

Fall 2025

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British Columbia

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AI in Construction



Partners in Progress 2026



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# 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 promote harmony in labour relations
- 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 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.

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Istock Photo / Nastco

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**PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY**

Point One Media Inc.

Sheet Metal Journal  
P.O. Box 11, Station A Nanaimo, BC V9R 5K4  
Toll-free: 877.755.2762  
www.sheetmetaljournal.com

While information contained in this publication has been compiled from sources deemed to be reliable, the publisher may not be held liable for omissions or errors.

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Printed in Canada.  
Postage paid at Coquitlam, BC.

Return postage guaranteed. Canada Post  
Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product  
Agreement #40719512.

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:  
Circulation Department

Sheet Metal Journal  
P.O. Box 11, Station A Nanaimo, BC V9R 5K4  
email: circulations@pointonemedia.com

Official Journal of Record for  
SMACNA - BC

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Funded by the  
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## EVENTS AND EDUCATION AT SMACNA-BC

This year, I had the pleasure of attending the 2025 SMACNA Annual Convention in Maui, Hawaii, held from October 26–29 at the Grand Wailea, A Waldorf Astoria Resort. The weather certainly cooperated for our group, and the convention delivered an engaging and informative experience for contractors, chapter leaders, and industry partners. From the opening College of Fellows golf tournament to the closing dinner and show, every day showcased the strength and innovation of our industry.

### Highlights from the 2025 SMACNA Annual Convention

Educational sessions this year focused on artificial intelligence, workforce development, and regulatory updates impacting contractors across North America. I arrived early for a keynote session on AI in construction, but the room was already standing room only. It's clear that practical tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot are becoming essential for contractors looking to streamline documentation, estimating, and project planning. These technologies continue to evolve rapidly, and I'm happy to see that SMACNA is actively helping members understand how to integrate them responsibly into daily operations.

Another interesting program discussed was software rollouts along with the lessons learned. I thought this program was good because it provided suggestions on implementation and trying to achieve buy in. It also provided tips to ensure that contractors avoid implementing programs that operate independently on incompatible databases.

The convention also featured discussions on the future of sustainability in HVAC design and updates to SMACNA's technical standards. In my opinion, one of the best things I walk away with each year is the networking and learning opportunities provided by your peers. People seem willing to share what has worked and what hasn't, especially if you're not in a competing area.



Jeremy Hallman,  
Executive Director, SMACNA-BC

### Workforce and Industry Growth

SMART General President Mike Coleman reported that membership has now surpassed 235,000 across North America, with work hours exceeding pre-pandemic levels and expected to reach 123 million by the end of 2025. This growth continues to demonstrate both the strength of unionized sheet metal work and the resilience of our industry.

Locally, many BC contractors are seeing gradual improvement in workforce availability. While some scheduling and supply chain delays persist, project starts have stabilized compared to last year.

SMACNA-BC continues to work alongside industry partners to advance prompt payment legislation. Although this process obviously takes time, it appears to be moving in the right direction. Chris Atchison of the British Columbia Construction Association recently announced that the provincial government had tabled Prompt Payment Legislation. Members are encouraged to visit [bccassn.com/industry-priorities/prompt-payment/](http://bccassn.com/industry-priorities/prompt-payment/) for additional updates and to send a letter of support to their local MLAs.

### Recent and Upcoming SMACNA-BC Events

Our 40<sup>th</sup> Annual SMACNA-BC Golf Classic took place on September 12, 2025, at Northview Golf & Country Club. The weather couldn't have been better as 172 golfers participated across both courses. Together, members, sponsors, and golfers helped raise \$12,140 for the SMACNA-BC charity of choice, which this year was Zajac Ranch for Children [zajacranch.com](http://zajacranch.com)

I'm pleased to announce that on November 19, we will be hosting a Supervisor Program in Prince George. After a visit there with Phil McDonald of Summit Sheet Metal Ltd this past June, it was clear that there was enough interest to put something together. Kevin Dougherty will be presenting his program "How to Be a More Effective Supervisor" at the Courtyard Marriott Prince George. We will fly back to Vancouver later that night and he will present the same program at the Civic Hotel in Surrey on November 20. The two classes are currently showing attendance of 23 for PG and 53 in Surrey with registration open until November 17. Regardless of final numbers, we're expecting a strong turnout.

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Finally, we'll close the year with our always-anticipated SMACNA-BC Christmas Party on November 29 at the Westin Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver. If you think you have the wrong calendar out, you are seeing it correctly. This year the event will be held on a Saturday night. We hope this gives everyone a chance to travel at their leisure on Saturday afternoon and enjoy some shopping, a seawall stroll, or a dip in the pool prior to getting ready for the party. This new venue also allows us to accommodate our growing attendance. We currently have almost 300 people attending compared to 274 last year. Members are encouraged to bring an unwrapped gift or make a donation to the Helping Families in Need Society [helpingfamiliesinneed.org](http://helpingfamiliesinneed.org)

### Looking Ahead

As we move into 2026, SMACNA-BC will continue to strengthen partnerships with SMART Local 280, advocate for our industry, and support ongoing education, training, and workforce development initiatives. I encourage all members to stay connected through our website [smacna-bc.org](http://smacna-bc.org) and to participate in upcoming events and programs.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to excellence within our trade. I look forward to another successful year ahead. ■



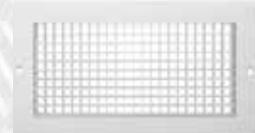
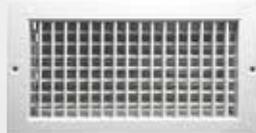
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# Making Movie History

Ridge Sheet Metal helps bring Canada's largest film studio expansion to life.

