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INTO PEAK PERFORMERS

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HISTORICAL TIMELINE**
THE FIRST 50 YEARS

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DIVERSE,
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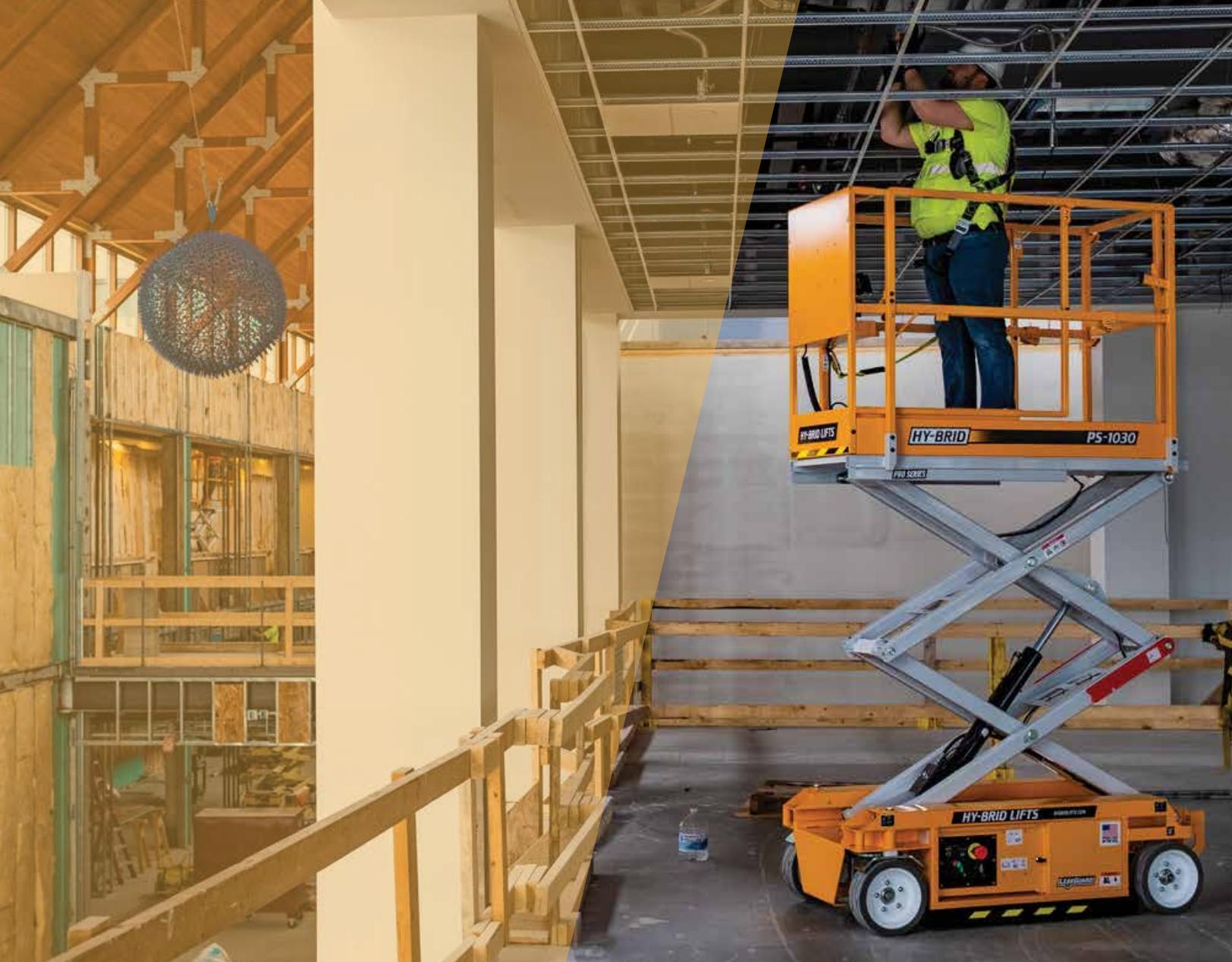
**DIVERSITY IN THE
CONSTRUCTION
WORKFORCE**

ISSUE

**WE SHOULD BE
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OUR
FUTURE WORKFORCE**
PAGE 5



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THE WORKFORCE ISSUE

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ABC National: abc.org



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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We should be optimistic about our future workforce



IT'S INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT WE NOW HAVE FIVE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS IN OUR WORKFORCE. It's hard to believe, but traditionalists, born between 1927 and 1945, still make up about 3% of the workforce today.

Sometimes referred to as "The Greatest Generation," these traditionalists were raised with strict rules and high expectations. This resulted in highly-motivated individuals, with a strong work ethic who were good at attaining goals. With the bar set so high, it's a tough generation to be compared with.

It seems that each older generation likes to think its youth are riding on the coattails of the generation that preceded it. Fair or unfair, it can lead to very broad generalizations about members of a generation or age group.

The Millennials seem to get hit on this quite a bit. Millennials earned more college degrees than any other generation in history. They often appeared to be less open to opportunities in the construction trades. Many of them emerged from school with no real industry experience and a big load of college debt.

