

Cause-Related Marketing Union Carpenters and Contractors: Building a Positive Image

Volume IV, 2004
Building Contractor Magazine

There is something truly special about the volunteer spirit of union carpenters and contractors. Attend a union meeting at any hall across the State and chances are there is a request for assistance for someone in need. It might be the building of a wheelchair ramp or repairing a home with storm damage, whatever the request, hands are raised in the air and volunteers line-up. "There is a long-standing history within the United Brotherhood of Carpenters of giving back to the communities we help build. Every Local does its part in preserving this legacy by sharing its craft through volunteerism," explained Frank Spencer, executive secretary-treasurer of the New Jersey Regional Council of Carpenters.

So, why do they do it? "We are sincere in our volunteer efforts. If in volunteering we receive media attention, the positive perception generated for our organization is welcomed," said John Mackay, Director of the Carpenter Training Center located in Kenilworth, NJ. Actually, *Cause-Related Marketing* is a component of many organizations' overall marketing strategy. Aligning your company with a charity or cause can assist in marketing an image, product or service. Embracing a good cause makes good business sense when you can merge your organization's values and beliefs into a campaign that supports a worthy cause and generates an appropriate level of media attention.

The Carpenters Union and their Contractors have recently added to their legacy of helping those in need by teaming up with the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). In an effort coordinated by their labor/management cooperative, the New Jersey

Carpenter Contractor Trust (NJCCT), carpenters and contractors have received cause-related exposure. "After researching potential charity-based organizations, we elected to support MDA. Having a common interest with one another is important to selecting an appropriate partner. In our case, we both hold Labor Day in high regard – unions celebrate their history and it is MDA's largest opportunity to raise awareness," explained Phil Cooney, Director of the NJCCT. The Trust established a relationship with MDA because of the opportunities to become involved with the annual Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon. During this year's broadcast, an estimated five million viewers were exposed to a positive message about union carpenters and contractors. As a result, a new tradition has started with labor and management representatives manning the phone banks on live television during the telecast. "For years, union carpenters and contractors have unselfishly volunteered to help people. By participating in an event that draws significant attention, the general public will see a side of a union organization that doesn't fit their usual stereotype. Cause-related marketing changes perceptions," Cooney said. In addition to appearing on the live broadcast, the Carpenters and their contractors have also helped MDA raise money by participating at events during New York Jet football games over the past two years. Over 500 union carpenters and contractors raised more than \$100,000 at these events. The Carpenters and Contractors were graciously rewarded with an acknowledgment over the public address system in front of 70,000 fans.

Remember one thing before embarking on a cause-related program. Philanthropic endeavors must be based in your organization's desire to contribute to the community you serve. If subjective gain is the focus of your labor, the meaning is lost. Passion-based giving will yield the most positive results.