

Create a Culture of Safety to Improve Labor Recruitment Efforts

Written by: Grant Robbins, Co-Founder and CMO, Billy

The commercial construction industry must rely on skilled labor to survive. Skilled labor, however, is hard to come by. In fact, many construction firms report projects being delayed because of shortages in the workforce.

Part of the problem is training. Few companies have the time, resources, or opportunities to train new construction workers. But the biggest reason for the labor shortage in the construction industry is simply a lack of people joining the trades. Decades ago, construction was a respected career choice. Over the years, however, the pressure to get into a four-year college has created negative perceptions of working in the trades.

Some commercial construction companies choose to work with fewer crews as a result of the lack of skilled labor, therefore limiting the number of jobs they can handle. The labor shortage in the construction industry has simply made it nearly impossible to find subcontractors to adequately staff upcoming projects (one survey found that 35% of contractors had to turn down jobs due to a lack of skilled laborers). This then leads to hikes in construction costs and delays in scheduling, which can take a major toll on business.

So what's the solution to these construction labor issues?

How to Keep Construction Workers Safe to Prevent Further Labor Shortages



Although safety might not sound like an obvious solution to labor shortages in the construction industry, many companies no longer have backup plans should an injury occur on the job due to the absence of laborers. Consider the vertical structure of a jobsite: Crews can't skip a step and keep moving forward. When a tradesperson gets injured, it delays everything that follows if the company doesn't have another tradesperson handy.

In other words, keeping everyone on the team safe and secure throughout a project - though not a permanent solution - is one of the only ways to immediately mitigate the labor shortage in the construction industry.

Keeping construction workers safe often starts with a

company's culture. But a culture of safety entails more than plastering jobsites and office buildings with safety reminders or listing safety as one of the core values of an operation. It takes work and commitment to instill such beliefs and behaviors into every person in the ranks. Here are just a few tactics that can help keep construction workers safe and alleviate labor shortages:

1. OFFER SAFETY TRAINING

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 60% of construction accidents occur in the first year of employment. Therefore, keeping workers safe can be summed up in a single word: training. Commercial construction companies must ensure everyone on-site is properly trained in basic safety. Also, forepeople should be put through the paces of site safety supervisory training to ensure they can implement project-specific safety protocols.

2. FOCUS ON AWARENESS

From laborers to the lead superintendent, everyone who sets foot on a jobsite should be acutely aware of the importance of maintaining a safe environment. Companies can request that all workers sign a safety agreement that not only details safety procedures but also includes a commitment to report any unsafe conditions to the foreperson or project manager. Safety is hard to manage, and it takes every set of eyes to keep construction workers safe.

3. PROVIDE AND MANDATE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT


This is the most basic of requirements, but employers should provide personal protective equipment to ensure they're keeping construction workers safe during day-to-day operations and protected from potential hazards on projects. PPE such as hard hats, safety glasses, safety vests, gloves, boots or solid shoes, ear protection when loud equipment is in use, and face masks (based on the location's requirements) should be mandated for all people on location.

4. KEEP PROJECT SITES CLEAN

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that fall-related injuries account for over one-third of construction industry fatalities and comprise nearly 40% of fatal work-related falls in the United States. The biggest culprit of these accidents is safety hazards. Accidents are bound to happen when materials, tools, and debris are left lying around the jobsite. To mitigate these accidents, companies can encourage all workers to pick up after themselves (and others) when items are out of place. Organized jobsites are safe jobsites.

5. STAY ON SCHEDULE

This might seem like a less obvious solution, but staying on schedule can do wonders for keeping construction workers safe. For one, rushing through a build can lead to accidents. It can also encourage workers to take shortcuts, which increases the chances of injury. Besides, scheduling issues often lead to workers laboring for longer hours and even weekends. And when someone is tired, accidents are more likely to occur.

Putting time and effort into safety is always important - but especially in light of the labor shortage in the construction industry. When workers are safe, less time is spent filling labor gaps and more time can be spent completing projects. 



About the Author

Grant Robbins is the co-founder and CMO of [Billy](#), the time-saving tool that helps construction companies verify that their subcontractors and partners have the correct insurance on every project.

About the Article

Republished from [Construction Executive](#), a publication of [Associated Builders and Contractors](#). Copyright 2022. All rights reserved. Associated Builders and Contractors is a national construction industry trade association representing more than 21,000 members. Based on the merit shop philosophy, ABC helps its members develop people, win work, and deliver work safely, ethically, and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which they work.

Any views and opinions expressed in this article may or may not reflect the views and opinions of the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA). By publishing this piece, CMAA is not expressing endorsement of the individual, the article, or their association, organization, or company.