

# DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

MARKETING ISSUES • APPRENTICESHIP CORNER • SAFETY & HEALTH • THE LEGAL ASPECT

## Marketing Issues

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### Market the Union Advantage

One prevalent and frustrating problem in our industry today is the acceptance of the “lowest bid” on private and public projects bid on by our signatory contractors. The principle of a “cheaper is better” approach has significantly impacted the union sector of the roofing industry in terms of our market share. The end users of our services in many cases do not take into consideration, or are not aware of, the value added to roofing and waterproofing projects by the trained, skilled and safety-conscious workforce available in the union sector.

Nevertheless, there are still customers who see the value of using a well-trained and safe workforce, particularly when it comes to large industrial projects and major commercial developments. With ever-increasing workers’ compensation costs and liability insurance, safety has become a key factor that can influence the decision-making process. However, we cannot assume that potential users of our services recognize the amount of time, cost and training that the union sector expends on developing our workforce expertise. Our Local Union Joint Apprenticeship Programs, along with the International Union, expend enormous amounts of dollars and resources on apprenticeship and safety training, OSHA 10- and 30-hour training, fall protection, hazard-specific training, and, recently, foremen training. It is obvious that we have significantly more to offer than the non-union sector.

Simply providing a trained and skilled workforce to our employers is not enough. We must market our training and services to potential “clients.” We are no different than any other business that markets its product or service; ultimately we wish to expand our industry share. We cannot presume that all commercial developers, industrial and manufacturing facilities, school districts and general contractors are aware of the advantages of union roofers and waterproofers. We must bring that message to them!

In that regard, it is important that local union leadership identify those sizeable clients in their jurisdictions who are not currently using the services of union signatory contractors, and take the time to approach them about the benefits of the union sector. A few of our affiliates have recently started using the marketing portfolios and brochures produced by the International along with Local Union information (such as apprenticeship training, contractors lists, etc.) to make “top-down” presentations to the end-users of our services.

There are no guarantees that you will change every client’s mind or perceptions immediately. However, in any marketing strategy, the goal is to reach out to as large of a customer base as possible, hopeful that, in our case, some will see the real advantages of employing union roofers and waterproofers. If any affiliate is in need of support or guidance regarding marketing to potential clients, please feel free to request assistance.

Some believe that marketing to potential clients in our industry is the sole responsibility of our signatory contractors. However, it is my opinion that as union leaders we represent the most qualified and trained roofers and waterproofers in the industry. Therefore, it should be our obligation to express this. We should be proud to see our professional skills recognized. ■



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