

# Partners in PROGRESS

SMACNA & SMWIA—Building A Future Together • SPRING 2006



2006  
PARTNERSHIP  
CONFERENCE



HVAC  
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Metal



Inside...Conference Wrap-up

**EXPERTISE**

PERFORMANCE • TRAINING • STANDARDS

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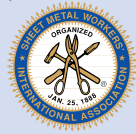
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## A Passion For Expansion

SMACNA and SMWIA put their heads together in a joint effort to increase market share.

“We’d like to see a net tripling of membership over the next six years,” said Mark Watson, former SMACNA president, at a Partners In Progress conference general session.

As part of SMACNA/SMWIA Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force, the organizations are about half-way through a three-year action plan to increase customer awareness and reach decision-makers.

“Through our customer focus groups, we found that sheet metal was not on anyone’s radar screen,” Watson said. “People only thought of us as duct installers.”

Out of that realization was born the industry’s “Expertise” branding. Expertise logos—meant to replace SMACNA logos—have been released for HVAC, architectural metal, and industrial work. According to Watson, requests to use the logo on web sites, ads, letterhead, and invoices have increased steadily over the past two years.

Putting “Expertise” on the web has been a priority. “Our goal is to help people find union contractors in their area,” Watson said. “In some cases, it’s proving effective. An Ohio contractor received so many calls about residential work that he actually decided to take it on.”

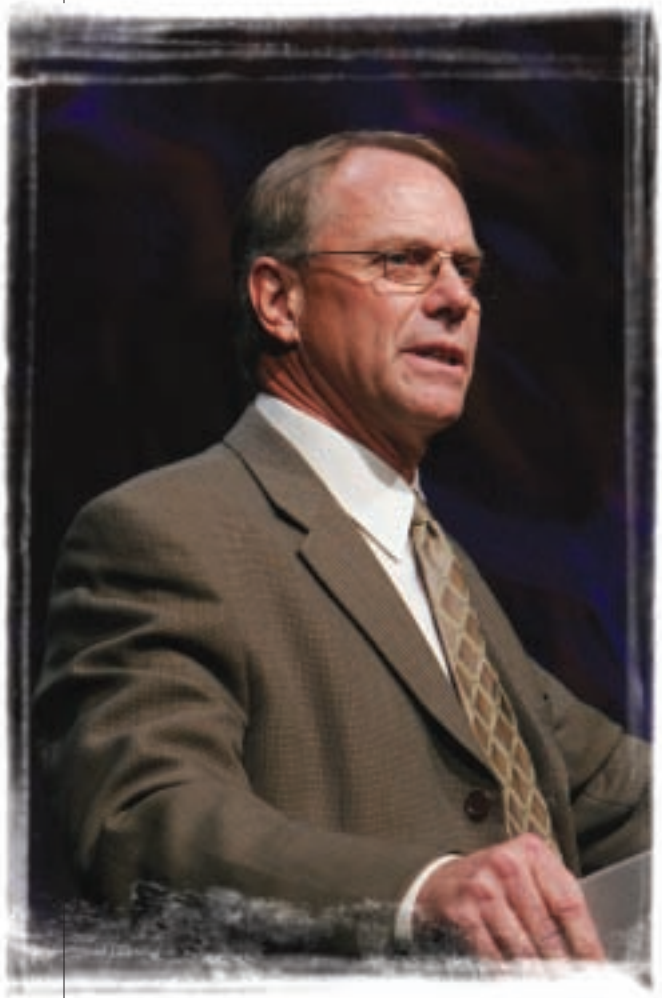


*Joe Nigro of SMWIA (left) and Mark Watson, past president of SMACNA, discuss the efforts of the Market Expansion Task Force.*

Other priorities for market expansion include sharing best practices to save time and money for both the unions and contractors and facilitating change.

“One of the hardest things to face is that our industry is changing daily, sometimes hourly,” Watson said. “We have to take a better look at ourselves and what we are doing right and wrong.”

“To be successful, we have to approach market expansion with a great deal of passion,” concluded Joe Nigro, SMWIA general secretary-treasurer.—*K. Engelmann*



# We Came, We Learned... We Reshaped The Future

**V***eni, vidi, vici*—that was Julius Caesar’s simple summary of his 10 years in the province of Gaul. *I came, I saw, I conquered.*

Roughly 2,050 years later, SMWIA leaders and SMACNA contractors converged on Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas. They conversed (although not in Latin), listened to each other and some important speakers—and helped to reshape the industry’s future.

