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NEWS AND REVIEW™

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TALENT: FINDING & KEEPING IT

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CONTENTS

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02

Declining Birth Rates, Aging Workforce Impacting Capacity

04

Non-Monetary Perks Motivate, Inspire, Retain

05

Harnessing Generative AI's Potential in Recruiting

10

Execs Tap into Tech-Based Assessment Platforms to ID Best Candidates

14

Recruiting, Retaining Gen Zs: Show Them Path to Advancement

18

Safe Workplaces Build Employee Retention

22

Affording Workers Remote Option Enlarges Candidate Pool

24

Unique Characteristics of High-Performing Construction Teams

28

The Truth about Counteroffers from a Recruiter's Perspective

34

Customized Welcome, Regular Check-Ins Enhance Retention

38

Top Strategies in Construction Talent Retention

41

Gear Job Description, Work's Purpose and Meaning to Attract Younger Workers

44

Construction Firms Aggressively Seeking Key Positions as Talent Scarcity Remains

47

6 Actionable Tips to Engage Your Construction Employees

PERSPECTIVE

01 Talent Acquisition is a Fine Art
By Kerry Smith Buck

GUEST COLUMNS

06 The Interview That Changed How I See Hiring Forever
By TJ Kastning

08 Retention: Adapt Your Approach
By Heather Parbst

12 High-Impact Recruiting for Construction Firms
By Colin Estrem

16 Building Careers that Last
By Susan Schultz

17 Cultivating the Future: Building a Workforce for Tomorrow's Construction Industry
By Mike Yazbec

20 Ways to Build Employee Retention in Construction
By Brenton Williamson

23 Health & Safety as a Recruiting & Retention Tool
By Steve Pinkley

25 10 Key Qualities to Look for in Construction Candidates
By Evan McDowell

26 The Ethics and Etiquette of Employee Poaching
By Cherone Duggan

30 Boosting Morale: Keep Your Crew Engaged and Productive
By Josh Miles

32 The Ripple Effect of Pay Transparency on Hiring Strategies
By Mallory Vachon

36 Successful Hiring: How to Avoid the War for Talent
By Charlie Kimmel



Talent Acquisition is a Fine Art: It's All About the Process

It happened nearly 25 years ago, and yet I remember it as if it were yesterday.

After moving back to the Midwest, I was working at a small daily newspaper. For a journalist who had previously only been part of staffs on huge dailies, it was a dream job. That said, it didn't pay enough to hold the position for long. Little did I know then that I would reenter the entrepreneurial space and launch a business publication from the ground up. But in the short term, I needed to make a transition to use my communications expertise in a higher-paying role.

These circumstances led me to apply for a marketing director position at a well-regarded St. Louis law firm. I'd gained approval from the phone interview to move on to the in-person conversations. Up until that point, the law firm communicated an identifiable brand, a positive company culture (on the surface) and an enviable opportunity to grow my skills and contribute to what looked to be a first-class organization.

I arrived downtown for the in-person session and was ushered into a large conference room, populated by two distinct teams - the client development team and a team of select senior partners. The interview began normally enough - that was until the question of what the role at hand would require.

What happened next could well have been a scene from *The Office*, once the shouting subsided.

You may have guessed it: the client development team expressed that the objective of the marketing director role was to attract new A-list clients. The firm's senior partners insisted that the marketing director role was to promote the existing legal talent and to attract additional bright attorneys to the team.

With a number of strong personalities in the room, it didn't take long for tempers to flare amidst an atmosphere of confusion and histrionics.

After sitting there for 10 more minutes, hoping the chaos would ebb, I gave up, excused myself (to no one's notice) and left the building.

Who would want to consider working for an organization that - during a job interview, no less - couldn't agree on the very role for which it was recruiting?

While this is likely an extreme example of how the process isn't intended to work, I imagine there are others of you who could share similar experiences.

Although the caliber of the candidate is essential to successful recruiting, the very process by which companies acquire talent - I would argue - is potentially more important than the individual they bring on board. Check out guest author TJ Kastning's guest piece in this edition (see page 6) to see how lack of a detailed, consistent, professional recruiting process can cause the brightest, most well-intentioned companies to fail in attracting (and keeping) the best people.

As Kastning says, a faulty process can fail the moment - the moment when one of your firm's best candidates walks away. And in the construction industry that is continually short-staffed, the process has to be one that works. If it doesn't, candidates are going to notice, roles are going to take longer to fill with the right people and the process is going to cost more while tiring existing employees who are working harder to fill the gap in the short term.

It's been *Construction News and Review's* pleasure to devote this edition to the theme of talent acquisition and retention. So many of you have shared sage expertise on this topic.

We hope you, the reader, draws information and inspiration from the pages that follow as you learn the best strategies - tried and tested by those who've spoken into these stories and guest pieces - for making sure you've got the best talent in your offices and on your jobsites. It's a challenge that so many of you are meeting head-on and succeeding in as you continue growing your unique company culture, and in keeping teams together to build meaningful projects today, tomorrow and beyond.

Kerry

Declining Birth Rates, Aging Workforce Impacting Construction Firms' Capacity

Construction projects are popping up all over. But the number of skilled workers aren't popping up quickly enough to keep pace, according to construction company executives and recruiters.

BY KERRY SMITH BUCK

How did we get here, and what's to be done about it?

"There's a sizable demographic shift occurring in the U.S. construction workforce," says Pete Wisnom, director of recruiting for AllSearch Recruiting. "And coupled with a slowdown in birth rates, it leads to fewer potential employees to fill critical voids."

Wisnom's comments track with the findings of the National Center for Construction Education and Research. The organization reports that the U.S. construction industry employs 7,040,788 people across 745,205 companies. A total of 99.7 percent of these firms employ fewer than 250 people; 81.48 percent have fewer than 10 employees. Only 21.75 percent of employees work at construction companies with fewer than 10 employees.

Construction age progression numbers from NCCER show that the construction craft workforce is aging; the average age of a tradesperson is 42.9 years. If the current aging rate continues, in 2030 - just five years from now - the average age of the craft workforce, such as electricians, carpenters, laborers and others, will be greater than 46 years old. The largest decrease in craft population, according to the NCCER, is occurring in the 25-year to 34-year age range.

The most in-demand craft workers, in order, are craft laborers, carpenters, masons, heavy equipment operators, ironworkers, electricians, boilermakers, roofers, pipefitters and painters.

"There are two huge factors at play," says Kyle Hullmann, director of business development at AllSearch Recruiting. "One is the declining U.S. birth rate. That rate alone equates to a loss of some 300,000 con-

struction industry workers a year. Then there's the retirement rate...we're losing approximately 500,000 workers annually who are aging out of the construction workforce. We're not just losing bodies. We're losing all that industry experience," he adds.

How to transfer that experience to younger generations and bridge the people gap is a challenge that the industry is energetically seeking to bridge as quickly as possible.

"The worker shortage is definitely having major impacts on timelines, deadlines, cost of the project and the full scope," Wisnom says. "Other employees have to carry the load on a project when just one individual retires and leaves. And for those companies that perform on government projects, it's even more of a challenge. We have construction clients trying to staff for projects that haven't even been won yet to ensure that if they get the award they're able to build it. In these instances, there's no assurance that the projects are going to go through."

NCCER

National Center for Construction
Education and Research

Construction Employment Outlook

The construction industry currently employs more than 8.1 million people, but more talent is in demand as construction spending is projected to increase over the next few years. It is estimated that the construction industry will need more than 500,000 new skilled workers every year.

Number of employees in the construction industry in the United States from January 2000 to January 2024

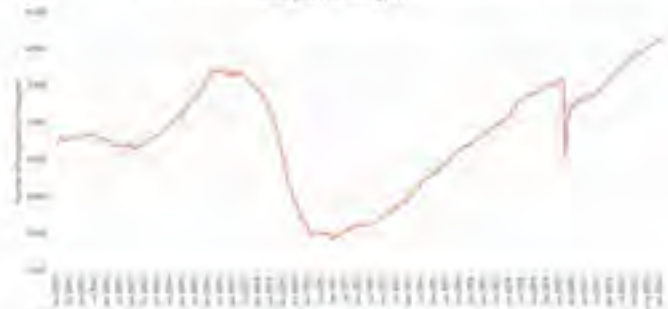


Figure 1. Number of employees in the construction industry in the United States from January 2000 to January 2024

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Non-Monetary Perks MOTIVATE, INSPIRE, RETAIN Construction Industry Employees

BY CNR STAFF

KCI Construction's GriT Token Program is but one example of a non-monetary perk that doubles as a branding and retention tool.

The Missouri-based self-performing contractor, with offices in St. Louis and Springfield, launched the program that empowers fellow colleagues to recognize when one of them is exemplifying KCI's company values.

Vice President of Human Resources Angie Lovatto says it has been a huge success for recognizing employees for their hard work.

"When a KCI employee notices a fellow employee displaying a particular company value - such as growth (personal and professional improvement), resilience (adapt and overcome), integrity (do the right thing) or teamwork (we build better together), he or she can nominate that individual for a GRiT token. The employee is then recognized in our company newsletter and receives a GRiT-specific swag item of their choice. It's simple but powerful and our employees really appreciate it."

Valuing and celebrating construction industry employees - those in the office and in the field - is paramount to positive company-wide morale and to retention, contractors agree,

The Korte Company believes in this, too.

Korte Corporate Recruiter Elizabeth Vatole says flexible hours is another prized, non-monetary incentive that employees appreciate.

"If your child has a baseball game that you need to be at, we understand if you make up the hours later that day or the next day," says Vatole.

Kevin Moorhead, The Korte Company's safety director, says the firm is intentional about celebrating employees' safety-related wins. "We recognize people who complete safety-oriented tasks at the jobsite," Moorhead says. "Our Star Awards are given when an individual goes up and above. We honor that person at our company-wide quarterly meetings with a Star Award hard hat, plaque and monetary gift. This simple recognition goes a very long way in rewarding individuals in front of their team."

MBG (Midas Building Group) Director of Recruitment and Marketing Katy Schmitt says the number-one non-monetary perk MBG offers is the promise that no employee will need to travel beyond the St. Louis metro area to work. "Our ability to guarantee that none of our workforce will be asked to be away overnight is a huge benefit," she says. "And the other piece of that is that our employees' work is reflected in the communities where they live. It's a huge component in our culture and our retention, especially for young families with children."

BEX Construction echoes this sentiment. Director of Human Resources and Administration Meredith Greene says being able to promise employees that they'll not be asked to travel overnight to jobsites is huge. "In contrast with large construction companies that work out of state, we work locally in and around St. Louis," Greene says. "That's a really valuable benefit for people."

Additional benefits that companies offer include tuition reimbursement and pet insurance.

Lea Ann Dies, director of people and culture at Russell, says the company routinely utilizes an employee recognition program called Kudos that is integrated with social media platforms.

The Academy to Innovate HR (AIHR), the value of non-monetary awards - those apart from everyday monetary compensation - is great.

"You can reward your workers nearly immediately," says AIHR Co-Founder Erik van Vulpen. "That's just one benefit. Another is that it can be memorable, a lasting impact for both the recipient and for co-workers and leadership. Also, you can create a lot of impact without spending a lot of money. Non-monetary benefits also spark intrinsic motivation - they make people feel valued as to who they are and the impact they're making on the organization."

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HARNESSING GENERATIVE AI'S POTENTIAL WITHIN A PEOPLE-CENTRIC CONSTRUCTION CULTURE

BY CNR STAFF

Human resource professionals working in the world of construction are seeing emerging trends in talent, many of them driven by technology. Generative artificial intelligence is making its mark within an environment of increased skill building.

While AI is used in predictive analytics, natural language processing and autonomous systems, generative AI is used to generate information – in construction, it is used in content creation and design.

How might AI advances also impact recruitment, work-force culture and skill building? More specifically, how can generative AI tools support recruitment, performance and employee well-being for construction industry organizations?

Human resource professionals and recruiters alike say AI has the potential to reshape talent management within the construction industry.

According to ADP Research, 85 percent of workers believe AI will impact their jobs within the next two to three years.

Hiring managers can leverage AI to streamline time management and talent acquisition processes, says Chris Mullen, vice president of workplace insights and transformation at ADP. Generative AI tools can also automate the creation of job descriptions, scan and filter candidate

résumés, reduce human screening biases and even schedule interviews.

“While these talent acquisition tools can save managers time and effort, best practices support keeping a ‘human in the loop,’ says Mullen. “Without human oversight, generative AI-produced communications can come off as cold and impersonal. Further, an algorithm-driven AI tasked with screening could pass over an excellent candidate with a shabby resume by introducing bias into the hiring process.”

In today’s complex job market, skills rule. A skills-based approach to talent acquisition and retention shifts recruiters’ focus from traditional qualifications – such as degrees and industry experience – to candidates’ actual abilities. Construction leaders looking to fill labor gaps can lean on technology for employee upskilling and re-skilling, via on-the-job training, boot camps and certificate programs.

Advances in communications and generative AI are ushering in significant changes for HR professionals in the construction industry. A skill-based talent strategy matters more and more, helping to align hires with evolving workplace needs and reducing the risk of mis-hires. While generative AI can dramatically impact recruiting practices, human oversight remains essential to ward off bias and maintain a personalized experience for candidates.



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The Zoom Interview That Changed How I See Hiring Forever

Early in COVID, Zoom interviews became the norm. I was supporting a critical executive search for one of the most respected builders in high-end residential construction. This wasn't just any hire; it was a principal leader for the firm's Southern California division. A role with real weight.

The leadership team? Sharp, values-driven, visionary. I admired them.

When they invited me to observe the final Zoom interview, I was in. I wasn't leading...just watching to learn.

What I saw changed how I think about hiring forever.

The Interview That Had Everything... Except a Process

I expected a focused, high-stakes conversation. Instead, it was chaos.

