SMACNA and SMART overcome geographical and financial barriers to train students in southern Oregon
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Lessons from Las Vegas

Many ideas came out of the recent Partners in Progress Conference. One of the most important was that our industry needs to be moving in a positive direction, as we are likely closer to the next economic downturn than the last one. But, as Coach Herm Edwards said in the closing session, “A goal without a plan is a wish.”

How do we make steps in the right direction? Attitude is key. In the leadership forum, SMACNA President Angie Simon reminded both SMACNA and SMART members that “we can’t survive without each other” and SMART General President Joseph Sellers Jr. emphasized that it is vital for labor and management to focus on developing communication and trust.

SMACNA and SMART’s Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force is hoping that areas where this perspective is missing can start to think differently.

“When labor-management programs have failed in the past, it was because one party thought that it could change the other party’s mind,” said SMACNA CEO Vince Sandusky. “Instead, it requires commitment, an open mind, and a willingness to try something new. We need to be willing to discuss what is not working and keep searching for solutions with a common goal.”

President Sellers said, “Meeting regularly helps, even during tough times… Not doing it is not an answer. We must do it.”

Nathan Dills, SMACNA's immediate past president—formerly co-chair of the Best Practices task force, urged any area that would like assistance improving labor-management cooperation to reach out to members of the task force for a grant or for guidance in getting started.

“The risks are too great not to come together and have a conversation,” said Sellers, who served on the task force many years ago.

Breakout sessions at the conference echoed the same sentiments. Stephane McShane of Matrix Consulting advised, “threat and intimidation must leave our partnership. We need to lead by inspiration, engagement, motivation, and trust.” (You’ll read more about the sessions in upcoming issues, on social media, and you can download handouts from pinp.org or using the conference app available at eventmobi.com/app/pip20.)

“Partners in Progress is imperative for industry growth,” said Luther Medina, Local 105 president and business manager, after McShane’s session. “The more we get to know each other, the better we can tackle issues that affect the industry—technology, education, and recruitment.”

Local 32 Business Manager Daniel Villarruel agreed. “For far too long—and even today—we still think ‘us’ and ‘them’. We need to forge the one ‘us’.”

That is what this—and future issues—will focus on: ways we can and have created best practices, learned lessons, developed resources, and are making it possible for signatory contractors and their labor partners to thrive in both strong and weak economic times.

If we can go All In with the ideas generated by members within our industry—as publicized in this publication and highlighted at the Partners in Progress Conference—and the resources created by SMACNA, SMART, the International Training Institute, the Best Practices Task Force, and others, we can achieve monstrous results!

Remember, Coach Edwards’ words: “When you are a leader, you are either coaching it or you are allowing it to happen.” Let’s make good things happen! •

NEW WEBINAR SERIES ON RECRUITING

The Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force has developed tools to aid your local recruiting efforts, including the MJMG campaign, and a series of webinars is scheduled to provide additional information. The next webinar will include:

• presentation for promoting your apprentice program in schools;
• new Brand Ambassador materials for use on social media;
• updated Guidance Counselor Toolkit (including Spanish-language option); and
• details on how to customize the resources.

Upcoming webinar dates are:
• Monday, April 13
• Tuesday, June 9
• Tuesday, Sept. 15
• Tuesday, Nov. 17

All webinars will start at 2 p.m. Eastern Time (11 a.m. Pacific Time). (Find additional information and check out previous webinars at pinp.org under Resources/Recruiting.)
Prepare for Success
A 10-Step Practical Guide to Preparing for Economic Downturn with a Go-to-Market Program

By / Mark Coronna
John C. Maxwell, the American author, speaker, and pastor who has written many books on leadership has a wonderful quote about growth that says, “Change is inevitable, growth is optional.” There may be another version of this we should be paying attention to, and I think that version is, “Change is inevitable, so is an economic slowdown.”