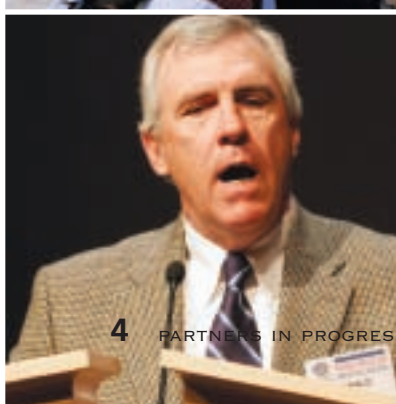
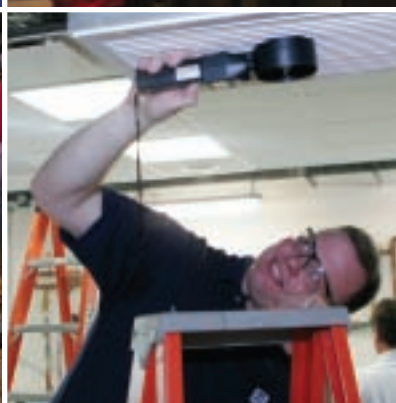
Held March 29-April 1, the Partners In Progress conference was the 4th biennial joint meeting of the two organizations. This issue, a 16-page report on what was said and done, can’t do justice to what went on. Events included:

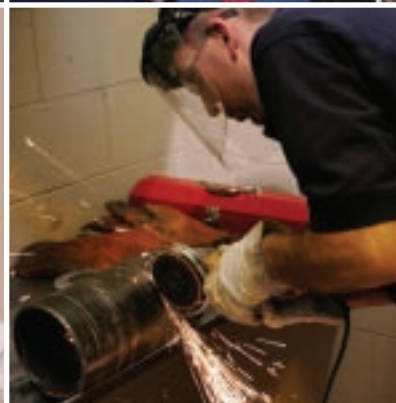
- 16 breakout sessions on Emerging Markets & Industry Trends, and more;
- general sessions on the industry’s future, union mergers, and recruiting;
- a special all-day session featuring speaker Mark Breslin, especially for SMWIA members;
- a case study segment on lean production and 3D technology, with lessons learned from real-life experience at a General Motors plant; and
- before the conference, the 34th annual ITI Apprenticeship Contest (which concluded with an awards dinner the night before the conference officially opened).

Were the SMACNA-SMWIA event summarized by keywords, they would cut a broad swath. Words heard frequently during sessions included: survival, health, lean production, specifications, certifications, market expansion, productivity, getting young people interested, and opportunity.

Major news made at the event included introduction of a new DVD from the SMWIA-SMACNA team—with a strong message from the General President to the SMWIA membership (see page 11). See page 9 for other news made by our industry during the conference.

For more information flowing from the conference, be sure to download presentations. Find them by clicking the links at [www.pinp.org/smiw/schedule.cfm](http://www.pinp.org/smiw/schedule.cfm). ■





the

# Partners Conference:

## In Pictures

In all its glory, from Best Practice to Market Expansion, SMACNA and SMWIA covered it all.



# Capitalizing on MasterFormat '04

**N**ews on the organized sheet metal industry's effort to capitalize on the new MasterFormat 2004, and new information, was one highlight of the Partners In Progress conference.

Here's a quick list:

1. Attendees learned that SMACNA is preparing the *HVAC Bid Specification Reference Manual* to help owners/designers to prepare a complete HVAC bid package (and also to help contractors prepare competitive, accurate bids).
2. The National Center for Energy Management and Building Technologies (NCEMBT) signed an agreement in Las Vegas with the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI), which promulgates the MasterFormat.
3. Industry members from western Washington discussed a cooperative agreement they've worked out with local CSI members. Included: Training and certification of sheet metal apprentices in construction document technology.
4. Another new SMACNA publication was discussed—*HVAC Systems: Understanding The Basics*.

## Brief background

That's a lot of new information to digest. To understand why these things are happening, here's a bit of background:

MasterFormat is the "communication" document for organizing construction projects on paper—a standard way for project manuals to be presented. It's voluntary, not compulsory; yet some estimates say at least 70% of construction projects make use of some version (1995 or earlier) of the MasterFormat.

CSI produces the standard document, and updates it regularly. The various parts of a construction project, with product and service bid specifications, are presented in separate divisions.

A major change from the 1995 edition to MasterFormat 2004 involves "facility services" disciplines. Where the 1995 edition including Division 15 (mechanical) and Division 16 (electrical), there are now seven facilities service divisions.

Most importantly for SMWIA and SMACNA, the new Division 23 is devoted to HVAC.

Most HVAC industry experts see the separation of HVAC from plumbing (Division 22) as a great opportunity. While CSI "has been careful to say that the project manual shouldn't affect who gets the work...we all know that's just not true," said Dr. Thomas Glavinich, a conference presenter.

## NCEMBT, SMWIA & CSI

By a fortunate coincidence, CSI held its annual convention in Las Vegas at the same time as the Partners Conference. Michael Sullivan, general president of SMWIA, went to the CSI event to mark a new partnership between that organization and the NCEMBT.

Note that NCEMBT is a non-profit national resource, established by the sheet metal industry in cooperation with the federal government.

Sullivan and Mike Owens, president of CSI, agreed to a collaboration between NCEMBT and CSI—the Construction Taxonomy Project. Sullivan presented a \$180,000 check to CSI to help fund the project.

