be issued. All cancellations must be sent in writing to KKirchner@tbaglobal.com. If you have questions about a refund, please call Katie Kirchner at (301)509-0813.

FOR MORE INFO 301.509.0813	REGISTER ONLINE www.pinp.org	OR FAX 540.301.0095	OR MAIL Partners in Progress c/o TBA 15121 Red Clover Drive Rockville, MD 20853
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Jack Sprat is not the only one who should be concerned about Lean.

By Cairine Caughill

Unless “lean principles” are how you’ve always done it, it’s time to start thinking “outside the box.” Virtually all skeptics become believers once they see how this kind of thinking changes the workplace for the better.

The term “lean” has been part of the North American manufacturing mindset since the 1990s, but it took longer to be embraced by the construction industry.

“When I first heard about it—in relation to safety at one of our job sites—I didn’t see how it related to our business,” says Bob Stokes, member of Local 17 and field superintendent at Charles P. Blouin in Seabrook, N.H. “It took a few years before I saw it pop up in my industry research.”

Lean involves adding value for the customer and eliminating waste. “Less than 30% of construction projects come in on time, on budget, and within specification. In construction, waste is rampant,” says Dennis Sowards a consultant on lean production and president of Quality Support Services, Inc.

Waste comes in many forms, including motion, inventory, overproduction, defects, waiting, transportation, and

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***It’s not rocket science...
It’s the way we’ve always done it.***

Illustration by Eric Westbrook

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over-processing. “Until you understand how waste manifests in construction—whether in the shop, the field, or the office—it’s impossible to eliminate,” Sowards says.

Lean Tools Primer

Achieving lean requires many tools. Some of the most useful ones for construction are described below.

Five S’s—Lean is built upon the Five S’s. Sorting, simplifying (or setting in order), sweeping, standardizing, and sustaining (or exerting self-discipline).

Blouin’s president Joe Cullen admits that there was some initial pushback when sorting, simplifying, and standardizing. “For example, workers used to call in from the field and request a tool. Now they have to fill out and fax in a form with their request before the item is pulled from the tool clip.”

On the surface, the procedure sounds like busywork, but it allows everything to be tracked in a database. “Thus, when someone requests heavy rigging equipment, the shop foreman doesn’t need to say, ‘I don’t have it. I’m gonna have to find out where it is.’ Instead, that same foreman can query the database, find out who is using it, and keep all of the jobs productive,” Cullen says.

Sorting reduced waste in Blouin’s warehouse, as well. “Specific aisles are allotted for certain jobs. Rather than just dropping goods anywhere in the warehouse, everything goes directly to its assigned location,” Stokes says.

Hiring a shipper/receiver facilitated this process. “He receives all the goods and makes sure they’re stored in their appropriate location. He also logs this information into the computer within specific job folders,” Cullen says. “Since it’s possible to access the server from a smart phone or laptop while on a job-site, it cuts down on all these extra phone calls.”

Stokes says the changes were well-received in the end. “It’s just a better way of doing business.”

Spaghetti Chart—It helps determine the flow and distance in the work processes, and highlights wasted time, motion, and backtracking.

“For example, you get a drawing of the shop layout and then you watch how the material flows, or how people go about doing the work. You draw lines on your paper following the movement and reflecting the flow,” Sowards explains.

Kaizen Blitz—Kaizen is Japanese for “improvement.” A blitz focuses on one area at a time and involves a team made up of employees from different departments. The team looks at how work is done and tries to identify and purge waste. It is usually done within a short period of time, generally no more than a week.

Kanban—Kanban is basically a “signal to replace.” Waiting to order supplies until they’re completely exhausted wastes time. A two-bin production system is effective in shops or on job sites with consumables like screws, bolts or nuts.

“Use a little bin or box for the nuts and bolts that people use all the time. Don’t worry about counting them. When the box is empty, take the card from the side with the part number

Pre-Fab is Lean Success

Pre-fabrication provides a better product in the end, says contractor Charles P. Blouin’s president Joe Cullen. “Everything is put together in a supervised environment, which means it’s not out on a job with wind and dust blowing.”



