

Partners **IN** PROGRESS

SMACNA & SMART—Building A Future Together Vol. 10 No. 1

What happens in Vegas...
does not stay in Vegas!



Ask and learn

Joint strategic planning

Diversity skills

Lead within

Own your career



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Partners In Progress

Vol. 10/No. 1

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Partners in Progress is a publication of the Sheet Metal Industry Labor-Management Cooperation Fund.

All contents ©2012 by the Sheet Metal Industry Labor-Management Cooperation Fund, P.O. Box 221211, Chantilly, VA 20153-1211.

For subscriptions and address changes, e-mail editor@pinpmagazine.org

Canada Publications Agreement No. PM40063731



PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

'The Apprentice' Sheet Metal Edition

Perspectives from the industry's up-and-coming

By Cairine Caughill

Unless the organized sheet metal industry wants to be “fired,” its apprentices need not only technical skills, but also leadership aptitude and business knowledge. Typically that means getting them out of their comfort zones, watching, talking with, and listening to peers, journeymen, leaders, and their management partners.

That’s exactly what happened in Las Vegas earlier this year, when apprentices competed in the International Training Center’s International Apprenticeship Contest and participated in the Partners in Progress Conference.

Months later, they are still thinking about and applying some of the lessons learned and looking forward to the 2014 Partners in Progress Conference. “Many good seeds were planted,” says Bryan Hunckley, a third-year apprentice from SMART local 33 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Partnership

As improving technical skills is usually top on apprentices’ lists of things to do, few of those who attended the conference were aware of the extent to which SMACNA and SMART cooperate. They were impressed, however, and eager to strengthen the partnership.

“Coming in as an apprentice, you know you’ve got to go to work and learn the trade, but there’s a clear line between management or the owner and labor,” Hunckley says.

“I’ve realized that we are truly in this together. We make money for management and their making money keeps us working. It’s a symbiotic relationship. We’re not enemies.”

Hunckley believes that interacting with contractors was what really drove the point home. “When you are isolated—just going to work and coming home, it’s easy to forget.”

* The International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) was formed with the merger of the United Transportation Union into the Sheet Metal Workers’ International Association.



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BEE a Better Leader

A how-to guide for developing better leadership skills

By Cairine Caughill

Leadership matters, and it affects employee morale and productivity.

Consider a beehive. According to Karl Birky, a civil engineer and beekeeper, worker bees want to touch the queen every three days so they have her scent and know who they are. It's a matter of survival.

"When you have (or are) an ineffective leader, most things just don't get done," says Vince Alvarado, business manager and financial secretary treasurer for SMART local 49 in New Mexico. "Anything that is completed is rarely done properly."

It's altogether different with a good leader, says Louie Petricca, business manager and financial secretary for SMART

local 285 in Ontario, Canada. "Good leaders have vision, the ability to inspire those around them to move forward, and the courage to follow through."

With today's tough competition, demanding customers, and continuing lackluster economy, it's a great time to examine leadership styles and make changes where there's room for improvement.

The Peter Principle

We've all heard stories about bad bosses; and many of us have experienced the frustration of trying to work with them. De-

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© Mary Anne Lloyd/Laughing Stock

continued from page 3

spite our best intentions, some of those stories may be about us.

Jake Appelman, a member of FMI's Leadership and Organizational Development Group, describes bad bosses as disorganized and unable to control their emotions when stressed. "Such bosses hoard information, micromanage employees, fail to listen or take responsibility for their mistakes, refuse to recognize employee efforts, and even take credit for others' work."

On the other hand, Appelman says, good bosses have and share knowledge. "They listen, lead by example, are honest, treat subordinates as equals, recognize employee contributions, give employees the freedom to make mistakes when learning, make solid decisions, and truly lead their people. Furthermore, they communicate effectively with all types of people and don't let small details get in the way of achieving their goals."

Is it possible to move from the first category to the second? Are people simply born leaders or can leadership skills be learned?

Alvarado believes the answer to that question is that some people are born with leadership skills. Those who aren't can learn leadership skills—when they have access to the proper mentor.

Petricca is on the same page. He believes that the majority of leadership skills can be learned, "but you need to have a God-given sense of logic."

Mark Mastropasqua of SMART local 40 says, "Some people understand leadership at a very young age, even if they don't recognize it. You can learn and develop it."

Self Leadership

According to FMI, those who effectively lead themselves are the best leaders of others. Consequentially, only organizations that cultivate self leadership skills in their leaders can succeed in today's competitive marketplace.

What is self leadership, and what shapes leadership style? According to Appelman, everyone leads based on their worldview, which is shaped by life experiences, parents, and teachers.

"Our worldview determines our values and beliefs that, in turn, influence our behavior and skills. We can't change while holding onto our worldviews, but to change them requires gaining powerful insight into things that aren't working."

One way to assess worldview is to fill in the following blanks:

- When no one else is watching, people _____.
- People are _____.

- I have _____% control of my life.

Are the words in those blanks negative or positive? "The assumptions we make about how the world works show up in our values, attitudes, and our work," Appelman says. "What you believe people will do reflects your behavior toward them, which frames your leadership style."

He says that someone who believes his employees will look for ways to take advantage of others will behave in certain ways with them. "Perhaps you'll be unwilling to talk about your own weaknesses, won't delegate important tasks, will not leave employees unsupervised, and check employees' work carefully."

On the other hand, someone who believes people are hardworking and productive, will be more likely to notice employees' achievements, listen to their suggestions, give them additional responsibilities, and let them work more independently.

"We must keep in mind that all individuals have their own worldview. We can't change others' behaviors and skills while their worldviews remain the same. Long-term change requires a change in their worldview, and someone only changes their worldview when they perceive a need," Appelman says.

It's difficult to motivate others to make a change. "You have to make them want to adopt your agenda," Mastropasqua says.

Petricca agrees that it's a challenge to convince people and get the message through to them at their level.

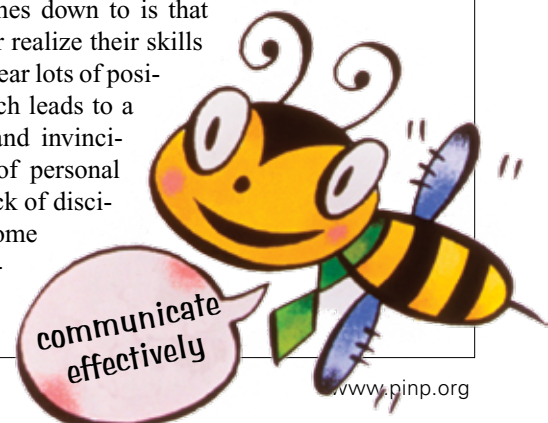
According to Appelman, though, good leaders help individuals see the need to change based on their interactions. "As worldviews evolve, personal values and attitudes can change, which in turn prompts change in behaviors and skills."

But what happens when it's the leader who needs to do the changing? Few leaders recognize problems with their worldviews or their leadership skills if their subordinates are good at their jobs. "You may be getting positive results not because of your leadership, but in spite of it," Petricca says. "The only way a bad leader can get positive results is if he is charismatic and has the knowledge to hire the right people."

