

Organizing Adapts to Change to Fuel the IUPAT

Organizing is the lifeblood of the union.” But what does that really mean? More importantly, what does it mean to you?

Some people tried to qualify the phrase by saying, “Organizing is to the union what recruiting and the draft are to an army.” This may work for some, but most people still cannot relate to what organizing really is. Organizing remains an abstract term, like “beauty,” “tall,” and “old.” We can only understand these abstract terms through life experiences. I know beauty because I have seen ugly...I know tall because I have experienced short...I know old because I was once young...I know organizing through assisting groups of exploited workers, winning NLRB elections, getting collective-bargaining agreements, and improving their families’ standard of living through better wages, health insurance, pensions, and job security...

I know organizing by proposing Responsible Contracting language in the public works bidding process resulting in unscrupulous contractors not being allowed to bid...I know organizing by working with our district councils to level the playing field for our union contractors and increase market share.

So, organizing is not an abstract term to me, or to the many of my brothers and sisters in this room who have been through the same life experience as I have.

Non-organizers may ask, “What has the IUPAT done to promote organizing?”

At the last convention, the delegates passed a resolution to start an organizing fund. With that fund, which we call the nickel fund, the International has provided the various

district councils close to \$11.7 million in organizing assistance. Also, the International has provided training—lots of training, as you have just seen



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in the video: COMET I & II, Lucas, Breslin, and many, many more.

At one point, we confused people with our training. No, really, we did confuse some people, because some district councils thought that the new training was the new way to organize! We failed to communicate that organizing is multi-dimensional and the new training was just a new tool to be added to the organizing tool box.

As General President Williams, the director of Organizing, examined the growth of the union, he found it was growing—but not by the amount it should, and he wanted to clearly define what the problem was. So,

under the constitution, he formed an Organizing Committee, made up of four District Council BM/STs and four full-time Regional Organizing Coordinators (ROC's). This committee discussed, compared, and assisted district councils in their organizing efforts.

It was discovered that each region had (both) strong and weak organizing district councils. Out of this, questions arose. Why do some district councils have a high market share in a particular industry, while others have no market share at all? How is it that a smaller district council with little resources can out-perform larger district councils—with more resources—in the same region? How can district councils in right-to-work states bring in more new members than those in free states?

These were questions that needed to be answered and addressed.

It is said that a wise person learns from his mistakes, a wiser person learns from others’ mistakes, but the wisest person of all learns from the success of others.

This was the basis on which General President Williams proposed an organizing summit and assembled the most productive Organizing directors from each region to share their successful organizing models with the other district councils. The goal was to formulate a Case Studies Manual of the “Best Organizing Practices” to share with our districts councils.

You have clearly seen, in the video, that this summit was a huge success and the Best Practice Organizing Manual will be available soon online for your use.

In following with the convention theme, “Change Makes Us Stronger,” General President Williams has introduced changes to the International

Organizing Department. The organizing department is a stand-alone department whose goal is not to direct the district councils' organizing efforts but, rather, (to) partner with them to develop effective organizing campaigns.

Another change was the creation of the Go Fund. Go Fund stands for Growth-Opportunity and it gives additional funding to a district council for specific targets in specific industries. Since the inception of the Go Fund, over \$5.1 million has been committed to district councils for such targeted industries as floor covering, glazing, and industrial painting. And Go Fund grants have been dispensed to all four regions.

As we talk about the funding (\$16.8 million), I would like to mention that there are two requirements. One, an approved organizing plan, and two, a monthly report. These strategic organizing plans have criteria which must be followed to be approved. To sum up a successful organizing plan in one word, it must be "effective," and that is where the monthly reports come in. The monthly report was not designed to denounce anyone but, rather, (as) a measure of the effectiveness of the organizing plan.

I recently had the opportunity to analyze a district council's organizing efforts at the request of the BM/ST and, in doing so, I pulled their monthly report along with another district council's for comparison. Both district councils had similar plans and reports, so I was able to compare. In working with the AGP/ROC in that region and, in turn, him working with the directors of Organizing, we were able to show the BM/STs how their organizing efforts could be more effective with a few changes. This is just one example of the intent of the reports and how the International can help share the "best practices theory."

In addition to funding, the Organizing Department knows that training is what gives the union value, and who and how we train demonstrates, as a union, where we are going. We will continue to train new organizers and upgrade the skills of our veteran organizers.

The question now becomes, "What are we going to do for the future?"

We cannot have progress without changes and, as the world we live in changes, so must we. The Organizing Department, with the help of the Communications Department, is developing an online clearinghouse, bulletin board, and discussion forum—putting everything organizers need to know within reach, at the simple click of a mouse.

What changes are taking place in the world of organizing?

Well, as we look at what is happening in Congress, we have to ask ourselves not if and when the EFCA passes but, rather, "Are we prepared to take advantage of it...if it does pass?"

We at the IUPAT are fortunate because the bill, as it is now, is patterned after some "Provincial Labor Laws" in Canada, and our brothers and sisters in Canada know the "ins" and "outs" of this type of law and how to successfully use it. So, we can and will look to them for assistance. It's fortunate that we are an international union, and not just a national union.

Besides the EFCA, what is coming up that could expand our market share?

The Organizing Department, along with the Government Affairs Department, is looking at a Green Initiative of the Obama administration under Secretary of Energy Chu, who, at a climate-change symposium in London, said that he "wanted to paint roofs an energy-reflecting white."

Since 2005, California has required new commercial buildings with flat roofs to have white tops because of the energy savings they produce. This law has been amended to cover other type of roofs. In Washington, DC, a similar law goes into effect in January that requires new flat roofs on commercial buildings to be covered in vegetation or a reflective material. I am sure that similar laws like these will soon follow.

A spokeswoman for Chu said that the (U.S.) Energy Department is exploring ways to encourage more white roofs on private and public buildings. She also noted that some homeowners who purchase "cool" roofs would be eligible for an expanded tax credit intended for "weatherizing" homes.

Last night, I had an opportunity to talk to a friend of mine and a friend of yours, and we were talking about some of the problems that arise with the regional organizing coordinators, the problems they have in not getting some district councils to embrace the organizing. And he said, "Greg, when you get up there tomorrow, you have to tell them to try...you really have to tell them to try to organize. If they don't try to organize, they're going to die."

I thank you, Terry Fitzmaurice, for those words of wisdom. And in doing that, I would like to pose a challenge to all of the delegates in this room. Let's unite, work with your district council, and conduct a multi-council, multi-regional organizing campaign focused on a single target. Imagine, just imagine what the result would be if we really worked as ONE UNION.

And, in closing, I would like to leave you with one final thought: "Organizing is the Lifeblood of our Union"—experience it!

Thank you.