By Natalie Bruckner

**For Ridge Sheet Metal,** few projects capture both technical scope and creative collaboration like Bridge Studios' Lake City expansion in Burnaby, BC. Tasked with the complete installation of all sheet metal ductwork across 21 studio spaces, the team's work became an integral part of the largest studio development in Canadian film history.

Bridge Studios, established in 1987 as Vancouver's first dedicated film production facility, has long been a cornerstone of the city's screen industry. Early productions such as *MacGyver* and *Stakeout* helped establish its reputation, and more than 1,000 film and television projects have since been shot there, including *Deadpool*, *Jumanji*, and *40 Days and 40 Nights*. The new Lake City expansion adds 18 state-of-the-art sound stages, bringing the total to 34 and further cementing Bridge Studios' role as the beating heart of Canadian film production.

For Ridge Sheet Metal, the invitation to contribute to such a landmark project came through BC Comfort, who retained their services as a subcontractor. The scope of work was extensive, encompassing the supply and installation of all HVAC ductwork, grilles, diffusers, and inlet fans, along with full compliance to mechanical design and performance specifications.

"The scope included large-diameter spiral supply air runs, extensive outside air [OA] branch connections, and large exhaust elbows, as well as rooftop ductwork for all air handling units [AHUs] and outside air goosenecks," says Curtis Olliffe,



project lead at Ridge Sheet Metal. "Each studio operated as an independent HVAC system."

Each sound stage featured ten perimeter support towers that served multiple functions, incorporating washrooms and kitchen facilities. Additionally, every stage included three levels of electrical "tower" rooms. Ridge Sheet Metal installed large fans and motorized dampers on all three levels across all 21 stages, ensuring efficient ventilation and system control.

"The project also included the installation of all ductwork, grilles, and diffusers for a three-level office complex, constructed in three phases," Olliffe says. "This portion of the work integrated multiple fan coil units and three energy recovery ventilator systems to optimize indoor air quality and energy efficiency."

Ridge Sheet Metal completed the ductwork installation throughout two interconnected parkade levels spanning the entire project footprint. This scope included the installation of transfer fans and exhaust fans to maintain adequate ventilation and code compliance across the parking structures.



**“To handle the large-diameter stage ductwork safely and efficiently, the team implemented a custom roller system designed specifically for this project.”**

One surprise that arose was that while sound stages might appear to require specialized acoustic treatment within their duct systems, the acoustic performance requirements specified for this installation were consistent with those of a standard HVAC system. Olliffe explains that this was due to the operational design of each stage, which incorporates a centralized control system (motherboard) governing all mechanical equipment.

“This control system provides the capability to isolate or disable any air handling units, supply fans, or exhaust fans during filming operations,” he says. “As a result, the need for specialized acoustic lining or attenuators within the ductwork was minimized, since mechanical noise can be fully mitigated through system shutdown protocols rather than passive acoustic measures.”

Innovation also shaped Ridge’s installation strategy. To handle the large-diameter stage ductwork safely and efficiently, the team implemented a custom roller system designed specifically for this project. This system allowed the installation team to complete all duct connections from a single, fixed position by rolling each section along the system after assembly.

“Once the full duct runs were assembled, they were lifted into final position using chain falls, ensuring accurate height alignment and minimizing manual handling,” Olliffe explains. “This method provided precise control during installation and reduced the risk of damage to large duct sections.”

Ridge also leveraged its in-house spiral duct fabrication capabilities to produce custom lengths tailored to project specifications. This eliminated the need for field cuts, improved dimensional accuracy, and enhanced overall installation efficiency and quality control.

With a project of this scale, effective co-ordination among all trades was essential. Frequent road closures, restricted access





areas, concrete pours, and steel erection activities often impacted delivery schedules and work sequencing. Co-ordinating material handling and determining workable zones required ongoing flexibility and communication. Daily co-ordination meetings allowed the team to address changes in real time, adapt to evolving site conditions, and maintain alignment across all disciplines.

“Ridge places a strong emphasis on building and maintaining positive working relationships with all project partners, particularly the mechanical and electrical trades,” says Olliffe. “Open communication and mutual respect were key to resolving

challenges quickly and preventing conflicts that could impact scheduling or installation quality.”

Internally, Ridge prioritized organization and leadership within its own team to maintain efficiency on such a large-scale build. “Experienced journeypersons were assigned to oversee specific areas of the project, ensuring that work progressed smoothly, safely, and in accordance with the project schedule,” he adds. “This structured approach enabled Ridge to deliver consistent quality and co-ordination throughout all phases of construction, and Ridge’s field superintendents played a crucial role in ensuring that productivity and quality standards were upheld.”

At its peak, Ridge Sheet Metal deployed a crew of 16 skilled sheet metal workers to meet the demands of the Bridge Studios Lake City project.

For Olliffe, the highlight of the project was indeed the team itself. “I was fortunate to work with experienced project managers and superintendents who provided strong support throughout the job, including Joe Kalinich, Mark McLaren, and Peter Wood,” he says. “I also had a group of hardworking journeymen who took ownership of their areas, maintained the schedule, and delivered exceptional workmanship.

