

MERIT SHOP

# CONTRACTOR

WISCONSIN

**KEEPING YOUR  
WORKFORCE HEART HEALTHY**

**FOUR TECHNOLOGIES  
TO IMPROVE YOUR  
BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

# WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

**OVERCOMING THE APPREHENSION  
ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP**

**CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE  
OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT TIPS**

ALSO INSIDE:  
**HOLDING GROUND  
ON THE PRO ACT**  
PAGE 7

**NEW MEMBERS**  
PAGE 22



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Website: [abcwi.org](http://abcwi.org)  
ABC National: [abc.org](http://abc.org)



Merit Shop Contractor Wisconsin is published six times annually by Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, Inc. (ISSN# 10642978) 5330 Wall St., Madison, WI 53718. Periodicals Postage Paid, Madison, WI and other additional mailing offices. (UPS 340-650). Subscription price is \$50 per year.

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**FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

# Holding Ground on the PRO Act

**THE PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE (PRO) ACT IS BACK.** If the PRO Act becomes law, it will result in dramatic changes to our labor laws. This “gift” to organized labor is a compilation of many of the worst union-labor initiatives that lacked congressional support or were rejected by the courts over many decades.

The PRO Act is an attempt by organized labor to stack the deck in its favor. No one has taken away the rights of unions to organize, but membership is not strong. The average worker’s favor for unions has fallen drastically over the past several decades. Therefore, labor unions are looking to Congress for a helping hand to grow dues-paying member numbers; something unions have been unable to do on their own using free-market principles.

The measure would essentially overhaul the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), instituting the most changes to the NLRA since the Taft-Harley Act restricted union power in 1947. The bill has no regard for employers – whether union or non-union – most workers, consumers or the economy, which will all be affected by these numerous fundamental changes to our country’s labor laws.

If the PRO Act becomes law, it will:

- Effectively invalidate state “right to work” laws affecting 27 states, including Wisconsin.
- Interfere with the ability of employers to secure labor relations advice on issues.
- Limit the ability of employers to contest union election petitions and allow unions to engage in coercive tactics long held to be unlawful.
- Force employers to provide unions with electronic employee lists within two days after the NLRB directs an election.
- Allow for card checks to be used when employers are accused of interfering with elections, which removes the workers’ rights to secret ballot (and places a burden of proof on the employer).
- Legalize secondary strikes and boycotts.
- Redefine the definition of “supervisor” to include more frontline leaders as “employees” covered by the NLRA.
- Broaden the definition of “employee,” making it difficult for workers to be classified as independent contractors.
- Make it illegal to permanently replace striking workers.

- Expand fines and penalties associated with unfair labor practices and, in some cases, impose personal liability on company officers and directors.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. There’s much more. You’d be hard pressed to find a piece of legislation that is worse for businesses than the PRO Act.

As expected, the measure quickly passed the U.S. House of Representatives on March 9 and faces a much tougher road in the U.S. Senate, where the filibuster, and its 60-vote threshold, is expected to be utilized by Republicans to block passage. We don’t expect much movement by either side and the filibuster will have to remain intact to defeat the PRO Act.

But the push by union bosses is strong. They understand if they can’t get the PRO Act passed now, with control of the House and Senate and a president who has promised to be the strongest labor president in our nation’s history, then when should they expect it? As such, union leaders are vehemently supporting ending the filibuster and have even reportedly threatened to withhold 2022 support of Democratic Party candidates if they don’t get this legislation passed.

Subsequently, if the measure is blocked, you can expect various parts of the PRO Act, such as ending right-to-work, to be inserted into infrastructure legislation or be introduced as separate pieces of legislation, which may make their way onto the president’s desk.

This is going to be a long, hard fight to hold the filibuster and prevent this latest union power grab. Unfortunately, that will only be the first step in fighting off these disastrous initiatives.

— John Mielke

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# KEEPING YOUR WORKFORCE

By Liz Jirschele,  
Communications Director,  
and Cassandra Rix,  
Development Director,  
American Heart Association, Madison

# HEART HEALTHY

**I**t's no secret that construction careers are hard work. They are physically and mentally demanding. Requiring early start times, long hours, strenuous activity and often, eating what's on hand rather than what's healthy. We also know that cardiovascular disease disproportionately affects construction. Approximately 1 out of 25 construction workers are diagnosed with cardiovascular disease. That's more than double the number of people who attended the Rose Bowl.

The good news is there are many ways to prevent cardiovascular disease and stroke. Eating smart, moving more and paying attention to your overall mental health and wellbeing are some good places to start. Here are several action steps that should be shared with your entire team to encourage them to be heart healthy.

## FACT:

1 OF 4

CONSTRUCTION  
WORKERS ARE OBESE

1 IN 25 HAVE  
DIABETES



### Heart health starts with healthy food choices.

You don't need to be a chef to create nutritious, heart-healthy meals your family will love. Learn what to look for at the grocery store, restaurants, your workplace and any eating occasion.

You may be eating plenty of food, but your body may not be getting the nutrients it needs to be healthy. Nutrient-rich foods have minerals, protein, whole grains and other nutrients but are lower in calories. They may help you control your weight, cholesterol and blood pressure.