Leaders joined late. Some were clearly distracted. The questions were repetitive, uncoordinated and scattered. No one steered the flow. There was no structure, no alignment, no ownership.

It wasn't because they didn't care. These were smart, well-intentioned people doing their best in a tough time.

But the process failed the moment.

The candidate left confused. The team had no basis for a strong decision.

And I walked away with a realization that hit hard: The problem

wasn't sourcing. It was what happened after the hand-off.

The Real Reason for Turnover

Until then, I carried the weight of every hire on my back. If someone didn't work out, I took it personally. I doubled down on vetting, screening, coaching - thinking better recruiting would solve it.

But that interview cracked something open: Most hiring failures aren't recruiting problems.

They're process problems.

No level of sourcing brilliance can save a broken system.

What Great Hiring Actually Looks Like

Since that day, we've helped clients build something better - not just more candidates, but a system that works. Here's what that looks like:

Attentive Leadership

Great hiring leaders don't just delegate. They engage. They own outcomes. They know that quality teams build quality projects. They're clear on what problem the hire solves, and work to align with candidates on expectations. They don't treat hiring like a checklist.

They treat it like strategy.

Outcome-Focused Job Descriptions

Most job descriptions are bloated and vague. We help define real accountability: what success looks like, what matters and what doesn't. This sets the stage

for better interviews and better decisions.

Coordinated Interview Strategy

Hiring is a team sport. Good teams don't wing it. Each interviewer gets a focus area and asks structured questions tied to real outcomes. Interviews are sequenced to build insight, not just gut feel.

Written Interview Feedback

If it's not documented, it's not real. Structured feedback keeps everyone aligned, reduces bias and enables confident decisions. This isn't about opinions. It's about managing a high-stakes milestone.

Aggressive Interview Scheduling

Momentum matters. Long delays kill interest. Great teams prioritize scheduling and move fast - not recklessly, but decisively.

Why This Still Matters

That Zoom interview happened years ago. But it stuck with me. It proved that even world-class leaders can make bad hires if the process is weak.

And it solidified a core belief: Great hiring doesn't come from good intentions. It comes from a strong system.

Yes, leaders are under pressure to move fast. And they should. But speed without structure is what causes most hiring mistakes.

You might get lucky with a fast, instinct-driven hire.

But that's like sprinting across traffic with your eyes closed. You might make it, but if you don't, the cost is high.

Too much hiring philosophy is built on survivor bias. We remember the hires that worked, not the ones that quietly corroded trust, culture and performance.

The companies that win in the long term aren't just fast.

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Retention: Adapt Your Approach to Today's Workers and Their Motivations

One of the biggest challenges construction firms face today in building value and sustainability is attracting and retaining talent. It's a struggle we hear from almost all our clients.

This is a real problem, often written off as unfixable or considered a consequence of younger generations not wanting to work hard or having poor work ethic. This stereotype doesn't help and oversimplifies a complex issue influenced by changing work values, technological adaptation, a shifting working world with more dynamic and flexible work environments, communication differences across generations and job market challenges like higher student loans and housing costs.

Owners can retain previous perceptions of what defines a good employee, or they can accept the new reality and choose to adapt. This choice can have a very real impact on long-term success.

There are strategies to move an organization from having a talent shortage to having a competitive advantage through talent attraction and retention.

Consider these 10 strategies for talent retention in construction:

1. Training and development

This may be the most overlooked strategy. Providing opportunities for skills development resulting in career advancement can make employees feel valued and invested. Strategies including apprenticeships, certifications, on-the-job training and continuous education form a visible foundation. Such offerings inspire employees to connect and stay, and it builds bench strength.

2. Positive work environment

Creating a supportive and inclusive workplace culture is crucial. Recognize and reward hard work, encourage teamwork and maintain open communication channels. Addressing issues like workplace safety and providing necessary equipment and

resources can also enhance job satisfaction.

3. Work-life balance

When owners invest 50 hours or more weekly into growing their business, they may believe it's the only way to be successful. This can be at odds with other generations that value more work-life balance.

Get curious about shifting this topic from a perspective of "right versus wrong" and recognize it's just a different approach. Offering flexible work schedules, paid time off and policies supporting work-life balance helps employees manage personal responsibilities alongside their job. This can reduce burnout and increase job loyalty.

4. Employee engagement

This is another often overlooked strategy. Engaging employees through regular feedback, involving them in decision-making and acknowledging their contributions can increase their commitment to the company. Building interaction, creating connection and gathering employee insight can also significantly improve engagement.

5. Career advancement opportunities

Clearly defined career paths (career pathing) and promotion opportunities can motivate employees to stay with your company. Providing mentorship programs built on sharing experience and perspective shows a longer-term investment in the individual. Both can significantly support succession planning, which reassures your top talent they have a future with your company and drives value in the minds of potential buyers.

6. Health and safety

Safety issues in construction can creep in to the most well-intentioned businesses, so addressing safety is essential. Teaching about assessing risk, implementing disciplined safety protocols, providing required safety gear and offering health and wellness

programs support a safe working environment and demonstrate to employees they are valued.

7. Company culture and values

Building a strong, positive company culture, emphasizing core values and clearly articulating behaviors supporting those values can inspire employees and foster loyalty, a sense of community and belonging.

8. Employee recognition programs

Some may bristle at the thought of providing regular employee praise and positive feedback. But whereas once employees expected a pension, now they expect acknowledgement. While it can feel time consuming, the benefits of providing real-time recognition and appreciation are significant.

Understand that recognition is in response to something earned or deserved. Appreciation is something we all need to hear regularly.

9. Improved communication

Transparent and frequent communication from management can build trust and engagement. Keeping employees informed about company goals, changes and their role in the company's success can enhance their sense of purpose.

10. Competitive compensation and benefits

This is where many employers often start, but there's evidence it's not as important as many employers think. Offering attractive salaries, bonuses, health insurance, retirement plans and other benefits can help retain employees. Consider reviewing and adjusting compensation packages regularly to stay competitive. But if you are paying your employees fairly, compensation may not be the biggest motivator for retention.

Focusing on these strategies over time can truly shift the landscape of a business in very tangible ways while also building value and sustainability. Don't underestimate the importance of a strong team and dedicated employees, and don't buy in to the notion your talent challenges are insurmountable.



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Execs Tap into Tech-Based Assessment Platforms to Identify Best Candidates

BY KERRY SMITH BUCK

A number of construction companies are leveraging the benefits of a variety of tech platforms in the talent acquisition process.

Scott Drury, CEO and visionary at Bloomsdale Excavating Company Inc. in Bloomsdale, Mo., is among them.

Drury says that while the company's set of core values is where recruiting truly begins, a couple of valuable assessment tools - the Kolbe A Index and the Saboteur Assessment - provide additional insight into the way candidates process information, how they think and what drives their behaviors.

The Kolbe A Index is unique. The assessment does not measure intelligence, personality or social style. It measures the instinctive ways that individuals take action when they strive. A candidate's Kolbe A result will describe his or her natural strengths and modus operandi. This assessment takes only 15 minutes to complete, says Drury, and contains 36 short questions. There are two responses for each question - most and least. Applicants choose one response for the way they would most likely act if you they were free to be themselves and then choose one response for the action they are least likely to take.

The Saboteur Assessment is a roadmap to transform the relationship with one's inner critic. This enables adept navigation of challenges with clarity and compassion. Increased awareness of thought patterns empowers rewriting life's narrative, cultivating positivity. This positively impacts relationships, decision-making and overall satisfaction, according to Drury.

"Recently when we've made any new company employee hires outside of our union workforce, we use these tools," says Drury. "We've also given these assessments to nearly half of our management team to gain an understanding of how we all think."

Bloomsdale Excavating typically combines the Saboteur and Kolbe A Index to better understand its candidates and what motivates them.

"For example, someone who is a stickler for perfection, this can be a positive trait in construction but if it's on the extreme end of the spectrum, it can be a problem if the individual is too rigid in his or her thoughts and processes," Drury says.

Old-school, in-person conversations also prove valuable in Bloomsdale Excavating's candidate assessments.

"My role in interviewing someone - as the CEO of our company - is to try to talk them out of wanting to come and work here," says Drury. "Because we have such a strong emphasis on our culture, we want to make darn sure they know what they're signing up for. For

us, it really comes down to putting the right people in the right seats."

BEX Construction Services begins the candidate search process with a live interview and then continues with a DISC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness) personality profile survey, according to Meredith Greene, director of human resources and administration.

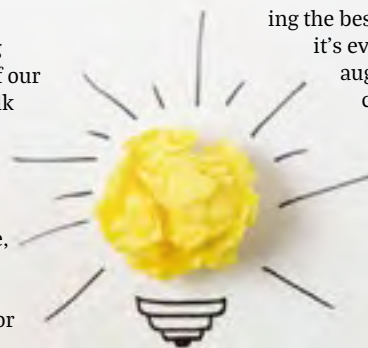
"The DISC measures a variety of different aspects of the candidate's personality and it also measures emotional intelligence," says Greene. "It reveals how individuals will react when stressed, the type of work environment they need and what kind of person they work well with."

When BEX is seeking to bring in an executive-level person, the company also taps into Chapman & Co. Leadership Institute's in-depth pre-employment testing resources. The firm also utilizes an originally-created 50-question test, authored by BEX Construction Services President Randy Bueckendorf, that uncovers a construction candidate's basic field knowledge.

The company also utilizes a tool known as the Predictive Index - a theory-based, self-report measurement of normal, adult, work-related personality. It illuminates a candidate's personality and cognitive abilities, helping organizations make data-driven, objective hiring decisions by transcending what they can determine from a skills- and experienced-focused resume. The index measures candidates' behavioral drives on the basis of four parameters - dominance, extroversion, patience and formality - and their cognitive ability. Russell, The Korte Company and others in the industry also rely upon the Predictive Index.

BEX Construction Vice President Grace Bueckendorf Wright says that while choosing the best candidate is important, it's even more crucial when augmenting the staff of a small construction firm.

"At a smaller company, in terms of a percentage of the whole, if you have a misfit, everyone around you is having to tiptoe around that person in order to perform their job,"



The 10 Saboteurs



she says. “Culture is pretty much everything, so it’s incumbent upon companies to choose the best of the best.”

Jason Read is management and operations recruiter/senior recruiter at AllSearch Recruiting. Read says having a structure – one that the company adheres to from the first contact with a candidate through the onboarding timeframe – no matter what specific position is being filled.

“The minute we’re talking to candidates, we’re technically onboarding, overseeing how the process works,” Read says. “Initiating that process right from the beginning is key. It creates a sense of security for candidates. Anytime we change jobs, it’s always a never-ending challenge in terms of what to expect...having that structure in place from the start builds trust.”

Inviting the candidate on a walk-through of the office and/or a construction project site personalizes the interview and provides additional information as to whether the individual is a fit. This can go a long way, he says, to ensure that the candidate will be a good fit with the rest of the team as far as personalities are concerned.

Being prompt when making an employment offer, he adds, is also critical. “In such a competitive marketplace, it’s vital to get the offer out within 48 hours of interviewing and meeting with the team,” adds Read. “Once the employer knows it will be sending an offer, it relays that to us. Often times, we make a verbal offer on behalf of our construction clients and field any upfront questions at that time. If everything looks and sounds good, the employer will send over a Docusign offer to the candidate immediately following his or her verbal acceptance.”

AllSearch Recruiting recruiters agree that C-Suite candidate interviews need to include a meal with the candidate and his or her spouse to make sure the family is on board, particularly if the job offer requires relocating. “Making sure the candidate’s spouse is on board goes a long way,” Read says. “Being able to sit down for lunch or dinner and gain a personal sense of who they are, showing

that degree of attention, offering information such as the reputation of the school district, good neighborhoods in which to live and quality of life offerings is instrumental to seeing whether the new role is a fit not only for the executive, but for the family, too.”



High-Impact Recruiting for Construction Firms

It will cost your firm six to nine months' salary to replace an employee, making it more important than ever to make the best selection the first time.

If you have a project manager who is earning \$120,000, it will cost you up to \$90,000 to find a great replacement if you are doing everything internally.

You have options as a construction executive to keep your head-hunting and recruiting efforts in-house or to outsource the lion's share of this task to an agency recruiting firm.

Does your organization have a rock solid game plan to attract, acquire and retain the best of the best?

Are you taking advantage of all the tools, technology and resources available today?

Do you and your hiring managers understand the financial and cultural impacts of a misfire or a mis-hire?

Here are the Top Nine Recruiting Tips for running a successful internal recruiting program:

1. Prepare a profile of your ideal candidate's background

Brainstorm your must-have and want-to-have traits for your new hire. Write them down and refer to them as you interview prospective candidates. The point of this exercise is to establish a consistent baseline from which to measure all candidates equally. Interviewer bias will cost you big-time in mis-hires.

2. Your value proposition as an employer: Why work for you?

Once you've figured out what traits make up your ideal person, you can use this information to begin to understand what needs to be done to attract him or her. What are the selling points of working with you and your firm? Money alone is not always

enough to lure top talent away from your competitors. Consider things like PTO, benefits package, vehicle allowance, bonus structure as well as your culture and career growth you can offer. Write your employer value proposition down and make sure that your team is on the same page. When the moment comes to pitch a prospective candidate, you must be ready. Why would he or she want to leave for you or choose you over your competitors?

3. Getting the word out on the job boards

What we need now is an advertisement that will attract interest from the right people. Be prepared. You will have just opened a virtual fire hydrant of talent (not always the right kind) that will take you some time to sort through. A job description is a clinical look at what the requirements and responsibilities are for the position, and a job ad is used to peak your prospects' interest and attract them to your organization.

