PREFACE – THE MANAGEMENT SOB

I am a management SOB.

I have been threatened, picketed, spit at, defamed, sued, harassed and generally made to feel unloved. I represent employers in terminations, sexual harassment, strikes, lock-outs, jurisdictional disputes and other sudden death games. My winning arbitration record is Cy Young quality. My Italian and Irish bloodlines cause occasional loud and unruly outbursts. I have broken phones but never promises. When provoked I can laugh or froth like a junkyard dog.

I have taken an eye for an eye, gone nose to nose and matched drink for drink. I have no formal legal training but I can find the obscure contract loophole. I have no guilt about using the mangiest choke-chain lawyers to bare fangs at a labor dinosaur. And I confess to have just recently given up the amusing pastime of “taunt the first year business agent.”

I am, by trade or situation, a negotiator, mediator, father-confessor and sympathetic arm twister. Yes, I am a management SOB. But at the same time, I have been honored by local and international unions. I have made presentations to many thousands of business managers, agents and organizers across the United States. I was even the recipient of the highest honor granted by an International Union. As a result, I now own more plaques, shirts, watches, pins, jackets and pens with union logos than I will ever need or use.

You see, despite my obvious lack of charm and my abundance of serious character flaws, I am a very effective and successful union organizer. I am a wolf in wolf’s clothing. It’s just that I alternately promote and eat the sheep.

Results speak louder than words. One local District Council used the ideas contained in this booklet and signed up 500 new companies on a “top-down” basis in three years; no salting or campaigns or votes required. I have personally brokered relationships and contracts between more than 100 non-union companies and various unions in the last five years. We should all have such productive hobbies.

Now before you finger me as a college “suit” or heartless corporate kill-shot type, without an understanding of an honest day’s work, a little history is in order. I started working when I was 12. To put myself through high school and college I would do about anything for money. I’ve been a paperboy, busboy, waiter, fry-cook, housepainter, drywaller, janitor, bar-back, retail clerk, pump jockey, laborer, carpenter, gardener, foreman, production manager, and on and on. Been paid union, non-union and cash under the table. I’ve had dirt on my jeans. Mud on my boots. Dust up my nose. Paint in my hair. Whatever it took. A man apart from “an honest day’s work?” Hardly. Been there and done that.
I come from three generations of contracting in my family. Great grandfather, grandfather and step-dad. By age 26 I had put myself through college, become the chief executive of a contractor’s trade association in California. And become, without knowing it, the youngest SOB in the nation with this job.

I knew nothing, acted like it and didn’t know that either.

It was then, with a lot of help from some class-act labor leaders and innovative employers, that I began to formulate a different way of conducting labor-management relations.

Since that time, the association has tripled in size. It has become a leading multi-employer bargaining unit and an innovator in labor-management relations in California. The unit currently represents more than two hundred major companies. These companies employ tens of thousands of union workers, for millions of man-hours each year with billions of dollars in secured contracts.

So why now, at the pinnacle of management SOB success, might I compromise my notoriety? What could I possibly gain by promoting relationships between nonunion firms and organized labor? Is there any balance to this risk-reward formula?

My motives are not noble. I am not engaged in a fight for the heart and soul of the American worker. The simple fact is that I represent unionized employers and it is easier to teach you, my opponents, to even the playing field, than it is to get you to take your medicine; the wage, fringe or work rule concessions your members will scream about, (and then hang your asses out to dry for.)

Thus I am using non-traditional strategies to aggressively expand my market share. In fact, I am using labor to bring the market to me and even the playing field for my employers at the same time. Is this a marketing innovation? Maybe. Is this the new labor-management dynamic at work? Perhaps. But the blunt truth is that it is a survival technique for existing union employers. This market is governed by a harsh economic and political environment that does not measure itself by its ideology. Its dog-eat-dog determined by performance and results. It is the American Way.

I have no time to debate the moral merits or deficiencies of this system. But I have invested nearly a decade devising very specific marketing and business development strategies to thrive within it. This book is designed to address top-down organizing; marketing and business development strategies up to and including closing the sale on non-union employers. It’s about how to conduct yourself as a real professional labor representative in the business world.

This book does not address bottom up techniques such as salting, arm-twisting or ass-chewing. Someone else will teach you those strategies; essential for some campaigns but not my style. To me, most business relationships that starts that way will probably lack the trust, loyalty and mutual benefit that is the foundation for any long-term relationship. I know that sometimes you-gotta-do-what-you-gotta-do; but what if you didn’t have to go that far to begin with?

So as we move on, keep an open mind. The following pages may not always be easy to accept or digest. I hope you find it provoking and interesting. And you may find in its’ raw and vulgar nature some compelling in-your-
face truths; like a serious car accident you just can’t look away from. One guarantee; if you are willing to try something different, there is at least one thing in the pages ahead that will change the way you do business.