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PERSPECTIVE **The Story of the Three Bricklayers: Seeing Vision Step by Step**

BY KERRY SMITH BUCK
PRESIDENT & CEO

British architect Sir Christopher Wren – the designer of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, built between 1675 and 1710 – spent nine years gaining approval of the plans.

Following the destruction of the old Gothic cathedral in the 1666 Great Fire of London, Wren – not only a respected architect but a scientist as well – was commissioned to create a new masterpiece in an English Baroque style, one that continues to be greatly admired today by more than one million visitors annually.

The design is renowned for its massive, iconic dome, inspired by classical and Italian Renaissance architecture such as St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

During the course of construction, Wren observed three bricklayers positioned on a scaffold and inquired about what each was doing.

The first bricklayer replied, “I’m a bricklayer. I’m working hard

laying bricks to feed my family.”

The second bricklayer responded, “I’m a builder. I’m building a wall.”

The third bricklayer, with a twinkle in his eyes, stood tall and answered Wren, “I’m building a cathedral.”

No doubt, the power of purpose is a common attribute shared by effective leaders in the construction industry and elsewhere. But an equally powerful ingredient in the recipe for successful, proactive leadership is vision.

None of the three bricklayers’ answers were incorrect. However, the third bricklayer saw beyond the technical facets of the job to the bigger picture. He knew that with each brick he laid, the project was one step closer to its magnificent completion.

Connecting daily tasks on the jobsite – or in the office – to a larger vision, one that every team member can engage in, is

what exemplary leaders do.

In the pages that follow, you’ll catch a glimpse of general contractors, attorneys, tech companies and safety incentive firms with leaders who carry true vision in leading and inspiring their people – as teams and as individuals – with humility, integrity, respect, excellence, hard work, innovation and more.

Here’s to the leaders who inspire us all.

- Kerry Smith Buck

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GRSM Receivable Recovery: Getting Paid Should Never be the Hardest Part of the Job

BY QUINN MURPHY

My father was a sculptor who utilized natural elements to create artistic beauty.

My father used rock, straw, wood, metal and leather to match a design vision in his mind. Each element was meticulously chosen for its unique qualities, hand selecting rock from the Missouri rivers he fished, leather he meticulously treated by hand, straw bales he retrieved from the farm fields of Oklahoma and metal twisted and weathered by time. Once these elements were combined by his hand, my father's sculptures became deeply personal to him.

As a child I can still picture my father pouring over the combined elements in an endless effort to merge construction with design. My father never sold his sculptures; they were just too personal to him. Many of my father's sculptures outlived their creator, and some still grace my home and office to this day.

I have thought a lot about why I became a construction attorney. I think my father's sculpture and artwork were the impetus. Growing up with an appreciation for the creative process and respect for "builders," it bothered me that contractors who build for others would not be paid for their work. In my view, the injustice of non-payment was the genesis of creating GRSM's Construction Receivable Recovery group.

Deconstructing Contractor Collections

Ten years ago, I began hearing the same complaint among my contractor clients: "I am owed money for my work, but I will incur more in legal fees than I would ever recover." The first time I heard this, I understood the frustration, but when the same complaint was repeated by contractors across various specialties, the unfairness of non-payment really hit home with me. The realization that the legal costs associated with my profession contributed to builders accepting non-payment prompted me to take action and find a solution to the problem.

Building a Nationwide Framework for Affordable Construction Payment Recovery

Construction Payment Recovery

I began by deconstructing the legal process of collection and determined that legal costs are a direct function of two primary

factors: legal subject matter and geographical location. In law, niche expertise (like intellectual property or antitrust, for example) warrant higher hourly rates due to the specific expertise required. But most construction disputes are contract-based, and while they can venture into more complex areas of delay or defect, contractor collections are generally not niche.

I next looked at the impact of geographic location on hourly rates and for purposes of evaluation, I divided the U.S. into three vertical zones: Western, Central and Eastern. Interestingly, I found that the rates in the Western and Eastern zones were 25 percent to 30 percent higher than hourly rates in the Central zone. To me, this represented an opportunity to utilize the lower Central zone rates to perform work in more expensive jurisdictions. But to do so, I had to design a system.

I mapped out each step of legal collections from initial file placement to recovery (file placement - initial evaluation - demand - complaint filing - written discovery - motion practice - trial - collection) and determined that even in high-cost jurisdictions (Eastern/Western), the bulk of time intensive legal work could be performed by highly trained attorneys in the Central zone working through local attorneys at significant cost savings.

The last step was to find a law firm with a broad geographical footprint that could support our new program. When I joined Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, the only full-service law firm with offices and attorneys in all 50 states, with my colleague Meredith Pitts, the GRSM Construction Receivable Recovery Team was born.

How Our Team Works

GRSM's Construction Receivable Recovery program utilizes efficient processes to pursue contractor receivables in all 50 states at reduced effective rates.



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The program allows multi-state contractors to “throw away the legal Rolodex” of attorneys across the nation and enjoy one point of contact for all multi-state collections. The efficiency of the system is what sets the program apart.

On the front end, our group utilizes pre-suit asset searches to evaluate collectability before legal costs are incurred, eliminating legal spend on unproductive accounts. If litigation is initiated, our GRSM Construction Receivable Recovery team utilizes centrally located, highly trained recovery attorneys to perform much of the required legal work at lower effective rates, thereby lowering the contractor’s financial investment and allowing contractors to pursue receivables of all amounts.

Our Construction Receivable Recovery team members are fully trained and intimately familiar with construction-specific recovery rights and obligations (e.g., Fair Debt Collections Practices Act, state mechanics lien statutes, Prompt Payment Acts), allowing the team to maximize contractor recovery throughout the U.S. Finally, our team tracks and provides periodic updates on net return on investment, demonstrating first-hand the economic difference our group makes in contractor collections.

Leadership

Leadership is not always front and center. Often leadership can be found “behind the curtain,” supporting the extraordinary work of others. The success of our unique 50-state collections program brings me back to the impetus of its development – my father’s sculpture. It occurs to me that the pride my father felt in constructing sculptures is the same pride that contractors feel in their own work. I believe that pride in construction and craftsmanship is something to be valued, honored and never taken for free. The hardest part of a contractor’s job should never be getting paid. I am proud of our group’s leadership in aligning

our mission with our construction clients to secure payment for the work performed and delivered.

I think my father would be proud, too.

Quinn Murphy is managing partner of the Tampa office of GRSM and chair of its Receivable Recovery Group.



Dudley Murphy’s nature elements sculpture at his “Sticks & Stones” art exhibit in Springfield, Missouri in 1988.



Dudley Murphy admiring one hay bale sculpture in his art exhibit in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1971.



Dudley Murphy arranging another hay bale sculpture in his art exhibit in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1971.



Showing Up Matters: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Increase Performance on the Job

BY DAVID SIMS

It was the middle of summer on the Gulf Coast. The plant and its workers were at a standstill, thanks to malfunctioning equipment. Stifling doesn't begin to describe the heat inside the airless plant, where the scorching sun outside was matched by the steaming equipment inside. The men on shift waited, restless and sweating, while the maintenance workers labored to get things moving again.

As the delay dragged on, their site leader appeared on the floor with a cooler of bottled water. They watched as he made his way through the area, handing out bottles one at a time and stopping to talk with the men working. They weren't surprised. He was as much a fixture on the site as they were and made a point to know them by name.

That's the story we were told by the wife of one of the workers when we asked what it was about that location that kept him there. She told us about that day and simply said, "They'd do anything for that man."

That plant was one of two facilities under the same corporate umbrella, practically identical in operations and size. But one plant consistently ranked high in employee satisfaction, especially on questions about trust in leadership and feeling supported on the job. The other struggled. The difference?

Leadership.

Stories like that say a lot about what good leadership looks like in the real world. Leadership doesn't happen in air-conditioned conference rooms. It happens on hot jobsites, under changing conditions, from before dawn til long after most of the world has gone home. Leaders are expected to keep the work moving, solve problems on the fly and make sure everyone goes home safely.

Most leaders in construction are put into those roles because they're skilled, experienced and

dependable. What often gets less attention is that technical skill and leadership skill aren't the same thing. Most supervisors are never given the tools to make that transition successfully.

We wouldn't hand a worker a pile of nails but no hammer and expect great results. Without the right tools, even the most capable person will struggle. It's not that leaders don't care; it's that no one has given them a working understanding of how their day-to-day interactions shape their crew's performance.

Research has consistently shown that supervisors have an enormous influence over team performance. Studies from Gallup found that the direct supervisor is one of the strongest factors in whether employees feel committed to their work, perform at a high level and stay with an organization. In industries like construction – where so much depends on decisions made in the field – that influence becomes even more important. No procedure can cover every situation, and no leader can watch every task. Workers decide every day whether to take a shortcut or not, to speak up about a problem or stay silent, to go the extra mile or throw in the towel.

What leaders notice, respond to and reinforce becomes the culture of the jobsite. In most cases, the only thing that gets attention is outputs – finishing a job early, hitting quotas and staying on schedule. But if leaders only focus on output, they miss that the inputs – the detours, shortcuts and risky choices – are leading the team to disaster. Every response (or lack thereof) from leadership becomes your company's culture.

We've seen how it plays out in organizations where leaders recognize the daily effort behind results. One former client received a national safety award and was invited to Washington, D.C. to accept it at a formal ceremony attended by elected officials and industry leaders. Instead of

bringing another executive, the CEO brought along one of his plant's janitors. He even bought him a suit and made sure he stood beside him to accept the award.

This was the same CEO who regularly walked the plant floor late at night to thank employees for their work. When a night-shift employee was selected for the safety committee, the CEO arranged for the worker's wife and children to be there to see him accept the nomination. It was late, and the kids were already in pajamas, but you can bet that's a moment the family never forgot.

In each of these moments, the focus was on recognizing the behaviors that lead to success. That simple practice sends a powerful message: your work matters, and your supervisor sees you. That's what makes employees more willing to speak up, follow standards and look out for one another.

