

Superintendent Career Training Program...a pathway defined.

By: Phillip E. Cooney, Director

Joe Siegfried has been a union carpenter of Local #2250 working for the Damon G. Douglas Company for 25 years. Starting as an apprentice, Joe worked his way up to foreman and was being considered for the role of superintendent. But exactly how the formal transition from foreman to superintendent would be made by Joe and his employer was uncertain.

As with most employers, the elevation of a key employee from the role of foreman to superintendent has not been an exact science. Historically, decisions of this nature have been based on a combination of ability, timing, trust, and even an element of gut instinct. No one knows for sure how a person is going to work out as a superintendent until he or she is in that role performing the task.

In 2001, the New Jersey Regional Council of Carpenters (NJRCC) and their union contractor employers collaborated through their labor-management cooperative, the New Jersey Carpenter Contractor Trust (NJCCT), to address the lack of industry guidelines for foremen stepping into the role of superintendent. By enlisting the support of NJCCT as well as the United Brotherhood of Carpenters (UBC), the NJRCC and its employers were able to coordinate a formal pathway for superintendent career growth.

In 2002, the UBC launched the Superintendent Career Training Program (SCTP) - an 18-month program involving an intense curriculum delivered by instructors with dual backgrounds in contracting and education. Complementing this instruction is a series of On-the-Job-Training (OJT) exercises and structured mentoring sessions that allow the carpenter student to experience life as a superintendent within the structure of the firm for which he or she is working. This format eliminates the bulk of the guesswork and offers regimentation while providing firm-specific learning. UBC offers this course at no cost to union carpenters and union contractors signatory to a carpenter agreement. Locally, the

NJCCT handles recruiting and travel arrangements for the four visits to the International Training Center (ITC) in Las Vegas.

We recently sat down with Joe Siegfried and Director of Field Operations Cedric Richardson of the Damon G. Douglas Company of Cranford, NJ, to learn more about their first-hand experiences with the SCTP. “By enrolling in SCTP, I was able to better understand the complete project cycle from beginning to end. Working with my mentor enabled me to feel much more confident in my ability, knowledge and grasp of key project-completion issues in the field,” explained SCTP graduate Joe Siegfried.

Siegfried’s mentor, Cedric Richardson, discussed his company’s motivation behind its involvement into the program, “While Joe knew certain *procedures* in running a jobsite, the SCTP student-mentor setting enabled us to discuss the *process*, in detail, from concept to completion. This arrangement opened a unique channel of communication that was a powerful addition to preparing Joe for his new role as project superintendent.”

Mr. Richardson applauded his firm’s leadership and their endorsement of the program. “Our CEO, Sam Prisco, was the motivating force behind our enrollment into the program. His support made it possible for us to take the time we needed to complete the 18 months of course work,” he added.

While the program involves four multi-day sessions at the ITC in Las Vegas, the bulk of the program takes place back home, in the contractor’s office and out in the field on active jobsites. Over an 18-month period, Joe and Cedric met three times per month, twice in the office and once in the field, in order to complete their OJT assignments and mentoring sessions. “We worked on our lunch hour and after work to complete the course work. It was hard at times, but we made a commitment to each other and made it happen. The benefits of this program outweighed any perceived inconvenience by leaps and bounds,” explained Richardson.

Since the course began in February of 2002, New Jersey has turned out 12 graduates and has another four carpenters in the program at various stages. Richardson explained that his primary reason for becoming a mentor was credited to Joe's "ongoing and unwavering commitment to Damon G. Douglas." He recalls that "mentoring Joe was the commitment that Damon G. Douglas could make to him, in return."

For contractors interested in learning more about SCTP, call the NJCCT office at 732-225-1300 or visit the website at www.njcct.org.