



## Marketing Issues

by Jordan Ritenour  
Director of Market Development

### How Flexible Are Your Plans?

Whether or not you think about it, every day you have a plan. Maybe it starts with a morning ritual: eat breakfast, check the forecast and leave for work. Beyond that, however, your daily plan will often change depending on weather, appointments, or family obligations, and you adjust your plan accordingly.

The same holds true for organizing: you must start with a plan, but you must be able to alter the plan as needed. Two things will never change in an organizing campaign: selecting a target, and researching that target. After that, you plan as you see fit.

### The Selection Process

Enormous thought and preparation goes into picking a target contractor. Start by considering what type of campaign you want to pursue. For a top-down approach, determine whether the target contractor is a “good” contractor—maybe it doesn’t meet the high standards we demand from our union contractors. For a bottom-up campaign, decide if you will be able to rally enough employee support for the union that it will convince the contractor to sign a collective bargaining agreement.

Research the contractor extensively. Selecting the contractor is just the beginning. Once you have a target, you should be continuously researching them. This will also help determine which type of campaign is best for successfully signing the contractor. In some cases, both a top-down and a bottom-up campaign can be done at the same time.

### A Top-Down Plan

For a top-down approach, propose to the target contractor that being union will create an avenue for generating greater profits. Be prepared to discuss the benefits of being a union contractor. Some of those benefits include a trained workforce, apprenticeship, foreman training and the local membership. We have some of the best roofers in the industry within the union; let the contractor know this!



- ▶ Apprenticeship offers several ways to generate more revenue for the company. It can be used as a cost-saver on prevailing wage projects, and the training that our apprentice programs provide is absolutely the best in the country.
- ▶ Foreman training is also crucial. As the baby boomers in today’s construction workforce retire, positions of leadership are being filled by new employees who might be unprepared for the task. Often they have neither the experience nor knowledge needed to run a roofing crew. Our union provides this training at no cost to the contractor.
- ▶ The local membership can be a huge asset to the contractor by making a large skilled labor pool available. The contractor needs only to make a phone call to tap into this group of trained and qualified members.

### Approaching from the Bottom Up

If a bottom-up campaign is the way to go, do not underestimate the amount of time and manpower that will be required. Several factors will go into your bottom-up campaign, including house calls, handbills and building allies.

- ▶ One of your most important tasks is forming worker committees. This can only be done by doing “house calls.” House calls can be done after work or before work, but never on the job, so schedule accordingly.
- ▶ You will need to develop white papers or handbills. This requires creativity and resourcefulness. Often the handbills you produce will be a result of the research you have done or the information you have gathered from an employee.
- ▶ Along with building worker committees, you will need to build community allies. If you are a business manager, agent or organizer, you should be doing this every day. Accomplish this by attending building trades meetings, political functions, labor council meetings, community group meetings, etc.

These are just a few requirements of top-down or bottom-up campaigns to consider before deciding on a strategy. You must be flexible, as plans change all of the time. Some organizing plans are short-term and some are long-term, but in all cases they are useless unless implemented. ■



## Persistence Pays Off!

After years of negotiation Ron Chambers, left, owner of Roof Construction, and International Representative Gabriel Perea sign a new three-year collective bargaining agreement for Local 45, San Diego, CA.