4. Have company info readily available to share

This one is basic, but a lot of companies overlook it. Don't be that company that doesn't have a shareable company profile. This is your opportunity to list your company's achievements and showcase the team. Prospective candidates will want to understand who they're dealing with. This is your chance to show off who you are and what you're all about.

5. Tune up your company's best practices by using a structured interview process

Structured interviews are the most important step towards eliminating "interviewer bias," which is what happens when the interviewer begins to form an opinion based on anything other than a defined set of criteria. Have all interviewers use a set of agreed-upon questions for all interviews. Then a prede-

termined method of evaluating answers is applied. Debriefing is done after each interview. Based on the input from the group and the fact that there were set criteria, it will eliminate the chance for a "gut instinct" hire, giving you a better shot at eliminating mis-hires.

6. Set up your Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

Software to manage the profiles of candidates who apply to you is cheap and easy to use these days. The basic concept of the software is this: Over the course of the year, these profiles add up. Then the next time you are ready to make a hire, you have an easily searchable database that can provide you with a list of candidates as a starting point.

7. Engage with construction professionals on a consistent basis

Referrals are almost always a high-quality lead, but you won't likely get many referrals if your network is small and people don't know or trust you. You know that ATS from the last step? Don't just use it to store the results of your job postings. You need to be loading that database with people you meet as you interact with people in your industry and in your community.

8. Establish a presence on social media

Post your job advertisements when you have active hiring needs. Share them across all platforms. We all can benefit from building up and leveraging our networks. Social media makes it that much easier. LinkedIn is king right now, but we recommend a broad social media approach.

9. Prepare to begin the interview process

Remember that it is not only the candidate who needs to make a great first impression. Make sure that your interviewing process is professional and makes people want to join your team.



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Recruiting, Retaining Gen Z Construction Professionals: Show Them Their Path to Advancement

BY CNR STAFF

As the Baby Boomer generation continues aging and exiting from the construction industry workforce, Millennials and Generation X workers represent the majority of the U.S. construction workforce. But on their heels is Generation Z.

Generation Z - individuals born between 1997 and 2012 - currently comprise approximately 16.3 percent of the workforce, according to the National Association of Home Builders. Known for short as "Gen Zs," individuals aged 28 and younger have abilities and expectations that differ significantly from earlier generations. Construction companies and construction recruiting agencies agree that a markedly distinct strategy is required in order to hire - and keep - Gen Zs.

"We are in a unique period of time in which Baby Boomers (16.3 percent of the current U.S. construction workforce, according to ADP Research Institute), many of whom are near re-

tirement, are colliding with Gen Zs who are just beginning their careers in construction," says Tina Nazier, president of Affinity Advisory Solutions LLC. "We're in the midst of a transitional workforce right now. Whereas Baby Boomers typically tend to lead with more command and control styles, Gen Zs will not work within a traditional hierarchy like that. Many Gen Zs are also focused on growth and career advancement and therefore want confirmation of clear paths to advancement prior to hiring or shortly after joining a firm. It's essential that we as employers realize that recruitment and retention approaches of the past may need to change if we are to successfully entice Gen Zs to join the construction industry."

Gen Zs appreciate having everything laid out for them at the start, according to Jason Read, management and operations recruiter/senior recruiter at AllSearch Recruiting. "They want to know what to expect and specifically how to navigate the path toward career advancement. If they don't see from the outset how to advance within the firm, they likely won't stick around long."

ADP Research Institute identifies four key statistics about Gen Zs in today's workforce:

- They are already planning ahead. Up to 53 percent of Gen Z employees are keen on leaving their current position within the next two years.
- Flexibility is important to them. Some

19 percent of Gen Z employees are likely to quit organizations that don't encourage flexible working practices.

- They are tech-curious. A whopping 91 percent of Gen Z employees report that they would be more attracted to organizations using sophisticated technology.
- Up-to-date technology infrastructure is important. Organizations using substandard technology are likely to repel 42 percent of Gen Zs.

Grace Bueckendorf Wright, vice president at BEX Construction Services, shares a vivid example of this. BEX Construction employs a Gen Z junior project manager who saw an opportunity to go after more public-sector work. Once he got the green light from management, this twentysomething project manager hunted and brought in one of the company's biggest construction projects to date. "Gen Zs who are hungry and work hard are the people who shine in small companies," says Bueckendorf Wright.

Scott Drury, CEO and visionary at Bloomsdale Excavating, says that when all is said and done, Gen Zs "just want a good place to work and to be treated like a human being and not a number, with a path that's well-defined."

The advent of Gen Zs' entrance into the

construction workforce, according to AllSearch Recruiting Senior Recruiter Kim Waggoner, underscores the shifting work-life/life-work values of Gen Zs.

“Gone are the days of working 80 hours with your job as your sole priority,” Waggoner says. “There’s definitely a transition in motion that is centered on work-life balance. Many benefits – such as non-paid time off, where an employee has flexibility to take extra time off when needed – is huge for Gen Zs. They like to take vacations and travel, focusing on working to make these life experiences possible.”

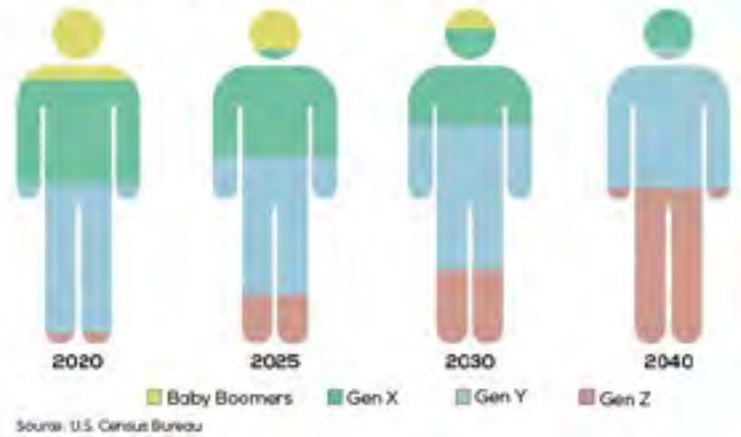
Continuing education opportunities – all the better with tuition reimbursement – are prized by Gen Z workers, says Waggoner. “Gen Zs value trajectory. ‘What’s the clear path for me to grow from A to B to C at this company, and will you help me get there?’ is a Gen Z’s mindset. They’re truly a different breed,” she adds. “The older generation was pretty much heads down, do your work, with little to no feedback needed. Gen Zs expect positive recognition and positive reinforcement along the way as to how they’re doing.”

Elizabeth Vatole, corporate recruiter for The Korte Company, says she’s an older Gen Z herself.

“Gen Zs are born tech users,” Vatole says. “Our generation wants the opportunity to use the latest VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality) tools. “Our firm has a development menu that provides a path and customized opportunities for workers to seek online and in-person career development education, the chance to return to college for a 16-week course, plus other options for growing in their professional knowledge and skills so they can move up to the next level, and the next one above that. Supporting career growth is an essential piece of the puzzle for Gen Zs.”

With a 473 percent increase in headcount – and a 754 percent

Workforce Percentages



increase in revenue – through the past 13 years, Emery Sapp & Sons knows and see the value of developing Gen Zs.

Tyler Myers, assistant vice president of operations in the Kansas City, Mo. office, says ESS intentionally cross-trains workers seeking to add to their skills base. Large-scale construction projects, he adds, offer opportunities for employees to witness a wide variety of tasks and specialties.

“Offering exposure to new trades and skills is something our company culture consistently supports,”

says Myers. “As a multi-disciplinary infrastructure contractor, we give our people the chance to grow by gaining exposure to new things. If laborers show interest in learning how to be a heavy equipment operator, we find ways for them to explore that career path while in their current role. These types of cross-training opportunities are even more available on our mega projects, where we see high volumes of work across diverse scopes. Not only are these big wins for our company, they’re also a great opportunity to train, develop and retain top talent.”

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GUEST COLUMN

BY SUSAN SCHULTZ
SENIOR TALENT ACQUISITION SPECIALIST
AT HOLLAND CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

Building Careers That Last: How Holland Construction Services Retains Top Talent

port made a profound impact on my professional development and instilled in me a deep appreciation for leadership that invests in others.

Eventually, I made a significant career shift into the construction industry, an exciting but intimidating move after more than two decades in a completely different field. Although my background in relationship-building, communication and strategy translated well, stepping into a new industry required a leap of faith. But Holland's reputation for excellence and its people-first approach gave me the confidence to take that step. The leadership here took a chance on me, recognizing the transferable skills I brought from another industry and invested in my growth and development, helping me grow into a well-rounded and impactful member of the team.

That kind of belief in people is powerful - and it's exactly the kind of leadership that builds loyalty, fuels engagement and ultimately retains top talent.

At Holland, we're deeply committed to helping our team members succeed. We promote ongoing professional development and encourage employees to take ownership of their growth through training, mentorship and continuous learning - including leadership training and project management certifications. Whether someone is just getting started in his or her career or preparing to take the next step into leadership, our goal is to provide the tools and support to help him or her thrive.

One of the most rewarding parts of my role in talent acquisition is seeing that growth firsthand. We've celebrated numerous internal promotions over the past year, watching team members step into new responsibilities with confidence and pride. That's not by accident. It's the result of a workplace culture that empowers people to stretch, learn and lead.

Having made a career transition myself, I know how important it is to work for a company that not only values your contributions but also shares your core principles. When I interview candidates, I assess technical ability and industry experience, but I also listen for alignment in core values. At Holland, values like integrity, excellence, teamwork and community aren't just words on a wall. They guide our daily work and decisions. I listen for candidates who demonstrate self-awareness, a growth mindset, a strong work ethic and respect for collaboration. These traits often come through in how someone talks about past challenges, team experiences and lessons learned. When values align, candidates are more likely to thrive in our culture and grow with us over the long term.

Our employees stay because they trust leadership, feel a sense of purpose in their work and thrive in a collaborative environment. What sets Holland apart is our family-oriented culture. We con-

tinue to receive positive feedback from employees who are grateful for the culture. We offer flexible schedules, team-building events and regular recognition that reinforces a sense of belonging. Leadership is highly accessible and regularly shows appreciation for the work being done across the company. Our benefits package includes not only competitive pay but also education reimbursement, a sabbatical program and subsidized fitness memberships.

But the reason people stay goes far beyond the perks. It's about feeling connected and valued. One of our team members said it best: "Working for Holland Construction has been a fantastic career choice. I feel valued both personally and professionally, and that keeps me engaged and motivated."

At the end of the day, Holland doesn't just build projects. We build careers. Through values-driven leadership, a supportive culture and a deep respect for people, we've created an environment where top talent chooses to work, stay, grow and succeed.

Retaining top talent in today's competitive construction landscape requires more than competitive pay and benefits.

It requires a culture where people feel genuinely valued, supported and empowered to grow.

At Holland Construction Services, we've made it our mission to foster an environment where employees are recognized for their unique strengths, given opportunities to lead and encouraged to shape their own professional journeys.

My own career path reflects this belief. I spent more than 25 years in higher education, serving in various leadership roles that prioritized mentorship, growth and people-first leadership. I was fortunate to have a mentor early in my career who not only encouraged my development but actively supported my pursuit of training and education. That sup-

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GUEST COLUMN

BY MIKE YAZBEC
PRESIDENT OF S. M. WILSON

Cultivating the Future: Building a Workforce for Tomorrow's Construction Industry

At S. M. Wilson, our reputation relies on delivering amazing client experiences and ensuring that every project, regardless of size, becomes a source of pride. We understand a skilled and supported workforce is essential.

With more than 35 years in the A/E/C industry, I've seen firsthand that strong relationships are the foundation of lasting success. While innovation drives our industry forward, it's the strength and synergy of our people that make progress possible. As seasoned professionals retire and fewer individuals pursue careers in this field, it's critical that we rethink our approach to attracting, developing and retaining talent.

Forward Thinking Recruitment

Relying solely on job boards or career fairs to find talent is no longer a viable option. Today, recruiting skilled individuals requires a proactive approach at many levels. This often involves directly engaging with students, educators, families and communities to showcase construction opportunities.

In 2019, S. M. Wilson launched SKILLED®, a construction education program designed to provide hands-on opportunities for students, "inspiring the future of construction." The program offers opportunities for individuals to "discover, develop and elevate" careers in architecture, engineering and construction.

Since its launch, the program has impacted more than 17,000 students - from pre-kindergarten through college - through a wide range of opportunities. These include more than 100 unique STEAM events, eight high school shadowing and internship experiences, 29 academic stipends, 29 college internships, \$121,000 in college reimbursements and more than 1,950 hours of training, leadership development and coaching.

Through initiatives like SKILLED and immersive, hands-on experiences offered by leading industry

partners, we are redefining what a career in construction can look like. Our mission goes beyond filling roles - we're inspiring the next generation to see themselves in this industry. We're not just recruiting project engineers, managers and superintendents; we're building a pipeline of passionate, skilled future team members who will shape the future of construction.

How To Retain Industry Talent

Attracting new talent is only part of the challenge; providing incentives and benefits for team member retention is crucial at a time when the average tenure in the construction industry is just over four years.

Today's employees seek more than a competitive salary; they also desire growth opportunities, flexibility and purpose.

At S. M. Wilson, we have worked to cultivate an inclusive and supportive culture where our people feel valued. Loyalty is driven when employees feel heard, supported and empowered.

In addition to competitive pay, our employees are looking for flexible benefits that reflect real life, which include:

- Paid Parental Leave
- Tuition Reimbursement
- Defined Career Paths
- Unique Health and Education Benefits
- Robust Onboarding Plans for All New Employees
- Mental Health Resources
- Mentorship Programs Connecting New Hires with Seasoned Professionals

As part of our larger commitment to investing in our people, S. M. Wilson team members also enjoy paid fall and winter breaks, paid volunteer time, a charitable match program, student loan and college savings assistance, subsidized gym memberships and participation in our Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

An Investment in People

While the labor shortage presents undeniable challenges, it also offers a powerful opportunity for internal growth and transformation. At S. M. Wilson, we recognize that attracting top talent requires more than just a competitive paycheck - it demands a culture of continuous learning, support and meaningful connection. We are committed to fostering an environment where individuals at all experience levels can grow alongside one another. Just as important, we remain focused and intentional in retaining both new and seasoned team members to ensure we continue delivering the exceptional workforce our clients trust and expect.