If we can give leaders tools to notice what goes right, give positive feedback and recognize effort as well as results, we can create more workers who would proudly say, "We'd follow that man anywhere."

David Sims is vice president at The Bill Sims Company, Inc.



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Contractors Are Leaving Millions in Bid Opportunities Untouched: The Real Issue is Estimator Capacity

BY SHIVA DHAWAN

Across the construction industry today, opportunity is not short in supply. Project pipelines remain strong across several sectors, and planning activity continues to hold steady. Dodge Construction Network's Momentum Index reflects sustained commercial and institutional development, while investment in large-scale projects such as data centers is adding further momentum to the market.

Yet inside many precon teams, a very different constraint is emerging.

Contractors are receiving more invitations to bid than their estimating teams can realistically pursue. What looks like a healthy pipeline is increasingly becoming a capacity bottleneck inside businesses.

Part of the pressure comes from ongoing labor shortages across the industry. According to the Associated General Contractors of America, more than 80 percent of construction firms report difficulty filling positions. While much of the conversation around labor shortages focuses on field roles, the shortage extends into estimating functions as well.

At the same time, the work required to produce a bid

remains highly manual. Industry estimates suggest that takeoffs alone can account for 50 percent to 70 percent of the total bid preparation process. Estimators routinely spend hours reviewing drawings, extracting quantities, coordinating with vendors and assembling estimates before a project can even be priced competitively.

When experienced estimators are limited and workflows remain time-intensive, companies inevitably reach a point where they prioritize certain opportunities over others.

What does this mean? Contractors are leaving high-value projects untouched – not because they lack expertise, but only because they lack the time to bid on them.

A Pattern Emerging Across Trades

Over the past several years, I have seen a pattern emerge in conversations with contractors across the U.S.

One example comes from Rays Stairs, a steel contractor based in Atlanta that bids on complex stair and structural steel fabrication projects. Demand for its expertise has remained strong, but the estimating team's bandwidth was limited. When several opportunities arrived simultaneously, the team was forced to decide which bids it could realistically pursue and which to skip.

We saw a similar challenge at Vinco Builders, where manual takeoffs were slowing down the entire bidding process. Estimators were spending significant portions of their day reviewing drawings and extracting quantities before they could even begin developing the estimate. This drastically restricted the team's ability to bid on more projects.

What became clear in both cases was that the issue wasn't expertise. It was capacity and time.

Both teams eventually began

looking for ways to remove that manual effort from the estimating workflow. By adopting Beam AI, both teams were able to automate takeoffs and estimates, the most tedious parts of the estimating workflow. This change did not hamper the estimator's role; it simply gave time back to bid on more high-value projects, focus on risk assessments, vendor communications, relationship building, etc.

When estimating, teams are constrained by time rather than opportunity; the impact is significant. Across the industry, contractors are leaving millions in bid opportunities untouched simply because their teams cannot process the volume of work coming through the door.

The Experience Gap Problem in Estimating & How AI Is the Solution

Workforce dynamics are making this challenge even more pronounced.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects tens of thousands of openings for cost estimators each year over the next decade, many driven by retirements and workforce transitions. Estimating is a discipline built on experience. Professionals develop judgment over time by reviewing plans, understanding scope risks and learning how projects unfold on field.

When experienced estimators retire, companies lose headcount and knowledge that has traditionally helped train the next gen of professionals.

At the same time, fewer young professionals are entering estimating roles compared to previous decades. As demand for construction projects grows, the gap between demand and supply widens.

Artificial intelligence is now emerging as a solution to this problem. AI systems automate the most time-consuming parts of estimating – reading drawings, extracting quantities and

generating estimates. Tasks that once required days of manual work can now be completed in hours.

For estimators, this amplifies expertise. Instead of spending hours on repetitive takeoff work, experienced professionals can focus on the parts of bidding that truly require judgment: evaluating scope gaps, coordinating with vendors, refining pricing strategies and managing project risk.

In other words, AI expands estimator capacity by allowing the same team to evaluate and pursue significantly more opportunities.

Culture Ultimately Determines Whether Technology Works

Technology alone, however, rarely solves an industry problem.

Expanding estimator capacity ultimately requires leadership teams to rethink long-standing workflows and build organizations that are comfortable adopting new ways of working.

At Beam AI, we think about this through our BOLD culture code. For us, that means staying curious, building continuously for the customer, owning the problem, being on a constant learning path and doing the right thing for the industry.

That philosophy shapes how we build Beam AI and how we work with contractors navigating the shift to AI workflows in preconstruction.

The companies that succeed in the next decade of construction will not be the ones with the most technology. They will be the ones who build the culture, systems and leadership mindset needed to use technology intelligently and expand their capacity to pursue opportunity.

Shiva Dhawan is CEO and co-founder of Attentive.ai.

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21 Things All Great Leaders Do

BY CAREY NIEUWHOF

Here are 21 things I've seen great leaders do.

1. Make the mission more important than themselves

The sure sign of mediocre or poor leaders is that their leadership is about them.

And it's not always ego that drives this. Self-centered leadership can be driven as much by insecurity as it can be by pride.

The reason people want to throw their whole

heart into a mission is because the mission is about a cause bigger than everyone, including the leader.

2. Work on their character even harder than their skill set

Character sinks the ships of otherwise highly skilled leaders. Ethical breaches, moral lapses and character flaws take highly skilled leaders out of play regularly.

Great leaders know that character – not competency – determines their capacity as a leader. They work hard on their heart, their lives, their morality.

3. Refuse to make excuses

In fact, the leaders who make the most progress make the fewest excuses. You can make excuses, or you can make progress, but you can't make both.

4. Bring clarity

Great leaders stick with a problem or idea long enough and engage it deeply enough to clear away the fog and reduce the concept to its simplest forms so anyone can understand it.

They make the concept accessible. If you can't say it clearly in 30 seconds, you probably don't understand the problem clearly enough to proceed.

5. Think abundance, not scarcity

A scarcity mindset will kill your organization over the long haul. But if you think small you will stay small. If you think it's not possible, it won't be.

6. See the opportunity, not the obstacle

Great leaders see opportunities. Great leaders work at the problem until they find the opportunity.

7. Show up on time

Great leaders tend to show up on time and they show up prepared.

8. Deliver on time...or ahead of time

Great leaders will under-promise and over-deliver.

One of the best ways to do that is to hit deadlines and even beat them.

9. Schedule their priorities

Great leaders set their own agendas. They know where they bring the most value and schedule time for it. They devote meaningful time to working on their business, not just in it. Their most important tasks get their best energy and time, not their leftovers.

10. Develop their strengths

Most of us want to fix our weaknesses. Great leaders instead decide to recruit around their weaknesses and spend almost all of their time doing what they're best at.

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21 Things All Great Leaders Do (continued)

11. Invest in themselves

Great leaders see a wise use of seminars, coaches, networks, conferences and resources as an investment rather than an expense.

12. Practice self-care

Great leaders take time off. They don't work 24/7. They realize they have limits, and they respect them.

13. Prepare to be misunderstood

Being misunderstood comes with the territory of leadership.

14. Develop a trusted inner circle

Great leaders never lead alone. They surround themselves with people who are wiser than they are.

15. Take the high road

Great leaders take the high road. They're kind, they forgive, they show grace.

16. Push through their fears

It's not that great leaders have no fears. They just push through them.

17. Take full responsibility

Weak leaders blame.

The best leaders take full responsibility, even when it's not their fault.

18. Leave people better than they found them

All leaders leave a trail.

Great leaders leave a legacy, because they leave people better than they were when they found them. Great leaders help people become better people.

19. Call people by name

Great leaders remember and say people's names.

20. Help people who can't help them

Truly great leaders always make time for people who can provide no direct help for them.

They take the time to talk to an intern, to hear the custodian's stories, to come alongside the middle manager who's frustrated.

21. Have private relationships that reflect their public leadership

Truly great leaders don't have a disconnect between who they are at work and who they are in life. Great leaders throw the same passion, skill and heart into their home life as they throw into their work life.

Getting Paid Shouldn't Be the Hardest Part of the Job.

Navigating multi-state receivable recovery can be challenging. Partner with our Construction Receivable Recovery team to minimize write-offs and collect the debt you're rightfully owed.



Quinn Murphy

Partner and Practice Group Leader

Meredith Pitts

Partner

Janice Driggers

Senior Counsel

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How Do Construction Team Leaders Motivate Their Employees?

BY GEORGE HEDLEY

The team leader is responsible to motivate people to put out more effort with more enthusiasm and get them to go beyond the minimum required.

It is the team leader's job to discover what makes each person tick, do their best and produce outstanding results. People who work for you are not you. They don't think like you, and they work differently than you. And just because you pay them a good pay or salary doesn't mean they're going to work their fanny off the same way you do.

To get them to follow your vision and achieve big goals, you've got to give them a reason to want to follow. People are motivated for their reasons, not yours.

Leadership is really about influencing others to want to do what you want them to do. The key words are "to want to do." They've got to want to do it. You tell and they decide *if* they'll do it.

Ask yourself: "What makes people want to follow me?" You know what doesn't work with children and employees: confusion, lack of trust, no integrity, no accountability and no consequences.

A lot of managers say, "My people won't do what I want them to do. I should get rid of them, but I can't afford them to leave,

so I don't fire them." What kind of accountability is this? If they don't have to do what you want them to do, why should they do more than the minimum to keep their job? You've got to make them want to do it.

What people need

People need two things: money and happiness.

Money includes fair pay at a secure company with competitive benefits. Happiness is the same as being motivated.

Effective leaders and winning coaches motivate people to perform. This is accomplished with exciting leadership, motivation, inspiration, holding people accountable and giving them responsibility. The team leader is responsible for motivating people to put out more effort with more enthusiasm and get them to go beyond the minimum required.

Here are four action steps leaders take to achieve bottom-line results through people.

1. Provide clear expectations

People need to know exactly what the team leader wants them to achieve – the clear and expected specific results. Just like professional baseball managers use statistics and the scoreboard to provide accountability and feedback for their players, your employees need to know the score and what is expected. Weak leaders and poor coaches assume people understand what's required, don't take the time to spell out what they want and don't make people accountable for achieving specific results.