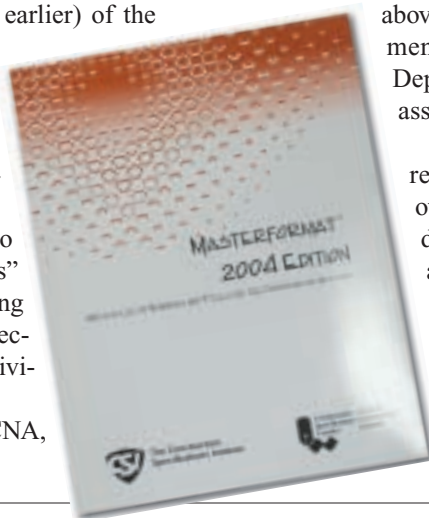
"Our respective organizations must become conduits to facilitate a more efficient and productive construction process," Sullivan said. "CSI has been able to identify obstacles in the process that created a less-efficient construction industry.

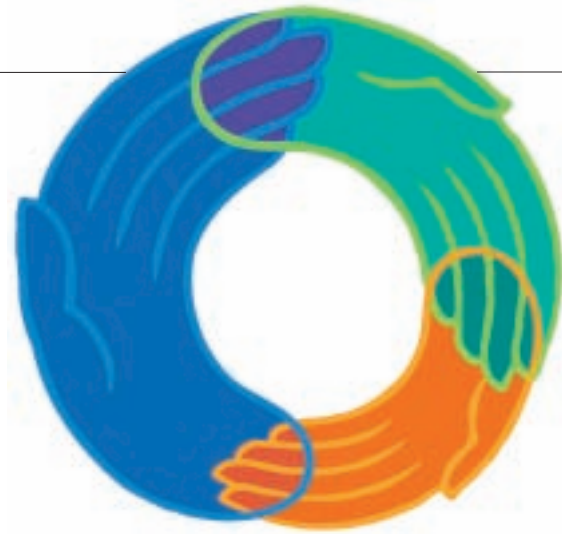
"The National Center, with its mission to support research, participate in standard-setting, and advance technical training and professional education, is a natural partner."

## Publications

SMACNA's efforts to capitalize on this opportunity include creating the two documents referenced above. Glavinich, from the Civil, Environmental & Architectural Engineering Department at the University of Kansas, is assisting in preparing each.

Using the *BSRM* (the specification reference document), Glavinich said, owners and their agents (building designers and specifiers) will be able to assure themselves that they are preparing a complete HVAC bid package. They should net more accurate bids, increased installation quality, and a more efficient system installation, he said—with fewer change orders and disputes. *continued to page 8*





# After Mergers, Will SWMIA = SMART?

By Kaarin Engelmann

**The** Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA) is negotiating to merge with the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS) and the United Transportation Union (UTU), SMWIA President Michael Sullivan told union members and contractors at the recent Partners In Progress Conference in Las Vegas.

SMWIA represents 147,000 craftspersons in the sheet metal industry.

BRS represents nearly 9,500 men and women who install and maintain signal systems for most of the nation's railroads.

UTU is a broad-based, transportation labor union representing about 125,000 active and retired railroad, bus, and mass transit workers in the United States and Canada.

"The more unity we have, the more political influence we have," Sullivan said. "It is a combination of legislative effort and collective bargaining that brings power and success to the labor movement."

Soon after these mergers occur, SMWIA may change its name to SMART, Sullivan said—the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, Transportation union.

## Answering The Obvious Question

An obvious question many will ask about any union consolidation is: Why?

"Increased size brings increased power and organizational efficiencies," said Ron Seeber of the Association for Conflict Resolution. He has recently completed research on union mergers for the New Horizons Foundation, a sheet metal industry research organization sponsored by SMACNA.

Additionally, SMWIA's roots in the rail industry reach back to the 19th century—and the union has a rail division today. Sullivan said there are no conflicts between the core objectives of SMWIA's manufacturing and rail divisions.

Further, after studying the feasibility of such a merger, SMWIA has determined that the three unions' constitutions and methods of operation are similar.

Perspective is offered by Paul Thompson, International President of the UTU: "We want an appropriate merger partner to offset the power the Teamsters are exerting over some in rail labor."

## Why Mergers Make Sense

According to Seeber, unions should and will consider mergers for several reasons, including the organization and success of non-union construction and unions' failure to organize markets. Both have weakened bargaining strength, eroded political influence, diminished available

*continued to page 8*

"People are afraid of change, yet we're changing every day"

## MasterFormat '04 *continued from page 6*

Contractors are also expected to find the BSRM useful. It will help them to identify potential problems, ensure that bids address all contract requirements, and reduce contractual and construction risk, Glavinich claimed.

## Apprentices get CDT certification

In western Washington, the local CSI operation and the sheet metal industry's Western Washington JATC have come together to mutual benefit. Charlie Mulcahy of SMWIA Local 66, Eric Peterson of the JATC, and Bob Simmons of CSI discussed their progress at the Partners event.