SAFE WORKPLACES BUILD EMPLOYEE RETENTION

BY NOLAN POINTER

Safety - or the lack thereof - serves as a building block in the landscape of employee retention.

Construction industry professionals agree that efforts to instill and maintain a safe environment - both in the office and in the field - reaps rewards in terms of keeping good workers.

John Waldmann, founder and CEO of Homebase - a construction scheduling app - says safety and long-term health effects are one of the reasons why construction turnover rates are so high, and why employee retention is so important.

“Construction workers face inherent risks on the job, so when you put a strong emphasis on safety, it shows that you value their well-being,” says Waldmann.

Specific strategies to enhance safety and improve employee retention in the construction industry, he says, include prioritizing safety and implementing effective safety protocols. Homebase advises construction companies to consider the following:

- **Provide comprehensive safety training:** Give workers safety training before they start work and continue to provide ongoing training to reinforce safe practices. This includes educating them on hazard identification, proper equipment usage and emergency procedures.
- **Establish clear safety protocols and policies:** Develop and communicate clear guidelines and policies for safety procedures on construction sites. This includes enforcing safety protocols, like the use of personal protective equipment, regular equipment maintenance and regular safety inspections.
- **Encourage a safety-conscious culture:** Promote open communication about safety concerns, encourage reporting of near-miss incidents and recognize and reward employees who consistently prioritize safety.
- **Conduct regular safety meetings and toolbox talks:** Hold regular safety meetings to discuss current safety issues, provide updates on safety regulations and address any questions or concerns raised by employees. Additionally, conduct toolbox talks at jobsites to provide specific safety reminders and address site-specific hazards.
- **Empower employees to participate in safety initiatives:** Involve construction workers in safety committees or safety improvement initiatives. Encourage them to share their expertise and insights, as they often have valuable on-the-ground experience and can contribute to identifying and addressing potential safety hazards.

“Construction work can be physically demanding and dangerous,” Waldmann says. “The physically demanding and hazardous conditions of construction work can have a significant impact on the well-being, safety and job satisfaction of construction workers. Employers need to create the right incentives for construction workers.”

The construction industry also consistently ranks among the highest for non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses, according to The physical demands of the job - such as heavy lifting, repetitive motions and prolonged periods of standing or working at heights - can lead to musculoskeletal disorders and other health issues in the long-term. On top of the physical risks, the demanding conditions of construction work can also result in higher levels of fatigue, stress and burnout. A study published in the *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management* found a strong relationship between physical demands and mental fatigue.

The Construction Safety Council says reinforcing a safe workplace is more important than ever, as project teams are often spread thin due to the amount of work and expedited schedules. According to President and CEO Robert Lahey, a safe workplace is also one that's free of harassment and discrimination. "Implementing strict anti-harassment policies, training managers to handle complaints effectively and fostering a culture of respect ensure that all employees feel secure and valued is paramount," he says.

Conducting "stay interviews" is a smart practice, Lahey adds, noting that stay interviews provide valuable insights into worker satisfaction. "Asking questions about what employees enjoy about their jobs, what changes could improve their experiences and what motivates them to stay can help identify areas for improvement and prevent turnover," he says.

Exit interviews are an opportunity to learn why workers leave, Lahey says, and can reveal patterns or recurring issues - some of them safety related - that may be driving turnover. "Construction employers need to be asking specific questions about the workers' decision to leave, aspects of their role they found challenging and suggestions for improvement. This is valuable feedback in identifying and addressing systemic problems, refine policies and create a better work environment for current and future employees."





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GUEST COLUMN
BY BRENTON WILLIAMSON
DIRECTOR OF BRAND MARKETING
AT BAMBOOHR

Ways to Build Employee Retention in Construction

If your phone's been ringing a lot more lately, you're not alone. Demand for construction work has soared since the pandemic. According to Deloitte's Engineering and Construction Industry Outlook report, construction spending is near a record high.

While business may be booming, you're probably finding it increasingly difficult to hire skilled workers. The Associated General Contractors of America reports that 91 percent of construction firms are having trouble filling open positions, particularly craftsmen who perform the bulk of onsite construction work. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are approximately 168,500 openings for construction workers each year.

You work hard to build your team, and losing a skilled worker to a competitor or seasonal turnover can be devastating, derailing work schedules and delaying project timelines.

Instead of losing a member to a competitor, focus on these key initiatives to create a retention strategy.

Create a Formal Onboarding Process

According to a study by Gallup, 88 percent of employees say their company's onboarding program fell short. Instead of just tossing your new hire a hard hat, experts recommend building a structured process with checkpoints and milestones.

Research suggests that onboarding is worth the investment. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, your employees are 58 percent more likely to stick around for three or more years if you take the time to create a formal onboarding process.

Set Up a Buddy Program

Being the new person can feel awkward. They are learning their way around the jobsite and getting used to how things are done. Having to ask a manager a lot of questions can feel intimidating.

Instead, pair new employees with a buddy or mentor to help them become acclimated to their job. A total of 56 percent of employees said having a buddy or mentor helped them be more productive and effective in their first week on the job.

A buddy can also help improve the safety of a job site by training new employees on safety programs and shadowing them for a day or two to make sure they're compliant with procedures and regulations. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, first-year construction workers account for 60 percent of the total number of injuries.

Schedule Regular Check-Ins

According to a study by Jobvite, one in three employees leave within the first 90 days of employment.

The top reasons for leaving include:

- The day-to-day role wasn't what they expected (41 percent)
- An incident or bad experience occurred (35 percent)
- Company culture was disappointing (34 percent)
- Company leadership was unsatisfactory (32 percent)

Nobody wants a revolving door. Instead, have regular check-ins with employees to identify and address problems before they lead to an employee's departure.

During these meetings, ensure an environment where crew supervisors and employees feel comfortable sharing concerns to reduce issues on site. The goal is to establish a workplace where there is mutual respect between managers and employees from the beginning.

Digitize the Process

If your construction firm still uses printouts for new hires, it's time to move into the 21st century. Not only does manual paperwork take more time to complete, but it can also easily be misplaced, which could cause delays in payroll.

Instead, consider adopting an online onboarding system that will speed up the process. New hires can submit forms instantly from their phones and input direct deposit information, ensuring they get paid on time. Digital onboarding systems also keep track of forms to make sure everything is completed.

A BambooHR survey revealed that 15 percent of respondents quit or considered quitting due to the lack of an effective onboarding process.

Offer a Competitive Compensation Package

High inflation and a competitive talent market make your compensation strategy a critical factor in retaining your workforce. If an employee can get a higher rate or better benefits by working for your competitor, they're more likely to leave. Even a bump of 50 cents an hour can add up to an extra \$1,000 in a year.

Employees expect to be paid what they're worth. If you haven't updated your compensation strategy in the past year, it's time to revisit the rates, benefits and perks you offer your workers.

Pay Market Rates

Start by making sure you're paying a wage that is consistent with the market. If you're not sure where your rates fall, the BLS has outlined the average pay grade of employees in the construction industry. Their tables can be a good way to ensure your pay structure is meeting industry benchmarks.

It's also possible to learn what your competitors are offering. Visit a website like PayScale or Glassdoor where current or former employees can reveal their real wages.

Provide Comprehensive Benefits

Monetary compensation is important, but it's not always the deciding factor in retention. Providing benefits employees want helps improve employee loyalty.

Traditional benefits like health, life and disability insurance, PTO and retirement contributions are essential.

Construction industry jobs involve more physical labor than other industries, so be sure to have better-than-average healthcare or disability offerings. If employees know you care about their health and will support them if they become sick or injured, they're more likely to stay.

But don't stop there. In a survey by BambooHR:

- 35 percent of employees value rewards
- 32 percent want employee performance bonuses
- 30 percent like flexible working arrangements
- 23 percent want mental health services
- 22 percent value paid vacation time
- 22 percent want increased paid time off

If you're not sure which benefits are most attractive to employees, just ask. Survey your crew on which current benefits they like and which they don't use and find out what benefits they'd like to see in the future.

Then Throw in Some Perks

Beyond traditional benefits, consider offering other perks. For example, you might provide a comfortable space where your staff can take breaks or have access to water and snacks on the jobsite.

Companies that think outside the box can gain a competitive edge in employee retention. Perks like free gym memberships, tools, cell phone allowance, tuition reimbursement for degrees in construction management or certificates for auto-detailing or restaurants may encourage employees to stick around.

Develop a Positive Culture

It doesn't matter whether you're a small local construction firm or a large national contractor: you've got to find ways to make sure your employees are happy. That starts with building a strong culture. According to SHRM, a toxic culture is more impactful than compensation when it comes to an employee deciding to leave a job.

Since construction workers don't often have a business email address where you can engage them with weekly email newsletters, communication and culture building needs to happen in different and intentional ways.

Be Clear About Your Values

Your company may have a mission statement, which is a concise explanation of why your company exists. But do you have a values statement? According to SHRM, a values statement lists the core principles that guide and direct

your organization and its culture. Your values will inform decision-making and establish standards and conduct employees should uphold.

Once you've crafted your values statement, post it on your job site, website and in your offices. When your team members are reminded of your values on a consistent basis, they'll be more likely to follow them.

Leadership shapes your culture. Your values statement only holds weight when it's modeled from the top. Make sure your managers walk the talk. If you start seeing a higher-than-normal turnover, especially on a specific jobsite, there may be a disconnect between your culture and your values statement. Do something about it immediately. If you're not already onsite, visit construction projects for culture and values checks. Employees who see a disconnect between company values and leaders' behavior will be more likely to leave.

Train Your Managers

It's been said that employees don't quit jobs; they quit bosses.

According to the Construction Industry Institute, the construction industry will continue to tackle worker shortages until it implements effective management strategies. Often, companies promote strong workers to supervisory roles. Unfortunately, the skills it takes to do a job well aren't the same skills needed to manage and develop others. Invest in your managers by getting them training in communication, motivation and engagement.

For example, managers should look for and acknowledge hard work instead of only providing correction, criticism or negative feedback. Encourage managers to call out and reward employees for jobs done well.

Keep in mind that rewards don't have to be monetary. An acknowledgement during a team meeting or shout out on social media can be impactful. An added bonus is that public acknowledgements on your social media pages will enhance your employer brand.

Provide Learning Opportunities

Compliance requirements in the construction industry are constantly shifting, requiring constant checks and training. Make sure that your company is a place where employees can improve their craft and progress in their career while staying current with the latest industry standards.

Start new hires off right by offering on-the-job training. More than 75 percent of new employees said on-the-job training was the most important thing they need to become productive quickly.

Create a training program that helps em-

ployees improve their skills and learn new ones. The more skills your employees learn, the more confident they'll become, helping them work more productively with less supervision. By cross-training employees, your company will be in better shape to withstand natural attrition. What's more, employees will be more likely to stay put if they see that you're investing in their expertise and knowledge.

Set up clear pathways for advancement based on performance and skill sets. According to Indeed, "searching for job growth and career advancement" is one of the top reasons people quit their jobs. Employees want to grow in their careers, and strong employers offer continued education, like workshops, seminars, lectures or even tuition reimbursement.

Employee Satisfaction Creates Employee Retention

Recruiting and turnover costs can be high. When you improve your employee retention rate, you protect your schedules, reputation and profits.

According to economists at Warwick University, happy employees are more productive in their jobs and are more likely to stay. By implementing an employee retention plan, you're not growing a strong team; you're making an investment in your company and its future.



Affording Workers the Remote Option Enlarges Pool of Best Candidates

BY KERRY SMITH BUCK



While the majority of construction industry professionals need to work where the jobsite is located or work at the office headquarters, there is a small percentage of workers who may find partially or fully remote positions.

Recognizing the potential to hire remote workers, says AllSearch Recruiting Sourcing Manager Mike Santoro, broadens the geographic territory and the pool of skilled candidates.

“The construction industry is project based, of course, so a higher percentage of workers need to be onsite,” says Santoro. “At first you wouldn’t think it’s a great industry for remote or hybrid work, but in reality there are a number of roles that allow employees to work remotely - at least part of the time.”

Project managers, project engineers, estimators, project coordinators, schedulers, project controls professionals and BIM (building information modeling) managers/specialists are examples of roles that may well work in a hybrid, partially remote structure, says Santoro.

“Some of these professionals may go to the jobsite once or twice a month,” he says. “These days, employers need to ask themselves: ‘How much of a competitive disadvantage do we have by not offering hybrid work options?’”

Depending upon which phase a construction project is in, according to Santoro, there may be an arrangement whereby the project manager - and others - can work one to two days a week at the jobsite and the rest in the office or remotely from home.

“From a talent acquisition perspective, if you’re requiring your workers to be in the office every day, they also need to be within a commutable distance,” he says. “With this approach, you’re severely limiting your total accessible market talent pool to the local

market.” The X factor, says Santoro, is whether the ideal candidate is not only local but willing to commute on a daily basis. “Even local candidates are not willing to go fully in-office anymore.”

Employers who don’t offer candidates the option to work at least partially remotely risk the possibility that these candidates, not long after they sign on, will be searching for the next job that promises them flexibility and quality work-life balance. “It’s a Catch 22,” Santoro says. “Many employees who don’t currently have a hybrid work arrangement want it for their next job. And the other side of this Catch 22 paradox is that candidates who have already worked hybrid - who are looking for their next job - are not willing to give that up. The challenge we often see regarding remote work is that a lot of companies are willing to give their longstanding, local employees flexibility but are less willing to grant new employees that flexibility...they’re leery of the new, unproven employees.”

