

WINTER 2020

# Sheet Metal Journal

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British Columbia

## CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK

Apprenticeship Contest

Leadership

Developing Trust

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Official Journal of  
Record for SMACNA-BC



# PROMOTING GROWTH AND STABILITY IN OUR INDUSTRY

Formed in 1969, the British Columbia Sheet Metal Association (SMACNA-BC) was the first international chapter of the Sheet Metal & Air-conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA). Founded in 1934, SMACNA traces its history to the National Association of Sheet Metal Contractors established in 1910, and has 2,300 members worldwide.

SMACNA-BC is a member-driven association representing unionized sheet metal contractors in the Mainland of BC, and suppliers to our industry. It promotes the growth and stability of the members and industry.

## OUR MANDATE

- To improve the financial stability and business conditions of the sheet metal industry, and to develop and promote methods to improve managerial proficiency
- To improve quality, efficiency and productivity of this industry, and to implement high standards of work
- To establish and maintain high ethical standards of conduct between members of the Association, and between members and owners, architects, engineers, other contractors, and the public
- To study and help in the development and enforcement of governmental codes and regulations, and such legislation as may be necessary for the best interest of the public and the sheet metal industry
- To promote harmony in labour relations
- To exchange technical, professional, and educational information with other contractor associations in the sheet metal industry and its allied trades in Canada and other countries
- To affiliate as a Chapter with the Sheet Metal & Air-conditioning Contractors National Association, Inc.



[BC Sheet Metal Association \(SMACNA-BC\)](#)

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WINTER 2020

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## CALLING BRAND AMBASSADORS

Social media's refurbishing of the advertising landscape has changed the way businesses and organizations promote their offerings and effectively reach a viable market. Its ascension to omnipotence has triggered an over saturation of the information market where brand creation and promotion are only a few clicks away from just about any fingertip, making it difficult for the average consumer to garner meaningful information about what has genuine value. While overwhelming in some ways, this abundance has also demanded a return to the basics—personal stories, recommendations, and first-hand reviews—as key determinants of quality.

So what does this mean for the signatory sheet metal industry? Looking at North America's labour shortage, it can mean a great deal in terms of recruitment. Young people are graduating every day and making decisions about their futures. As with any other entity leveraging the online consumer market, the challenge is standing out among the onslaught in a genuine, meaningful way.

The SMACNA-SMART Task Force has launched a recruitment initiative that seeks to do exactly that. The Brand Ambassador program, which piloted in various American locales in 2019, uses an evidence-based approach to attract new recruits to the sheet metal trade, leveraging research collected surveying apprentices in their first, second, third, and final years of training.

The approach is simple—contractors, training centers, and instructors can identify apprentices and journeypersons in their communities that are models of “best of breed,” and who might be active on social media. These “ambassadors” should typify the sort of individuals leaders would like to see more of in the industry. Ambassadors will be encouraged to take to the frontlines of social media promoting various aspects of the sheet metal trade.

### Ideal ambassadors

Paul Pimentel, research and communications for SMART, says being a brand ambassador means being someone who goes above and beyond, someone who can uniquely communicate their positive contribution to the sheet metal industry.

Ambassadors demonstrate members' skill, pride, and craftpersonship and the high standards consistent in the unionized sheet metal industry. “We represent contractors and members that are a cut above the rest and we should not be shy about making it known,” Pimentel says.

Fulfilling this mission means standing out and making an impact bigger than the every day work, he adds. “We all want to leave the world we inherit better than how we came into it.



By / Jessica Kirby  
Editor, Sheet Metal Journal

“Brand ambassadors are the best among us, who industry stakeholders look to as pioneers in the industry and the world we live in.”

—Paul Pimentel, research and communications for SMART

This is how we recognize people who have made a positive mark and hold them up as examples to be followed.

“Whether it's your work ethic or how you blaze a path forward for other women or lead your fellow members in calling out safety issues at a non-union jobsite, brand ambassadors are the best among us, who industry stakeholders look to as pioneers in the industry and the world we live in.”

### Industry research

The SMACNA-SMART Best Practices Task Force recruiting initiative surveyed 1,459 apprentices to find out where they'd learned about a career in sheet metal, how they would suggest improving recruitment efforts, and whether they would recommend the trade to others.

Of those, 1,209 learned of the trade from family and friends, 95 received the information from a school counselor, 72 from social media, and 52 from job fairs. The remaining few were inspired by radio, TV, and newspaper ads.

They gave nearly equal consideration to wages, training, health care, and retirement benefits (in that order) when deciding on a career in sheet metal, and listed social media (70%), supporting school counselors (56%), and support for non-print media ads and websites (52%), respectively, as the best ways to reach new recruits. Ninety-four percent said they would recommend the trade to others.

Brand ambassador program materials focus on these areas and promote the items apprentices said they wished they'd known about the trade before entering, such as variety of work, diversity in the trade, earning college credit, continuing education, and leadership opportunities.

Lisa Bordeaux, consultant to SMACNA and an expert in recruitment efforts aimed at young people, said the first brand ambassadors campaign is aimed at promoting the Industrial Athlete aspects of the work.

“Not having to sit at a desk and is an important benefit for some,” Bordeaux says. “With that in mind, the first campaign is 'My Job is My Gym', promoting the athletic component of the sheet metal trade.”

Apprentices with a flair for social media are encouraged to post photos and selfies with the hashtag #mjmg on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, vying for two monthly top prizes (\$100 at Amazon): one for best photo and the other for most likes. T-shirts are also available to order to help promote the campaign.



Once #MJMG has run its course, the next Brand Ambassador campaign will be related to a “craftsperson by day, artist by night” theme and showcase the things people do related to their craft outside of daily life. In the meantime, Bordeaux encourages more activity at the organizational level, particularly in places experiencing a labour shortage.

