

## Best Practice104: SMACNA Kansas City and SMART Local 2 Local Partnership Conference and Joint Programs

SMACNA Kansas City and SMART Local 2 came together on strategic planning efforts in order to identify and address their top concerns. Together they applied for and received funding from the national SMACNA-SMART Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force to hold a local partnership conference, where they established a structure to ensure that action items would move forward in an effort to improve market share in the Kansas City area. The following steps identify best practices established.

1. **Establish an active labor-management cooperation committee/trust.** Members must be committed to developing trust and communication. Labor and management won't always agree on every issue, but they should be willing to work together for the good of the industry to ensure that SMACNA and SMART are competing on an even playing field with their non-signatory competition. It should meet frequently and regularly. For example, Kansas City SMACNA and SMART Local 2 meet monthly.
2. **Hold a local partnership conference to develop a long-term blueprint for regaining and increasing local market share.** A facilitator—such as Michael Gaffney, formerly of Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations—can assist the local and contractors with developing strategic plans, including setting goals and distributing or assigning responsibilities. In Kansas City, 37 individuals—including 17 contractors—participated in the conference.

The event involved a group discussion of what a partnership relationship meant to each participant, a group discussion of the history of the industry in Kansas City from both the labor and management perspective, identification of key issues and concerns, and creation of issue teams assigned to develop action plans to address those issues.

Note that the SMART-SMACNA Joint Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force accepts applications to provide grants to support such conferences, including follow-up meetings after the initial discussions.

3. **Create an action plan to implement the blueprint.** The best place to create the initial action plan is at the partnership conference—before anyone leaves. Ensure that action items are assigned to appropriate committees, with measurable deliverables and deadlines. Ideally participants at the conference should volunteer to be a part of committees that interest them most. For example, the partners in Kansas City established three committees to address the key issues they identified.
  - a. **Education and Training.** This committee was charged with the following missions:
    - **Implement Journeyperson Upgrade Training**—Mandatory training was incorporated into contract language, which separated safety training, job specific training, and upgrade training. The upgrade training requirement was 10 hours the first year, 14 hours the second year, and 16 hours the third year and thereafter. Furthermore, the committee formed joint subcommittees to investigate on logistics, incentives, and penalties. Incentives included \$100 for each 10 hours completed; whereas, penalties included getting buy-in from contractors to not hire if training not accomplished or at least scheduled. Subsequently, more than 700 journeypersons receiving continuing education training.

- **Provide alternative training options for apprentices**—The committee investigated web-based and self-paced options for apprentices. In addition, Local 2 and Kansas City contractors implemented stronger requirements, such as requiring welding certificates in order to graduate from the program.
  - **Expand safety training for apprentices**—SMACNA Kansas City and Local 2 expanded safety training to ensure all apprentices receive 30-hour OSHA. Pre-apprentices were required to take 10-hour OSHA. Furthermore, the partnership improved training on topics such as rigging. By 2012, Kansas City was being recognized by the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Trust (SMOHIT) with a Safety Award for creating a company safety culture that incorporated management commitment and employee involvement; a system for hazard identification; and hazard corrections and controls and training.
  - **Create a leadership pilot program.** The program increased the number of classes geared toward leadership. Furthermore, apprentices and teachers at the Kansas City JATC selected the apprentice with the best leadership skills to send to the Partners In Progress Conference in 2012.
- b. **Marketing.** Members of the marketing committee helped to develop joint marketing initiatives to better reach potential customers and convey the message that the SMART-SMACNA team is the better choice. They had to establish a budget and make decisions about where to spend it. The committee worked also to improve marketing to members and potential members (e.g., non-union contractors).
- **Developed the Demand Metal Excellence program**—The program included creation of a logo and establishment of a Web site to link customers to union-signatory contractors and potential sheet metal apprentices with application information. The Web site links both audiences to the national Expertise Web sites. The Demand Metal Expertise logo has also been used to advertise at local professional sporting events—showcasing union labor that built four stadiums in the Kansas City area—and for television and print commercials. Contract Bargaining Agreement language required contractors to show the partnership branding in a prominent place on commercial vehicles.
  - **Contributed to FixMyHomeKC.com**—Kansas City contractors and the local worked with the International Training Institute (ITI), on the Fix My Home KC campaign. It links to signatory contractors to target the residential market with changeouts and service-work. It promotes union members and educates the public about the cost effectiveness of obtaining quality work.
  - **Used Constant Contact to send electronic newsletters to members.**
- c. **Work Classifications, Ratios, Flexibility.** Members of the committee helped create contract addendums covering changes that allow union-affiliated contractors to better compete on price in market segments targeted for expansion, such as Siding and Decking, and Residential and Light Commercial. Agreements lowered ratios, provided for a zero-wage

increase for the next three-year contract, and a mileage radius increase. The Local 2 business manager and Kansas City SMACNA chapter executive made personal visits to contractors to promote the changes and ask about challenges and concerns.

4. **Maintain the programs.** Once the action plan begins to be implemented, it is important to frequently review progress and identify what works and what is not effective. Changes to budgets may be required based on market conditions; however, neglecting to follow-through with joint efforts—such as keeping Web Sites up-to-date—can ultimately weaken the involved parties position in the market. Most important, continue to communicate with the opposite party in the joint efforts to ensure that concerns are addressed as quickly as possible.

### Quotes

- *Stacey Smyly, Kansas City SMACNA Executive Director:* “We have an excellent relationship with our union partners. Our monthly meetings are a forum to jointly discuss topics of concern. Open and honest discussion and following through with what we say is our recipe for success...We all strive to keep the lines of communication open through hard times and differing personalities on both sides of the equation.”
- *Jay Lind, SMART Local 2 Business Representative:* “We want to promote partnership—and the industry as a whole—in a city with 80 signatory contractors. Our hope is to get the Demand Metal Excellence logo on every truck, gang box, hard hat, and job trailer of anyone who is associated with Local 2 and SMACNA Kansas City.”
- *Stacey Smyly, Kansas City SMACNA Executive Director:* “We can’t do things the way we’ve always done them. It’s a different market today. We have to think of creative ways to hold onto what we have and maybe build back what we lost in the past.”

### Resources

1. Demand Metal Excellence Web Site—<http://www.demandmetalexcellence.com/>
2. Fix My Home KC Web Site—<http://www.fixmyhomekc.com/>
3. Amazing Success Stories, Partners in Progress Conference Presentation—  
<http://www.pinp.org/conf12/program/?fa=marketing-success-stories>
4. *Siding and Decking Agreement (available from SMACNA Kansas City)*
5. *Light Commercial Agreement (available from SMACNA Kansas City)*
6. *Work Safe Partnership Program II Agreement—*  
<http://www.smacnakc.com/images/uploads/osha-partnership-agreement.pdf>

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