There’s a complex trust factor at stake with new hires, he adds. “Companies need to begin to not only be more open minded but put processes and technology in place to facilitate a proper type of hybrid arrangement. Their organization needs to evolve and try to facilitate flexibility rather than saying, ‘We’re not set up for that.’”

Sometimes construction companies are more willing to set up a remote work option to hold onto a solid employee whose spouse needs to relocate for his or her job, but they don’t permit it to be the norm, Santoro says. “None of this flexibility should negate the reality that in many roles, in-person collaboration is important,” he says. “In construction and engineering, there’s a need to be shoulder to shoulder, desk to desk collaborating. There’s definitely a lot of value there. The important question employers face really is ‘How much of it (in-person collaboration) is necessary and what’s the trade-off between having a potentially lower-quality employee perform in person rather than a potentially much higher-quality person performing remotely or slightly hybrid?’ It really necessitates a mindset shift in upper management to discern if their business is suffering because the local commutable talent market is underqualified, non-existent or too expensive to secure for their business’s needs.”

In addition, gauging the opportunity cost of not filling a position quickly - in terms of time and stress on existing employees who are carrying the load for the worker who departed - is critical. “Remote work options carry value not only for a candidate but also in a retention sense for existing staff. Remote work options can also be a valuable retention tool,” Santoro says.

Elizabeth Vatile, corporate recruiter at The Korte Company, says the firm is one of few in the industry to offer fully remote employment in any U.S. state for roles which are possible to fulfill away from the central office. Korte has offices in St. Louis, Mo., Highland, Ill. and Las Vegas, Nev.

“I work a hybrid schedule of three days in the office and two days remote,” says Vatile. “A lot of this ties into transparency at the beginning when we’re bringing on a new employee. Of course anyone working in the field doesn’t have this opportunity, so we need to make sure we’re compensating them appropriately. But if that (remote) opportunity is available, as an employer you’re opening up your market to find the best people. We leverage technology-driven communication channels as a regular part of our day...it’s how we stay connected.”



GUEST COLUMN

BY STEVE PINKLEY
REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE
MID-AMERICA CARPENTERS
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Topic: Health & Safety as a Recruiting and Retention Tool

and awareness of surroundings. A busy construction site is packed with heavy equipment, sharp tools, loud noise and risk of falling from heights. No one should be working on jobsites where safety procedures aren't being followed. The well-being of every man and woman on those sites must be their employers' top priority. Always.

This is where union contractors have an exceptional selling point when planning their recruitment strategies.

Unions are designed to represent workers' interests, and nothing is more important to any worker than returning home safely from the job each day. We actively push for better safety standards, more training and strict enforcement. Too many non-union employers prioritize productivity or cost-cutting over safety, especially if there's little pressure from employees.

Unionized workers are less afraid to speak up, report hazards and refuse unsafe work because they know they will be protected from retaliation by their union representatives. Sadly, this is not the case for those construction workers who are being taken advantage of, getting paid well below industry standards and facing daily, critical safety violations.

Unions are experienced with state and federal regulations. We're experts on OSHA standards, and we incorporate extensive safety education into

every training program. Here at the Carpenters Union, for example, we have a fully staffed team of safety professionals, led by our Safety Director Al Jotautas, visiting jobsites to make sure procedures are being followed and those sites where our members work are being run safely. Union members receive more thorough and consistent safety education; it's a proven fact that unionized workplaces have lower injury and fatalities rates.

This is information we consider vital for every potential recruit. No one likes to think about getting hurt on the job, but in our line of work it's an everyday concern. The professional, ongoing training available to union members is a powerful incentive in recruitment and retention.

But safety is more than procedures and protocol. Workers' health, both physical and mental, also plays a part in their well-being, and trade unions simply cannot be matched on this front. We offer the kinds of health and retirement benefits that are the envy of many, if not most, of America's private-sector employees. Our union carpenters have access to members-only wellness centers where doctor visits, eye exams, physical therapy and prescription medicines come with little or no out-of-pocket copays. Removing the stress of crushing medical expenses and scarce retirement funds means our people have less to worry about when they're heading to work every morning.

There's much ground to cover and many questions to answer every time we speak to a class of graduating seniors or staff a career fair booth. Understandably, the size of their paycheck is what most recruits want to know about first. There's nothing wrong with that and it's certainly an important consideration when choosing a career. But, at the end of the day, it's their health and safety that matters most, and it's our strongest talking point for attracting and keeping the next generation.

It's no secret that the construction industry is facing a significant labor shortage. Some estimates say that as many as 400,000 workers are needed right now, just to keep pace with demand and allow contractors to take on all the additional projects that need building.

We also know industry recruiting has a few things working in its favor these days. Many young Americans simply cannot afford the sky-high cost of college tuition. This is pushing recent high school graduates to explore a variety of career options that may have been ruled out just one or two generations ago. Also working to our advantage is the exceptional pay and benefits packages that often take years, if not decades, to reach in other careers.

What regularly gets overlooked in discussing construction industry recruiting, however, is health and safety. To be perfectly blunt, this is a serious profession that requires constant safety vigilance



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UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS of High-Performing Construction Teams

BY CNR STAFF

Why do certain teams outperform others? What sets these high-performing teams apart? Assembling a successful project management team takes more than gathering skilled individuals. It requires a deliberate focus on developing key qualities and cultivating practices that drive performance, collaboration and accountability. High-performing teams emerge from intentional leadership development, structured communication and a strategic alignment on goals.

This is especially important in the construction industry, where project demands can be intense, hours can be long and conditions unpredictable. Having a team that works cohesively under pressure can make all the difference to a firm's bottom line, according to Velocity Advisory Group.

It's not only about technical smarts. It's about making sure that every team member, whether in the office or on the jobsite, shares a clear understanding of project goals, adapts quickly to changes and feels empowered to take ownership of his or her role.

Understanding how to build and sustain a high-performing project team is essential for construction companies to stay competitive and consistently deliver exceptional results. Some key elements from Velocity Advisory Group to consider when building a high-performance project team are:

• **Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill:** Skills can be taught - but a positive attitude, drive and alignment with the company culture are harder to instill. In the construction industry, where conditions

can be physically demanding and schedules often unpredictable, team members with a strong work ethic and willingness to learn can significantly impact the team's performance.

• **Don't Confuse Experience with Output:** The most experienced person is not always the most effective team member. Sometimes, those with fewer years in the industry bring fresh perspectives, new energy and a willingness to adapt that more seasoned workers may lack.

Strong leadership is the cornerstone of any successful project team, and this holds especially true in construction. Leaders must not only set clear expectations and provide direction but also be skilled in conflict resolution, accountability, change management and decision-making.

• **Conflict Resolution:** With multiple teams working on various aspects of a construction project, conflicts are inevitable. Effective leaders should be able to address issues quickly, prevent escalation and maintain team morale.

• **Accountability:** High-performing project teams thrive on accountability, and it starts with people who lead by example. Leaders must not only hold their team members responsible but also demonstrate accountability in their actions, setting the standard for others to follow. When leaders exhibit accountability, it drives higher standards across the entire team and fosters a culture where everyone is committed to delivering results.

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10 Key Qualities to Look for in Construction Candidates

The construction industry remains incredibly competitive, and finding the right talent can make or break your projects.

As construction methods evolve and projects become increasingly complex, identifying candidates with the right combination of skills and attributes is more critical than ever.

These are essential top construction candidate qualities that separate exceptional hires from the rest.

1. Technical Expertise

Solid technical knowledge is the foundation of any successful construction professional. Candidates should demonstrate proficiency in construction methodologies, building codes, safety regulations and project management principles.

When shopping for candidates, look for education in construction management or civil engineering. Industry certifications, knowledge of building information and contemporary construction technologies and familiarity with project management software are also key.

Technical expertise isn't just about academic credentials. Practical application is equally important. Present candidates with real-world scenarios they might encounter on your projects to assess how they apply their knowledge.

2. Communication Skills

Construction projects involve coordination among numerous stakeholders. Effective communication is non-negotiable for ensuring projects run smoothly. Strong candidates should:

- Articulate ideas clearly and concisely, both verbally and in writing
- Listen actively and respond thoughtfully
- Document project details accurately

Pay attention to how candidates communicate during the interview process. These observations often

reveal how they'll communicate on the job.

3. Attention to Detail

In construction, small oversights can lead to costly mistakes, safety hazards or compliance issues. Having detail-oriented candidates is a must.

Detail-oriented candidates should demonstrate:

- Thoroughness in reviewing plans and specifications
- Diligence in quality control procedures
- Precision in measurements and calculations
- Consistency in documentation

During the interview process, measure the candidate's eye for detail.

4. Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills

Construction projects rarely proceed as planned. They require professionals who can think quickly and offer creative solutions. Look for candidates who approach problems methodically, identify multiple potential solutions and learn from past challenges. Ask candidates to describe specific problems they've faced on past projects and how they resolved them. Their answers will reveal their problem-solving approach and adaptability.

5. Time Management

With tight deadlines and complex scheduling requirements, construction professionals must excel at managing their time and the time of others. Strong candidates prioritize tasks effectively and meet deadlines consistently.

6. Leadership

Leaders at all levels take initiative without constant supervision, motivate and guide teammates and make decisions confidently.

7. Flexibility

Construction is unpredictable. The best candidates adapt quickly to changing circumstances,

remain calm and adjust plans without compromising quality.

8. Relevant Experience

Candidates should demonstrate a track record in similar environments or with comparable responsibilities.

Remember that transferable skills sometimes outweigh direct experience. A candidate from a different construction sector might bring valuable new perspectives to your team.

9. Strong References

A candidate's past performance often predicts future success.

Don't just verify employment. Ask detailed questions about the candidate's strengths, areas for improvement and overall impact.

10. Work Ethic

Most important is a candidate's dedication and commitment to excellence. Signs of a strong work ethic include consistent reliability and punctuality, pride in work quality and continuous professional development.

During interviews, inquire about challenging projects that required extraordinary effort and note how candidates discuss their contributions and commitment.

The construction industry continues to face significant workforce challenges, from labor shortages to skills gaps. Companies that identify and recruit top talent gain a substantial competitive advantage in this environment.



GUEST COLUMN
 BY **CHERON DUGGAN**
 INDEPENDENT USER
 EXPERIENCE WRITER

The Ethics and Etiquette of Employee Poaching

Employee poaching, while ethical, may not always be legal. It involves recruiting employees from direct competitors or former employers, often leading to non-compete clause issues. Companies can handle these issues by ignoring them, waiting out the clause or thinking beyond direct competitors.

Employee Poaching is a Misnomer

“Employee poaching” sounds like an illicit animal hunt. The simple act of asking whether employee poaching is ethical reveals how deep into our psyches we let the animal metaphor creep. Unlike animals, people can make choices and cannot be owned. Given this fact, employee poaching isn’t an ethical dilemma. It’s a misplaced metaphor.

Unlike elephants, employees aren’t an endangered species who can be unfairly captured. And unlike cattle, employees don’t belong to their employers, even if they sign non-compete agreements. Employees are independent people with autonomy, agency and personal responsibility. That makes them free to wander off to another employer whenever they want. And that’s a good thing for everyone. Because the threat of losing employees keeps the labor market purring and incentivizes employers to treat - and pay - people well.

Dealing with the Reality of Non-compete Clauses

“Poaching” usually refers to the practice of targeting - and taking - the employees of direct competitors or former employers. These approaches are fraught with non-compete clause problems. Many employees are required to sign non-compete and non-solicitation agree-

ments as a condition of their employment, and these contracts can restrict employees’ mobility - or hiring choices - for a year or more after they leave their employer.

Non-compete clauses are designed to stop free labor markets from becoming free-for-alls. They encourage transparency within companies and can boost retention rates. But they may stifle wages and impact labor mobility. Regardless of their broader effects on the economy, non-compete agreements are a reality for many employees companies want to hire.

People who already have jobs are usually pretty good at them. That’s why recruiters prize “passive candidates” who aren’t actively looking for a new job, but who could be persuaded to ditch their current one, under the right conditions. Sourcing passive candidates is sometimes referred to as “poaching,” too, especially if a company hires multiple people - or teams - away from another company.

When it Comes to Dealing with Non-compete Issues, Companies Have a Few Options:

- **Ignore them and take the risk:** Nobody ever gives people this advice. But it’s the gutsy, legally-gray-area approach, for employers and employees alike. Many non-competes are unenforceable and you can weigh the likelihood of a lawsuit before taking the leap. If this suits your risk tolerance levels, it could pay off for a key hire in a tight competitive market. But it’s a risk that you will have to weigh against its potential reward. If the employee in question is alluring enough to recruit regardless, it may be a risk worth taking. But you will be responsible for the consequences if they come back to bite you.

- **Circumvent them by waiting a few years:** Keep an eye on departures at competing companies and take note of their non-compete clause (and vesting incentive) timelines. This can help reduce your risk if you’re okay with delaying future gains. This approach plays a long, risk-averse game - which may or may not be appropriate for you, given your industry and growth goals.

- **Avoid them by thinking beyond your direct competitors:** This is the easiest way to avoid non-compete clause problems. Think beyond the obvious poaching grounds of your direct competitors and previous employers. Ask the people you would otherwise want to poach for referrals, and focus on industry-agnostic skills that your company needs to succeed, instead of relying on industry-specific people. This is the most creative way to source and hire people who may end up disrupting your industry and fueling your future growth. There’s a risk in hiring good new people, though. Other companies will try to poach them from you.