“The program’s success is dependent on individual organizations and their ability to get people excited about the campaign,” Bordeaux says. “We need people to share what they like about their jobs, what they do, and how that affects their lives.”

For additional program information, contact Paul Pimentel ppimentel@smart-union.org or Jason Watson jkwatson@smacna.org. Program feedback and suggestions can go to Lisa Bordeaux at bordeaux11@gmail.com. ■



**British Columbia Sheet Metal Association (SMACNA-BC)**

Providing products and information related to the Sheet Metal Industry, including technical manuals and guidelines.

The unmatched technical and managerial expertise of SMACNA-BC Contractors is enhanced by the talent and skills of the workforce they employ. SMACNA-BC Contractors employ only Red Seal Certified Sheet Metal Journeymen and Registered Apprentices.

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**SMWTC Presents the 2019  
Alex Donaldson Award**

The Alex Donaldson Award is dedicated to the memory of Alex Donaldson, a Local 280 member committed to apprenticeships and training, who passed away in 1980. Each year, the apprentice who earns distinction as Top Apprentice receives this award. Since the 60s, the Top Apprentice represents Local 280 and SMACNA-BC at the Canadian Council's Sheet Metal Apprentice Competition held annually around the country.

The pathway to be selected as the Top Apprentice has changed many times over the decades. Currently, the individual winning the Level 4 competition at the SMWTC Annual Apprentice Contest has priority to compete at the Canadian contest.

Patrick Welch of Viaduct Sheet Metal Ltd. was the Level 4 winner of SMWTC Annual Apprentice Contest in 2018 and also competed in the Canadian Contest in May 2019 in Toronto, ON. Patrick and other sheet metal apprentices from different provinces had eight hours to build a copper replica of one of the city's most distinctive landmarks—the Toronto City Hall.

Congratulations to Patrick Welch as our 2019 winner of the Alex Donaldson Award. He was presented this annual Top Apprentice award at the SMACNA Christmas Party in November 2019. ■

**Scott Wilcox Receives First Annual Franco Pederzini  
Memorial Scholarship Award**

Apollo Sheet Metal Ltd. has created a perpetual scholarship award memorializing Franco Pederzini, who served as a SMITB Trustee/SMWTCS Director (2018-19). Franco is recognized for his work at Apollo Sheet Metal, his participation in the development of the sheet metal apprenticeship and training programs at SMWTCS, and for his dedication and commitment to the trade.

The Franco Pederzini memorial scholarship award (\$1,000) will be presented to the Level 4 winner of the Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre Annual Apprentice Contest competition. Congratulations to Scott Wilcox of Spectrum Sheet Metal Ltd. as the 2019 Annual Apprentice Contest Level 4 winner. Scott was presented the scholarship award at the Annual Apollo Christmas Lunch on December 20, 2019. ■

**Let's Talk Shop, Episode 8:  
Integrated Project Delivery**

What are the benefits of integrated project delivery? In the January 2020 episode of Let's Talk Shop, Angie Simon, CEO of Western Allied Mechanical and SMACNA president, talks with Matt Cramer, president, Dee Cramer, on how he got started with integrated project delivery (IPD). Dee Cramer has completed eight IPD projects in Michigan and management has noticed a great increase in customer satisfaction when using this process. Listen to the episode on Soundcloud or iTunes. ■

**Improve Your Leadership Skills with SMACNA's  
Executive Leadership Development Program**

SMACNA has teamed up with the staff of University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School to offer the Executive Leadership Development Program in Chapel Hill, NC from April 6-9, 2020.

Designed to address business challenges anticipated in the next three to five years and to identify industry trends causing concern and creating opportunities, this intensive program includes a focus on leadership style, talent management/retention, and change management.

Participants will walk away with the knowledge of how to be a better leader, how to use a better style, how to use power, how to influence other people, and how to create change in their organizations.

Specifically tailored for presidents, CEOs, their direct reports, and senior staff, this program has been custom developed for SMACNA contractors who are ready to embrace new ideas, structured action plans, professional coaching, and executive mentoring from professors at UNC's Kenan-Flagler Business School.

This business school is consistently ranked as a leading public university management program with its focus on leadership skills development. Learn more by visiting Executive Leadership Development Program webpage, and please contact Bridgette Bienacker (bbienacker@smacna.org) at SMACNA National with any additional questions about this program. ■

## 2020 SMACNA-BC Events

**March 3:** 60 Day Notice of SMACNA-BC Annual General Meeting

**March 10:** SMACNA-BC Board of Directors Meeting

**March 19:** SMACNA-BC Membership Dinner Meeting,  
Topic, TBA

**March 24:** SMACNA-BC / SMART Local Union No. 280 Joint  
Conference Board Meeting

**April 2:** 30 Day Notice of SMACNA-BC Annual General Meeting

**April 14:** SMACNA-BC Board of Directors Meeting

**April 15:** Skills Canada-BC  
Abbotsford Tradex

**April 16:** SMACNA-BC Membership Dinner Meeting  
Topic, TBA

**April 21:** SMACNA-BC / SMART Local Union No. 280 Joint  
Conference Board Meeting

**April 30-May 3:** SMACNA-BC AGM & Convention  
Ocean Pointe Resort, Victoria, BC

**May 26:** ASHRAE BC Annual Golf Tournament  
Northview Golf & Country Club, Surrey, BC

**May 31-June 2:** SMACNA Council of Chapter Representatives  
Meeting  
Charleston, SC

**May 28-29:** Skills Canada  
Vancouver BC

**July 16-18:** Canadian Sheet Metal Contest  
St. John's, NL

**September 18:** SMACNA-BC Annual Golf Tournament  
Northview Golf & Country Club, Surrey, BC

**November 21:** SMWTC Annual Apprentice Contest  
Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre

**November 27:** SMACNA-BC Christmas Party  
Pan Pacific Hotel, Vancouver, BC

For more event and details check out the calendar on the  
SMACNA-BC website, [www.smacna-bc.org](http://www.smacna-bc.org)

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# Construction Outlook

By / Jordan Whitehouse

The two biggest stories in Canadian construction this year should be how the energy investment projects pan out in the west and how the industry continues to try to deal with labour shortages across the country, say industry experts.

