

MEETING THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY '88

AWCI Continues to Educate the Industry

By Denise M. McGiffin

Keeping up with the changes that occur in our industry is a difficult job. There are constantly new (and improved) products, techniques, regulations, and avenues of opportunity. That's why AWCI's major educational "force," the Academy Council, a committee made of up wall and ceiling contractors and suppliers, puts so much time and effort into developing the Association's mid-year educational program, Academy. And that's why Academy continues to be such a popular educational event.

Academy '88, held last November in New Orleans, Louisiana, continued the tradition of meeting and educating the industry veterans and newcomers.

Changing Your Tune

Changing your attitudes about how you communicate to your employees can make you a more effective manager, says Academy Instructor Norb Slowkowski, of Slowkowski & Associates, Darien, Illinois. In his session on Job Site Communication, Norb pointed out some common myths and reviewed the basics of communication. Communication is more than just talking, its listening too, says Norb. Knowing what communication is all about and putting that knowledge to work can help you on the job everyday.



... and an infamous table top reception



The panel in the Interior Finish System session fields a question



A discussion on quality control



Staff hard at work



Academy Chairman Jim Keller...



The participants take an active role in the sessions

But this Job Site Communication session wasn't so much a "how to" course about talking to your workers as it was a lesson on human behavior. Understanding what motivates your workers can make you a better, more effective manager and make your workers more satisfied and—hopefully—more productive.

A Change of Focus

Staying abreast of the latest U.S. government regulations is a tedious but necessary job. The Occupational Health and Safety Administration's Hazard Communication Standard has been of concern to all involved in the construction industry.

In the Academy session on the Haz-Corn, Jack Matthews, a representative from OSHA's Louisiana Branch Office discussed the development of the standard and what contractors should be doing to comply. The participants voiced some of their frustrations with the standard and asked many questions.

Also taking part in the session was John Dolmar of H.B. Fuller. With the

OSHA representative still present, John bravely reviewed what his company had done to comply with the standard. And consequently was commended by the gentleman from OSHA following his presentation.

Some Things Never Change

In the session titled, "Second Guessing Architects, Owners and General Contractors through Specifications," participants learned tips on how to avoid doing just that. Instructor Duane Feldner, McNulty Bros. Company, Chicago, Illinois, stressed the importance of "thinking up front."

He emphasized the need to know beforehand the specifications for other trades on the job. Armed with stacks of reference material, Duane pointed out some helpful standards and guides you can use when dealing with others in the industry, especially architects.

"This session alone was worth the trip for me," said AWCI member George Fisher, G.K. Fisher, Inc., Vero Beach, Florida. "I picked up a lot of helpful ideas that I'll put to work the day I get back to the office."

Although the bulk of the Academy program was made up of educational sessions, daily table top exhibit receptions added another dimension to the program. These receptions gave everyone a chance to talk to some industry suppliers in a informal, relaxed setting.

But don't be fooled, Academy '88 was not all work and no play. In the few days set aside for Academy, participants did enjoy a social event or two. One evening event was a river boat cruise down the Mighty Mississippi—good fun and good food.

"All in all, I was really pleased with this year's Academy program," said Academy Chairman Jim Keller. "We offered sessions that everyone attending could benefit from. Our topics ranged from technical such as, Interior Caulking and Exterior Sealants, to outrageous, Relieving Stress Through Humor—we were encouraged not to take ourselves too seriously. It was an educational three days—to say the least."

Planning for Academy '89 is already underway. The educational sessions will be determined at the Academy Council's Spring Planning Meeting, to be held in Washington, D.C. this May.



Academy Council members take time to pose