Be specific with clear targets and expected exact results clearly defined. Make sure people understand what the target is, what's acceptable and what's not, when they hit or miss it, the consequences for not achieving results and the rewards for a good job.

2. Motivation, recognition and praise

Like winning coaches, effective leaders provide ongoing motivation, recognition and praise to people who do the work and achieve the desired results. Weak leaders, who don't take time to thank people for a job well done, get weak results.

Think of the great winning coaches over time. Most are known as great motivators who use different methods depending on the circumstance. Motivation can be provided in different ways – challenges, competitions, listening, training, encouragement, incentives, rewards, recognition or praise. Of all the motivating factors, the two that provide the biggest incentive for people to perform are regular recognition and praise.

In a survey why people left their company, more than 90 percent said they'd never been recognized or praised by their boss, ever, for anything. People want and need feedback and positive reinforcement for their contributions and efforts.

Leaders give praise at least every week to everyone in their sphere of influence. Use words like, "I appreciate you" and "Thanks for a great job." Leaders use recognition to motivate their people to perform at a higher level.

3. Understand the big picture

Employees as team players need a clear understanding of the big picture, what's happening, how they fit in and how their contributions add value to the process. Team leaders as great coaches share and explain where the company or project is going – its vision, future, positive and negatives, and changes required to be successful. People need to know the truth and big picture, otherwise they tend to fear the worst.

Effective leaders constantly tell the real deal – business is good or bad, sales are up or down, productivity is acceptable or not,

whether people are doing a good job or not and the profit picture. When leaders leave their people in the dark, people also don't see any reason to perform at a higher level.

4. Show you care

Leaders let their people know they care about them as individuals. People need to know you appreciate them; you care about their goals, their future, their kids and their families. People must know they're important, and their needs and wants will be considered as they contribute to the entire organization's success.

Leadership is simple. The hard part of leadership is to do what you know you should do every day. Go do it.

George Hedley is a professional construction business coach and professional industry speaker.



A Leader or a Ruler: Which Role Do You Embody?

BY SCOTT DRURY

I always enjoy discussing leadership with other business leaders and owners. The topic is of interest to me because the personality of the person at the top is the personality of the entire company. We can get cliché with all the different types of leadership styles blah, blah.

I break it down into two categories. You are either a leader or a ruler.

A leader emulates confidence, is assertive, asking for reasons, not excuses. A leader has high self-worth and can set healthy boundaries with others while demonstrating empathy. A leader motivates with positive energy, encourages personal development and improvement – maybe assisting a teammate with a paradigm shift in his or her view of life or career, valuing strong win-win relationships, is a great listener and above all demonstrates a high level of humility.

A ruler, as I've discovered over time, is basically a narcissist. He or she rules over people with manipulation and control. Rulers are emotionally volatile when questioned or criticized; they always have excuses, not reasons. Relationships are superficial and self-serving. They take credit for others' work and effort. They lack empathy, are arrogant, feel entitled and fantasize about success and power. They're the energy vampires of the room and the company, all the while

convincing themselves and others that they are "leading" a company, a project or a team. These folks are a cancer in any environment.

Aside from our core values of 1) Check our Ego at the Door, 2) Set the Bar, 3) Have a Positive Attitude and 4) Figure it Out, we have another filter at Bloomsdale Excavating. It's our definition of teamwork: "To put others' wants, needs and desires before our own." Period. Yes, it's servant leadership. When you see our flag flying on our projects, it represents that we are present and here to serve our customers, our subcontractors, our suppliers and one another. It's a reminder flapping in the wind every minute of every day. This is the culture we represent and simply expect it in return.

If we, as individuals, can set our self-serving mindset aside and think more about how we can help each other succeed, it's a magical experience. Productivity increases, levels of efficiency are immediate, you will see results in your safety program, and you will actually be working together for the

common goal of "what's best for you today" rather than "how can I use you for my gain today." This unlocks a culture of positivity in your business, especially at the project level. One where people will want to come to work, not feel they have to. Our best relationships exist when our definition of teamwork is reciprocated. It's a win-win. How many

projects have you worked on where the weekly progress meetings are nothing but beat-downs, the energy of the jobsite is heavy – almost exhausting – and very few are working together? It's everyone for themselves. Is this an enjoyable environment? As a general contractor to an owner, a subcontractor to a general contractor, a supplier to the entire project, what will your price be on the next project, if you even submit a bid?

Yeah, I know, we are hardened construction companies and workers. We have schedules to meet, contracts to fulfill carrying risk we probably had no business taking on, employees to manage, cash flow to predict, supply chains to manage, prepare for rain, heat, and cold and try to control all the things we can't control, and "Scott, you're expecting me to be nice?!" Silly me. I ask you, are these your excuses for being a ruler? Or are you going to produce the reasons for being a leader?

Leaders and rulers. Which will you be today?

Scott T. Drury is the chief executive officer and visionary at Bloomsdale Excavating Company, Inc.

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Why Authentic Leadership is Key to a Strong Company Culture in Construction

COURTESY OF PROTIV

What Is Authentic Leadership?

Authentic leadership is about being real with your team. It means that what you say, what you believe and what you do all align. It's about letting your true priorities show, whether that's meeting project deadlines or ensuring that your employees have the flexibility to make it to their kids' baseball games. There's no "right" or "wrong" set of values; what's important is that those values are reflected in every aspect of your business.

If your approach to culture doesn't match the way you lead day-to-day, your team will see through it. Your team will notice when your policies contradict the values you claim

to hold. If you say safety comes first, but then criticize your crew for taking the time to follow safety protocols that push the project slightly over budget, that inconsistency will erode trust. It's better to be clear about what you really prioritize and build your company culture around those values.

Why Authenticity Matters in Construction

In an industry like construction, the impact of authentic leadership can't be overstated. Strong leaders know that building trust is the first step to creating a motivated and engaged team.

How to Build Authentic Leadership into Your Culture

Building authenticity into your leadership style and company culture isn't always easy, but it's well worth the effort. Here are a few best practices that can help:

1. Align Your Words and Actions: If you claim that safety is your top priority, ensure that your policies reflect that – even if it means a project takes a little longer. Your team needs to see that you're willing to stand by your values, even when it's challenging. This consistency builds credibility and trust.

2. Communicate Your Core Values Clearly: What does your business stand for? Is it delivering quality or ensuring that your workers have a healthy work-life balance? Communicate these values regularly, and make sure your team understands how these values drive decision-making at every level.

3. Involve Your Team in Decision-Making: Authentic leadership means being open to feedback and involving your team members in decisions that impact them. When your crew feels heard, it is more likely to trust your leadership and support the direction of the company.

4. Lead by Example: Your actions set the tone for your team. If you want your team to be diligent, honest and safety-conscious, you need to demonstrate those qualities yourself. Leaders who show up authentically inspire their teams to do the same.

5. Consistency Is Key: Being an authentic leader doesn't mean you're perfect. It means you're consistent. When challenges arise, stick to your values and follow through on your commitments. This consistency will reinforce the positive aspects of your culture and help your team stay aligned with your vision.



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Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Construction Managers

BY ED KUBIAK

Becoming an extraordinary construction manager isn't about luck. It's about deliberate practice, discipline and a commitment to growth.

If you're just starting your journey in this field, you're stepping into a role that demands leadership, precision and people skills in equal measure.

Mindset: Set the Standard Early

Extraordinary construction managers understand that mindset defines their craft. Commit to these foundational principles to elevate both your professional outcomes and personal growth:

- Cleanliness reflects quality. No team member is too important to address cleanliness on site.
- Honesty and integrity are non-negotiable. Your reputation is your most valuable asset – protect it.

- Confidence matters but should always be balanced with humility and fairness.
- Start early, stay late. Excellence doesn't adhere to a traditional 9-to-5 schedule.

Leadership: Control the Process or Be Controlled

Exceptional leaders proactively manage their environment rather than reacting to it. Adopt these strategies to maintain control and ensure successful outcomes:

- Walk every room of every home, every day. You can't manage what you don't inspect.
- Own your site. You must be the most informed person on the job.
- Never assume; confirmation beats assumption every time.
- Be fair but firm. Relationships matter, but so does accountability.
- Lead the pack or get eaten. Leaders anticipate and act before issues arise.

Communication & Planning: Build a System That Works

Great construction managers

rely on effective communication and meticulous planning. Embrace these guidelines to build clarity, consistency and reliability into your projects:

- Explain the why, not just the how. When people understand the purpose, they'll find a way.
- Follow up and follow through. Your word means little without action.
- Write it down. Don't rely on memory; use your brain for problem-solving, not recall.
- Document everything as if you'll need to defend it five years from now. Because one day, you might.
- Leave a trail – texts, emails, site notes. It's your insurance policy.

Learning: Stay Curious and Coachable

Continuous learning and curiosity distinguish top-performing construction managers. Adopt these principles to stay informed, adaptable and consistently growing:

- Learn at least 10 sellable fea-

tures in each room. Know your product inside and out.

- Understand your materials, where they come from, how they're installed, what they cost, how they're warranted.
- Always make time for mentors. Ask questions. Listen more than you speak.
- Challenge everything, including your own assumptions.

Final Thoughts: Be a Builder of People and Projects

Construction management isn't just about buildings; it's about people, planning and impact. Drama has no place on a jobsite. Energy is finite; spend it wisely.

If you're a young professional in this space, commit to being extraordinary. Not someday – today. Your habits, your communication and your integrity will define your career more than any title or certification ever could.

Stay humble. Stay sharp. And always lead with purpose.

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GRSM Construction Receivable Recovery Team (LEFT TO RIGHT):

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- **Quinn Murphy** · Managing Partner, Tampa Office / Practice Group Chair
- **Janice Driggers** · Senior Counsel, Chicago Office

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Dennis Araujo
Project Executive

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Scott Drury
CEO - Visionary



Daniel Latham
President - Integrator



Gary Lalumandier
VP of Operations



Kyle Drury
VP of Preconstruction

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“Leadership begins with humility. It’s the difference between leading people with courage, motivation, and positivity or ruling over people with narcissism, manipulation, and fear.