The \$40 billion LNG project in Kitimat, BC, tops the list of those energy projects, but there is also the twinning of the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Line 3 pipeline replacement project, which is nearing completion, among others. “There is a potential for delays on some of those projects, however, so I’ll be watching carefully if they keep with the timeline we’re expecting or if they will get delayed a little bit,” says Robyn Gibbard, a senior economist at the Conference Board of Canada.

Canadian Construction Association President Mary Van Buren is keeping her eye on the energy sector, too, along with how quickly all of the \$180 billion of federal infrastructure money

will be doled out. “We have seen some progress in committed dollars versus last year—so now each province or territory has at least 5% committed—but the flow of funding is still slow,” says Van Buren. As of writing, only about 5% of the 2018 dollars have been committed in Ontario, while in Alberta and BC, about 75% and 60% of those dollars have been earmarked, respectively.

Regionally, Gibbard believes the energy sector in Alberta will pick up this year, but commercial construction is going to be quite weak there. “And that’s just because right now they have vacancy rates of 27% in downtown Calgary and 18% in Edmonton. So even if things are turning around there, it’s going to be a long time before all of that space is used up.”

Toronto has a downtown commercial vacancy rate of close to 3%, while Vancouver’s is near 4%, so there should be strong





# 2020

commercial construction numbers in those cities this year, says Gibbard.

The weakest construction sector in 2020 will likely be residential, says Gibbard, and that's largely because of the mortgage stress test rules and the Bank of Canada's interest rate, which is tied for the highest in the G7. Governments in Toronto and Vancouver are also enacting policies to deflate housing markets, which will mean less construction there in particular. One bright spot is Montreal, which should continue to see strong residential construction numbers.

In general, though, Van Buren believes that the construction industry will continue to be "on fire" across the country, particularly in Ontario, BC, and PEI, and that will continue to put pressure on labour needs. "The positive is that it's now reached almost national consensus that there is a workforce



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challenge,” she says, “and immigration is moving up on the agenda in terms of how we attract people.” Still, she adds, there isn’t an easy immigration solution, especially when you consider that many new Canadians have not worked in the trades.

New recruitment programs are showing some success, however, including BC’s Builders Code initiative and PEI’s Island Builder campaign. This March, the Canadian Construction Association will introduce its own, called Talent Fits Here. “It will position the industry as a very vibrant and diverse career opportunity, whether you’re a woman, whether you’re a trades person, whether you’re a lawyer,” says Van Buren.

But a growing number of industry watchers believe that technology will have to be a bigger driver of solutions to the workforce problem than it has been. Right now, about 12 people are employed for every \$1 million in construction output, while for all goods producing industries, that figure is close to seven people. “That seems worrying if you’re talking about a retiring workforce, but the flipside is that because the industry relies so much on labour, it has more room to automate than most industries,” says Gibbard. “There will come a point when labour becomes even more scarce that it will make sense to invest in equipment that replaces people. It’s tough to say when that will happen, but if things keep going the way they are, we should expect to see that more and more.”

On the regulatory and policy side, one of the biggest pieces of recent news was that federal prompt payment legislation received royal assent in 2019. A number of provinces have passed or in the process of developing similar legislation, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

Another legal development that could have wide implications was the Supreme Court of Canada’s December decision to uphold the use of reprisal clauses in tender documents. The case involved the City of Burnaby using a reprisal clause against J. Cote & Son Excavating. That clause essentially stated that the city would not accept tenders from any party that had sued the city within the previous two years. “This is taking away your legal rights to sue, and so this is of deep concern to the industry,” say Van Buren. “Right now, we’re gathering internally to look at how we are going to raise this issue and advocate with our members to change the legislation.”

The deepest concerns of the industry in the year ahead, however, continue to be workforce shortages and the energy investment projects. The latter will be what Robyn Gibbard keeps his eye on in particular in 2020. “It’s definitely the biggest story in our forecasting, and I think it will have the largest impact for this year and the years after.” ■

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# BC CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK 2020

By / Jordan Whitehouse

The construction industry is booming in BC, and there are no signs of it slowing anytime soon. In the fall, there were \$115 billion worth of projects on the go across the province and \$206 billion worth of proposed work, according to the BC Construction Association (BCCA).

The \$40 billion LNG Canada project in Kitimat leads the way, but other major infrastructure projects include the ongoing construction of the Site C Dam, the twinning of the Trans Mountain Pipeline, the Patullo Bridge replacement, the extension of the subway line in Vancouver's Broadway corridor, and the expansion of the Vancouver International Airport.

Market consultant BTY is expecting slower growth in housing starts across the province, but Vancouver is seeing big investments in retail buildings and office towers right now, and multiple properties are under construction in the city that are set for completion over the next couple of years. Victoria and Nanaimo are experiencing sustained building booms, too, and had record numbers of building permits issued early in 2019.

All of which means that labour supply continues to be top of mind for the entire industry. The BCCA's 2019 Construction Industry Survey showed that skilled workforce shortage was a concern for 68% of respondents, far outstripping the Community Benefits Agreement (20%), permits and red tape (17%), productivity and management (10%), and quality of public procurement (6.3%). And while there were 236,000 employees in province's construction sector at the end of 2019—an increase of 17% over the past five years—the industry will need to continue adding more skilled tradespeople to keep up with demand, says BCCA president Chris Atchison.