Mastropasqua agrees. "Bad leaders can get positive results only if they get lucky."

According to FMI, the higher a person's position, the less willing he or she is to listen to criticism. Furthermore, people are generally unwilling to directly criticize their superiors for fear of reprisal.

What this comes down to is that many leaders never realize their skills are lacking. They hear lots of positive feedback, which leads to a feeling of power and invincibility and a lack of personal discipline. Such lack of discipline has led to some spectacular scandals by those in





high-profile and high-powered positions.

One leader who was never plagued by lack of discipline was Mahatma Gandhi. His secretary, Mahadev Desai, said: “What Gandhi thinks, what he feels, what he says,

and what he does are all the same. He does not need notes... You and I, we think one thing, feel another, say a third, and do a fourth, so we need notes and files to keep track.”

It all comes down to character. According to Appelman, a leader’s character is based on two factors:

- Intent—fundamental motive or agenda, and
- Integrity—honesty and consistency in values beliefs and behaviors.

“People notice the choices we make day after day, and the little decisions we make shape our character. Our actions reveal our character, whether good or bad,” he says. “The trust we build up with our employees grows slowly over time and can be easily degraded by a single bad choice. It’s difficult to effectively lead people who don’t respect us.”

Another key aspect of leadership is accountability. Appelman says real leaders recognize their responsibility for the successes and failures that happen under their watch. “Leaders look for solutions.”

On the other end of the spectrum is the “victim” personality—someone who always has an excuse and someone else to blame. “Victims wait for someone else to solve problems,” Appelman adds.

He believes that the best leaders

- develop talent,
- set direction,
- think strategically,
- align resources,
- motivate and inspire,
- focus on others,
- execute and follow through, and
- lead within.

“Developing a more effective leadership style can be overwhelming, so don’t try to do everything at once. Choose one to three focus areas and work on them. Once you’ve made progress in those areas, choose new ones,” Appelman concludes. ■

Caughill is a freelance writer based in Ontario, Canada. Jake Appelman, consultant with FMI’s Center for Strategic Leadership, offered ideas on Leading Within: Life Skills for Getting Exceptional Results at Work at the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference. To download his presentation, visit the Partners in Progress Web site at pinp.org and select 2012 PinP Conference and Conference Presentations.

4 Leadership Lessons: The Wisdom of Bees

When talking about wisdom, bees often come up. Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius and Emerson all spoke about bees. And for good reason. They have a lot to teach us. Beekeeper, management consultant and professor Michael O’Malley has extracted 25 lessons for leaders in *The Wisdom of Bees*. Here are four:

• **Protect the Future.** Bees don’t focus exclusively on the most productive flower patches at any given time, and for good reason. Conditions change rapidly for bees and they can ill afford wide swings in pollen and nectar intake....When a lucrative vein of nectar is discovered, the entire colony doesn’t rush off to mine it no matter how enriching the short-term benefits. The colony has internalized a very important natural rule: Someday the nectar in that location will stop flowing and they need to be prepared to rapidly reallocate resources to other productive sites. The best way to ensure that there will be a short run is to focus on the long run.

• **Distribute Authority.** With many thousands of employed workers, the queen couldn’t possibly direct all of the actions in the field from her command post....While the queen is the generic heart and soul of the hive, she is by no means the only leader....Those closest to the information should make the relevant decision. Decentralization is one of the hallmarks of the honeybee colony. Foraging decisions, for example, are made by the foragers. If you are thinking of shifting greater power away from the organizational core and into the field, however, consider: 1) bees have clear objectives; 2) they are excellent communicators; and 3) they are reliable workers that are very good at what they do.

• **Keep Your Balance.** One of the principle ways that bees moderate extreme behaviors is through genetic diversity....This genetic diversity produces bees within the same hives that are differentially sensitive to environmental conditions....Managers should strive to hire capable people who, as a group, provide the team with a range of perspectives and worldviews. Other-wise organizations can become closed societies.

• **Prepare For Leadership Changes.** A colony headed by a high-quality queen has a more robust worker population and greater honey yield. It matters a great deal who is at the top. Consequently, it is not surprising that the workers in the hive pay close attention to the queen’s ability to propagate and are sensitive to declines in her performance. The queen’s ability to lead is determined ultimately by the minions, a truth unfortunately lost in many organizations. Leadership depends on the consent of the people to follow....If the honeybee teaches us anything, it is that organizations cannot survive without a leader and, therefore, the colony prevents costly voids in leadership by planning for successors in advance of the obvious need.

Excerpted from a Leadership Now Leading Blog entry by Michael McKinney. The blog is available at leadershipnow.com. For more information on The Wisdom of Bees, visit thewisdomofbees.com.



W

hat does it take to:

- block a Kobe Bryant shot,
- intercept a Tom Brady pass,
- cross the checkered flag ahead of Jeff

Gordon,

- get a slapper past Jonathan Quick,
- prepare the signatory sheet metal industry in Central

Valley for recession?

A plan and perfect timing.

In September 2007, Central Valley, California sheet metal contractors attended a SMACNA informational program featuring successful St. Louis contractor Butch Welsch.

Welsch had successfully expanded into the service/retrofit residential and light commercial market. He shared his business plan, and the Central Valley contractors liked what they heard.

Business was booming at the time, and the economic downturn hadn't started. It turns out the timing was perfect.

Marketing

Working with the Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force, the group hired a professional facilitator to conduct a two-day strategy meeting. They developed a three-prong approach for marketing: raise awareness, educate, and engage.

"Raising awareness and educating go hand in hand," says Matthew Smith, president of Smith Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc. "We're trying to increase consciousness that HVAC performance matters not only for comfort, but also for indoor air quality..."

He says education also extends to talking about indoor air quality with relation to allergens and carbon monoxide. "In the process, we're trying to promote union contractors. We talk about getting quality instead of just the cheapest job.

"We want people to understand that there're getting better value over the long-term if they obtain the best performing job, the most efficient job," Smith adds.

BY CAIRINE CAUGHILL

Recently, he could see that the marketing efforts were paying off, as the local JATC was featured on ABC News 10.

Of course, all of the great publicity in the world doesn't matter if potential customers don't "engage." The third prong of the marketing approach was the call to action—trying to get customers to contact HVAC Expertise contractors via individual contractors' websites and the HVAC Expertise Central Valley site at hvacexpertisecentralvalley.com.

These websites promote maintenance (both seasonal and ongoing), offer tips, and are a springboard for additional marketing efforts, including one-on-one consultations, seasonal mailings, and a monthly newsletter.

Other efforts to raise awareness, educate, and engage have included

- using HVAC Expertise logos on trucks, literature, and proposals;
- holding an HVAC Expertise promotional night at a local team's professional minor league baseball game;
- exhibiting at trade shows;
- getting involved with legislative efforts;
- promoting career technical education;
- supporting local high schools' career technical education program; and
- creating a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, and LinkedIn.

"Above all," says J.H. Simpson Company General Manager Michael Lawson, "we stay proactive with our customers, making sure we are always in front of them with postcards or just picking up the phone and calling them."

