

Member Communication Experience

Leading Through Headwinds: Build a Resilient Construction Workforce Amid Economic Shifts

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Workforce management has always been a cornerstone of success in the construction industry, but today's challenges make it more critical than ever. Business leaders must navigate a persistent labor shortage, escalating economic pressures, and growing concerns over worker well-being. In an industry where skilled professionals are in short supply, managing your team goes beyond just scheduling shifts or filling roles — it requires a strategic, people-centered approach. By investing in a resilient construction workforce, businesses can not only improve retention and productivity but also ensure they are better prepared to meet long-term challenges.

WHAT IS A BUILDER'S MINDSET AND HOW CAN IT HELP?

Economic shifts are on the horizon, and while the specifics are still developing, one thing is certain: Construction leaders will need to respond with agility. Potential changes in trade policy and broader market forces are likely to drive up the cost of key materials, placing additional strain on already-tight margins. In this kind of environment, resilient leaders don't wait for clarity — they prepare for impact. That means adopting what I call a "builder's mindset": an approach grounded in adaptability, strategic foresight, and proactive problem-solving. Rather than reacting to rising costs in the moment, these leaders are thinking several steps ahead by reassessing supply chains, improving cost forecasting, investing in project management tools that reduce inefficiency, and engaging clients early in open, transparent discussions about budget risks. It's not about having all the answers; it's about staying ahead of the storm.



Meanwhile, the industry's most pressing challenge continues to be workforce capacity. With a significant portion of seasoned professionals approaching retirement, the construction sector faces a looming talent shortfall that can't be solved by simply hiring more people. This moment calls for a broader, more intentional approach to workforce development — one that emphasizes training, mentorship, and culture. One clear opportunity lies in expanding the recruitment pipeline by encouraging more women to enter the trades, a strategy that not only addresses labor shortages but also strengthens teams through increased diversity of thought and experience. But inclusion isn't just about recruitment: It's also about retention. Businesses that invest in creating supportive, flexible, and respectful work environments are far more likely to attract and

keep top talent — and that's the foundation of a workforce built to last.

Beyond the numbers, there is a growing awareness of the importance of mental well-being in the construction trades. Studies show that workers in this industry often face higher levels of stress, fatigue, and burnout compared to other sectors. This is a critical yet often overlooked component of building a resilient workforce. Forward-thinking leaders are recognizing the value of a healthy work culture — one that promotes open communication, reduces stigma around mental health, and ensures employees have access to supportive resources. Initiatives like the mental health bill under consideration in Minnesota, which would allocate funding specifically for mental health in the construction industry, reflect a growing commitment to addressing this need. When teams feel supported not just physically but emotionally, they're better equipped to manage daily pressures and perform at their best. Investing in their well-being isn't a perk: It's a responsibility.

FORMING A RESILIENT WORKFORCE

So, how do you cultivate resilience within your workforce? It starts with leadership. Resilient teams are often a reflection of resilient leaders — those who model steadiness in uncertainty and remain grounded in a clear sense of purpose. One of the most powerful qualities these leaders bring to the table is hope. While they don't ignore the realities of the moment, they maintain a deep belief that progress is possible, that challenges can be overcome and better days are ahead. This kind of outlook isn't just optimistic — it's strategic. When leaders consistently communicate a sense of possibility, it builds morale, strengthens trust, and inspires people to stay engaged even when the road gets tough. Hope, in this context, becomes a leadership asset — one that energizes teams and helps them keep moving forward with clarity and conviction.

Another crucial element is adopting a builder's mindset. Leaders who think this way don't view problems as roadblocks — they see them as projects to be solved. They focus on finding solutions, taking initiative, and empowering their teams to do the same. This mindset requires a foundation of transparency and trust. When challenges arise, resilient leaders foster an environment where issues can be openly discussed and addressed collaboratively. By prioritizing honest communication, they build the kind of trust that helps teams

stay grounded and united during difficult periods.

In today's fast-moving business landscape, speed and agility are just as important. Effective leaders must be able to make timely decisions and adapt quickly as conditions change. This isn't about acting impulsively; it's about cultivating a mindset of urgency and a willingness to shift course when needed. Agility allows construction businesses to respond to challenges in real time, seize opportunities as they emerge, and remain competitive in an unpredictable environment.

Maintaining a long-term perspective is just as important as addressing immediate challenges. Resilient leaders stay anchored to their core values and overarching goals, even when day-to-day pressures are high. They recognize that meaningful progress rarely comes from one big breakthrough, but as the result of small, deliberate steps taken consistently over time. This steady approach not only builds momentum but also reinforces a sense of direction and purpose, helping teams stay focused and optimistic even in uncertain conditions.

Just as important is the ability to cultivate resilience, both personally and within your team. Setbacks are inevitable, but resilient leaders view them not as failures, but as opportunities to learn and adapt. By reflecting on what didn't go as planned and adjusting accordingly, individuals and organizations can grow stronger through adversity. This mindset also includes taking ownership of your own well-being. Leading effectively requires energy, clarity, and emotional stamina — and that starts with making sure you're prioritizing rest, health, and the mental focus needed to guide others forward.

Building a resilient construction workforce isn't just about surviving the next challenge — it's about creating something sustainable for the long term. This kind of resilience requires a vision that looks beyond today's projects and prioritizes the lasting well-being and growth of both your people and your business. It means fostering a culture of continuous improvement, where learning and adaptation are embedded into daily operations. And it means recognizing that leadership isn't a solo pursuit. The most effective leaders surround themselves with a strong network of mentors, peers, and trusted team members who offer perspective, support, and accountability along the way.

FUTURE-THINKING LEADERSHIP

Ultimately, leading through headwinds demands a multifaceted approach. It calls for clear-eyed awareness of the economic landscape, a commitment to evolving workforce needs – including mental health and inclusion – and the steady presence of core leadership values like hope, adaptability, and integrity. When leaders focus on these pillars, they're not just managing a workforce; they're building one that can weather change, rise to challenges, and help drive the business forward for years to come. After all, the most enduring structures aren't built in haste: They're built with vision, care, and a solid foundation.

The same holds true for your people. 



About the Author

Matthew Mathison is a seasoned entrepreneur, investor, and co-founder of [MBL Partners](#) with over 25 years of experience transforming businesses globally. Matthew is fueled by an unwavering commitment to problem-solving, conquering challenges, and empowering the next generation of leaders.

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