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The Truth about Counteroffers

from a Recruiter's Perspective

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A counteroffer can be an offer made by your current employer in terms of a better salary package or career prospects. It can also be a better offer made by your prospective employer, should one reject the initial offer. According to a survey conducted by CareerBuilder:

- 56 percent of candidates do not negotiate for higher pay when they are offered a job
- 51 percent of candidates are uncomfortable asking for more money
- 47 percent of candidates are concerned employers will decide not to hire them if they ask

A Glassdoor survey further indicated that women are more risk averse when it comes to discussing counteroffers, with 68 percent of women stating they prefer not to negotiate compensation. In comparison, 52 percent of men chose not to engage in counteroffers.

We always advise our candidates on their priorities and try to fully understand their motivations before we put them forward for a role. While higher pay can be an enticing factor, it is only a temporary fix. In fact, research conducted by software company Eclipse indicates that:

- About 80 percent of candidates who accept a counteroffer from their current employer end up leaving within six months
- 9 out of 10 candidates who accept a counteroffer will leave their employer within 12 months
- 50 percent of candidates who accept a counteroffer from their current employer will be back on the job market after two months - usually when the novelty of an increased salary and new responsibilities wear off

Furthermore, accepting a counteroffer from your current employer can also subsequently be a sensitive subject as you've demonstrated your lack of loyalty toward your organization. There is also a strong likelihood that your basic reasons for wanting to leave the organization to begin with will eventually resurface.

If you have applied for a new role and received an offer that is below what you expected, you can either:

- Ask if there is any flexibility in salary - immediately or in the future
- Enquire about any possible fringe benefits (such as children's school fees reimbursement, car lease arrangements

or health and wellness expenses) that can be provided in the absence of an increase in salary

- Turn down the offer, as the company may not make a counteroffer

Tips to keep in mind before entering a counteroffer discussion with a prospective employer

- Research on your position. Compare it with similar salary reviews and the average market rate. When asking for a higher salary, you need to substantiate your claims in order to be compensated accordingly.
- Remind the employer why you are the best candidate for the role. If you can show your value-add to your future employer and quantify it in the form of increased revenue, you will have a higher probability of landing better pay.
- Think about your priorities and know what is important to you. Do you think you deserve a higher pay for the work that you do?

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Boosting Morale: Keep Your Construction Crew Engaged and Productive

How to motivate your employees

Motivating your workers is something that concerns many construction project managers - because if your employees are not motivated, it becomes difficult to hit deadlines.

While some delays are normal, managers have wondered if other delays can be attributed to unmotivated workers. Studies have indicated that construction employees require various motivational techniques to stay engaged. However, applying this knowledge can be difficult on a fast-paced, high-pressure construction site.

Managing motivation is a moving target. It's constantly changing depending on what phase of the project you're on, but you must keep a pulse on it. Unmotivated workers will seek another opportunity to make equal or more money elsewhere or cause safety and morale issues onsite.

Here are effective strategies to motivate your employees:

Show them a positive attitude

Managing a construction site can be exhausting, but your attitude will rub off on your employees. If you're unhappy about being at work or are too exhausted to stay positive, your employees will pick up on this and they may begin to mimic your disposition.

Displaying positivity can help improve the overall work atmosphere and help motivate your workers. Negativity is infectious - and when it spreads, people are more likely to quit. To help prevent negativity from spreading, avoid letting your frustrations affect interactions with your employees. Keep in mind that exhausting your employees can lead to accidents. Your construction workers need to be well rested to work efficiently and safely.

Communicate your expectations

Everyone wants to know what they should be doing and what is expected of them. You're going to get a better outcome if you relay the purpose of the task so that workers know what to aim for and offer performance feedback.

Talk to your team about your expectations and be willing to listen to their input. There might be a problem that will prevent them from completing the work in that time frame, or they might have a suggestion that will work better than your idea.

Listening to your employees can motivate them to work harder and remain loyal to your company.

Acknowledge employees' hard work

Employees rarely receive recognition when they do a good job, and often the employees who do get recognition don't get enough of it. In construction, doing a good job is expected. What gets noticed more often is when something goes wrong.

When people are never recognized for doing a good job, they may not think it matters if they only do the bare minimum. While people want to be paid well, they also want to know they matter and are not just faceless, replaceable cogs in the machine.

A weekly or monthly recognition of an onsite worker doing their job well can help keep him or her motivated. You might see better results if you create a more formal process, like an employee of the month program. This will encourage your employees to want to garner recognition.

Provide incentives

Offering incentives such as performance bonuses, shift differentials and completion bonuses can significantly enhance motivation. Performance bonuses reward employees for their hard work, encouraging them to strive for excellence and meet or exceed expectations. Shift differentials, which offer higher pay for working earlier or later shifts, can help ensure projects are staffed during crucial times, promoting punctuality and dedication. Completion bonuses foster a sense of commitment and accomplishment, driving workers to remain engaged and loyal throughout the project's duration. These incentives not only boost morale but also create a culture of achievement and reliability, ultimately leading to more efficient and successful project completions.

Challenge employees

You can keep workers engaged by introducing new challenges. Most workers won't feel great if they're just cleaning up the worksite for an entire year. The importance of having an upskilling or on-the-job training program shouldn't be underestimated. There are several ways you can help your team build new skills. Get them involved in other areas of the project where they can learn something or add another skill to their toolbox. Make them feel part of the bigger picture and ultimately add more value to the project and projects in the future. Instead of sweeping the floors today, you ask if they want to learn how to frame a wall and then let them work with someone experienced in framing for a couple of days.

A motivated construction team will help you complete projects more efficiently, and they'll be easier to retain for your next job.



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GUEST COLUMN
BY MALLORY VACHON, PhD
CHIEF ECONOMIST AT LABORIQ

The Ripple Effect of Pay Transparency on Hiring Strategies

Pay transparency is more than showing a salary range in a job posting. Establishing pay bands is a crucial part of hiring and compensation strategy, especially since pay transparency is required by law in many areas. One in three U.S. workers live in an area with pay transparency requirements.

Let's explore how pay transparency affects job seekers, current employees, hiring managers and the competition for talent.

The Applicant's Viewpoint

It comes as no surprise that salary is one of the primary motivators when looking for a new job. When job seekers see salary ranges in a job description, it is the first thing they use to determine if the job is a good fit. A salary range provides a specific reference point that allows candidates to easily compare opportunities in the labor market. It's something applicants have wanted for a long time.

This openness saves time for job seekers and HR teams.

Applicants enter interviews and negotiations knowing what they can expect in terms of compensation, and businesses save time by avoiding several rounds of interviews only to discover salary misalignment. Pay transparency helps in setting realistic expectations regarding career and salary progression, allowing candidates to plan their career paths more effectively.

However, misunderstandings around pay can still creep in. Some candidates may only apply for the jobs that offer the most money without considering whether their skills or experience align with job requirements.

Job titles can also be misleading without appropriate context. Titles like "manager" or "director" can signify vastly different responsibilities, expectations and compensation packages from one organization to another. For instance, a manager at a small nonprofit may have a broad range of duties with a modest salary, whereas a manager in a large publicly traded company might oversee an entire department - with several direct reports and significant budget - and receive a higher salary.

By educating candidates about the nuances of salary ranges and the factors that influence them, companies can help ensure more informed decision-making, aligning job seekers with roles that truly fit their skills, career goals and personal needs.

The Employee's Perspective

Employees desire more transparency when it comes to their organization's pay structures. More than two-thirds of workers say they would switch jobs in favor of a new opportunity with greater pay transparency. When employees understand

how their pay is determined, they feel more valued and fairly treated, which can build trust and loyalty.

Pay transparency can provide a clearer understanding of the pathways for career advancement, allowing employees to see potential salary progressions. This visibility can motivate employees to pursue promotions and personal development, knowing the financial benefits associated with different career paths.

However, without clearly established pay structures and well-defined criteria for each salary range, pay transparency can leave employees with more questions than answers.

Even with the most thoughtful and well-planned compensation structures, there may be some challenges with pay transparency.

If an employee discovers that his or her salary is near the top of the pay range, that could limit the possibility of raises without promotions, potentially dampening enthusiasm for annual review cycles. In contrast, learning that one's salary is at the lower end of the pay scale can lead to dissatisfaction and resentment. Employees may feel undervalued if they believe they are performing at the same level as higher-paid colleagues. Managers may also face increased pressure to justify pay discrepancies or to advocate for salary increases, leading to difficult conversations - especially when budget constraints limit the ability to offer raises.

For pay transparency to be effective, companies need to clearly explain to employees how compensation is determined - emphasizing fairness, equity and the other factors

that influence pay decisions. Include external benchmarking results in pay communications to demonstrate that competitive pay practices are aligned with the market.

Broader Market Implications

How does this affect the labor market at large? It depends, but here are some things we've seen.

Job Market Churn... Maybe

When individuals have clear, accessible information about potential earnings in their field, they may be more likely to pursue new opportunities that align with their financial goals and career aspirations.

The technology sector has built a reputation for job hopping where individuals look for personal hyper growth and move from company to company every 18 months. While this strategy may work for financial gain, businesses make an investment in each hire and may be less likely to bring someone on board who is likely to leave in a short period of time.

And yet, the reverse is also possible. Workers are less likely to quit their job for a new opportunity when they work for a company with transparent pay practices. The share of workers planning to leave a company in the next year drops from 20 percent to 8 percent when there is full transparency. Employees don't want to leave a sure thing, and the trust that comes with transparent organizations is hard to part with.

Equity Increases

HR leaders can correct disparities they would've otherwise missed with transparent practices. This will help reduce the gender wage gap and promote more equitable hiring and promotion practices.

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WELCOME

Customized Welcome, Regular Check-Ins Add to New Employee Retention

BY CNR STAFF

There are five C's to effective new hire onboarding, according to Alister Esam, CEO of workflow software company beSlick:

Clarity Compliance Culture Connection Check-In

"From the very first day of employee onboarding, these serve as crucial pillars that support an effective onboarding process," says Esam. "They help transform what could be an overwhelming experience into an empowering journey for new hires. In a landscape where the importance of onboarding cannot be overstated, these five Cs offer a roadmap to not only bring new employees into the fold but to inspire them to become valuable contributors to the business narrative."

Katy Schmitt, director of recruitment and marketing at MBG (Midwest Building Group), suggests a sixth C: Celebrating your new hire. Well before MBG's newest employees begin work at the St. Louis-based commercial construction management firm, the company has gained enough information about them to welcome them in a customized fashion.

"We send a 'Celebration Survey' upon hiring," Schmitt says, noting that the survey information provided by the new hire enables MBG to send an introductory email to existing employees with a photo and details about their new colleague. "Prior to their first day, the questionnaire asks them to describe themselves, what they're most excited about, what their favorite snacks are and suggestions on company merch," she adds. "On their first day, they receive an MBG bag with a personalized hard hat, vest/PPE and their favorite snacks. I also include a handwritten welcome note from our leadership, and our owners take new employees out to lunch on their first day."

Next to hiring, onboarding is a critical step in retention. If a new employee doesn't feel welcome, have a sense of belonging and is equipped for successful performance, the likelihood that he or she will remain at the firm is questionable. And that, says Affinity Advisory Solutions LLC President Tina Nazier, is costly.

"It can cost up to \$28,000 in hard costs - such as job board fees, background checks, training for the new employee and employee benefits as a percentage of total compensation - to bring on a new employee," she says. "And that doesn't account for the soft costs, such as coworkers having to carry the load while the company is seeking to replace someone who has left. If a company begins to lose a succession of skilled people, that can play into its industry reputation. In a competitive market, no one chooses to work for a firm that has a less-than-stellar reputation."

CEO and Visionary Scott Drury at Bloomsdale Excavating says his firm's onboarding process shows new employees every part of operations. "They're drinking from a fire hose as we expose them to every possible scenario, variable, person and department that they will be interacting with," says Drury. "Honestly, we're not as adept at onboarding because so many of us have worked here for 25-plus years...but we do prioritize the people aspect of onboarding, spending as much time with them as we can and pairing them with the best

people to mentor them along the way. Construction moves at such a swift pace. Sometimes we literally don't have the time to onboard them in a theoretical fashion. When the pace gets busy, we bring them along with us as we show them how to figure it out along the way. This is one of the best ways we've found to set them up for success."

Under the fifth "C" to effective onboarding, Check-In, Bloomsdale Excavating schedules quarterly one-on-one conversations and utilizes a tool known as the People Analyzer. It's an EOS (Entrepreneurial Operating System) tool that identifies two critical things: 1) if the individual is a fit with the company's culture, and 2) if the individual is working in the best role according to his or her skills and abilities. "The People Analyzer helps us compare the individual against our core values," Drury says. "We measure if they get it, want it and have the capacity to do it. So much of success boils down to attitude. We can teach skills."

Networking with fellow construction company executives through organizations such as the Associated General Contractors of Missouri (AGCMO), says Drury, provides valuable insight into what colleagues - and sometimes competitors - are doing to practice successful onboarding and retain staff.

Meredith Greene, director of human resources and administration at BEX Construction Services, says laying out clear expectations and communicating a precise roadmap for the new hire is also critical. "It enables the new employee to join us with the right mindset and expectations," Greene says. "At BEX, we've always believed that if you're key talent, we will find a place for you to fit for the next 10 years. Rather than taking a tech-centric, deadline-oriented approach, we onboard with a culture-driven strategy. That's been one of our greatest keys to success."

From a recruiting agency perspective, depending upon the open position or positions at hand, leveraging technology becomes a necessary resource in helping construction clients cull the wheat from the chaff. Jason Read, management and operations recruiter/senior recruiter at AllSearch Recruiting, says tech helps speed up the candidate search process so offers can be made within a timely manner.