CSI offers a certification called CDT—construction document technologist. WWJATC apprentices are now routinely getting CDT training (it's available to journeymen as well).

## More MasterFormat Info

Dr. Glavinich's presentations can be found online at [www.pinp.org](http://www.pinp.org).

For information on MasterFormat, see [www.csinet.org](http://www.csinet.org). To access an "information kit" on MasterFormat 2004, which offers a great deal of free info, see <http://tinyurl.com/netxa>.

See <http://tinyurl.com/o7dhf> for details on CSI's certifications, including the CDT.



Bob Simmons of the Construction Specifications Institute (left) joins Charlie Mulcahy of SMWIA Local Union #66 (center) and Eric Peterson of the Western Washington JATC in a discussion of how SMWIA, the JATC and CSI are working together.

"We saw this as an opportunity in our local to turnout 50 to 60 graduating apprentices with the CDT certification every year," said Mulcahy. "A side benefit is that it gives us—and other areas that do the same thing—a great chance to show off our JATC."

Added Simmons: "When we began talking, a light bulb went on for me. This is a great opportunity to help educate both organizations."

In addition to the gain for apprentices, Peterson noted, "this is a benefit to contractors as well. The journeymen with this certification will be able to help the contractor make more money." —Joe Salimando

## Merger *continued from page 7*

resources, and a reduced unions' capacity to confront problems.

"Although the labor movement has been successful at keeping its members, it has failed to grow at a time when the size of the labor force has nearly doubled," Seeber said during a general session at the Partners conference.

Despite the need, merging is not likely to happen smoothly. According to Seeber, the biggest barriers to any merger include pride of craft, a given union's traditions, and even its name.

"Another barrier is the lack of a sense of crisis and push from top management," Seeber added.

Sullivan encouraged his audience to participate in open debate and discussion about the issue, but in the end to put the good of the union first: "People are afraid of change, yet we're changing every day—in many positive ways. Strong leadership is key."

In his Las Vegas speech, Sullivan pointed to the words of Eugene V. Debs as a reason to push for positive merges in construction trade unionism (see accompanying story):

"When we are in partnership and have stopped clutching each other's throats, when we have stopped enslaving each other, we will stand together, hands clasped, and be friends. We will be comrades, we will be brothers, and we will begin the march to the grandest civilization the human race has ever known." ■

ENGLMANN IS A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR BASED IN SPRINGFIELD, VA.



## About The Debs Foundation

Michael Sullivan not only serves as SMWIA president, but also as president of the Eugene V. Debs Foundation. The foundation was established as a memorial to Debs and as an archive and resource for research and education in the social sciences and in labor and political history.

Debs held memberships and official positions in two late 19th century labor unions: the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and the American Railway Union

Later, he helped found the Industrial Workers of the World. Debs promoted workers' right to organize unions and to strike in order to protect their interests, for shorter hours, and for restrictions on child labor.

Each year since 1965, except 1971, the Debs Foundation has honored a person whose work has been in the spirit of Debs and who has contributed to the advancement of the causes of industrial unionism, social justice, or world peace. Sullivan received the award in 2000.

At the recent Partners Conference, he called Debs a "great labor leader" who understood the need for one union for the working class. "If there are different unions representing different people, they'll fight amongst themselves and destroy each other from within," Sullivan said.

Visit [www.eugenevdebs.com](http://www.eugenevdebs.com) for more information on Debs.



# News

## We Made In Las Vegas

Here's a quick reference to news made during the Partners In Progress conference:

### Union Mergers

SMWIA General President Michael Sullivan said that his union is likely to merge with two other unions—the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen and the United Transportation Union. Should the mergers take place as envisioned, Sullivan said, SMWIA could be renamed—as the Sheet Metal, Air & Rail transportation union...SMART!  
*See page 7.*

### College Credit

Arina Konnenberg of the International Training Institute, discussed how ITI can help local JATCs in discussions with college and community college officials. One key issue: Obtaining credit for apprentices not only for their classroom work, but for on-the-job training as well.



Ted Kuczynski, ITI's executive administrator, said she would travel upon request to help JATCs in meetings with educators.

### Using Division 23 (HVAC)

Tom Soles, executive director for market sectors at SMACNA, said that the MasterFormat 2004 change to include Division 23 was "SMACNA's #1 BHAG." BHAG = "big, hairy, audacious goal." Two publications are being prepared, including a *Bid Specification Reference Manual*. *See page 6.*

### Fire Damper Certification

Erik Emblem of the National Energy Management Institute updated attendees on progress in created a Fire Damper/Life Safety Systems certification. NEMI is working with Underwriters Laboratories (UL) in creating this. The hoped-for end result: To have UL certify contractors who are ready to do fire damper testing.

"Contractors will be able to verify and validate the dampers," Emblem said, "and fix them in place if need be."

Plans as of early April: A study guide for supervisors and technicians is to be available by July; training classes are to start in September; and initial certifications could be awarded as early as November.