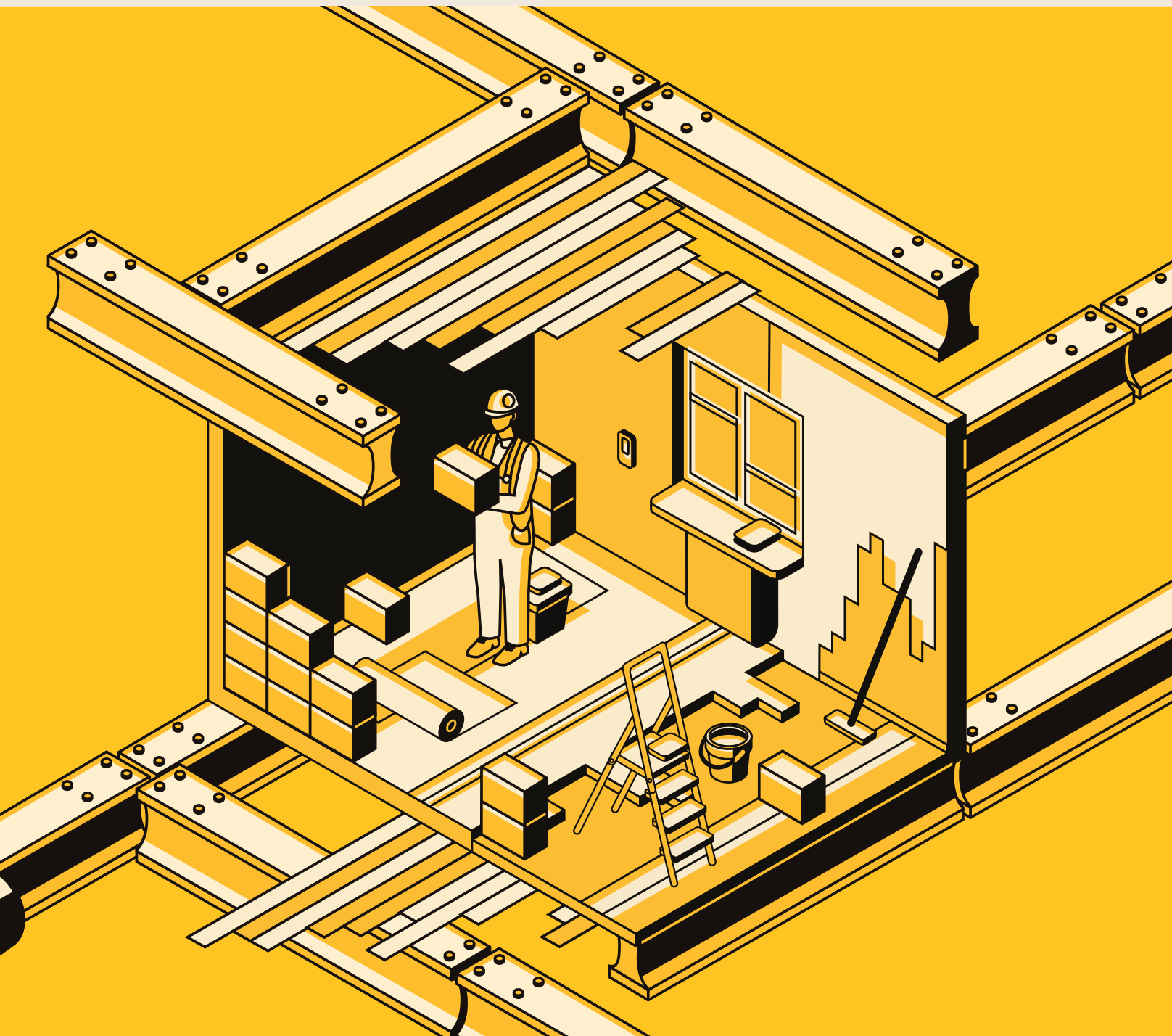
Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry and fish, nuts and legumes and using non-tropical vegetable oils are important items to include in an overall healthy diet. It is also important to limit saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, red meat, sweet and sugar-sweetened beverages.

While this sounds great, we also understand how difficult it can be to get in nutritious foods when you are constantly on the go. Sometimes when we run out of time, we grab a quick and easy alternative, and most times, in the form of processed food.

Most foods are processed – changed, prepared or packaged – in some way before we eat them. They fall somewhere on a spectrum from minimally processed (like salad mix, bagged dry beans, roasted nuts or frozen fruits and vegetables) to what some nutrition experts refer to as highly or ultra-processed (like ready-to-eat meals and snack foods).

Some processed foods have ingredients added, like sweeteners, oils, colors and preservatives. Some are fortified to add nutrients like fiber, calcium or vitamin D. Some are simply prepped for convenience (washed or chopped) or packaged to





last longer. Processes such as pasteurizing milk, canning fruits and vegetables, and vacuum packing meats help prevent spoilage and increase food safety. Even foods labeled “natural” or “organic” can be processed.

If you eat a lot of highly processed foods, you risk getting too much sodium, added sugars and unhealthy fats. Highly processed foods contribute almost 60% of calories and 90% of added sugars in the American diet, according to a 2016 research study.

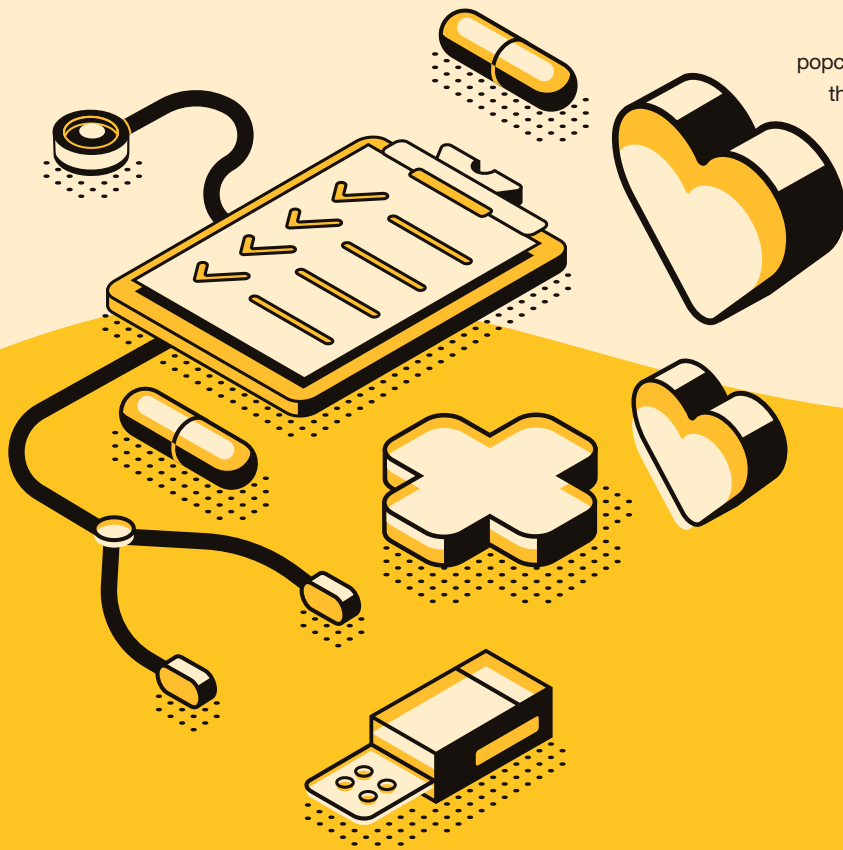
So what can you do if want to eat healthier? While it’s tempting to throw all “processed food” under the bus, the reality is you can’t avoid it entirely... nor should you! The key is knowing how to

identify healthier processed foods and make smart choices in the grocery store and restaurants.

In order to choose healthier processed foods, try to stick to these tips.

- **Read food labels.** This is the best way to know exactly what’s in a processed food. Choose products without a lot of sodium, added sugars, and unhealthy fats.

- **Enjoy frozen and canned produce.** Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are convenient and affordable options that can be just as nutritious as fresh. Look for varieties without salty sauces and sugary syrups.



popcorn. Package up these healthier snacks in small containers and they're just as convenient as that bag of chips!

Processed foods can contain a lot of sodium as well, contributing to poor health. Breads, pizza, sandwiches, cold cuts and cured meats, soups, burritos and tacos, savory snacks, chicken, and cheese can contribute high amounts of hidden sodium into your diet.

And don't rely on taste alone. Foods with excess sodium sometimes don't taste salty, like some breads, cereals and pastries.

FACT: **1** OF ALL CONSTRUCTION WORKERS DON'T GET ENOUGH EXERCISE. **2**

- **Look for the Heart-Check mark.** The American Heart Association's online Heart-Check mark will help you find packaged foods that can be part a healthy eating pattern. This red and white icon on the package means the food meets specific nutrition requirements for certification.

- **Make smart choices when eating out.** Choose restaurants where food is cooked to order or there are designated healthier menu options. Communication is key. Ask how food is prepared, which items are made to order in-house versus prepackaged, and if you can make substitutions. Request sauces, dressings and condiments on the side so you can decide how much is added.