Marketing professionals have been an integral part of the market expansion effort. Smith considers the expense an investment in the future. "They've been able to keep us on track and enhance our ideas. I think that, on our own, we could have made a lot of mistakes that would have dampened our success."

© Shutterstock

Expansion

Marketing was not, however, the entire game plan for expansion into service work and survival during the lean years.

Training more craftspersons to do the work in the new market niche was fundamental. “We began immediately working with our local JATC to build up our service training program,” says Smith. It turned into a major overhaul of the program.

“As our apprentices start, we try to figure out which ones have the ability and the personality and so forth, and we work with them and train them as they go through their five-year apprenticeship program,” Smith says.

Service work isn’t interchangeable for commercial or industrial work, Lawson points out. “It’s a lot more hands-on for the technician.”

He says that while a commercial technician could be called out to a job site to fix a problem, that same technician wouldn’t necessarily interact with the owner or manager or be responsible for preparing an estimate or invoice.

“When a residential guy goes out to a home and finds that repairs are needed, he or she writes up a proposal for the customers, presents it to them, and goes over it with them. These technicians must be very personable and someone the customer can trust,” Lawson says.

The program has become so popular that there are more service apprentices than apprentices in the traditional building trades. “It shows the demand that was out there,” Lawson adds.

The Result

“Contractors are used to responding to changing market conditions but focusing on this type of work wasn’t easy, especially during such difficult economic times,” Smith remembers.

Indeed, not every contractor was interested in entering the service market at first, but along the way, many have changed their minds. One in Modesto finally came around when the economy collapsed.

“They used the resources we provided and formed a relationship with a local utility company, replacing equipment on 450-500 homes throughout the northern California area,” Smith recalls. “It was a significant contract and a significant amount of money. Even with the up-front expenses to get involved, it turned out to be a very positive experience.”

Many contractors readily admit that the new service portion of the business has kept them afloat during the downturn. “We’ve seen little work going on in traditional building trades, but service has really held its own in terms of volume and profit,” Smith says. “We’re thriving now because we were willing to look for solutions even before there was an obvious problem,” he concludes. ■

Caughill is a freelance writer based in Ontario, Canada.

TEAM PLAYER

J.H. SIMPSON COMPANY

Though moving into the service/retrofit residential and light commercial market seemed like the right thing for J.H. Simpson Company to do, change is always difficult.

According to General Manager Michael Lawson, the biggest challenges have been related to “reaching out to new customers, competing with the non union shops, and making sure we price ourselves correctly and competitively for the new business.”

Implementing the new marketing program hasn’t been as difficult. “We dove right in, and we’re seeing results,” Lawson says. “It has made a big difference with the brand recognition, strategic development, implementation, and sales flow.”

Preparing to open a service department took a little longer—and is not done yet. “We’re always fine-tuning it, looking at different things, ways to make it all run smoother,” Lawson says. When J.H. Simpson’s service department opened three years ago, there were only four techs. Now there are 11.

Those techs had to learn to sell residential maintenance contracts, build a database of customers, and market to those customers, staying in front of them with postcards and newsletters. They also had to be computer savvy enough to run Blackberries with printers in their trucks.

Lawson admits to being surprised by the amount of money his company has been able to earn in the service market and to the response of staff and customers.

Lawson’s advice to contractors wanting to get into the residential/light commercial service and retrofit market is simple: “The big thing is your staff—your service manager and having the correct individuals to start up the department and get it organized.”

He says there are a lot of logistics to consider. “It’s not like you just go buy a van and start doing service. For instance, J.H. Simpson’s residential techs wear booties in homes, something they rarely have to do on a commercial site, and they always set their tool bags on a towel instead of the carpet.

“We also changed our uniforms to look more clean-cut and always make sure our service trucks are presentable—washed and clean upon arrival,” Lawson says. “All the little things matter when dealing with residential customers.”

Above all, Lawson says, contractors and their union partners must be willing to undergo a transformation and to study the unique requirements of whatever market they decide to jump into.

PIP CONFERENCE 2012

A few months ago members of the organized sheet metal industry gathered in Las Vegas for several days of creative collaboration. It was a time for labor and management to come together, share ideas, and find resourceful approaches to challenges. Looking back, did what happened in Vegas stay in Vegas? Or are we making strides leading from within, creating marketing success stories, working together politically, and building business opportunities through strengthening our core and entering new markets? This and future issues expand upon the themes at the conference to provide you with ideas, how-to guides, and best practices to build upon locally.





WE MEAN BUSINESS
2012 PHOENIX & PHOENIX CONFERENCE
MARCH 13-15, 2012 PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER

BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS IN ENTERING NEW MARKETS



WE MEAN BUSINESS
2012 INTERNATIONAL SHEET METAL CONTEST
AWARDS BANQUET



“With the same goal in mind, both sides can win and everyone benefits.”

SMART general president Joe Nigro when talking about labor-management cooperation and partnership.

“Your best salesmen are your employees.”

John E. Sickle, Jr., president of Duct Fabricators Inc., in Ohio, talking about how to expand in the fire and life safety market.

Heard out and about...

“The key to good customer service is to NOT know your customer. The more you don't know, the more you ask and learn.”

Steven Gaffney, communications expert.

“I was tired of working jobs. I wanted a career.”

SMART local 26 apprentice Nathan Schwindt on why he got into the industry.

“We have to be more than certified. We need to be qualified to do the job.”

Brandon Aragon, 4th year apprentice with SMART local 88.

Partners **IN** PROGRESS

READERSHIP SURVEY

Please answer the following 20 questions to help us better serve you. Copy and mail the completed questionnaire to *Partners in Progress Magazine*, SMLMCF, PO Box 221211, Chantilly, VA 20153-1211 **or answer the questions online at pinp.org/survey**. Include your name and contact information for a chance to win an iPad.



1. How do you get access to *Partners in Progress* magazine?

- Don't read it
 - Read online
 - Read my own copy
 - Read a copy obtained from someone else
 - Other (*please explain*)
-

2. Why do you read *Partners in Progress* magazine? (check all that apply)

- Learn about best practices for market expansion
 - Learn about best practices for labor-management cooperation
 - Learn about upcoming events
 - Learn about SMACNA and SMART programs
 - Other (*please explain*)
-

3. How would you prefer to receive *Partners in Progress* magazine?

- A printed copy mailed to me.
 - On the Web via internet browser (e.g., after clicking through to it via a link in my e-mail)
 - In my e-mail (e.g., via an Adobe Acrobat file e-mailed to me)
 - On my mobile device (e.g., iPad or Android tablet)
 - Other (*please explain*)
-

4. Identify an article or topic from an issue of *Partners in Progress* that you recall finding useful or interesting.

5. What actions have you taken as a result of reading *Partners in Progress* magazine? (check all that apply)

- Attended a Partners in Progress Conference
 - Implemented or employed a local labor-management cooperation trust/committee
 - Contacted a labor/management partner
 - Expanded into a new market sector
 - Started a public relations/marketing program
 - Discussed or forwarded an article or issue
 - Saved an article or issue
 - Started using the Expertise Branding Program
 - Held a conference or meeting
 - Changed training curriculum
 - Ordered a resource (such as the Sheet Metal Photo Library or Expertise ads)
 - No action taken or other action (*please explain*)
-

6. What article topics would you like the magazine to cover?

7. What do you like most about *Partners in Progress* magazine?

8. What do you like least about *Partners in Progress* magazine?

9. What changes or improvements to *Partners in Progress* magazine would you like to suggest?

10. Would you use a How To Guide and Case Studies of best practices for market expansion?

- Yes
- No

Why or why not?