It’s a process that has eliminated wasted materials and time. “We take a sheet of metal at one end of our shop and walk out with a finished product,” says Blouin superintendent Bob Stokes.

“In the past, we brought little pieces out to the job site. They would get moved around, scattered, and sorted multiple times. We don’t have that now. We pick up the metal, take it to the shop, assemble it, send it to the job site, and deliver it to the room where it belongs,” Stokes adds. Often pre-fab pieces are installed the day they are delivered.

Before he could implement this process, Cullen had to convince general contractors that just-in-time delivery would work. “We stressed the benefits—no space required for storage or assembly; instead of having guys walking around looking for things, they were actually doing their jobs.”

His argument works, and Blouin is better equipped than ever to compete in the marketplace. “Now we take [the duct work] up to the floor and walk this 15-foot-long piece right into a room. The hangers are up for it, and we literally walk into a room, put it on a lift, and raise it right into place,” says Cullen.

and hand it to the foreman or whoever orders parts—that’s the Kanban, the signal,” Sowards says. “Then you start drawing from the second bin. You don’t stop work.”

The goal is to never run out of supplies. “When you do,” Sowards says, “the crew is waiting and the customer isn’t getting any value.”

Last Planner—Although Last Planner may offer the biggest payoff when it comes to construction, it is a hard sell because it means running jobs differently.

Typically the general contractor’s superintendent tells a foreman what must be accomplished in a given day. Depending on the state of the job, that may or may not be possible.

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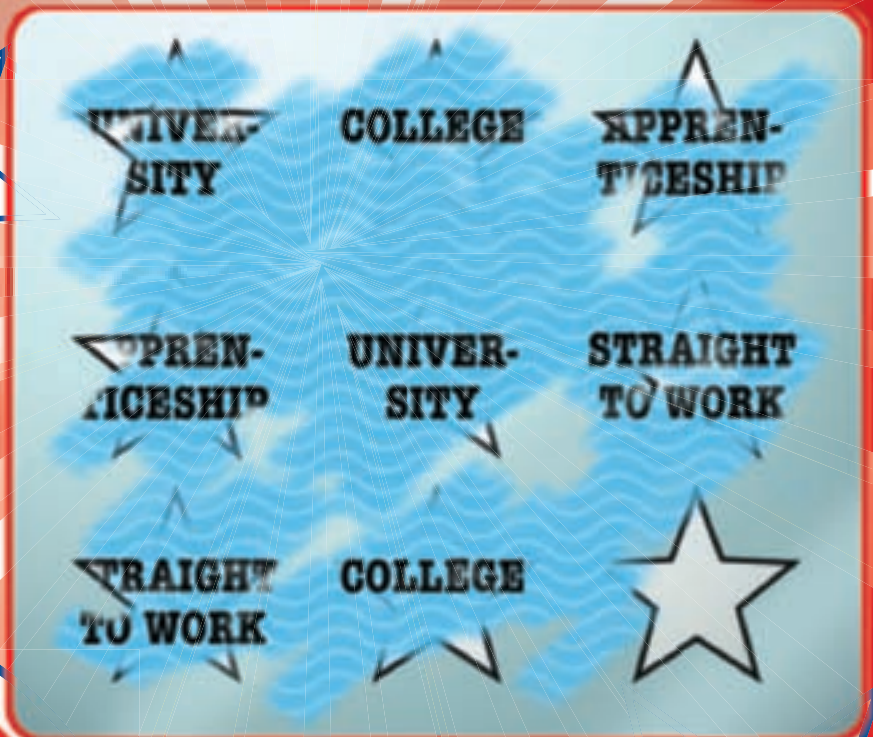


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What Should I Do Now?

By Karri Neves



WIN



Match 3 To Win





Homecoming...prom...senior trip...diploma. What now? Taking the next step can be a daunting prospect. Some choices can lead to a lifetime of rewards. Others can lead to a lifetime of educational debt and few opportunities.

Think of enrolling in a college or university believing it's the best path to employment, only to be forced to move back home when no jobs materialize.

