

From the

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FOREMAN TRAINING

Preparing the construction leaders of tomorrow



Dee Burch, President of Advanced American Construction, Inc speaks to the foreman training class at our Portland area monthly meeting. Attendees are shown here meeting in one of the work bays at the contractor's place of business.

In February 2014, the Regional Council launched the Foreman Leadership Development Training. This training, offered monthly in both Portland and Tangent, Oregon is loosely based on the book, "The Five Minute Foreman," by Mark Breslin. A successful pilot program in the Southwest Council has been hugely popular with members and viewed by contractors as excellent training for their current and future foremen.

The training is by recommendation. The company employing the interested member must recommend each person.

"One aspect of this training that I think is really unique is that the class participants are driving the curriculum to a certain extent," said **Mike Hawes**, LU 146, PNCI Special Projects Coordinator and a facilitator at the meetings, "We have an extremely diverse group from leads to both new and seasoned foremen as well as superintendents. Our goal is to create a platform where our participants are learning from each other as they work through the material."

Guest speakers attend training to address specific topics and includes leadership from other Councils, and construction company owners and managers.

Mike Greenslade, Vice President and owner of Bremik Construction started his construction career wearing bags, now he's a business owner.

"We have a great partnership with the Carpenters Union" said Greenslade, "And we need that to compete in today's market."

Greenslade notes that six years ago, the entire leadership team at Bremik started meeting one day every other week. This included project managers, superintendents, engineers, equipment managers, estimators, and administrative staff. They would discuss scheduling, job issues, and other challenges that came up. As a leadership group they became better, smarter, stronger leaders. Recently they started including foremen in these meetings.

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"Consistency is core to being successful in this industry," said Greenslade, "The more our foremen know about the company and the work, the more opportunities they have to be effective foremen and move up in our leadership team. The sky's the limit."

The training focuses on communication and organizational skills, budget, production management, and team building. It has the potential to build better relationships with other trades, stronger more productive teams of workers on the job, and develop and enhance the management / labor connection.



Joshua Coleman, (pictured left) LU 1503, has been a member since 2000. Coleman says he started working for a non-union construction company right out of high school and was unaware that carpenters were unionized.

One year into his career, Coleman found out about the union and two years later, was able to join as a 3rd period apprentice. Currently an employee of Bremik

Construction, Coleman said his opportunity to become a foreman presented itself when the owner of Bremik, Mike Greenslade was touring the job site.

"He stopped and talked with me for a few minutes," recalled Coleman, "When I told him I'd been a foreman with another union company, he asked if I was interested in being a foreman again and if so, they'd give me a shot.

"In February 2014 I began going to the monthly foreman training and in April of that year I started as a General Foreman on a 10 million dollar project."

This program will fill that gap and help assure that we have qualified men and women ready to step into leadership positions in the future. Foremen on the job who have good communication, organization, and people skills have the ability to impact the whole job site in a positive way.

It is not unusual for a foreman to be appointed with little or no training. Making sure that our lead people in the field, foremen included, have the skills necessary to run multi-million dollars projects just makes good business sense.

"We talk a lot about the people skills side of being a foreman," continued Coleman, "How to

build a rapport with workers, how to deal best with difficult and different personalities. It's been really helpful to have a wealth of knowledge at these meetings."

Many of the attendees have years of experience as foremen and they bring their seasoned perspective to the program. When construction company owners/managers come to the training as guest speakers, attendees get their view on the skills management is looking for in a leader on the job.

Not only are attendees able to hone their skills to become better foremen, but they can get a grasp on how they can continue to develop their skills and advance their career in the construction industry. With baby boomers retiring in the thousands each year, leadership opportunities in the construction industry are at an all time high and will continue to grow throughout the next decade.

"The foreman training program is a guide to show me what I need to work on personally and professionally to become better at my job," said Coleman. "It's a tool for success."



One of the challenges for the foreman training is bringing more women into the program. **Joann Lay-Taylor**, (pictured at left) LU 1503, has been a union carpenter for more than 15 years. She has been a foreman for a previous employer and did well. "I am a details person," said Lay-Taylor.

"Even though we have more women on the job in the Northwest than any other part of the country,

we are often overlooked for leadership positions," said Lay-Taylor. "Getting the word out about this foreman training at Union meetings, informational meetings, and most especially with the Sisters in the Brotherhood group in Portland would be a good start to let more women know about this training.

The idea of visiting construction company offices and talking to owners and managers evolved as attendees discussed ways to make the class more engaging. Facilitators quickly acted on the idea and since then the class has visited the offices of Advanced American, Anderson, Bremik, and others. Now the class is a permanent fixture at PNCI and the Tangent Training Center and guest speakers are on the agenda at every meeting.

"Having guest speakers has become a highlight of the program," said **Dale Dvorak**, LU 1503, who is one of the facilitators and a Regional Council employee. "The owners have embraced the training and are excited to be a part of it. They talk about the challenges they have faced as business owners, what they expect of their leadership, and a myriad of other subjects come to light."

Dan Toussaint, (pictured at right) LU 1503, and a foreman for Bremik Construction is a 20-year union carpenter. He started in the trade non-union, but like Coleman, heard about the union, went down to the training center and signed up.



"We've gained a lot of insight into the industry through the ideas and techniques a proven and successful construction industry leader brings to our meetings," said Toussaint. "I think the training has become more interesting because of it and should draw more qualified people to the training."

With seven years on the job as a foreman, Toussaint brings his years of experience to the class.

"I think I've been able to contribute a lot of my experience with interpersonal skills," remarked Toussaint, "Including how to relate and resolve issues with other trades as well as other carpenters on the job."

President of Advanced American Construction Inc, **Dee Burch**, is one of the owners who hosted a foreman training session at the Advanced American shop (see photo front page).

"This kind of training allows men and women who have the interest in becoming foremen to share information and ideas," said Burch, "it provides them the opportunity to move up in responsibility and go on to the next level of leadership.

"There are already signs of success," he continued, "just the fact that our employees are going regularly to these meetings, on their own time, after shift says a lot about their dedication to this company.

"At the same time, it gives them the opportunity to see just how far they can go and evaluate for themselves the energy and commitment it will take to reach that goal."

"Where in our industry can you be in a room with young up and coming foremen willing to learn, and seasoned and experienced foremen, superintendents, and owners willing to pass on their knowledge?" asked **Max Murphy**, General Superintendent for Advanced American Construction. Murphy regularly attends these meetings and sits down with the facilitators to plan future sessions.

"Union and company leaders, men and women committed to foreman training come to these workshops with great ideas from great companies," continued Murphy, "This is a unique learning environment for all of us."

Keep in touch with your business representative to find out when foreman training will be coming to your area.

Before you are a leader,
success is all about growing yourself.
When you become a leader,
success is all about growing others.

– Jack Welch