"And as recruiters, once we make that (job) placement, it's up to us to follow up in an onboarding sense," Read says. "I find that people (new hires) stay and attain the 90-day mark and beyond if I follow up with them to see if they've got any particular struggles. We have a direct line to the hiring managers and can reach out to them to say, 'You might want to follow up and make this happen with your new employee.' Many times, we can quell the issue early on and keep the employee in place. During the onboarding process and though the first couple months of employment, we build upon those new employee and hiring manager relationships."

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BY CHARLIE KIMMEL
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Successful Hiring: How to Avoid the War for Talent

of the key “battlegrounds” - in other words, specific situations where industry leaders find themselves drawn into the war, and how to avoid them.

● High Turnover Rates:

When turnover is high, companies are forced to reenter the talent war more often. It's no secret that losing top talent is financially costly to a company (our research shows that the average cost can be up to 30 percent of the employee's annual earnings), but beyond the dollars and cents, turnover can also have a negative impact on productivity, time and employee morale.

So how do you avoid turnover? Prioritize employee retention. Keeping employees engaged and committed starts even before their first day. In fact, new hires are the most vulnerable to turnover between their hire date and start date, and during their first six months. Transitions are challenging, so implementing a strong, structured onboarding process that spans the interview stage through the first six months of employment can help ensure that new employees feel supported and get acclimated to their new surroundings. Onboarding might include setting realistic goals, giving employees input on their workspace and responsibilities, and inviting their families to company events.

Of course, some turnover is inevitable, but you can minimize its impact by making each employee feel special, building a strong company culture, providing employees at every level with the tools and support they need to be successful and keeping an open line of communication.

● Candidate Turndowns:

Nothing is more frustrating than getting to the end of the hiring process and having your top candidate decline an offer. The time and cost

of having to start the process over again are staggering, and candidate turndowns can leave hiring managers disappointed, disillusioned and scrambling for solutions.

Fortunately, there are ways to help prevent turndowns. First and foremost, hiring managers must act with a sense of urgency during the hiring process. In a competitive market, top candidates have a short shelf life and a high chance of receiving multiple offers. In addition, review and evaluate your interview process and style. For example, The Intimidation Interview, The Group Interview, The Open-Ended Question Interview and The Friendly Interview each have their pros and cons, and each will appeal to some candidates and may be a turnoff to others.

There's no “right” way to interview - but it is important to understand what the structure and content of your interviews is communicating to the candidates. No matter what your interview style, communicate clearly throughout the hiring process, treat every interviewee with respect, make decisions quickly and efficiently and come out strong with your best offer.

● Market Reputation:

In today's job market, word travels fast, and a company's reputation can be built or torn down by word of mouth. By the time you engage with a promising candidate, chances are good that they know a lot about your company - from your online presence, from their professional networks and from your general reputation. The best way to avoid “battling” with competitors in this way is to make sure your market reputation is exceptional.

Start by making sure your company's website and social

media platforms clearly communicate your culture, values and successes. And remember, every person who walks through your company's doors is a possible ambassador, for better or worse - from employees to vendors and even the candidates you didn't hire. All of them can (and often do) share their experiences with your company out in the marketplace - so make sure they have positive experiences and leave feeling respected and valued.

The war for talent is both expensive and exhausting - so the more battles you can avoid, the better. Focus on retention, streamline your hiring process and build a reputation that draws people in. That's how you win before the battle even begins.

Sun Tzu taught us, “Every battle is won before it is fought.” He wasn't talking about hiring top talent - but he might as well have been. The best way for a company to win the war for talent is by avoiding it altogether. But why is that important, and how can companies do it?

What Causes the War for Talent?

The war for talent is widespread and complex, with multiple causes. Perhaps the most obvious is the ongoing labor shortage. With a limited pool of skilled construction professionals, everyone in the marketplace is competing for the same talent. When you add ongoing challenges related to public health concerns, remote work, rising material costs and economic headwinds, you have all the makings of a contentious, costly and time-consuming war.

Key Battlegrounds - and How to Avoid Them

With an understanding of the major causes of the war for talent, it's easier to identify some



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TOP STRATEGIES IN CONSTRUCTION TALENT RETENTION

BY NOLAN POINTER

As the construction industry continues to experience one of the tightest labor markets in modern times, employers and recruiting agencies alike agree that retention is a top priority - perhaps even more so than talent acquisition.

"My motto has always been, "You should spend as much time re-recruiting your existing team members as you should recruiting them in the first place," says Tina Nazier, president at Affinity Advisory Solutions, LLC.

A solid workforce, Nazier says, is like a three-legged stool. The first leg is successfully recruiting the right new people. The second leg is keeping your current people engaged and happy. And the third leg, she says, is growing and developing your people so they can take on future leadership roles. "This will create a solid workforce to perform at all levels of the company, while ensuring a bench of future leaders to take on critical succession roles," says Nazier. "A key concept in recruiting is incentivizing your existing workforce with bonuses for recommending quality people whom they'd like to work with."

KCI Construction knows well how effective cash incentives are for referrals from their existing people. Angie Lovatto, vice president of human resources at KCI, says the company pays \$6,000 per referral that results in employment. "It has been really successful," says Lovatto. "We pay \$6,000 per successful referral regardless of the role. During the last calendar quarter, the number of referrals we received on the office side is close to 50 percent."

Industry hirers say retention is about more than just keeping workers on the payroll. It's about building a team that is loyal, motivated and productive. According to the National Center for Construction Education and Research, contractors face unique hurdles - including high competition for skilled workers, seasonal work demands and the physically demanding nature of the job. Addressing these challenges requires innovative and thoughtful solutions tailored to the needs of construction workers.

BSI Constructors President and CEO Paul

Shaughnessy suggests that construction industry employers should be realistic - not too flowery - about the responsibilities and rewards connected with the role at hand.

"First, don't overpromise," he says. "The seeds for turnover are often planted by painting an overly glowing picture as to what a position/company will be like. Construction is tough and competitive. You have to produce. When hiring, we try to be as realistic about the demands of working at BSI as we are about the benefits. We want people who like the challenge of accomplishing hard things. Second, pay attention to results. High performers - and we like to think we're a place where they can thrive - will go the extra mile if they know their efforts are recognized and appreciated. In some cases, that might be as simple as a sincere personal or public expression of appreciation. In the longer run, it needs to affect compensation and/or increased opportunities within the company."

Moving Beyond Basic Benefits

While standard benefits like health insurance and paid time off are important, workers today value unique perks that enhance their quality of life, says the NCCER. Offering flexible scheduling, paid training and certifications or even tuition reimbursement can demonstrate that the company values its employees' personal and professional growth.

Suggested Benefits and Programs:

- 1. Flexible Work Hours** - Allow for staggered shifts or compressed workweeks to accommodate personal responsibilities.
- 2. Tuition Reimbursement** - Cover costs for courses that improve skills relevant to a worker's job.
- 3. Paid Certifications** - Pay for safety or technical certifications that boost employee credentials.
- 4. Childcare Assistance** - Offer subsidies or access to childcare services to ease work-life balance.

- 5. Housing Allowances** - Provide support for temporary or permanent housing, especially for projects requiring relocation.

Promoting Wellness Programs

The American Institute of Construction notes that work can be physically and mentally taxing. Providing wellness programs such as gym memberships, access to physical therapy or mental health support, helps workers stay healthy. Healthy workers are happier, more productive and more likely to stay with your company.

Wellness Program Ideas:

- Onsite health screenings or annual check-ups
- Partnerships with local gyms for discounted memberships
- Subsidized physical therapy sessions
- Access to mental health professionals or Employee Assistance Programs
- Regular wellness challenges with rewards for participation

Creating a Positive Workplace Culture

• Recognizing and Rewarding Hard Work

Showing appreciation for your team's efforts can go a long way in building loyalty. Regularly recognizing achievements - whether through employee-of-the-month awards, public acknowledgment during meetings or spot bonuses for exceptional work - makes workers feel valued.

• Fostering Open Communication

Encouraging open communication is key to a positive workplace culture. Regular team meetings, anonymous suggestion boxes and an open-door policy can help workers feel heard and involved in decision-making processes. When employees feel their input matters, they are more likely to remain committed to the company.

Investing in Training and Development as a Part of Construction

Worker Retention Strategies

Workers want to improve their skills and advance in their careers. Providing skill development opportunities such as leadership workshops, safety certifications or new equipment training shows a commitment to their professional growth. This keeps workers engaged and motivated.

Detailed Suggestions for Skill Development Programs:

- **Leadership Workshops** - Train employees to take on supervisory roles with confidence.
- **Safety Certifications** - Offer regular OSHA certification courses to ensure compliance and safety.
- **Technology Training** - Familiarize workers with construction management software or advanced tools.
- **Cross-Training Programs** - Teach workers new skills in different roles, increasing their versatility.
- **Apprenticeship Programs** - Collaborate with trade schools to provide structured learning experiences.

Supporting Career Advancement

Promoting from within and outlining clear career progression plans can make a significant difference in retention. When workers see a path for advancement, they are more likely to stay and grow with a company.

Ideas for Career Advancement:

- **Mentorship Programs** - Pair experienced workers with newer employees for guidance.
- **Clear Job Ladders** - Create visual career progression charts to show opportunities for growth.
- **Quarterly Performance Reviews** - Offer feedback and discuss potential promotions.
- **Financial Support for Further Education** - Provide grants or scholarships for advanced degrees.
- **Recognition of Milestones** - Celebrate promotions or long service anniversaries to motivate loyalty.

Focusing on Work-Life Balance Can Enhance Construction Worker Retention Strategies

- **Offer Flexible Scheduling**
Flexibility is a key factor in worker satisfaction. Allowing for four-day workweeks, staggered start times, or job-sharing arrangements can help employees balance personal and professional responsibilities. This flexibility builds loyalty and reduces burnout.
- **Provide Ample Time Off**
Encouraging workers to take time off is essential for their well-being. Offering paid holidays, sick leave, and even mental health days ensures that employees return to work refreshed and ready to perform at their best.

Building Strong Team Relationships

- **Host Team-Building Activities**
Strong relationships among team members improve job satisfaction and overall morale. Hosting events like company picnics, volunteer outings or sports leagues can foster camaraderie and build a sense of community.

- **Celebrate Milestones Together**
Recognizing both professional and personal milestones - such as work anniversaries, birthdays or the completion of major projects - helps workers feel valued and connected to the company's mission.

Leveraging Technology to Improve Engagement

• Implementing Workforce Management Tools

Technology can simplify processes and enhance efficiency. Workforce management tools can streamline scheduling, track project progress and improve communication. Efficient systems reduce frustration and keep workers engaged.

- **Providing Digital Training Platforms**
Online learning tools allow workers to develop skills at their own pace. These platforms are particularly useful for busy construction teams, ensuring that workers remain knowledgeable and motivated without disrupting their schedules.

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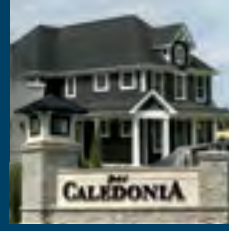
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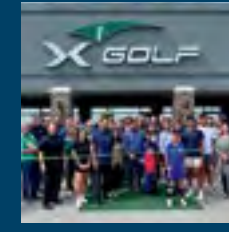
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Gear Job Description Work's Purpose and Meaning

to Attract Younger Workers

BY NOLAN POINTER

About 70 percent of U.S. construction companies are having a hard time finding construction workers, according to a recent Associated General Contractors of America survey.

Why is this?

Some, like Matt DiBara - co-founder of The Contractor Consultants and a Millennial himself - say it's because construction as a career isn't "sexy" enough for many Millennials (born between 1981-1996) and Gen Zs (born between 1997-2012).

"Fair or not, the construction industry doesn't enjoy a good reputation among many Millennials and Gen Zs," DiBara says. "Unfortunately, the (construction) sector cannot solve this crisis without catering to these individuals to some degree."

DiBara adds that too many construction companies just don't understand today's workers.

"Gone are the days when a good paycheck was enough to attract workers," he says. "People today want more, including better training opportunities, flexible routines and a work-life balance. The fact remains that young workers aren't interested in the construction industry, and fewer than 3 percent want to join it."

What does he suggest construction companies do to turn the situation around?

For starters, says DiBara, they need to avoid boring job descriptions.

"Construction firms need to make sure they present interesting descriptions that clearly mention what a job requires and what it offers," DiBara says. "Avoid long job posts, as most applicants spend only 14 seconds on a job ad."

Shorter job posts, he adds, receive 8.4 percent more applications per view than longer posts. "Seekers only pay it a glance...most pay importance to factors such as the salary range, qualifications and performance goals," he adds.

Streamlining the application process is another key to attracting the younger generations. The AGC suggests eliminating unnecessary requirements to make it easier for workers to apply. Implementing online interviews is another tip for attracting the younger sets.

Realizing that many Millennials and Gen Zs are looking for careers that give them a feeling of purpose - and catering the construction company's search to that - is a sure strategy for attracting workers in their early 40s and younger.

According to a study released by Bentley University, 84 percent of Millennials believe that making a positive impact on the world is more important than being recognized as a professional.

Second to making an impact is work flexibility that leads to work-life balance. Flexibility has gradually become one of the key perks young professionals look for when choosing a job. According to an American Express poll, 75 percent of millennials agree that a successful organization should have flexible working options.

Like older workers, Millennials and Gen Zs are seeking a safe workplace. It's a risk-laden occupation, especially for those in the field. Niran Shrestha, CEO co-founder of Kwant (a safety and productivity tracking firm), says that new hires, in particular, face higher risks of injury.