“Thanks to their dedication and teamwork, the project ran smoothly from start to finish. Osi Kramer led the stages with outstanding craftsmanship and attention to detail. Mack Flesher and Marcel Mirek oversaw the office areas, keeping everything on schedule, while Noah Yachuk managed the towers and supports, doing an excellent job staying organized—which was absolutely essential on a project of this scale. Having a great crew is absolutely essential to the success of any project. Without their effort, skill, and teamwork, this job would not have run as smoothly or achieved the same level of quality we’re all proud of today.” ■

### SMACNA-BC / SMART Local 280 Partnership



Left: Jud Martell, Local Union No. 280 President.  
Right: Al Benning, Ames Metal Fabricators 82 Ltd., SMACNA-BC President.



## Labour & Management

### “Embracing the Challenge”

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

# AI in Construction: Navigating Opportunities and Risks for SMACNA Contractors



These next few years will be important for the construction industry, as artificial intelligence transforms key elements of how contractors operate.

For SMACNA members, this technological shift presents both opportunities and challenges. As AI adoption accelerates across the industry, understanding its implications will be essential for growth and increasing margins, while keeping a firm grasp on the risks AI can present.

The rapid emergence of AI technologies—from machine learning algorithms that optimize ductwork design to natural language processing systems that automate documentation—is beginning to fundamentally reshape how contractors bid, build, and deliver projects.

## First, the Opportunities

AI tools are accessible to anyone with a keyboard, and people are getting used to using chatbots and other tools in their day-to-day.

This fluency promises to spill over into the workplace, giving teams new tools and skillsets they can use to drive efficiency and control risk, as well as elevating the most critical skills by automating repetitive, time-wasting tasks.

## Revolutionizing Document Management

AI offers transformative benefits for document-heavy construction processes. AI technology can eliminate up to 90% of PO processing time while automatically identifying billing errors, which can save contractors 5% to 10% in material costs. For SMACNA contractors managing dozens, hundreds, even thousands of purchase orders, specifications, submittals, and compliance documents, AI-powered systems can dramatically reduce administrative burden while improving accuracy.

Beyond simple automation, AI can identify patterns in vendor pricing, flag unusual charges, and even predict potential supply chain disruptions based on historical data.

### Mitigating Field Risks

AI’s predictive capabilities shine in field safety applications. Computer vision systems can monitor job sites 24/7, identifying safety violations that human supervisors might miss. These systems can detect workers without hard hats, identify improper ladder usage, and even recognize fatigue patterns that precede accidents. Real-time alerts can enable immediate intervention, preventing injuries before they occur.

Environmental monitoring represents another frontier. AI systems can continuously analyze air quality data during renovation projects, ensuring worker safety and regulatory compliance. They can predict when conditions might exceed exposure limits and automatically trigger ventilation adjustments or work stoppages.

### Productivity Gains That Matter

Construction professionals currently spend way too much of their time searching for information on projects. AI-powered search and retrieval systems can slash this waste, connecting workers with the exact specifications, drawings, or procedures they need instantly. Natural language queries like “show me the rooftop unit specifications for the third floor” can instantly retrieve relevant documents from thousands of project files.

Beyond search, AI enables entirely new workflows. Generative

design tools can explore thousands of ductwork configurations overnight, optimizing for multiple parameters simultaneously, airflow efficiency, material usage, installation accessibility, and cost.

### Transforming Recruitment

Advanced algorithms can scan thousands of resumes to identify candidates with the specific certifications and experience SMACNA contractors need, from certified welders to TAB technicians. But the technology can go deeper, analyzing patterns to predict candidate success and cultural fit based on historical hiring data.

Chatbots handle initial screening questions around the clock, ensuring no promising candidate is lost due to delayed response. They can answer questions about benefits, schedule preliminary interviews, and even conduct basic skills assessments. This frees HR teams to focus on high-value interactions with qualified candidates, improving both efficiency and candidate experience.

### Enabling Process Innovation

Machine-learning algorithms analyzing historical project data can identify patterns that predict delays or cost overruns with remarkable accuracy. By examining factors like weather patterns, material lead times, and crew productivity across hundreds of projects, AI can flag risks that human planners might miss.

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Integration with Building Information Modeling (BIM) opens even more possibilities. AI can automatically check designs for code compliance, identify clashes before installation begins, and suggest optimal installation sequences based on site conditions and crew availability. Some contractors report 30% reductions in coordination time through AI-powered clash detection and resolution.

Many of these opportunities will take some time, as managers become more comfortable with AI and begin to explore its capabilities. In fact, what we've seen already is that once construction leaders and field professionals get to a certain level of capability with AI, they start to find ways it can help both large and small companies. The true power of AI is giving teams the ability to adapt software to exactly what they need.

### The Double-Edged Sword: Risks AI Poses Data Access Policy Vulnerabilities

The foundation of AI systems rests on data, documents, and knowledge. For construction companies, this creates immediate concerns about data access and governance. AI systems require access to sensitive information, including infrastructure blueprints, cost estimates, client specifications, and resource management plans, making them attractive targets for malicious actors. Without proper data access policies, contractors risk exposing proprietary fabrication methods, client details, and competitive advantages that took decades to develop.

Internal data access policies must address how AI systems interact with different levels of sensitive information. What historical project information can be fed into third-party AI tools? Can subcontractor data be included in AI training sets? These questions require clear, enforceable policies that balance innovation with security.

