

MERIT

ISSUE 1
2023

MICHIGAN

A PUBLICATION OF ASSOCIATED BUILDERS AND CONTRACTORS OF MICHIGAN



Michigan

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***Celebrates 60
Influential Leaders***



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President
ABC of Michigan

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Western Michigan Chapter

Last year's election has brought significant change to the Michigan legislature, something many of us never expected. For the first time in nearly 40 years, Democrats control Michigan's House, Senate, and Governor's office. This change has already brought significant challenges in just the first six months of this legislative session.

I believe with a challenge comes the opportunity to grow, persevere, and come out on the other end as a stronger organization. If ABC of Michigan is to do that, it means that each of us must be united in our message that open competition, equal opportunity, and free enterprise is the key to the future of Michigan, not only in the construction industry but in all aspects of our economy. It also means we must work harder than ever to protect merit shops across Michigan.

Last year, ABC of Michigan celebrated 60 years. In this issue, we've highlighted 60 influential leaders who have been critical to every success we've seen over those past 60 years. People like that, members like all of you, will be why we have another successful 60 years.

You'll also see us highlighting our upcoming Michigan Construction Leadership Summit in this issue. This is an excellent opportunity to network with your peers from across the state. I'm looking forward to 2 ½ days on the island with all of you, sharing best practices, learning from educational speakers, and having a great time getting to know each of you.

We have some tough days ahead, but these challenges allow us to learn and grow. I look forward to working with and getting to know each of you!

Yours for the merit shop,

Shane Hernandez



ABC of Michigan's 60 Influential Leaders

In 2022, ABC of Michigan celebrated 60 years since three men came together to start an organization that realized liberty is the most precious possession of man and knowing it will be taken away from any individual, group or nation unworthy of it.

Thanks to the dedication and commitment of volunteer leaders, paid staff, elected officials, and stakeholders invested in the merit shop and free enterprise, ABC of Michigan has accomplished so much in 60 years.

Through the partnership with three local chapters and its leaders, ABC chapters in Michigan have built flourishing training facilities to continue to promulgate the purposes of the original association.

Thanks to dedicated elected officials, ABC of Michigan has lobbied and advocated for a free and open competition state where monopolies cannot control, and the capitalistic system can flourish.

Committed staff members over the years have continued to drive the association's mission, advancing the purposes daily.

Stakeholders have supported the organization statewide through grassroots support, monetary contributions, advice, and strength in numbers.

The success of ABC of Michigan is most influential, thanks to everyone's commitment to the merit shop philosophy. We believe the merit shop movement is a movement for the betterment of the individual, the construction industry, and the nation.



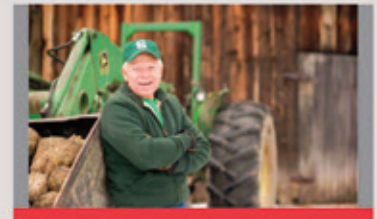
DAN ACCIAVATTI

Former member of ABC of Michigan Board of Directors |
Founding family of ABC Southeastern Michigan Chapter



ANDY ANUZIS

Former executive director of ABC of Michigan | Current president at Cornerstone Education Group



JOHN BARTOS

Founder Three Rivers Corporation of Midland | Board of Directors Associated Builders & Contractors, Greater Michigan Chapter | Funder for Michigan Association of Construction Academies



MAURY BASKIN

Long-serving legal counsel for ABC National | Helped write appeal to U.S. Court of Appeals defending Michigan's PLA law



CHRIS BECKERING

Executive Vice President, Pioneer Construction | Western Michigan Chapter Member | ABC of Michigan Board Chair, Government Affairs Committee, PAC Trustee | Chris Fisher Chairman's Award Winner



MIKE BISHOP

U.S. Representative 2015 - 2019, Michigan State Senator 2003 - 2010, Michigan State Representative 1999 - 2003 | Michigan Senate Majority Leader 2007 - 2010



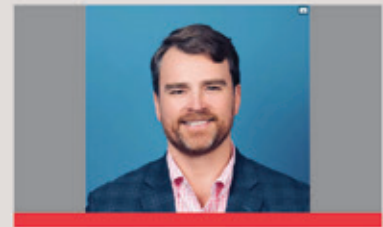
JASE BOLGER

71st Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives | Michigan State Representative 2009-2014 | Led efforts to enact Michigan's Right to Work Law and repeal project labor agreements in Michigan



NORM BRADY

Former Western Michigan Chapter President (2013-2022)



BEN BRUBECK

Vice President of Regulatory, Labor and State Affairs at ABC National | Has spent nearly 20 years with ABC starting in 2003 as Legislative Assistant, Government Affairs