At Bloomsdale Excavating Company, we are leaders, not rulers. Our definition of Teamwork is to put others’ (customers, employees, subcontractors, suppliers) wants, needs, and desires before our own. We believe that if we commit to their success first, they will, in return, commit to ours.”

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IMPACT Strategies Executive Leadership Team

Left to Right

Derek Schaefer
Director of Pre-Construction

Nick Walker
VP, Project Development & Strategy

Derek Hinrichs
CFO

Mark Hinrichs
President

Jason Toennies
Director of Estimating

Scott Manning
VP of Operations

Mike Christ
Executive VP

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At the end of the day, leadership at IMPACT means setting the tone for excellence, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that every project reflects the standards and values we stand for.



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Are Your Construction Workers Fearful of Leadership?

BY KEN MADDEN

A little fear is a good thing. You want employees who perform their best, and fear of underperforming is a great motivator. But too much fear can do more harm than good. You don't have time to hold your employees' hands through every task or constantly be telling them what to do next.

The job of leadership is to create a work site where employees are confident in their abilities, take initiative and trust their own instinct – but are also comfortable coming to you when they have questions. So how do you foster that type of work environment?

1. Promote an open line of communication. The most important element of trust is communication. If you talk openly with your employees, they will be open with you. This doesn't mean gossiping or complaining. Just be clear with them about your expectations, concerns and any issues that may arise. Your employees will appreciate the honesty and reciprocate.
2. Provide adequate training. Employees who receive proper training will feel more at ease on the work site. Even temporary employees need guidance on your site's specific guidelines and expectations. Without that training, employees will either ask too many questions or

avoid asking any for fear that they're doing something wrong.

3. Praise good work. Positive feedback can help build your employees' trust in leadership and in themselves. When someone takes initiative and it turns out well, let everyone know. The more praise your team gets, the more they'll respect you and trust their own instincts.
4. Reward the group. Rewarding an employee for excellent work is a great way to promote individual high performance. If you offer a reward to that employee's entire team – even something as simple as pizza for lunch – you promote a sense of team support and encourage employees to rely on each other.
5. Offer constructive feedback. Constructive feedback should never be judgmental or disciplinary. Frame your suggestions as ways to make the work easier or more effective, based on your knowledge of the site, client or the team.
6. Take a step back. Managers that hover are intimidating. If you scrutinize every move your employees make, they will lose confidence in their ability to perform to your standards. Instead, take a step back and prove that you trust them to do the job right.

Ken Madden is the owner of Madden Industrial Craftsmen, Inc.





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TOM HUSTER
PRESIDENT
KCI CONSTRUCTION

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Five Essential Traits of Compassionate Leaders in Construction

BY CNR STAFF

Leadership in the construction industry goes beyond managing projects; it's about fostering a sense of community, inspiring teams and striving for excellence together. The most impactful leaders embody these five essential traits:

Visionary Thinking: Compassionate leaders take the time to paint a clear picture of their vision. They passionately share it with their teams, creating a sense of purpose and guiding everyone toward common goals with enthusiasm.

Resilience: The construction landscape can be unpredictable, but great leaders remain steadfast and flexible amidst challenges. Their ability to adapt not only keeps projects on track but also provides reassurance and motivation to their teams.

Commitment to Excellence: Upholding high standards and consistently striving for quality is essential in building trust within a team. Compassionate leaders show this commitment, ensuring that everyone feels valued and that their efforts contribute to long-term success.

Innovation: Embracing creative solutions and new technologies isn't just about staying competitive; it's about nurturing an environment where everyone feels empowered to share their ideas. This openness can lead to more efficient projects and the growth of individuals within the team.

Effective Communication: Compassionate communication is about

being transparent and approachable. By fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and clarity, leaders ensure everyone feels heard and respected, which is vital for successful project outcomes.

These compassionate traits not only cultivate exceptional leaders but also lay the foundation for remarkable achievements in the construction industry.



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Why Construction's Next Era Demands More Than Great Projects

BY MICHAEL YAZBEC

The St. Louis and Midwest construction market in 2026 is full of contradictions.

Demand in health care, education and data centers is as strong as it's been in years. And yet margins are tighter, labor is harder to find and material costs remain volatile. This divided market is full of opportunity for those prepared to capture it, and unforgiving for those still playing by the old rules.

Chief among the tactics that don't work in 2026 is the "chase every bid, win on price, repeat" strategy. Success in today's environment demands something more deliberate, including deep project alignment, owner relationships built on transparency and a company structure capable of executing consistently without burning out the people who make it work.

At S. M. Wilson, we've been adapting our unbending values for this new era. What hasn't changed is our commitment to our "Beyond the Build" people-first culture, which is more important than ever. What has changed is the actual business of doing.

Our framework has settled around three pillars that construction companies can incorporate to thrive in this new era.

Getting the Right People on the Same Page

Growth without structure creates drift. In an industry where your team is scattered across multiple worksites, the field and the office can operate from different assumptions. Decisions get made on instinct rather than alignment.

A year and a half ago, we adopted the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) as our management framework. EOS gave us a shared operating language. It gave us the discipline to ask hard questions about our people – not just whether they're talented, but whether they get the work, want to do it and have the capacity to grow with us. That framework sounds simple, but applying it rigorously changes how you hire, develop people and hold leadership accountable at every level. When team members are genuinely on the same page, the work shows it.

The Compensation Conversation We're Not Having

The construction industry has a workforce problem, and most of the conversation about solving it focuses on the pipeline – getting more young people interested in the trades and in construction management. That matters. But there's a parallel problem that gets less attention: we're not doing a good job of telling the people already in our pipeline what working for a great company is actually worth.

The compensation conversation is meaningfully different from the stated salary figure, health insurance and retirement, when you add employee donation matches, tuition assistance, gym memberships, college savings plans and a two-week company-wide shutdown over the holidays.

In our case, S. M. Wilson is 100 percent employee owned. The people doing the work share directly in the long-term value the company creates. That is a form of wealth building that most industries can't offer and most candidates never fully factor into their decision-making.

My point isn't to recite a list of benefits. It's to argue that we have a responsibility to help people evaluate their whole picture. When they do, the firms that have invested in their people tend to look very different from the ones that haven't.

Construction Is a People Business. Full Stop.

There's a version of the industry conversation that treats technology, AI, BIM, drone analytics, whatever comes next, as the story. We don't see it that way. Technology is a requirement for efficient delivery, not a differentiator. The firms that treat it as a competitive advantage are already a step behind. The real differentiator is culture: whether people actually want to work for you, grow with you and stay.

At S. M. Wilson, we've built intentional programs to reflect what we stand for – SKILLED®, SMWill, Wilson Women. These aren't marketing concepts. They're internal commitments that shape how we operate, develop people and show up in the communities where we build. We measure success not just in square feet completed, but in the number of communities we meaningfully invest in.

That's what we call "Beyond the Build." It's the idea that a construction firm's responsibility doesn't end at the certificate of occupancy. The schools we build are where kids will learn for the next 50 years. The hospitals we build are where people heal. The workplaces we build anchor local economies.

That context tangibly changes how we approach the work and the relationships we build. This unites our team around a greater purpose that shows in the fact that more than 40 percent of our employees have been with us 10-plus years. Long-tenured workers have the time to build and pass on institutional knowledge.

When you commit to your

workforce for the long haul, the returns show up everywhere – in tighter communication, safer jobsites and more efficient project delivery – and in a market where qualified workers are increasingly hard to come by, companies known for taking care of their people don't just retain talent. They attract it.

What the Next Decade Requires

S. M. Wilson has built a strong foundation across many sectors, especially K-12 public construction and municipal projects. Our repeat client and referral base is strong. As we expand our retail division and develop footholds in new geographic markets, we are confident that our team and operational infrastructure will continue to operate with the same intent.

The market rewards firms that know who they are, execute with discipline and treat the people inside and outside their walls as the core of the business. The firms that will lead the next decade won't be the ones that build the most. They'll be the ones who build with the most purpose.

Michael Yazbec is president of S. M. Wilson & Co.

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MIKE YAZBEC
PRESIDENT

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Shiva Dhawan
Co-Founder & CEO
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“Every industry eventually reaches a point where the old ways of working stop scaling. Construction is there today. In moments like this, progress comes from building smarter systems. The leaders who rethink how work gets done will unlock far greater opportunity.”

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Humility: A Sought-After Trait in Construction Leaders

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Humility is a profound trait that significantly enhances the effectiveness of leaders across all aspects of construction. It involves recognizing and acknowledging one's limitations, valuing the contributions of others and maintaining a grounded perspective despite achievements and status.

In the dynamic landscape of modern construction industry leadership, humility fosters collaboration, continuous learning and authentic relationships – essential building blocks for driving sustained organizational success.

An effective leader's humility not only influences his or her personal growth but also profoundly impacts his or her team's morale and productivity. By demonstrating humility, leaders create an environment where team members feel respected, empowered and motivated to contribute their best efforts. This trait cultivates a culture of mutual respect, open communication and collective achievement, positioning construction teams and organizations to thrive in ever-changing environments.

Understanding humility in leadership involves recognizing its multifaceted nature and how it contributes to overall effectiveness. The fundamental aspects of humility in leadership include:

- **Self-Awareness:** Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses and being open to feedback and personal growth.
- **Empathy:** Demonstrating genuine care and understanding for the feelings and perspectives of others.
- **Openness to Feedback:** Actively seeking and valuing input from team members and stakeholders.

- **Servant Leadership:** Prioritizing the needs of the team and organization over personal ambitions.
- **Admitting Mistakes:** Acknowledging errors and learning from them to foster trust and continuous improvement.

