



WINNING JOBS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS



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Teamwork ... It Is A Beautiful Thing.

By Rick Allen, Business Manager

If you look back at the history of labor and management from the beginning, it was always a very volatile relationship. We all know the recent history, but I'm going back 80 to 100 years. Back then, if a craft union had a contract unsettled and went on strike, every craft union would go on strike to support their brothers, even if the other unions had contracts. It was called direct action and it was a very effective tool. Was it fair? No, it wasn't fair to the companies with an agreement in place. Could you imagine the chaos that would cause today? We would never land jobs with general contractors because they couldn't risk the unions going on strike every other week to support another union.

Eighty years ago a strike was a regular occurrence and could go on for months. Thankfully, we don't see that much anymore. Now we may see an occasional picket, but I have only seen two in 16 years on the job. Both of them were unsanctioned (unapproved) and both lasted only a couple of hours.

Although strikes became fewer and farther between, when I first started in the union in 1989 we still looked at our relationship with contractors as "us against them." Fast forward 26 years and now, we not only look at each other as partners, we are progressively finding ways to help each other. We realize it makes sense to have open lines of communication and trust each other. We need contractors to have jobs for our members and it's important to assist in, not hinder, that process. As Richard Barnes says, "Don't negotiate an agreement to split the pie up, negotiate to create opportunity and wealth." That is exactly what we need to strive to achieve.

Recently, we've worked with our contractor association executive, Dave Davia, to position ourselves for the urban renewal work on the planned revitalization of the Western Stock Show Complex. There are billions of dollars of work and we are out front working with the mayor's office in Denver to make sure our contractors get every opportunity to land it. Five years ago we would have waited until the bids came back to find out if we got lucky enough to get one or two of those projects.

Now, we are proactively involved in the early stages of these projects, selling our business model (the key word is "our"). We are a team, as management and labor, and as a team we will be successful. I truly believe the sky is the limit for us. Every contractor and every union representative should feel great pride for changing more than 100 years of legacy into a model that is successful and creates opportunity instead of conflict. Will we be best buddies forever? We will always have issues we can't agree on just like any other relationship (including friendship or marriage). The important thing is to look at each other as teammates working toward the same goal and not adversaries, then great things will happen.

I promise you this model is opening eyes and blowing minds right now because most people have never seen it before. I am truly appreciative of the work that Dave Davia and all of our contractors have put into this giant leap forward. I am equally proud of all of our union representatives who also support the effort and were challenged with convincing thousands of union members to break away from historic hardline positions to do things differently. Change is hard and it is even harder to sell. We have intelligent members and when presented with the truth and the facts they come on board.

None of this means we won or we are perfect now. We have a ways to go, but we are walking a new path. If we can stay focused on the goal then this will be a great path to be on and we will be even more successful.

Rick