11. Did you attend the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference?

- Yes
- No

Why or why not?

12. What was your primary source of information about the 2012 Partners in Progress Conference?

- I didn't know about it
- Partners in Progress Web site
- Partners in Progress* magazine
- SMART/SMWIA Publications or Web site
- SMACNA Publications or Web site
- Other (please explain)

13. Would you be interested in attending the 2014 Partners in Progress Conference?

- Yes
- No

Why or why not?

14. What is your primary source of information about the Expertise branding program?

- I don't know about it.
- Partners in Progress Web site
- Partners in Progress conference
- Partners in Progress* magazine
- Other (please explain)

15. Where did you learn about the Sheet Metal Network?

- I don't know about it.
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Partners in Progress Web site
- Partners in Progress conference
- Partners in Progress* magazine
- Other (please explain)

16. Mark each of the Web sites you have visited:

	Within past 3 months?	Ever?
Partners in Progress (pinp.org)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HVAC Expertise (hvacexpertise.com)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Architectural Expertise (asm-expertise.com)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industrial Expertise (industrialexpertise.com)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sheet Metal Network (sheetmetalnetwork.org)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SMWIA/SMART (smwia.org)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SMACNA (smacna.org)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International Training Institute (sheetmetal-iti.org)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust (smohit.org)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. What best describes your relationship to the industry:

- Apprentice
- Journey person
- Foreperson
- Project manager
- Owner/President
- Other management
- JATC Instructor
- SMACNA Staff
- SMART Staff
- Retired
- Other (*explain*) _____

18. What is your age?

- Under 25
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 49
- 50 to 64
- 65 and older

19. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female



**iPAD
DRAWING**

To enter the drawing to win an Apple iPad, include the following information with your submission via mail or online at pinp.org/survey

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

“Everyone is a recruiter.”

Larry Lawrence, regional field representative/
instructional development specialist, ITI,
in the session *Career Opportunities for Apprentices*.

*“Can you put your finger on what
you have done to effect change?”*

Joe Sellers, SMART general secretary-treasurer.

“Don’t be afraid of going into new markets.”

Joe Toso, president of Tri-metal Fabricators when discussing how to prosper in difficult economic times.

Heard on the floor...

*“If you are going to get involved in this business,
you have to take it very seriously. Be all the way in.
If you are going to do it halfway, don’t bother.”*

Charles “Chuck” Holt, NEMI director of Research & Education, about getting into the fire and life safety market.

“Everybody can knock tin. What’s your hidden value?”

participant in the *West Regional Break-out Session*.

*“If you did not like the recession,
you will hate the recovery.”*

Thomas C Schleifer, author and turn-around expert on how
margins appear unlikely to bounce back even after the market
does and reporting that more companies fail on the upswing
than the downswing.

MARKET

Will it be
“happy trails”
or a
“massacre?”

By Ruth E. Thaler-Carter

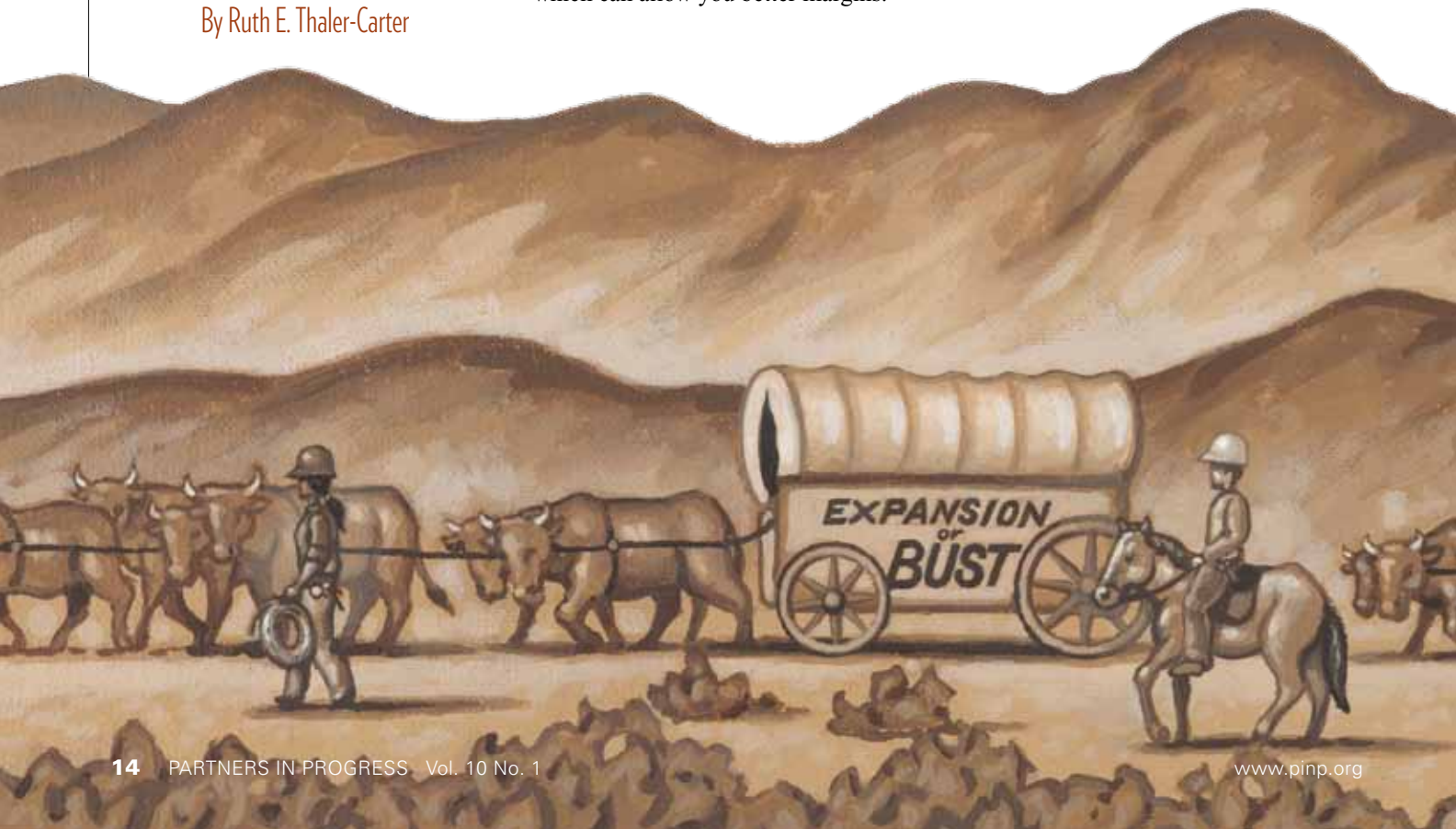
Horace Greeley once famously said, “Go west, young man!” His advice—at least in terms of willingness to expand into new geographical locations and market segments—is looking better and better.