With the long economic growth we have been experiencing it can be challenging to remember that we will not always have the economic tailwinds that have been boosting us along. The most recent ITR Trends Report continues to forecast a cyclical market slowdown. It says, “The United States economy has moved a little deeper on the backside of the business cycle, and the shift in momentum and outcome will feel more pronounced the further we go in 2019. Our analysis continues to point to a probable first-half-2020 bottom for this business cycle.”

The ITR analysts also advise contingency planning in case the cycle downturn is worse than projected and advise business executives, “not to forget to play offense by devising tactics to beat the business cycle as best you can over the next four to six quarters.”

The timing and severity of economic slowdowns may be a moving target—maybe we are already experiencing it, maybe not. Maybe the next one will have a steeper decline than originally thought, maybe it will be a gentle decline. That’s not my point.

There will be an economic slowdown, and just as ITR recommends, it’s time to be proactive and play offense. What does that mean to your business or Local and your go-to-market programs?

Preparing Your Organization and Go-to-Market Program

In most organizations, surviving or even thriving in an economic downturn is possible. Can you grow in a declining market? Of course you can, that’s why you get paid the big bucks. Can you recruit labor and keep training centres full? Definitely.

When the financial recession hit in 2007-2009, I was managing a team of financial compliance experts serving the banking, securities, insurance, and mortgage markets. No one expected the recession to hit so quickly or to have such a large impact on the financial markets. We lost over 300 mortgage originator customers in 30 days—gone, poof. Never to come back.

We decided that now was the time to demonstrate our management expertise. We took proactive, offensive actions to survive the recession and come out a stronger player when the economy came back with healthy tailwinds.

That’s important context because you can either put your head in the sand or you can take the initiative. We took the initiative. Here’s what we did, and I’ll offer these 10 steps as a practical, proven approach.

### The Ten-Step Checklist

1. **Protect every relationship you have.** In a slowdown, there will be fewer new business start-ups, less capital to invest, and lots of hunkering down. You have invested time and resources acquiring your relationship portfolio—protect every one. Understand which are worth the most to you (revenue, contribution, lifetime value), and make especially sure you protect the highest value relationships through your servicing touchpoints.

2. **Keep competitors at bay—lock them out for a long time if you can.** Everyone is going to be looking for revenue, and your competitors may be more aggressive with pricing in order to try to stay viable. If you offer service contracts, one proactive tactic is to offer multi-year service with price protection built in. We did this successfully, extending every one-year subscription to two or three years and locking in the price for our customers. We now had predictable revenues for several years, and our competitors were locked out. Many competitors never survived.

3. **Go deep on innovation.** This might sound crazy, but when markets are in turmoil, it’s a wonderful opportunity to have a conversation with your teams about their pain points, work collaboratively with them to reengineer processes, and to understand where digital tools could improve process cycles, costs, training opportunities, and quality. Many competitors will be cutting their R&D and product development budgets. You’ll be cautiously investing in new solutions. When the slowdown ends, they will be in worse shape and you’ll likely have something new to offer the market. There’s a common phrase, “never kick someone when they are down.” There’s a version of that phrase in Italy that says, “the best time to kick someone is when they are down (because that’s when you have the greatest advantage), but not if they are a relative or
**THE KEY TO SUCCESS**

Matthew Smith, committee member on the SMACNA/SMART Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force, offers a number of considerations for weathering economic turmoil in the signatory sheet metal industry.

Stable and quality contractors are always promoting more work opportunities even when the economy is strong to ensure that work is available and can be achieved even during a downturn in the market, he explains.

“Successful contractors also plan well for these changes to ensure a stable cash flow to take advantage of any work that can be achieved. It is also important to be versatile with work processes and change with the market conditions.”

Staying competitive for the sake of the business and its workforce means straying from the status quo when necessary. Doing things as they have always been done in a fast-paced construction market can be the downfall of organizations who fail to innovate and be proactive.

“One of the mistakes I see happening is a decrease in marketing activities and promotion during the down times,” Smith says. “It is important to look long term and continue to explore new work opportunities and expansion into other markets where it can make sense. If you just simply react to the market without changing and growing with the market, you will get left behind.”