BRIAN CALLEY

Lieutenant governor under Rick Snyder 2011 - 2019 | Current president at Small Business Association of Michigan



ROBERT CLANCY

Founder, Robert Clancy Contracting | SEMI Chapter Member | ABC of Michigan Chair, Government Affairs Committee, PAC Trustee | Led ABC MI through COVID shutdowns & legal battle



KEVIN COTTER

State Representative from 2011 - 2016 | Served as Michigan Speaker of the House 2015 - 2016



JIM CRIPPS

Long-serving ABC of Michigan Board Member | Founding trustee of ABC of Michigan Health Trust



DICK DEVOS

Passionate advocate for free enterprise in Michigan



BETSY DEVOS

Passionate advocate for free enterprise in Michigan



JOHN DOHERTY

Former Western Michigan Chapter President for more than four decades



KEITH EASTLAND

Labor attorney out of the Western Michigan who has led ABC through many legal battles



LARRY ERHARDT

Founder | former member ABC of Michigan Board of Directors | ABC Western Michigan Chapter Board of Directors



MARLIN FEYEN

Former member ABC of Michigan Board of Directors | Construction Hall of Fame | ABC National Board



CHRIS FISHER

Former ABC of Michigan President & CEO from 2007 – 2016 | Chris Fisher Chairman's Award Winner



JIMMY E. GREENE

ABC Greater Michigan Chapter President and CEO (2007-2020) | ABC of Michigan President and CEO (2020-2023) | Chris Fisher Chairman's Award Winner



TIM HANNA

Former President & CEO, RPS
Regency | Led the ABC MI Self-
Insured Workers Compensation
Fund to great success



MIKE HOUSEMAN

Former ABC of Michigan Board
Chair | Government Affairs
Committee Member | ABC MI
PAC Trustee | ABC National PAC
Board Member | Chris Fisher
Chairman's Award Winner



JIM JOHNSON

Founder, Associated Builders &
Contractors, Greater Michigan
Chapter | CEO and founder of
JE Johnson



ALBERT J. KARSTEN

Original founder of the Liberty
Association



JEFF KIPFMILLER

10 years ABC GMC Board
Member | Chair GMC PAC
Board | ABC MI Government
Affairs Committee | 4 years ABC
National board member | GMCA
Board chair and member



ROD KLOHA

Associated Builders &
Contractors, Greater Michigan
Chapter Board of Directors 14
years | ABC Michigan Board
of Directors member | ABC
National PAC Chair



PETER KOK

Labor attorney out of the
Western Michigan who has led
ABC through many legal battles



DAN KOZAKIEWICZ

15 years ABC GMC Board | 2
terms as ABC GMC Chair | 4
years ABC National Board
Member | GMCA Board Member



MIKE LAUNDRA

Associated Builders &
Contractors, Greater Michigan
Chapter Board of Directors |
ABC National Board of Directors
| ABC Michigan Self-Insured
Workers Compensation Board of
Directors



JOE LEHMAN

President of Mackinac Center for Public Policy | Led the institute in advancing the principles of free markets and limited government | Partner and leader with ABC MI on many major policy initiatives



TOM LEONARD

Michigan State Representative 2012-2019 | Speaker of the House 2017 - 2019



FRANK MAMAT

Long-serving attorney for the ABC Southeastern Michigan Chapter



DAVE MASUD

Associated Builders & Contractors, Greater Michigan Chapter Labor Attorney 1977-current



GREG MCNEILLY

CEO & President at the Windquest Group | Passionate supporter of free enterprise in Michigan



ARLEN MEEKHOF

Former Michigan Senate Majority Leader | Lead legislator on repealing Michigan's prevailing wage law



DAVE MOLLITOR

President & CEO, Consolidated Electrical Contractors | GMC & WMC Member | ABC MI Board Chair, Government Affairs Committee, Chair of Health Trust, Chair of SIWCF | Chris Fisher Chairman's Award Winner



JOHN MOOLENAAR

Current U.S. Representative for Michigan's 4th Congressional District | Former Michigan State Representative (2003-2008) and State Senator (2011-2014) | Author of the Fair & Open Competition Act



ARIC NESBITT

Sponsored a resolution opposing the Pro Act | Long-serving representative and senator who has championed free enterprise issues



LEONARD OSTERINK

Original founder of Liberty Association



CHARLIE OWENS

Regional Director of the National Federation of Independent Businesses | Passionate supporter of businesses in Michigan



JIM PARISH

Founder of Associated Builders & Contractors Central Chapter



FRANK PYTLOWANY

ABC, Greater Michigan Chapter and Central Board of Directors | The Greater Michigan Construction Academy Board of Directors | ABC National Board of Directors



