

## Labor Management Viewpoints: Building Advantage for southeast Wisconsin

December 22, 2004

In a widespread effort, union contractors and trades people are launching a campaign to inform residential and commercial consumers, along with potential trades people, about the benefits of union construction.

The campaign, called Building Advantage, is an initiative of the Construction Labor Management Council of Southeast Wisconsin Inc. The CLMC is jointly supported by union contractors and trades people throughout the region.

The cooperation between labor and management across many different trades is significant. It is no secret that labor and management have not always pulled in the same direction to achieve common goals. Building Advantage presents an opportunity for the building trades industry to have a strong impact by pooling resources and ideas.

The Building Advantage name is also significant. Everyone associated with union construction benefits from the advantages it offers.

Choosing union construction as a career path builds an advantage in the lives of those who choose it. Students and other potential trades people of all races and gender can find a rewarding career in the trades.

Using union construction builds an advantage for commercial and residential consumers. Whether it's a new power plant or a single-family home, union construction can build it with unsurpassed quality and value -- and complete it on time.

Building Advantage strives to increase demand for union building trades, attract and retain the best people and -- most important -- change misperceptions about union contractors and trades people. This ongoing campaign helps contractors and trades people communicate positive views about their industry to expand people's awareness of union membership and its benefits. These messages increase understanding of and respect for careers in the trades.

### Improving perceptions

To build a foundation for this campaign, the Allied Construction Employers Association conducted extensive focus group research. The study's goal was to determine what people -- including consumers, nonunion contractors, union contractors, high-school students and parents -- really think about union contractors and trades. The research results demonstrate that it is possible to improve perceptions by setting the record straight.

Armed with this information, the CLMC has tailored a long-term marketing communications plan to reach out to target audiences. The research showed that one of the most important audiences is union contractors and trades people themselves. The CLMC has focused its initial efforts on spreading the Building Advantage message to these groups.

When people hear about the advantages of union building trades, they want to learn more about it. Together we will build support by presenting the facts: Union trades people are highly trained in their skills and productive on the job site so jobs get done on time and on budget. Union contractors and trades people also take extra steps to meet -- and often exceed -- safety regulations, for fewer accidents. Add to that the secured benefits package -- health insurance and retirement -- and union construction is an unbeatable career.

Expect to see a lot more from Building Advantage in the coming months. Some of the many tactics include: direct mail, brochures, advertising, a speaker program, resources to help consumers hire quality contractors, career fairs, a [Web site](#), print advertising, billboards and more.

*John Topp is the executive director of the Construction Labor Management Council of Southeast Wisconsin Inc.*