Apprenticeship in the sheet metal industry, with no tuition fees and no significant out-of-pocket expenses for books or other materials, is an outstanding alternative for many individuals.

"What we do is hard work, but it's rewarding work. It's honest work. And when you finish, there's no student loan to pay off and plenty of career options," says Nathan Dills, president of ACP Sheet Metal Co. Inc., Oklahoma City, Okla..

In the current economy, having no school debt hanging over head is an excellent way to start off a career, but it's not the only reason to choose apprenticeship.

"Students actually get paid to go to school in Denver," says Larry Lawrence, former training director for local 9 and currently instructional development specialist for SMWIA's International Training Institute (ITI). "They earn the same amount they would on the job while they're in class."

Even better, those classes aren't underwater basket weaving taught by someone who has never sold a basket in the real world. Apprentices get top-notch training—both in the lab and in the field—from instructors with hands-on experience in industry

Better yet, selecting apprenticeship doesn't mean getting a college degree is out of the question. "As students complete our courses, they can earn credits towards an associate's degree," Lawrence says. "The American Council on Education grants 56 credits at an accredited community college to students who finish our programs."

Students who complete their apprenticeships and then pursue a university degree find they have a career to fall back on—to make money during school or after. "It's a lot better than working in fast food or being a waiter," Lawrence chuckles.

How Do I Get There?

An opportunity like that can't be easy to find. Can it?

When Raymond Cornsilk, apprentice with Midwest Fabricators, LLC, found himself without money for school, a friend told him about the Joint apprenticeship programs offered by SMACNA and SMWIA. Coming from a welding background, a chance to learn for free and a world of opportunity was all the motivation he needed to get the ball rolling.

Of course, it takes more than desire to get into an apprenticeship program. The basics are a high school diploma or GED and good physical conditioning. In addition, apprenticeship programs look for applicants with above average mechanical and math skills, good eye-hand coordination, an understanding of spatial relationships and patterns, and excellent work/study habits.

Learn more about Career Opportunities for Apprentices: Endless Possibilities and the Potential for a Lifetime of Rewards by attending the breakout session at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, March 8-10, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Other related breakout sessions include the Changing Face of Leadership, and the Reality of Being a Business Agent, Chapter Exec, and Contractor. For more information, visit pinp.org/conf12/.

Okay, I'm an Apprentice...

Exam...drug screen...interview...indenture. What now?

While there is a core curriculum that helps students develop basic hand skills and knowledge required by every professional in the sheet metal industry, students move on to specialize in one or more specific areas within the industry—from commercial, residential, and architectural work to welding, drafting, and testing and balancing.

"Apprenticeship programs try to mold a well-rounded sheet metal worker who can work in a variety of markets as the economy picks up," says Lawrence.

Cornsilk, appreciates the flexibility of ITI's program. "We have a wide variety of choices in our program. I can take general HVAC, refrigeration, or even service classes," he says.

Flexibility to follow the work wherever it goes is another important feature of ITI's apprenticeship program. "You can pick up where you left off with your studies in a completely different part of the country," Lawrence says.

"Transferability is key," says Ian Armstrong, a third-year apprentice with Midwest Fabricators, LLC. "I'm not much for sitting still," he says. "I've been able to travel around the country and work in many different fields within the industry."

What's Next?

Apprenticeship is only the beginning of a career in sheet metal. "Our training may only be a stepping stone for someone who wants to get an engineering or construction design degree," Dills says.

However, many journeypersons pursue expertise that allows them to specialize in more than one field or in an area ripe for market expansion, such as "green" buildings, fire and life safety, or retrofits. Alternatively, they move into an office role, becoming an estimator or project manager.

"Our future leaders take on additional responsibilities and develop the skills that allow them to become foreman, project managers or superintendents," Dills says. "A few even end up opening up their own shops or buying out the owners who currently employ them." ■

Neves is a freelance writer based in Downey, Idaho.

Sheet Metal Careers

Sheet metal is a varied career. Take a look at a few of the possibilities. Visit the International Training Institute at www.sheetmetal-iti.org to find a local training center or for additional information on careers in the sheet metal industry.