Rewards for entering new markets can be substantial. “Being first into a market has its advantages,” says Thomas Schleifer, author of the *Construction Contractors’ Survival Guide* and a turnaround expert for companies in financial distress. “With new types of work, competition is limited and buyers don’t have historic information about costs, which can allow you better margins.”

Unfortunately, expansion does not always mean “sunny weather”. “Entering new markets requires more effort and more risk than business owners often realize,” Schleifer says. “It shouldn’t be attempted lightly.”

His biggest concern is that “risk is certain in an up market and even more so in a down market. That means caution is not just prudent, it is necessary.”

Risks can be managed, but only if they are understood in advance. Schleifer says that expanding in size, taking on larger projects, and going after projects



X P A N S I O N

of different kinds or in different territories are activities that are the most likely to cause a business to fail.

Risk arises from inexperience, especially when it comes to estimating a new type of job in a new place with new personnel. “Doing what you’ve done before reduces risk,” Schleifer says. Another risk reduction strategy is to work with a local union that has been providing the training and certification for the new type of work.

Growth and change for the sake of “growth” and “change” are not worth it. “These activities stress an organization. Under stress, a weak component can become a fatal component,” Schleifer says.

Before expanding into a new market, Schleifer suggests answering a few questions:

- Is the business well-established, with financial stability and staying power?
- Is capacity—personnel, equipment, financing, technology—readily available?
- Is flexible, trainable supervision available?
- Are cooperative union relationships in place?
- Does management and labor understand the competition?

Were the answers “yes”? If so, then he advises a careful evaluation of the potential of the new opportunity:

- Is there really a demand?
 - What is the size of the new market?
 - Do the potential customers genuinely need the service(s)?
 - Can the potential customer afford it?
 - Is there an ongoing demand?
 - Has the technology been tested?
- Were the answers “yes”? If so, then it’s time to start assessing the other risks:
- Has productivity been adequately tested?
 - How reliable are estimates likely to be when no historic performance information is available?
 - How limited is your labor force’s experience with the work or area?

continued on page 16



Illustration by Eric Westbrook

continued from page 15

- How limited is your field supervision's familiarity with the work or area?
- Do you thoroughly understand customer expectations?
- What are the permitting and inspection capabilities?
- Is any SMART and SMACNA research available on the market?
- Have training initiatives and jointly negotiated national specialty agreements been developed?

Don't overlook the key factors associated with success or failure of market expansion efforts:

- The size of a project is critical to its success or failure.

graphic area was a mixed blessing for Partlan-Labadie Sheet Metal Company, Oak Park, Mich., near Detroit. "We were riding an up-and-down roller coaster," Vice President Jeff Walters says of that experience.

Economic hardships of the past five years forced Partlan-Labadie to travel outside the Detroit region to find new clients and projects.

This particular market expansion effort didn't require performing any new type of work, but rather establishing a presence in a new location on a larger contract than normal.

"We previously had had success with smaller jobs in locations eight to 10 hours away, but this one was 12

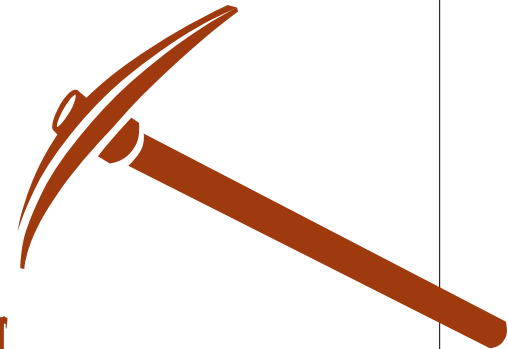
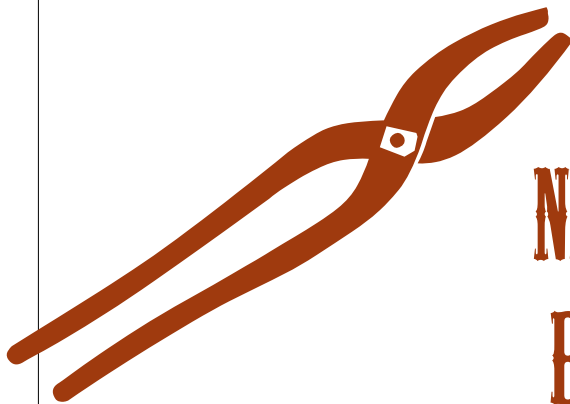
a year of rebuilding to repair the damage. We called the recovery process our 'hangover year.'"

Problems were compounded by the lack of personal interaction with clients back home. "Technology is convenient, but it's not the same as 'face time'."

Walters thought the electronic environment was sufficient, but, he says, it was the problem. "I was sending e-mail and attaching proposals, but it was not enough. Personal contact still means a lot."

Partlan-Labadie ended up spending the next year restoring relations with core clients. "It was almost like starting all over again in our backyard,

REWARDS FOR ENTERING NEW MARKET CAN BE SUBSTANTIAL.



- Location of the project really matters; distance affects expenses and whether current employees can be used in the new market versus needing to hire locally in that market.
- Selection of appropriate personnel is essential.
- Top management oversight is necessary, regardless of where the new project or client is located.
- One success is not conclusive.
- There will be entry costs.

Where the rubber meets the wagon trail

Taking on a huge project in a new geo-

hours away," Walters says. "That made a difference—no one could go back and forth regularly from home to the new location. Accommodating the need to stay in the new area added to the costs of the project."

Partlan-Labadie ended up sending 90% of its key personnel to that new location. "It meant there were not enough people to handle anything but the most basic work back home. It was a mistake that caused us to lose touch with our local market," Walters recalls.

Management hadn't considered the impact of that neglect. "We had a lot of confidence—or ego—going in and were humbled by what occurred. It took

even though we've been around for 123 years," Walters says.

"If you don't watch out, when you reach out to an area where you haven't been working before and bite off more than you can chew, it can be a disaster."

In the end, the expansion was worthwhile. Partlan-Labadie survived the effort and even made a small profit on the project. Though, Walters says, he would do things differently now if a similar opportunity became available.

"We need to be able to manage the job without depleting our resources... instead, we would team with someone located nearer the work site or at least hire new staff and use local support staff."

Yippie ki-yay

Allied Ventilation, based in Warren, Mich., had a much smoother expansion into new markets. “We took it in small bites,” says Vice President Nick Seraphinoff, Jr. It was a strategy consistent with Schleifer’s advice about reducing risk.

“We asked our customers where they needed us to be, and—within limits—we went there,” Seraphinoff says.

He didn’t worry about the smaller jobs. For larger jobs that did not promise to be worth the added risk, Allied either took a pass or budgeted so that the company would be covered for all contingencies, which, according to Seraphinoff, usually meant losing the work.

It was a technique that gave the company ongoing visibility while limiting its exposure to unmanageable risk. “We have to survive in the current economy when going after new markets,” Seraphinoff cautions.