While our industry has done a poor job replacing Baby Boomers with Millennials and Gen X'ers, we may be in a better position with the latest generation to come of age. Gen-Z does not place the same emphasis on the necessity of college for starting a career. This generation is more open to alternative methods – outside of traditional higher education – to acquire the knowledge and skills they need. They seek more real-world experiences to reach their personal goals.

Gen-Z'ers are said to be looking more for employers to help them grow into their careers. At least on paper, it appears the construction industry may align very well with their core values and beliefs.

I was able to experience first-hand, the character and integrity of this next generation at the National Craft Championships in San Antonio in March. Congratulations to Drew Hawkins and Tony Ehrike (highlighted later in this issue) who earned gold and silver medals, respectively. Hawkins also earned the overall safety performance awards in the Carpentry division.

These competitors from ABC member Royal Construction are passionate about their crafts. They handle themselves very professionally and they represent our industry well. We can be proud of them.

As I mentioned earlier, we often make broad generalizations about a specific generation, which are usually negative in nature. Here's a positive one: I can't help but be optimistic about the individuals coming up from Gen-Z to fill positions in our industry. They are the future of our workforce and they can help us solve the construction industry's skills gap. I'm optimistic and I hope you are too. [ABC Wisconsin](#)

**“
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT TRADITIONALISTS, BORN BETWEEN 1927 AND 1945, STILL MAKE UP ABOUT 3% OF THE WORKFORCE TODAY.**

The construction industry will r



TIPS FOR TACKLING

By John Lack – Acuity Insurance

THE LABOR

The labor shortage is one of the biggest challenges that contractors are facing today—and it is not just a labor shortage, but a shortage of skilled labor.

In fact, according to the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), the construction industry will need to attract nearly 650,000 additional workers in 2022 to meet the demand for labor—above and beyond their normal hiring. In 2023, that number declines with a presumed growth in construction spending, but not by much—to 590,000 new workers needed.

The increased demand for labor is being driven not just by growth in construction, but by other changes as well. The first change is the high rate of churn. ABC crunched the numbers

and estimated that 1.2 million construction workers will leave their jobs to work in other industries in 2022. Additionally, an aging workforce is likely to lead to an even higher rate of departure. The number of construction workers aged 25-54 fell by 8% over the past 10 years, bringing the average age of retirement in the industry to 61.

For contractors, the labor shortage poses many problems, including having to turn down work, postponing projects, or experiencing delays in completing projects. Additionally, a short-handed work environment can lead to overworked employees, quality control issues, and increased costs for the company. Contractors need to be proactive and think creatively to address this shortage.

need to attract nearly **650,000** additional workers in 2022.



Here are 10 tips to consider:

1 Invest in technology. Adopting or increasing your investment in technology, tools, and equipment to save labor hours is always worth considering. Depending on one's scope, this could include battery-operated tools, power screeds for concrete, lifts for overhead work, GPS or laser-guided equipment, drones, and robots.

2 Review methods. Using the principles of lean construction can help maximize efficiency and minimize waste and time delays. More developers and builders are turning to off-site fabrication. Virtual construction, such as BIM (building information modeling), is saving time for everyone involved in the process.

3 Improve company culture. Competitive pay is not the only reason people want to work for a company. Highlighting a work-life balance, benefits, and other opportunities will bring added value to the company-employee relationship. Consider using social media to showcase why tradespeople should want to work for your company.

4 Communicate effectively. Overcoming any language barriers and communicating effectively with all employees can help open up opportunities. Some of my greatest employees were Hispanic and having management that could communicate well with them was very effective for enhancing the working relationship.

the opportunity to develop the employee around your company's values. Reaching out to schools and presenting opportunities about what your company has to offer may be time well spent.

7 Offer referral bonuses. Compensating employees for referrals can be a great way to find applicants. Employees may know other tradespeople from past jobs or someone with good work ethics who wants to start a career in construction. Offering creative incentives to employees may result in qualified candidates.

8 Advertise clearly. How you post a job position is very important. The more accurate you describe the position, the more likely you are to get the right candidate. Clearly describe the job, what it is like to work at your company, your preferences, and minimum requirements for the position.

9 Invest in your employees. In these times, it is more important than ever to invest in your current employees. Many construction companies are working diligently to recruit skilled talent, but they sometimes overlook working to keep their current employees. Make sure your employees feel appreciated, know they are an important part of the company, and receive competitive benefits and salary.

10 Network. Networking with industry associations and others in construction can help get the

SHORTAGE

1.2 million
construction
workers will
leave their jobs
to work in other
industries
in 2022

5 Overcome stereotypes. More women are strapping on tool belts, operating equipment, managing job sites, and owning construction businesses than ever before. The industry has made strides in expanding employment for women, with associations such as Women in Construction helping to drive the change.

6 Consider apprenticeships. Presenting apprenticeship opportunities to high school graduates and local trade schools can work well, providing temporary help and sometimes leading to full-time employment if the person's character traits and skills work well with the crew. This also gives you

word out that you are hiring. Some of my best employees were those who had been in business for themselves at one time or another. They know what it takes to run an operation and are familiar with the behind-the-scenes work that no one sees. When an employee has walked in the owner's shoes, there can be a connection. Temp agencies are also an option, but I would use them in construction only when necessary.

John Lack is Acuity's Construction Consultant. Acuity insurance provides a wide array of insurance products to contractors and other businesses across 30 states. 

