

Hello everybody, welcome back to our Digging Deeper blog series. Dennis Engelbrecht here with The Family Business Institute and the CEOPRO for Contractors in our Roundtable.

So, today I wanted to talk about an interesting thing that I've been observing at construction companies. And we're going to talk about culture, but not the culture of the company itself. Every company has got a culture. But the culture of the job site. And as I think back to when I was a sub-contractor in miscellaneous metals, I remember we had some job sites that our teams just dreaded going to.

And you think about that, you go to other job sites and you can see that those job sites, they're cooperative, different trades are cooperating with each other for equipment, sharing space, treating other's materials with respect and equipment with respect as they go along. The job site might be clean. There's a quality standard, a safety standard. All of those things. And all those things when you walk on the site are sort of evident, or on the downside, you can see that they're not there.

So, think about that a little bit because you can be sure that those negative job sites were also the job sites on which we lost money. And those positive job sites tend to be the job sites on which we're more successful. So, started thinking about how do you establish a positive culture on the job site? Whose responsibility is that? How do you maintain that? How does that happen? So, thinking about that, first of all of course the superintendent for the general contract running the job is the first line of a fence, or defense I guess, whichever way you've looked at it. But everybody I think who leads their team out there has an effect on that. And I think if you're over here with your masonry crew, you can have a positive culture among your crew and in your area that hopefully catches on with the people around you.

Maybe you can't affect the whole job site completely, but you can affect your folks. And I also think the project manager has an effect. When you come on site, are you complaining? Do you have a frown? Are you looking for things everybody's doing wrong? Or are you setting a standard? Are you positive? Are you friendly? How are you engaging with people? I think all of those things if you think about it have an effect.

So, I was really looking at it and I thought well, maybe there are three C's of establishing a positive culture on a job site. And one being cooperation. Again, you've got one trade working next to another trade. Do I end up walking on their materials, or do I walk around their materials? Do I share the equipment we're using? Do we talk about well if you go here first, I'll come in behind and I'll be effective, or vice versa? Those sorts of things. That's sort of cooperation, because what you do affects the others around you.

And then there's collaboration. You think about appropriate planning. We can collaborate, we can be in that weekly job site meeting and we can be a positive force there, not just to help ourselves but to help others. And of course, if you're in charge of the entire job, you can promote collaboration by how you work. You can be more of a listener of ideas and not just barking out instructions and orders. And you can be drawing out the great ideas the group has, or you could be subverting the great ideas of the group.

And then caring. And I know on one of these prior blogs I talked about caring as well, but I think caring is catchy. And that's where those initial aspects of a job, the cleanliness of a job site, the safety standards, the quality standards. I mean if you can see that people are taking care with their job, you're going to tend to take care with yours. If you can see that others

are following safety protocols, you're going to tend to follow your protocols. So, cooperation, collaboration and caring, the three C's for establishing culture on the job site.

Now, just one more thing, we're not in a good mood every day, right? Something happened at home, we didn't get fed right, we didn't get enough sleep, we're arguing with our spouse. Whatever. We have a lot of pressure on us, we have too much to do, we've got to go to a meeting we think is worthless. We have all of these things happening to us. But for you to present, establish and maintain a culture, sometimes you have to be an actor or actress. But you have to play a role.

I'm reminded of a movie, it's an old movie, it's black and white. You know it's old, and I'm old so that fits. But it's called 12o'clock High, Gregory Peck. And the scene I remember in here, he's a colonel or whatever and he has to replace his best friend in running a failing bombing squadron. And his best friend by the way is a great leader but somehow this squadron has gone bad and everything that can go wrong is going wrong.

And as he comes to the site to take over for his buddy, he stops his car, gets out of the car. Of course, this is an old movie again, has a cigarette, and changes his entire demeanor, look and everything before he steps on that site. He knows what messages he has to convey, and he becomes an actor in a role to get it accomplished. It starts at the guard house where he dresses down the guard for I forget what it was, not having his uniform buttoned or his hat right or not saluting correct. Whatever it was. But he dresses the first guy down, and you can tell that it's game on.

Now, I'm not saying you have to come in and be this terrorist when you go back to your job site, but what you are is an actor. So, if you need to set a more positive mood, you have the ability to do that. And if you need to come down harder on some folks, and you probably do this with your children. They might have done something that you thought was kind of funny, but you know the school got down on them or something and you know you have to scold them, but you can't do it with a smile. So, you have to assume a role. And the same thing. So, think about that. Do the three C's to establish your culture, and then don't forget that you play a key role in who you are when you step on that job site. And don't be afraid to be a bit of an actor. Thanks. Again, Digging Deeper.