

The Power Of Construction Workforce Diversity

Written by: InEight Industry Insights Blog Editors

The construction industry has always been outwardly diverse. After all, there are wildly different sectors, from mining the depths of the earth to building the highest skyscrapers. And there are countless job disciplines on the jobsite and in the back office that make those projects happen, from the welder and contractor to the accountant and project manager. Yet what hasn't been so diverse are the people within those roles; their cultures, ethnicities, experiences, and genders.

It's important to understand that this is diversity not just for its own sake, but for the good of the industry itself. There are the current labor shortages plus the "brain drain" of succession challenges. And then there's the recent survey by Tallo on Gen Z career preferences that found the percentage of high school and college students who want to work in construction ranked second to last out of 22 industries.

Therefore, expanding recruitment ideology will help strengthen the ability of construction companies to experience the many benefits of construction diversity as they succeed in an increasingly competitive market.

BENEFITS OF CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

ALLEVIATING THE IMPACT OF A SHRINKING LABOR POOL

One of the most important advantages is helping to stave off the ongoing loss of skilled labor. With open spots left



behind by retiring workers not being backfilled fast enough and a labor shortage that never fully recovered from the Great Recession, it necessitates a change in recruitment strategy.

Why not go outside of the demographic that has traditionally donned the hard hats to actively reach out those who haven't historically been part of the industry?

BOOSTING COLLABORATION AND THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

Women and minorities have lived unique experiences that influence how they perceive people and situations, how they make decisions, and how they choose to navigate tough situations. It's these differences that can actually inspire improved collaboration, strengthen company culture, and lead

to a more innovative workplace. This can move the competitive advantage needle over other construction companies that are lagging in this area.

IMPROVING PROFITABILITY

Another compelling reason to expand construction workforce diversity initiatives: a potentially better bottom line. According to a 2020 McKinsey & Company report, companies with a higher percentage of women and minorities in their workforces, especially in top leadership roles, were more likely to financially outpace those with much lower representation. This is regardless of industry, which underscores the very real profit-based business case for incorporating diversity into construction's ranks as a purposeful strategy.

WAYS TO ENCOURAGE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Use technology as a logical entrée into the field. Consider how over the span of one generation, construction has been making the slow but steady transition from being entirely paper-based to incorporating 3D modeling, data analytics, and artificial intelligence-based technologies. So even though interest in pursuing the trades as a career choice has been on the decline, the industry can still take advantage of the counter trend that aligns with its own shift: the emphasis on S.T.E.M. skills in computer science, software engineering, and data science, for example.


These skills are actually blind to minority status, though minorities are currently underrepresented in tech fields as well. This represents a two-fold opportunity to attract a diverse new group of employees. This could appeal to the up-and-coming, tech-savvy generations who value diversity and want to expand their career opportunities.

And there's a shared benefit for both minority job seekers and construction hiring managers. Having these skills has essentially removed geographic barriers as we've transitioned to home offices, especially over the last couple of years.

Remote work has also helped level the playing field for people of all backgrounds, genders, and ages. It expands career opportunities for minorities while expanding the hiring pool beyond local markets. This frees up construction companies to hire minority talent anywhere in the world who can support the technologies that will contribute to their business growth and competitiveness.

Meet them where they are. For many construction companies, it may not be so much that they don't want to build a diverse workforce, but rather many minority groups tend not to gravitate toward nor seek out careers in construction, likely because they've not seen themselves represented in the field. So, the onus falls on those companies to meet them where they are: high schools, trade schools, colleges, career fairs, and tech schools. It involves shattering the construction workforce diversity stereotype while building awareness of the opportunities within the field that may appeal to both traditional and non-traditional college-bound individuals.

With social media pretty much serving as an anchor in the lives of younger generations, this is another way for construction companies to reach this crucial talent pool and redefine the narrative of what the industry is really like. Even the video gaming community may find appeal in the physical technologies like drones and robotics that are slowly but surely being incorporated into construction, especially capital projects and similar large-scale builds.

Remember, senior management must also be committed to and vested in developing a recruitment strategy that actively reaches out to engage everyone, from the front office to the field. It's an organizational change for sure, one that depends on support from the top to help smooth adoption. Particularly as project teams are becoming more collaborative thanks to construction technology, construction workforce diversity can help further strengthen innovative ideas, decision making, and problem solving as more voices and perspectives are considered, which ultimately will have a positive impact on project outcomes. 



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