Zignego Company is very active in trying to recruit diversity into its work crews and educating individuals through the ABC Apprenticeship program.



INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE, EQUITABLE.

PROGRESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENT – AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO BETTER.

By Elizabeth Roddy – ABC of Wisconsin Recruitment & Training Director



FEMALES
REPRESENT
ROUGHLY

50

PERCENT

OF THE
POPULATION
BUT HOLD FEWER
THAN 10% OF
CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY JOBS

In a time where “diversity” is the new buzz word, it is important not to just jump on the bandwagon. On the other hand, the construction industry is historically a white, male dominated industry and having conversations that move our industry towards more diversity is important.

According to ABC National’s Publication, *Building the Case for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity*, “The construction industry is changing in profound ways, from our corporate culture, recruitment and retention efforts to innovative ways to win and deliver projects. But one constant is the need to ensure that organizations offer a state-of-the-art employee value proposition that’s attractive to top talent from all communities.”

Recently, ABC of Wisconsin examined our numbers regarding diversity – both on a company membership level and an apprentice-

ship level – and although we have made some progress over the years, there is still opportunity to do better.

When we talk about inclusion, diversity, and equity, it isn’t about being politically correct. It is about the merit shop principles of free enterprise and open competition being a step above the competition. Breaking down the words when it comes to ABC, it means:

■ **Inclusion:** That all members and their employees feel like they belong to ABC of Wisconsin and that we offer benefits and services that meet the needs of our individual members.

■ **Diversity:** That we are an association that includes a variety of types of companies and people who have a variety of abilities, skills, backgrounds, and experiences.



■ **Equity:** That ABC of Wisconsin and our members provide access opportunities for all.

You may have heard that more diverse companies have a competitive advantage over less diverse companies (typically due to the various backgrounds bringing in greater innovation and creativity). If nothing else, there is potential for a much larger talent pool that can be accessed if our industry does a better job

encouraging and welcoming individuals into construction careers. According to Construction Executive's article *Build Up a Diverse Construction Workforce*, "Females represent roughly 50% of the population but hold fewer than 10% of construction industry jobs. Only 6% of construction workers are Black or African American, while they represent 12% of the workforce across all industries, according to the BLS. This is a massive, un-

tapped talent pool and a huge opportunity to fill the void in construction."

When thinking about diversity within your own company, it can feel overwhelming if you are not sure where to start. Here are a few tips:

❶ **Create a welcoming culture.** It can be very overwhelming for employees if someone is the only one of a certain gender, race, ethnic group, etc. The main thing is to make sure that you think of the

It is about the **merit shop principles of free enterprise** and open competition being a step above the competition.

Make it **safe and easy for employees to speak up** if they run into an unwelcome or uncomfortable situation.

ONLY
6
PERCENT
OF
CONSTRUCTION
WORKERS ARE
BLACK OR
AFRICAN
AMERICAN, WHILE
THEY REPRESENT
12
PERCENT
OF THE
WORKFORCE
ACROSS ALL
INDUSTRIES,
ACCORDING TO
THE BLS.

situation from their point of view and help them feel a part of the group from the beginning. Make it safe and easy for employees to speak up if they run into an unwelcome or uncomfortable situation.

④ **Get support from company leadership.** From the top leadership to construction jobsite supervisors, everyone on the team should be committed to setting an example on how we should be treating each other. Provide training on how to create a safe and welcoming work environment if needed. Making the case for employees on why this is an important initiative can help them better understand and hopefully want to assist with this effort.

⑤ **Start where you can and build from there.** Companies can't go from zero diversity to a diverse crew overnight, but you can change your mindset and start in any way you can. If you are hiring, consider recruiting from non-traditional areas (for example there are different

community-based organizations or diversity groups that you might want to connect with). If you are in an area of the state where there isn't as much ethnic diversity, consider looking at diversifying with more females on your crews. Once hired, you may be able to match up similar employees with one another so they don't feel "so alone."

④ **Make construction something they can see themselves doing.** When we look at ads on TV, the ones that we relate to most are the ones we can see ourselves in. If you are trying to recruit diverse populations, make sure your marketing and social media shows diversity. If you have someone on staff who represents the population you are trying to recruit, invite them to join you at your career or job fair table.

⑤ **Don't give up.** For diversity and inclusion programs to work, consistent messaging with outreach opportunities is required. Continue to gain and share knowledge by talking with your employees and others in the industry about effective strategies to diversify the workforce. Every company, no matter how big or small, has to start somewhere.

Tony Zignego, the HR & Safety Manager at Zignego Co, Inc. credits his own employees to helping create diverse crews. "You start with a few good people, then you ask them to bring some of their family and friends to the company." Zignego also says, "No matter what, be genuine and demonstrate symbiotic respect with current and prospective employees. It is about creating a welcoming, team atmosphere that people feel good about being a part of."

ABC of Wisconsin has been taking a deeper look into what we can do to help. For years, we have done a lot to help promote careers in construction and apprenticeships to diverse populations through work at various high schools and community-based organizations. Recently, a small task force of ABC of Wisconsin members has come together to examine our membership makeup to see if there is more that we can do to recruit, welcome, and retain more woman- and minority-owned businesses into our association.