Consider a scenario where a well-meaning project manager uploads years of bid data to an AI tool for analysis. Without proper controls, this action could inadvertently expose pricing strategies, material sourcing relationships, and proprietary installation methodologies to competitors if the AI platform experiences a breach or inappropriately uses the data for training public models.

### Accuracy Concerns and Meeting Documentation

AI's promise of automated meeting transcription and documentation has captivated many contractors, but accuracy remains a persistent concern. When AI misinterprets technical discussions about HVAC specifications, refrigerant requirements, or fabrication tolerances, the consequences can cascade through entire projects.

The nuanced nature of construction conversations, with their mix of technical jargon, regional terminology, and project-specific abbreviations, poses unique challenges for AI systems trained on general datasets. When a superintendent mentions "fishmouth"



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“As AI-powered tools handle increasingly complex tasks, from automated layout to robotic fabrication, the craftspeople who built their careers on these skills may find their expertise devalued. This could create a dangerous knowledge gap.”

or “Pittsburgh lock,” will the AI accurately capture these industry-specific terms and their implications for the project?

### The Erosion of Critical Skills

Perhaps most concerning is AI’s potential to erode fundamental skills within the workforce. As contractors increasingly rely on AI for load calculations, psychrometric analysis, and ductwork optimization, there’s a risk that essential technical expertise may atrophy. Young professionals entering the field might bypass the foundational learning that comes from manual calculations and hands-on problem-solving.

This dependency creates vulnerabilities when AI systems fail or produce questionable results. Without the underlying knowledge to verify AI outputs, contractors may blindly follow flawed recommendations, potentially compromising project safety and quality. Imagine a scenario where an AI system recommends a duct size based on incomplete data, and no one on the team possesses the experience to recognize that the recommendation violates basic airflow principles.

As AI-powered tools handle increasingly complex tasks, from automated layout to robotic fabrication, the craftspeople who built their careers on these skills may find their expertise devalued. This could create a dangerous knowledge gap where the industry loses the very expertise needed to train and validate AI systems.

### Cybersecurity Threats

AI systems face risks from attackers who shift focus from stealing data to poisoning the AI models themselves. For construction companies, this represents a new frontier of cyber risk. Compromised AI models could provide access to customer information or lead to incorrect answers.

The interconnected nature of modern construction projects amplifies these risks. IoT devices monitoring equipment performance, sensors tracking environmental conditions, and integrated project management platforms all represent potential entry points for attackers. A breach in one system can cascade through integrated platforms, affecting everything from BIM models to financial systems.

### The “Bring Your Own AI” Dilemma

As AI tools proliferate, contractors face the challenge of employees using personal or unapproved AI applications for work tasks. This “shadow AI” phenomenon creates multiple risks: data leakage through consumer-grade tools, inconsistent outputs across teams, and potential intellectual property violations. Without clear policies, sensitive project information could end up training public AI models, benefiting competitors.

A foreman might use a free AI app to quickly generate a materials list, unknowingly uploading proprietary assembly details. An estimator could rely on an AI chatbot for code interpretations, receiving guidance that hasn’t been verified for local jurisdictions. These individual actions, while well-intentioned, can create liability exposure and competitive disadvantages that compound over time.

### Crafting Effective AI Policies Early Stage: Foundation Building

For contractors just beginning their AI journey, success starts with solid foundations:

*Governance Structure:* Create an AI steering committee combining IT, operations, field personnel, and leadership perspectives. This group should meet regularly to evaluate tools, assess risks, and guide implementation. Include both AI enthusiasts and skeptics to ensure balanced decision-making.

*Data Classification:* Develop clear schemes identifying what information can be used with AI tools. Create categories like “Public” (marketing materials), “Internal” (general procedures), “Confidential” (project specifics), and “Restricted” (client data, pricing strategies). Each category should have clear handling requirements and approved use cases.

*Tool Approval Process:* Establish a formal process for evaluating and approving AI tools. Consider factors like data security, vendor stability, integration capabilities, and total cost of ownership. Start with pilot programs on non-critical projects before widespread deployment.

*Training Foundation:* Implement basic training on AI capabilities and limitations. Every employee should understand what AI can and cannot do, recognizing both its potential and its pitfalls. Include real-world examples relevant to their daily work.

### Mid Stage: Systemic Integration

As AI adoption matures, policies must evolve to address more complex scenarios:

*Verification Protocols:* Develop specific procedures for verifying AI outputs in critical applications. For example,

any AI-generated load calculation must be spot-checked by a qualified engineer. Establish clear thresholds for when human verification is mandatory versus optional. A critical point here is to make sure someone “owns” every output from the AI system.

**Vendor Management:** Create comprehensive assessment criteria for AI solution providers. Evaluate not just functionality but also data handling practices, model transparency, and update procedures. Require vendors to provide regular reports on model performance and any identified biases or errors.

**Performance Metrics:** Establish KPIs for AI initiatives. Track not just efficiency gains but also error rates, user adoption, and impact on project outcomes. Regular reviews ensure AI investments deliver promised value while identifying areas for improvement.

### Balancing Innovation with Prudence

The construction industry’s AI transformation is not a question of if, but how. SMACNA works to be one step ahead to ensure members have the resources and education to align with the growth curve. Success requires balancing aggressive innovation with prudent risk management.

The path forward demands a thoughtful approach. Contractors must embrace AI’s potential while maintaining healthy

skepticism about its limitations. They must invest in technology while preserving the human expertise that remains irreplaceable. Most critically, they must view AI as a tool to augment human capabilities rather than replace them.

