



SHEET METAL & AIR CONDITIONING
CONTRACTORS' NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Panel Discussion: Industry Negotiation Experiences

Collective Bargaining Orientation

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Top 5 in 2025

1. After selecting our bargaining team, what should we do to prepare for negotiations? Do we need to meet? Should we discuss roles at the bargaining table? Who should do the talking? Do we need a lead/chief negotiator?
2. What information do we need to gather in order to prepare for negotiations? Should we be prepared with data to support our bargaining position?
3. How do we say “No” (or “Heck No”) to SMART’s outrageous economic proposals without a “plea of poverty” or otherwise causing the union to request our financial information?
4. One of our bargaining team members just said something stupid at the bargaining table (e.g., “We can’t afford that,” “OK, I agree to that proposal,” “You guys are idiots,” “The Union is worthless,” etc.). How do we fix it?
5. Should we set ground rules for negotiations? Social Media.



Bargaining Prep

- How do you go about getting information from your contractors on what issues they believe are most important – aside from the monetary settlement?
- Do you get information from your contractors on what they see the man-hours looking like in the next 1-3 years? Or what work they already have on the books?
- What impact would a strike have?
- Do you maintain a list of jobs or large projects that have gone non-union? Do you regularly get that info from your contractors?
- I'm trying to identify good members for our negotiating committee. How do you do that? Is it just always the most senior people from the biggest contractors? Do you try to get contractors of different parts of the industry? Do you try and integrate younger members?



Potential Bargaining Issues

- One of our largest contractors just sent in a notice saying that their company is withdrawing their bargaining rights. I'm concerned the union is going to attempt to negotiate terms with this large contractor first and then tell the multiemployer bargaining unit "here is the deal." What can or should we do?
- The plumbers and/or electricians are up before/after our agreement. Does it make sense to try and get a settlement early so our local union isn't just pushing for whatever the other trades settled for?



At the Table...

- What is the impact of offering retroactive pay?
- How do you handle negotiations where there are different rates for different areas and different types of work?
- Don't negotiate against yourself – when to cut off negotiations at home



At the Table...

- We made what we believe is a fair settlement proposal. The union's negotiating committee has rejected it and is refusing to even counter. Can they do that? What do we do?
- We made what we believe is a fair settlement proposal. The union's negotiating committee is refusing to even present it to the membership for a vote. Can they do that? What do we do?
- We have reached a fair settlement at the table but the union negotiating committee is not supporting and promoting the agreement to membership. What do we do?
- How do you handle a failed ratification vote?



Impasse / Deadlock

- Our contract has expired, we haven't reached a settlement, don't have Article X-8 in our CBA, and there is a realistic chance that the union will strike. How should we prepare our contractors? What are strategies to getting back to the table? Or encouraging our contractors to wait it out?
- Our local union is out on strike but has presented contractors with agreements whereby the members will continue to work, so long as the employer agrees to pay the settlement retroactively. Is this legal? Should we allow contractors whose bargaining rights we hold to do this?
- What are successful strategies to control the customer's perception when our local union out on strike, which minimizes the damage to our relationship afterwards?



THANK YOU!

