

Member Communication Experience

3 Cs – Connection, Communication, and Change: My Key Takeaways from CMAA’s Emerging Leaders Program

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In March of this year, I had the privilege of completing the Construction Management Association of America’s (CMAA) Emerging Leaders Program (ELP). The ELP equips participants with essential leadership skills and valuable connections within the construction management field. Designed to prepare participants for greater responsibilities within their organizations and the CMAA community, the program emphasizes association leadership, networking, and industry insights.

I was honored to be selected to join 10 other construction industry emerging leaders from around the country. Over the course of a year, we explored various leadership topics to deepen our self-awareness and enhance our ability to lead more effective teams. It was energizing to experience and see the connections built amongst our cohort, supporting each other in our individual leadership growth, and ultimately coming together as a team to present at the program’s culmination at the CMAA Focus24 conference in Philadelphia. Sharing our thought leadership at two education sessions and providing our insights on stage to hundreds of attendees at the plenary session were incredible opportunities for visibility and growth as emerging leaders in our industry.

CMAA recently welcomed its newest group of emerging leaders, providing a perfect moment to reflect on my experiences and share advice for emerging leaders and those who mentor them. Here are my three key insights into how today’s emerging leaders perceive leadership and the construction industry’s future:



CONNECTION

Emerging leaders seek connections and opportunities to tap into the wealth of knowledge of seasoned industry professionals. Whether through formal mentorship or casual conversations, these interactions are invaluable. Mentors, advocates, and sponsors play a crucial role in connecting emerging leaders with diverse opportunities, enabling them to navigate their career paths and shape the future of our industry. Transferring wisdom and lessons learned from experienced professionals to the next generation is essential for the industry’s future success.

I am grateful to the many senior leaders who have mentored, guided, and encouraged me. These connections have undoubtedly had a positive impact on my career thus far. To the

senior leaders reading this, I encourage you to connect with an emerging leader in your network. Let's continue to pass on the knowledge we gain today to the next generation of leaders.

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication drives project success and fosters a productive team culture. Successful leaders recognize their preferred communication style, understand the styles of others, and learn to adapt to different individual and team scenarios. A critical conversation for emerging leaders is intentional career dialogue. By envisioning multiple career pathways and engaging in ongoing discussions, emerging leaders gain clarity and motivation, contributing to talent retention. While communication styles, empathy, and other "soft" skills can be developed and improved, authentic leadership serves as the foundation for these skills. As technology platforms continue to evolve, communication skills become even more critical given the various ways we communicate with each other.

I continue to see the importance of effective communication and the negative results of ineffective (or lack of) communication. If you step back to evaluate, how many of the current issues or challenges in our lives stem from a root cause of ineffective communication or could be solved with effective communication? A key aspect often overlooked is understanding our audience's communication style and how they receive communication. As I continue my journey to become a better communicator, I remind myself that being aware of and considering the recipient's communication style are important steps towards becoming a better leader.

CHANGE


The construction industry is rapidly changing in many ways. As the generational makeup of our workforce changes – with Baby Boomers retiring, Generation Z entering the workforce, and Millennials and Generation X moving into more senior leadership roles – what most employees are looking for in their leaders and companies will also change. What makes a good leader must evolve as emerging leaders place increasing value on both empathic leadership and leaders who actively support career path development.

Technology adoption and artificial intelligence are challenging us to rethink what we do and how we do it. We need to

understand these current and future shifts and adapt accordingly if we want to be successful. This requires leaders with a continuous learning mindset to include a feedback loop for lessons learned and improvement. We also need to recruit and retain more talent to our the industry. We need today's emerging leaders to stay in the industry and be the leaders for the next generation.

I am excited to witness the positive impact that emerging leaders can have on emotional intelligence, a sense of belonging, professional development, and the adoption of new technology. While change can sometimes be uncomfortable, I am optimistic that the overall result will be a better construction industry. I am inspired by the many emerging leaders at the forefront of innovative ideas, aimed at addressing the challenges in our industry, and I anticipate playing a role in improving the construction industry for both my future and the generations to come.

As you consider the themes of connection, communication, and change, take a moment to reflect on how your company's emerging leaders can make valuable contributions, assist current leaders in navigating change, and have a positive impact on the industry in the future.

I want to express my gratitude to MBP for supporting my involvement in this program and to my amazing CMAA cohort for their support in my learning and growth. 



About the Author

Rachel Fleming PE, CMIT, is a project manager at [MBP](#). Fleming has 11 years of experience in the construction industry and brings valuable project management skills to all phases of the construction process. These include owner's representation, transition to operations, cost estimating, CPM scheduling, claims analysis, and onsite construction management.

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