

CASE STUDY: IRONWORKERS LOCAL 512

This chapter of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Ironworkers represents union members in Minnesota, North Dakota, and northwestern Wisconsin.



SERVICES PROVIDED

- Brand Cohesiveness Services
- Social Media Management
- Facebook Ad Campaign Development & Management
- Content Development (Blog Articles)

OPPORTUNITY: INCREASE APPRENTICESHIPS

The Ironworkers' apprenticeship program is how Local 512 trains new Ironworkers. It's what keeps the buildings going up, the union strong, and the jobsite safe.

But the organization was facing a new challenge: recruiting apprentices. The recruiting pool used to be largely local and word of mouth. But after COVID-19, competition for workers was "Unlike anything I've ever seen," said Pete Teigland, training director for Local 512.

Though the Ironworkers had done their own marketing in the past, their efforts were scattershot and irregular. They realized it was time to seek out expert advice. Through a referral connected to another local union, the Ironworkers turned to SOULO.

SOLUTION: SOULO

Because their marketing materials and online presence were inconsistent, the first thing SOULO did was tighten up the Ironworkers' brand guidelines. Then we planned a series of monthly blog posts and created a social media marketing campaign to drive awareness and activity online.

Blog Articles

The blog posts were informational, focusing on aspects of an Ironworker's job, such as welding, bolting, and crane safety. They also covered other aspects of an Ironworker's life, such as mental health, wellbeing, and the apprenticeship program.

The posts were honest and frank about the challenges of being an Ironworker, but they also highlighted the benefits: excellent pay, health insurance, and retirement with dignity (as well as the satisfaction of seeing the physical results of your labor). They also helped show potential recruits (and their parents!) the quality of the organization.



Wednesday, January 30, 2023

Becoming an Ironworker

There are many paths that can lead a person to becoming an ironworker. The brothers and sisters in Ironworkers Local #512 come from all walks of life. We have people with four-year degrees, high school dropouts, and everything in between and beyond. We even have a former medical doctor among our ranks. But regardless of race, age, gender, native language, or any other category that separates people, we are united by one thing: taking pride in doing hard work right.

Another thing that unites ironworkers in Local 512 is our apprenticeship program. We mentioned above the many paths that can lead to ironworking, but the apprenticeship program is how every one of us becomes an ironworker. It's the one door we all go through, but don't think of it as restrictive. The apprenticeship program is, bar none, the best way to learn the trade of being an ironworker. It's also the least expensive. In fact, the "earn while you learn" part of our program is one of its main attractions.

First, a little bit about the apprenticeship program. It's a four-year program, with two semesters each year. It does cost our apprentices—it's \$400 for each semester, for a total of \$3,200 over the four years. That's the total cost to you for tuition that trains you in every aspect of ironworking. And while \$400 can seem like a difficult sum, remember that this is for the "learn" part of the program. There's also an "earn" part. While you are in the apprenticeship program, you'll work on a jobsite with your crew, as well as other tradespeople. You don't quite earn a journeyman's wage, but you make 70% of it. In Region A, which covers roughly the southern half of Minnesota and a good portion of western Wisconsin, that's \$28.70 per hour in wages, plus a \$33.39 per hour benefit package. Compare that to a four-year program at the University of Minnesota. You're looking at roughly \$18,000 per year in tuition (estimates vary, but that's close enough) and maybe working part time for \$5 an hour, no benefits. And when you've graduated, you have to find your own job.

That's not to bash university education—different careers are great for different people. And apprenticing as an ironworker isn't easy. You work full days, full weeks, doing demanding work that can pose new challenges every day.

Blog Article

"WHEN OUR WEBSITE CAN SHOW PARENTS AND RECRUITS THAT LOCAL 512 IS A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION, WITH EDUCATION, TRAINING, WAGES, AND BENEFITS, THAT'S A LOT BETTER THAN ME TELLING ONE PERSON WHO THEN TELLS THEIR PARENTS."

**- PETE TEIGLAND
TRAINING DIRECTOR**



Facebook Advertisement

Social Media

The social media approach for the Ironworkers' campaign included weekly posts as well as a paid ad campaign on Facebook. Some of the posts highlighted the work, showing pictures of finished projects; others focused on the people (such as a graduating class of apprentices, and Ironworkers standing atop a building). This drove interest from both current followers (re-posting) as well as new followers.

Facebook Ad Campaign numbers at a glance:

Impressions
83,175

Clicks
1,735

CTR
2.08%

Average Facebook CTR (click through rate is 0.90%)

RESULTS

The project was a success. Initial efforts with the Facebook ad campaign were successful enough that the ad buy continued and expanded to target specific geographic areas and audiences with the message.

In three months, the ads generated 83,175 impressions and 1,735 clicks, for a click-through rate of 2.08%. Furthermore, Ironworkers Local 512 saw a noticeable increase in applicants from demographics that they had not drawn interest from in the past.

13% increase in new applicants



16% increase in interviewees



Doubled the size of apprenticeship class!

(compared to the previous two years)