For SMACNA contractors, this means developing comprehensive strategies that address both opportunities and risks. It means creating policies that enable innovation while protecting against emerging threats. It means investing in both technology and training, ensuring teams can leverage AI effectively while maintaining the skills to work without it.

The future belongs to those who can harness AI’s power while preserving the craftsmanship, judgment and expertise that define excellence in sheet metal and HVAC construction. By sharing experiences, best practices and lessons learned within the SMACNA community, contractors can collectively navigate this transformation, emerging stronger, and more capable than ever before.

As we stand at this technological crossroads, one truth remains clear: the contractors who thrive will be those who approach AI with both ambition and wisdom, leveraging its capabilities to enhance their work while never forgetting that construction remains, at its core, a human endeavor built on skill, experience and dedication to quality. ■



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# PARTNERS IN PROGRESS CONFERENCE IS BACK IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA

By / Jessica Kirby

The 2026 *Partners in Progress* Conference in Orlando, Florida, is set to be another success, bringing labor and management representatives from the United States and Canada together for three days of collaboration and education under the theme, “Leading Together to Deliver Results.” *Partners in Progress* is the only jointly funded conference focused exclusively on labor-management cooperation and offering learning, networking, and strategies for building a stronger industry together.

“The Conference offers an opportunity to hear perspectives from both management and labour on issues that impact the entire industry,” says Jeremy Hallman, executive director at SMACNA-BC. “It encourages open dialogue and mutual understanding between the two sides. For our group, it’s also a great chance to connect socially, outside of the regular work environment.”

This year’s line-up of breakout sessions is dynamic and diverse, focused on market development, diversity, labor and training, leadership, and more. The general sessions will include talks by SMART General President Mike Coleman and in-coming SMACNA National President, Todd Hill, as well as a fireside chat with these and other leaders representing labor and management.

“Labour and management are interdependent; one cannot succeed without the other,” Hallman says. “For SMACNA, which works exclusively with union labour, this relationship is a genuine partnership.

“A conference focused on labour-management reinforces that shared responsibility and helps strengthen our relationship. It’s



SMACNA-BC and Local 280 members at the Partners in Progress Conference in 2024

not about ‘us versus them,’ but about working together toward common goals that benefit the entire industry.”

*Partners in Progress* has some incredible keynote speakers lined up. Mike Massimino is a former NASA Astronaut, a New York Times bestselling author, a Columbia University professor, an advisor at The Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum, and a television personality. A spacewalker on the final two Hubble Space Telescope servicing missions, Mike and his crews traveled faster (Mach 26) and higher (350 miles) than any other astronauts in the 21st century while increasing the discovery capabilities of arguably the greatest scientific instrument ever built by a factor of 100.

Mike uses humor and his unique storytelling ability to inspire audiences to identify the passion in their work, to use teamwork and innovation to solve problems, to provide leadership in the

face of adversity and crisis, and to never give up when pursuing a goal.

Melissa Stockwell is an American war hero who has triumphed over personal tragedy to achieve greatness and World Champion status, and she has dedicated her life to chasing remarkable accomplishments while giving back to others, particularly those who face challenges similar to her own.

In 2002, Melissa graduated from the University of Colorado and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army. In March 2004, she deployed to Baghdad, Iraq. Just three weeks later, a blast from a roadside bomb struck Melissa's Humvee, causing the loss of her left leg above the knee. After enduring numerous infections and surgeries, Melissa was medically retired from the Army. She is the first female to ever lose a limb in active combat.

Melissa is proud to have served her country as a member first of The US Army and now as part of Team USA. On September 11, 2016, Melissa raced in honour of her fellow soldiers and their families who had given the ultimate sacrifice serving and protecting America. After a grueling race, the day ended on the podium, draped in the American flag, as the newly crowned Paralympic Bronze Medalist.

Both of these speakers are sure to deliver engaging, relatable talks that will inspire and connect your teams.

If you're thinking about attending the 2026 *Partners in Progress* Conference, consider that there is irreplaceable value in meeting with your labour partners in a more casual, less pressured environment. In fact, one way to get the most out of the conference is to plan time in advance.

Reach out ahead of time and agree to spend hour together before dinner or grab a cocktail afterwards to connect and make the effort It will be beneficial for everyone.

SMACNA-BC and SMART Local 280 will support attendance at the upcoming *Partners in Progress* Conference by encouraging member firms and local union partners to nominate two Emerging Leaders (under age 35) for full registration waiver.

"This is a great opportunity for the next generation of sheet metal professionals to connect with industry peers, labour-management leadership, and bring back new ideas to our BC region," Hallman says.

Visit [pinp.org](http://pinp.org) for a full list of speakers and their bios and to register. For more information or to nominate an Emerging Leader, please reach out to the SMACNA-BC office. ■



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## THE GREATEST LESSON YOU CAN TEACH YOUR APPRENTICE

Picture this scenario:

John is a construction apprentice who's been given a new task he's never faced before. It's a big challenge for him, and he doesn't really know how to get it done.

Now, let's take a look inside John's head. We might find him thinking one of two ways: using a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. People typically tend to use one or the other—and the difference has a lot to do with our success in training great apprentices.

People with a fixed mindset believe that their capabilities are set. In other words, everyone has their strengths and weaknesses and there's no real way to change that. Bad at math? Nothing's going to make you not be bad at math for the rest of your life.

