

## Introduction

In last issue, we discussed the roles of the **Northwest Wall & Ceiling Industry Trust Fund**, **Northwest Wall & Ceiling Contractors Association** and the **Northwest Wall and Ceiling Bureau** in the industry.

These organizations need a partnership with a trained, skilled workforce to give the union wall and ceiling industry the strength, credibility and professionalism necessary to compete in today's construction market.

## A Well Trained Workforce

One of the premises of a union workforce is that journeymen are better trained in their specialty than their non-union counterparts. They have more to offer their employers and the end users – or purchasers – of their “product.” The high skill level of the workers is the edge the union employer has historically enjoyed.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, this edge has eroded, allowing the non-union segment to take away a lot of work from the union contractors in the wall and ceiling industry.

Both management and labor have recognized the declined skill level of our industry and discussed it at great length during the last contract negotiations. One thing is clear: a trained, highly skilled workforce is a common goal of both workers and employers.

## New Strategies

In order to address the trend of declining skill of the industry, management and labor agreed to add two new sections in Article 10 of the collective bargaining agreement.

## Continuing Education (Article 10.4)

This section was created to ensure that existing journeymen maintain the highest level of skill offered by the wall and ceiling industry.

Many other professions already require continuing education as a means of keeping up with changes in their fields. This program will help journeymen stay current on their knowledge of materials, procedures and tools in our industry.

## Journeymen New to the Union (Article 10.05)

This section created a new path for experienced workers to join

the union and get the additional training they need to become journeymen.

This is a major benefit to all parties as it:

- allows the union to organize new members;
- sets up journeymen new to the union for success; and
- gives employees and existing journeymen an incentive to help train the new journeymen.

On their first dispatch to a union employer, these new journeymen are evaluated and, if necessary, given a training plan. Once they complete whatever additional training is needed to perform the work of a journeyman, they receive a pay increase that brings them to par with existing journeymen.

---

The construction market has changed, and in order to compete, we must change too.

These new sections in the collective bargaining agreement allow the union, its employees and employers to work together to provide the customer the best end product possible.