STEVE RUSSELL

Associated Builders & Contractors, Greater Michigan Chapter, Central Chapter | ABC Michigan Board of Directors



BILL SCHUETTE

Former Michigan Attorney General from 2011-2019



DAVE SHEFFIELD

Long serving treasurer for ABC of Michigan Board of Directors | ABC of Michigan Self-Insured Workers Compensation Fund Board Member



MIKE SHIRKEY

Senate Majority Leader 2018-2022 | Long-serving representative and senator who has championed free enterprise issues



BONNIE SIEFERT

Founded ABC of Michigan Self-Insured Workers Compensation Fund



DENNIS SIEKIERSKI

ABC of Michigan Board Chair | founder and long-serving board member of SEMCA | Board Chair at ABC SEMI Chapter



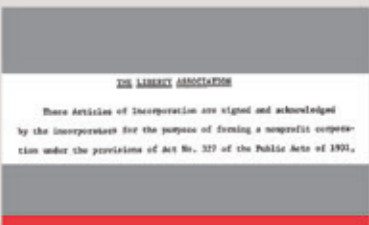
RICK SNYDER

48th Governor of Michigan serving from 2011-2019 | Signed Right to Work into law



BRIAN STADLER

President & CEO, Wolgast Corporation | GMC Board Member | ABC MI Board Chair | Chris Fisher Chairman's Award Winner | GMCA Board Member | ABC National Board of Directors



THOMAS STAFFORD

Original founder of Liberty Association



JIM STRUBLE

Long-serving member of ABC Southeastern Michigan Chapter | Member of the ABC of Michigan Board of Directors



RICH STUDLEY

Former president of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce | ABC of Michigan supporter & friend



ED TANZINI

Founder, The Tancor Corporation | Greater Michigan Chapter Member | ABC of Michigan Board, Government Affairs Committee | Chris Fisher Chairman's Award Winner



JEFF THEUER

ABC Michigan and ABC Michigan Self-Insured Workers Compensation Fund Attorney



JACK VANDEGUCHTE

Retired member of ABC Western Michigan Chapter | former member of ABC of Michigan Self-Insured Workers Compensation Fund Board



GARY VOS

Chairman, Dan Vos Construction



LYNN WOLGAST

Founder Associated Builders & Contractors, Greater Michigan Chapter | Michigan Construction Hall of Fame Inductee



MERIT SHOP PHILOSOPHY

A movement for the betterment of the individual, the construction industry, and the nation, supported and advanced by members, supporters, partners and staff around the state and nation.

The Merit Shop Philosophy

We believe in the system of free enterprise.

We believe employees and employers should have the right to determine wages and working conditions through either individual or collective bargaining, as they choose, within the boundaries of the law.

We believe the employer must have concern for the general welfare of the employee and that there must be a fair compensation for work performed. At the same time, we believe that the employee has an obligation for satisfactory performance of assigned work.

We support sound legislation in the areas of workers compensation, safety and unemployment compensation.

We believe legislation that embraces fair play for employer and employee is essential to the preservation of our free enterprise system.

We believe the law should protect the right of employees to work regardless of race, color, creed, age, sex, national origin or membership or non-membership in a labor organization. We believe work opportunities should be made available to all legal residents and we support programs toward this end.

We oppose violence, coercion, intimidation and the denial of the rights of employees and employers.

We believe it is incumbent upon all branches of government to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars and we believe that government should award contracts only to the lowest responsible bidder. We oppose unjust pressure to violate these principles.

We believe monopolies or any kind of price or wage fixing, in either the public or private sector, are detrimental to our system of free enterprise.

We believe the destiny of all Americans can be best served by cooperation, reconciliation and following the tenants of free enterprise and a democratic government. We believe business leaders can best preserve these tenets by becoming active in politics and civic affairs.



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ABC OF MICHIGAN 2023

MICHIGAN CONSTRUCTION LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

THE MICHIGAN CONSTRUCTION LEADERSHIP SUMMIT (MCLS) IS BACK AGAIN IN 2023! JOIN US FOR THE FIFTH BIENNIAL SUMMIT WHERE MORE THAN 150 OF YOUR COLLEAGUES AND GUESTS JOIN US ON MACKINAC ISLAND FOR LEADERSHIP SPEAKERS, KEYNOTE SESSIONS, AND LOTS OF NETWORKING FUN.

THE 2023 MCLS IS EXPECTED TO BRING 150-200 STATEWIDE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY CEOs AND TOP LEVEL MANAGEMENT FROM ABC MEMBER COMPANIES AROUND THE STATE TO THE GRAND HOTEL. ADDITIONALLY, INVITATIONS HAVE BEEN EXTENDED TO ABC CHAPTERS ACROSS THE NATION! PROGRAMMING IS OUR TOP PRIORITY FOR ATTENDEES. SESSIONS WILL FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVING COMMUNICATION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION, AND MORE!