Exhibiting humility as a leader offers numerous advantages that enhance both individual performance and organizational success:

- **Builds Trust:** Humble leaders earn the trust and respect of their teams by valuing their contributions and being approachable.
- **Enhances Collaboration:** A humble leadership style fosters a collaborative environment where team members

- feel encouraged to share ideas and work together.
- **Promotes Continuous Learning:** Humble leaders are open to learning and growth, setting an example for their teams to pursue ongoing development.
- **Increases Employee Engagement:** When leaders show humility, employees feel more connected and committed to the organization's mission and values.
- **Improves Decision-Making:** Humble leaders consider diverse perspectives and are more likely to make well-informed, balanced decisions.

While humility is a valuable trait, cultivating and maintaining it presents several challenges:

- **Perception of Weakness:**

Humble leaders may be perceived as lacking confidence or authority if not balanced appropriately.

- **Balancing Humility and Assertiveness:** Finding the right balance between being humble and asserting necessary leadership authority can be difficult.
- **Overcoming Ego:** Leaders must continually manage their ego to maintain genuine humility, especially in high-stakes environments.
- **Ensuring Recognition:** Humble leaders may struggle to ensure that their contributions are recognized without appearing boastful.
- **Handling Criticism:** Embracing humility involves accepting criticism gracefully, which can be challenging in competitive settings.

Humility is undeniably a key trait of effective leadership. Humble leaders create environments where team members feel valued, empowered and motivated to contribute their best efforts. Ultimately, humility not only defines a leader's ability to connect and collaborate but also significantly influences the overall trajectory and resilience of the organization.

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"The way a crew feels about their leadership will always show up in how the work gets done. Every leader has the opportunity to control what gets attention, what gets ignored and what gets reinforced. When leaders take the time to know their people, notice effort and recognize good work, the culture improves and performance follows. The strongest teams are the ones where people know their leadership has their back."

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Construction Leadership Isn't What It Used to Be — and That's Exactly the Point

BY MICHAEL TURNER

The jobsite used to move at the pace of paper prints, voicemail callbacks and “that’s how we’ve always done it.”

Now? The pace of construction is relentless. Schedules are tighter. Technology shifts weekly. Client expectations are higher than ever.

The leaders who succeed today aren’t the ones who know all the answers.

They’re the ones who know how to adapt faster than the problem can grow.

Modern construction leadership is no longer:

- Managing from the trailer
- Hiding behind email
- Waiting for direction

It’s about:

- Walking the work
- Making decisions with imperfect information
- Communicating clearly and consistently
- Empowering teams to move, not wait

The field doesn’t slow down to wait for a leader to catch up. Leadership is a verb now. It’s action. It’s clarity. It’s momentum.

The best leaders don’t chase perfection. They chase progress. Because in construction, the pace isn’t slowing down. And neither are we.

Michael Turner is director of prefabrication at Helix Electric.

Key Personality Traits in Successful Construction Managers

BY CNR STAFF

1. Leadership and Decisiveness

At the core of a construction manager’s responsibilities is the ability to lead. Effective construction managers must inspire confidence, provide clear direction and make quick, informed decisions under pressure. These leadership qualities are often associated with personality types that exhibit assertiveness, confidence, and a results-driven approach.

2. Strong Communication Skills

Construction managers act as the bridge between various stakeholders, ensuring everyone is on the same page. This requires excellent communication skills – both verbal and written. The ability to explain complex technical details in simple terms, mediate conflicts, and negotiate contracts is paramount.

3. Problem-Solving and Adaptability

From weather delays to supply

chain disruptions, the ability to think critically and adapt quickly can mean the difference between a project’s success and failure. Creativity, flexibility and resilience are essential.

4. Attention to Detail and Organizational Skills

Construction managers must keep track of countless moving parts, from schedules and budgets to safety protocols and quality standards. A detail-oriented mindset and strong organizational skills are non-negotiable.

5. Empathy and Team-Building

A successful construction manager understands that people are the backbone of any project. Building a cohesive team, fostering a positive work environment and addressing concerns with empathy can significantly boost morale and productivity.

6. Risk Management and Stress Tolerance

Construction projects come with inherent risks including safety hazards, financial pressures and tight deadlines. Managing these effectively requires a high tolerance for stress and the ability to remain calm under pressure.

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Being a True Leader on a Construction Crew: Leading by Example

BY CNR STAFF

Being a true leader on a construction crew requires leading by example with a strong work ethic, prioritizing safety above all else and maintaining open, honest communication. A true leader supports his or her team by providing clear instructions, necessary tools and removing obstacles to productivity, rather than just giving orders.

Here is how to be a true leader on a construction crew, based on key industry practices:

- **Lead by Example (Walk the Talk):** Demonstrate the professionalism, punctuality and work ethic you expect from your crew. If you expect safety gear to be worn, wear yours correctly at all times.
- **Prioritize Safety Culture:** Do not just enforce rules; foster a culture where safety is a personal responsibility and look out for the well-being of every crew member.
- **Communicate Clearly and Constantly:** Use daily huddles

to outline the plan, discuss potential problems and ensure everyone knows their tasks. Keep communication open so workers feel comfortable raising concerns.

- **Provide Tools and Support:** A true leader ensures the crew has the necessary equipment, training and a clean, safe workspace to work efficiently.
- **Be a Mentor and Coach:** Invest in your team's professional development, teach team members new skills and provide room for them to make decisions.
- **Stay Calm and Manage Conflict:** Remain professional during high-pressure situations or when conflicts arise onsite.
- **Build Trust and Respect:** Be honest, give credit to your team for successes and take ownership of mistakes.



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When Relationships Come First, Jobsite and Business Results Follow

BY RYAN POETTKER

As Poettker Construction has grown from a small-town contractor into a nationally recognized, award-winning firm, our leadership philosophy has remained rooted in a family-first culture. It's a mindset instilled in Poettker's DNA. It's how we lead, how we support one another and how we build lasting relationships with our partners and clients.

This family-first mentality started with my father, Charles (Chuck) Poettker, a Bronze Star Vietnam War Veteran who lost three members of his platoon in combat and vowed that if he survived, he would dedicate his life to building something of value. He returned home, began his construction career and founded Poettker Construction on the principles of safety, quality, mutual respect, professionalism, integrity and a dedication to building lasting relationships and projects.

Forty-six years later, these principles continue to guide our leadership team through the ever-evolving construction industry, serving as the building blocks for a successful business model. My brothers, sister and most of the leadership team had the privilege of working with my father, making carrying on his legacy a natural extension of how we lead.

Poettker Construction's core values focus on safety, quality, best-

in-class service, family orientation, community engagement, top talent and financial success. Like our firm's founding principles, these values guide our operations, ensuring that we attract and retain the best talent in the industry while offering in-house training and professional development programs.

Prioritizing and investing in employees early on and continuously was something my father adamantly pushed from one generation to the next. We unite the company through regular communication and town halls, and we invest in our employees through skills training and workforce development programs. Through Poettker's NextGen initiative, we encourage younger generations to pursue careers in construction management, architecture, engineering, skilled trades, safety and quality.

Our company's average employee tenure is 10 years, and many of Poettker's employees are second and third-generation workers with deep family ties to the company's inception. We treat our employees like family, and our employees have helped solidify a family-first culture by embracing an atmosphere where everyone has the knowledge, training, coaching and oversight to be aware of their surroundings and look out for one another.

We've been honored to receive many awards for growth, leadership, safety and quality of work. Being recognized year-over-year as one of the best places to work is a testament to our firm's servant leadership approach of treating employees, clients, business partners and subcontractors as family.

Staying true to our company's founding principles and core values, the Poettker family's solidarity

extends to employees, business partners and the community. Our extended family has grown to more than 300 full-time employees across three office locations, along with a roster of repeat clients who share our core values and appreciate building long-term relationships.

Building quality relationships through quality work is more than just a motto to us; it has become our industry standard. Eighty-eight percent of our projects come from repeat clients or client referrals – including Walmart, Ameren, Planet Fitness and Continental Tire, as well as regional developers, educational institutions and government agencies.

We continue to exceed our clients' expectations by delivering projects safely, cost-effectively and to the highest standards. A testament to our leadership approach, Poettker's ongoing commitment to safety and quality has earned regional construction safety awards from AGC Missouri, Carolinas AGC, Central Illinois Builders of AGC and Southern Illinois Builders' Association. Nationally, Poettker is recognized by the Associated Builders and Contractors as an

Accredited Quality Contractor and ABC Top Performer.

Advocating for the community is another pillar of Poettker's values. We remain committed to the local communities that we serve and where our employees and clients live. Over the years, Poettker has supported more than 50 nonprofit organizations through philanthropic partnerships, advocacy, fundraising and volunteer initiatives.

At its core, successful leadership in a family-owned construction business comes down to a simple principle: treat people the way you would want to be treated. Leading with integrity, building trust and treating people with respect creates a culture where employees, partners and clients all thrive. When relationships come first, the results – both on the jobsite and in the business – naturally follow.

Ryan Poettker, LEED AP BD+C, CPC, is president of Poettker Construction.

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In construction, leadership gets tested when things get hard. At Holland, taking care of people and holding each other accountable go hand in hand because real respect means expecting more, not less. As we mark our 40th year in business, that belief continues to shape us and the way we lead. When leaders run toward problems, communicate clearly, and do the right thing even when it's uncomfortable, that standard becomes part of the culture and earns trust that lasts.

Mike Marchal
President, Holland Construction Services



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The People Side of Effective Construction Leadership

BY CNR STAFF

The people side of construction leadership focuses on fostering a positive culture, mentoring and clear communication to drive safety, efficiency and team retention. Transitioning from traditional “command and control” to a coaching-based approach empowers crew members, boosts morale, reduces rework and attracts top talent in a competitive market.

The people side of construction leadership focuses on fostering a positive culture, mentoring and clear communication to drive safety, efficiency and team retention. Transitioning from traditional “command and control” to a coaching-based approach empowers crew members, boosts morale, reduces rework and attracts top talent in a competitive market.

Key elements of the people side in construction include:

- **Coaching & Development:** Shifting from telling to coaching helps employees develop skills, enhancing efficiency and innovation.
- **Empowerment and Trust:** Empowering team members fosters accountability, encouraging them to take initiative and solve problems rather than relying solely on superiors.
- **Clear, Consistent Communication:** Effective leaders use clear communication to set expectations, reduce errors and build trust among crews and subcontractors.
- **Safety Culture:** Strong leaders lead by example, prioritizing safety over solely focusing on profits or speed.
- **Building Relationships:** Recognizing that construction is a relationship-driven industry, leaders foster collaboration and mutual respect to retain talent and improve project outcomes.