Our chapter has also been connecting with the efforts on this nationally, with our chapter having representation from Scott Truehl of Friede & Associates, LLC, who sits on the ABC National Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee.

"It is so important to see the work that is being done regarding inclusion, diversity, and equity both on a national level and a state level of ABC," Truehl said about being on the national committee. "We hope to dive into meaningful, thought-provoking discussions, and solutions-based recommendations for building diverse networks."

The conversation on this valuable topic has started but we are far from done, so if this is something that interests you, be sure to contact ABC of Wisconsin on how you can get more involved. 



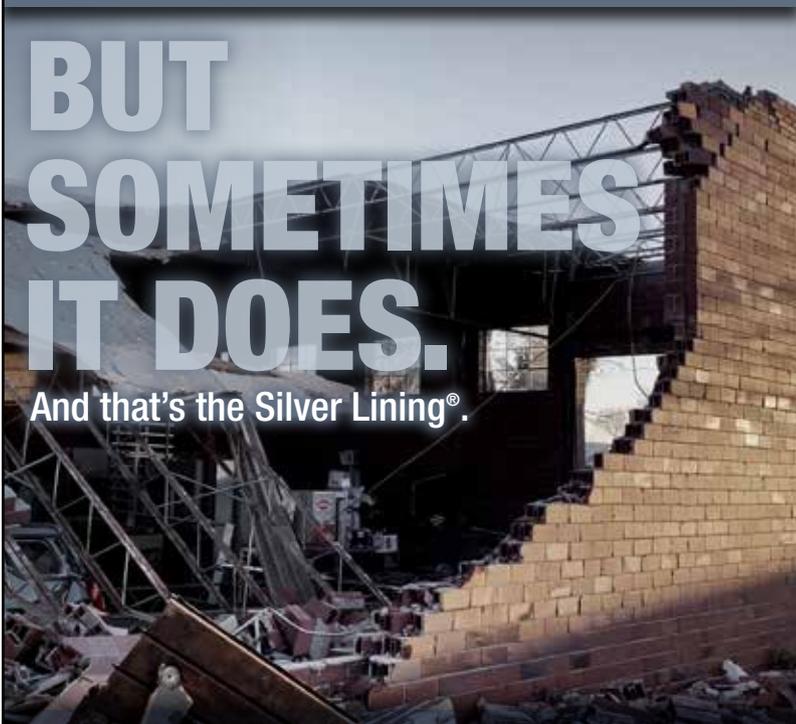
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Online, May 16
- **APPRENTICESHIP GRADUATION BANQUET**
Wis. Dells, May 19
- **MILWAUKEE BREWERS TAILGATE – SOLD OUT**
Milwaukee, May 20
- **QUALIFIED RIGGER & CRANE SIGNAL PERSON TRAINING**
Pewaukee Area – May 26
- **FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING**
Madison, May 26
- **PLAN & SPEC READING**
Madison, June 2
- **10-HOUR OSHA CONSTRUCTION SAFETY & HEALTH OUTREACH**
Madison, June 3
- **GOLF SCRAMBLE AT THE OAKS — SOLD OUT**
Cottage Grove, June 8
- **FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING**
Marshfield Area, June 21
- **MEMBER LUNCHEON**
Beaver Dam, June 21
- **FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING**
La Crosse, July 11
- **BELOIT SKY CARP BASEBALL GAME**
Beloit, July 14
- **FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING**
West Bend Area, July 15
- **MEMBER LUNCHEON**
Rhineland, July 28
- **FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING**
Wausau Area, July 29

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IT DOES.**

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1970s



1970
It's 20 years since the first ABC meeting was held at 5212 Spring Lake Way in Baltimore (1950), establishing ABC National.

First chapter convention held at Howard Johnson Motor Lodge in Wausau. Registration is \$25.



1975
Ron Miller is president in '75 and '76.



1976
1976 Chapter Christmas Party at Columbus Club in Appleton has 171 attendees.



1976
America celebrates its 200th Birthday and chapter reaches 250 members.



1977
Tony Rosecky hired as chapter executive director.



Bruce Abbott is president of the ABC Steering Committee.

1971

1972

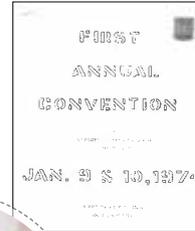


Official Charter signed in 1972 to become a chapter of ABC. Only 22 chapters came before it.



1973
Syd Faulks is chapter president for first two years.

1974



1974



Wes Meilahn is chapter president in '74 and meets President Ford.

Hi! I'm Marty Merit 211 to your guide through this 1977 yearbook.

1977
"Marty Merit" was informally introduced.

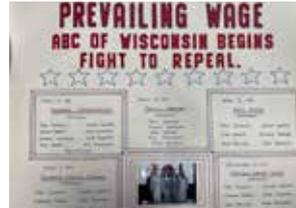


1979



Women of ABC is launched in '79.

1979



The fight to repeal Prevailing Wage in Wisconsin begins in '79.



Corinne Scott

1979
ABC of Wisconsin has three paid staff members.

1980s

Chapter membership surpasses 300; four staff members.



MERIT SHOP
1980

1981



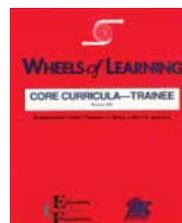
Many ABC members access the JAC/Union programs; the only option to train.