SEPTEMBER 27-30, 2023

THE GRAND HOTEL | MACKINAC ISLAND, MI

Visit abcmi.com/leadershipsummit for more info!

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2023

2:00 – 6:00 P.M.	REGISTRATION
5:00 – 6:00 P.M.	RECEPTION: FRONT PORCH
6:00 P.M.	DINNER IN THE GRAND PAVILION

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

7:30 – 8:45 A.M.	BREAKFAST & KEYNOTE SPEAKER
9:00 – 11:45 A.M.	BREAKOUT SESSIONS
12:00 – 1:30 P.M.	GRAND HOTEL LUNCHEON
1:45 – 3:00 P.M.	BREAKOUT SESSIONS
6:00 P.M.	DINNER & EVENING EVENTS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2023

7:30 – 8:45 A.M.	BREAKFAST & KEYNOTE SPEAKER
9:00 – 12:00 P.M.	BREAKOUT SESSIONS
12:00 – 6:00 P.M.	FREE TIME
6:00	DINNER
8:00	CLOSING CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

7:00 – 9:00 A.M.	BREAKFAST & DEPARTURE
------------------	-----------------------



REGISTRATION

REGISTRATION RATES

EARLY BIRD RATES

RATE
(BY JUNE 30, 2023)

REGULAR

STARTS JULY 1,

FULL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

\$350

ABC MEMBER

\$450

\$600

\$700

NONMEMBER

ENTERTAINMENT & EVENTS RATE

\$200

\$300

ABC MEMBER SPOUSE/GUEST

NONMEMBER SPOUSE/GUEST

\$250

\$350

*CONTACT ABC MICHIGAN FOR DETAILS ON BRINGING CHILDREN TO THE EVENT

DISCOUNTED HOTEL RATES

WEEKDAY (SUN-THURS)

GRAND ROOM

\$458

DOUBLE

LAKE VIEW

\$558

\$329

SINGLE

\$603

WEEKEND (FRI- SAT)

\$508

DOUBLE

\$429

\$379

SINGLE

\$479

DAILY GROUP RATES ARE BASED ON THE MODIFIED AMERICAN MEAL PLAN AND INCLUDE A FULL BREAKFAST AND DINNER EACH DAY. A 19.5% ADDED CHARGE IS APPLIED TO THE ROOM RATES, IN ADDITION TO MICHIGAN'S 6% SALES TAX. AS MANDATED BY LAW, A 3% MACKINAC ISLAND ASSESSMENT APPLIES TO THE DAILY RATE. THERE IS ALSO A ONE-TIME CHARGE OF \$8.95 FOR ROUND-TRIP BAGGAGE TRANSFER FROM THE DOCKS TO THE HOTEL AND RETURN.

FULL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

ACCESS TO ALL CONFERENCE EVENTS AND EDUCATION SESSIONS. INCLUDES GRAND HOTEL LUNCHEON WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKER, FERRY TICKET TO AND FROM THE ISLAND.

ENTERTAINMENT & EVENTS

INCLUDES ACCESS TO ALL RECEPTIONS, DINNERS, AND BREAKFAST KEYNOTE SESSIONS. DOES NOT INCLUDE BREAKOUT SESSIONS. INCLUDES FERRY TICKET TO AND FROM THE ISLAND.



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KEYNOTE SESSIONS

BOB TAGATZ, GRAND HOTEL HISTORIAN



PROHIBITION AND THE ROARING 20'S AT GRAND HOTEL

GRAND HOTEL HAS NEVER CLOSED ITS DOORS TO THE TRAVELING PUBLIC IN OVER 130 SUMMER SEASONS, BUT IT HAS COME VERY CLOSE. LEARN HOW THE HOTEL KEPT THE GOOD TIMES FLOWING DURING PROHIBITION. HEAR SOME OF THE FASCINATING STORIES ABOUT THE HOTEL'S "BACK OF THE HOUSE" ENTERTAINMENT TAKING PLACE IN ITS VERY OWN SPEAKEASY. FIND OUT WHO RAN THE GAMBLING OPERATIONS, HOW ALL THAT LIQUOR GOT HERE, AND WHERE IT WAS STORED. HOW WERE RAIDS A BIT DIFFERENT ON MACKINAC ISLAND, COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE COUNTRY? MEET SOME OF THE HEROES AND VILLAINS OF THIS OUTRAGEOUS TIME AND THE PART THEY PLAYED IN KEEPING THE DOORS OPEN EVEN AFTER THE STOCK MARKET CRASH OF 1929. COME AND ENJOY YOURSELF BUT REMEMBER TO KNOCK THREE TIMES AND QUIETLY WHISPER, "UNCLE BOB SENT ME."

