

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

Marketing Issues

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Market the Union Advantage

Over the past year, the International Union and numerous local unions have made great strides in implementing a top-down approach to organizing. Many locals that have adopted the "Breslin" strategy or a similar top-down technique are starting to see positive responses to this method of organizing, which focuses on promoting the union at the employer level as opposed to organizing at the worker level. We have found that the marketing materials developed by the International, when paired with local union information and resources, have opened the doors to many non-signatory contractors. In some cases this has resulted in gaining a new signatory contractor. More often, however, it has created opportunities for dialogue about the benefits of the union -- discussions that have been positive and ongoing. In either case, I believe the top-down approach is changing the image of the Roofers Union, and it warrants continued support and implementation by our local affiliates.

I have noticed in my numerous top-down meetings with non-signatory contractors over the past year how uninformed these employers are about the union and the benefits of being a signatory contractor. In general, a majority of contractors have some knowledge of our Apprenticeship Training Programs; however, beyond that subject, they seem unaware of advantages of the union sector. Furthermore, there are contractors who still believe that the union will control their company, that every contract negotiation will result in a strike, and that the union promotes stringent work rules that prohibit production.

In order to reverse negative opinions held by the non-signatory sector and to educate them on the rewards of becoming signatory to the Roofers, we need to continue to approach them as a "business partner." Educate these contractors by marketing our myriad values, including the Professional Code of Conduct, safety training programs, foreman training, industry advancement funds, our Train-the-Trainer program, drug and alcohol policies, and the merits of labor-management committees. In addition, keep them informed

about new work opportunities that may be available to their company in the union sector. Discuss how the Local will be their advocate in securing and policing work in your jurisdiction. Educate them about the Roofers Political Education and Legislative Fund, which provides monetary support to public office candidates who are supportive of not only workers' rights, but industry issues that have an impact on our signatory contractors. This list does not end here; each local may have additional, distinctive benefits to promote to contractors in their jurisdiction.

There are no guarantees that marketing these positive points will result in a signed agreement. However, following recent meetings where union advantages were discussed, contractors' responses show they overwhelmingly left with an image of the Roofers Union that was more agreeable than the one they arrived with. Our future and potential growth will be dependent on our ability to market an organization with a strong and positive image.

On a final note I want to personally thank all of our Local Unions that have put forth the effort this year to organize and promote the Roofers Union. And to all of the members and officers, a Merry Christmas and safe and prosperous New Year!

Milwaukee Local 65: Proof That It Pays to Organize

The International Office wishes to recognize a Local that has displayed continuous success in its organizing efforts. "Roofers Local 65 (Milwaukee, WI) has been sending in quite a few pages from new contractors that they have been signing up," says International Financial Secretary-Treasurer Robert Danley.

Over the past few years, Local 65 has signed a half-dozen new contractors:

- * S & R Contracting
- * Pinebaker Enterprises LLC
- * Wauconda Roofing
- * Velcheck & Finger Roof Consulting and Services
- * SRS Roofing & Sheet Metals
- * Universal Water Resources LLC

These are concrete results of hard work and dedication on the part of Local organizers, officers, and members. We would like to commend Local 65 for serving as an extraordinary example in the organizing arena.

Congratulations Local 65 Outstanding Organizers!!