

Hello. This is Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, and welcome back to our pod series Digging Deeper, where we try to dig in to some construction issues that companies and people in the construction world are facing today.

Today, we're going to talk about one of the primary issues that's really facing the whole industry, and that's the fact that many of our most talented construction, experienced, and knowledgeable people are retiring out of the industry. So, we're trying to build these buildings and create these projects really with a group of younger, less experienced people in many cases. And in doing so, of course we still have a few of those sage veterans that are left in our companies, and they become more and more important. And what we found through the course of our round table programs and other discussions we have with contractors is, it's hard to be able to extract that career of knowledge from these professionals and get it into the hands of the younger people.

So, really what this podcast is about is going to be how do we leverage those most experienced and talented construction professionals that we still have and get that knowledge to the people that are coming up in the business? Well, first of all, if we just put that individual on an individual project, that is probably not the best way to do so. But that may be where they're more comfortable. So, how do we fix that? Well, one of the things is there are really three elements where I find that construction experience and knowledge can be brought out and leveraged across the organization. The first one is in preconstruction. Of course, pre-construction's critical, because that's where we set the jobs up for success. That's where we make sure we've got all the scope coverage, we're using the best building systems, we're figuring out the plan for their job, how to look at the job, and identifying those flaws that may come out in the construction documents, et cetera. The constructability.

So, getting these key people to weigh in at the right levels during your pre-con process, that's key. And then by doing so, you could have a better plan for more jobs. The second opportunity I find is your pre-planning or launch meeting that you have for each job. However, you take that job from pre-construction and get it into your operations group, that's an ideal time to bring in your most experienced people and have your project team present their plan to them for the job and see if that passes muster. See where that experienced person can poke holes and maybe get his way of thinking about a job into those other people's minds, because clearly with his experience, he's going to think about it differently. Have them asking the tough questions, see what can go wrong, make sure that they're thinking in terms of contingencies, make sure they've got the key timelines and timeframes in mind that are going to make that job successful or possibly make it unsuccessful.

So basically, if you can involve your key people in every one of those meetings, and sometimes that's the president of the company, the vice president, or it's this super superintendent with all this great knowledge, whoever it is, get them to that spot, because that's probably the best place to have his knowledge really spread among those people into various jobs and various people in your organization. The next opportunity is probably in your project reviews. In your project reviews, pull in that key person and have them sit in there and listen to the issues, the problems. Maybe have them walk the job site before and see what they see, and when you do your job review, that's another opportunity, sort of poke holes in the plan. They may think they're 60% on this aspect of the job, but maybe they're not really, and this, again, experienced professional can lend their experience, their expertise, and bring that knowledge to the younger people.

Finally, the whole idea of mentoring, of course, these great construction professionals are not necessarily great mentors. So, one strategy we use to try to extend the career of one of our retiring professionals, this particular person was the most knowledgeable construction person in the company, and of course with him retiring out, that was going to take a big basis

of knowledge from the company. So, what we decided to do happened to be largely a Clemson team, and of course Clemson has won our National Football Championship here, a couple of the last three years. So, what we did is we actually named this individual Director of Championship performance. So, as Director of Championship performance, his job was, first of all, to make sure that every job that the company did was a championship performance. And then secondarily, to make sure that all the PE's and interns and younger people that were coming up through the company had an opportunity to experience the interesting and necessary construction things that were going on across the company.

So, if there was a large concrete pour going on, for example, somewhere, or they were erecting steel on sort of a unique type of structure that they were doing, his job was to identify those learning opportunities and figure out how to pull those people in to see that happening on the job site, so that they would get a more broadened experience and make sure that they gain some of those experience, and again, some of that knowledge from him, and that they had the opportunity to learn from that individual before he moved on to greener pastures, so to speak. So, the key thing is to think about, those retiring people, those most knowledgeable people, how can you best leverage them across your organization and how can you transition that knowledge and make sure that what you don't do is allow them to retire without taking advantage of that opportunity.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper. We look forward to your comments, and if you need a transcript of this, that should be available in the next 24 hours. Thanks for listening.