COL. MARK TILLMAN



AIR FORCE ONE: ZERO FAIL MISSION

COL. TILLMAN KEEPS ATTENDEES ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEAT AS HE SHARES HIS FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT OF PILOTING PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 AND LATER TRANSPORTING THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF INTO THE WAR ZONE OF BAGHDAD, IRAQ FOR THANKSGIVING DINNER WITH THE TROOPS. COL EMPHASIZES THE CONCEPT OF A ZERO FAIL MISSION WHICH CAN BE APPLIED IN BOTH BUSINESS AND EVERYDAY LIFE. DETAILED PLANNING, MEASURABLE EXPECTATIONS AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ARE SEVERAL OF THE KEY ELEMENTS.

AN ENGAGING STORY TELLER, COL. TILLMAN WILL TAKE YOU BEHIND THE SCENES OF AIR FORCE ONE UTILIZING HIS EXPERIENCES TO REINFORCE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ZERO FAIL MISSION.

COL. MIKE MULLANE



THE LIGHTER SIDE OF SPACEFLIGHT - HUMOR

IN HIS PROGRAM, THE LIGHTER SIDE OF SPACEFLIGHT, ASTRONAUT MIKE MULLANE WILL TAKE THE AUDIENCE ON A UNIQUELY REVEALING, CAPTIVATING AND HILARIOUS SPACE JOURNEY. USING SPECTACULAR VIDEO AND SLIDES HE WILL ANSWER EVERYBODY'S SPACE QUESTIONS: WHAT DOES A SHUTTLE LAUNCH FEEL LIKE?...HOW DOES AN ASTRONAUT DEAL WITH THE INCREDIBLE FEAR OF LAUNCH?...HOW DO YOU SLEEP, BATHE, EAT, DRINK, ETC?...WHAT DO YOU SEE FROM SPACE?...AND, OF COURSE, HE WILL ANSWER THE TOP TWO QUESTIONS THAT ASTRONAUTS ARE EVER ASKED:

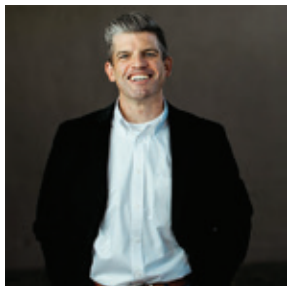
NUMBER 1: HOW DOES THE SPACE TOILET WORK? (WHEN THE AUDIENCE HEARS HOW ASTRONAUTS TRAIN TO USE THE TOILET THEY WILL BE CONVULSED WITH LAUGHTER.)...AND...

NUMBER 2: HAVE ASTRONAUTS SEEN ANY UFOS OR ALIENS?

THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS AND MANY, MANY MORE ARE LAVISHLY WRAPPED WITH INSIDE, HILARIOUS STORIES AND SUPPORTED WITH AMAZING VIDEO. THE AUDIENCE WILL NOT ONLY BE THOROUGHLY ENTERTAINED BY THE LIGHTER SIDE OF SPACEFLIGHT, BUT WILL ALSO FEEL PRIVILEGED TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN AN INSIGHT INTO THE ASTRONAUT EXPERIENCE THAT FEW PEOPLE EVER GET TO EXPERIENCE.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

SHAWN VANDYKE



LEADERSHIP BOOTCAMP: LEADERSHIP WITHIN YOUR TEAMS BY DISCOVERING YOUR FOUNDATIONAL VOICE

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN YOUR CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS STARTS WITH YOU. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF YOU BEFORE YOU CAN EXPECT ANYONE TO WANT TO FOLLOW YOU.

THE PROBLEM IS EVERYONE HAS THE ABILITY TO LEAD, BUT NOT EVERYONE HAS THE FREEDOM OR PERMISSION TO DO SO.

IN ORDER TO BE A LEADER WORTH FOLLOWING, YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO VALUE THE OTHER LEADERSHIP VOICES ON YOUR TEAM AND CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR THEM TO BE HEARD.

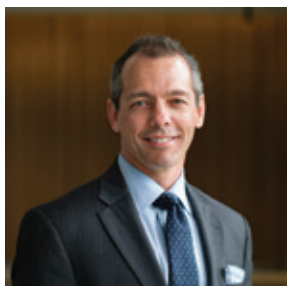
TALENT MAGNET: HOW TO ATTRACT YOUR NEXT BEST EMPLOYEE

IT'S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND GOOD EMPLOYEES BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WITH THE SKILLS, THE TALENT, AND THE CHARACTER YOU NEED TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS...ALREADY HAVE JOBS. YOU NEED TO STOP TRYING TO FIND THEM AND START RECRUITING THEM, BUT MOST CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNERS ARE MISSING A VITAL PIECE IN THEIR HIRING PROCESS.

