

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with FBI, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about, Winning the “When,” in quotes, the “when,” and I wrote about this couple of weeks back, but wanted to talk about it today.

Great construction companies have a certain discipline to them, and that discipline is that things happen on time. The when probably in construction is consistently more important than how. If you get buyout done on time, if you get your reports in on time, that allows the internal machine of the company to move. Certainly, you've got to get your payroll in on time. If you don't pay people on time, that's very much a problem. But really, there are a million things in your company that have to happen on a timely basis and happen on time, and when they do, the engine turns, and things get done well.

When I say the discipline of doing it on time can be more important than how, I think the discipline for doing work on time actually spills over to doing it well and doing it with quality. Those same traits and that same discipline that promotes getting things done on time also promotes getting them done well. What it is, everything has to be done, so if we do everything a little bit late, does that really help us get things done? Or can we just move the whole cycle up and make all those things happen on time, get on time, stay on time, be on time?

I think the answer is yes, we can, but you may have some people that have trouble with that, and they may need some training or some support, and sometimes it is a matter of support because people have too much on their plate. Perhaps they can't get it all done on time, so that may be a matter of job design or how much support they have or whatever. But for the most part, you want them to be able to get their work done on time and you want them to have the discipline for getting it done on time.

In order for on-time to be important, time must also be valued. There's an efficiency of time that you probably see most often in things like your company meetings. Do people show up on time? Do they show up ready for the meetings? Is people's time wasted as they wait on a decision or they stand in line at the door waiting to see you, or they take too long of breaks, and they don't come and go from their breaks very well? Even getting to work and from work, there's again, that timeliness. Not that everybody has to arrive at the exact same hour or leave at the exact same hour, but if you can't rely on when people are going to be there, again, that may muck up the whole operation. So, time has to be valued so that it's not being wasted, and there should be efficiency to your meetings and discipline to your meetings and those things, as well.

Again, great companies have that discipline, and they almost have a rhythm to it, almost like a fine music or something like that, that things happen, they happen on time, people can count on them, and that rhythm oftentimes is a weekly, monthly rhythm that they have to them. Their culture is such that being on time and being timely with the work is an expectation. By the way, that expectation must be set as an example also by the leaders, because if the leaders don't set that example, it'll likely follow through the organization.

My encouragement to each of you about winning the when is to do a self-audit. Perhaps just in your mind, look at the 50 things that are most important to happen on time in your organization. Are they occurring on time? Do people get their invoices approved on time? Just one example, but is buyout done on time? Are some submittals in on time? Are they reviewed on time, sent back out on time? Are we finishing our projects on time? Are we done, done and off the project on time? Those are the big things, but of course, in construction, everything has to happen on time.

So, do a little self-audit. If 90%, and that may sound like a high bar, if 90% of the activities in your company do not occur on a timely basis, you probably need a major intervention to try to change the culture and give things back so they happen as a discipline, as a rhythm, and you can then win the when.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.