Contractors must commit to constantly motivating and keeping their valuable employees engaged especially during these down times, Smith says. “Again, thinking long term for the health of your company, you have to continue to invest in training and helping them to grow and prosper along with the company,” he adds. “We are definitely seeing a shift in the way to satisfy the needs of all of our employees to avoid costly turnover and instability in business growth. The old saying is true, our employees are the most valuable assets we have.”

There is no doubt: a strong labor-management partnership and regular communication is absolutely necessary during all times of the market and economy. It is crucial that parties are constantly working together to understand each collective and individual needs in order to achieve success.

“This success for all includes increased person hours, company profitability, and growth in our markets,” Smith says. “We have to be united in our communities and politically to establish ourselves as the true leaders in our industry.”

4. **Take the opportunity to understand where your organization makes money.** A slowdown should force you to take a deeper look at your organization. I’ve found that market, customer, and competitor insights are often not a strength of many organizations. Many of my clients have been in markets for a long time, but when you ask questions about share, profitability across multiple markets, profitability across customers, and competitor knowledge, you get a lot of blank stares. You should improve your organizational intelligence now to re-shape your focus and priorities, and to prune unprofitable parts of your operations. Another great place to focus is on your product and service portfolio. If you haven’t evaluated the performance of your products or training programs across your entire portfolio for a while, this is an excellent time to understand their role in your offering, their profitability, and expectations for future growth and contribution. Slowdowns give you a fresh set of eyes to understand what drives your organization and your team. Understand, validate, then act with confidence.

5. **Diversify markets.** One of the reasons we were able to grow our business 8% annually through the financial recession of 2007-2009 was our revenue mix. Serving several markets (banking, securities, insurance, and mortgage), meant that while some markets were hit hard (mortgage), others were impacted to a much lesser degree (banking, insurance). Now is the time to reduce your concentration risks from too few markets and from a small number of large customers or areas of expertise. Now is the time to invest in training that prepares your workforce for hireability in your region’s growing market sectors.
6. **Stop shot-gunning lead generation and get more targeted.** If you are using passive lead generation programs as your primary source of new business or new recruits, it’s time to get more focused and targeted. Websites alone will not drive enough qualified leads or bring enough trainees to your doors. You’ll need to use proactive lead generation tactics like paid search and account-based marketing to help you more efficiently put more qualified leads into your sales pipeline. Don’t forget to access jointly-funded programs to fuel your marketing and recruitment initiatives.

7. **Complete a Marketing Assessment and Audit.** If you have not done a rigorous review of the performance of your marketing programs, it’s time. The goals of a marketing assessment and audit are threefold:
   - Provide an immediate identification of “Horizon 0” opportunities which can be evaluated for immediate performance and financial improvement.
   - Set a formal baseline of current performance, which will function as a foundation for future performance improvements.
   - Ensure that marketing performance aligns with future needs by quantifying the gap between current and required future performance.

8. **Evaluate the performance of your marketing and sales staff and suppliers.** You’ll need high value from everyone on the team, internal as well as external. Time to check whether you have the right number of marketing and sales people in the right seats and with the right skills. Have you waited too long to implement a more proactive digital marketing program because you don’t have the internal expertise? Maybe time for a swap out or an addition. Are your suppliers bringing maximum value to you? Time to ask them to buy-in with extras (research, services, etc.).

9. **Fine-tune your pricing.** Just as I’ve recommended for fine-tuning your markets, customer relationships, and products, this is an excellent time to review your pricing strategies and tactical execution. Have you deployed a consistent pricing strategy? If so, what is it? How consistently is it utilized? Where are you losing value because your prices are too low?

10. **Empower and develop your marketing and sales staff, and have some fun, too.** Everyone will likely feel the effects of a slowdown in different ways. It’s your job to keep them aligned, focused, and acting as a team. Schedule some fun team-building activities. Make sure your staff have the ability to act on each one of the previous nine checklist ideas, too. They need to feel empowered and part of the solution.