1981
Steve Stone hired as Chapter Assistant Executive Director.



1982



1985

Chapter begins Electrical & HVAC training programs at 16 locations; grows to 300 trainees in two years.



Motorola Dynatac introduced; roughly \$3,000 each; used for membership drives.

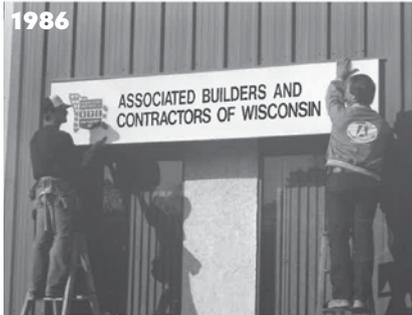
HISTORICAL TIMELINE / THE FIRST 50 YEARS

1980s



1987

Avg. cost of new house: \$92,000
Avg. income: \$24,350
Avg. new car price: \$10,305
Avg. price of gallon of gas: \$.89



1986

Chapter opens "branch office" in Monona; membership is beyond 500.

1986



Wayne Belanger is hired as first Apprenticeship Director



The ABC Apprenticeship Program is established with the approval of standards from the Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor & Human Relations (DILHR).

1987

1988



Bob Pheifer, Pheifer Bros. Construction Co., Inc., is Chair of ABC during first full year of Apprenticeship; 14 apprentices with eight different companies in the program, including Pheifer Bros.



ABC Counsel Jim Pease contacts the chapter with news that Milwaukee Plumbers Local 75 and other unions are suing the State over the approval of ABCWI Apprenticeship.

ABCWI Apprenticeship & Training Trust Fund established with six trustees.



1989

Gov. Thompson recognizes Chapter for efforts strengthening the construction industry. ABCWI Chair Mike Zignego accepts.

1990s

Chapter offering safety consulting.



1990

John Hauke

1990



First Apprentice Skill Competition (Craft Olympics) held in WI; competitors advance to Nationals.



1992

John Mielke, current ABC President, joins ABC as first education coordinator.



1992

Chapter celebrates 20 years.

1993



Court cases challenging the existence of ABCWI Apprenticeship goes all way to State Supreme Court; rules in favor of ABC.

1993



Chapter launches Projects of Distinction Awards Program.

1994



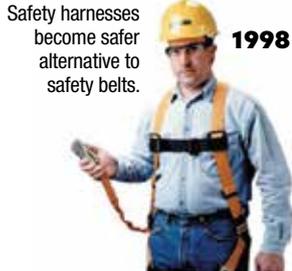
Apprenticeship "indentures" were hand typed three times on carbon paper to produce six "original copies" as records.



1997 The US Green Building Council launches Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Program.

50 YEARS OF SUCCESS

1990s



Safety harnesses become safer alternative to safety belts.

1998



1999

Wisconsin gears up to promote Apprenticeship.



1999

ABCWI membership more than 800 firms.

1999



ABCWI surpasses 1,000 apprentices.



1999 The ABC Home at Rawhide Boys Ranch opens.

2000s



2000

ABC moves into its own, member-built, office space.



2001

Tammy (Altmann) Meyers is first female elected as Chair of the Chapter.

2001



ABC member Bob Riberich named Chair of the State Apprenticeship Advisory Council.



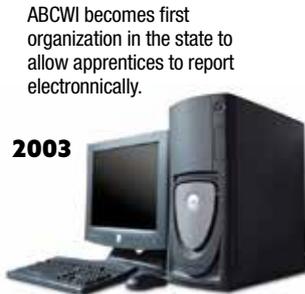
Chapter produces a four-color apprenticeship brochure and DVD for the first time.

2002



2002

ABC Training Center opens; more than 1,300 enrolled.



2003

ABCWI becomes first organization in the state to allow apprentices to report electronically.



2006

Governor Doyle signs Executive Order 108 mandating, apprenticeship training for contractors working on most state projects.



2008 Chapter Instructor Jerry Schwengels receives ABC National Instructor of the Year.

2010s

2008
Economic crisis hits after housing, banking and mortgage crises coupled with oil prices above \$140 per barrel.



2011

WI Apprenticeship, oldest in the U.S., celebrates 100.



2012

Chapter adds computer-based simulators with a federal grant.



2013

Government begins enrolling individuals in Affordable Care Act, despite a variety of problems implementing its cumbersome rules and regulations.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / THE FIRST 50 YEARS

2010s

2013 Skills Gap in Construction reaches new levels; Chapter focuses on outreach for prospective construction workers.

2014
Chapter begins offering Core Curriculum craft skills education to school students; the start of Core Certifications.



2014



Youth Apprenticeship made available to Architecture and Construction in WI; ABCWI promotes YA in high schools.

2015



ABCWI receives the Award of Excellence for Chapter Apprenticeship from ABC National.



2016

Chapter V.P. Kelly Tourdot appointed by Governor Walker to serve on Wisconsin Technical College System Board.



2016



President Trump comes to Waukesha County Technical College; visits with ABC apprentices.

2017



Apprenticeship surpasses 1,300 apprentices and celebrates its 30th birthday.



2018

Chapter adds fourth person for safety consulting services.