Commercial HVAC—Technicians in this field will work on high-volume mechanical systems that deliver heated and cooled air to commercial buildings, such as schools, airports, museums, and shopping centers. Opportunities in this field include:

- Installer
- Service technician
- Testing, Adjusting, and Balancing (TAB) technician
- Energy Management technician
- Commissioning agent
- Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) technician
- Supervisor
- Project manager
- Detailer

Residential HVAC—Residential HVAC technicians install ductwork for a wide variety of residences, including single family homes, town homes, and apartment buildings. Opportunities in this field include:

- New construction installer
- Residential finish installer
- Retrofit technician
- Residential services technician

Architectural Sheet Metal—Architectural technicians shape metal into useful and beautiful forms, particularly in the construction of large buildings. Some famous 19th and 20th century structures that are built of, clad with, or roofed using sheet metals of various types and thicknesses include Fordham Spire, Chicago; Experience Music, Seattle; CN Tower, Toronto; Empire State Building, New York; and Statue of Liberty, New York. Opportunities in this field include:

- Installer
- Fabricator
- Solderer
- Designer
- Project manager
- Customer sales and service
- Crew leader

Service and Refrigeration—Service and refrigeration technicians lay out and connect piping systems, leak test piping and equipment, clear and charge systems with refrigerant, service and test electrical components, connect pressure testing equipment, measure system performance, and diagnose system malfunctions. Opportunities in this field include:

- Installer
- Service technician
- System evaluator
- Energy consumption manager

Testing, Adjusting, and Balancing—Testing, adjusting, and balancing (TAB) technicians analyze, conduct tests and make adjustments to ensure that air and water are delivered efficiently, quietly, and safely throughout a building. Opportunities in this field include:

- Energy management
- Building systems commissioning
- Project management or facility management
- HVAC installation or system controls
- Sound and vibration testing
- Clean room work or certification
- Life safety control systems
- Indoor air quality
- System design

Detailing—Technicians who specialize in detailing use CAD (computer-aided drafting) to produce detailed two- and three-dimensional drawings of the major systems—including HVAC, electrical conduits and wiring, and plumbing and piping—that make buildings comfortable and safe. The drawings help ensure that workers install all systems efficiently and on time. Opportunities in this field include:

- Detailer
- Customer service representative
- Project manager
- Contractor

Sign Industry—Craftworkers in the sheet metal industry make the majority of the signs found on highways, on top of buildings, hanging outside stores, or planted in the ground, even signs made of plastics or neon tubing. They design new signs, fabricate signs based on existing designs, and mount signs in a variety of locations. Opportunities in this field include:

- Welder
- Crane operator
- Project coordinator
- Rigger
- Sign designer
- Contractor

Building Trades and Pharmaceutical Companies: The Right Medicine

By Steve Grieco

Biopharmaceutical companies perform high-risk, high-reward research at a very high level, requiring exacting standards. Their building and system requirements involve working with volatile compounds and biologic formulations that must be rigidly controlled.

“Every worker on the job must adhere to the kind of standards that union training and apprenticeship programs deliver,” says Tim Dickson, executive director of the Pharmaceutical Industry Labor-Management Association (PILMA). “That means trained union workers—and the contractors who hire them—have a significant advantage.”

Pharmaceutical companies have long been great customers for SMACNA contractors and their SMWIA workforce. Back in 2000, unions and employers in the biopharmaceutical industry started working together—forming PILMA—to promote industry employment, innovation, and legislation affecting working families.

Besides SMWIA, the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, International Association of Bridge, Structural & Ornamental Iron Workers, and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, participate in PILMA.

Now Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Merck, Novartis and other PILMA members have taken the relationship to a new level, working as partners with SMWIA and SMACNA chapters on key issues affecting the pharmaceutical industry and organized labor.

One of the things the coalition has been advocating for years is meaningful reform of the United States’ patent system. A strong patent system is crucial to American competitiveness, especially in the biopharmaceutical sector where innovation is costly and risky.