This isn't to say the industry isn't making strides on the workforce front, however, he adds, particularly in its targeting of underrepresented groups. "We want to create and ensure that workplaces are safe and productive for everybody and to break down some of those barriers that might have precluded some demographics from either seeking out the wonderful opportunities in construction or preventing them from staying."

As two examples of the industry making headway on this front, Atchison points to the Skilled Trades Employment program, which has placed more than 12,000 people in construction jobs over the past 12 years, and the Builders Code, an initiative started last year that sets a standard code of conduct for workers on construction sites in BC. So far, over 125 employers have signed on to the Builders Code and more than 20 training programs have been done throughout the province.

On the regulatory side, the BCCA says it's keeping its eye on proposed changes to the Builders Lien Act, which may include prompt payment stipulations, as well as changes to the energy code, which will increase capital costs to ICI contractors.

Atchison is also hoping that 2020 will foster more relationships between the tech and construction sectors in the province. "We want to make sure that the advances in technology aren't being made without consideration of the opportunities that exist in construction," he says. "I think we're largely an untapped market for advances in technology, and so by encouraging this partnership we can not only wake up a potential industry to assist us, but also a willing collaborator in terms of innovation." ■

# WINNING THE DAY

Sheet Metal Workers Training Center Hosts Successful 2019 Apprentice Contest



## Winners:

**Level 1 - Bramwell Chao**  
Piedmont Sheet Metal 1997 Ltd.

**Level 2 - Richard Webster**  
Ecco Heating Products Ltd.

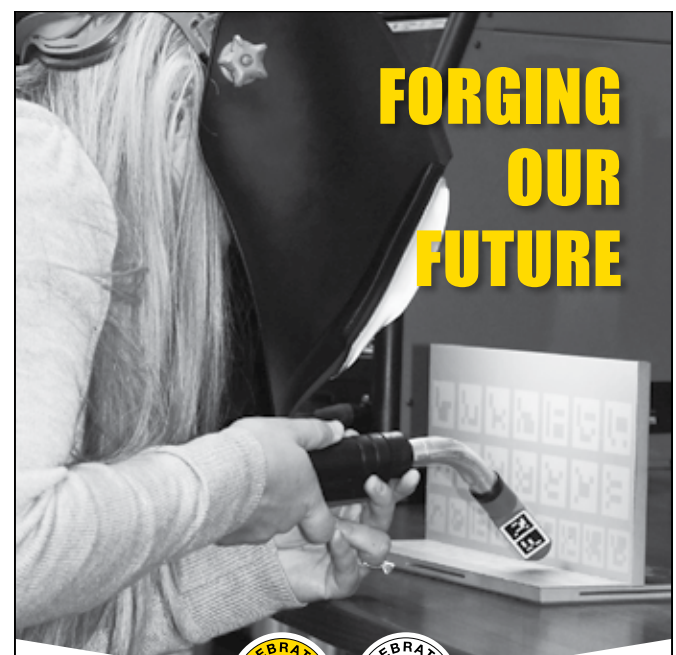
**Level 3 - Alexander Flaman**  
Piedmont Sheet Metal 1997 Ltd.

**Level 4 - Scott Wilcox**  
Spectrum Sheet Metal Ltd.



On November 23, 2019, the Sheet Metal Workers Training Center hosted its Annual Apprentice Contest at its facility. Nineteen contestants representing eleven contractors competed in four levels aligned with their last year of technical training. Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, there was over \$7,000 worth of prizes donated to the participants.

Shop: Participants assembled different projects for each level while spectators watched. Projects showcasing contestants' precision and skill, ranging from an aluminum hinged ammo-style box to on-centre and off-centre square-to-round fittings and a copper bucket.



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Theory: Mark Curtis from the International union proctored the theory category and was SMWTC's guest of honour at the prize awards ceremony. It was a fantastic day during which there were many proud moments.

New Equipment Demonstration: During the contest, SMWTC's instructor Adam Dudarewicz demonstrated the Mobile Elevated Work Platform simulator purchased as part of the Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP). Everyone who tried the simulator was entered for a chance to win a prize. We thank those who stopped by to experience this new technology. Congratulations to Connor Sové for winning the prize—a Milwaukee packout bag.

Thanks to all who participated in the 2019 SMWTC Annual Apprentice Contest:

**LEVEL 1:**

Bramwell Chao (Piedmont Sheet Metal (1997) Ltd.) Galbyn Knell (Keith Panel Systems Co. Ltd.) James Parreno (Boston Sheet Metal Ltd.) Richard Steenhuisen (Pacific Waterproofing Ltd.)

**LEVEL 2:**

Mitchell Beaugard (Boston Sheet Metal Ltd.) Brendan Detta (Apollo Sheet Metal Ltd) Troy Martell (Austin Metal Fabricators LP) Brady Morton (Northwest Sheet Metal Ltd.) Shad Simpson (Viaduct Sheet Metal Works Ltd.) Luke Sutton (Boston Sheet Metal Ltd.) Richard Webster (ECCO Heating Products Ltd.)

**LEVEL 3:**

Tyler Crowder (Summit Sheet Metal Ltd.) Alexander Flaman (Piedmont Sheet Metal (1997) Ltd.) James Plett (Austin Metal Fabricators LP) Josiah Stagg (Viaduct Sheet Metal Works Ltd.) Stanley Suddaby (Austin Metal Fabricators LP) Philip Wong (Summit Sheet Metal Ltd.)

**LEVEL 4:**

Carlos Flores (Northwest Sheet Metal Ltd.) William Scott Wilcox (Spectrum Sheet Metal Ltd.) ■



# **BORN** LEADERS

**Leaders are made in many ways, and every one of them requires hard work and commitment to looking within**

By / Mark Breslin

I did not become a CEO by being emotionally healthy and well adjusted.

I did not become a public speaker and talk to 400,000 people because I was interested in them as individuals.