2018



Trifecta of merit shop measures pass in Wisconsin from 2015-2017, making WI a Right-to-Work state and banning Prevailing Wage and PLAs on state-funded work.



2019 Chapter closes in on another high-water mark for membership.

2020s

2020



A virus, originating from China, causes world disorder; Chapter forced to move events online.



2020

Chapter hires Former Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch as Jobs Ambassador.



2021 Chapter moves events back in person; Golf Outing sells out in a few hours.

2021



Chapter surpasses 900 members; new logo revealed.



2022

Chapter Apprenticeship surpasses 1,800 enrollees.



2022 The chapter celebrates with a 50th Anniversary Party at the Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

ONE CONTRACTOR'S EFFORTS TO BUILD A STRONG WORKFORCE THROUGH APPRENTICESHIP



Carrie Nielson of Royal Construction watches her co-worker Drew Hawkins compete in the National Craft Championships in San Antonio, TX. Hawkins earned a gold medal in Carpentry.

One of the best ways leaders of organizations can enhance their operations is by creating better opportunities for employees. Employees value opportunity, but they are not always offered it because it often requires an investment by the company.

ABC of Wisconsin member Royal Construction, Inc. of Eau Claire believes in opportunity. Royal Construction has been educating carpentry apprentices in the ABC of Wisconsin Apprenticeship Program for more than 20 years.

Royal Construction believes that construction apprenticeships provide great opportunity and discovery of passions.

“Here at Royal Construction, we feel privileged to watch these talented young individuals grow throughout the program and become skilled carpenters,” said Jim Bunkelman, President and CEO of Royal Construction, Inc.

Apprenticeships are also extremely important for the growth of the company.

“By investing in apprenticeships, we can provide more skilled workers to expand our business opportunities and be a more

professional, productive workforce,” Bunkelman said.

That can lead to a competitive advantage through:

Production: Skilled employees are typically much more productive; educated workers have fewer errors on the job.

Workforce: Employees appreciate the investment shown in them, which can result in lower turnover and a word-of-mouth recruitment pipeline; skilled workers could become excellent future managers.

Soft skills: Apprenticeships provide greater problem-solving ability, ability to perform a variety of tasks, and a reduced need for supervision.

Most all construction companies are dealing with worker shortages. Royal Construction is not a company waiting for talent to find it. Along with their own events, each year Royal partners with ABC of Wisconsin Apprenticeship to participate in “Career Venture” in Eau Claire. For well over a decade, this annual event has been a huge event for over 2,000 middle and high school students in the region to get

hands on experience of a variety of different careers. The always popular booth, that the two collaborate on, involves a screwdriver contest where students compete to see who can get three screws in the fastest. It is always fun to see young people who have never properly used a screw gun to learn the proper way to hold the tool, and to see that it isn't as scary as they once thought. Royal always makes sure to send enough staff so there is enough people to talk to the students about carpentry and the construction industry, and the great careers they can have here.

Royal also participates in Youth Apprenticeship (YA). YA is a school-to-work initiative by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. It 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.

Youth Apprenticeships can prepare students for the adult registered apprenticeship too. Royal Construction's Office Manager, Carrie Nielson, knows about this firsthand. Her son, Treyton, was one of the first individuals in the state to complete a youth apprenticeship and move directly into the registered adult apprenticeship. Royal Construction participated in a signing day, invited local dignitaries, and elected officials, which attracted media attention to promote careers in construction.

"Having a son in high school, I found that apprenticeships were not promoted. Technical college and four-year colleges were seen as having more value," Nielson said.

The Youth Apprenticeship Program gives students more visibility to the construction industry, safety knowledge, and hands-on experience with tools at jobsites. Classroom training gives students the ability to learn about different trades and how the whole construction process comes together from start to finish.

"My son gained so much from his time in the youth apprenticeship program. The program created a pathway for his future just as college would," Nielson said.

It also gave her son a wonderful opportunity.

"If it wasn't for the Youth Apprenticeship, I'm not sure I would have found my passion," said Treyton Sloniker, Nielson's son. "Fast forward to today, I'm a fourth-year apprentice and will be graduating in May 2022. These past four years have taught me a lot, a little intimidating in the beginning because I was the youngest and had the least experience, but I have pushed myself through — proving myself and dedicating myself to carpentry."

"Many people may overlook apprenticeships in construction— instead dedicating their time and money to a four-year college or university—but through an apprenticeship, a person is able to get on-the-job experience, go to school, and make money while doing it," Nielson said.

Treyton was one of several Royal Construction carpentry apprentices to participate in the annual ABC of Wisconsin Apprenticeship Skill Competition in West Bend. The competition allows apprentices,

who are in their later years of their respective programs, demonstrate their skill levels and competency while having a neat learning experience.

"I really enjoyed the experience of watching our carpenters compete at the State Skill Competition in West Bend," Nielson said.

At the competition, Royal Construction's Drew Hawkins earned first place in Carpentry, which allowed him to advance to the National Craft Championships to compete against the nation's best in San Antonio, TX, where he earned a gold medal along with top honors in safety.

Another Royal Construction apprentice, Tony Ehrike, placed second in the National Craft Championships. Ehrike placed third in the 2020 ABC of Wisconsin Apprenticeship Skill

Competition and was planning to compete on the state level in 2021, but the competition was not held because of COVID-19, so he was allowed to compete on the national level and Royal Construction took advantage of the opportunity for him.