What Next?

A wise person reading this article and the 10-step checklist may say, “Why shouldn’t I be doing these activities all the time and not just to prepare for an economic slowdown?” That person gets an “A.”

Having challenges with your pipeline management, alignment of sales and marketing programs, customer acquisition, recruitment, training, or overall revenue growth? If you are interested in learning more about building a high-performing marketing program, please give me a shout.

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**Construction Forecast Information Coming Soon**

See upcoming issues for a general construction outlook and targeted information for each region as presented at the 2020 Partners in Progress Conference.

Mark Coronna is area managing partner & CMO, Chief Outsiders. He earned note as one of the first ecommerce industry executives and built a career leading marketing efforts for some of the most revered names in software and financial services. This article was reprinted with permission from Chief Outsiders. Please see its original publication at chiefoutsiders.com/blog/preparing-for-economic-downturn
Fast forward 200 years, and parties to the collective bargaining process no longer have the luxury of dividing the available “pie” or wealth. In the face of increased competition and a global economy, they must jointly find a path to grow the “pie” or create wealth and build relationships that allow them to be more competitive in their markets.

Looking back

It isn’t as though today’s labor-management parties didn’t come by it honestly. The introduction of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935 introduced the protected rights to organize and bargain a contract. The following “rights” era of collective bargaining emerged, allowing either union or management to bring charges and seek redress before a quasi-judicial forum, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). This “rights” era and the “power” era began to exist in tandem, which meant when there were rights to assert, the parties would do so. But, where there were no rights to enforce, the parties would fall back on the use of “power” when it was more favorable. This “power” versus “rights” approach became the definition of competitive distributive bargaining.
The National Labor Relations Act operated on the unstated premise that the parties to a collective bargaining relationship were adversaries with the proper role of the government being a neutral referee. Bargaining in good faith was limited to wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, and management was not required to bargain over how to bake the economic pie, only how it would be split.

Within six years of the National Labor Relations Act, union membership had tripled to 8.4 million, roughly 23% of the workforce.

The United States economy surged in a post-war economy. Adding to a swelling economy was an expansion in the construction industry fed by the “baby boom” years. Oligopolies came to be the dominant market structure in almost all major American industries, accompanied by labor monopolies.

In the auto industry, for instance, GM, Ford, and Chrysler—all with the United Auto Workers representing their employees—realized the greatest danger was interrupted production. With assurance that all producers would face the same wage cost, employers were willing to grant significant increases constrained only by price elasticity of demand and pass on cost increases to the consumer. The distributive bargaining model proved beneficial for both labor and management. It became deeply ingrained into the fabric of collective bargaining, a process to be mastered not questioned. By 1954, union membership hit its high watermark of 34.8% of all United States wage and salary workers.

The Downward Spiral

From 1960 to 1980, foreign economies were growing faster than the economy, and as American companies were squeezed, they adopted a number of strategies that proved detrimental to unions. Between 1970 and 1975, 2.5 million jobs left the heavily organized Rust Belt in the north for Right-To-Work Sunbelt states, and other jobs were also moved offshore—between 1950 and 1974, American companies invested $100 billion abroad.

Between 1948 and 1968, the 200 largest manufacturing companies had acquired 3900 other enterprises with combined assets of $50 billion. By the end of 1974, these same 200 companies accounted for 1/10 of 1% of all manufacturing firms and held 2/3 of all assets, sales, employment and net income in manufacturing. They were so diversified that no single product line accounted for more than a small part of annual profits or employment, greatly shifting the balance of power, the balance of power shifted significantly in management’s favor making bargaining and organizing extremely difficult.