**CERTIFIED**

### Prescription Drug Savings

Bucking national trends, SMWIA Locals are actually saving money on prescription drug coverage. SMWIA has made this possible through negotiating a contract with Envision, which allows the union to leverage its buying power. *See page 14.*

### Fit for Life and Work

SMOHIT has released its *Fit For Life* DVD and workbook designed to improve the quality of life for your workforce through wellness and healthy living. See page 13 for additional coverage of healthcare.



### Agreement with CSI

SMWIA General President Michael Sullivan, on behalf of the National Center for Energy Management and Building Technology, signed an agreement with the Construction Specification Institute. The first-ever cooperation between the sheet metal/HVAC industry and CSI is important—as CSI owns, revises, and promulgates the MasterFormat, the construction project manual preparation standard.



5...

Unions and signatory contractors are partners on the edge of survival, according to Mark Breslin, a nationally recognized speaker on labor-management issues. "The clock is ticking and everyone has to face what's going on."

In his Partners Conference presentation, Breslin said he expects few construction unions will survive longer than five years.

4...

"International unions have spent \$200 million to grow their market share and not much has happened. Instead of more money, we need different strategies to secure our future."

Keeping organized construction alive is not a task for the bargaining table, he told a general session audience: "If you are arguing about little issues and your market share isn't at least 70%, you are in trouble. When we look at each other instead of our client or the market, we are simply dividing ever decreasing shares of the pie."

3...

**Offer greater value**

Instead, he said, the goal should be to create more competitive market conditions. Rather than competing on price with non-union contractors, signatory contractors must offer greater economic value to their customers.

"We've done a terrible job justifying the existing price point," Breslin said. Buyers are willing to pay more to deal with a company on their Best Brands List, but in many cases, unions and union-signatory contractors don't measure up—at least when it comes to perception.

2...

"Most of what people know about unions is outdated or inaccurate. We need to create a positive market image," he noted.

What's needed, he outlined, are innovative labor-management public relations and marketing programs to influence non-union contractors and end-users. "Use business strategies to replace adversarial traditions."

1...

As a first step, signatory contractors would benefit by recruiting more contractors into the fold. "We're not knocking on enough doors. Remember, you are competing with these non-union contractors anyway. If you level the playing field, you will be more profitable," Breslin said.

# The Countdown Is On!

## Will SMACNA and SMWIA Still Be Around in Five Years?

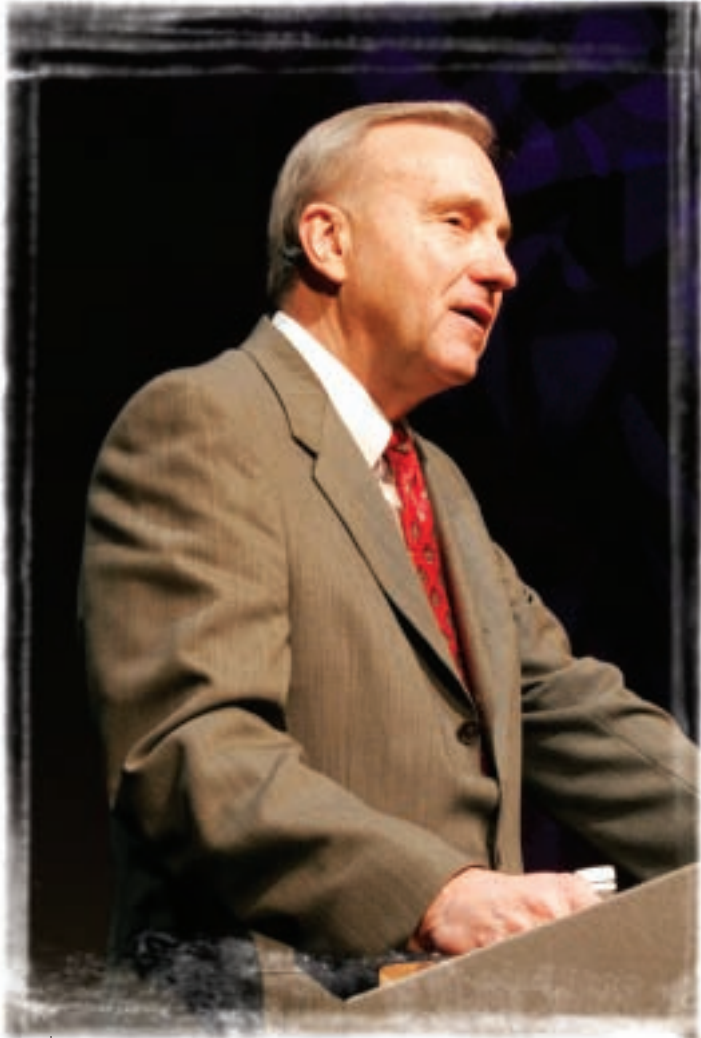
**The next step**

As a next step, labor and management must deliver on their promise to provide a workforce with professionalism—the proper attitudes and behaviors to accompany their skills.

