

Member Communication Experience

How to Set Up New Hires for Success

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The construction industry has a bad habit, and it's been around far too long.

Construction companies will throw new hires into the deep end after only a couple of days on the job without much formal training or onboarding. If you haven't seen it personally, then you've at least heard about it.

It's this concept of "sink or swim" training where industry leaders figure we'll just throw them into the thick of it and see if they can handle this work. No life vest, no instruction manual, just a trial by fire. Unfortunately, more often than not, they sink.

Not only have I seen it happen firsthand, but it's also happened to me. I remember being new in the industry. I was working for a residential remodeling company at the time, and within my first week I was sent out on my own to a project and asked to check the specifications on some materials that were delivered.

Now, looking back on it with the experience and knowledge I've obtained, that's a simple task. But at the time, I had no idea what was right or wrong, or how to find out that information.

I remember calling other people I worked with and them being too busy to answer a phone call. It took hours for me to get an answer and finally check off a simple task.

On top of that, my production manager was frustrated with the fact it took me so long to complete a simple task. I felt confused, alone, and angry.

Let's be real: This approach is not training. It's a gamble.



When a new employee begins to struggle, especially early in a new role, they don't just disappear. Often, they get frustrated, and resentment can begin to grow.

They start to make mistakes and become disengaged in their work. They begin to dread their workday until they eventually walk away or get fired because they aren't performing to standards. The bigger picture to remember: the construction industry is facing a serious labor shortage. So why make it harder on ourselves by setting up new hires to fail?

The cost of turnover isn't just a number. It's lost productivity, rework, and project delays that can be a serious hit to a company's reputation. When someone leaves because they weren't given the tools to succeed, we don't only lose a worker. We miss out on the potential they have to help our business thrive.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

The best construction companies know that training isn't a waste of time or resources, rather it's an investment. Taking the time to properly onboard and mentor new hires doesn't truly slow a company down when it comes to progress. In the long run, everything speeds up. A well-trained employee makes fewer mistakes, works more efficiently, and tends to stick around longer.


I've worked with plenty of leaders who get this. They don't just throw people in and hope for the best. They assign team members or find time to coach, guide, and give new hires the support they need to grow.

And you know what usually happens as a result of that time and effort? Those companies build strong teams, deliver better projects, and create an environment where people actually want to work.

If we really want to put an end to this sink-or-swim mentality we need to do better. We can do that by providing:

- » **Structured onboarding:** Every new hire should have a clear, organized introduction to their role. This isn't about babysitting, it's about setting expectations and providing a solid foundation.
- » **Hands-on mentorship:** Pair new employees with experienced team members who can guide them in their role. Learning on the job is great, and it absolutely has its place in the construction world. But in addition to that, having someone in your corner makes all the difference.
- » **Clear feedback and growth plans:** Create a space for new hires to garner feedback on their performance and what's coming on the horizon. If they're struggling, don't just leave them to figure it out. Teach them, and give them space to correct.

The reality is, most people don't just "figure it out" in high-stakes environments like the world of construction. We wouldn't expect a first-time carpenter to frame a house without training, so why do we expect project managers, superintendents, and estimators to excel without guidance and training?

The best companies don't leave the success of their people up to chance. They build it – one trained, mentored employee at a time. 



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