In 1981, eight months into Ronald Reagan’s first presidential term, federal air traffic controllers represented by PATCO went on strike. When they failed to heed a demand to abandon the strike, they were fired and their union was decertified as the bargaining representative. The government announced that the fired strikers were never to be rehired, and the public supported the president to the extent that his support from union households rose from 40% to 46%. The clear message for all to see was that unions had lost public support and much political power. Thus was ushered in an era of hard bargaining, the characteristics of which included wage cuts or freezes, two-tier wage systems, work rule givebacks, and the use of permanent replacement of strikers. By the end of 1990, unions represented just 16.1% of the workforce and that number dropped to 9.8% 10 years later.

Collective Bargaining Innovation

In a globally competitive economy, the traditional model of unionized industrial relations no longer fully served the interests of management or labor. Rather than examining the institutions, procedures, and practices for possible improvement, management and labor were inclined to blame each other for the system not working, increasingly viewing each other as enemies rather than economic partners. When someone else is at fault, one feels relieved of the burden of self-examination and change.

Labor and management began to look for ways to improve the system of collective bargaining. The most notable of these efforts looked at quality of work life (QWL), labor management committees (LMC), quality work circles (QWC), and total quality management (TQM). While these programs had an element of relationship improvement, all of them steered clear of the principle that management defined the economic pie and the parties used distributive bargaining to divide that pie.

QWL concepts refer to the degree to which employees are able to satisfy important needs by working in an organization: being able to use one’s skills to the utmost, having open trusting communication in the organization, and taking an active role in important job decisions. The goal is to increase organizational effectiveness by improving rewards that workers obtain from their jobs.

In the 1970s, LMCs began to develop and received heavy sponsorship from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), which was historically tasked with minimizing disruption to the economy from labor-management conflict. LMCs were envisioned as an additional dimension of the collective bargaining process. They were a voluntary process of the parties working together with a common goal to discuss and resolve mutual problems as well as improve their relationship. Key decision makers met regularly on a monthly basis with an agenda and items for discussion, and committee members were trained together in problem solving, consensus decision making, group dynamics, and communication skills. Changes to the collective bargaining agreement were prohibited, and either side was permitted to decline discussion of a particular item. The penalty for failing to resolve agenda items was the knowledge that it was certain to appear at the next contract negotiation as an issue.
Alternative to the Distributive Negotiation Model

By 1990, interest based bargaining (IBB) as an integrative model—complete with principles, steps, and tools—began to be practiced on a regular basis. This cooperative process operates in a structured way that requires training and seeks to reach an effective mutual gain result while simultaneously improving the relationship between the parties. Critical to success is the belief that mutual gain is possible, and therefore, it makes sense that labor and management should help each other reach a positive result. Decisions are made based on criteria rather than the threat or exercise of power.

Lessons from the Past

William N. Cooke, professor and associate dean at Wayne State University, conducted extensive research on cooperative initiatives and results of those labor and management relationships that hued to an entirely traditional distributive approach. He reached the unambiguous conclusion that traditional relationships don’t work well in highly competitive markets. Therefore, parties of necessity must choose to cooperate to be successful. He explains that in competitive markets employers cannot sustain higher costs per unit of output while unions must, of necessity, obtain higher levels of compensation and sustainable workplace environments. It is through cooperation that sufficient added value can be created to allow this paradox to close. Otherwise, traditional processes result in continuous conflict, decreased market share, and employment levels.

Cooke reasons that for a cooperative initiative to be successful two fundamental conditions must be met: first, the gains of cooperation must be greater than the costs of cooperation. Second, the net potential gain from cooperating must be equal to or greater than that from a traditional approach.

Finally, trust, commitment, expectations not met, and the need to balance cooperation versus various aspects of a traditional relationship must be addressed when labor and management embark on a cooperative path.

Trust and cooperation are directly correlated. As trust increases, so does cooperation and vice versa. Trust, in the beginning, is always difficult where the relationship has been adversarial. The parties are accustomed to the distributive manner of engagement with trust being minimal or nonexistent.

Commitment is also critical to long-term success. When embarking on a new cooperative effort, there is often a strong inclination to oversell the likely results, creating unrealistic hopes. When these expectations are not met, participants become disenchanted with a corresponding reduction of support and effort.