#### Limit highly processed foods.

- **Cook more meals at home.** You don't have to be a master chef to get your cook on! You can find lots of great recipes and brush up on your cooking skills online. Preparing food at home gives you the control over what's added to it. It can save you money and be a great family bonding time.

- **Swap out highly processed foods with less-processed options.** Some examples: Add fruit to plain oatmeal, cereal and yogurt instead of buying the sweetened or flavored kind. Choose canned and frozen produce without salty sauces and sugary syrups. Slice up leftover roasted chicken or make a light tuna salad for sandwiches instead of using processed deli meat.

- **Grow fruits and vegetables.** If space is a challenge, look at container, indoor or community gardening. You'll love the taste of ultra-fresh produce, and kids may be more likely to try fruits and veggies they've helped grow! If you don't have a green thumb, shop the local farmers' market for fresh seasonal produce.

- **Snack smarter.** Think crunchy nuts and seeds, cut-up veggies for dipping, fruits that hit the sweet spot, and easy homemade

#### Make sure you exercise.

A good starting goal is at least 150 minutes a week, but if you don't want to sweat the numbers, just move more! Find forms of exercise you like and will stick with, and build more opportunities to be active into your routine.

When you can't seem to make time for a full workout, try these no-sweat ways to simply move more. You can find at least 150 minutes each week to get physically active! You can get health benefits even if you split it into a few short bouts of exercise a day. Taking your dog for a walk, going for family walk, getting in a 10 minute workout, parking a little further away at the store and taking the stairs rather than the elevator are some easy ways to get a little more movement into your day.

When you start looking for them, you'll see lots of opportunities to be more active every day and get a few more steps in during everyday activities. Remember, every step counts!

Along with eating right and being active, real health includes getting enough sleep, practicing mindfulness, managing stress, keeping mind and body fit, connecting socially, and more.

#### Manage stress.

Stress plays a big role in the construction industry. With continuous deadlines and endless projects, it is important to take care of your stress levels. More research is needed to determine how stress contributes to heart disease — the leading killer of Americans. But stress may affect behaviors and factors that increase heart disease risk: high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, smoking, physical inactivity and overeating. Some people may choose to drink too much alcohol or smoke cigarettes to "manage" their chronic stress, however these habits can increase blood pressure and may damage artery walls.



And your body's response to stress may be a headache, back strain or stomach pains. Stress can also zap your energy, wreak havoc on your sleep and make you feel cranky, forgetful and out of control.

When stress is constant, your body remains in high gear off and on for days or weeks at a time. Although the link between stress and heart disease isn't clear, chronic stress may cause some people to drink too much alcohol, which can increase your blood pressure and may damage the artery walls.

Managing stress is a good idea for your overall health, and researchers are currently studying whether managing stress is effective for heart disease. A few studies have examined how well treatment or therapies work in reducing the effects of stress on cardiovascular disease. Studies using psychosocial therapies – involving both psychological and social aspects – are promising in the prevention of second heart attacks. After a heart attack or stroke, individuals who feel depressed, anxious or overwhelmed by stress should talk to their doctor or other healthcare professionals.

## FACT: 1 OF 4 CONSTRUCTION WORKERS USE TOBACCO

### Stay away from tobacco.

According to the American Heart Association and the U.S. surgeon general, this is how your body starts to recover when you quit smoking:

- In the first 20 minutes: your blood pressure and heart rate recover from the nicotine-induced spikes.
- After 12 hours: the carbon monoxide levels in your blood return to normal.
- After two weeks: your circulation and lung function begin to improve.
- After one to nine months: clear and deeper breathing gradually returns; you have less coughing and shortness of breath; you regain the ability to cough productively instead of hacking, which cleans your lungs and reduce your risk of infection.
- After one year: your risk of coronary heart disease is reduced by 50 percent.
- After five years: Your risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, and bladder are cut in half. Your risk of cervical cancer and stroke return to normal.
- After 10 years: You are half as likely to die from lung cancer. Your risk of larynx or pancreatic cancer decreases.
- After 15 years: your risk of coronary heart disease is the same as a non-smoker's.

Recently, there has been an uptick in vaping devices that claim to be better for you than cigarettes. No tobacco product is safe, and there's no evidence that they can help you successfully quit

smoking. They may be just as addictive and may contain dangerous levels of nicotine, chemicals, neurotoxins and metals. Talk with your doctor about safe and effective ways to quit smoking and stay tobacco-free.

In order to change your habits, there are some steps you can take.

### 1 Identify Cues.

Something has to trigger a habit, and a cue can be anything. Maybe stress makes you crave chocolate, or the sound of your alarm triggers you to hit the snooze button. Identifying cues helps you understand what puts your habits into motion.

### 2 Disrupt.

Once you know the cues, you can throw bad habits off track. If the alarm cues you to bash the snooze button every morning, put the alarm clock on the other side of the room. Trekking across the cold floor will likely disrupt the snooze habit.

### 3 Replace.

Research shows that replacing a bad behavior with a good one is more effective than stopping the bad behavior alone. The new behavior "interferes" with the old habit and prevents your brain from going into autopilot. Deciding to eat fruit every time your mind thinks "cookie" substitutes a positive behavior for the negative habit.

### 4 Keep It Simple.

It's usually hard to change a habit because the behavior has become easy and automatic. The opposite is true, too: new behaviors can be hard because your brain's basal ganglia, (the "autopilot" part), hasn't taken over this behavior yet. Simplifying new behaviors helps you integrate them into your autopilot routines.

### 5 Think Long-Term.

Habits often form because they satisfy short-term impulses, the way chewing on your nails might immediately calm your nerves. But short-term desires often have long-term consequences, like nasty, splintered, chewed up fingers. Focusing long term while trying to change some habits will help you remember why you're investing the effort.

### 6 Persist.

Research has shown that what you've done before is a strong indicator of what you'll do next. This means established habits are hard to break. But the good news is, if you keep at it, your new behaviors will turn into habits, too. Persistence works. At first it might be painful to get up at 5 AM for that jog, but soon it will be second nature.

Because the American Heart Association sees cardiovascular disease and stroke too often in the construction industry, we have an initiative called Hard Hats with Heart, specifically focused on raising awareness of heart disease among members of the construction community to change the trajectory of our workforce's overall health. [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)



To learn more about Hard Hats with Heart or browse our resources, visit [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

By Kyle Schwarm, ABC of Wisconsin Marketing & Communications Director

# OVERCOMING THE APPREHENSION ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP



With the construction economy and work backlogs remaining strong, the majority of contractors are reporting they would add employees if given the opportunity. One of those opportunities worth exploring is Youth Apprenticeship (YA).

"You don't get too many hiring opportunities where you get somebody who's just so eager to learn and to impress," said Ashley Schumacher, HR workforce specialist with Dave Jones, Inc. "They have so much support from the school and from their parents," she added during a recent ABC of Wisconsin forum.