For Seraphinoff, the decision about bidding a project is based on whether or not it fits Allied Ventilation’s expertise and falls within a certain volume in terms of size. “If it meets all of our criteria, I don’t care where the job is,” he adds, “but I want to make sure that no single job will devastate our resources.”

His philosophy is working well, keeping Seraphinoff with backlog of projects in nine different states. (In Seraphinoff’s book, “backlog” is a good thing: “Backlog is our lifeblood!” he says.)

He never takes it for granted that there is enough work both underway and coming up. “My dad taught me that you’re only as good as your last job, so you always have to be watching out for the next one,” he says.

“By limiting risk and maintaining good customer relations, we aren’t living paycheck-to-paycheck or job-to-job, and I can say we’re a success.” ■

Ruth E. Thaler-Carter (www.writerruth.com) is a freelance writer/editor based in Rochester, NY. She has written for the St. Louis Labor Tribune newspaper and is a founding member of the National Writers Union.



WANTED

National specialty agreements, training initiatives, and emerging market research are just some of the ways that SMART and SMACNA have for years encouraged contractors and local unions to position themselves to take advantage of emerging and growth markets.

Expansion into these markets in some cases is necessary for survival and in many cases is a clear means of growing the unionized sheet metal industry. “Signatory contractors and their labor partners must get more aggressive about going after new business opportunities,” says Michigan SMART local 80 Treasurer/Financial Secretary Mark Saba.

However, exploring and entering new markets is an activity that requires more effort and encompasses far greater risk than is generally appreciated. It’s vital to define the issues and recognize and manage the risks BEFORE making any trek into new territory.





IMHO:

Facts vs. Imagination

A simple shift in understanding can positively affect the bottom line and more.

By Steven Gaffney

If only I had known.

It's a terrible thought most of us have at one point—usually when we discover a big problem that started out small.

Good news is that most problems really do start out small.

Better news is that a simple shift in understanding will empower you and those in your organization to improve communication and mend small, lurking problems before they disrupt your work. That shift in understanding can ultimately net great bottom-line results.

I was on my way to a speaking engagement recently and carried on the usual brief introductory conversation with the person seated next to me on the plane.

Since I had an extra copy of my book *Just Be Honest* (which includes how to handle “If only I had known” situations), I gave it to him before taking a nap.

When I awoke, he told me he wished he had read the book sooner, as he was preparing to announce some major layoffs at his company.

When I asked how this related to my book, he explained

how his company had just lost a major re-compete with a long-standing client. The competitor's proposal reflected what the client really wanted. The losing proposal had what the incumbent “thought” the long-time client was looking for, based on the prior working relationship.

The result? A lost contract, lost jobs, and a major loss in revenue.

This story illustrates a powerful truth we can harness to positively impact our personal and professional lives.

How often do people operate and make decisions as if their opinions are facts?

The trouble is, according to our research based on almost two decades of conducting seminars, we are typically between 50% and 80% wrong on a daily basis. Hard to believe, but we tend to remember the times we are correct and forget the times we are not. That means we are wrong more often than we are right.

Think about it. Have you seen missed opportunities because someone believes they know what their customer wants, rather than finding out what that customer actually wants?

Or have you seen project execution go awry because goals were based on assumptions rather than facts and data points?

It's a simple problem to understand, but not so simple to fix—and it's easy to blame other people.

For example, do you think of yourself as open-minded? How about those around you? Answers to a couple of questions can help gauge your open-mindedness:

- How long can you listen to a talk show host who represents views with which you disagree before you change the station?

- When was the last time you had a discussion with someone with whom you disagreed and came away from the conversation converted to their viewpoint?

Being open-minded is much more challenging than we like to admit.

Start by understanding the difference between what can be “noticed” (the facts of a situation) and what we “imagine” (our opinions, thoughts, evaluations, conclusions). This may sound simple—and it is—but think how often people operate and make decisions as if their opinions are fact, or as if what they “imagine” is correct instead of discovering the truth.

Once we develop a conclusion, we look for evidence to support it and overlook facts inconsistent with our opinions and conclusions. The misdiagnosis becomes exacerbated when the people with whom we interact have different agendas, goals, needs, and backgrounds.

Fully understanding the difference between “notice” and “imagine” and that imagination is often wrong can produce major breakthroughs.

Why? When we understand we could be wrong, we ask more questions. The more questions we ask, the more likely we are to discover the underlying facts. The more facts we discover, the better the quality of our decisions. The better the quality of our decisions, the better the quality of our professional lives.

The man I met on the plane highlights this point. He recognized the “notice vs. imagine” confusion was what had happened with his former client. He went on to tell me that if he had known about this he would have been able to save jobs and revenue—and avoid a lot of stress.

Notice vs. imagine provides an excellent reason to check in with others and ask questions. It reminds us to ask for feedback and information rather than passively waiting for others to provide it.

I heard from a manager at a large corporation who had been told to fire an employee who was performing poorly. He decided to ask the person what was going on. It turned out this person's son had just undergone open-heart surgery.

The employee had never said anything to his boss because he preferred not to discuss his personal life. Clearly, the facts surrounding this employee's situation did not resemble what the boss had imagined.

It is critical to remember that even though employees may not ask for help, you can always talk to them.

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Taking It Home

By Cairine Caughill

“Notice vs. Imagination” isn't a theoretical strategy for improving communication, it was something to take home from Las Vegas and apply. The results?

- Greg Dudeck, manager at Dudeck Roofing and Sheet Metal, Inc., says he instantly recognized ways he could improve his own communication strategies. “Sometimes I jump to conclusions when I am on a job site or going through the shop.”

He says he is trying harder to explain himself more thoroughly and ask for feedback. “It is hard to change. After 32 years of working with people I am pretty set in my ways, but I think my efforts are appreciated.”

- Brad Matulevich, a third-year apprentice from Washington, D.C., has become more aware of the importance of honest communication. “If you don't tell people what you want, you don't get it,” he says.

“People do a lot of imagining. It's easy to go into a situation with your own beliefs and not allow anyone to alter them, regardless of how productive the changes could be.”

- Joe Toso, president of Tri-Metal Fabricators in British Columbia, agrees it can be tough to keep an open mind. “Sometimes we hide in our own little environment and don't find out what's going on out there.”

He thinks honest two-way communication makes a big difference. “It's useful to REALLY listen to other people and be willing to implement their good ideas, not just think you have all of the answers yourself.”

- Bryan Hunckley, a third-year apprentice from Cleveland, says putting Gaffney's ideas into practice has been challenging. “It's easy to revert to old ways. We have to work together and keep the fire under our feet.”

Caughill is a freelance writer based in Ontario, Canada.

Order a CD on Notice vs. Imagination from stevengaffney.com/success-store. Mention Partners in Progress for a 20% discount.



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This concept can be applied to other areas of life. The following story is from one of my seminar participants:

“A while back, my husband and I ordered pizza. After 45 minutes we called to find out when we could expect delivery. We called again after an hour and finally, after an hour and fifteen minutes, we called and cancelled our order.

