



## Marketing Issues

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Director of Market Development

### The Professional Roofer

Four years ago, International Vice President Jim Hadel—who was then Director of Market Development—knew we had to change our image. Just as Harley-Davidson revamped its branding from “fill it up with oil and check the gas” to that of a sleek, high-performance machine, the Roofers Union needed an overhaul of the image we were presenting the market. Harley-Davidson was successful and is once again a leader in the motorcycle market. Can the same be said about our union?

Realizing what was needed, the Marketing Department acquired the assistance of Mark Breslin, a nationally recognized speaker and author known for his top-down, or business, approach in union organizing. Hundreds of organizers and members of our organization have attended his seminars. Even contractors sometimes had Mr. Breslin come to their shop to put on his presentation for a captive audience of our members. Other building trades have also incorporated this training, which includes a short paperback book and workbook, into their apprenticeship programs. His guidance helped provide fresh, new ideas for the future of our union.

Some of Mr. Breslin’s suggestions included:

#### CODE OF CONDUCT

Mr. Breslin recommended that we develop a Code of Conduct. This Code is now available on our website, and it was officially adopted and placed in the International’s Constitution and By-Laws at last year’s International Convention.

#### FOREMAN TRAINING PROGRAM

The Executive Board was already working on a foreman training program when this was recommended. The program was launched earlier this year and can be obtained at your local business manager’s request.

#### MARKETING BROCHURES

Now available are marketing brochures that were developed to be customized by each local to fit their needs. We have many other print items for organizing that can be customized by local.

Business managers and organizers alike must convince contractors, owners and end-users that we are profes-



sionals in all that we do. Many of us are involved in the communities we live in; we would never want to hurt our image in the community by our actions or our attire. The same holds true as representatives of our union: We must act and dress according to the jobs we have. Indeed there will be times when it is necessary to dress as a construction worker, but remember that you are also a businessperson. When attending a business meeting, you are there as a professional and should present yourself as such. We often deal with other businesspeople who are not concerned with the cares of the working class, but only the bottom line, and these people want to deal with professionals.

As union members and “guys in the field,” you hold a level of responsibility. You are what the public sees; you are the Union Roofer. Hold yourself to a higher standard. You are paid a premium wage and benefit package for a reason. Every day presents an opportunity to prove you are the best and deserving of the pay you receive, not only to the contractor you are working for, but also to the owners and tenants of the buildings you perform your work on.

Sometimes we need to do a bottom-up campaign, and we must be able to complete that task also. If this opportunity arises, use the same professionalism with potential union roofers that you would with a contractor. Do not pass up the chance of explaining the benefits of being a Union Roofer: the Union Plus program, The Union Sportsmen’s Alliance, better benefits, better wages, and what we all desire—respect for the job we do.

Today’s market may be different when it comes to strong tactics. Remember that the person you are meeting with may not be the owner, but only a representative for the owner, whom you must convince to sign a collective bargaining agreement with your local. No longer can we use the heavy-handed ways of the past.

The top-down approach is working; however, we can still focus on the small changes that will make it even more successful. Numerous contractors—union and non-union, large and small—have said it is refreshing to see how we have changed our approach toward gaining market share and growing our membership. We are the best-trained, most productive workers in the industry, and we are an important commodity worth investing in. Let’s deliver this message every day in a professional and forthright manner. Then let the facts speak for themselves: Once a contractor signs a collective bargaining agreement with the Roofers, that contractor will become more profitable, and that contractor will be proud to say he or she is a union contractor. ■