The school-to-work initiative by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development is on-the-job training following state-approved specifications for students who receive instruction from qualified teachers and skilled worksite mentors. It combines school-based and work-based learning for high school juniors and seniors who want to get a head start on a career or explore a potential career area. It can be a big advantage for students who have an idea of what they want to do but aren't sure if a particular career area is right for them. It also provides employers with a new resource for talent.

It has experienced steady growth in the seven years it has been available in construction. There were 635 students who participated in Wisconsin's Architecture & Construction YA program during the 2020-21 school year, a 17% increase over the previous year. This makes up 12% of all students in 14 YA programs in the state. The number of employers participating in Architecture & Construction YA, however, increased by less than 3% last year.

There are several issues causing apprehension with contractors, mainly centered around the "risky" investment proposition of hiring individuals with no construction experience. While so many contractors need skilled employees with 10 to 15 years of experience, you also have to be willing to invest in youth as well.

"If you're avoiding hiring younger individuals because all you want is a skilled journeyman, you're really missing out," Schumacher said. "We have so many great employees right now, who are apprentices, skilled labor, journeyman foreman, that started out as youth apprentices right out of high school and they were very coachable."

Josh Fassl of the Dane County School Consortium mentioned the common concern he hears is investment related, with contractors saying, "Well, what if I train them really well and then they leave?"

"Odds are if you do that, they're not going to leave," Fassl said. "It's no more an investment in time than hiring a 25-year-old and having to

teach them and re-teach them and retrain them on what is showing up for work and those expectations," Fassl said. "If we start sooner, we can build those better work habits with students ... and help create a better longevity.

"The need for journeymen starts with prepping youth in high school," Fassl added. He is one of 33 YA coordinators across the state ready to assist employers who want to take part in the program.

Fassl said schools identify students who are good fits for various youth apprenticeship positions out there. In most programs, students are provided with well-rounded curriculum to provide exposure to several different trades for a well-rounded experience.

Scott Martin, training and development coordinator at Surburban Enterprises, recommends contractors take advantage of motivated youth.

"If they're that motivated in high school to reach out for a partnership, you know, they're probably going to be a good employee as opposed to someone who's graduated, and their parents are sick of them living in their basement," Martin said. "That's an unmotivated individual that's

IF YOU'RE AVOIDING HIRING YOUNGER INDIVIDUALS BECAUSE ALL YOU WANT IS A SKILLED JOURNEYMAN, YOU'RE REALLY MISSING OUT.

applying for pre-apprentice jobs. If they're motivated in high school to look for this opportunity, they're going to be a good worker, most likely. Typically, if they don't work out for us, they were still effective while they were with us."

"These kids are looking for youth apprenticeship opportunities and they're either going to do it in construction, or if there are not the opportunities in construction, then they'll find it in manufacturing, auto or something like that," said Elizabeth Roddy, ABC of Wisconsin recruitment and training director.

While the DWD seeks to develop more pathways and bridges from youth apprenticeship programs into adult careers, construction already has a ready-made bridge.

*Continued on page 12*



# CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT TIPS

By Elizabeth Roddy, ABC of Wisconsin  
Recruitment & Training Director

Let's face it, we are facing an uphill battle when it comes to recruiting the next generation of skilled professionals into our industry. However, the tide may be changing, and some people are starting to understand the awesome opportunities the construction industry offers. A decade ago, nearly all parents would discourage their children from choosing an apprenticeship over college. Today, more parents are happy to encourage their sons and daughters into the more accepted skilled construction careers.

We have to remember, though, we are in an industry public relations race, and we have to treat this similarly to a marketing campaign. Here are three tips to consider when doing your workforce recruitment:

## 1. Keep it Positive.

We can't continue to lead with all the negatives of our industry, or we will scare off more people than we can ever recruit. Why do you like your job? Why have you continued to work in this industry? What is the neatest thing you have ever worked on? Start there. The military doesn't start off their commercials talking about getting shot at, and similarly, we shouldn't start our marketing out with talking about your two new knees or working in the cold.

## 2. Talk About Long Range Opportunities.

These are not dead-end jobs. This is an industry full of opportunity and potential careers that can take you around the country and in a variety of positions. This next generation is looking for ways to help others and do things to change the world – that is something this industry does every day. Modern society does not exist without the construction industry.

## 3. Financial Benefits

The student loan crisis is real, but with the registered apprenticeship program and/or on-the-job training, there isn't the financial burden of debt. Wages and benefits in our industry are very competitive, and they are continuing to rise as our skilled worker shortage increases. Not to mention, the financial benefits not directly on the paycheck; like fixing their own house, having a company vehicle, and being able to leave work at work.

### How to make connections:

#### Connecting with Your Local School Districts.

Some school districts are easier to work with than others, and some just aren't right fits. Talk with your employees who have kids, and find out the right person to talk to at the school. Check out Youth Apprenticeships (working while still in high school). Offer the school some extra supplies for their classes or invite them to tour a cool job site you are working on.

#### Connecting with Your Community.

Some communities have community-based programs that are specifically related to construction, and they can be a great resource in finding people. Figure out who the "person to know" is who can refer you to the local church or chamber of commerce or Rotary Club where you can make connections.

The skilled worker shortage isn't going to be solved overnight, but if each member can do a few things to encourage individuals to explore what our industry has to offer, we can make some gains in recruiting good, qualified workers into our profession. [abc.wisconsin.gov](http://abc.wisconsin.gov)

**Youth Apprenticeship**  
Continued from page 10

“Unlike some of the other industries out there, construction actually has a registered apprenticeship program that is aligned with youth apprenticeship,” Roddy said.


In addition to overcoming the investment risk aversion, employers also need to provide good mentors who are patient about sharing their talents and remembering that youth apprentices are younger workers who have limits. Contractors also must be conscious about tool restrictions. There are also challenges for students. With some job sites a significant distance from town, many YA students will get the bulk of their work hours in the summer. In addition to transportation, students have to work out a schedule for a real-work environment and remember to be students first. Regardless of the challenges, students all seem to have one common denominator: a passion to learn on the job.

“You don’t get too many hiring opportunities where you get somebody who’s just so eager to learn and to impress,” said Christina Youngwirth, safety specialist at Surburban Enterprises. “They have so much support from the school and from their parents,” she said.

Many ABC of Wisconsin members have worked through the logistics, including the interview process. Interviewing prospective youth apprenticeship students is more like an informal question and answer period, according to Schumacher, who likes to include a jobsite tour as part of the interviewing process.

