

William P. Hite
General President

The UA Standard For Excellence: Our Commitment To The Future

As members of the United Association, we all know that we are among the elite in the building trades. We are right at the top in terms of our training and our overall commitment to our industry as well as to our union. However, it's no longer enough for only us to know this—it's now time to make it official, so that everyone we come in contact with knows that we are truly the best in the business.

That's why we're making our commitment to doing the best job possible a formal policy of the United Association. In this issue of your *UA Journal*, you will find a comprehensive document entitled *UA Standard for Excellence*. We are putting down in writing our pledge to maintain the highest standards of excellence in all that we do—in training, maintaining our skills, working safely, being more productive, improving workplace attitudes, and all the other elements that will set us apart from the rest of the pack. It's also about pride; I want our UA

members to be the ones who stand out on the jobsite when it comes to how they conduct themselves, their professional attitude, and even what kind of image or appearance they present.

These are not just words on paper; these are principles we believe in. Our contractors are also part of this initiative. Like us, they want to do the best job possible, because they understand that their future success—and ours as well—depends on it. The UA Standard for Excellence is a joint labor-management pledge to uphold the highest industry standard in the workplace, with the ultimate goal of ensuring complete customer satisfaction. Owners contract with union contractors because they give them the best “bang for their buck.” It's the union's job to make sure we keep our contractors competitive to increase market share, which equates to more jobs for our members.

I believe strongly that the UA Standard for Excellence is a policy that should be adopted at

every level of our organization. I don't mean that you should just put the official policy up on a wall somewhere and walk away. I mean that we should incorporate it into our daily lives—in our training schools, on the job and in our interactions with our local union and our UA brothers and sisters.

During the past year, I, along with our other General Officers, have traveled to all parts of the U.S. and Canada. We have met with hundreds of UA members and officers, dozens of contractors and many owners and clients of our signatory employers. These meetings have been invaluable in providing insight into the things we do right on the jobsite and, more importantly, where we can improve.

There is always room for improvement, and the UA is no exception to that old saying. We do get high marks from our employers and their clients when it comes to our overall craftsmanship. We have shown time and again that when skilled manpower is critical, for the

most part, we can provide that manpower whenever and wherever it is needed.

The truth is, I have no doubt that the vast majority of our membership is made up of good, decent, hardworking people who simply want a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. By and large, UA members work hard and are always willing to go the extra mile to help a contractor be successful.

Now, that doesn't mean we can just sit back and take it for granted that everyone appreciates the UA and the good job we do. Moreover, as I noted, there are areas where we can do better. In every corner of North America, if you ask a contractor or a construction owner where we need to improve, the answers are all pretty much the same. To put it very simply and directly, this is what concerns our employers and their customers: low productivity, absenteeism, worker appearance on the jobsite, poor attitudes and inadequate safety practices, lack of training and certification, unqualified foremen and concerns about illicit drug and alcohol use. While these may sound pretty ominous, the fact is that all of these concerns are easy to fix, if we just have the will to do so. The reality is that most of our members are not guilty of any of these negative things, but the bad actions of a small minority can spoil it for the rest of us.

Let's face it—every organization has that 5% who are negative on everything. This is also true in many local unions. They are the 5% that your elected officers spend way too much of their time addressing and putting up with their nonsense and unwarranted behavior. They're the same ones who are at the union meetings or on the jobsite disrupting everything. Their focus is on everything negative. Unfortunately, this small group often has a lot of influence on what goes on in their local and on the jobsite. Brothers and sisters, this has got to stop. We cannot let a small group of malcontents bring us down and ruin our reputation. I think we all know who I'm talking about. It's time to put this group in their place and focus on more important things, like increasing market share through owner satisfaction. Make no mistake about it—the owner, no one else—decides if a job goes union or not.

It's our responsibility to work with our contractors to make the union the “go to guys.” Increased market share equates to better wages and benefits and goes a long way to securing the UA's position well into the future.

However, I don't believe that we can simply blame a few people for the problems we face on the job. As we all know, for construction jobs to run smoothly and safely, it takes a team pulling together. When one element of that team lets down, the whole team is affected, even

**“It's up
to us to
create the
future we
want.”**

those who are doing exactly what they should be doing. This is a domino effect that ultimately works its way throughout a jobsite and eventually gets to the construction owner. When it gets to that point, there is now a serious problem. We need to do all we can to prevent the problem from starting in the first place—and that's where all of you come into play.