Finally, it is difficult balancing cooperative ventures with other aspects of the collective bargaining relationship. Successful labor-management committees require labor and management working together in problem solving, by fully sharing information, reaching consensus decisions, and helping each other. When these same individuals enter into negotiation for a new contract using the traditional distributive model, it is hard not to feel some amount of duplicity.

Cornerstones for Change

At no time in modern America has the need for effective leadership in construction organizations been more pronounced. An international economy, emerging competitive giants around the globe, spreading technology, increased regulation, as well as entangled legal and ethical problems all confront the assumption of success. America will only continue its international leadership if it sets the pace in technology, service, and the development of its human capital. Organized labor and construction enterprises will survive only if they develop their leaders in a similar manner. The problem solvers of the future are going to need a new and expanded set of problem-solving tools to deal with the challenges they will face as they assume larger and more important roles in their organizations. Their challenges will not be the same as in the past. Neither should their education and training. •

LEADERSHIP ACCESS INSTITUTE

Richard C. Barnes presented Leadership Access Institute—a cohort fellows program for the sheet metal industry in Portland, Oregon, in 2019. The 11-day program reflects the ineffectiveness of old patterns and behaviors and arms contractors, Local members, and leadership in labor-management cooperation organizations with a variety of skills and techniques for furthering positive, constructive relationships.

Days 1 & 2 topics include communication, organizational cultures leadership, group dynamics, information sharing, and consensus.

Days 3 & 4 offer a strategic negotiation skills framework into which any negotiation can be placed, examined, and used to produce strategic decisions.

Days 5 & 6 cover problem solving, managing workplace conflict, and an introduction to BEST: briefing, education, and speech techniques.

Days 6 & 7 go further into BEST practices and techniques and allow participants to prepare and present a 20-minute presentation subject to private evaluation

Days 9, 10, & 11 introduce Hogan Leadership Assessment, which is individual coaching sessions based on a personality profile for emerging and high potential leaders.

Learn more about Richard’s work in Portland in the April 2020 issue of Partners in Progress pinp.org/pinp-magazine/
The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the need for welders is expected to grow by 26% this year alone. This makes welding one of the fastest growing professions in the country.

This number is expected to be significantly higher in the state of Utah, which last year grew faster than any other state this decade, according to the United States Census Bureau. In order to meet the demand for skilled workers, Utah Governor Gary R. Herbert has committed to raising awareness through career fairs and school visits. It is hoped this will change the perception and elevate awareness of the benefits of trade and other skilled jobs throughout the entire state.

Last year, the Department of Workforce Services launched the Building Design and Construction Pathway project to help highlight the hands-on technical education programs that are available to kids as early as seventh grade.

To support these initiatives, SMACNA and SMART continue to ramp up their efforts and have been working with local schools to address this challenge by beefing up their initiatives to entice high school students and young adults to consider careers in the sheet metal trade.

At Maple Mountain High School in Spanish Ford, Utah, the Trade and Technical Education’s (CTE) welding/metals department, led by welding teacher Jared Massic, has been extremely proactive on this front and is working closely with the Utah Sheet Metal Workers Local 312 Training Center to provide students with a clearer idea of what is involved by way of tours of the center.

Last year marked the third year in which students toured the facility, and Gordon Hyde, Local 312 training center coordinator, says the results speak for themselves. “I do a lot of career fairs and public events, but these tours are some of the best because the students get to see the facility in person,” he says. “It’s also a targeted group of welding seniors who are already interested in our metal shop. While it can take time for students to open up at a career fair, at the facility, they are in an inclusive environment that encourages them to speak out. They get to chat with us, and we provide them with a toolbox so they can build something while they are here.”