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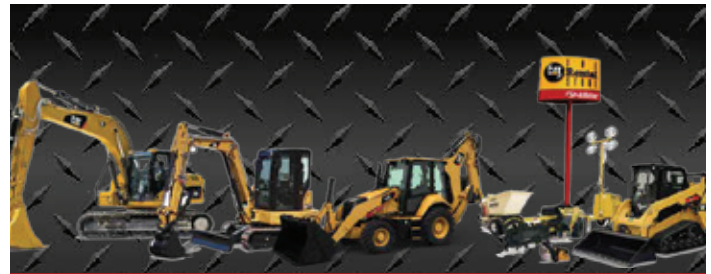
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FILLING THE BOOMER GAP

Originally posted on
[constructionexec.com](https://www.constructionexec.com)
by David McMillin on
Tuesday, May 30, 2023.

Annie Mecias-Murphy didn't find talent recruitment nearly as challenging as she does today when she started JA&M Developing Corp. nearly 20 years ago. "Back then, there were always people willing to enter the labor force," says Mecias-Murphy, co-owner and president of JA&M, which is based in Pembroke Pines, Florida. "They might not have had the skills, but they would work themselves up the ranks. Now, we face both a skilled worker shortage and an aging workforce."

None of this is new, but thanks to that aging workforce, it is newly urgent. Suddenly, the long-projected shortage of skilled trades professionals—even before the pandemic, in 2019, Associated Builders and Contractors put the number at a half-million—is experiencing a multiplier effect in the form of growing numbers of retiring baby boomers. Not only do the members of this historically large generation, 75 million of whom are expected to retire by 2030, leave a lot of slots to fill, they also take with them an incalculable trove of skill, experience and institutional knowledge.

This is the boomer gap. And filling it will mean not just finding new sources of talent but also developing new models for training, instruction and mentorship.

THE FALL AND RISE OF SHOP CLASS

It's easy to assume that COVID-19 is the primary catalyst for the workforce shortage. While it is true that 3 million more boomers retired in 2020, the first year of the pandemic, than in the year before, the storm clouds of a construction talent crisis were gathering long before that. Consider Tara Tiger Brown's perspective in a 2012 *Forbes* column reflecting on a shift in California's education course requirements for college preparedness that eliminated shop classes in the majority of the state's schools.

"The [California] system focuses on theory and not applied skills," Tiger Brown, the co-founder of three technology organizations and now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of British Columbia, wrote, "a belief that learning how to swing a hammer or understand the difference between a good joint from a bad joint is part of a bygone era, and as a society these skills are not something to strive for—they are something people resort to when they are out of options."

The Golden State was part of a trend in its abandonment of shop class. Between 1990 and 2009, the number of CTE (career and technical education) credits earned in high schools dropped by 14%, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics. As that decline swept the country, Fred McManus, chief operating officer for Brown & Root, noticed a troubling shift in public perception of craft professionals.

"The public stereotype decades ago of a construction worker, no thanks to commercials, was a worker digging a ditch or running a jackhammer and whistling at passerby's and telling off-color jokes," McManus tells Construction Executive. "The view was just horrific, and that's not the accurate representation of what a craft professional does."

Brown & Root is part of an industry effort to redefine the value of the skilled trades for an emerging generation of prospective workers.



The Baton Rouge–headquartered industrial contractor is focused on introducing students to career opportunities in construction. “We’re going into the high schools and updating the industrial-arts classes,” McManus says. “When I was in high school, it was an easy class. Now we’re teaching electrical, plumbing, welding and carpentry. It’s curriculum-based craft education that introduces the foundational skills to these students.”

“As these students are trying to figure out their next steps after high school, most of them have not considered a career in construction,” McManus adds, “unless they’re like me, and their family was in the industry. They’ve never seen what an excavator can do, what a bulldozer can do, or the 3D CAD technology we use to design scaffolding.”

In South Florida, Mecias-Murphy is doing similar work to deliver shop-class offerings to high schools. Her career arc makes her uniquely positioned to help address the country’s current lack of skills-based education. Before her journey to becoming a leader in the construction industry, Mecias-Murphy—who has a Ph.D. in philosophy—spent 15 years as a teacher and a school counselor. Since joining the ABC Florida East Coast Chapter, where she now serves on the board of directors, she has been working to build stronger relationships with school boards to develop skills-based courses that can be part of the curriculum. “Why can’t an estimating class be taken as a math class?” she asks.