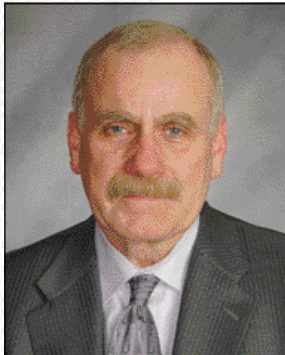
The UA Standard for Excellence serves as a guide for everyone—labor, management, the owner—to use as a means of smoothing the path to job completion. You will also be glad to know that the UA isn't alone in taking this approach; most of the building trades unions are also embracing this

concept. I encourage you to read in its entirety the official UA Standard for Excellence appearing on pages 16-17 of this issue.

Our Standard for Excellence is strongly supported by two other initiatives. These are our Strategic Planning Committee, which is tasked with expanding our market share, and the Mechanical Allied Crafts Council or MAC, which brings together the six unions responsible for the majority of the work in the mechanical and piping industry. MAC allows us to speak with one voice as we seek to increase job opportunities, eliminate jurisdictional disputes and do all the other things that we must do to make building trades unions competitive today.

The bottom line is that we want to increase the market share of our organization and our employing contractors. It's up to us to make that happen by keeping our commitment to being the most highly skilled, best trained, safest and most productive workers in the industry. Our contractors will go after the work, if they know they have a team behind them that they can depend on. If they don't have that certainty, they will hesitate to seek work beyond their own comfort zone. In essence, it's up to us to create the future we want.

The UA Standard for Excellence sets us on a clear path for change in the workplace. As you read the policy, you will see that responsibility for improving the job is not just placed on the shoulders of the members, the local union, the contractor or owner. We are stating that we believe responsibility lies with *all* parties engaged in a project. I believe our contractors and their customers will make the commitment we are asking for, especially if they see that our rank-and-file are committed to it as well. That's why I am asking for your cooperation and support in making the UA Standard for Excellence the basis for a new, stronger and mutually beneficial relationship with our contractors and their clients. I've said over and over, if the union, our contractors and the owners are on the same page, we're unstoppable! The UA Standard for Excellence is our commitment to making that a reality. ■



Steve Kelly, Assistant General President

During the past two years much has changed in the United Association. It has been and will continue to be our mission to get this union back on the proper track. Clearly, we have made major strides in accomplishing that goal as evidenced by your overwhelming support at our

National Convention. As General President Hite has often said, we must put the past in our rear view mirror and look to the future. To that end, we want to present you with the **UA Standard for Excellence**. This document outlines a *policy that is a Labor-Management commitment to uphold the highest industry standard in the workplace and ensure customer satisfaction. The program is designed to promote the UA members' world-class skills and safe, efficient work practices on the jobs performed by our signatory contractors for their customers.*

During the past year the General President and I, along with the other General Officers, have traveled to all parts of the United States and Canada. We have met with hundreds of UA members and officers, dozens of our contractors and many owners and contractor clients. These meetings have been invaluable in providing insight as to what is right and wrong with our approach to the jobsite.

On the positive side of these meetings, the UA gets high marks for overall craftsmanship. There can be no doubt the training and certification provided UA members is the best in the world. The UA has demonstrated that, when skilled manpower is at a premium, we are able to muster whatever manpower is needed. Our response to the rebuilding effort following hurricane Katrina is proof of that point. Finally, it is proven over and over again that the majority of the UA's membership is made up of good, decent people who simply want a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

On the negative side, the complaints heard are virtually universal:

Low Productivity
Absenteeism
Poor Craftsmanship

Lack of Training and Certification
Worker Appearance on the Jobsite
Poor Workplace Attitude
Poor Workplace Safety Practices
Illicit Drug and Alcohol Usage

These "hot button" issues pervade nearly every major job we are involved with. Yet the majority of our members are doing the right thing from job to job. So what is the problem?

It is easy to blame a few people for the problems described but it is not that simple. Construction jobs are living, changing entities. In other words, all parts of the job are in some way connected. Normally the thumb is something that is connected to the hand. Hit that thumb with a hammer, and suddenly the whole body is something connected to the thumb. This is exactly where we are when it comes to dealing with the issues seen as negative by our contractors and their clients. When a crew is missing a key worker because of absenteeism, or if the crew in general has a poor work attitude, the problems created are not local but systemic. The whole project is affected. Typically, these problems are not limited to a single crew or group of craftsmen. These same problems, when present in multiple crews, create a domino effect adversely affecting the entire project. It is at this point that job performance comes to the client's attention. Ideally the relationship between labor, contractor and client would be positive and seamless. But we all know that, more often than not, all parties engage in finger pointing when things begin falling apart. Consequently, we offer the **UA Standard for Excellence** as a guide for all parties—labor, management and owners—to use as a means of smoothing job completion. We are not alone in this approach as most of the other construction unions are applying the same strategy.