“As we were walking out the door to go grab a bite, our pizza delivery lady showed up with our pizza. My husband and I told her that we had cancelled our order and now no longer wanted the pizza. She apologized for being late and told us we could have the pizza for free. We told her, ‘No, thanks. We decided to go out to eat.’

“All of a sudden she started to cry. ‘My father died last week and today is the first time I’ve really felt that he’s gone,’ she said. She couldn’t stop crying while she told us how she kept getting lost in our neighborhood all night even though she delivers pizza there all the time.

“She said the people in the last home she delivered to yelled at her for being late, and she felt terrible about that, too. I threw my arms around her and hugged her tightly. My husband stepped up and did the same. We paid for the pizza and invited her in to have dinner with us.

“A couple of weeks later, there was a knock on the door and there stood Vicky the pizza lady. She told us she wanted to buy us a gift, but there was no gift that could ever express the appreciation she felt for our kindness that night. Instead, she told us, when she drives by our home she sends good wishes our way.

“One night my husband and I were driving home, and we happened to be behind Vicky. I’m sure she didn’t know we were there. When we turned onto our street, we watched her drive by and wave toward our home, throwing good wishes our way.

“Vicky gave us an immeasurable gift...she gave us an unforgettable life lesson.”

It is easy to make assumptions and draw faulty conclusions based on a lack of information. Maybe someone who is not returning our calls is not trying to be disrespectful. Rather, it is possible he didn’t receive the messages because he was out of town and did not change his voice mail accordingly.

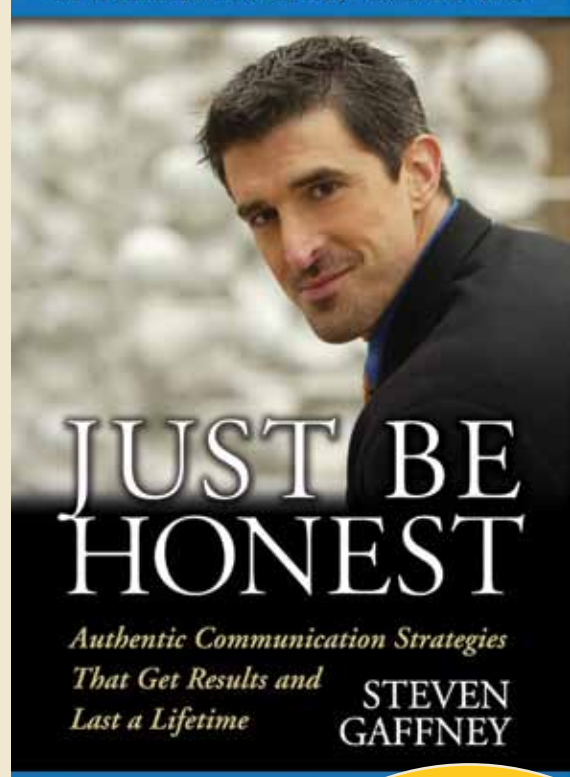
Maybe she did receive our messages but was embarrassed to call and let us know she is behind schedule. Or maybe he did not do what he said he would do, and by not calling he is avoiding the anticipated conflict.

Maybe when someone snaps at us, it has nothing to do with us. Maybe instead she is having a problem at home (e.g., an elderly parent is sick or a child is not doing well in school). Maybe he is under stress or feeling extreme pressure over work issues.

I am not making a judgment about the behavior being right or wrong; I am saying things are not always as they appear.

Understanding the difference between “noticing” and “imagining” enables us to be open-minded and get the information we need.

From the creator of the life-changing Honest Communication Results System™ and “The Fish Isn’t Sick... The Water’s Dirty”™ communication seminar.



Imagine a workplace and home life where everyone understands they might be wrong—or is at least in need of more information.

People would be more likely to check in before making decisions or drawing conclusions. They would be more likely to give others the benefit of the doubt.

The outcome would be open lines of communication, less defensiveness, more appropriate expectations, greater collaboration and teamwork, improved sales, and better-executed programs. Organizations would be more efficient and more profitable.

I’ve seen all of these things happen in real life. In my honest opinion, it’s possible to make them happen in yours. ■

Gaffney, one of the keynote speakers at this year’s Partners in Progress Conference, is a leading expert on honest, interpersonal communication, influence and leadership and has authored several books. Visit stevengaffney.com to find out more about Gaffney’s seminars, speeches, coaching services, or products.

Watch Steve Gaffney’s full Partners in Progress presentation on the Partners in Progress website at pinp.org/conf12/index.cfm. His handout is also available.

No Family Left Behind

Management and labor work together to support military families.

Together, SMACNA Boston and SMART local 17 spend as much as \$50,000 on military programs each year.

It all started in the winter of 1991 when Jeff Chase, president of COX Engineering Co., made a motion at a SMACNA Boston chapter meeting to divert advertising funds to U.S. troops serving in Desert Storm and to their families.

“A lot of our employees and office staff were being called up,” Chase says. “We had been talking about buying advertising with the Boston teams—the Celtics and Bruins—to promote the chapter. It just came to me at the end of the meeting: Why not give that money to the families of our troops instead?”

SMACNA Boston Executive Director Tom Gunning supported the motion. “Our troops sacrifice so much for our well being at home—we need to remember how fortunate we are and take care of our own,” he says.

Indeed, supporting the military is a natural fit for SMACNA Boston and SMART local 17, considering children of SMACNA Boston contractors have attended military academies and enlisted and many members of SMART local 17 are affiliated with the military in some way, including as reservists and veterans.

Perhaps that is why the program that Chase started is around 21 years later.

Today, SMACNA Boston uses money from its general operating fund to support military families, whether their member is deployed or actively serving at home.

“Each family receives \$900 a month,” says Chase. “SMACNA donates \$500 and the other \$400 comes from SMART local 17. Today, we support as many as 15 families.”

Carepacks

Army veteran Rick Donohue, vice president and treasurer at Harrington Brothers Corp., was drafted in 1972 and remembers serving in an “unpopular” war.

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Top: Care Packs celebrated its 15,000th package packed and sent. The program, co-founded by Harrington Brother's VP Rick Donohue eight years ago, is an all-volunteer organization supported by SMACNA Boston and many others.



Right, Stephen McKunes and daughter Ava. McKunes is an Air Force reservist and an apprentice with SMART local 17.

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“A lot of us served at a time when it was not cool to be in the military. The day I was discharged, I was spit on at Oakland International Airport.

“If we can bring a little smile to a face of lonely soldiers far away from their friends and family, then it’s all worth it. We need to keep in mind that all the freedoms we have are because of their effort.” Donohue’s son Evan recently enlisted in the Army.

Donohue is one of the originators of Carepacks, a non-profit organization dedicated to sending care packages to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is staffed and managed entirely by volunteers and began with one package Donohue sent to his son-in-law eight years ago.

Carepacks celebrated sending 15,000 packages this summer. The Massachusetts State Senate recognized the program with a citation presented by Senator Robert Hedlund. The program also received a citation from the Weymouth Town Council and Mayor Sue Kay.

According to Donohue, this feat was accomplished with the help of many hands. “Through the end of 2011, we spent \$170,000 on shipping and \$202,000 on everything that went into the boxes. SMACNA contractors have been very generous to our cause.”