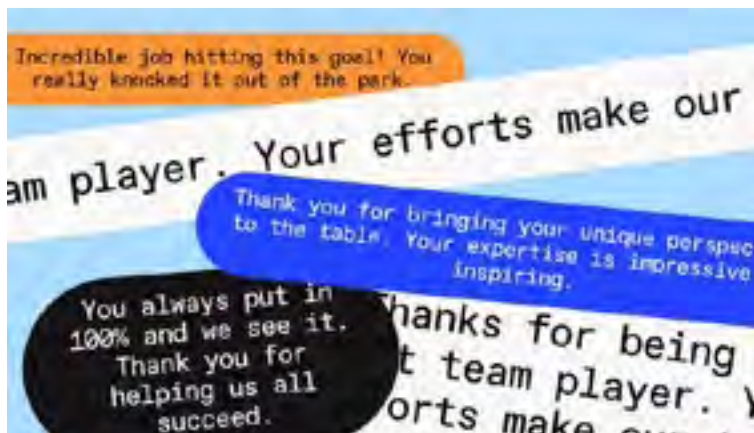
"Statistics show that more than half of all construction worker compensation claims occur within the first year of employment," Shrestha says. "Highlighting the increased danger for newcomers to the field. There's no doubt: construction can be a difficult industry to work in. The risk of injuries is very high, and workers often are required to work in difficult

conditions and use equipment and tools that can be dangerous. This is one of the major reasons why the many in the new generation chooses to avoid the construction industry."

Specifying the offering of comprehensive training programs in the job description, he says, is one way to combat any perceptions that it's not safe to work in construction.

Communicating specific starting pay in the job posting, Shrestha says, and specifying the tech-related resources the applicant will have the opportunity to use, separates that job listing from others, underscores the safe working environment culture and catches the attention of the younger construction population who are eager to learn new tools.

"About 80 percent of Millennials and Gen Zs agree that 'good pay' is an important factor, but it is no longer their top priority," he says. "Many workers in their 20s, 30s and early 40s are willing to accept a job with a lower salary if it offers more meaningful work."



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Construction Firms Aggressively Seeking Key Positions as Talent Scarcity Remains

BY **KERRY SMITH BUCK**

As good people remain difficult to find to fill various construction positions - in the field and in the office - salaries are reflecting the ongoing scarcity of talent.

According to Indeed, project managers and superintendents are among the most sought-after roles.

The average annual U.S. project manager salary currently sits at \$96,109, with the low end at \$62,867 and the high end at \$146,927.

Superintendents hiring on across U.S. metropolitan areas are coming in at an average annual base salary of \$94,217, with a range from \$64,713 on the low end to \$137,171 on the high end.

Surveyors - another highly coveted role - are seeing entry salaries of \$70,619, according to Indeed, with a low-high range from \$47,054 to \$105,985.

Estimators are also a prized commodity, commanding an annual average base salary of \$82,608 with a range - depending upon the specific market - from \$52,145 to \$130,866.

How are construction companies navigating hiring amidst the overall worker shortage, especially as they seek to attract top talent in these roles?

"As demand for skilled professionals remains high, understanding compensation trends is crucial for both employers looking to attract top talent and professionals seeking fair market play," says Brian Jackson, managing director and construction practice lead at Chicago-based Hirewell. "Driving these salaries is increased

demand for experienced field leaders and the push for more tech-savvy leaders to manage digital project tracking."

Companies searching for top-notch estimators - in today's environment of tariffs, unpredictable supply chains and the like - are more valuable than ever, Jackson adds.

"As construction costs fluctuate and competitive bidding tightens, companies are aggressively seeking skilled estimators who can provide accurate projections to maintain profitability," he says, observing that key drivers are rising material costs that require precision estimating and senior estimators with deep subcontractor networks who are earning premium pay. "As companies are prioritizing preconstruction planning to reduce risk," says Jackson, "there's a rising demand for managers with both estimating and project management experience."

Pete Wisnom is the director of recruiting at AllSearch Recruiting, a national search firm. He says that construction industry job candidates today are looking for the full, comprehensive package - one that meets their specific career goals.

"Construction industry employers need to make sure their job offers are detailed and spelled out...not just a one-pager with the role and salary amount," Wisnom says. "I am blown away over the number of employers' job offers that are still this brief. Employers need to know the pain points of their potential candidates - and even better, know their reasons for wanting to move - and then cater everything to that with respect to their offer."

Taking an accurate temperature of the marketplace to offer a

market-appropriate base salary for the role is a must, according to Wisnom. "It may not be in line with what you're currently paying employees, which may be lower than what the market is commanding," he says.

Salary doesn't comprise the entire picture. Wisnom says that a clearly defined bonus or incentive package/structure, one that is spelled out in the job offer, is essential. The offer should also describe components such as a vehicle allowance, holidays and other paid time off, retirement plans and more. "For most of the positions, it's essentially the same role at every construction firm," he says. "How are you going to differentiate yourself as an employer?"

Kyle Hullmann, AllSearch director of business development, says the job offer to Generation Z - individuals born between 1997 and 2012 - also needs to detail the potential career advancement path and what it is going to look like in two to three years.

"Taking them from day through two to three years in is paramount," says Hullmann. "They need to see what your company is willing to invest in them in terms of career development. Every circumstance, every candidate, is uniquely different. Is the candidate searching for more dollars per hour, or is he/she looking for an opportunity to grow and advance as a professional because the current employer doesn't offer that? Communicating openly with the candidate - your future employee - about what they're truly looking for and what you're able to offer - is essential. Because candidates possess unique and varied emotions, health and outside influences, every hiring circumstance is also unique."

Making sure your offer is within

the accepted market range is important, according to Tina Nazier, president of Affinity Advisory Solutions, LLC. "It's a tricky situation in terms of potentially hiring new people in at what your company is paying long-term people," Nazier says. "The wage compression issue (which occurs when there's little difference in pay between employees regardless of differences in their respective knowledge, skills, experience or abilities) is a delicate dance. It's definitely something that has to be navigated very carefully...employers are going to have to make sure that they're careful about how they're offering new people and also looking at how/whether to rectify the gap."

If a company is hiring at a higher skill set and/or higher level of formal education, it can more easily justify a higher dollar amount.

Nazier adds that salary, as important as it is, is really the "table stakes," defined as the minimum offering that is acceptable to compete in the market, or in other words, the baseline. "Salary is alignment with the market," she says. "After that, you really get into factors like culture, professional growth and development and feeling a sense of belonging."

Paul Shaughnessy, president and CEO of BSI Constructors, says candidates who are overly concerned about their starting salary are usually not a good fit at the firm.

"Ultimately, a decision to join a new company is a bet on the long-term prospects of that company, as well as its demonstrated history of sharing its success," says Shaughnessy. "High performers at BSI usually outperform the market financially in the long run, regardless of what salary they start at."

AECTechCon™ Draws Hundreds of Technology Professionals



The second-annual Architecture Engineering Construction Technology Conference (AECTechCon™) on May 7-8 at the St. Charles Convention Center in St. Charles drew more than 350 construction technology professionals representing a variety of roles from CEOs, COOs, CTOs, project managers, superintendents, IT managers and more.

The two-day event, held every May, is dedicated to AEC clients, practitioners and partners who are using technology to transform the construction industry. Known as Where Technology Transforms Industry™, AECTechCon™'s programming is geared toward driving and supporting tech-driven innovation in construction.

Autodesk and Procore served as the Conference Sponsors.

Sessions included these topics:

- BIM & VDC
- IT & Infrastructure
- Innovation and Emerging Technologies
- Safety & Workforce Development

Keynote speakers were Dustin Burns, senior vice president of technology and business solutions at McCownGordon, and Sal D'Ambrosia, director of construction technology at Wm. Blanchard Co.

More than 70 expert speakers comprised the program docket.

"This conference brings it," says Alex Belkofer, senior VDC director at McCarthy Building Companies and AECTechCon™ co-chair. "It represents some of the best value and the brightest tech minds you will ever see and hear in our industry."

Conference co-chair Travis Byerley, director of facility and technology solutions at Cooperative Building Solutions, part of PARIC, agrees.

"Last year we came upon the idea of a 'community of practice,'" says Byerley. "AECTechCon™ provides a space for contributing our individual and collective knowledge to learn, grow, share, build and exchange expertise in order to drive innovation in construction."

Creating this neutral ground for learning and collaboration as a valuable opportunity to step away from the traditional competitive landscape is what AECTechCon™ is all about. Belkofer and Byerley say the conference's goal is to offer respite from the everyday pressure of deadlines, schedules and competitors to allow tech professionals the chance to grow together in a dedicated effort to augment their industry.

Whether individuals attended as guests, presenters or industry panel experts, says Belkofer, the powerful avenues for learning and collaboration exist at AECTechCon™.

"I do honestly believe that why we're all here," Belkofer says, "to keep our finger on the pulse of what's happening in our industry as technology is moving rapidly and is impacting us all... and how construction technology is driving business value."

Another point that the two conference co-chairs agree on is this: Technology alone doesn't transform an industry. People do.

"It's the creative opportunity problem solvers who ask the right questions, learn the tools and push the boundaries," says Belkofer. "We're all learning, connecting and building the future. I believe we're all in the very best industry in the whole world."

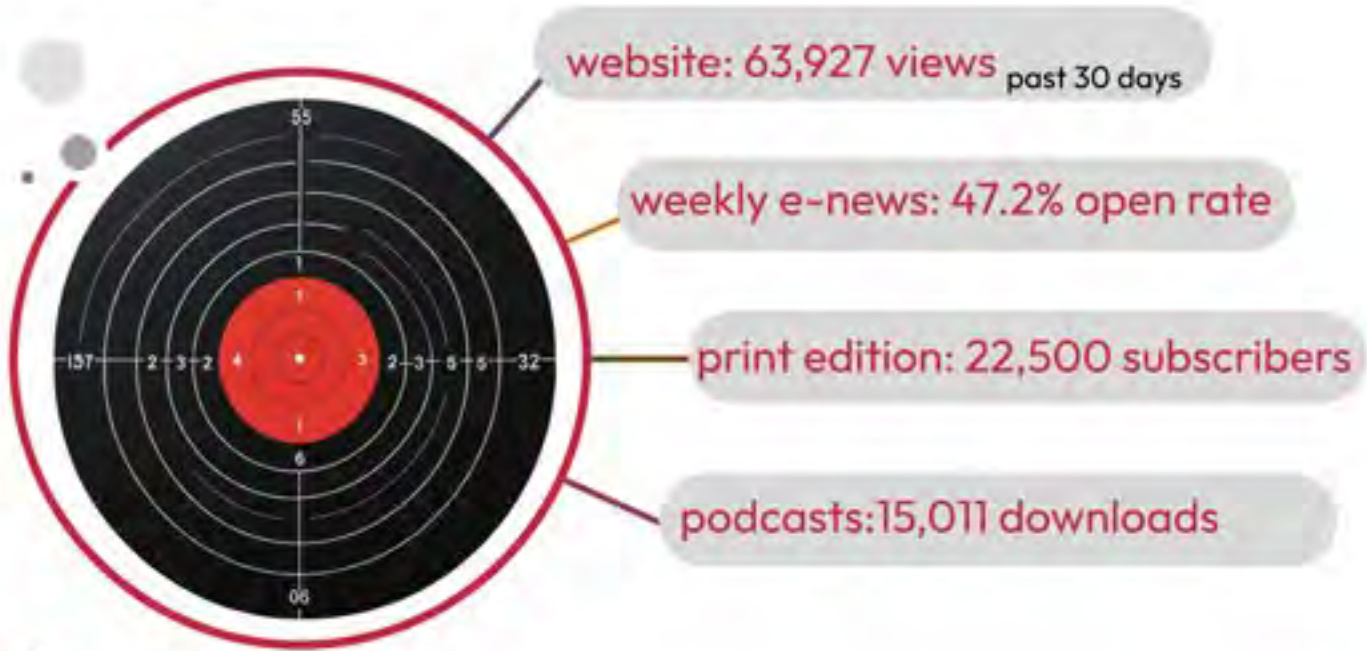
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4 Ways to Reach Your Target Audience



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6 Actionable Tips to Engage Your Construction Employees

BY CNR STAFF

1 Get Buy-In

Whether it is in the startup or construction sector, introducing an initiative requires support from the executives. As such, you need to get support from the entire management team first.

That's because part of employee engagement is to make themselves (you included) visible. This means visiting construction sites, talking with clients and catching up with your workers.

You also have to champion working arrangements that support employee well-being. This includes competitive pay, a personal development plan and employee benefits.

2 Keep Your Employees Informed

Now that your management team is on the same page, the next step is to inform your construction employees about employee engagement. One of the reasons employees leave a company is because of disengagement.

According to a Tribe Inc. study, 84 percent of employees believe there is not enough information from the management. This can lead to employees feeling disconnected.

One way to prevent this is to keep your employees informed. Conduct regular staff meetings and team huddles. That way you can ensure that everyone is connected with your construction company's vision and direction.

3 Provide Clear Objectives And Results

First, you need to identify your corporate goals. Second, let your employees know how their job can help achieve those goals. Third, figure out what key performance indicators you should be measuring. Fourth and last, do not be afraid to delegate some tasks and decision-making to your employees.

Your workers will then have a clear picture of how they contribute to the company's growth.

4 Use Digital Communication Channels

Use digital communication channels to keep all employees in the loop.

5 Foster Transparency And Openness

The foundation of employee engagement is trust. If your construction workers do not feel that they can trust your company, you cannot expect loyalty from them.

As such, you need to foster a culture of transparency and openness. You can do this by having an open-door policy. This means that your employees are free to approach the management and executives to voice their concerns. It is also important that they won't be judged for doing so.

6 Improve Workplace Safety

If you want to retain as many employees as you can, make sure you improve your workplace safety. Here are five ways to do that:

1. Train your employees properly.
2. Put together a safety committee that involves employees from different levels.
3. Hold everyone accountable.
4. Incentivize employees who adhere to workplace safety protocols.
5. Inspect your sites regularly.

Practice these actionable strategies and there's a good chance that your construction workforce - both in the office and field - will feel even more engaged.

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