The good news: Mecias-Murphy doesn’t seem to be the only one pondering that type of question. States such as Montana and Nevada have allocated significant money for CTE in recent years—a promising signal for giving skilled work some much-needed time in the spotlight.

GOING TO THE SOURCE

Now for some bad news: No matter how much the industry can benefit from a resurgence in the number of schools that offer shop classes, the reality is that it’s not likely to happen overnight. After all, there are only so many hours in a school day—and so many dollars in a limited school budget.

With that in mind, construction companies will need to identify additional opportunities to connect with their future workforce. Mecias-Murphy, who serves as the vice chair of the board of directors of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Broward County, thinks that grassroots initiatives are key to addressing the skilled-labor shortage. When she spoke to CE, JA&M had recently participated in a construction career day that gave approximately 150 14- to 18-year-old Broward County students—all members

of different chapters of the Boys and Girls Clubs—an immersive look at the industry. Students circulated among different stations, including roofing, plumbing and concrete, “to see what construction is all about.”

In addition to those types of broad introductions, Mecias-Murphy highlighted ABC Florida East Coast’s Apprenticeship Program, which allows young workers to transfer 28 hours toward a community-college degree—just as if they were students who had begun their undergraduate studies elsewhere. “Kids can start as a laborer and go on to earn a management degree,” she says, “all without amassing any college debt.”

That lack of debt is a big selling point. Research shows that graduation-ready students are open to career paths that don’t involve borrowing a mountain of money, including a 2022 study conducted by ECMC Group that found that 51% of teens are interested in pursuing a four-year degree—a 20% drop from just two years earlier.

McManus thinks that events from Build Your Future—an NCCER program offering high-school and middle-school students field-trip opportunities to get a sense of careers in construction—are one of the best ways to share the potential of pursuing skilled trades. The company aims to participate in at least one each quarter in Louisiana, which he says helps them connect with approximately 2,000 students (the company’s Texas operation also participates in programs in the Lone Star State). “We had one yesterday in Lake Charles, Louisiana,” McManus says. “We show them how to build a scaffold, as well as robotic welding.”

Those students are ready to learn, too. “What I enjoy about the Gen Z workforce is that they enjoy listening to us old-timers,” McManus says. “They appreciate the mentorship and listening to understand your history and experiences.”

FROM SHOVEL TO C-SUITE

No matter how open a student is to learning about the potential of a career in construction, though, there’s an arguably more important set of ears that the industry needs to convince: their parents. In an economy where many people still believe that a four-year degree is a centerpiece of success, that can be a tall order. “Parents want their children to go to receive a great education and to succeed,” McManus says, reflecting on sending his daughters—both of whom now work in the construction industry—to college.

While McManus hasn’t completed his own degree, he considers himself a lifelong learner, and regardless of

the education credentials listed next to his name, he notes that he's gone from "the shovel to the C-suite." "It is our responsibility to inform parents that their children have endless opportunities in this industry and can make an impressive salary and that they can execute their tasks safely," he says. "Right now, if a person engages in further education with us, they can be making \$100,000 in five years. These are all important elements for parents to know—that this is an industry where their children can have a good income, work safely, provide for their family and climb the career ladder."

Sabra Phillips, director of organizational and talent development at Houston-based MAREK, echoes the importance of that ladder, highlighting the need to have a "repeatable, effective way to grow someone from entry-level to journey-level"—and a similar route to move that journey-level employee into a supervisory-level position. "We have attracted people we wouldn't have otherwise attracted because we can describe a career path that leads to supervision and leadership," Phillips says.

Mecias-Murphy points out that some parents may need more convincing than others. "In many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, a degree in teaching, law or medicine represented the way to make money," says Mecias-Murphy, whose father immigrated to the United States from Cuba. "For parents who came from that background and immigrated to the U.S., the construction industry needs to articulate that it's a different story here. There are so many ways to earn a good living that don't only involve those three career paths."

KEEPING UP WITH THE COMPETITION

Construction isn't the only profession confronting a talent gap. Nursing, aviation and hospitality are just a few of the industries that are staring down a future without enough workers. Some of them are actually taking cues from the craft-professional development model, with companies such as Accenture and Aon borrowing a page from the registered-apprenticeship playbook. "People are borrowing from us as an industry and finding ways to attract talent," Phillips says. "We can learn from them, and they can learn from us. But it also means the competition is fierce."

With that in mind, Phillips is already planning to borrow inspiration from outside the industry as she works to offer recruiting, training and safety program materials in more languages than the industry standard English and

"Right now, if a person engages in further education with us, they can be making \$100,000 in five years..."