No Reserve About Reservists

Leadership at SMART local 17 and SMACNA contractors focus first on their craftspersons who serve in the military

Cox Engineering and Harrington Brothers both employ several craftspersons from SMART local 17 who are also reservists, including Stephen McKunes. McKunes recently returned from a deployment and three activations in the U.S. Air Force Reserve.

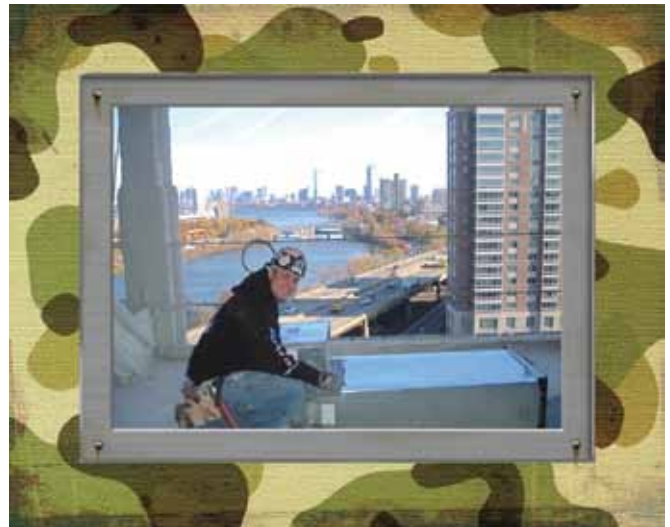
McKunes had already gone through two of the five years’ apprenticeship training at SMART local 17 when he was deployed for four months in 2009 to the U.S. Reservist Forward Operating Base in Southwest Asia. His apprenticeship spot was waiting for him.

He appreciates SMART’s willingness to work with his schedule. “After I came back to continue my apprenticeship, the Air Force activated me three times to our home station at Westover Air Force Base in Chicopee.”

He spent seven months away in 2010, a month in 2011, and three months in 2012. Despite all that, McKunes has been hired by Harrington Bros. He will reach journeyman status in the spring of 2013.

“Today, we support as many as 15 families.”

—Jeff Chase, president of COX Engineering Co.



Top: The McKunes are involved in both the military and sheet metal. Stephen (front, in uniform) will reach journeyman status in Spring 2013. Younger brother Patrick is a Marine and a fourth-year apprentice, and twin brother Mark is in the Air Force.

Bottom, Stephen McKunes participates in the Sheet Metal Workers SMART local 17 Helmets to Hardhats program. He works for Harrington Brothers.

Help for Wounded Soldiers’ Families

SMACNA Boston donated \$5,000 raised at a membership meeting last Christmas for the Fisher House Boston, which serves wounded soldiers and their families.

Fisher House Foundation donates “comfort homes,” built on the grounds of major military and veteran’s medical centers. These homes enable family members to be close to a loved one at the most stressful times.

According to Jen Deluca, assistant to the Board of Directors, the money donated by SMACNA Boston was timely. “It just happened that last winter was the first time we’ve had to reach out to a hotel since our suites were all filled. We will never turn a family away,” explains Deluca. “That \$5,000 enabled us to provide the hotel rooms our families needed.” ■

continued from page 2

Jesse Pritchard of Montana's SMART local 103 in Montana also values the time he spent with contractors. "It left me trying to picture myself in the contractor's shoes a little more—trying to look at things from both sides."

Perspective was what Brad Matulevich, a third year apprentice from SMART local 100 in Washington, DC, gained. "Now that I understand the impact union benefits have on contractors' bottom line, I think union members should always be asking themselves, 'How do we help our contractors win jobs?'"

Communication

All of these apprentices could agree that even though labor and management are going in the right direction, they need to communicate a lot more. That's what the Partners in Progress

Conference is all about, from impromptu "hallway" discussions to break-out and general sessions.

"I value getting together with counterparts from different markets and different parts of the country and having the conversations we should be having, but we're usually not," Hunckley says.

He believes it's worthwhile to sit down with a business owner who has no reason not to share details of the business, how he runs it, and what his financial stakes are. "They are the kinds of talks I could benefit from having with my own employer."

Chadwick Paine of Washington state's SMART local 66 admits that although he has a great relationship with his boss, it's sometimes easier to talk with other contractors.

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Bringing together the best of the best from across North America, the International Apprenticeship Contest demonstrated that the industry will be in good hands when these craftsmen take their places as foremen, supervisors, business agents and even contractors. Take a look at what went on during the competition at sheetmetal-iti.org/contests/ or by scanning the code with your mobile device.



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Pritchard agrees and adds that “mingling with contractors and a lot of other union members and listening to their ideas opens your mind.”

This sort of “mind-altering” experience is what Blaze March of Wisconsin’s SMART local 18 thinks all apprentices need. “Learning how contractors and foremen see things helps us now and in the future.”

That’s especially true for SMART local 66’s Yuriy Kosmin, who says he’s gained insight into what it takes to be a leader. “It’s clear that the things you need to be good at change as you move up.”

And regardless of where someone is on the ladder, he or she needs to consider how generational differences affect learning and working. SMART local 66’s Paine says he thinks he can use such information to work more effectively on teams.

It’s the kind of lesson that Chris Wilson of Michigan’s SMART local 80 took to heart. “We can train each other informally. The more we each put into our work, the more we get out of it. Everyone needs to take action.”

Hunckley took home to Cleveland what he learned at the competition and the Partners in Progress Conference. “I think I’m better prepared when issues arise. I’m more likely to stop and go to the source for clarification. If the owner wants things done a certain way, I have to try to understand that point of view,” he says.

Foremost in his mind is: “How can we work together to get this job done right so you can get your money and I can stay working?”

Market Expansion

One of the focuses of the Partners in Progress Conferences is always potential for market expansion, and apprentices were particularly interested in fire/life safety and green projects.

“Most of the contractors in the Cleveland area are very ‘single track’ in their focus; thus, it was an eye-opener to see how some contractors have expanded into new areas,” Hunckley says.

He says the experience permanently changed his mindset, and he now finds himself thinking about possible areas of expansion, but thanks to his Las Vegas experience, he’s not ignorant about the effort required to effect change.

“If you want to get into a different market, and take on different kinds of work, you have to be prepared as a union and train guys to do it.”

Pritchard looks forward to the challenge. “The more versatile we are, the better we’ll survive because there’ll be more work out there.” ■

Caughill is a freelance writer based in Ontario, Canada.



Communication and cooperation and industry success are what *Partners in Progress* magazine is all about. Finding ways to reach those within the industry who can make a difference—from apprentice to journeyman, foreman, superintendent, business manager, chapter manager, and contractor—is our priority. Whether you are most comfortable with smart phones, mobile apps, e-mail, Web links, or sitting down with paper and ink, we want to put ideas and proven best practices for getting contracts and labor hours and overall strengthening of the organized sheet metal industry into your hands. To switch your subscription to the magazine to electronic delivery send an e-mail to editor@pinpmagazine.org or go to our subscription management page at pinpmagazine.org/subscriptions.