People with a growth mindset believe they can level up. They think if they can practise and get help, they'll get better at math, even if they've struggled before.

Enough with the definitions. Let's go back to what's going on in John's head and look at the impact of the fixed and growth mindsets.

If John has a fixed mindset, he's going to get frustrated with his new task as he struggles with it. His confidence drops. "Maybe I'm just not cut out for this," is something that's going to go through his head. Maybe, if that thought occurs to him often enough over the weeks and months, he loses heart and quits. If he doesn't quit, he'll probably always want to work on the tasks he thinks he can do well and do his best to avoid those where he's not confident.

If John has a growth mindset, he's going to look at this new task as a challenge and be eager to take it on. He recognizes that he'll make mistakes but knows that he'll learn from them and grow his overall skill set. He'll see it as a chance to get better and seek help from more experienced people around him. He'll be resilient to the difficulties he encounters along the way.

Anyone choosing between the two is going to want "growth mindset" John. And here's the key: mindset isn't fixed. Apprenticeship programs can help their apprentices adopt a growth mindset with all the benefits that it brings.

Here are some simple approaches you can use to create a growth mindset in your program:

### Learning from Expert Mentors

We've talked about the value of mentorship before. Mentors aren't just another kind of instructor, but someone who can provide support and share their own experiences with setbacks and how to adapt to them. They can talk about challenges they've



By Mark Breslin, principal,  
Apprentice Performance Solutions

faced and the solutions they learned, helping apprentices quickly learn valuable lessons second-hand.

### Sharing Real-Life Stories from the Program

Your program has no shortage of apprentices who started off slowly but worked hard and became great construction professionals. Have them tell those stories or have your instructors do it. Highlight how determination and guidance helped them get to where they are. The message of the growth mindset is that anyone can succeed if they're willing to try hard, make mistakes, and learn—and the living examples are all around your apprentices today.

### Turning Mistakes into Insights

Share stories of overcoming early mistakes. For example, Sir James Dyson had an idea for a vacuum cleaner and built 5,127 prototypes before getting it right. Encourage apprentices not to dwell on the "messing it up" aspect of their mistakes, but to identify lessons to be learned and strategies for improvement. This builds resilience and a habit of learning from experience.

### Setting Goals and Tracking Progress

Encourage your apprentices to set long-term goals and break them down into shorter-term goals and steps. Track their progress with them and celebrate their achievements. This helps apprentices make the connection between effort, growth, and success in their own careers.

### Embracing Challenges and Feedback

Finally, encourage your apprentices to take on different challenges and expand their range of skills and experiences. Have them seek constructive feedback from mentors and colleagues along the way. Building a habit of taking on new challenges and learning from feedback now will ensure that they continue to grow and develop as they mature into construction professionals.

Mindset is a powerful force that apprenticeship programs can harness for tremendous benefit. Want a can-do attitude and a culture of persistence? Build a growth mindset in your apprentices and watch it happen. ■

*For more information on leadership training and performance or to find Mark's best-selling books, Five Minute Foreman and Alpha Dog, visit [breslin.biz](http://breslin.biz).*

## HVAC VENTING: THE RIGHT CHOICES

Gas-fired equipment is changing and so are the related codes. As efficiencies and energy factors creep up, the installation processes and venting technologies evolve. New materials recently have presented the installers with a learning curve. As a gas appliance is only as good as the venting system; poor venting can cause improper combustion and possible gas spillage into the occupied space. As efficiencies are changing so are the various types of venting materials available, each for a specific application. There is polyvinyl chloride (PVC), chlorinated polyvinyl chloride (CPVC), and polypropylene venting, as well more traditional metal venting systems.

### Unit Heaters

Unit heaters are most often found in warehouses and semi-finished areas. Relatively recent code changes and energy efficiency concerns have seen some of the most significant shifts in venting for unit heaters.

Recently, Canadian Standards Association (CSA) requirement 10.96 and CR96-005 were combined with American Standards Institute (ANSI) Z83.8 CSA2.6 to create one overarching standard for all unit heaters installed in North America. Going forward all new horizontally vented unit heaters will require a minimum Category III venting.

This means that all power-vented unit heaters installed in commercial applications that require horizontal venting must now be gas-tight and meet criteria defined in UL1738, Venting Systems for Gas Burning Appliances, Categories II,III,IV. Venting systems approved to meet UL1738 will be clearly identified on each piece with ULC approval.

Power-vented units installed in commercial applications must use a listed vent system. This applies to separated combustion units, as well. High-efficiency, separated combustion units are condensing appliances, meaning the vents must be gas and water tight and must include a means to drain condensate from the vent system.

There are a variety of simple rules to follow to ensure proper venting. Perhaps the most important is the need to keep vent runs as straight as possible, limiting the number of turns or elbows. And, never use a vent size smaller than the size recommended by the equipment manufacturer.

Vertical vent systems must terminate vertically, must not have a horizontal run that is more than 75 percent of the vertical rise in Category I installations, and must terminate a reasonable distance above the roof line to prevent snow buildup. Vertical venting systems are preferred as they interfere less with adjacent building occupants.



By Norm Grusnick, PEng  
Commercial Sales Rep,  
PACAIRE HVAC Suppliers Ltd.

Horizontal vent systems, if needed, must terminate horizontally and must be pitched no less than a quarter inch per foot and must not terminate near inlet openings. They must also be at a height sufficient to prevent accidental contact by neighbours.

