



Five Ways to Stay Abreast of Industry Trends

By Carol Goguen, Executive Director, SMACNA Arizona

As our world continues to grow and diversify, it has become increasingly difficult for professionals to remain up-to-date on information regarding their industries. To help sort through all of the information in the 21st-century digital world, here are a few ways to stay current on industry trends:



Membership in Trade Organizations

By far the best (and often easiest) way to stay up-to-date on industry trends is to join one or more trade organizations. Membership in one of these groups is the key to all

other strategies of staying abreast or getting ahead in your industry. The benefits of joining one or these organizations include:

- Direct access to accepted industry technical standards;
- The opportunity to become a contributor in the processes of developing and revising these standards;
- The opportunity to participate in ongoing educational programs that can improve many facets of your business
- Access to an entire network of like-minded industry professionals in your community or state, and throughout the country and the global community.

At the least, membership ensures that those who join will receive newsletters and have access to “members only” benefits. At the most, a trade organization can act as a forum for ideas, a place to learn and teach, and a way to remain in-the-know about the particular industry.

Subscriptions to Trade Publications

Upon joining an organization, members automatically receive newsletters, emails, and any number of other updates on the industry. However, there are independent publications that can supply professionals with a steady stream of information as well. These cater to both broad and niche audiences, so people can pick and choose publications that will supplement those that they already receive from organizations. In Phoenix alone, one can choose from *American Builder Magazine* — *Phoenix*, *Arizona Homebuilder*, *Arizona Metalworker*,

Construction News West, the *Electric Times* and *HVACR Today*. Add to that national publications and those from global organizations, and industry members will find that a wealth of information is available on any topic. It is as easy as paying for a subscription, though oftentimes publications are free to qualified subscribers in the industry.

Networking

Everyone has heard this piece of advice before, but that is because it is so true: networking is a fundamental part of a professional career, no matter the industry in which one is employed. Before joining an organization, sit in on a meeting in order to observe what goes on. Chances are that members will interact as colleagues and even friends, even if they do not necessarily know each other. They are held together by a common bond — that of the organization — which serves as a major networking tool. In making connections, industry members will increase the flow of information between professionals in the field, and one never knows how that may help in the future.

Ongoing and Regular Communications

Though networking is an important step in the communication process, it is imperative to keep those lines of communication open and active. In addition to joining organizations and reading up on the latest news of an industry, it is beneficial to engage in ongoing and regular communications that focus on that industry. This is the way in which professionals can discuss and influence change in the field, as an alliance of businessmen and businesswomen working together can develop and expand their power base to improve industry conditions beyond the ability of a single contractor. Engaging in ongoing communication with other professionals will encourage dialogue about the state of the industry, allowing the exchange of current information among colleagues in a long-term relationship.



Construction Career Connection

Ongoing Education

Finally, it is important to continue the learning process in your profession. Routine participation in classes or training will guarantee that one stays abreast of industry trends. Organizations such as SMACNA offer education and training courses directed at business management, industry technical expertise, and personal growth, and the courses are presented by industry-acclaimed professionals. Education does not stop at graduation; the only way to ensure knowledge that develops with one's industry is to keep the learning process going throughout one's career.

About the Author

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Contractors National Association. SMACNA Arizona is committed to quality work and to ensuring quality workers for the future. SMACNA is an international association of union contractors in the sheet metal and air conditioning industry representing 4,500 contributing contractor firms. The organization is focused on upholding the highest standards of quality and excellence in all facets of the sheet metal and air conditioning industry. To demonstrate that commitment, SMACNA Arizona has contributed more than \$2.5 million statewide toward skills training and apprenticeships programs. For more information on SMACNA Arizona, visit www.smacna-az.org or call (602) 734-0214.

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