Effective people leadership on jobsites is about treating workers with respect and acknowledging their role in the overall project’s success.



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A photograph of a man with a beard and a bald head, wearing a blue blazer over a patterned shirt. He is standing outdoors with a blurred background of greenery. In the top right corner of the image, there is a glowing lightbulb.

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Jason Rode
Senior Executive Vice President

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Essential Leadership Skills for Contractors

BY CNR STAFF

In construction, a strong foundation isn't just about concrete and steel. It's about leadership. Whether you're managing a small crew or overseeing a multi-million-dollar project, your ability to lead can determine the success of every job. While technical skills are critical, developing leadership abilities ensures your team works efficiently, safely and cohesively.

Communication That Builds Trust

Effective communication is the cornerstone of leadership in construction. Clear instructions prevent costly mistakes and delays. Leaders must also listen actively to their team's concerns and feedback. Projects with strong communication channels report higher efficiency and fewer safety incidents.

Decision-Making Under Pressure

Construction often demands split-second decisions, whether it's a supply shortage or sudden weather challenges. Leaders who remain calm and make informed decisions inspire confidence in their crew. Using project management tools can aid in real-time decisions and keep timelines on track.

Safety Leadership

A successful builder prioritizes safety above all. Implementing and enforcing safety protocols shows your team that its well-being is paramount. OSHA reports consistently show that leadership engagement directly correlates with reduced workplace accidents.

Motivating Your Crew

Motivation goes beyond monetary incentives. Recognizing hard work, offering training opportunities and providing a clear career path fosters loyalty

and productivity. Builders who master motivation create teams that are proactive rather than reactive.

Adaptability and Innovation

Construction projects rarely go exactly as planned. Leaders who adapt quickly to changes, embrace innovative technologies and encourage creative problem-solving help their teams overcome obstacles. Staying updated on industry trends is essential.

Financial and Resource Management

Strong leadership also involves managing budgets, timelines and resources effectively. Understanding cost control, scheduling and material management allows leaders to keep projects profitable while maintaining quality.



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The Importance of Leadership Skills in a Project Manager

BY EMMA DALY and MARTA BORKOWSKA

The best project managers can inspire teams to work together harmoniously to successfully deliver projects on time and in the most efficient way. This not only requires exceptional organizational and management skills; it also calls for strong leadership qualities.

Without leadership skills, the pitfalls can be stark. Poor leadership can create an environment of uncertainty and a lack of clear direction within a project team. This can lead to misunderstandings, mistakes and delays, spiraling into a loss of motivation and morale among the team – with a resulting decrease in their productivity, missed deadlines and ultimately not achieving results.

Peter Drucker said, “Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.” An effective leader is one who empowers others to reach their potential and guides them toward achieving their goals.

Ultimately, a great project manager is all about being a people person, with emotional intelligence and the ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses within his or her team and within himself or herself.

A great project manager brings out the best in his or her team and has the end goal and big picture clearly in sight at all times, helping keep teams focused and motivated. This positive environment, in turn, encourages innovation and higher levels of team performance, all contributing to project success.

While technical know-how is important, being an effective leader does not require you to be an expert in every technical detail of a project. The key is to pull together the right team that has the complete set of skills and expertise between them – and to delegate, coordinate and lead

this team successfully, navigating and adapting to any risks or unforeseen circumstances along the way.

There are five key leadership skills that will set project managers in good stead:

Strong Communication

The most important leadership skill an effective project manager needs to master and embody is effective communication, both with the project team and all other stakeholders. Clear communication will lift an entire project and avoid mistakes and misunderstandings that can cause unnecessary and costly delays. It also fosters trust because everyone knows the parameters and expectations around a project.

Clear Vision

It is vital for a project manager to understand the end goal of a project and the tasks involved to get there, and to articulate this vision to the team. Part of this involves keeping an open mind to potential opportunities and challenges within a project to steer them to his or her advantage.

Being an expert in every field is not necessary; the key to being a good leader is the ability to build the right team and to delegate, coordinate and lead the team successfully, navigating and adapting to any risks or unforeseen circumstances along the way.

Decision Making

It is critical for any leader to have the confidence to make decisions and run with them. However, even the best leaders may occasionally make wrong decisions; when this happens, it is important to possess humility and self-awareness to learn and move on.

Delegation

It is not solely the project manager’s responsibility to delegate tasks on a project. While knowing how and when to delegate is crucial, effective leaders go beyond delegation and actively support their team members, being ready to roll up their sleeves and provide assistance when needed. By fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, leaders empower their teams to achieve success together.

Team Building

A project manager is only as good as his or her team. Pulling together the best team and then managing the different dynamics and personalities within it to foster a positive working environment and adapting as necessary is vital to a harmonious process and successful result. Conflict resolution and problem-solving skills are also integral to good leadership.

What is the best leadership style? There is also the question of what leadership style is most effective to deliver results. This may vary from project to project depending on the work, the company culture, and a variety of external factors.

Projects never go 100 percent according to plan, so being a project manager who is cool, calm and collected will help to keep a team level-headed when challenges arise.

Adopting an “in it together” leadership style can be very effective, fostering a positive and protective work environment in which the team will feel it can bring issues to the project manager’s attention so they can be quickly resolved before they escalate.

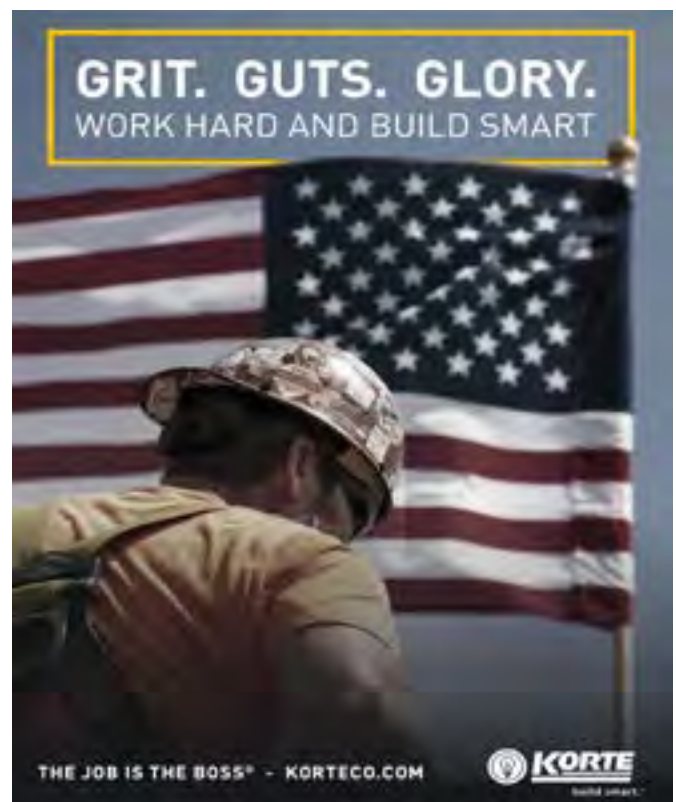
By fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, leaders

empower their teams to achieve success together.

Can these skills be taught?

Effective project managers often possess innate leadership qualities, which can be further nurtured and developed through training and experience. Leadership is not a static skillset but a continuous journey of growth and improvement, regardless of one’s natural inclinations.

Emma Daly and Marta Borkowska are in talent acquisition at emagine Group.



Building a Team to Lead in a Crisis: Four Key Steps

BY CNR STAFF

Crises are experienced in different ways by different people at different levels of an organization or ecosystem.

Prepared leaders – those who have worked to ready themselves and their organizations to withstand crises – should be open to all input and perspectives that can help create a solution and improve outcomes, wherever that input and those perspectives surface within the organizational hierarchy.

As a prepared leader, you need to be ready to do the following:

- Make space for other people to stand up, speak up and contribute as the situation dictates
- Let go of your ego and be humble enough to allow others to take the lead as the situation dictates
- Let these things happen spontaneously and without obstacles as the situation changes

Building a crisis team is like putting together a puzzle. Each piece should play its role and fit well enough with the others to make a complete picture. Try these four action steps:

- **Compose the Team:** Be diverse, strategic and inclusive in your thinking. Source diverse competencies that will help you overcome blind spots, make connections and connect the dots. Look all over your organization for this talent; don't stick to the usual suspects or those who volunteer first. And make it a priority to really listen and to value other people's contributions.
- **Establish Purpose and Accountability:** Align around a shared vision, goal and actions by being purposeful, clear and personally accountable. Set out the team's purpose and establish goals that you can assess and revise at different points. Make it clear you all share responsibility for achieving your goals.
- **Create the Culture:** Empower your team to experiment, try new things, bounce back

(or forward) when things go wrong and fully leverage all the learning opportunities along the way. Let them know you don't have all the answers and that you are open-minded. Encourage them to forge new connections and to unearth expertise from new or different sources. Inspire everyone to share, exchange and respect all ideas and input – wherever they come from – without blame or judgment. Model this mindset and lead by example.

- **Empower Your Team to Respond and Adapt:** Minimize red tape and bureaucracy, re-

maintaining as open and accessible as possible. Be ready to share bad as well as good news so as not to minimize real threats or risks and encourage your people to share feelings of anxiety or stress. Know, too, when to step away and let others take the lead. Understand when you need to focus on the long-term strategy, leaving the immediacy of the crisis to your team and when it's time to defer to the expertise of others.

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Building More Than Projects: Why People Will Always Be the Future of Construction

BY TOM HUSTER

Construction has always been about more than concrete, steel, and schedules. At its core, it's about people – the people who build, the communities who benefit and the relationships that make every project possible. That belief has shaped our company for more than a century, and it continues to guide how we think about the future.

