

# Breslin says change is good in the down economy

By Pat Barcas  
Staff writer

National labor speaker Mark Breslin said last Tuesday that union trades need to adapt to the poor economy and lack of hours, or face sinking into bankruptcy.

Breslin's first talk was entitled "*The Perfect Storm*" and he made analogies to the tale of the Andrea Gail, a sword fishing boat that went down in a vicious storm in 1991 and is the subject of the non-fiction novel of the same name.

"There is only so long you can ride out the waves," said Breslin during his conference at Pipers Banquets in Aurora, presented by PAMCANI, CISCO, and FCAC.

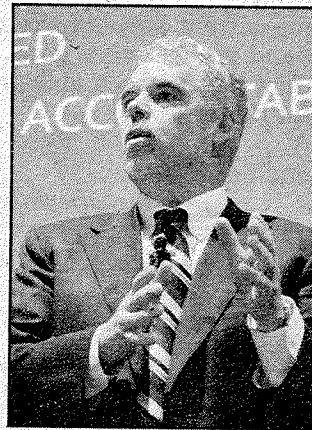
He first interacted with the crowd of laborers and contractors by asking them to list their common complaints about the industry. The list was then

shared with the crowd.

Most common were a clash of egos, poor communication, and a lack of trust.

Breslin focused on contractors communicating better with their employees in terms of management on job sites, budgets, and how jobs were going.

"Contractors, when's the last time you called your employees and asked 'what's the best way to beat the competition?'" asked Breslin. "The gap of information between contractors and workers is huge. They say, 'if you can do the work, that's good enough.' Well it's not good enough."



Mark Breslin

He said now is the perfect time for change, in the worst economy the industry has seen in decades. Key areas of change, according to Breslin, are contacts, negotiations, benefit structures and liabilities, apprenticeship, member engagement and reducing political risk.

"What we are in right now is a rogue wave," said Breslin, meaning the industry is at the greatest risk right now, facing the equivalent of what a fishing boat would face in a huge storm. "We've had 15-16 years of ridiculous growth, but now it's different. We don't have jobs anymore, and without jobs, we

can't even have apprentices."

Breslin is the fourth generation of a construction family. He became the CEO of the Engineering and Utility Contractors Association at age 26, and is noted as the number one speaker nationally on construction leadership, strategy and labor management relations.

The venue for the conference had to be changed due to more than 500 people attending.

"We didn't expect this kind of turnout, this is excellent. He's challenging people to rethink in this economy," said S.J. Peters, executive director of PAMCANI. "We've had an awfully long period of slow work, so maybe a complete rethinking is what people need."

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