I did not embrace the idea of empowering others with fear of failure chasing me like a junkyard dog.

I did not understand that success and happiness are not the same. No matter what shows up on my title or W-2.

Leaders are made a lot of ways, and not always because we were shaped by a happy, sunshine filled, ride-a-pony upbringing. More often than not, it is just the opposite. The fuel that drives leaders often times has its genesis in our early development. Our beliefs about ourselves are well founded way before anyone gives us a shot at career advancement. I think a lot of leaders reading this know this to be true for themselves. My story is certainly the case. My self beliefs were steeped in a youth of turbulence, instability, and trouble. I am frankly the last guy who should have made it this far.

Without really knowing it I started my leadership with an emotional platform of fear and insecurity that I mistook for confidence. Ultimately it got filed under the need to prove myself ... over and over and over again. That resulted in me being a very driven, aggressive, and effective leader, as well as a grade A insecure jerk.

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***If you are truly willing to be the authentic person you are, you will reap rewards far beyond the validation, proving, and other stuff that substitutes for real impact.***

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But through leadership trial and error (mostly error), I was able to evolve and grow, and it is this I want to share with you: the rewards of leaving that fear and ego bullshit all behind, as a leader, as an influencer, as a family member, and as a person.

Simply put, here it is. After all the striving, proving, and grinding you just might find that happiness and success are not the same thing. As a leader, it is not about the money, title, power, or validation. They are nice rewards, no doubt, but as a leader, it's more about each person that we can influence in a positive way in this life. And we as leaders truly have this obligation and opportunity.

A lot of us become top leaders because we are compelled. Our fire burns red hot. Our need is to succeed and overcome. Driven by what? The raw fear of failure. The hole we are trying to fill. The respect we didn't get. The self image we are constructing to feel real. Often we carry forward our baggage to simply prove ourselves over and over and over without resolution. We grind and push and are willing to die on the hill to show we are worthy in the eyes of others. No way. No one else makes us worthy. No external validation makes us real or human. Service and love of self and others is the ticket. It's not about us. It's about the people we love and lead, care about, and influence.

After abandoning my endless idiotic quest for validation, I have tried, above all, to make it about anyone else but me. But my old habits and the ego die hard. It takes a lot of work. So as a leader I have to be less "the man" and more accepting of myself as a flawed but battle scarred human with the lessons I have paid for on deposit. I have to be careful I don't slip backwards, and I simply hope to see with clarity more each day.

If you are truly willing to be the authentic person you are, you will reap rewards far beyond the validation, proving, and other stuff that substitutes for real impact. This takes three things. First, you have to do the work on yourself and solicit the painful feedback and advice that crushes your ego and builds your authentic self. Next, you have to decide what's important and act on it. Sounds simple? If so, why don't more people do it? Yeah, how many people you know are really truly emotionally healthy and secure? How many have marriages you want? How many people have a level of health and well being that make you think, "Oh yeah, I want that, too"? How many people get



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their priorities right without epic failure as their teacher? And the third and final aspect, you have to understand that this life is short and valuable and that you better do something remarkable before it passes you by. Hey, just want to make a shitload of money and play golf? Good for you. Stop reading now.

I know I am annoying some of you. There's nothing worse than a reformed smoker or anyone who gives you advice you didn't ask for. But in writing this I am not proud of who I was and why I was that way. The advice given is simply so you don't travel my path or pay the price like I have.

Remember, your success is not always your friend. Your amazing skills and tendencies may also be your greatest burden. Sometimes we have to risk giving up the approaches and behaviours that "made" us successful to get to a different way to influence and care about others. With that comes fear of change and failure. But it all starts – for me and for every leader reading this today – with the realization that it is not about us. It is about them. And when you see it, believe it, and act on it, you will share in the greatest reward leadership has to offer—to touch the lives of many and change you for the better. ■

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# Developing Trust

## With Home Service Customers in Three Simple Steps

By / Danielle Putnam  
President, Women in HVACR



One of my trainers told me a great story the other day. He was doing ride-alongs with a company to train their technicians on our system. The customer had a plumbing issue, and he had called every company in town to see who would get there first and who would get the sale. My trainer and our customer were first on the scene, and they began to diagnose the issue. They had to dig up part of the yard to find and solve the problem, which was that a pipe had slipped out of a joint. By this time, the customer had already paid the service charge to at least one other company that was elsewhere diagnosing, but the customer was not comfortable with any of the other technicians. When it was my trainer's turn to present the prices to the customer, the customer sat down in the dirt, a little defeated. While the others had spoken to the customer while hovering over him, fighting for the sale and pressuring the customer, my trainer sat down in the dirt beside the customer, took a deep breath with him, and then presented his options. My trainer closed that deal.

### Get On The Customer's Level

Yes, sometimes this means literally. In job interviews, many experts recommend “mirroring,” where you note the body language of your interviewer and mimic it. If the interviewer leans back, you lean back. If they fold their hands, you fold

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*“When you describe the effects in terms of the whole system, your customers understand that the issue is more serious than just a part. This builds value in their minds.”*

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your hands. It's an easy, non-verbal way of building rapport and establishing a connection. Whether you are providing an estimate or in the home doing the work, it is no different for residential HVAC customers. Take note of their cues, such as sitting down in the dirt, and meet them where they are—sometimes this means physically and sometimes this means emotionally. They are already frustrated with the situation and uncomfortable with having a stranger in their home, so emotions run high. Let your body language put them at ease and if their body language reveals panic or discomfort, give them something calmer to mirror, too. When you consciously decide how to portray your body language, their subconscious will pick up.