At KCI Construction, our mission is simple: to serve our people, community and clients. Those words aren't just a statement on paper. They drive every decision we make – from how we support employees to how we partner with communities across the Midwest.

The construction industry is evolving rapidly. Technology is advancing, workforce challenges are growing and community needs are changing. In the midst of that change, one thing remains constant: companies that invest in people will be the ones that succeed.

That philosophy is reflected in our core values – what we call **GRIT: Growth, Resilience, Integrity and Teamwork**. These values are more than guiding principles; they represent the mindset required to thrive in an industry that demands adaptability, collaboration and accountability.

Growth begins with learning. As an industry, we have a responsibility to develop the next generation of builders, leaders and innovators. At KCI, we're focused on expanding training and development opportunities so our team can build meaningful careers. Upskilling our workforce – whether through training, leadership development or mentorship – ensures our people have the tools they need to grow alongside the company.

We're also placing greater emphasis on communication and goal setting across our teams. Regular touchpoints between employees and managers create space for meaningful conversations about career growth, professional development and long-term goals. When people understand where they're going and feel supported along the way, they perform at their best.

Resilience is another defining factor in construction. Every project presents challenges – weather, logistics, unforeseen site conditions. But resilience allows teams to adapt, problem-solve and keep moving forward.

One of the most important ways we demonstrate resilience is through our commitment to safety. Construction is inherently demanding work, and protecting our people must always come first. Our goal is simple: every employee should return home safely to his or her family each day. That means continuously improving safety programs, strengthening risk management practices and ensuring safety remains a shared responsibility across every jobsite.

Integrity is the foundation of every successful partnership. Our industry is built on trust – between contractors and clients, team members and the communities they serve. Delivering on commitments, communicating transparently and doing the right thing – even when it's difficult – are values we adhere to.

Equally important is **teamwork**,

which is truly the driving force behind great construction. No project is accomplished by one individual. It takes designers, project managers, craft workers and countless others working together toward a common goal. When people respect one another's expertise and collaborate effectively, extraordinary things happen.

At KCI, we believe our people are our greatest asset. Since 1922, we've built a culture grounded in hard work, pride and mutual respect. That culture enables us to take on complex infrastructure, transportation and community-focused projects while maintaining the relationships that have defined our company for generations.

Looking ahead, our focus is on strengthening the foundation that has carried us this far while positioning the company for the next era of growth.

One priority is developing the next generation of leaders. Succession planning is critical in construction, and we are intentionally investing in younger team members so they can step into leadership roles with confidence. Mentorship, knowledge sharing, and hands-on experience ensure the expertise built over decades continues moving forward.

We're also focused on enhancing our systems and processes to operate more efficiently. Technology is transforming the way projects are managed – from scheduling and cost tracking to communication and decision-making. By embracing modern tools and improving internal processes, we can maximize efficiency while maintaining the craftsmanship and quality that define our work.

At the same time, we're continuing to expand within markets where we already have strong relationships. That includes growing opportunities in transportation and water and wastewater infrastructure, as well as exploring new work in

Illinois and strengthening our presence in and around Springfield. In health care, DOT and other critical sectors, we aim to deepen partnerships and build on the trust we've earned.

But growth for the sake of growth has never been our goal. Sustainable success comes from remaining grounded in who you are as a company. For us, that means staying committed to the people who make this work possible.

Construction companies often talk about the structures they build. Bridges, treatment facilities, roadways and buildings are important, but the true impact of construction is measured differently. KCI's leadership team measures our impact in the opportunities created for workers, the infrastructure that strengthens communities and the relationships that stand the test of time.

When we approach every project with that mindset, the results speak for themselves.

After more than a century in this industry, one lesson continues to hold true: the strongest foundations aren't made of concrete – they're made of people.

Tom Huster is president of KCI Construction.



Boosting Construction Leadership Skills for Project Success

BY CLAY CROWNOVER

Leading people requires a specific approach. Those in construction know that developing essential leadership abilities helps motivate teams and foster improvement.

Why Great Leadership Matters on the Jobsite

Construction projects can become complicated with numerous individuals and groups collaborating. Strict deadlines and high risks can create stress.

A capable leader is essential for maintaining focus. Yet, finding a good leader isn't easy.

Essential Construction Leadership Skills

Effective leaders communicate clearly, enhancing workplace safety. Leaders of integrity guide others using their experience.

Clear Communication is Crucial

A construction site needs constant, open communication to flourish. It helps increase trust and accountability in those who are in leadership positions.

It's about more than giving instructions. Effective leaders communicate in a manner that energizes and motivates everyone to work hard.

Safety Always Comes First

Safety is the top priority on any construction site. Leaders emphasize its importance and lead by example, with regard to safety.

Unfortunately, this isn't universal across all companies. Some may prioritize profits over safety, which should not be the case.

Setting the Right Example

Your team observes your daily actions and work ethic. Having a solid work ethic motivates others on your team.

Demonstrating desired behaviors fosters teamwork. Positive examples cultivate respect within the group, leading to improved performance.

Handling Conflicts Like a Pro

Disagreements can arise, even in well-managed companies. Individuals often hold differing opinions and perspectives.

Effective leaders handle situations by hearing everyone out. Strong leaders also understand proper project team conflict management.

Building Strong Relationships

Successful projects involve collaboration with numerous people from various companies. Establishing strong connections with everyone fosters opportunities for improved trust with the different parties.

Construction leadership abilities are essential, particularly when establishing new connections. Leaders express appreciation and maintain open communication with all involved teams.

Growing Your Capabilities with Others

Construction leaders who aim for improvement must take advantage of available learning resources. Those in a position to lead should focus on consistent growth.

Organizations providing an excellent leadership skills development program help connect others to many sources of industry information. Keeping up with the newest construction innovations helps to stay ahead of competing firms.

Communication in Construction Leadership

In construction, clear communication is essential for project success. Transparent interactions foster trust among team members, creating a collaborative environment that enhances project outcomes and how everyone works together.

Communication failures frequently lead to delays and safety problems on jobsites. In an industry subject to unpredictable weather, unexpected site conditions and various unforeseen difficulties, setbacks can cause project delays and increase costs.

Communication problems account for a large portion of workplace issues, exceeding 93 percent in the U.S. These issues have contributed to many construction accidents, making up 72 percent of the 26,000 workplace incidents.

Developing Active Listening and Feedback Mechanisms

Active listening is often underestimated, but it is important for understanding and resolving team issues. It involves more than just hearing words. You need to give full attention to the speaker, acknowledge nonverbal signals and show genuine interest in what's being

said.

Adding feedback systems into team procedures demonstrates a commitment to two-way communication. For a leader's abilities to truly affect team dynamics, regularly requesting, providing and implementing feedback is critical. This fosters a collaborative, responsive environment for project development and progression.

Accountability in Construction Management

Responsibility isn't a solo concept, particularly in project planning. All stakeholders must follow through on commitments and manage tasks effectively, from management duties down to basic routine activities.

Establishing responsibility helps complete jobs on schedule and maintain group standards. Construction quality control helps with this process as well.

Conflict Resolution on Construction Sites

Conflicts hinder project progress and worsen employee relations, creating unsafe working environments. Good conflict resolution is key.

Identifying conflict triggers facilitates smoother interactions. Leaders actively involved in industry organizations leverage emerging opportunities for advancement. Addressing underlying issues allows disagreements to lead to positive team outcomes, uniting teams and enhancing collaboration. Improving worker safety should always be at the front of minds for all team members involved.

Creating Lasting Solutions

Opting for lasting dispute resolutions over tempo-

rarily fixes supports robust future teams. Considering fundamental causes and utilizing that information helps create trust among construction companies and their workers.

Ethics in Construction

Maintaining standards is crucial, especially since construction significantly affects lives and environments. Ethical leadership helps teams make sound decisions when addressing issues at any construction site and those working on it.

ABC's Code of Ethics guides leaders in making ethical decisions, demonstrating strong work ethics. Integrating ethics into construction promotes public trust in constructors and project managers.

Transparency

Transparent procedures establish an accountable company culture, increasing trust among managers, employees, clients and external suppliers. This commitment helps improve communication among companies, giving them better access to technology for building operations.

Effective construction leadership skills are increasingly important in the modern age. Managing diverse teams spread across various locations can be difficult.

Excellent leaders maintain their teams' performance. In an essential industry that's rapidly evolving, strong people-management abilities and good character should be the primary focus.

Clay Crownover is CEO of ABC Greater Tennessee.

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Investing in Employee-Owners: How Emery Sapp & Sons Shapes People and Performance

BY ESS

At Emery Sapp & Sons (ESS), construction is more than heavy equipment, long days and tough work. It's about our people – employee-owners.

The work we do every day is tangible: roads, bridges and infrastructure that keep communities moving. But the heart of our company is our people. The employee-owners who build, lead and innovate, and the communities they serve. That focus has shaped our culture for more than half a century and continues to define how we approach every project, every decision and every opportunity for growth.

At ESS, our leadership culture begins with the long-term investment we make in our people. ESS is led by engineers, operators, builders and problem-solvers who have spent their careers at the company, working their way from the ground up. Many of our operations leaders have been with the company for multiples decades – rising through the ranks from laborers and operators to superintendents, project managers and executives. That kind of tenure isn't typical in this industry, and it's not accidental.

It's the result of a deliberate commitment to developing people and giving them a reason to stay.

“At ESS, the real win is not just the project in front of us. It's the people we are building, the leaders we are developing and the long-lasting careers we are creating,” says Jason Rode, senior executive vice president of ESS. “When leaders have lived the work and grown through the business, they lead with trust, accountability and a real understanding of what it takes to

deliver.”

That experience translates directly to performance in the field. ESS leaders have guided some of the region's most complex and high-impact infrastructure projects – from large-scale DOT highway expansions like the \$441 million Improve I-70: Rocheport to Columbia and \$600 million Improve I-70: Warrenton to Wentzville design-build projects, to critical bridge replacements such as the \$38 million Kaysinger Basin Bridge Bundle and essential regional projects like the 612 Bypass that support growing communities. These aren't one-off wins; they're repeat demonstrations of expertise built over time. That depth allows teams to execute with speed, precision and accountability – because decisions are made by people who have done the job themselves.

