

# Steel sharpens steel



**James D. Henry**

**T**he age-old maxim “steel sharpens steel” or “iron sharpens iron” embodies the simple premise that we grow stronger when we surround ourselves with others who are strong. As we go about our daily activities at work, we encounter events and situations that sharpen our mental blade. These experiences help achieve our potential to be at our best and brightest.

The union—in our case, the NALC members—is one such example of surrounding ourselves with others who are strong. As such, we all benefit from the affiliation with one another. Whether

you are a rank-and-file member or in the leadership structure, we pride ourselves on being strong individuals and a strong union.

The education of the NALC membership and the superior training of NALC representatives at every level make them tremendous assets for the union, but also vital tools to help the rest of us sharpen our knowledge and skills and prepare us for success. The NALC offers continuing education to the members through information that is provided by, but not limited to, *Bulletins*, training sessions and the NALC website. The national and regional training sessions allow for the shop stewards and branch officers to assemble with one another and sharpen their tools, as well as to draw inspiration, determination, strength from experience, level up on their knowledge, and potentially gain a mentor and/or the opportunity to mentor and simply pay it forward.

**When our leaders are able to surround themselves with strong individuals, it makes them stronger and the NALC membership benefits tenfold. When I speak of being stronger, I’m not referring to the physical body, rather, the enduring strength that is developed by surrounding yourself with those who possess the following traits:**

- Integrity—Demonstrating honesty, ethics and moral principles in actions and decisions, fostering trust and credibility
- Resilience—Showing mental toughness and the adaptability to bounce back from setbacks and lead during challenging times

- Empathy—Understanding and acknowledging the feelings and perspectives of others, promoting a supportive and empathetic environment
- Decisiveness—Making well-informed and timely decisions, even in the face of ambiguity or uncertainty
- Effective communication—Articulating ideas clearly and actively listening to others, ensuring seamless information flow within the organization
- Adaptability—Embracing change and remaining flexible in dynamic environments and fostering growth
- Accountability—Taking responsibility for actions and results, fostering a culture of responsibility and ownership
- Confidence—Demonstrating self-assurance and belief in one’s abilities, inspiring confidence in each other
- Humility—Being open to learning and valuing others’ contributions, fostering a collaborative and humble leadership style
- Strategic thinking—Possessing the ability to analyze situations and make long-term plans to achieve organizational objectives
- Inspiring and motivating—Encouraging and energizing team members to perform at their best and teach their potential.
- Courageousness—Displaying bravery and boldness in making difficult decisions and taking calculated risks
- Continuous learning—Valuing personal and professional growth, continuously seeking knowledge and improvement
- Building and nurturing relationships—Cultivating strong connections and networks, fostering a collaborative supportive work environment
- Transparency—Being open and honest in communication, promoting trust and authenticity within the team and organization

**As I endeavor to impart and partake of these traits, I know it’s a work in progress. However, for the NALC to be, grow and remain strong, at minimum we all must participate, be involved in activism, training, attending our branch meetings and we’ll be engaging in “steel sharpening steel!”**