Spanish. She is in a peer group focused on adult education, and she highlights that Tyson Foods has done an impressive job of catering to a workforce that speaks approximately 60 different languages in its plants. "They brought in the former state director of adult education in Texas, Anson Green, to expand their Upward Academy and Upward Pathways programs," Phillips says.

Tyson's investment includes covering 100% of the costs of tuition, books and fees for employees at more than 35 universities and education centers, too. And, in addition to spending more than \$500 million on wage increases and bonuses for its hourly employees in 2021, the company committed more than \$1 million to help immigrant employees access legal services for sorting through the challenges of securing U.S. citizenship. Tyson's programs are a reminder that companies can do more to enhance their employees' lives outside their shifts.

A NEW LEGACY

Construction companies are trained to follow blueprints, but the solution to the talent shortage doesn't have a clearly defined action plan. Instead, it's a simple order that everyone in the industry is accustomed to following: Roll up your sleeves, and dig in. "Construction has always been a provider of solutions," Mecias-Murphy says. "It's up to us to make it happen. No one else is going to be able to do it better than we can."

For Phillips, filling the boomer gap isn't so much about saying goodbye to a retiring generation of talent and welcoming a new one. It's about recognizing that the industry has the tools to transition between the two—and pass down the preceding generation's knowledge to new talents as they prepare to fuel innovation and growth. "We have been fortunate to work with many wonderful craft professionals and field leaders for decades," Phillips says. "As they retire, we honor their legacy, the structures and the people they built up during their great service, and we miss them."

"At the same time we celebrate with the team graduating to retirement, we intentionally build up the incoming team and seek out their unique opportunities and contributions," Phillips says. "Taking an integrated talent development approach means we incorporate skills, experiences and relationship building as a part of career growth and evolve as we learn from each other. It's not easy, but it is worthwhile. The greater risk is stagnation and lack of curiosity." 🇺🇸

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How to Avoid the Biggest Mistake **CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNERS MAKE**



By Shawn VanDyke

YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL YOURSELF

Most construction business owners make the mistake of thinking they have to be THE expert in the business to grow the business.

Making this mistake creates stress and frustration for you because you will spend all your time answering questions and reacting to day-to-day fires.

As the business owner, your main job is to find and hire experts so you can focus on your most important task:

Growing your business.

DO YOU WANT HELP? OR DO YOU WANT FREEDOM?

One of the core principles in the Built to Lead program in the Built to Build Academy® is called “The Line.”

Here's what that means:

There's a line in every business that's defined by the owner's abilities.

When you hire people below your line or your abilities, then you get some help.

But when you hire people and create systems above your line, above your expertise and experience, then you get freedom.

You don't have to be the expert.

The single biggest mistake most construction business owners make is waiting too long to bring in an expert—someone who can operate ABOVE THE LINE.

Don't be afraid to be the dumbest person in the room. When you surround yourself with people smarter than you, you'll achieve your goals much faster and with more profit to show for it.

Here are 3 ways hiring an expert will transform your business.

3 BENEFITS OF HIRING AN EXPERT

1. Experience Exponential Growth

When you hire below the line, you're stuck as the bottleneck of your business.

You may have the knowledge to crunch the numbers and do the estimating, but if those aren't your strengths, then hire someone who loves to crunch numbers and is a nerd for spreadsheets.

They exist. Trust me... I am one of them.

The faster you find those people and put them in charge of the stuff you don't like, the faster your business will grow.

2. Get a Return on Your Investment

When you make the choice to hire an expert, you're going to spend more money than you've ever spent.

Don't let this scare you away from doing what your business needs to succeed.

If you bring in the right person, they will pay for themselves.

Trying to do everything yourself hampers your growth and costs you money in the long run.

3. Create Freedom From Your Business

Hiring an expert gives you the freedom to focus on the future of your business.

When was the last time you put your feet up on your desk and thought about what comes next for your business?

Thinking about your business should be an appointment on your weekly calendar, but it's nearly impossible when everyone is looking to you for answers.

Hire experts, and you'll get your time back.

Your stress level will decrease, and you'll create freedom for you and your family.

GET THE STEP-BY-STEP SYSTEM TO HIRE YOUR NEXT EXPERT

The experts you're looking for already have jobs.

You're not going to just find them. You have to go recruit them.

Shawn VanDyke founded the Built to Build Academy™ where he trains contractors around the world to build the systems they need for purposeful, profitable growth. Learn more at www.shawnvandyke.com.

You can learn more from Shawn at the 2023 Michigan Construction Leadership Summit. Visit www.abcmi.com/leadershipsummit for more information. 🇺🇸



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