"You have a responsibility as a union employee. You don't have an entitlement," Breslin said. That means being highly motivated, honest, tolerant, and productive, with a strong work ethic and the ability to be a team player.

In addition, Breslin admonished, it's up to contractors to do their part to stop "spinning" the workforce. Even if just 10% of the union labor pool is not performing, that means 15,000 sheet metal workers are giving the industry a black eye when they don't show up to work or put forth their best efforts on the job site.

Finally, Breslin said, "ask the owners and end users what they want from us. Nothing will matter if we are not listening to our clients."—K. Engelmann



# No Sugar Coating

SMWIA President Michael Sullivan asks union members—and signatory contractors—to aspire to a higher standard.

**U**nion construction market share is down to about 17%. “I’m tired of losing jobs on price alone to competitors who do substandard work,” said SMWIA President Michael Sullivan.

Sullivan’s remarks appear on a DVD released jointly by SMACNA and SMWIA (through their national LMCC). It addresses the issue of construction unions losing ground, even as more companies outsource services to save money and gain access to skilled and productive workers.

“Market research shows us that decision makers choose contractors based on cost, past performance, safety, and quality of work. Our predicament is that they don’t believe there

is any difference between hiring union and non-union,” said SMACNA President Keith Wilson, in a segment of the DVD.

Or worse, they see unions as inflexible. “They want problem solvers, not problem causers,” he added. “Standing out in a positive way determines not just how well we thrive, but IF we survive.”

## Survival hinges on perceptions

From Sullivan: “Our success—even our survival—hinges on the perceptions we create in the minds of our end-users. Right or wrong, the customer perception of us is our reality.” He believes it is time to aspire to a higher standard.

“We need to use every resource to demonstrate that customers achieve a financial advantage using union sheet metal,” Sullivan insisted. “That means providing outstanding productivity, positive attitude, professionalism, and the best value for the dollar.”

Sullivan addressed these concepts on the DVD because, he explained, increasing market share is the only way to ensure collective bargaining wins out over “collective begging.”

Of course, building market share has proven difficult.

“No one can touch us when we show up with the right attitude,” Sullivan stated. Regrettably, that doesn’t always happen. “For example, we must take advantage of new, dynamic, on-the-job training techniques to produce more flexible and valuable sheet metal workers.”

## Emphasis on productivity

In addition, Sullivan expressed concern over productivity. He cautioned that there is a serious financial trickle-down effect for a single lost hour of productivity. “We all have a responsibility to each other to produce.

“There is nothing more noble than a solid day’s work for a day’s pay,” Sullivan said. “You bring respect to yourself, your family, and your union.”

Only when labor does its part, he noted, can SMWIA members expect contractors to aggressively pursue the work.

Wilson agreed: “Union contractors are committed to investing the time and money to win the work, but we need to know we can depend on the Union to supply a qualified team of experts.”

Never lose sight of the fact, Sullivan added, that “what affects *one* of us today, affects *all* of us tomorrow.”

The *Live Up to the Promise* DVD is being distributed to Locals, chapters, JATCs and contractors. Ordering information will be on the Partners in Progress website [www.pinp.org](http://www.pinp.org). —K. Engelmann

# Key Info

## That You Missed

This issue of Partners In Progress comes up short of presenting everything that attendees learned at in Las Vegas. Our 16 pages can't come close to adequately summarizing the information conveyed in 2½ days of meetings.

Here are three additional highlights—on the special owner/lean construction session, information from ITI, and regulations that apply to JATCs.

### Owners, 'lean' & technology

A fascinating session about the future of construction—"Revolutionary Changes in Construction Contracting"—featured representatives from a key construction owner, an A/E firm, and a sheet metal contractor. All spoke about the same project.

For a report from *Engineering News-Record* on the project—which included SMACNA member Dee Cramer, Inc.—see [www.pinp.org/files/smiw/-ENR\\_10\\_10\\_2005\\_p28.pdf](http://www.pinp.org/files/smiw/-ENR_10_10_2005_p28.pdf).

### ITI: Curricula, College Credit

Four speakers contributed a great deal of information on these subjects. We've provided two tables here, giving key pieces of what was conveyed.

Table One provides current curricula and modules that are in development. ITI expects to have all this finished in 2007.

Table Two provides ITI recommendations on college credits for classroom and on-the-job training hours invested by sheet metal industry apprentices.

**Table One**

#### ITI Curriculum Status

##### Current Curricula

Core	400 hrs.
HVAC	458 hrs.
TAB	80 hrs.
Welding	160 hrs.
*S.E.S.	400 hrs.

##### Upcoming Curricula

Architectural	400 hrs.
Roofing	193 hrs.
Detailing	397 hrs.
Industrial	176 hrs.
Soldering	22 hrs.
Mathematics	93 hrs.
Plans & Specs	60 hrs.
Residential	235 hrs.
Foreman	32 hrs.

\*S.E.S. = servicing environmental systems.