"Competing in the craft championships is definitely the highlight of my career so far. It was a great opportunity to put the skills and knowledge I've acquired over the years to the test," said Hawkins.

The NCC featured a field of 176 competitors in 12 different crafts over two days. Wisconsin sent five participants in four different trades, including carpentry (2), electrical, plumbing and HVAC.

Each competition consists of an online exam based on craft curricula developed by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). The online exam accounts for 25% of the total score. Held on the second day, competitors are tested on their skills during a six-hour project. This practical performance test accounts for 75% of the total score.



Jim Bunkelman of Royal Construction, Inc. demonstrates the screwdriver activity with students in Eau Claire this month.

Ehrike said the Apprenticeship Program has prepared him for moments like this, proving that hard work pays off.

"The whole experience was great— meeting everyone and being able to take what I've learned through the years and using it in a timed competition," Ehrike says.

Nielson was in awe.

"To have two compete nationally and be able to see them compete in person at the National Craft Championships and have our guys earn first and second place, was really special," Nielson said. "I don't know who was more nervous and excited — me or them! It was awesome for them to showcase how they have built their knowledge, skills, and training."

When you offer career growth opportunities within your business like Royal Construction, you help your employees to develop their skills, their knowledge and their careers while enhancing the culture of your company. So long term, supporting job development isn't just good for employees. It's good for the business. 

LEGISLATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON WORKFORCE ISSUES

By State Rep. Evan Goyke (D)

In Wisconsin, our workforce challenges are directly connected to our slow population growth. We are not attracting or retaining enough people, so we are losing ground to communities across the country that are creating and sustaining the type of quality of life they desire. With recent shifts in workspace needs, more workers are able to choose where they want to live rather than where they want to work. We are no longer only competing with our Midwest neighbors - we are competing across the entire country.

The 2010-2020 decade was one of Wisconsin's slowest population growth decades ever. Nationwide, states averaged 6.7% growth over the last decade, while Wisconsin only reached 2.6%. Wisconsin's population growth was roughly half of the 2000-2010 decade and a third of the 1990-2000 decade. Wisconsin's experience is not unique in the Midwest; Illinois also experienced a slight population loss over the past decade.

Where Wisconsin's population gain did take place is illustrative. Small rural communities, as well as some core city neighborhoods, experienced population decreases. Communities in the Fox Valley, the I-94 corridor in northwest Wisconsin,

and some parts of southeast Wisconsin experienced growth. The strongest growth, however, was in the Madison metro area, which experienced 10.7% growth over the last decade.

The fast-growing communities in Wisconsin are among the most prosperous. Higher property values provide local governments with resources to maintain population growth, whereas slow or no growth communities plateau with declining property values and corresponding local revenue. The flat or declining local rev-

STATE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE LOCAL COMMUNITIES, THE RESIDENTS AND THE ELECTED OFFICIALS, MORE FINANCIAL TOOLS TO GROW.

enues leave these communities with few options to alter their trajectory.

Creating desirable communities is not something the state government is good at. The decisions that lead to desirable communities are organic; they come best from local residents and their elected leaders. Our communities are vibrant and unique, each with different challenges and opportunities. Our state government can best support local growth by empowering local governments to enact the vision of their residents.

Local governments receive less state aid today than they did ten years ago. The State's largest local government aid program is called Shared Revenue. The state collects most tax revenues, including locally collected sales tax, and "shares" it back to local communities. While each local government budget is different, broadly, state Shared Revenue makes up a third of local government funding. With increased costs and declining state aid, local governments have struggled to maintain services and have been unable to keep pace with changing demand in housing, infrastructure, and social or cultural amenities.

State lawmakers have left local governments in Wisconsin with three options: keep property taxes high; use TIF or debt to develop (if they are even able); do nothing. These limited options stagnate the type of local change and local development that fuels population growth. People want healthy, vibrant, safe communities. They need affordable housing and quality transportation.

State government should give local communities, the residents and the elected officials, more financial tools to grow. Only a few states, including Wisconsin, provide such little fiscal flexibility to their local communities. Empowering local communities can, and should, be a bi-partisan issue. It benefits deeply red and deeply blue communities the same.

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BUSINESSES ARE IN SEARCH OF CREATIVE WAYS TO OPERATE WITH AS LITTLE STAFF AS POSSIBLE AND DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO STAY AFLOAT.



By State Rep. Dave Murphy (R)

Other than people being given the runaround trying to get the unemployment insurance they're owed, I hear most from employers who just can't find enough workers. Every industry, from healthcare to fast food, has approached the legislature looking for a subsidy to boost recruitment. Unfortunately, every incentive for one industry only shifts the worker shortage to another. When I look for solutions as a legislator, it's my responsibility to make sure I'm not robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Declining productivity is one problem that seems to be affecting nearly every sector. The shift to employees working from home, office collaboration declining with a lack of in-person interaction, and workers moving jobs more frequently, has left employees in a constant training mode. Businesses are in search of creative ways to operate with as little staff as possible and doing everything they can to stay afloat. As they innovate and experiment to ramp up productivity, it's critical for big government to stay out of their way.