It was thanks to Massic’s foresight a few years ago that these tours are possible. “We had been doing a senior class tour for some time and visiting local shops around the valley,
but I didn’t feel this was enriching the student experience,” he says. “I realized that to show them the possibilities we needed to visit the Locals’ training centers instead. Since starting the visits, it has opened our students up to what apprenticeships are really about and how they can benefit from them. Our students love to get in there and train with the Local 312 apprentices.”

In 2019, 24 students from Maple Mountain High School took part in the tour, and the response was, once again, extremely positive. “Local 312 gave us an awesome tour of their facility and what they have to offer,” says student Matt Warren. “They answered all of my questions and gave me information about a career in sheet metal. It looked like an awesome program to help someone learn a useful trade.”

Warren most enjoyed the hands-on activity, informative videos, helpful apprentices, and explanation of money and timetables.

It turns out that exposing the students to the Local has made them even more excited about the trade and serious about what their future holds. While Massic says that more could be done to raise awareness with the students about the trades, the Locals have been extremely accommodating.

“It’s good for the apprentices, as they get a chance to talk up the trade,” Hyde says. He adds that getting seen and heard (you can always hear Local 312 at career fairs because students will be banging and bashing as they build their tool boxes) is important in raising the profile of the trade. In fact, high schools all over Utah proudly feature five-foot tall tin men that have been made and donated by Local 312 apprentices.

As we dive into a new year, the Local 312 apprenticeship team plans to increase its presence and will be actively involved in the government’s Pathways project and career fairs. Utahns across the state are also coming together to ensure the health of the sector with the launch of the Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection (TRAC), an initiative led by Talent Ready Utah Center (Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development), in partnership with Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City School District, Salt Lake Education Foundation, and Stadler US.

“The Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection creates a strong partnership with industry and education, working together to increase the talent pipeline in Utah,” said Gov. Herbert. “This model works well in Utah because of our training centre. In addition to the tours, it hosts training days during which a class of Local 312 apprentices will go out and help kids build tool trays.

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“The Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection creates a strong partnership with industry and education, working together to increase the talent pipeline in Utah,” said Gov. Herbert. “This model works well in Utah because of our training centre. In addition to the tours, it hosts training days during which a class of Local 312 apprentices will go out and help kids build tool trays.

“We find this extremely effective, as the apprentices are closer to the age of the students and they connect well. In turn, it’s good for the apprentices, as they get a chance to talk up the trade,” Hyde says. He adds that getting seen and heard (you can always hear Local 312 at career fairs because students will be banging and bashing as they build their tool boxes) is important in raising the profile of the trade. In fact, high schools all over Utah proudly feature five-foot tall tin men that have been made and donated by Local 312 apprentices.

As we dive into a new year, the Local 312 apprenticeship team plans to increase its presence and will be actively involved in the government’s Pathways project and career fairs. Utahns across the state are also coming together to ensure the health of the sector with the launch of the Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection (TRAC), an initiative led by Talent Ready Utah Center (Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development), in partnership with Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City School District, Salt Lake Education Foundation, and Stadler US.
collaborative culture of working together to solve difficult problems. This program will be a shining example in our state and the nation.”

However, more can always be done, and Chris Thomas, internship coordinator for Nebo School District, says that while they have been working closely with Local 312, there is still some work ahead of them to bring awareness to youth about the trade. “This first semester we have about 130 students placed in internships, but only one of those is a welding internship,” Thomas says. “I would love to place more. The internship gives students a taste of what the job and industry are like and helps them decide if this field would be a good career for them.”

Hyde agrees, adding: “I’ve been in the industry for 30 years and when people ask you what you do and you say sheet metal worker, they don’t understand. It’s not like a plumber where everyone knows what it is. We need to continue educating and think of new ways to raise awareness.”

As for Massic, he has plans to introduce something he is calling a Trade Signing Day, which is expected to take place in May. “It will be a banquet style meeting where I want to celebrate all my students’ post high school options,” he says. “Any students committed to a trade, business, school, or union are invited, and we will snap some pictures of them signing their letters of intent to go into the trades with a representative there to also shake hands with them.”