### How SarbOx Applies to JATCs

Provisions of Sarbanes-Oxley legislation—which have ensnared many for-profit corporations—apply to nonprofit construction JATCs, according to William K. Ecklund of Felhaber Larson Fenlon & Vogt (Minneapolis).

Two important specifics:

1. "You cannot retaliate against an employee who" blows the whistle on something in your organization, Ecklund said. SarbOx, as it's called, does not require an organization to have a written policy on this, he added—"but you should have one!"
2. Document destruction has become a knotty issue thanks to SarbOx. Ecklund noted that many JATCs keep more documents than they probably need to for longer periods of time than is reasonable. Key advice: Don't destroy anything—until you have a formal, written Document Destruction Policy. ■

**Table Two**

#### ITI's College Credit Recommendation

Course	Classroom Hours	OJT Hours	Total Hours
Old apprentice curriculum	48	8	56
Core curriculum	18	6	24
HVAC	30	6	36
*S.E.S.	26	6	32
TAB	4	4	8
Welding	9	8	17

\*S.E.S. = servicing environmental systems.

# Safety Brings You Home

Does health and safety get in the way of work? Don't let the job come between craftsmen and their families.



Gary Batykefer (top) and Charles Austin of SMOHIT.

**“D**on't be safe because you hear it from me or a contractor or GC or safety director. Be safe for your family,” said Leonard Otero, safety manager for Yearout Mechanical, Inc., in Albuquerque, N.M. “Safety brings you home.”

It's a message in which Otero fervently believes, he told an audience at the Partners Conference. “I started out as one of the least safe people around. I just wanted to get the job done.” After an accident that almost paralyzed one of his workers, Otero realized he couldn't continue down the same path.

“Complacency often sets in, but it's a numbers game. Even if you get away with something 499 times out of 500, that one time is when you lose a finger or an eye or your life,” added Chris Stockwell, vice president of U.S. Sheet Metal in Saginaw, Mich.

“Safety and productivity need to be in line with each other,” Otero claimed. “Union sheet metal workers are damn good craftsmen because they were trained to be that way.

“We have to treat safety the same way.”

One strategy Otero has found effective is to offer training on Saturdays and after work—for the entire family. Talking about safety in terms of both hard hats and bicycle helmets (to craftsmen and their children) gives it more clout, he noted.

“Besides, when you really care about your employees and their families, they are proud to work for you,” Otero added.

## On the job, then home at night

Caring about employees also extends to maintaining their health. SMOHIT—the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust—has released a training program called “Fit for Life” designed to help get this concept across.

It also discusses the importance of sleep and how overall wellness depends on developing healthy attitudes, values, and lifestyles.

“These aren't just issues for individuals. They also affect the job site,” says Charles Austin, SMOHIT's industrial hygienist. “Proper nutrition is part of maintaining a healthy workforce.”

To keep its employees and their families healthy, Local 36 in St. Louis holds health fairs. “It's preventative maintenance,” says David Zimmerman, Local 36 business manager. “Every little thing we do adds up.”

Gary Batykefer, SMOHIT administrator agrees. He saw the positive effects when Local 12 in Pittsburgh ran a health fair for members and their families. It offered health assessments, blood pressure and pulmonary function tests, flu shots at reduced rates, and a booth where retirees could get help filing claims. Services were all voluntary.

“It's not that expensive for you, yet it benefits the whole industry,” he says. “Health and safety keep people on the job and allow them to return to their families at night.”—K. Engelmann

# What They Mean When They Say 'Lean'

**'Lean' construction techniques help the unionized sheet metal industry stand-out in the marketplace.**



GM's Jack Hallman

"Lean construction isn't the future. It's here," said Dick Cramer, president-elect of SMACNA at the 2006 Partners Conference. He was one of several speakers on the topic.

Reducing inventory, eliminating waste, and increasing productivity are all ways to "go Lean." Toyota is one manufacturer that has used Lean techniques for many years. But: *What does it mean for construction?*

"Lean is about providing value to your customers," said Jack Hallman, director of the Manufacturing Construction Management Group for the Worldwide Facilities Group of the General Motors Corp.

"People say 'if the system ain't broke, don't fix it,'" Hallman continued. "I believe the system is broken. We need to move faster and smarter."

Jim Teston, a student at Clemson University, compared large construction jobs using Lean construction techniques to those using standard techniques. He determined that Lean methods increased productivity enough to save 17% of the labor budget, in this case \$1,511,544.

Results like this allow contractors to be more competitive in tight markets, making and winning more bids, which provides opportunities for the unionized sector to increase market share.

## Value, the opposite of waste

"Lean techniques differentiate between 'value' and 'waste.' 'Value' is the opposite of waste. It is what customers are willing to pay for," says Dennis Sowards,



Dennis Sowards spoke at a session on lean production.

coauthor of *Creating the High-Performing Contracting Company: Best Practices for SMACNA Contractors*.

Waste includes goods awaiting processing (e.g., duct work that sits in the yard while installers perform another task); "treasure hunts"—workers searching for material, tools, equipment, or information; and product defects.