“We encouraged passage of the America Invents Act, an important step in protecting intellectual property rights,” Dickson says. “Among the beneficiaries of such legislation are trade unions and signatory contractors across the country that will get more construction, renovation, and maintenance jobs at biopharmaceutical facilities.”

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Learn more about entering new markets at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, March 8-10, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Thomas C. Schleifer will present a breakout session on *Flirting with Loss: Entering New Markets*. Schleifer brings more than 45 years of contracting and consulting experience to his presentation. He has a doctorate in construction management from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland, and experience serving as foreman, field superintendent, project manager, and vice president of a construction company. Another breakout session will cover dealing with the multiemployer world on Capitol Hill. For more information, visit pinp.org/conf12/.

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Wing's Testing and Balancing Co., Inc., based in Branford, Conn., positioned itself to take advantage of such opportunities.

In the past, testing and balancing work in the lab environment was limited to individual projects where sheet metal workers installed ductwork and fume hoods, while testing and balancing technicians ensured design flow rates were met. A separate certification agency would test the hoods under the ASHRAE 110 guideline.

Wing's leadership saw the opportunity to have SMWIA members perform the certification work, and proposed to TABB that a certification be developed for fume hood certification testing.

"This testing protocol goes beyond basic flow measurements. It quantifies the containment of a fume hood by using prescribed methods, smoke visualization, and tracer gas measurement," explains Matthew Cole, Wing's field operations manager. "Building owners and managers rely on this testing for the safety of their workers and to ensure efficient energy usage."

In 2010, Cole and three other Wings' technicians were among the first trainees in the newly minted TABB Fume Hood Performance Testing Technician Certification. Since then, Wings has performed ASHRAE 110 testing on over 100 fume hoods, creating man-hours in a difficult economic climate.

"This is a perfect fit for our testing and balancing company," Cole says. "As certified TABB technicians, we have the training and knowledge to test and adjust complex HVAC systems. Companies that only certify will just say 'Fail.' Being balancers as well as certifiers, we can make the needed adjustments to the system and change the fail to a pass."

Dave Roche, business manager for local 40 in Rocky Hill, Conn., also sees the value of training apprentices to properly install fume hoods and understand all aspects of installation—from placement and measuring to installing ductwork and balancing the system.

"We know and understand the needs of our contractors and the biopharmaceutical companies because we have worked with them," Roche explains. "Training journeyman and apprentices provides work opportunities that benefit our members, contractors and customers."

During an August 2011 event at the JATC in Rocky Hill, SMWIA, SMACNA's Connecticut chapter and the Associated Sheet Metal & Roofing Contractors of Connecticut (ASMRCC) highlighted the mutual benefits of matching highly-trained SMACNA/SMWIA partners with pharmaceutical and biotech companies.

Senator Richard Blumenthal toured the facility and said efforts to create jobs and grow the economy depend on workers with the skills that they need to fill job openings that exist today.

Local 19 and SMACNA's Philadelphia chapter held a similar event in September, helping to create a political and

Fume Hoods Go Green

Fume hoods protect technicians and researchers from toxic or noxious fumes by sucking bad air out of a work area, just like the exhaust fan on a homeowners stove.

In industry, fume hoods are invaluable, but they are also expensive to operate—often adding \$10,000 to \$20,000 to institutional energy bills. Considering that there are as many as 1.2 million of these hoods operating nationwide, it's clear that they add considerably to America's energy usage.

Robert Morris, an engineer in New Jersey, has designed a retrofit kit that cuts the volume of air that a fume hood needs to move in half. The new design, once installed, would mean that HVAC systems will only have to work half as hard and the savings should show up on the bottom line.

Three of the Morris-designed retrofit kits have been installed in labs at Villanova University at a cost of \$8,000 each, plus labor. If the kits work as expected, the university says it will install them in their remaining 144 fume hoods over an extended period of time—and would expect to realize annual savings of \$5,000 a year for each installed kit.