The **UA Standard for Excellence** is a new way of doing business that extends to our present contractor and owner population. As reported previously, we have been deeply involved in two important initiatives. One represents labor in the form of the Mechanical Allied Crafts Council, or MAC. The MAC Council consists of the UA, Electrical Workers, Sheet Metal Workers, Insulators, Iron Workers and Elevator Constructors. These are the crafts that we work most closely with in the industrial setting. General

President Hite currently serves as President of this organization. At the same time we have been working with the Construction Users Roundtable, or CURT to gain the owner perspective as well as increase our exposure to owners currently outside our business relationship sphere. We are of course extending our already effective relationship with our union contractor base.

The UA Standard for Excellence is not a stand-alone initiative. Rather, it is an integral part of an overall strategy to advance and strengthen the United Association. Shortly after taking office, General President Hite created and now chairs the **Strategic Planning Committee**. The Committee is made up of Business Managers representing all parts of the U.S. and Canada. The charge of the Committee is to expand UA market-share. The focus of this effort is to excel in all core areas of operation. The framework of the Committee's approach is:

- *Skills Training and Workforce Development*
- *Contractor and Owner Relations*
- *Political Action and Government Affairs*
- *Effective Union Administration*

As you can see, the Standard for Excellence is an integral part of this overall strategy.

The growth of market-share is now and always has been the prerogative of the union. The reverse of that statement is certainly true. For example, the unions lost an enormous number of jobs in the Gulf Coast area during the early 1970s. Simply put, the unions were not responsive to the needs of the owners. As a matter of fact, the unions pushed the owners away by making unreasonable demands, failing to man work and in general performing poorly. We trapped our union contractors in the middle and have only ourselves to blame. **We can only regain those lost jobs through our own initiatives.** On the part of the UA, we have started the process of reinstating our presence in the Gulf Coast region. The implementation of the Gulf Coast District Council and the associated Gulf Coast Agreement has already borne fruit. The reason this approach is successful is simple. The entire premise of the Council and the Agreement is that the effort is driven by the needs of the owner community.

Another example of market-share growth is our banking initiative. We have reached out to major banking institutions and made a simple proposition. If you, the bank, will

seek to use union help for your construction and maintenance needs, we have something tangible to offer in return. We will recommend your banking and investment services to our local unions, trust funds and our membership. Our message is that we support businesses that support us. What could be easier to understand? The program is beginning to take off. Rather than being satisfied with just banks, it is our intent to expand the program to include major supermarket and drugstore chains. These endeavors represent new ground and new market-share for the UA. Only through this kind of activity are we able to increase market-share.

Only by developing relationships with the clients that hire our contractors can we hope to increase the UA's presence. Owners must know that we are what we **say** we are if they are to make decisions translating to jobs for UA members. Since taking office, General President Hite has encouraged input from not only his staff but from Business Managers, local union officers and members. There is real value in this type of open dialogue. As you may well expect, there are always the nay-sayers who are unhappy with anything we do. Recently, a letter was received from such a member. The letter was in response to an article that appeared in the General President's *Journal* column. This person took exception with a statement made in the article regarding the union's role in increasing market-share. In his view, the union had no role in growing UA market-share. He believed it solely the prerogative of the contractor to change market-share. As was explained earlier in this column, a union can diminish its market-share and only the union can increase or grow market-share. Of course we need contractors to bid work in a growing market. It is our responsibility to secure the opportunity for that contractor. It is foolish to believe otherwise.

The **UA Standard for Excellence** sets us on a clear path for change in the workplace. As you read the policy, you will see that responsibility for improving the job is not just relegated to the member, the local, the contractor or the owner. Responsibility lies with all parties engaged in the project. Only through mutual cooperation and effort can we correct problems that have plagued our industry for these many years. We ask for your unqualified support in making the **UA Standard for Excellence** the guide for our relationship with our contractors and their clients.



STANDARD

The **UA Standard for Excellence** policy is a Labor-Management commitment to uphold the highest industry standards in the workplace and ensure customer satisfaction. The program is designed to promote UA members' world-class skills and safe, efficient work practices on the jobs performed by our signatory contractors for their customers.