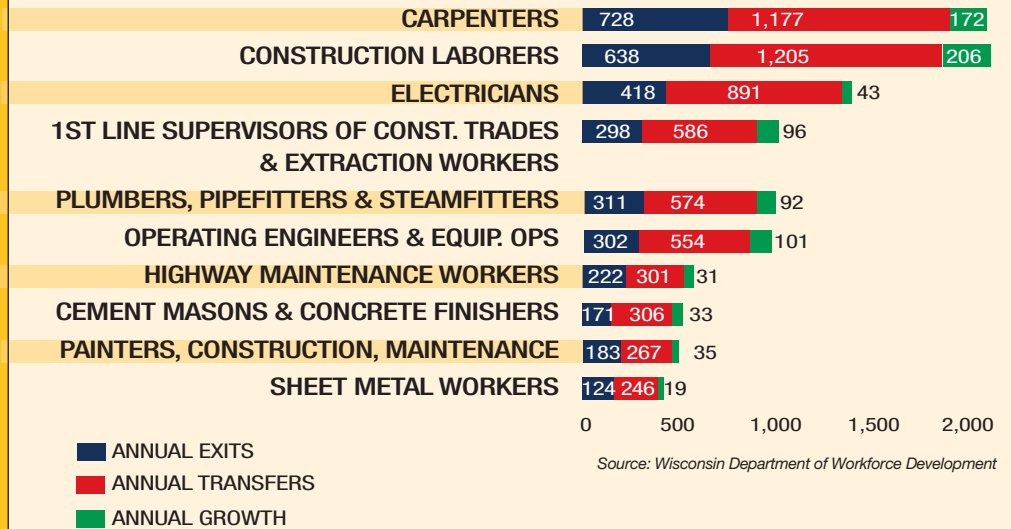
“You don’t really get to know the true person in an interview,” Schumacher said. “It’s awkward for everyone, you’re just back and forth trying to make it comfortable for them, but they’re scared, and all the eyes are on them. Whereas when you’re walking through a job site, it’s twofold; they get to actually see the job but like, ‘Wow, I didn’t know that’s what I was going to be doing,’” she said. “That’s helpful to them.”

Contractors are slowly realizing this is a great way for them to find really good future talent, but as with any recruiting process nowadays, there is some effort required.

“One of the things that really drew me into the difference between youth apprenticeship and other workplace learning programs, is it starts with the employers,” Fassl said. 

# CONSTRUCTION JOB OPENINGS

## WISCONSIN ANNUAL AVERAGE PROJECTED JOB OPENINGS 2016-2026 IN CONSTRUCTION AND EXTRACTION OCCUPATIONS



## WISCONSIN ECONOMIST: CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK IS NOT GREAT

By Kyle Schwarm, ABC of Wisconsin Marketing & Communications Director

Wisconsin’s top labor economist says the outlook has not improved much for the construction labor force and the outlook is not great. Many contractors don’t need to be told that finding good help is not getting any better and may get worse.

“If you think you had problem finding workers and talent before the recession and COVID, you’re going to be in the same situation coming out of it,” said Dennis Winters, chief economist at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

“When all this is over, and we get back to the next normal, we’re going to be facing the same situation we were looking at after the Great Recession; a decade worth of growth,” Winters said. “We were in the biggest expansion of all time until the pandemic hit, and it turned the economy around.”

Wisconsin’s population continues to grow, but the workforce population is flattening as baby boomers continue to retire.

“It may even go negative by 2035. This has never happened before,” Winters said. “There’s not enough people coming in, fast enough, to replace all those people that are retiring.”

In addition to retirements, the stigma associated with construction work has been an issue for decades. Contractors are also concerned the expanded and extended unemployment benefits with a work search waiver are not helping the situation either, as it reduces the desire for some to begin looking for work.

Winters expects construction to grow much faster than the total of all industries but difficulty finding workers will not be going away. Largest areas of construction job openings will be for carpenters, craft laborers and electricians, followed by first-line supervisors of construction trades, according to state data.

# WORKER SUPPLY CONSIDERATIONS

	GENDER (%)	
	MALE	FEMALE
OVERALL LABOR FORCE	52.2%	47.8%
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY	90.8%	9.2%

	RACE/ETHNICITY (%)		
	WHITE	HISPANIC OR LATINO	AFRICAN AMERICAN OR BLACK
OVERALL LABOR FORCE	83.8%	6.2%	5.1%
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY	90.2%	5.3%	2.4%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

The construction industry is facing these labor shortages a lot sooner than other industries.

"This is going to hit you guys [construction] a lot faster than it's going to hit a lot of other industries," Winters said. "You've got to get on your horse and start recruitment of a lot of young folks into this profession."


One solution, Winters said, is to consider more aggressive recruitment for women and minorities, which many contractors are already doing.

"This is a source, use it as a resource. It's a resource that is traditionally untapped."

He also points to automation, which could help construction the way it has helped manufacturing.

"There will be two classes of jobs: those that are augmented by automation; those that are replaced by automation."

Construction ranks as one of the least digitized and least innovative industries in the world with productivity that is in decline. Winters said improving technology could change that.

At some point, contractors may not have a better option. 



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JUST AS WITH OTHER INVESTMENTS, INVESTING IN YOUR PEOPLE SHOULD BE DONE IN A THOUGHTFUL AND PRUDENT MANNER.

# 7 MISTAKES

## *TO AVOID WHEN BUILDING A TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN*

By Jon Augelli, PE, CMA, CSCA and Dave Schwallier, MBA, Lift Consulting



**E**very business owner knows that their employees are their most valuable resource. Savvy business owners know that investments made in their people are not just the right thing to do, but often yield substantial returns as well.

However, just as with other investments, investing in your people should be done in a thoughtful and prudent manner. Developing a sound training and development plan for one's staff is critical to ensure effective employee growth and organizational excellence. Furthermore, the plan should be periodically reviewed and updated as needed to stay abreast of changes in the business, industry and culture.

Clearly, a well laid out plan is important. But what exactly constitutes a good training and development plan? Generally, a well laid out plan has the support of all levels of the organization, creates and strengthens the organization's culture and provides for the individual development needs of the individuals, while simultaneously improving the performance of the organization as a whole.

Simple enough. Many organizations claim to achieve these with their training programs.

Upon closer examination, however, some cracks begin to show. Sometimes these cracks look like projects or initiatives being implemented after multiple hiccups and reaching completion many months behind schedule or failing to be implemented at all. Other times they look like individuals routinely failing to meet expectations and getting away with it for years. Still other cracks manifest in the form of office politicking, people avoiding uncomfortable situations as a matter of habit, and artificial harmony in the organization. One example of artificial harmony is people all agreeing verbally in a meeting on a course of action when they actually disagree, and because they disagree, they then do not follow through.

