

Hi, I am Mike Concannon, with Performance Construction Advisors. We build better contractors.

In my 30 years' experience, I'd like to share some input related to what I believe contractors can actually do better as they go forward. A lot of it is really self-assessment, objective self-assessment, internally, and even bring in outside support to help you objectively look at yourself.

One of the key factors I have seen over my career is the understanding of the two-foot movement. A builder and a business. And many times, organizations, especially contractors, lead with being a builder and lag behind being a business. I think it's imperative that they walk step-in-step, and actually the lead foot be the business. That will eliminate a lot of issues and problems and help the business in a go-forward manner.

One of the other major pieces is culture. Culture, culture, culture. It's a real easy thing to say, but your organization has a culture. You may know what it is. You may think you know what it is, but day in and day out, your people, your staff, your business has a culture. What is that culture? Have you defined it? How do you work towards it every day as leaders of your organization, how do you inspire others?

I challenge you to walk around and ask everyone in your organization to answer one question in one to two words. What's our culture? Take stock of that and as you take that back, does that align with what you actually have your aspirations to be for your culture? It starts with culture.

Another big important piece I think is we've talked about in the past is talent. Talent assessment, talent succession, talent evaluation. I look at a role of a CEO and senior executive as a general manager, like a sports team. You're responsible for managing and bringing in the talent to help deliver successful results. Setting a culture, putting the right people in the right spots, and helping lead the team.

You may not be the one actually out on the court or in the starting lineup, but that's okay. You need to have the talent that can actually do and deliver that. So, remember as leaders and as CEOs, you are general managers of your business. Another opportunity that I think is a lot of times not taken serious enough is identification of issues and problems. And when those are identified, many times people don't want to look at them, want to think they'll go away by themselves, but they don't. They will only get worse. When you identify issues and challenges in your business, if it's a challenging project, if it's a financial situation, if it's the wrong people, if it's the client that isn't really aligned with your business, you need to run towards it.

You need to move towards those challenges and help assess and get through those challenges. Because again, as you know from experience, they don't get better. It is not easy, but it is a must do.

I talked recently just a moment ago about clients. One of the challenges I've seen, and we've all faced this, we have to have these clients. We have to have every client that we have and keep working for them. Have you ever considered firing a client? Do they align with your culture? Do they align with how they treat your staff and resources? Do you make money off that client or is it, "We're going to make money on the next one."? Really assess your clients in terms of how they align with your business in a true go-forward manner, I think is something also keep in mind.

We've talked in the past about strategic planning. Does your organization have a strategic plan? If so, how old is it? What does it really align with? Is your strategic plan and what you want to be? How does that align with the market, your talent, clients? You really need to reassess your strategic plan and the easy part of the whole strategic planning

process is creating the strategic plan. The actual work, the actual success in a strategic plan is the implementation and the week-in and week-out role of implementing that plan. And as senior executives and CEO of organizations, it's your responsibility to take the lead and be working on those initiatives and not pass those off.

I have seen from experience, myself and through clients and contractors I've worked with, the strategic plan gets prepared. It's a great document and gets put in a drawer and not used. It's a travesty and a significant loss to an organization by not actually implementing your strategic plan.

Go back to talent. Talent, talent, talent. Who are your future leaders? Where are you at? We talked about succession planning in the past, the need for succession planning ahead of time. You need to have emergency caretakers for your role and every senior person in your organization. Who could take your role tomorrow in an emergency situation? Who's ready in one to two years, who's ready in three to five, and if so, what are you doing to develop those individuals? Do those individuals even know that they're on a succession plan? Critically important for contractors to work on to help themselves immediately and specifically in the future.

One of the questions I get often is, as a CEO, what's my role? I think your role significantly is working on the business. You are the CEO and senior executives. You need to spend a significant portion of your time working on the business and not in the business. You need to have the talent to handle and manage in the business. You need to be thinking more strategically. You need to be leading the strategic plan. You need to be assessing the high-level risks and opportunities for your organization. So, the balance of your time working on the business versus in the business is something that is significantly important to you as construction leaders.

One of the key pieces, now, handful of different opportunities to really improve your organization, but as we talked about before, the strategic plan, similar to your self-assessment. As you go through this exercise and you objectively look at it and be true to yourself and to the organization, that's the easy part. That's the easy part. Some of you're thinking, "Well, that wasn't so easy." Well, if you are, you've actually done it right. It shouldn't have been easy. It should have been tough. It should have put a pit in your stomach.

But now comes the true opportunity for success, and that is through taking action. It is through the actions in which you take are going to impact your business. It's not through the assessment. It's through the actions you take. And one of the most important things to keep in mind, no matter how unpopular, how challenging your actions need to be. I think one of the most important things I've always been taught and learned is as leaders, we are empowered and responsible to focus on the hard right, which is making those tough decisions in the best interest of the business versus what they say is focus on the easy wrong. Continuing to do what you've done because it is unpopular, because it isn't popular.

You, as the leaders of your businesses to assess, challenge and continuously focus on the hard right versus the easy run. Let me know what you think. Let me know what you think aligns with you. Let me know where you think I'm off base and appreciate your feedback. Again, Mike Concannon, with Performance Construction Advisors.