

The Labor Management Cooperative- A Working Anomaly

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On its surface, it shouldn't work. In fact, it almost sounds as if an unnatural act is being committed. Two groups—labor versus management, negotiating over wages, benefits, and work rules, often times at extreme odds. Then the dust settles, and together they go from the rigors of the bargaining table to an amicable place known as a Labor Management Cooperative. While the concept seems too juxtaposed to succeed, both parties know it is a necessary business strategy. It truly is a working anomaly.

Unions and their Employer Partners have instituted LMC's in various formats over the years, but generally they all share a common goal---create more work opportunities for members and contractors. Today's LMC's have become very strategic in purpose with many serving as the "public relations department" charged with the task of carrying forth a positive message of partnership to perspective construction user groups.

Years of stereotypes and negative public perception have to be reversed; an LMC provides a neutral forum for this discussion and a platform where labor and management can

create change. Marketing, advertising and promotional campaigns are developed within its structure. While some of these programs are complex, LMC's still have a way of nurturing intuitive thoughts by simply getting together and understanding each other better. The net result; good ideas are turned into thoughtful industry outreach programs that create more work opportunities.

This on-going column will be dedicated to the LMC established by the NJ Regional Council of Carpenters and their Union Contractor Employers, known as the *NJ Carpenter Contractor Trust*. It will represent more than just a post-event program report. Our goal is to explain the mechanics behind marketing and public relations strategies that cultivate successful relationships. Future columns will devote time to explaining the qualitative and quantitative impact of communication programs; the why, the how, and the results.

Until next time, remember this. Every effective LMC is guided by an equal partnership, survives through its members and thrives on a spirit of cooperation.