If any one of these cracks is uncomfortably familiar to a business owner, they likely need to re-evaluate their training and development plan. We have already talked about what a good training and development plan does but building a new plan – or even revising an old one – can be tricky. There are multiple pitfalls organizations often fall prey to. Here are seven of the most common ones:



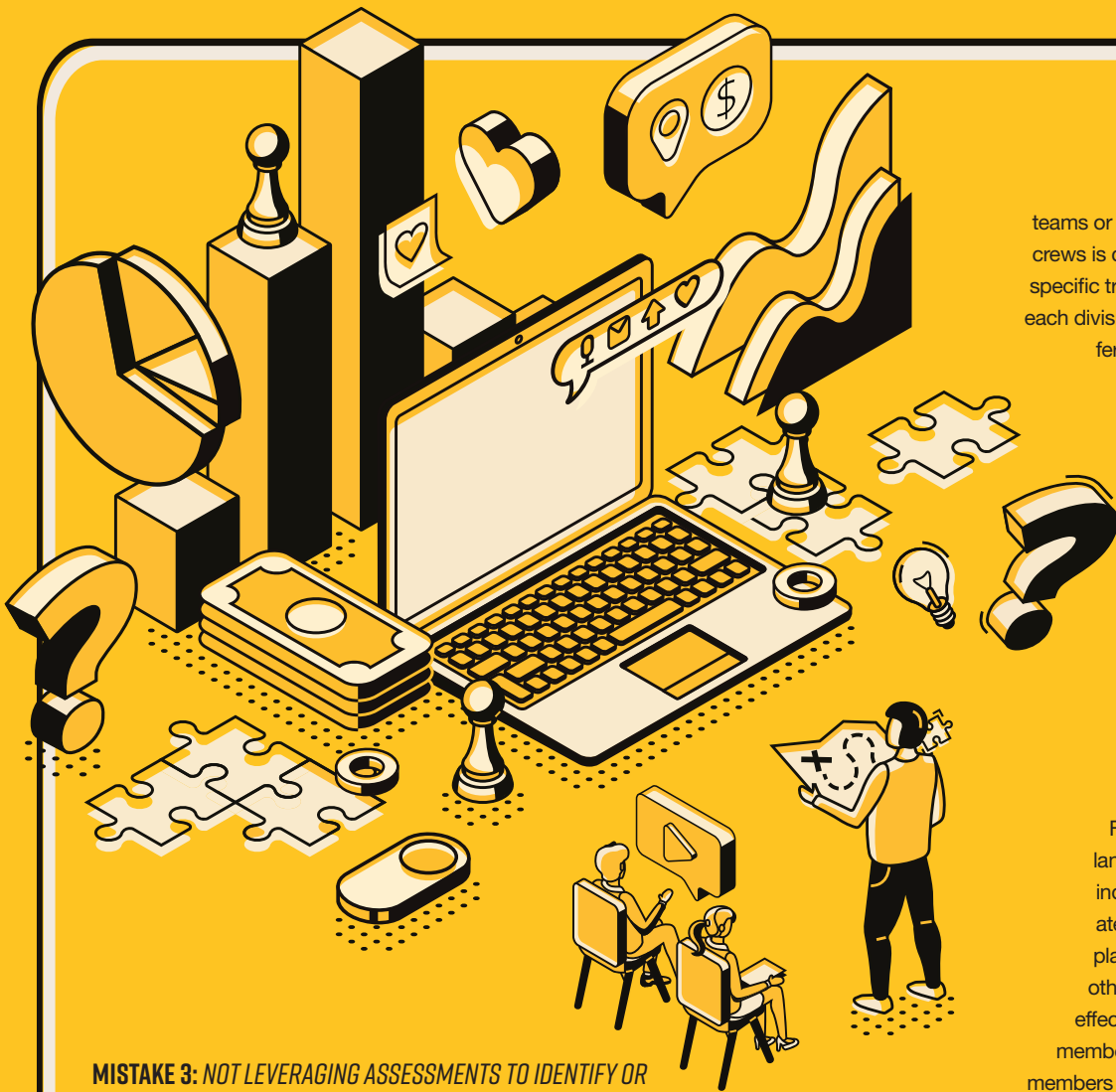
**MISTAKE 1: NOT HAVING CLARITY AND BUY-IN ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FROM EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP.**

Everyone knows how important setting the “tone at the top” is for any initiative. If the leadership does not truly believe in an endeavor and merely pays it lip service, the rest of the organization always knows it. It manifests itself in subtle ways and destroys the likelihood of successful implementation. This applies to training programs as much as it applies to anything else.

To avoid this, it is essential to collaborate with the executive leadership team on the proposed training and development plan and clarify the objectives to help gain their support. Be sure to address and alleviate their concerns and demonstrate the benefits of the plan. Understand what the leadership’s goals and expectations are for a training plan, explain to them your goals and expectations. Then, once all parties are in agreement on the required outcomes, build a plan that accomplishes those. Before rolling out the completed plan, it is very helpful to enlist one or more members of the leadership team to become advocates of the plan within the organization. The vocal backing of one or more members of the leadership team should help drive buy-in with the rest of the organization and greatly increase the likelihood of success.

**MISTAKE 2: FOCUSING TRAINING TOO MUCH ON TACTICAL SKILLS THAT DO NOT SOLVE THE UNDERLYING DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS, SUCH AS COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK.**

Addressing the root cause of problems is the most effective and efficient way of resolving them. Often, problems or poor performance in the workplace, especially with teams, are linked to poor communication and cohesion between the members of a team. Looking further beneath the surface, one often finds a lack of trust between individuals as the root cause of those issues. The foundation of the most effective organizational training and development programs focus on fostering trust between members of the team, building critical communication skills, and creating the sense of cohesion. By establishing an interpersonal foundation built on trust and effective communication between team members, you will create a team that is both ready to learn more tactical knowledge and to hold its members accountable for implementing that knowledge.



**MISTAKE 3: NOT LEVERAGING ASSESSMENTS TO IDENTIFY OR CONFIRM INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS.**

Anyone who has ever been part of any team can tell you that each member has different strengths and weaknesses. Every individual is unique. Part of what makes teams so effective is their ability to play off all the individuals within the team so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Likewise, successful training programs begin by first objectively assessing each individual using independent aptitude assessments to remove biases and confirm management assumptions. The results of these assessments should be used in conjunction with management's experience to develop individualized training and coaching plans for each team member.

In addition to assessing individual aptitude, behavioral assessments (such as DiSC) are particularly useful when it comes to understanding individuals' preferred communication, problem solving and work styles. Better understanding of these can improve communication, team dynamics and can give management insights on the most effective ways to give feedback and coaching to individuals.

**MISTAKE 4: NOT CREATING A COMMON LANGUAGE TO COACH TO.**

Feedback and coaching are made more effective by implementing a common language throughout the organization. This is especially true of organizations that often use multi-division

teams or where the composition of teams or crews is constantly shifting. Even though the specific training and development plan for each division, and each individual, may be different based on the needs identified by management and the assessments mentioned earlier, the core training and development program across the organization should use common terms, phrases and solutions that can be consistently referred to and understood by all individuals. This improves communication with all team members and can even become ingrained in the organization's culture over time.

Furthermore, having a common language across all departments and individuals allows for more immediate coaching and feedback to take place, not just from managers, but from other members of the team. If you have effectively built the trust with individual members of the team we alluded to earlier, members of the team may even be able to coach and give feedback to one another. The team may begin to hold itself accountable rather than relying solely on management.

**MISTAKE 5: ESTABLISHING GREAT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES, BUT NOT REINFORCING THE MATERIAL.**

It should come as no surprise that our knowledge atrophies quickly after completing training. Studies show that we retain only about 25% of the information we are presented within six days of learning it. Anyone who has ever tried to do geometry only a few years after their high school geometry class can relate to this. Professional training and development are no different. An effective training and development plan should constantly reinforce the material and provide opportunities to coach individuals in real time to improve behavior and engrain the lessons. A key aspect of this is ensuring supervisors have both the knowledge and the techniques needed to make the material part of regular team and individual interactions. Tying back into our last point about a common language, they need to know the common terms, phrases, and solutions taught and be able to properly identify when and how to discuss these concepts with their teams. The material should be included in weekly meetings with team and crew members and integrated into the normal coaching and mentoring aspects of the manager's role.