### Don't Overwhelm the Customer with Unwanted Details

Sometimes you will come in contact with customers who are technically inclined, who ask tons of questions, or who want to



know exactly what is going wrong, even if only to research it later to fact check you once you leave. Often times, they are only asking questions because they know their husband or wife will want some answers once they see the bill, and they want to be able to explain it. But the grand majority of the time, customers want their issue fixed, and the moment they pay, they have gifted you their problem so they don't have to deal with it anymore. If your instinct is to go into details and use technical jargon, the customers that don't know what you are talking about interpret that you are talking down to them and trying to school them. They know you are the expert. That is why they called for help. Most of them only need to know what had to be done, that you could fix it, and in the end, that you did fix it. You don't have to prove yourself the expert with detailed explanations unless they ask.

### Assure Customers That You Don't Think They Are Dumb

This makes me think of the quote credited to Albert Einstein: "Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." You almost never go into a job expecting the customer to be as much an expert in your trade as you are. After all, if they were an expert in your trade, they likely wouldn't be calling you. Many customers are inclined to assume that you think they are stupid if they don't understand what needs to be fixed. If your customers voice this, reassure them that you don't think they are stupid. Sometimes resistance comes out of embarrassment, so giving them a boost of reassurance will put them at ease.

### Build Intrinsic Value

In the age of Google and Amazon, it's so easy for customers to rush to research the price of a part if you say a specific part has failed. When you tell them the price of the job, they are often floored because in their minds, they know how much the job should cost—they just saw it on Amazon. Explain the work in terms of system functions, not just part functions, so they can understand that you will leave things working from beginning to end, solving every problem in the system along the way. When you describe the effects in terms of the whole system, your customers understand that the issue is more serious than just a part. This builds value in their minds. It helps to avoid sticker shock when you explain to them the prices of the work you will be doing.

### Leave Your Mark

Once you complete the job, look around and do a little extra. From deep cleaning your worksite, to helping hang a picture or refilling the pet's water bowl, a little extra nugget of service will speak volumes to your customer. We call this "wow factor." Make sure to leave your logoed sticker on the customer's equipment so the next time they have a problem in the home, your name is the first one that they see.



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### Building Trust=Solving Their Pain

The theory behind trust is good, but putting it into practice is what makes it great. The combination of empathy and solving your customer's pain is what will make the difference in building return customers that trust you. It all boils down to these three simple steps:

**Step 1: Don't sell what they don't want.** Nobody likes feeling like someone is trying to sell them something. Hear their pain, communicate that you understand their pain, and do not push them away by trying to convince them to buy something that they don't want. Low pressure=high return.

**Step 2: Always focus on the primary concern first.** We all know that if we dig deep enough, we can find thousands of dollar's worth of upgrades, fixes, and replacements in our homes. To build trust, focus on why you were called out to do the job first. Once your customer sees that you solved their pain, they will look to you for all of those upgrades later.

**Step 3: Provide options so it's their choice, not an ultimatum.** Who wants to feel backed into a corner? The worst feeling is knowing you are stuck and that you have no options. How many times have we needed work done and felt like we had no choice but to do it and to pay more than we could afford? Give your customers options so their spending is in their hands and they can feel confident that they made the right choice once you leave. ■

*Danielle is president of both The New Flat Rate, a home service menu-selling system designed to put profit directly into the hands of plumbing, electrical, and HVAC contractors; and Women in HVACR, a non-profit member-based organization providing professional avenues for networking and educating women while encouraging more women to enter the trades. For more information, email [danielle@menupricing.com](mailto:danielle@menupricing.com) or visit [www.thenewflatrate.com](http://www.thenewflatrate.com) and [www.womeninhvacr.org](http://www.womeninhvacr.org).*

## HEADING INTO 2020, FASTEST, INC. CONTINUES TO IMPROVE ITS AWARD-WINNING PROGRAMS

As we head into the next decade, technology continues to be a vital part of the construction industry. This includes all aspects of the HVAC and mechanical contracting trades and the estimating facet that goes with it. Estimating software is an important piece of many contractors' bidding strategies, and FastEST, Inc., one of the industry leaders in mechanical estimating software, continues to hone and improve upon its already reliable suite of programs: FastDUCT® for estimating HVAC ductwork and sheet metal, FastPIPE® for estimating mechanical, plumbing, and other types of piping, and FastWRAP™ for estimating mechanical insulation.

Below are just a few examples of the exciting improvements that FastEST's software development team is working on and plans to release sometime in the near future.

### Adaptable Takeoff Interface Options

One of FastEST's most popular program features is the intuitive and easy-to-use on-screen digitizer interface. Users can import digital plans right into the software and perform takeoffs right on the computer screen. Buttons for takeoff – in the example of FastDUCT®, there's ductwork, fittings, dampers and other specialties, and equipment, to name a few – are conveniently



laid out along the edge of a user's screen, while the plan window is large and easy to access in the middle of the screen.

A feature currently under development will allow users to utilize a customized palette of items that can be moved to any location in the takeoff screen, which will allow for even faster and more efficient project takeoffs, and also allows for further user customization.

### Improved Search Functions

Another helpful inclusion coming soon to FastEST's programs are various search bars that will be located throughout the programs. From being able to search within a company's existing estimate list, to being able to search within the programs' comprehensive material and labour database (for certain items, like a particular ball valve or a specific material), the addition of new search bars will continue to help users to their common end-goal—completion of project estimates in a faster amount of time, yet still allowing for the accuracy and detail that FastEST users have come to expect.

### Additions to Already Comprehensive Program Catalogues

As always, FastEST is constantly trying to build upon the above-mentioned wide-ranging databases, which include several hundred thousand items between the three programs. If a new product is released into the market, FastEST will try its best to get it added to the database with labour values and material list pricing (if available) included. That way, customers can have the newest and most cutting-edge materials available at their fingertips to include in their estimates. (One example of a recent addition to the FastPIPE® catalogue is Apollo®'s Powerpress product, which is a new line of carbon steel press fittings and valves.)