At ESS, leadership is grounded in our core values, the 5Ps: People, Purpose, Partnership, Passion and Performance, but what sets us apart is how those values are lived, not just stated.

People are at the center of everything at ESS. Being 100 percent employee owned means every individual is personally invested in the company's success and future. That ownership creates a culture where people aren't just workers; they're stewards of shared success. Leaders at ESS prioritize growth, development and opportunity for all employee-owners, from field crews to executives. From hands-on equipment training to leadership development for project teams, ESS invests heavily in preparing employee-owners for what's next – not just what's now.

“The goal isn't just to build great projects. It's to build great people for the next generation,” Jason adds. “That happens when you provide people with the resources they need, along with real opportunity, real responsibility and the support to grow.”

Purpose drives that growth. Whether it's a highway that im-

proves regional connectivity or a bridge that supports economic development, the work has a lasting impact – and our teams take that responsibility seriously. This shared purpose motivates employee-owners to push beyond transactional outcomes and focus on long-term impact.

Partnership is another defining pillar of our culture. At ESS, leadership values aren't just internal; they extend outward to clients, communities and collaborators. Strong partnerships help us navigate challenges and deliver work that stands up to the highest expectations.

Internally, that same mindset fosters partnership across teams. People across disciplines and regions work together toward shared goals, learning from each other and growing collectively. When we succeed, we succeed together.

Passion distinguishes ESS from many in the industry. The energy ESS brings is rooted in ownership – literally. When employee-owners have a stake in success, the work means more. That pride shows up in the details, in how projects are executed, how challenges are met and how wins are celebrated.

Performance completes the values. At ESS, performance is a shared commitment to delivering quality, safety and reliability on every project. We push the boundaries of what's possible, because our clients and communities rely on us to deliver with excellence.

The combination of tenured leadership, deep field experience and a true ownership mindset creates a competitive advantage that's difficult to replicate.

After more than half a century, ESS continues to grow – not by chasing quick wins, but by building something more durable: a company where people stay, develop and lead. The strongest foundations we build aren't measured in concrete or steel; they're measured in people

whose lives are better because of the opportunities, purpose and partnerships forged here at ESS.



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How to Develop Strong Construction Leaders: The Shift from Builder to Leader

BY ERIC ANDERTON

Many construction professionals struggle when moving from hands-on roles to leadership. You spend years mastering your craft – estimating, project management or fieldwork – only to realize that success in leadership isn't about being the best at the job. It's about building a team that gets the job done.

This transition – from project builder to people leader – is the hardest shift in a construction career. If you don't make it, you'll get stuck in the weeds, micromanaging instead of leading. Your time will be spent fixing problems instead of growing the business.

Leadership, however, is a skill that can be learned.

Reality Check: Your Value Is Changing

One of the biggest challenges in construction leadership today is change.

AI and automation are making knowledge more accessible; and while the construction industry resists change, the reality is that adaptation is not optional. The question is not if you will change, but how you will change.

The skills that made you successful as an estimator, project manager or superintendent are not the same skills that will make you a great leader.

The most valuable construction leaders today are not those with deep technical expertise in one area but those who:

- Make sound decisions when

problems arise.

- Build strong teams through trust and communication.
- Understand where the business is headed and how to adapt.

Why Leadership Skills Matter More Than Technical Skills in Construction

The most valuable construction leaders are not the ones who are specialists in a single technical area but those who:

- Have strong judgment and decision-making skills – the ability to make the right call when machines stop.
- Can build strong teams and relationships – because trust and communication still drive projects.
- Understand where the business is going – and how to navigate change.

If you can't develop leadership skills in your team, your business will struggle to keep up.

The Myth of Leadership: Doing vs. Deciding

Many first-time construction leaders struggle because they equate leadership with doing.

But that is a fundamental misunderstanding of leadership.

What Leadership in Construction Really Means

The role of a leader is not to do all the work but to make decisions that keep projects moving forward. Leadership is about judgment, insight and accountability.

The best construction leaders take ownership. They do not blame others when things go wrong. They recognize that leadership means making the final call, even when the answer is not obvious.

If your leadership team struggles with decision-making, accountability and ownership, leadership development must be a priority.

The Accountability Loop: A Simple Framework for Construction Leaders

One of the biggest leadership failures in construction is the lack of accountability.

Some leaders avoid difficult conversations, hoping issues will resolve themselves. But construction does not work that way. When people are not held accountable, mistakes pile up,

leading to delays, cost overruns and frustration.

Three Questions Every Construction Leader Should Be Asking

1. Did you do it?
2. If not, why not?
3. How can I help?

No blame. No emotion. Just a clear, structured conversation about expectations and responsibility.

The key is to have that conversation quickly. The longer you wait, the more the problem festers, the more pain increases and the more cost you incur.

Construction leaders who hold their teams accountable build stronger businesses.

From Commander to Coach: The Leadership Shift in Construction

Thirty years ago, construction leadership was mostly command and control. People were used to a military-style, top-down approach.

That approach no longer works.

Today's workforce expects leaders who provide guidance, training and problem-solving – not just directives.

Why Coaching is the New Leadership Model in Construction

Many top construction professionals played competitive sports. They understand coaching. That is the new leadership model - less barking orders, more guiding, training and problem-solving.

Good coaching conversations:

- Ask open-ended questions (who, what, where, why, when) instead of yes/no questions.
- Lean into the natural question – the one that pops into your head but feels uncomfortable to ask.
- Guide people to their own solutions rather than dictating answers.

If you want your company to grow, you need leaders who coach, not commanders who micromanage.

How to Develop Construction Leaders Who Can Bridge the Gap Between the Field and Office

One of the biggest challenges in construction is the disconnect between field and office teams.

Project managers and executives often fail to communicate effectively with superintendents and field crews. The result is friction, misaligned priorities and inefficiency.

How to Fix the Leadership Gap in Construction

- Educate your office team on where the company makes money. If work isn't getting put in place, there's no paycheck.
- Improve communication between supers, PMs and executives to reduce conflict.
- Make leadership training a priority so your team understands how to manage people, not just projects.

Without strong leadership to bridge the field-office gap, companies will struggle with internal conflict and inefficiency.

How to Train Construction Leaders Effectively

Leadership training in construction fails because it tries to solve too many problems at once.

Companies often roll out full-day training sessions packed with information, but people forget most of it within a few weeks.

The Right Way to Develop Leadership in Construction

- Bite-sized and targeted training – focus on one theme per quarter instead of an overload of information.
- Short and to the point; 90-minute sessions are more effective than all-day marathons.
- Incremental and practical; focus on skills that can be applied immediately.

For example, instead of a general leadership seminar, focus on one practical skill at a time. If the issue is time management, spend 90 minutes on it. Make that the theme for a quarter. Track improvement. Then move on to the next skill.

That's how you get real change.

Eric Anderton is a business and executive coaching professional who specializes in leadership development for construction executives.



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Construction Leadership that Builds and Sustains Performance

BY CNR STAFF

The world of construction is changing every day. New solutions have addressed many long-standing challenges, raising expectations for project quality and speed.

In 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, John Maxwell describes the “law of navigation.” In construction, that idea shows up as a leader’s ability to set direction, then adjust when conditions change. Even well-planned projects can drift, so leaders need current insight and a steady view of what is coming next.

Many top construction leaders are ready to handle uncertainty, and demand for them stays high. Organizations that want stability over time need to develop leadership internally.

What Does Leadership in Construction Look Like Today?

It shows up in decisions that hold up under pressure, jobsite communication that stays clear and project delivery that stays controlled as conditions shift. Those outcomes come from a few repeatable leadership habits.

They Have a Clear Vision

To chart a course, construction leadership starts with a clear vision for the work ahead and the industry conditions around it. Strong leaders anticipate problems early and plan for them. That can include training teams for exceptions, tightening construction management processes or adopting technology before issues start stacking up.

Leaders also connect day-to-day procedures to company performance. When crews and office teams can see how their work affects financial results and delivery outcomes, it becomes easier to sustain standards and improve execution.

What Clear Vision Looks Like on Real Projects

Clear direction is easier to communicate when leaders can support it with data. Resource planning and analytics help teams plan around availability and constraints.

This is one example of how construction ERP software can give leaders a clearer view of metrics tied to financial health and project performance.

They Adapt to Change

Leadership in construction depends on how well leaders respond when conditions shift. Project scope changes, labor availability tightens and material pricing moves quickly. Leaders who adapt early keep teams focused and projects stable.

Adaptability starts with awareness. Leaders need visibility into schedules, costs and field activity so adjustments happen with context. When information arrives late or fragmented, teams react instead of plan.

Strong leaders encourage controlled change rather than disruption. Processes are reviewed, updated and reinforced so teams know what adjustments are expected and how decisions will be made.

They Set Clear Expectations

Leadership in construction becomes visible through clarity. Teams perform better when roles, responsibilities and outcomes are defined early and reinforced often. Clear expectations reduce rework, limit disputes and support consistent execution across sites.

Effective leaders align expectations across the field and the office. That alignment covers schedules, reporting standards, approval paths and accountability. When expectations differ between teams, small gaps can turn into delays or cost issues.

Clear expectations also support construction workforce management. Crews need to know how success is measured, how progress is tracked and who is responsible for decisions at each stage of the project.

They Use the Right Tools

Leadership in construction requires more than experience and judgment. It also depends on access to reliable information. Leaders who rely on fragmented systems often face delays in reporting and decision-making. That can weaken oversight across projects.

Strong leaders select tools that support visibility, coordination and control. Construction technology should connect project delivery, financial management and workforce data. When systems work together, leaders gain a clearer picture of performance.

How the right tools support construction leadership

- Real-time insight: Current data supports timely decisions.
- Consistent reporting: Teams work from shared information.
- Better coordination: Field and office teams stay aligned.

Modern construction software helps leaders monitor progress without slowing teams down. Dashboards and reports provide insight into cost, schedule, and resource use. That visibility supports informed action as conditions change.

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