A drip leg is recommended with the cleanout cover located appropriately based on the installation to prevent condensate in the vent pipe from entering the heating equipment. Special attention must be paid to the maximum length of the vent system from the manufacturer's installation instructions.

### Boilers

The majority of gas-fired boilers are now Category IV and require positive pressure venting systems. Category I appliances feature less than 84 percent efficiency and operate with a neutral or negative pressure. The higher stack temperature—though less than 550 degrees F—means flue gas condensate is not an issue.

Category II appliances often use a small fan to move gases through a secondary heat exchanger. The force is not enough to pressurize the flue, thus operating at neutral or negative vent static pressure.

With vent gas temperatures below 140 degrees F over dew point, Category II appliances can cause excessive condensation in the vent.

Category III appliances operate with a positive pressure but are noncondensing, as vent gases are above 140 degrees F.

Category IV applies to high-efficiency condensing appliances producing condensate that must be removed.

One thing that has recently appeared is a big move towards polypropylene vent systems instead of PVC and CPVC. Component availability for polypropylene venting systems has greatly improved in the last few years and costs have come down. Polypropylene may be a better option for condensing boilers where flue temperatures tend to fluctuate. Polypropylene can operate up to 230 degrees F. As efficiency standards increase, the industry is providing more installer training to ensure appliances are vented correctly. ■

## ASSUME THE BEST FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



By John Millen

Since I've been in my own business for more than 20 years, I've had a few instances of losing contact with clients or potential clients, or being "ghosted" as we say today. I've learned not to take it personally as it generally works out fine.

But about ten years ago I had a new client, who I'll call Diana, at a Fortune 500 company. She accepted a proposal for a series of training workshops with leaders around the country that would start within a month. She said she loved my approach and was excited about me working with her leaders. We sent her my contract.

Then Diana ghosted me. Multiple emails and voicemails went unanswered.

It had me assuming the worst: Did she change her mind? Why wouldn't she let me know? I've got to start preparing for these sessions. How can she be so rude!? This is so unprofessional!

This went on for more than a week. Then came a call from Diana's assistant. She apologized on behalf of her boss. Diana's mother had died unexpectedly.

I felt so dumb. I was sucked into the vortex of negative assumptions, where we can needlessly feel emotions like disrespect, anger, and many others. It's such a waste of time and energy, but it's how we are built as human beings.

We have a bias for the negative. I have a CEO client who says that when we look into a dark room, we never assume it's filled with angels.

### False Assumptions

In our daily interactions, it's all too easy to jump to conclusions and assume the worst about others. We misinterpret a text message, an email or a casual comment and allow our minds to conjure up negative narratives.

And these false assumptions can lead to huge misunderstandings and unnecessary conflicts.

That's why assuming the best is an act of goodwill that can be a game-changer. Assuming the best is important for effective communication because it is a gesture of trust. When you extend trust to others, it encourages them to reciprocate.

**Do you have an interesting story or project idea?**

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**email [jessica.kirby@pointonemedia.com](mailto:jessica.kirby@pointonemedia.com)**

Trust is the foundation of strong relationships, and by assuming the best in others, you foster a climate of trust that can strengthen your personal and professional connections.

You may also produce a profound ripple effect. When you approach others with goodwill and positive assumptions, they are more likely to pass on this positivity to others as well.

With this in mind, let me share seven practical tips for incorporating this approach into your daily communication:

### 1. Be mindful of your assumptions

Start by being aware of your own assumptions. When you catch yourself jumping to conclusions about someone's intentions, pause and reflect. Ask yourself if there might be an alternative, more positive interpretation of the situation.

Think about instances where assuming the best about someone's intentions led to positive outcomes. Reflecting on these experiences can reinforce the benefits of this approach and motivate you to apply it more consistently.

### 2. Lead by example

As with many aspects of interpersonal relationships, leading by example is highly effective. When you consistently assume the best in others, you set the tone for the kind of communication you want to see in return.

### 3. Communicate clearly

To avoid misunderstandings, practice clear and concise communication. When you express yourself with clarity, you reduce the chances of others misinterpreting your message, leading to more positive assumptions on their part.

### 4. Ask for clarification

If you're unsure about someone's intentions or if something seems ambiguous, don't hesitate to ask for clarification. Instead of making assumptions, seek to understand their perspective and motivations.

### 5. Put yourself in their shoes

Empathy is a powerful tool for assuming the best. Try to see the situation from the other person's point of view. What might be their reasons for acting or speaking as they did? This can help you appreciate their intentions and make positive assumptions.

*Continued on page 22*

## 3 MENTAL HEALTH EXERCISES YOU CAN USE RIGHT NOW IN THE WORKPLACE

*These three exercises can help improve your mental health in five minutes or less.*

Deadlines are looming, work is going slower than anticipated, and you feel like you're getting further and further behind. To make things worse, a sudden negative experience is weighing you down, your body isn't cooperating, and your mind keeps interrupting your day with intrusive, negative thoughts.

You're anxious, or stressed, or depressed. Maybe all three. But you don't have the time to think about that now, because then you'll get even further behind, which will lead to more stress, which will lead to even more negative thoughts. What can you do? Stop. Breathe. Take a moment to reset.

Practicing positive mental health isn't just about one-on-one counselling or group therapy. Often, it's about taking a few moments here and there to ease tension, reset our way of thinking, and postpone intrusive thoughts so that we can get on with our day. The best thing? Some take only a minute or two to perform, packing a whole lot of relief in a small amount of time.

