

Best Practice101: How to Benefit from the Code of Excellence (SMACNA Buffalo and SMART Local 71)

In essence, the Code of Excellence Program is a marketing and action policy designed to develop a pride of ownership by SMART members and demonstrate the professional workmanship and productivity provided by those members every work day on every job site. It is instrumental for demonstrating the added value of the SMART and SMACNA partnership. The following steps identify best practices that SMART Local 71 and SMACNA Buffalo used to benefit from the SMART Code of Excellence program:

1. **Establish a dynamic active labor-management cooperation committee.** Members must be committed to developing trust and communication. Labor and management won't always agree on every issue, but they should be willing to work together for the good of the industry to ensure that SMACNA and SMART are competing on an even playing field with their non-signatory competition. The committee should meet frequently and regularly to discuss joint goals—including a marketing plan related to the Code of Excellence, determine the concrete actions to accomplish those goals, assign tasks, and measure progress.
2. **Ensure both SMART and SMACNA actively implement the Code of Excellence.** Without a commitment from both labor and management, the Code has less value to the industry and to potential customers. The Code of Excellence is meant to promote a culture within SMART that is consistent with the performance of the union's overall membership and it requires commitment and follow-through. SMACNA contractors must be willing to address job performance issues as described in the Code of Excellence. Buffalo New York developed such a brochure that can be used for ongoing training.
3. **Create and use joint marketing materials that highlight the Code of Excellence.** None of the best consumer brands sell because they are the cheapest. Customers will pay more if they believe they are getting value for that extra cost. The Code of Excellence demonstrates to customers that using the services of contractors that employ SMART members is synonymous with contracting excellence. Thus, the code provides an opportunity to strengthen existing customer relationships and expand business. However, if customers and potential customers are not aware that SMACNA and SMART hold their team to a higher standard that gets jobs done in a professional manner, on-time, and within budget, then something vital is missing.

The Code of Excellence should be central to marketing efforts and incorporated into proposals. Brochures such as the one developed in Buffalo can be used externally to inform customers about the worth of hiring the SMACNA-SMART team. Besides meeting with customers to explain the program, make use of videos—such as the American Federation of Labor's Building Trades Code of Excellence Program video—that can help explain that adherence to the code allows contractors to deliver maximum value for customers' investment.

Quotes

- *Michael J. Sullivan, former SMWIA general president:* “The future of our membership and the SMWIA (SMART) is dependent upon our ability to establish an added value to the employers and end users within the sheet metal industry.”
- *John Shields Jr., SMART Local 100 business manager:* “Convincing customers that the SMACNA-SMWIA partnership is worth the additional cost is an important step toward expanding union market share.”
- *SMACNA Board of Directors:* “[We] acknowledge that SMART efforts set forth in the Code to promote and improve productivity, craftsmanship, safety, attendance, fitness for duty and jobsite behavior and responsibility and will assist SMACNA and SMART in attaining their mutual goal of recapturing market share.”
- *Bonnie L. Vogel, CEO, Vogel Sheetmetal, Inc.:* “We have embraced the Code of Excellence by implementing uniform best practices and showcasing the skills, professionalism, and high-level productivity of union labor to bring excellence in HVAC contracting.”
- *John Lindemulder, chairman of Amber Mechanical Contractors and former SMACNA president,* “While the Code of Excellence is about accountability on a personal level, it is also about partnership. The code is about working together... When we can count on each other and draw from each other’s strengths, we are a team that cannot be beat.”

Resources

1. Code of Excellence for the Sheet Metal Industry, <http://preview.tinyurl.com/bkup6wf>
2. Sheet Metal Workers Code of Excellence Brochure, <http://www.smwlocal83.org/pdfs/2013%20LU%2083%20code%20of%20excellence.pdf>
3. Code of Excellence DVD (free), <http://www.pinp.org/forms/index.cfm?fuseaction=laborDVD> or <http://www.sheetmetanetwork.org/video/code-of-excellence-video>
4. SMWIA Codifies Excellence, *Partners in Progress*, Vol. 6, No. 5, pg. 2, http://www.pinp.org/resources/pip/vol6_no5.pdf
5. Code of Excellence FAQs, *Partners in Progress*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pg. 2, http://www.pinp.org/resources/PIP/vol7_no2.pdf
6. Drop the Green Flag for Excellence, *Partners in Progress*, Vol. 8, No. 1, http://www.pinp.org/resources/PIP/PIP_Mag_Vol_8_No_1.pdf
7. Excellence Is Path to Greater Union Market Share, *Partnership Communicator*, Vol. 4, No. 1, http://www.pinp.org/newsletters/index.cfm?fuseaction=view_article&id=4730
8. The SMWIA's New Code of Excellence: What ALL Contractors Need to Know (\$45), <http://smacna.peachnewmedia.com/store/seminar/seminar.php?seminar=2445>
9. SMWIA Code Of Excellence Raises Questions for Consideration When Terminating Employees for Cause, <http://www.smacna.org/pdf/ACF3438.pdf>
10. Glad To Have A Competitive Labor Partner On Our Side, *SMACNews*, Vol. 43, Issue 9, http://www.smacna.org/newsletters/index.cfm?fuseaction=view_article&id=5358
11. Building Trades Code of Excellence Program, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y3EOImSEvk>

12. Sample Agreement between East Central Ohio SMACNA and SMWIA Local 33 that includes the Code of Excellence, http://www.dol.gov/olms/regs/compliance/cba/private/cbrp_2433_pri.pdf
13. SMWIA Local 265 Code of Action Presentation, <http://www.smw265.org/Presentations/SMWIA%20Code%20of%20Excellence.pdf>
14. "2012 SMART BA Conference: General Session Reports", *SMART: The Members' Journal*, September/October 2012, pg. 9

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