

Technology and HR: A Symbiotic Relationship

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The construction industry is experiencing an influx of infrastructure spending. The U.S. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes \$550 billion in new spending - including improvements to public transit, roads, bridges, and more - over the next decade.

McKinsey & Company modeling shows that this investment will create more than three million new jobs across the nonresidential construction value chain, a 30% increase in the U.S. nonresidential construction workforce. While this is phenomenal news for industry growth, construction is also currently experiencing significant worker shortages. In early 2022, Associated Builders and Contractors anticipated a shortfall of at least 650,000 workers for that year alone.

In other words, when it comes to hiring for the construction workforce, the quicker the better. However, when new team members are ready to come on board, construction managers are often missing key tools to facilitate new employee onboarding and ongoing employee management.

According to a recent TalentCards/When I Work survey of managers in construction and similar industries, more than a third of construction managers said technology, like smartphones and tablets, would help speed up the onboarding process. But a mere 16% of construction companies are using this technology currently.

Additionally, in a recent survey of deskless workers in essential industries, like construction, 60% were dissatisfied



with the technology they are provided to do work, and 91% said technology for managing onboarding, training, human resources, and benefits would be helpful. Employees and managers are pleading for tools, the real question is: Are employers listening?

How Technology Can Help Improve Hiring

With a record number of job openings right now, every part of the hiring process should be examined to ensure employers are lowering barriers to entry and maximizing efficiencies.

Take, for example, an online application. Studies have consistently shown that asking too many questions can lower

application completion rates, sometimes by more than 350% if an application takes longer than 15 minutes. Keep applications short and stick to essential information, gathering specifics can take place further into the process.

Ensure the application process is user-friendly. Make it simple to upload any required documents, determine how many steps the process truly needs to have and always be sure applicants can save their progress and pick back up where they left off. “Timing out” of applications or losing all the work already put into filling it out is incredibly frustrating and makes it likely candidates will scroll away and not come back.

Job listings and applications should also be mobile-friendly. At least 60% of job seekers use mobile technology to search for opportunities, and deskless workers in traditionally blue collar industries are most likely to utilize mobile job search and applications.

How Technology Can Help Improve Onboarding of New Hires

How important is the onboarding process for new hires? In the TalentCards/When I Work survey, nearly 70% of construction managers said, “very important,” and without proper onboarding, new team members would most likely fail to properly execute their roles.

These same managers were interested in computer-based and mobile training programs, communications and messaging capabilities, and scheduling apps. Why are construction managers requesting the implementation of this technology?

- » Getting rid of manual, paper-based processes means employees get to jobsites more quickly.
- » New hires can be onboarded remotely for certain tasks, such as safety training, ensuring that employees have completed training before beginning work on a site.
- » Costs - both time and money - associated with physical onboarding can be significantly reduced. No more hiring trainers or reassigning current employees to train, no space rental fees, no travel and scheduling hassles.
- » Digital training resources are available anywhere, any time for reference.

In the same survey, 32% of managers reported that their company had experienced an accident due to employees being improperly trained. In other words, organizations can't afford not to train employees properly. Utilizing digital tools helps ensure training can be revisited as needed, training materials are always available and thorough evaluations of employee readiness are being conducted.

How Technology Can Help Improve Day-To-Day Tasks

Employee scheduling, in particular, can take an enormous amount of a construction manager's time, especially when done manually using paper or spreadsheets. Using a workforce management software can simplify this process and save managers hours in building and assigning shifts.


Additionally, workforce management software allows employees more control of their own schedules and offers the ability for employees to choose their shifts. Not only can this save time for managers, but it benefits employees who are increasingly calling for more flexibility. When employees are allowed to choose their own shifts, there are fewer problems with no-shows, an increase in productivity, and it is a perk for recruitment and retention.

How Technology Can Help Managers and Employees

Teams that are not in front of a computer all day still utilize technology constantly. Companies who seize the opportunity to use digital tools for time tracking and attendance, communication, accessing documents, and reporting can help managers and employees get tasks done more quickly and do their jobs better.

However, the correct technology tools must be implemented in order for them to be useful. Around 80% of the U.S. workforce is deskless, but just 1% of business software spending focuses on technology for those essential workers. For the construction industry, aim for technology that makes HR tasks such as time tracking quick, simple, and user-friendly for employees. Mobile-first is a must!

Investing in the right tech tools gives employees more time to devote to critical tasks and assures them that their company cares about their needs and is listening. Those same tools help managers save time, streamline work, and result in a happier, more productive workforce overall.

As we look ahead to 2023 and the increased demand for infrastructure construction work, HR technology will be key for organizations. Businesses that are quick to incorporate additional technology will be able to hire, onboard, and manage employees more effectively, and ultimately, take full advantage of this influx of work. 



About the Article

Written by Chad Halvorson, Founder, Chairman, and Chief Advisor, When I Work.

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