

Profiles in Academia—FTI Instructors See Value of Training

Thank you. I'm just going to go off-script a little bit before I get into my speech. First of all, I'd like to thank Mr. Williams; Mr. Rigmaiden; Mr. Galis; the entire General Executive Board; Joe Kolick, who has been there for me in some tough times. Warren, how many times have you talked me off the ledge; I appreciate that.

I'd also like to thank Bill McDevitt, who has been a big brother to me since I came onboard with the FTI. We've had our little talks, and he's kind of coached me through some things. So, thank you, Billy. I appreciate it.

I'd also like to thank Terry Webb, co-chair of the FTI, for his guidance, direction, patience. It's a very young staff with the FTI and, Terry, thank you for bearing with us. I'd also like to thank the entire board of trustees for having the faith in this young staff to go to work every day and get the job done.

Personally, I'd really like to thank Mr. Rigmaiden. He's been a mentor to me, a boss, and a friend. There isn't a day that doesn't go by that we don't communicate—e-mails, phone calls, Friday night, Saturday morning, Sunday morning, Sunday night—he's always been there for me professionally and personally. And he's also been there for me to give me my training days when I need it. That's kind of an inside deal at the FTI—time to get tuned up a little bit; he's not afraid to do it.

I'd like to thank the entire FTI team for a lunch-bucket attitude—(a) "get up and go to work and get it done" mentality. If the FTI team could stand up right now—everybody stand up from the FTI, FTI staff.

I just used the word "team." Staff—you can remain standing. Come on. Stand up. Be recognized here. I've



DAN PENSKI
FTI DIRECTOR

never used the word "team" before with this group. If I addressed them in a memo, an e-mail, it was always "staff," "crew," "group," "all." But I'll tell you something; they've surely come together as a team. Their attitude, the way they do things, the way they get it done it—is just totally unbelievable. I personally thank everybody on the staff.

I'd like to thank my executive assistant director, Sarah Coyne. She's the behind-the-scenes person that gets it done. When I came on board, Mr. Williams said to me one day, "Dan, I'm going to tell you something. Things are changing. You're the director. You direct. You don't deliver." I listened to

that and I said, "Well, if I'm not going to deliver, I got to have somebody who can deliver it for me," so Sarah is the one who does all the delivering. So thank you.

This group of professionals, like I said—they're just unbelievable. They use terms like, "Does anybody need a hand with anything? Is there anything else I can do to help out? I'll take care of it. When do you need it done by? Just tell me when and where, and I'll be there. I got your back."

The FTI team is built on trust and mutual respect, and I truly, truly appreciate everything that this staff has done. I'm very proud of everybody here. These folks do not work a shift. They don't punch a clock. There's no week-ends off. There are no evenings off. They work very hard. I have to say this: The team is now in place.

The last piece of the puzzle was put in place for a Canadian ATR. Now it's time to go to work for the membership. Thank you, team of the FTI.

Many things have changed since the 29th general convention five years ago. The dream of a international training center became a reality. Our 51,000-square-foot facility was built in Hanover, Maryland, and has 18,000 square feet of training space. The National JATF is now called the Finishing Trades Institute (FTI).

The FTI has also taken on a structural change. There's now a director, executive assistant director, director of curriculum, project manager, four ATRs, two recruitment managers, three curriculum technical writers, and three full-time support staff to effectively serve the membership.

In September 2006, the FTI board of trustees came to a consensus on what will constitute the FTI's success for the future. They created a strategic plan. The approach in defining the new strate-

gic direction was not to identify what the FTI is doing today, but to determine what is not being done today and what we must do in the future to be successful. The strategic direction is not about business as usual. It's about change. The strategic direction is a constant reminder, as the leadership of the FTI oversees the development of the annual operational plan and what must be changed to steer toward the envisioned future.

The FTI must illuminate choices it must make and the challenges that need to be overcome; better serve its key stakeholders; (and) fulfill its purpose, cause, or mission to successfully move into the future.

There are four major goals outlined in the strategic plan that establishes the direction of the FTI staff on a daily basis.

- Goal number one: The FTI will be the recognized finishing trades industry leading-edge resource for developing educational materials and training the most qualified instructors.
- Goal number two: The FTI will be a proactive partner in assisting local JATFs in raising their standards.
- Goal number three: The FTI will be a leader in helping to improve the recognition of the finishing trades industry as a viable and important career field.
- Goal number four: The FTI will have an infrastructure that supports and communicates their strategic goals.

Talking about change: In 2007, the Finishing Trades Institute board of trustees instituted a lodging reimbursement policy for our trainers who have taken courses at the ITC. Reimbursements given back to our affiliates to date have totaled \$163,000.

In 2008, the FTI board of trustees instituted a grant policy that desires to assist local training programs through the use of grant money or grant services, as requested, for the purpose of advancing the affiliated training programs during these tough economical

times. To date, the FTI awarded 22 grants to our local affiliates totaling \$1.8 million.

The FTI has also received health and safety grants from the Center to Protect Workers Rights to train our workers in the standards of health and safety. Our goal is to have trainers go back to their local areas and train the membership, and to ensure that our members work safely and productively every day on the job sites. Over the past three years, the FTI was awarded \$450,000 to assist in health and safety training to the members of the IUPAT.

In these ever-changing times, the Department of Labor has made a final ruling regarding the 29 CFR 29, which dictates our registered apprenticeship standards. The FTI applied for and received \$623,000 to help assist our training programs and contracting partners revamp, and adjust to the changes to the new apprenticeship standards.

In an effort to stay current with industry standards, the IUPAT FTI is committed to expanding its successful partnerships with leading manufacturers to provide updated curricula and training for its craft workers and signatory contractors. The IUPAT and FTI, and selected manufacturers, work in collaboration to develop educational materials that are current and based on industry standards, including manufacturers' certifications of their products.

Talking about change: The FTI is committed to lifelong learning. New partnerships have been created with Marshall Community and Technical College and the National Labor College, so our membership can obtain their associate's and bachelor's degrees.

The FTI is committed to strengthening our training capacity and raising the bar at our local training centers by

making sure that our trainers all enroll in teaching techniques.

The FTI is committed to working with manufacturers to obtain industry certification.

The FTI is committed to meeting the demands of our signatory contractors for a productive, skilled workforce by providing unsurpassed training for all IUPAT members.

Woodrow Wilson once said, "If you want to make enemies, try to change something." You know what? He was right. Change is not easy, and some people fear it. Yet, we must change.

Times are changing. Our industries are changing. Our workforce is changing. And we must prepare and change with the times. Training is not a gaff. It has to be joined at the hip (to) organizing, government affairs, LMCI, Job Corps, signatory contractors, and our rank-and-file if we are to continue to say that, as a union, we are the best at what we do.

Training should be our industry's top priority—what will set us apart from our competition. Without a trained workforce, we have no power and we have no future. During these hard economic times, our training center should be filled with journey workers updating their skills and

certifications, apprentices learning their crafts—preparing their skills for when we crawl out of these bad economic times.

We must change. We must change our current cultural mindset. We must change from being a reactive culture to a

proactive culture, and prepare for our future before our future prepares us for harder times. We must plot a course and stay on track. We must change the way we do our daily business.

We need to look at our JATF committees, (and) determine if we have

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