Take some time to learn and practise these three proven techniques for improving your mental health. That way, you'll always have a few fast and effective tools in your mental health toolbox. All the exercises below are available from Construction Industry Rehabilitation Program (CIRP) as mobile-friendly downloads so you can save them to your phone and have them handy for the next time you're feeling the pressure.

### 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding

**What you'll need:** Your five senses

**Time it takes:** 5 minutes or less

Anxiety can at any time, and it can be overwhelming, taking over our thoughts, stressing us out, and burdening us with a variety of physiological symptoms like an increased heart rate, heavy breathing, sweating, and trembling. "54321" is a proven self-guided intervention that helps us reset our mind and focus on the present. Simple, memorable, and straightforward, you only need your five senses and a few minutes of your time.

- 5 – Look** around the room and name five things that you can see around you.
- 4 – Touch** four things. Focus on their texture.
- 3 – Listen** to three sounds that you can hear around you. Name those three things softly.
- 2 – Smell** two things around you. Reflect on their scent.
- 1 – Taste** one thing. Feel it on your tongue before eating or drinking it. If you do not have concerns with acidity, choose lemon juice and take a sip of it.



### Square Breathing

**What you'll need:** Your five senses

**Time it takes:** 5 minutes or less

Anxious thoughts can make our breathing feel heavy. For those who find anxiety a frequent but not debilitating experience, the following exercises can help to reduce its symptoms. Square breathing helps regulate our heart which can often be out of balance when anxiety is at play.

1. Sit or stand upright.
2. Slowly take in a deep breath for 4 seconds
3. Hold your breath for 4 seconds
4. Breathe out for 4 seconds
5. Hold yourself from breathing in again for 4 seconds
6. Repeat 7 more times

### Thought Stopping

**What you'll need:** Your phone or a notepad

**Time it takes:** 1-2 minutes throughout the day, plus 30 minutes after work

"Intrusive thoughts" are unwanted involuntary images, ideas, or impulses that can suddenly appear in our mind. They can often be distressing and self-defeating, getting in the way of our daily lives. At first we might be tempted to suppress the thought, but continuously trying to suppress a thought often makes it come back even stronger. Instead we can simply postpone it until a more convenient time, allowing us to take back control of our own heads.

The key is planning. First, set aside 30 minutes of your day to indulge in negative thoughts. Make sure it's convenient for you—these persistent thoughts will get the attention they demand, but only when you are ready for them. Next, set a timer on your phone to buzz every 45 minutes. This is a reminder to quickly

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**BUSINESS ADVICE**

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**6. Practice active listening**

Active listening involves not only hearing the words but also understanding the emotions and intentions behind them. By actively listening, you're more likely to pick up on cues that suggest positive intentions, even when the words themselves might seem negative.

**7. Choose your battles**

Not every situation calls for assuming the best. In some cases, people may have negative intentions, and it's crucial to address them. However, by being discerning, you can strike a balance between assuming the best and addressing genuine concerns.

**Put this into Practice**

Assuming the best in your communication with others is a powerful yet simple way to build trust, reduce conflict, and foster positive relationships.

Remember that communication is a two-way street, and by extending the courtesy of positive assumptions to others, you'll likely find it reciprocated, leading to more fulfilling and harmonious relationships throughout your life.

If you're thinking right now that this approach won't work, you're probably making a negative assumption and instead should begin putting these tips to work immediately.

By using these practical tips, you can integrate this approach into your daily life, making your interactions more enjoyable and productive. ■

*John has more than 25 years of communication experience, including serving as VP of Communications for Fortune 100 companies Nationwide and The Hartford. Read more or reach out at [johnmillen.com](http://johnmillen.com)*

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

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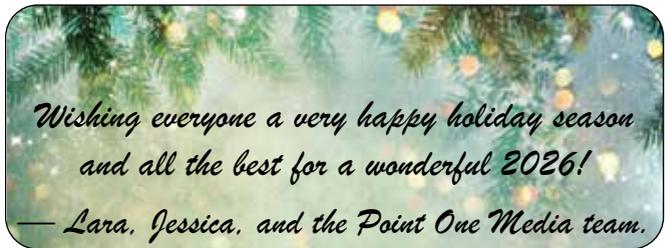
check in with yourself and ensure you're not getting distracted by negative thoughts outside the time you plan to give them.

When you do find yourself occupied with a negative thought, tell yourself "Stop" and take a sip of water, then write down the thought in a word or two on a piece of paper or in your phone to ensure it gets its time during the 30 minutes you scheduled for later.

When the time comes to give your attention to your negative thoughts, do so. Decide if you want to think about what you wrote earlier in the day or if that thought has passed. After the 30 minutes are up, go chat with a friend, cook a meal, play a game, or watch a show—whatever you think will improve your mood. Over time, you can slowly reduce the time you devote to dwelling on your negative thoughts. You might find that they pop up less often and demand less and less of your time.

Watch videos of these exercises or find mobile-friendly downloads at [buildstrong.org/3-mental-health-exercises-you-can-use-right-now-in-the-workplace](http://buildstrong.org/3-mental-health-exercises-you-can-use-right-now-in-the-workplace) ■

*BuildStrong by CIRP is British Columbia's only comprehensive Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU) treatment program and resource provider built for, and by, the unionized construction, trades, and technical industries. Learn more at [buildstrong.org](http://buildstrong.org)*



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