Natalie is an award-winning writer who has worked in the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, the United States, and Canada. She has more than 23 years experience as a journalist, editor, and brand builder, specializing in construction and transportation. When she’s not writing, you will likely find her snowboarding, mountain biking, or climbing mountains with her rescue dog.
Far along the southern coast of Oregon, almost to the California border, students at the Brookings-Harbor High School now have the opportunity to learn some of the skills and opportunities for a career in the sheet metal industry, thanks to the school and their community.

Metals lab teacher Chris Thompson explains, “Our shop was in pretty poor shape. On my first year here, I thought we should try to expand the program to cover all facets of metal with manufacturing more of a focus because here in Curry County there is a lot of demand for sheet metal fabrication.”

Thompson recalls investing a lot of time figuring out what direction to take in the shop and what renovations needed to be done. He soon realized exhaust ventilation station for the space where 16 welders are working was a top priority, and he called on Umpqua Sheet Metal for help.

Umpqua Sheet Metal, a signatory contractor with Local 16, helped the school get a rebate from local utility providers by installing high efficiency ventilation equipment in the lab. “We were also able to use that rebate to add another room with ventilation,” Thompson says.

John Walker and his team from Umpqua designed the system, then traveled 165 miles from the shop in Roseburg to install the equipment and bring the school’s metals lab up to date. “We based the design on other welding shops we have done
in the past, using a variable speed drive to control the fresh air and the exhaust air while tempering the fresh air with high efficiency heat pump technology and web based supervisory automation accessible on a cellphone or browser with internet capabilities,” Walker says.

He explains how Umpqua was able to purchase the highest efficiency equipment that would qualify for grant dollars from Bonneville Power and the Coos Curry Electric Co-Op.

“They use a prescriptive rebate for the school district based on efficiency of heat pump technology replacing direct resistance heating systems and at set rebate for VFD and thermostat technology,” Walker says. “Generally, the system is operating at 3.5+ COP and, when combined with the VFD and the supervisory thermostat technologies, the shop is running about 350% more efficient then across the line fans with direct resistance.”

The community around the high school also contributed to the success of the program, thanks to a grant of $1,000 from the Brookings-Harbor Education Foundation, specifically designed to fund educational opportunities for youth in the area.

The school put together an application for funding and was granted the $1,000 to buy supplies, 3D square stock, and other pieces for the lab. “Our first project was a box where the students learned how to use sheet metal cutting tools,” Thompson says. “After that, we moved into some welding. Now we’re looking at working on sheet metal projects that will benefit the community. We’ve been contacted about constructing garbage cans for the city park, and the city will also help buy materials.”

Thompson hopes that through this exposure some of his students might overcome the obstacles of distance and pursue a rewarding career in the sheet metal industry.

John Tillotson, training coordinator at Local 16’s JATC, has traveled those distances across the rugged landscape of southern Oregon, reaching out to high school students for career fairs. “Kids come from all over the place down there, and we show them what we do, but it can be a long way to travel for some of them,” he says. “We need to support the schools. They are key to bringing new blood into the industry.”

For example, the Local made contact with a school in Springfield through a class where teachers and administrators came to the JATC and saw the work and training first hand. “Later, when a new metal shops teacher wanted to expand the metals program to be a four-year training program, rather than a shorter basic metals course, she came to us for help filling the schedule,” Tillotson says. “I showed her projects, PDFs, and AutoCad drawings, and she had her advanced metal students doing our projects right out of our app curriculum.”

The students at Brookings-Harbor High School might be somewhat isolated, but with the dedication of a shop teacher who wants more for them, a contractor who went the extra mile to get them the most for its money, and a training center ready to offer information and support, a wider range of career possibilities is now opening up for them in the sheet metal industry.

From her desk in Calgary, Alberta, Deb Smith writes for trade and business publications across North America, specializing in profiles and stories within the hospitality, food service, mining, recreation, and construction industries. When not writing, she’s likely traveling, gardening, or taking long walks with her big white dog.
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