

## Generations Learning from Each Other is Crucial to Our Future

A few years back, I led my company through what was called a value analysis. It's a procedure where you call in an industry specialist and look at how you run your business – kind of like going to the Mayo Clinic for a complete physical and mental checkup.

They looked at everything from management systems to accounting, marketing, profit (which is not a dirty word, by the way), succession planning, and other areas. We scored "best of class" in all categories, but the highest ranking came when they looked at our depth of management. My company was structured so that, in the event I was no longer there, for whatever reason, we had good, solid backup leadership capable of stepping in and keeping the ship on its charted course.

When I heard of the IUPAT's Young Lions program, I was delighted, but frankly not surprised, that General President Williams and IUPAT Leadership understood the value of depth of management and planning for the future. As leaders, we need to have the vision to see down the road. Where will the IUPAT and all the respective district councils be when the leadership changes? In some instances, leadership changes will be good and, in some instances, not so good, but you can't leave this to chance. We all had better be ready for dealing with whatever the future brings. This is as close as you can come to having control of the future of the union, your industry and your future livelihood.

I strongly believe in promoting from within the ranks whenever possible. This does so much good. It gives everyone an opportunity to advance within their industry – to see their peers advance and not just survive but thrive in the business world. That's a big deal. It should and does bring pride to see future leaders come up through the ranks and earn their way into leadership roles. And existing leadership must be willing to mentor future leaders as well.

Current leaders must be willing to share what they have learned so future leaders don't have to learn the tough lessons the hard way: by making mistakes that could have been avoided if only they had been given the training and tools to get the job done. We all should try very hard to learn from our mistakes. Believe me, I have made my share of mistakes and paid the price, but I usually don't make the same mistake twice.

It has been my experience that existing leadership and management have much to gain and learn from the Young Lions in any facet of our industry. It's true in the unions just as it is in the contractors' businesses. I'm not saying make changes without good reason. There are many good things in place that need not be tampered with. It is, however, healthy to explore new ideas — a fresh approach to solving problems and dealing with people.

One thing is for sure – the new generation of leaders cut their teeth on information systems some of the old guard, which includes me, still can't comprehend. Don't let that be a deterrent. We have an opportunity to make positive changes in areas of communication and information. It's about knowledge, and we all know knowledge is power. In the process of bringing up new leadership, we can learn from them and they can learn from us.

Many years ago, when I was working my way through school, I worked part-time for an employment agency. I would interview young people just out of school and older ones simply out of a job, all needing help to find work. I started placing people in jobs at companies where none of the other employment counselors ever had any success, so they quit trying. Since I didn't know better, I started working the so-called impossible companies, made some contacts, and — low and behold — started placing people in some of the biggest Fortune 500 companies in the country.

I learned a valuable lesson back then and it has served me well through the years: Listen to the ideas of the new generation. Give them the full measure of your consideration. For those coming up through the ranks, listen closely to what your leaders and managers tell you. No need to learn the hard way. Don't ignore their advice when it is offered. Ideally there will be a willingness to work together and the end result will make us the better for it. Remember, most all of us who have been through difficult situations are eager to share our experiences with you.

I applaud the IUPAT for implementation of the Young Lions program. The FCA is working to create a similar program for its future leaders to facilitate the mentoring of our younger contractor members. This is proactive thinking at its best and will go a long way to assuring the future of the IUPAT and FCA — now, and into the 21st century.

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