FastEST offers some of the most affordable and easy-to-use mechanical, HVAC, and insulation estimating software products in the marketplace today. To find out more about FastEST and how it has helped thousands of HVAC and mechanical contractors improve their estimating process, visit [fastest-inc.com](http://fastest-inc.com). Watch videos of FastEST's latest and greatest program versions in action. Contact FastEST at 800-828-7108 or by email at [mike@fastest-inc.com](mailto:mike@fastest-inc.com). ■

## ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS TO DESIGN NEW HQ FOR TELECOM FIRM OPPO

Following an international competition, Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA) has been selected to build mobile communications company OPPO's new headquarters in Shenzhen, China.

Conceived as four interconnected towers reaching a height of 200 m (656 ft) and 42 floors, the 185,000-m<sup>2</sup> (2 million-sf) design incorporates two towers of flexible, open-plan spaces linked by a 20-story vertical lobby, and two external service towers providing vertical circulation. Orientated to maximize views of the nearby Shenzhen Bay, the towers taper inward at lower levels creating large civic spaces at street level.

Locating the towers' service cores externally frees the center of each floor from obstructions providing uninterrupted views throughout the building.

Large atrium spaces unite all occupants through visual connectivity. The abundance of natural light, varied working environments, and diversity of routes for staff and visitors to move through the building are all conducive to creative engagement and spontaneity.

Developed as a new civic space for the city with a public walkway diagonally traversing its center, OPPO's headquarters will include a landscaped plaza, art gallery, shops, restaurants, and a direct link to the adjacent station of Shenzhen's subway network.

The 10th floor sky plaza will provide local residents, visitors, and OPPO employees with varied dining, leisure, and entertainment facilities, while the rooftop sky lab will be a public space offering spectacular views.

The OPPO headquarters is targeting the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification. It is developed with 3D building information modelling (BIM) and energy management systems to optimize efficiencies.

OPPO launched its first phone in 2008, growing to become China's leading smartphone manufacturer and the fifth largest world-wide with over 40,000 employees in more than 40 countries. Pioneering new communication technology in smart devices and internet services, OPPO has established six research institutes, four research and development centres, and a global design studio. Accommodating its growth, OPPO's new headquarters will continue the company's commitment to connectivity through design.



Breaking ground later this year, Oppos's new headquarters is planned to complete in early 2025.

Name: OPPO Headquarters

Timeline: 2020-2025

Client: OPPO Telecommunication

Scope: Design

Size: 185,000 m<sup>2</sup> ■



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# GRATITUDE SCHMATITUDE: HOW TOO MUCH PRAISE DEVALUES APPRECIATION

*At what point to all the emoji-laden shout-outs begin to deafen us to meaningful praise?*

It's become a regular occurrence at our office. At least a couple times a week, one of our Slack threads erupts in a celebratory shout-out. It could be a manager congratulating their team for hitting its sales targets or an individual recognizing a senior employee for taking the time to teach them a new skill. Within seconds these posts get augmented with applause emojis, likes, and GIFs—a show of thanks from throughout the company.

The benefits of expressing gratitude in our personal lives – everything from healthier bodies to better sleep habits – have been well-documented. Studies also show expressing gratitude at work improves culture and boosts productivity. And with everyone from Arianna Huffington to Oprah touting gratitude journals as their keys to success, gratitude is definitely having a moment.

But getting the balance right can be tough in a business setting. Sure, it's easier than ever through online platforms like Slack to send a quick shout-out to your teams (which, by the way, I think is an excellent way to show support). But there can be serious consequences to misusing, or overusing, displays of appreciation in the office.

I certainly don't have the rules of gratitude all figured out. But since it's always a good time to reflect on what makes us thankful, here are some things I've learned along the way about the challenges of showing the right amount of gratitude – in the right way – at work.

## Gratitude is a Tool—Use it Wisely

Human beings need to feel a sense of purpose, and this is especially important at work. Ultimately, gratitude is a way of reinforcing that your team's contributions to your organization have a purpose beyond simply earning them a paycheck.

But there's a danger in overdoing it. Too much “drive-by praise” in the form of quick texts and emails – or even just popping into someone's office for a quick thanks on your way home – can make messages of appreciation lose their meaning. They start to come off like cheap motivational techniques. On the flip side, they also run the risk of conditioning teams to expect constant positive reinforcement for meeting the basic requirements of their jobs.

One manager who recently joined our team even broke from our company tradition of having employees ring a bell when they close a sale. His rationale? Closing sales is the job, not an extraordinary effort worthy of a special celebration. That



By Michael Litt

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said, he still takes time to ensure his team feels appreciated—taking them out for dinner to recognize achievements such as meeting quarterly targets or landing a big client. But reserving big displays of appreciation for big efforts, rather than day-to-day duties, helps gratitude retain its power.

## The Delivery Method Matters

Time and place matter when it comes to showing gratitude. Slack or email are great tools for acknowledging smaller wins, as they provide instant feedback as well as a record of appreciation managers can consult when it's time for performance reviews.

For big accomplishments, however, the most meaningful thanks still come in-person and can have added power with public recognition. We do this once a month at our companywide standup meetings, where I take time to credit teams or individuals whose outstanding efforts have made our company stronger.

The hitch here is that I really have to do my homework to ensure this is an effective way to communicate gratitude. Specificity is key. As CEO, I'm not always aware of the exceptional effort happening at every level of the organization, so I rely on my managers to be my eyes and ears. We have regular meetings where we discuss what's happening at all levels of the org, as well as agreed-upon criteria for what exactly counts as going the extra mile.