The retrofitted kits save approximately 60% over the price of new hoods. Working with the Facilities Department at Villanova University, Philadelphia local 19 signatory contractors Ernest D. Menold, Inc., and Keystone TAB Consulting, LLC arranged and performed the conversion of the three hoods.

"Innovations like the retrofit kits can help reduce unemployment among the local's 4,500 members," says Joe Sellers, SMWIA general secretary treasurer and former president of local 19.



legislative climate that is favorable to the biopharmaceutical industry nationwide.

After touring the JATC, Senator Robert Casey wrote in his blog, “[It] was a great opportunity to see, first-hand, the kind of comprehensive training these workers are receiving. I had the opportunity to meet several of the trainees, get an overview of how the training process works and speak with several contractors and employers who utilize these trainees after they have completed all of the necessary requirements.”

Dickson hopes to conduct several more of these programs. “Look for events in states where there is a good deal of biopharmaceutical industry density, such as New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Rhode Island,” he says.

Other unions are also on board with these programs. “By bringing the pharmaceutical industry into your training facility and allowing them to see the skill level and certifications that we can provide today’s marketplace, we can ensure that the union industry is the leader in economic growth and innovation well into the future,” says Jeff Stinson, business manager for Iron Workers local 22. ■

Grieco is a freelance writer based in Blacksburg, VA. For more details about the growing union-management-biopharmaceutical partnership, visit PILMA.org.



Use Your Imagination

TABB Fume Hood Performance Testing is a huge market, and certification gives SMACNA and SMWIA an advantage in the marketplace. “Look beyond the pharmaceutical industry,” says Matthew Cole, field operations manager for Wing’s Testing and Balancing of Branford, Conn. “High schools and colleges around the country are filled with hoods and hoods are used in industrial applications everywhere.”

What’s more, it’s recurring revenue. “Hoods must be tested regularly. The certification stickers we apply to the hood have our company contact information and a date for retesting,” Cole adds. “The man-hours that this certification has helped to create will happen again and again for years to come.”

Trim the Fat *continued from page 18*

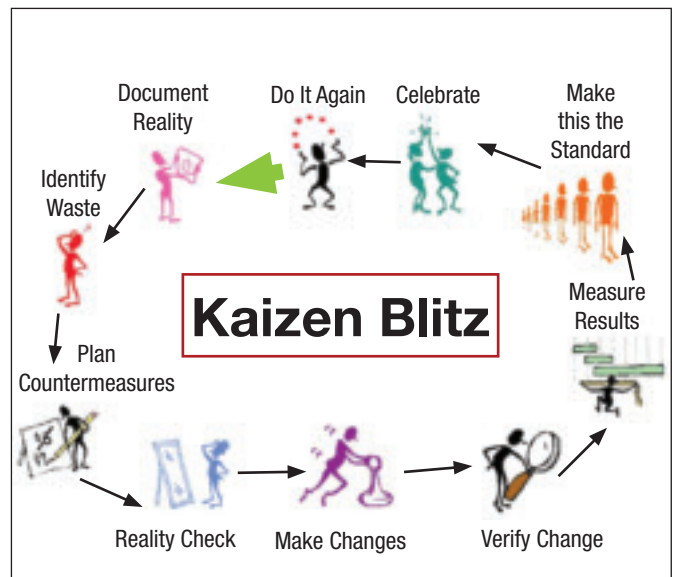
With the Last Planner system, the foreman can tell the superintendent what actually *can* be done. “It’s about planning tools that allow foremen to make commitments they can keep,” Sowards says.

State of Lean

Why isn’t lean the way it’s been done for the past 15 years?

For contractors just trying to stay alive, economic challenges make going lean seem less frivolous. “Some contractors, though, have been able to position themselves to get more work by going lean,” says Sowards.

Lean consultant Larry Swanson, who wrote a New Horizons Foundation report about the Kaizen Blitz, believes that as time goes by, more and more of those people who either didn’t



want or couldn’t handle change will become the chief advocates of the process. “They’ll say ‘Where have you been? Why didn’t you come sooner? Can we apply this to whatever I do?’”

