

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with Digging Deeper.

To start today, I really want to just give a shout out to all of the construction folks out. Really is a strange time in the industry: trying to get a project in budget, trying to get a project launched, trying to get a project finished, trying to get the items you need in time and whatever. But as I go around and I visit different companies, you're just getting it done. You're getting it done. We've got the work going on. We got the work getting done. Somehow or other we're working around all the budget constraints and all the supply constraints. So, kudos to all of you out there for just getting it done.

Now, that said, with all that is going on, your job is changing. Well, it's already changed, and it's undoubtedly gotten more difficult. So, thinking about all the different things that have gotten more challenging or changed in your role. First of all, we think about the supply chain restrictions and chaos, and ability to get different products, and things not showing up when they're supposed to. The whole price rise thing is unprecedented historically. So, we're facing that. Worker priorities have changed. Since the pandemic, a lot of folks have rethought their lives. We also have this sort of political divide. So, behaviors have gotten probably worse in the workplace and among your workers as well. The competition for people is absolutely bonkers right now. We got a record number of quits. At the same time, we have a record number of job openings and a record low number of people looking to fill those jobs. So that's crazy.

Manpower planning's gone out the door. Things are changing so rapidly in terms of when jobs start or get delayed, and all of that, that it's virtually impossible to do your traditional manpower planning. On the other hand, collaboration and cooperation have probably gone up. I think that's both internally and externally. As these challenges from all the other areas have come up, they're being solved through cooperation and collaboration.

The other thing that's occurred is because of the pandemic and the supply chain issues, things are going wrong, but really, nobody's at fault. That presents other challenges because down the road, will everybody remember that it's nobody's fault? Because ultimately, usually in construction, somebody's held financially responsible for the late finishes or the extra costs. So that's another issue that's going on.

At the same time, just looking back over our members, there's been tremendous growth. If you look back five years into the past, you might have been a half the size. Your organization is much larger. You look around and 40% of the employees in your company are new in the last three years. So that's a big change that's going on. With all that is going on, with the basic chaos that's going on in construction, the work capacity of your frontline people, your superintendents and project managers is probably reduced by 20%. So, at the same time you're struggling to get enough people, the capacity of your people has probably been reduced by all the extra work that they have to do to make projects happen. All of that is all this change that's confronted you. So, my question to each of you really is, have you changed? Have you changed the way you approach your job? Have you changed your own priorities, the way you're dealing with people? All of those things.

I'm sort of reminded by one of our members, with all of his chaos going on, he'd probably just throw up his hands and say, "Oh, geez, with all of this, we might as well just lock the doors and go home. What's the use?" Or whatever. But you really can't do that. So, really, the first step in handling all of this chaos and change is to recognize that it's going on and recognize that it is different, and it possibly does require different priorities, different behaviors, different skills and knowledge to get you and to get your folks through this. There's an old saying that "What got you here, won't get you there." I think that's never been more true than when you look at the landscape for construction today.

Certainly, among those changes, the first thing you have to realize today is that it's really all about people, and people issues are number one. I can remember it sometime in the past laying out the priorities of how leaders need to spend their time and do their job. Well, if people issues were at 30% back then, they have to be 50 or 60 or 70% now, in terms of where you need to spend your time, where you need to prioritize your times. So, have you adjusted your priorities to be able to do that? Are you taking the time to get personal or intimate with your people to make sure that you're managing

their workloads, you're recognizing their stress and managing that so that you don't lose additional people when you're struggling to have enough people already?

When chaos is the norm, it might be convenient, let's just say, to say, "Well, the heck with planning. All we got to do is react now." But really, with all of these supply chain issues and other issues confronting construction, it really requires more planning, daily planning. So, you can't give up. You have to keep working, you have to keep reprioritizing. It's almost like a war time situation where each day there's a new landscape out there and you have to reassess where you are, reassess your priorities, and plan again. It's really constant planning.

You have to communicate more often. You also have to communicate clearer, more thoroughly. You're saying, "Okay, we're expected for that to come next Monday and then we can get going. Have you talked to so and so? Have you gotten confirmation on this?" You have to take it the extra step today. So that communication has to be accelerated.

Change management is not just a key role. It's almost a constant role. Your people don't function as well. When change is going on. Change is just rampant and it's hitting your folks in the face every day. So, you need to be a change manager. Again, you need to be in tune with them. You need to be comforting them. You need to keep the vision of the future out there in front of them. There has to be a reason that they have to fight through all of these obstacles and go through all of these frustrations to get to the other side. That's the result of these great construction projects and happy customers and all of that. But you got to keep that in front of your people, and you got to keep motivating them, supporting them to get them through all of this change that they're confronting on a day-to-day basis.

Finally, for yourself and your people, continuing education. The problems and challenges of today possibly take some skills that you didn't come into the fight with. So, get a book on tape, read about how to work with people, to deal with stress, to deal with change, to help yourself stay up and stay motivated in these tough times. Really recommend work on your own new skills, work on that continuing education. Take some of your time to do that and you'll be a better leader for your folks.

But again, in summary, the job is changing. Look at yourself and say, "Have you changed, and have you kept up with the needs of this changing marketplace?" Because it really is a requirement. And really, kudos to you for getting here and kudos to you for fighting through those challenges.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.