## Money Doesn't (Always) Buy Thanks

Of course, as a founder, I may think the personal touch is the best way of showing gratitude. But that doesn't mean a big chunk of my team wouldn't prefer something more tangible. Still, showing thanks with bonuses gets tricky. For starters, it sets a dangerous precedent—expectations of raises at irregular times between reviews and an uneven compensation landscape. To be clear, regularly scheduled performance reviews and annual raises are very much a part of the business, but research actually shows that short-term or one-off financial bumps may not actually improve performance.

What we do offer, however, are off-cadence options – essentially, shares in the business – that are reserved for truly

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## WHAT'S IN A (GOOD) NAME: CONTRACTORS' REMEDIES FOR DEFAMATION

Many contractors have been in the position where, for one reason or another, relations with an owner (or other contractor) deteriorate and a legal dispute arises. Occasionally, a contractor may have the unpleasant surprise of finding out that another party has posted reviews online or in the media that could damage its reputation.

In the recent case of *Level One Construction Ltd. v Burnham*, 2019 BCCA 407, the BC Court of Appeal considered a situation involving a contractor's claim against a homeowner for defamation.

### The Facts

In this case, the plaintiff was a contractor (the "Contractor") and the defendant was an owner (the "Owner") who had hired the Contractor to carry out renovations at her home. After a series of discussions about the scope of work for the renovation, the Contractor provided an estimate of \$18,908.51 to the Owner, and both parties signed a contract based on that estimate. The Owner provided a \$5,000 deposit per the contract.

A few weeks later, one of the Contractor's employees provided a review of the work to the Owner. The employee's review included a scope of work that had mistakenly been expanded from that of the original contract. As a result of this misunderstanding, the employee gave the Owner an updated price forecast that was almost \$20,000 higher than the estimate. The Owner then demanded a full refund of her deposit, to which the Contractor agreed on the condition that the Owner would sign a non-disclosure agreement ("NDA") and accept certain administrative and work-related deductions. The Owner demanded the full amount, and commenced a small claims action when the Contractor would not agree.

A couple months later, the Owner left a negative review of the Contractor on the website Yelp, and sent emails to various news outlets, including the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ("CBC"). In these communications, the Contractor alleged the Owner's comments suggested, among other things, that the Contractor "scammed" her by providing an artificially low estimate and then increasing the price. The CBC eventually sent a reporter to interview the Owner. During the interview, the Owner made numerous accusations against the Contractor, including that the Contractor's estimate had doubled for the same amount of work. The CBC then ran several stories, including a TV news story and an online article, conveying the Owner's position. The Contractor then commenced a defamation claim against the Owner.



By Andrew D.R. Delmonico, Partner,  
and Ted R. Lewis, Kuhn LLC

### The Decision

At trial, the BC Supreme Court held the Owner's statements were not defamatory, if her words were given "the least harsh interpretation." The trial judge also found that the Owner was entitled to rely on a defence of fair comment, which protects statements of opinion on matters considered to be in the public interest. This decision was overturned on appeal.

In its reasons, the Court of Appeal found the lower court was wrong in finding that the "least harsh interpretation" should be given to the Owner's allegedly defamatory comments. In British Columbia, a statement is considered defamatory if it would tend to lower the reputation of the person to whom it refers in the eyes of a reasonable person. In considering this,

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## SMART Local 280 /SMACNA-BC Partnership



Left: Jud Martell, Local Union No. 280 President.  
Right: Bernie Antchak, Northwest Sheet Metal Ltd., SMACNA-BC President.



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- B. Flaherty, Cornell University, Syracuse, N.Y.

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exceptional cases. To me, this makes sense because it draws a direct connection between an employee's contribution and the continued success of the company: you've had a real impact on our value and deserve to share in it. Sustain those efforts and you'll reap even greater rewards down the road.

A similar issue with showing gratitude arises in the event of celebrations, like holiday parties. The reality is that these become perfunctory. We still do them, but I try to make the messages of thanks within them much more meaningful, say by delivering a short poem or speech to my team. It sounds trite, but sincerity matters at times like these—maybe even more than an open bar or fancy hors d'oeuvres.

In the end, showing gratitude makes us all happier. But for all the benefits it brings, gratitude can be a remarkably complex emotion to convey appropriately at work. At its core, gratitude is deeply instinctive. We can tell when it's truly deserved and when it's genuinely expressed. ■

*Michael Litt is cofounder and CEO of the video marketing platform Vidyard. Follow him on Twitter at @michaellitt. See this article's original post at fastcompany.com/90280648/gratitude-schmatitude-how-too-much-praise-devalues-appreciation.*

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**IT'S THE LAW**

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the Court clarified that neither the worst possible meaning nor the least harsh interpretation should be given to the comments in question.

The Court of Appeal also found that the Owner should not be able to rely on a defence of fair comment with respect to her claim that the Contractor had quoted her twice the price for the same work. In order to be protected on the basis that a statement is fair comment, the facts upon which the comment is based must be correct. In this case, the Owner knew about the change in the scope of work that had resulted in the Contractor's higher price, and left this important information out when giving her interview and review. Because her comments actually contradicted the facts, they were not protected as fair comment.

**Lessons Learned**

1. If an owner or other contracting party makes untrue statements that you think could damage your business or reputation, you may have recourse to claim against that person in defamation. Contractors should pay attention to the reviews they receive online to ensure customers are accurately representing their interactions with the contractor.
2. Similarly, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers should think carefully before posting negative reviews themselves. Although it may be permissible to share your opinion of another business online, statements that distort or misrepresent the facts of your interaction with that business may result in liability for defamation. ■

*This article was written by Andrew D.R. Delmonico, Partner, and Ted R. Lewis, articulated student, who practise in construction law with the law firm of Kuhn LLP. This article is only intended as a guide and cannot cover every situation. It is important to get legal advice for specific situations. If you have any questions or comments about this case or other construction law matters, please contact us at 604.864.8877 (Abbotsford) or 604.684.8668 (Vancouver).*

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