## **MISTAKE 6: NOT HOLDING PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR IMPROVEMENT.**

Individual accountability for one's own development and improvement is essential for the success of any training program. If individuals feel no responsibility for their own improvement, and are not held accountable by the organization, even the most robust training programs will do little to improve performance. Accountability must be a priority

within your training program, within your organization and within individual teams. Supervisors should use the common language developed during training to coach people on what they should be doing and how they should be improving. They must correct the improper behaviors as they see them. If it becomes apparent that they are continuing to exhibit the wrong behavior, managers must remind individuals every time their behavior is not changing.

A training and development program that has effectively established a common language and fostered trust and cohesion within the organization has an advantage when it comes to this aspect. Organizations with a strong team culture rooted in trust and communication often find teams holding their members accountable without relying solely on the management to perform this function. The feeling of accountability to one's fellow team or crew members can be significantly more motivating to individuals to spur actual change than the feeling of accountability to one's manager or organization.



## **MISTAKE 7: NOT FOCUSING ENOUGH ON SALES.**

While it may not seem intuitive at first, great organizations instill a sales mentality at all levels of the organization. Effective training and development programs engrain all members of an organization with some common, foundational sales skills, and an understanding of the organization's unique value proposition and ideal client profiles. At a minimum, every individual in the organization should be able to deliver an effective 30-second commercial for the organization or their division so that they can build intrigue with any potential prospects and identify leads. Furthermore, educating employees on the value propositions, ideal client profiles and solutions other departments or divisions provide can improve inter-organization referrals, cross-selling and upselling. Teaching people the right questions to ask when working onsite, or with other contractors or subcontractors, can reveal previously undiscovered opportunities such as referrals to bid or partner on other opportunities. Everyone in the organization will benefit from the additional growth brought about from integrating basic sales concepts and techniques into an organization's training and development plan. A rising tide lifts all boats.

An effective training and development plan is the cornerstone of a great organization. While many organizations believe they have an effective plan, closer observation reveals a host of issues symptomatic of a plan that is deficient in one or more key aspects. When creating or reviewing your plan, make sure to avoid the common pitfalls we addressed here. Doing so will improve the quality of your training and development plan and ensure an effective investment in your most valuable resource: your people. [ABC Wisconsin](#)



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# 4 TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS OPERATIONS

## A TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

By Matt Abeles, ABC National Vice President, Construction Technology and Innovation

**I**n the last two decades, smartphones have gone from a luxury to a necessity. Cars have gone from almost exclusively internal combustion to widespread electric motors. But today, construction technology is advancing at an exponential rate. From all-inclusive platforms like Procore to niche providers like Flashtract, there is a technological solution on the market that will improve your work, increase your number of bids and make your company more competitive.

Here are four products from ABC National's Technology Alliance that could provide a nice return on investment and may even make the job run more smoothly for your workforce.

### REAL TIME RISK SOLUTIONS

**Real Time Risk Solutions** is a mobile-first application for performing observations, filling out forms, conducting toolbox talks, collaborating to correct open risk issues, and accessing critical documents (even while offline). Not only does the software compile and create the necessary reports, but it also provides top-notch analytic views, allowing further insights into what is happening on site.

- Turn existing material digital or pick from an extensive library of content curated by industry leaders.

- Record and submit photos, notes and all pertinent information into the hands of those who need it most, in real time.
  - Work with third parties to turn forms into QR Codes and let others outside or inside of your organization submit the necessary information.
  - Save time and money by streamlining safety and reporting processes using this powerful application.
- Contractors can get started easily and quickly. In fact, companies are usually up and running within an hour) and have an attentive support team from Real Time Risk Solutions to assist in the process.



**THE FIRST STEP  
TO EMBRACING  
TECHNOLOGY IS TO  
START SMALL BY TESTING  
THE TECHNOLOGY ON  
ONE OR TWO PROJECTS  
BEFORE ROLLING IT  
OUT ACROSS ALL JOBS.**

## PROEST

Many contractors are still using Excel spreadsheets for estimating rather than industry-specific estimating software. There are two main problems with spreadsheets, however: efficiency and accuracy. Manually performing estimates and takeoffs requires a lot of time, and studies show that spreadsheets often contain errors.

Contractors should consider ProEst for one simple reason: bids need to be competitive. A competitive bid is an accurate bid, and the more accurate bids you submit, the more jobs you'll be awarded.

By using estimating software like ProEst, contractors can save time. ProEst users typically see a 51.7% reduction in the time it takes to create an estimate, as well as an overall improvement in the accuracy of bids.

ProEst's user-friendly interface allows contractors to easily generate error-free estimates from your data. The company has also published its construction costbook for more than 40 years, providing contractors with the information needed to create accurate estimates.

ProEst is not just estimating software, however, because estimating doesn't happen in a vacuum. The all-in-one platform combines cost estimating with digital takeoffs, bid management, CRM, proposal generation and reporting to create one streamlined workflow. After a bid is awarded, ProEst seamlessly integrates with

many popular project management and accounting software, so you can save time and avoid costly typos during data transfer.

Efficiency and accuracy are great benefits, but so is convenience. ProEst is a cloud-based estimating platform, which means you can sign in, access project data and complete work from any computer or mobile device.

In 2020, ProEst users easily transitioned to working remotely. When shutdowns forced some estimators out of the office, they were able to access all their projects from their home computers and collaborate in real time with other members of their teams.

With cloud-based technology, multiple estimators can work on the same bid at once without having to save files and send them to other team members. Changes are automatically saved to the cloud, so you never have to worry about forgetting to save your work or losing data to a computer crash.

In an increasingly virtual world, you need the power to create accurate bids from any device—and ProEst provides that competitive edge.

ABC of Wisconsin member Corporate Contractors Inc. made the switch to ProEst in 2018.

"With ProEst, our people can work on the same estimate anywhere, at any time," said Steve Ebling, pre-construction manager of CCI. "That's extremely useful."

**AUTODESK BUILD**

Autodesk Construction Cloud recently launched a new project and field management solution called Autodesk Build, which provides construction teams with a single solution for project management, quality, safety, cost and closeout by connecting data, workflows and teams in one highly configurable environment.

Autodesk Build is easy to deploy and use. It unifies best-in-class features from BIM 360 and PlanGrid and adds powerful new capabilities to make information immediately available across the entire construction team. Owners, general contractors and specialty contractors can enhance project quality by relying on Autodesk Build for real-time visibility that keeps teams in sync, improves collaboration, mitigates project risk and enables data-driven decision making.

"Our teams need the right technology to achieve outstanding results," said Ted Jennings, senior VDC manager of Barton Malow Holdings. "By bringing together the best of BIM 360 and PlanGrid and adding even more project management firepower, Autodesk Build is both a simple and robust solution. Connecting our teams and data across projects allows us to supercharge our work with more streamlined documents and safety and cost management all while delivering on our quality standards."