"Value-added portions of construction are those that apprentices learn. They account for only about 3% of the total time spent on a job. Productivity gains come when you find ways to reduce non-value-added time," Sowards says.

Cramer uses 3D modeling in his application of Lean techniques. "All of the trades put their drawings directly into a sharable database—instead of rendering them in 2D and then uploading them. We have as-built designs before we start a project."

With such techniques, the engineering and construction team can solve collisions—such as electrical work running through duct work—in the model before these problems show up in the field.

"Since there are no field cuts and no wasted material, we can do the work 15 to 20% faster," Cramer says. "On one job, we installed the HVAC four weeks ahead of schedule, with no rework and virtually no field overtime. Owner change orders were down by about 75%."

"Contractors—and the labor force who works for them—need to build the skills to meet owners' demands for Lean construction techniques," Hallman says. "Those who run Lean will be those who stay in business."

Soward agrees. "Lean is what helps a contractor become a high-performing contractor."—K. Engelmann



Dick Cramer of Dee Cramer Inc.

# Seen And Heard At The Partners Conference

**“We are committed to winning the work—even though sometimes it means risking our businesses.”**

—Keith Wilson, president of SMACNA, in the opening general session.

**“Be willing to say: ‘I’m a Union contractor. I’m proud to be a Union contractor. Here’s why and how I work with the Union.’”**

—Deborah Wyandt, SMACNA’s director of labor relations, at the Partners Conference General Session on ways to recruit contractors

**“If we aren’t careful, we’ll be a union of retirees and not have anyone in the field.”**

—SMWIA General President Michael Sullivan, during his presentation in a session on union mergers

**“Sheet metal workers are knowledge workers.”**

—Dr. Thomas Glavinich, in a session on Continuous Training & Career Opportunities.

**“You can imagine a future in which the mechanical trades work together a lot more closely [than they do today].”**

—Prof. Ronald Seeber, author of a study on union mergers, during a general session.

**“We had as-built designs...before we started the project.”**

—Dick Cramer, president-elect of SMACNA, in session on “Revolutionary Changes in Construction Contracting.”

**“Customers want proof that people working on their buildings are competent.”**

—Kenneth H. Senteney, chairman of TABB’s International Certification Board, in a session on certification.

**“We wadded up the old [training] system and threw it out.”**

—David Norris, co-chairman of ITI, at the session on Continuous Training.

**“You can’t do lean TO employees. You must do it WITH them.”**

—Dennis Sowards on Lean Production Techniques

**“Lean is an operating system. You can’t pick and choose what to implement.”**

—John Hallman of General Motors in session on “Revolutionary Changes in Construction Contracting.”

**“Proper nutrition is part of maintaining a healthy workforce.”**

—Charles Austin, SMOHIT industrial hygienist in the “Fit for Life” session

**“We don’t want people to get into construction because they failed at everything else.”**

—Prof. William F. Maloney, University of Kentucky on “Recruiting Your Most Important Asset”

**“For us, Partnership is a reality. I’m here with several people from the Local Union and six contractors from our area. Five years ago, it was totally different.”**

—Dan Andrews, SMWIA Local No. 36 Training Coordinator

**“‘Good is the enemy of great.’ Nothing improves unless something changes! Otherwise, you are just dreaming.”**

—Dennis Sowards quoting Jim Collins’ bestseller Good to Great on reasons the sheet metal industry should implement Lean production techniques

# Certifications are about Gaining Market Share

“**C**ertifications, written into the specifications, will allow our contractors to compete on an even playing field.”

That sentence from Erik Emblem, executive administrator of the National Energy Management Institute, summed up a Partners In Progress conference session on the subject.

New information conveyed included:

Training materials (study guides) for the new Life Safety Systems Verification and Validation program should be available this summer.

An updated IAQ certification should be available by September (2006).

Also scheduled for release in this year's second half are filtration standards, with Level 1 and Level 2 certifications.

Among the ideas conveyed by the various speakers:

From Kenneth H. Senteney, chairman of the International Certification Board (and CEO of a large Utah

contractor, Superior Air Handling): “Customers want proof that the people working on their building are competent.” That's the reason certifications are important.

From Roy Ringwood, business manager of SMWIA Local Union 105 (Los Angeles): “Certifications can be a verification to the purchasers—that there are standards that we have set, and they are standards that we have met.” Ringwood also noted that JATCs should “train to these standards.”

**'We need to differentiate ourselves from the dark side'**

Cary Norberg of the International Training Institute talked about the progressive nature of the three HVAC certifications—for mechanic, technician, and master mechanic. Confusion about the HVAC mechanic specification was dispelled by Norberg's presentation and in the question-and-answer session.

Emblem's introductory remarks also provided a neat summation for the session. “We need to differentiate ourselves from the dark side,” he said. “We need to establish that we have a level of credentials—that we are about more than hanging duct.” ■



*Kenneth Senteney,  
chairman of the ICB*

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