Indeed, one of the foremen at Blouin was that type. The first time the company used pre-assembly on a large project, he was skeptical. Two weeks into the project, he was a believer. “He couldn’t believe he’d been doing business differently for the past 40 years,” Cullen says.

Even without quantifying the company’s savings, Stokes can attest to a reduction in wasted time and resources in the shop and at job sites. “I’m stunned that it took so long to make these changes. We’ve found there are better, faster, smoother ways of doing things.”

Sometimes change is good! ■

Caughill is a freelance writer based in Ontario, Canada. Additional information is available in Partners in Progress, Vol. 9, Issue 1 at pinp.org, and from New Horizons Foundation (newhorizonsfoundation.org).

Learning is not compulsory . . . *neither is survival**



By Skip Maloney

Smart contractors, apprentices, journeypersons, foremen, and supervisors are always on the lookout for ways to improve performance.

It's a simple, bottom-line equation.

Improved performance equals greater customer satisfaction—and whether that customer is the owner of a building or your boss—the yield is an increase in the corporate or personal bottom line, which means more contracts for the contractor and more work for the craftsperson.

Acquiring a time-saving, energy-efficient, new piece of equipment or instituting a policy that streamlines a process isn't the beginning and end of improvement. True improvement requires creation and fostering of an environment where learning is a common and vibrant part of the culture.

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“A ‘learning culture’ provides not only the opportunity to acquire new skills and competencies, but also the atmosphere to thrive where such learning is encouraged and embraced,” says David Riley, associate professor of architectural engineering at the Pennsylvania State University.

Riley is one of the co-authors for a report on creating learning cultures within the sheet metal industry published by New Horizons Foundation, which is sponsored by SMACNA.

“Labor and management both sometimes find it easy to let habit, cost, or ignorance—in the form of ego or complacency—get in the way of such progress,” Riley says. But it’s that type of progress that is crucial to the future of the organized sheet metal industry.

Firmly in the “progress” camp, Southland Industries, the fourth largest mechanical contractor in the United States, takes the learning culture approach seriously. Central to SI’s learning culture is Southland University, an in-house training program, established as a formal entity in 1991, designed “to provide top-quality continuing education and training.”

“Employees team with their managers to evaluate career goals and learning opportunities,” says Mike Miller, senior vice president of Southland Industries’ Mid-Atlantic Division.

“Coursework ranges from pre-determined curricula to an à la carte approach, customized for the individual. The program includes classes taught on-site by Southland’s experts and outside classes, such as those taught at a JATC training center.”

It is not, stresses Miller, like a college degree program, bearing a pre-determined set of specific course requirements for graduation. “Any manager or department leader can create a curriculum that trains our employees and improves our project performance.”

Mid-Atlantic Division sheet metal superintendent Rob Delawder did just that, developing a training program focused on duct pressure testing, construction scheduling and quality control.

“He put (these classes) together on his own, seeing them as areas in need of improvement to improve overall performance in our sheet metal projects,” Miller says.

Delawder is a third-generation union worker, a member of local 100, and a shareholder in Southland Industries. “I have a unique perspective because I wear both hats,” he says.

Find out about how to enter new markets and create new business opportunities at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference, March 8-10, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. The program will include a series of regional and industry-specific break-out sessions to provide an environment where industry leaders—from apprentices and journeymen to contractors—can strengthen their partnership and learn from each other. For more information, visit pinp.org/conf12/.

“One of the things that struck me about Southland Industries is their emphasis on training people,” Delawder adds. “The company truly places a value on union employees; seeing to it that they’re the best educated possible.”

This type of culture doesn’t appear out of the blue. According to Southland’s Miller, it has to originate from leadership. “They have to value it, make it a ‘business strategy’, and then get employees to buy-in,” Miller says.

“Contractors who ignore training will pay one way or the other: either for the training up front or for mistakes on the job,” Miller adds.

It’s not just contractors who have to take responsibility for learning. “Too many people are happy just getting by,” says Mark Paavola, local 162’s JATC administrator. “Traditions are wonderful, but they don’t put food on the table,” he says.