With Autodesk Build, construction teams have the power to manage projects more efficiently, maximize cross-team collaboration, digitize and centralize document management and streamline cost management.

Autodesk Build is a subscription-based product, which includes:

- Autodesk Docs – A centralized document management solution that underpins Autodesk Build's Common Data Environment (CDE), providing users with seamless navigation and integrated workflows to create a single source of truth across the project lifecycle.
- Insights – Analytics capabilities that support the ability to collect, interpret and export project data; encompasses Construction IQ artificial intelligence to identify and mitigate risk.
- Administration – Project setup tools, including centralized user management and permissions capabilities, templates and single-sign-on.

**FLASHTRACT**

Flashtract is a cloud-based billing solution that was built specifically for construction and works alongside contractors' existing technologies like accounting programs, ERP systems and project management tools.

Flashtract eliminates the cumbersome paper processes for general contractors and subcontractors. It simplifies payment applications by automatically generating lien waivers, preventing unapproved change orders and eliminating billing errors.

General contractors start to see efficiencies in their back offices almost immediately after implementation. Once they have gone through onboarding, contractors simply set up a project and invite subcontractors via email. Flashtract handles all training and enables subs to efficiently use the platform. From there, the billing process becomes largely automated through preset values within each document and custom approval workflows.

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Flashtract's goal is to eliminate all manual and paper-based billing and payment processes for every contractor. Flashtract has made the traditional flow of billing paperwork getting lost or going to the wrong person or place a thing of the past. Stakeholders and approvers are notified as soon as documents are received and ready for new action. This saves countless hours a week per project for general contractors and makes the end of the month manageable.

From the other side of the process, Flashtract maintains a 100% adoption rate with subcontractors. Subcontractors simply take a few minutes to create an account, at which point they can automatically generate billing documents and create custom forms for each of their general contractors. This gets them paid faster and keeps their books balanced and up to date.

Flashtract set-up takes just a few hours and each person using the platform has access to a real person for custom support. Flashtract has a five-star rating for customer service, and a few review highlights include, "outstanding software and customer service! two thumbs up" and "supportive team at Flashtract... strong desire to help make their software suit your needs."

### Embracing Technology

The first step to embracing technology is to start small by testing the technology on one or two projects before rolling it out across all jobs. Get buy-in from everyone, especially the end-user. Assign a technology champion who is responsible for successful implementation. Finally, after you have done the due diligence on your challenges and selected the best technology to address them, strategize your roll-out to meet your end-users where they are. Some might be digital natives and can pick up the technology easily with minimal training. Some might need more guidance. Overall, let your team be a part of the full process and get their feedback, as this will also create change agents.

ABC National's Technology Alliance can help you adopt new technologies and solutions for your business. Any of the four companies in this article can provide value to your company, help you innovate, win contracts and be more profitable. 

For questions on any of these companies or the Technology Alliance in general, please contact Josef Burkart at [burkart@abc.org](mailto:burkart@abc.org). Visit [abc.org/Membership/Tech-Marketplace](http://abc.org/Membership/Tech-Marketplace) for discounts on these and many other tech products.



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Waukesha, May 20
- **QUALIFIED RIGGER & CRANE SIGNAL PERSON TRAINING**  
Pewaukee, May 21
- **FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING**  
Eau Claire, May 24
- **PROJECT COORDINATOR: CONSTRUCTION PROJECT DELIVERY**  
Online, May 25
- **SAFETY BREAKFAST**  
Online, May 26
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Online, June 3
- **WEBINAR: COVID IMMUNITY – NOT IMMUNIZATION: A FURTHER LOOK AT THE NEW BROAD COVID IMMUNITY LAW FOR BUSINESSES IN WISCONSIN**  
Online, June 10
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Pewaukee, June 11
- **CONFINED SPACES FOR CONSTRUCTION**  
Madison, June 14
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Fox Lake, June 23
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## MARCH 2021

### • Bontempo Plumbing & Drain Cleaning

*Chris Bontempo*

3954 S. Lipton Ave.

St. Francis, WI 53235

**Phone:** 414-403-6585

**Description:** Plumbing Contractor

**Sponsor:** Jay Zahn, Hausmann-Johnson Insurance

Beam Club Members-to-date: 51

### • Carr Valley Electric

*Grant Westerman*

442 S. Albert Ave.

Reedsburg, WI 53941

**Phone:** 608-415-3556

**Description:** Electrical Contractor

**Sponsor:** Scott Truehl, Friede & Associates, LLC

Beam Club Members-to-date: 13

### • Lindquist Electric, Inc.

*Alan Granley*

500 E. Cloverland Drive

Ironwood, WI 49938

**Phone:** 906-932-5346

**Description:** Electrical Contractor

**Sponsor:** Steve Klessig, Keller, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 58

### • Mindful Staffing Solutions, LLC

*Olivia Xaysombath*

111700 W. Lake Park Drive

Milwaukee, WI 53224

**Phone:** 833-414-6463

**Description:** Staffing & Employment Services

**Sponsor:** Greg Jones, Dave Jones, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 32

## APRIL 2021

### • Chippewa Concrete Services, Inc.

*Barry Bohman*

3030 110th St.

Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

**Phone:** 715-723-5004

**Description:** Specialty Contractor - Concrete

**Sponsor:** Bruce Freeland, Indianhead Insurance Agency

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1

### • Croell, Inc.

*Brad Rugg*

P.O. Box 2046

La Crosse, WI 54602

**Phone:** 608-781-3200

**Description:** Concrete Supplier

**Sponsor:** Brian Wieser, Wieser Borthers General Contractor, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 51.5

### • Fickett Structural Solutions, Inc.

*Andrew Fickett*

3148 Deming Way, Ste. 160

Middleton, WI 53562

**Phone:** 608-831-3238

**Description:** Associate Member – Engineering

**Sponsor:** Sam Daniels, Daniels General Contractor

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1.5

### • H.I.S. Comp., LLC

*Mary Schwartz*

5700 County Road K

Hartford, WI 53027

**Phone:** 262-644-5297

**Description:** Specialty Contractor – Thermal and Moisture Protection

**Sponsor:** Josh Thull, JRT Top Notch Roofs, LLC

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1

### • Petersen Companies, Inc.

*Mark Petersen*

7560 Poplar Drive

P.O. Box 966

Minocqua, WI 54548

**Phone:** 715-350-7124

**Description:** Specialty Contractor – Site Work

**Sponsor:** Kyle Howard, Howard Bros., Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1

### • Selzer-Ornst Construction Company

*Matthew Tadisch*

6222 W. State St.

Milwaukee, WI 53213

**Phone:** 414-722-2034

**Description:** General Contractor

**Sponsor:** Marc Flood, Hausmann-Johnson Insurance

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1

### • USI Insurance Services

*Andrew Sokol*

711 Eisenhower Drive

Kimberly, WI 54136

**Phone:** 920-481-2071

**Description:** Associate – Insurance

**Sponsor:** Dave Murphy, PDC – Electrical Contractors

Beam Club Members-to-date: 17



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— Amy Fischer, Owner/President,  
Fischer Construction, LLC  
Brookfield, Wis.

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