

Employer Spotlight: Vulcan Painters Inc.

The Painters and Allied Trades Labor Management Cooperation Initiative is commonly abbreviated and referred to as the LMCI. Although it's much easier to say (and write), unfortunately, the letters LMCI alone do not adequately convey the core mission of this International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) partner.

The LMCI strives to build on and maintain an effective partnership between union leaders and those who employ the members of the IUPAT. "Our philosophy, and the philosophy of IUPAT leadership, is that everything we do is to benefit both labor and management as partners and a team," said Kevin LaRue, LMCI administrator. "Increasing mar-

ket share, enhancing training and opening new doors of opportunity are what we work on every day to benefit that partnership."

In this issue of *The Journal*, the LMCI is proud to highlight one of its best industry partners, Vulcan Painters Inc. Founded in the late 1930's, Vulcan specializes in commercial and industrial painting pro-

jects; blasting and coating of structural steel and sewer pipe; electrodeposition; and powder coating of parts for automotive, appliance, castings, stampings, and lawn and garden furniture industries. Based in the Southeastern United States, on average, Vulcan has over 150 IUPAT members at work in the three companies that make up the business - Vulcan Painters Inc., Vulcan Electro-Coating, Inc. and Vulcan Pipe & Steel Coatings, Inc.

David R. Boyd, president and CEO of Vulcan Painters Inc., took a moment to speak to *The Journal*:

Your company traces its roots back to 1938, right on the heels of the Great Depression. Considering the times we're living in right now and what this economy has put us through, it seems appropriate to ask what you credit for giving your company such staying power.

Well, truthfully, not a whole lot carries over from those days to today in our industry. Technology and practices change drastically in such a short period of time in what we do. For example, 90 percent of the coatings we use on a job today didn't even exist ten years ago.

Our industry moves like a supersonic jet, you need to learn how to keep up, and I think that's where we've found our success. We're doing a good job of keeping up with the changes in our industry.

So, the company founders didn't hide some secret formula for success in a vault for you, only to be opened in hard economic times?

No. It's a new game today, a new playing field. It's always been hard, now it's just a different kind of hard. But one of the things we've always thought was important for success, even back then, was quality training. We've always made a



point of being involved with our local apprenticeship program. In fact, I'm a co-chair of the apprenticeship program for IUPAT District Council 77.

Dan Penski [director of the IUPAT Finishing Trades Institute, or FTI] has done a great job with the programs and the guys in DC 77 are very dedicated and talented in conducting the best training out there.

Obviously you're doing something right. Engineering News Record recently ranked your company in the top 17 painting contractors in the United States.

We've always been fortunate enough to be one of the top companies nationwide and yes, training and our ability to change with the industry have a lot to do with that. But I also think a bit of our success comes from some of our competitors failing to really understand this industry and how to succeed or even survive in it.

How so?

Truthfully, we've rarely seen a painting contractor go out of business because they didn't have any work. Instead, we've seen our competitors go out of business when they take work they can't manage. The project itself ends up devouring them because they weren't properly prepared to do the job right and they're on the hook for it.

Think about it, we use paint every day that costs \$300 a gallon. Now, you give that paint to an untrained person and they will probably use too much or too little. Either way, that costs you money. Give that paint to a trained worker and you won't have to repaint every year, you'll do it every ten years, like you're supposed to.

Speaking of being prepared, your company was recently recognized by

the SSPC for being "the first coatings contracting company to meet the certification requirements of the SSPC Q-9 program and the QS-1 certification program...first to achieve six SSPC Quality Program certifications including QP-1, QP-2, QP-3, QP-8, QP-9 and QS-1. Vulcan Electro-Coating, Inc. and Vulcan Pipe & Steel Coatings, Inc. have also achieved SSPC QP-3 certification." Being the first to do so is quite an achievement, and a testament to your company's drive to be a leader in your industry.

Absolutely. We built a sort of "culture of certification" that began about ten years ago with becoming ISO cer-

tified for the auto work we do. That really showed us the business value of training and being certified and we've made every effort since then to be a leader in certification.

Thanks to the IUPAT, FTI and LMCI we're able to accomplish our goals in certification, among other things. We couldn't do it all on our own without the resources they offer and that's one of the primary advantages of being a partner with the Painters and Allied Trades. We're a better business and remain highly competitive because of it.

To learn more about Vulcan Painters Inc. go to www.vulcangroup.com.

Our industry moves like a supersonic jet, you need to learn how to keep up, and I think that's where we've found our success.

**David R. Boyd
President and CEO,
Vulcan Painters Inc.**



WHAT IS VULCAN PAINTING WORKING ON RIGHT NOW?

"One of our more interesting projects right now is maintenance work on the statue of Vulcan [See Cover] that looks over Birmingham [Alabama]. It's the tallest cast iron statue in the country at 56 feet tall, and it stands atop a 124 foot pedestal. Obviously it takes quite a bit of preparation to do our job and do it safely. We've been taking care of Vulcan since about 1949, so it's something we take a great deal of pride in."

