

SHOP TALK

Angie Simon made history last year when she became the first female president to lead the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association's (SMACNA) board of directors. Although her standing as president sets a new precedent for the sheet metal union, Simon is far from new to the industry. A mechanical engineer by trade, her career began at age 22. Working her way up from project manager at Western Allied Mechanical, Simon is now president and CEO of the full-service HVAC contracting firm, with a resume of accomplishments that has amplified the company's standing as one of the Bay Area's best. Hers is the kind of new view the sheet metal union and industry as a whole needs right now, and she's hit the ground running with plans to bring the industry into the future.

Stepping into your new role as the first-ever female president of SMACNA, what are some of your top priorities?

First, workforce development and retention are top priorities; how do we get more people to be interested in our industry, and how do we get them to stay. We have several fronts that we are attacking to draw attention to the industry and our contractors, in particular. The most visible effort will be our website, IgniteYourCareer.com. Additionally, there are several national efforts to more closely align

ourselves with as many workforce boards, and career and technical education programs as possible. >> Second, we must address technology. It can be hard for contractors to keep up with the ever-changing role of technology; and SMACNA is establishing a technology committee to help them stay up to date and competitive in the space.

Other than labor, what do you think are some of the major issues facing the industry?

With 42 percent of people in our industry retiring in the next 10 years, there will be many companies looking for ways to transition their companies to the next generation of managers/owners. The good news is this next generation is more apt to innovate and use technology to their advantage.

In your opinion, in what major ways has SMACNA changed over the years, and how do you think those changes have enriched membership?

SMACNA continues to achieve excellence by helping our contractors and putting their needs first. Over the years, SMACNA has built

its library of educational programs, expanded the technical department to help with code compliances, written articles to demonstrate expertise, helped our contractors navigate negotiations at the local levels, and much more. We have also evolved our communication efforts by spotlighting contractors and projects via video, launching a podcast, expanding newsletters, and engaging with members on social media. SMACNA is a valuable partner that supports members in all they do. **What do you tell contractors about investing in technology and new machinery? How have investments in technology helped Western Allied?** Change is constant, and we must be willing to innovate. With innovation comes increased productivity and efficiencies that help us as an industry remain competitive. At Western Allied, we are working with our next generation of owners to remain on the cutting edge by investing in new technologies. In fact, we have increased our yearly budget considerably so that we continue to innovate and remain on the cutting edge of technology in our industry. **As SMACNA celebrates its 75th anniversary, what are some of SMACNA's goals going into the next 75 years?**

SMACNA has always been an organization that has evolved to meet the changing needs of this dynamic industry. As



the pace of change has increased, so has the pace of development of SMACNA strategies, services, and programming to meet contractors' needs. The SMACNA leadership has become much more proactive in focusing on the 50,000-foot-view of industry needs and pushing the organization to help its members stay competitive while addressing customer expectations. SMACNA's technical services, advocacy activities, business education, workforce development, safety programs, labor relations, and communications initiatives have been exceptionally effective in influencing the business environment so that our contractors thrive. >> While specific priorities and objectives may evolve over the next 75 years, I am confident SMACNA's leadership will ensure the organization maintains its role as an effective business and industry partner of its members.

For more information about SMACNA, visit smacna.org 