MEMBER AND LOCAL UNION RESPONSIBILITIES:

To ensure the **UA Standard for Excellence** platform meets and maintains its goals, the Local Union Business Manager, in partnership with his implementation team, including shop stewards and the local membership, shall ensure all members:

- Meet their responsibilities to the employer and their fellow workers by arriving on the job ready to work, every day on time (Absenteeism and tardiness will not be tolerated.)
- Adhere to the contractual starting and quitting times, including lunch and break periods (Personal cell phones will not be used during the workday with the exception of lunch and break periods.)
- Meet their responsibility as highly skilled craftworkers by providing the required tools as stipulated under the local Collective Bargaining Agreement while respecting those tools and equipment supplied by the employer
- Use and promote the local union and international training and certification systems to the membership so they may continue on the road of lifelong learning, thus ensuring UA craftworkers are the most highly trained and sought after workers
- Meet their responsibility to be fit for duty, ensuring a zero tolerance policy for substance abuse is strictly met
- Be productive and keep inactive time to a minimum
- Meet their contractual responsibility to eliminate disruptions on the job and safely work towards the on-time completion of the project in an auspicious manner
- Respect the customers' property (Waste and property destruction, such as graffiti, will not be tolerated.)
- Respect the UA, the customer, client and contractor by dressing in a manner appropriate for our highly skilled and professional craft (Offensive words and symbols on clothing and buttons are not acceptable.)
- Respect and obey employer and customer rules and policies
- Follow safe, reasonable and legitimate management directives

EMPLOYER AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

MCAA/MSCA, PFI, MCPWB, PCA, UAC and NFSA and their signatory contractors have the responsibility to manage their jobs effectively, and as such have the following responsibilities under the **UA Standard for Excellence**.

- Replace and return to the referral hall ineffective superintendents, general foremen, foremen, journey workers and apprentices.

FOR EXCELLENCE

- Provide worker recognition for a job well done.
- Ensure that all necessary tools and equipment are readily available to employees
- Minimize workers' downtime by ensuring blueprints, specifications, job layout instructions and material are readily available in a timely manner
- Provide proper storage for contractor and employee tools
- Provide the necessary leadership and problem-solving skills to jobsite Supervision
- Ensure jobsite leadership takes the necessary ownership of mistakes created by management decisions
- Encourage employees, but if necessary, be fair and consistent with discipline
- Create and maintain a safe work environment by providing site specific training, proper equipment and following occupational health and safety guidelines
- Promote and support continued education and training for employees while encouraging career building skills
- Employ an adequate number of properly trained employees to efficiently perform the work in a safe manner, while limiting the number of employees to the work at hand, thereby providing the customer with a key performance indicator of the value of the **UA Standard for Excellence**
- Treat all employees in a respectful and dignified manner, acknowledging their contributions to a successful project
- Cooperate and communicate with the Job Steward

PROBLEM RESOLUTION THROUGH THE UA STANDARD FOR EXCELLENCE POLICY:

Under the **UA Standard for Excellence** it is understood, that members through the local union, and management through the signatory contactors, have duties and are accountable in achieving successful resolutions.

MEMBER AND LOCAL UNION RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The Local Union and the Steward will work with members to correct and solve problems related to job performance.
- Job Stewards shall be provided with steward training and receive specialized training with regard to the **UA Standard for Excellence**.
- Regular meetings will be held where the job steward along with UA Supervision will communicate with the management team regarding job progress, work schedules, and other issues affecting work processes.

- The Job Steward shall communicate with the members about issues affecting work progress.
- The Business Manager or his delegate will conduct regularly scheduled meetings to discuss and resolve issues affecting compliance of the **UA Standard for Excellence** policy.
- The Steward and management will attempt to correct such problems with individual members in the workplace.
- Individual members not complying with membership responsibility shall be brought before the Local Union Executive Board, which will address such members' failure to meet their obligation to the local and the UA, up to and including filing charges. The Local Union's role is to use all available means to correct the compliance problem.

EMPLOYER AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Regular meetings will be held where the management team and UA Supervision will communicate with the Job Steward regarding job progress, work schedules, and other issues affecting the work process.
- Management will address concerns brought forth by the Steward or UA Supervision in a professional and timely manner.
- A course of action shall be established to allow the job Steward and/or UA Supervision to communicate with higher levels of management in the event there is a breakdown with the responsible manager.
- In the event that the employee is unwilling or unable to make the necessary changes, management must make the decision whether the employee is detrimental to the **UA Standard for Excellence** platform and make a decision regarding his further employment.

ADDITIONAL JOINTLY SUPPORTED METHODS OF PROBLEM RESOLUTION:

- In the event an issue is irresolvable at this level, the Local or the Contractor may call for a contractually established Labor Management meeting to resolve the issues.
- Weekly job progress meetings should be conducted with Job Stewards, UA Supervision and Management.
- The Local or the Contractor may involve the customer when their input is prudent in finding a solution.
- Foremen, General Foremen, Superintendents and other management should be educated and certified as leaders in the **UA Standard for Excellence** policy.