Brian Lehmkuhl, a technician with Airco Mechanical, Inc., based in Sacramento, Calif., didn’t need that explained to him. Along with colleagues Chris Ruch and Michael Weaver, Lehmkuhl started looking for ways for his department to diversify and expand.

Upon completing local 162’s training program on the fire life safety, Lehmkuhl knew he was onto something. “I realized nobody else in our area was doing this type of work, which meant a lot of codes were not being enforced,” he says.

With Airco’s support and financial backing, Lehmkuhl, Ruch and Weaver enrolled in additional fire life safety training classes, eventually earning their ICB/TABB Level I and Level II technician certifications, as well as Level I supervisor certifications.

What followed was a marketing plan, sales packet and an inspection checklist, followed by an outreach program that involved talking to owners directly. “We raised awareness of both Airco and the benefits of inspections and proper maintenance,” Lehmkuhl says.

That awareness led to new business for Airco, a relationship with the Sacramento Fire Department—which scheduled a four-hour training seminar for fire prevention officers, and enhanced the reputation of both Airco and the union generally.

“For our industry to grow—or even survive—we need to find new opportunities and create an environment where challenges are not just accepted, but embraced,” Paavola says.

And that’s what establishing a learning culture is all about. ■

*Maloney is a freelance writer based in North Carolina. Visit New Horizons Foundation’s store at NewHorizons.org to order a copy of the report *Creating a Learning Environment: A Template for Creating and Cultivating a Learning Culture in the HVAC and Sheet Metal Industry*.*

**Quote by W. Edwards Deming, an American statistician, professor, author, who is best known for his work in Japan teaching management how to improve design, service, product quality, testing, and sales.*

What Can I Do?

It's approaching 10 years since SMACNA and SMWIA established the Sheet Metal Industry Labor-Management Cooperation Committee and the Joint Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force. The ensuing decade has brought about an enhanced partnership that is making strides to promote industry health and market share growth.

One initiative resulting from this effort has been the Expertise program. More than a simple marketing ploy, it assists local areas in getting the word out about the value of the SMACNA-SMWIA team in terms that are meaningful to potential customers.

Furthermore, contractors, locals, chapters, and training centers can use—for FREE—professionally prepared advertisements in their local marketing efforts and take advantage of the expertise websites to send customers their way. Of course, if you don't use Expertise logos in connection with the organized sheet metal industry in your area, you won't get much benefit.

Many innovative "best practices" have been generated at the local level during this period. Through outlets such as this magazine and the Partners in Progress Conference, we are getting the word out about these ideas in order to make it possible for the entire industry to benefit—growing market share, thereby increasing work opportunities and memberships for our organizations.

One of the latest programs is a Commercial HVAC Quality Maintenance Program, which came out of a collaboration between Southern California Edison, CAL SMACNA, and California's Joint Committee on Energy and Environmental Policy, that includes California SMWIA Locals and California SMACNA chapters. The program provides incentive payments to customers for enrolling in a three-year air con-

ditioning maintenance service agreement. Approved Quality Maintenance contractors are listed on the utility's website. Additional information is available at commercial-hvacqm.com/contractors.php.

It's not just California partnerships that are making their mark developing best practices that other areas can benefit from. For example:

- Trade up New Mexico (tradeupnm.com)—a recruiting program sponsored by three business associations and their respective labor unions (*Partners in Progress* Vol. 6, No. 4) demonstrates one way to address workforce issues that we're facing with the retirement of our current leadership.
- New York's Airside Direct (sheetmetalny.com) program tells customers the advantages of working directly with union sheet metal contractors (*Partners in Progress* Vol. 6, No. 5).
- St. Louis and Kansas City held local partnership conferences with support from the national LMCC (*Partners in Progress* Vol. 7, No. 2).

These are just a few examples of what you could be doing to improve conditions in your local area. Find more by taking a look at the Local Partnership Links and reviewing the *Partners in Progress* archives on pinp.org, and attending the Partners in Progress Conference in March 2012. Don't just passively read or listen. Learn, ask questions, and then make a plan and move forward. It's our industry and we really mean business! ■