Slashing unneeded rules and regulations is critical to bolstering our workforce. Allowing businesses to operate nimbly makes hiring workers easier and leads to increases in productivity. That is why Republicans oppose the Biden administration's proposals that increase bureaucratic red tape for businesses. These measures will only make it harder for businesses to operate and hire workers. With a shrinking economy and inflation hitting levels not seen since the Carter administration, we can't allow regulations to hamper our best hope of digging out of this hole: American business ingenuity.

When unemployment is high and it's harder to find a job, it makes sense to give people additional time on unemploy-

ment insurance to find work. But when you can find a good paying job as easily as walking out your front door, it doesn't make sense for the state to subsidize people staying at home. It should come as no surprise that the last four weeks a claimant is on unemployment is when most jobs are found. Indexing unemployment benefits to the unemployment rate will help to bolster our workforce in times like these. With businesses currently struggling to recruit candidates, limiting the amount of time on unemployment will give businesses a greater pool of candidates to fill jobs.

When an applicant "ghosts" an employer by not showing up for an interview or a job, everyone loses. The goal of unemployment is to help workers get back on their feet, but when Wisconsin is in such dire need of workers, we can't allow unemployment to be used as an excuse for some people to not take that opportunity seriously, it just

makes a bad situation worse. That is why Republicans introduced a bill to require the Department of Workforce Development to investigate and, if verified, deem a claimant ineligible for benefits for a week that they did not show up for a job interview. This would reduce ghosting and drive employable claimants back into the workforce.

Reforming Wisconsin's benefit system to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse will give many people the push they need to reenter the workforce. Our Republican plan would enforce FoodShare work requirements, creating a reemployment assistance program that updates the current unemployment insurance program to match claimants with suitable work and make other changes to help transition individuals from social program dependents to fully employed. We need a major tune-up of our unemployment program that implements extended

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State Rep. Evan Goyke
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Whether red or blue, community growth and development should be driven by the input and direction of the residents.

If Wisconsin's slow growth continues, state lawmakers will need to work together to find more homegrown workers. Recent partisan efforts to reduce unemployment compensation and other social safety net programs are not evidence-based and would not have a positive impact on Wisconsin's workforce.

One policy area that has worked in other states, and can be a bi-partisan solution, is criminal justice reform. One example here in Wisconsin that has yet to become law is reforming the expungement law. The recent bill, 2021 Assembly Bill 69, has support from both sides of the aisle. Outside

the Legislature, the bill is supported by the WMC, MMAC, and the Waukesha County Business Alliance, as well as the ACLU, League of Women Voters, law enforcement and local governments.

The idea behind the bill is to create a pathway for individuals with non-violent, low-level convictions to earn a second chance. From the initial interview for an entry-level position to ineligibility to obtain over a hundred professional licenses, a criminal conviction for low-level nonviolent offenses can push individuals out of the workforce. The bill also removes liability for employers who hire individuals with expunged records, ensuring that both sides of the hiring decision are covered.

In addition to the bill, a new Legisla-

tive Council Study Committee has been formed to study how the state can more effectively help individuals returning from incarceration to enter and stay in the workforce. This effort will be chaired by two Republican legislators and will likely offer bi-partisan solutions that should be carefully followed and supported. These two important policy areas would address our workforce challenges in both the short and long term.

We have our work cut out for us but bringing people into the workforce is better accomplished by lifting them up than pushing them down. We grow from the bottom up, not the top down. State decision makers should give local communities the financial freedom to grow. 

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By State Rep. Dave Murphy Continued from Page 19

call-center hours, allows the transfer of state employees to DWD during times of surge, provides additional resources to employers to connect with qualified workers, and prohibits able bodied individuals without children from turning down job opportunities for the sole reason of continuing eligibility of medical assistance. Conducting regular eligibility checks will also ensure that up-to-date information is used to calculate benefits.

Delays brought on by a lack of truck drivers slows productivity at all levels. Addressing our ever-growing trucker shortage is another way to support workforce development across multiple industries. Republicans approved funding to get more drivers into the workforce to address the staggering trucker shortage and directed Governor Evers to finally implement the Talent Attraction and Retention program at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

A dependable transportation system is the cornerstone to any functional economy. Investing in local roads pays immense divi-

dends. It keeps local taxes down, it ensures workers can get to work, and it enables businesses to get products to consumers. That is why the legislature put another \$100 million into local transportation grants to cover 90% of the cost of local transportation projects. While Democrats are focused on using transportation dollars on trolleys and bike trails, Republicans are getting people to work.

The Biden administration's failure to approve pipelines has also caused supply chain issues and inflation. Any commodity that can be carried through a pipeline doesn't have to be carried by road and saves the environment.

Congress recently passed a trillion dollar package to overhaul our nation's infrastructure. This well-intended legislation has one critical flaw: it assumes money equals work. Money doesn't build roads, people do. If every state tries to rebuild all their bridges and highways at the same time, it won't matter how much money is spent, there simply won't be enough workers. That

is why our stronger workforce initiative is necessary for these projects and others to actually happen.

In the face of all these challenges, nothing trumps inflation. The key to taming inflation is to increase productivity. For years the federal government has printed ever increasing amounts of money. Economists have long warned of the risk of printing too much money but as long as productivity was increasing at a similar rate, inflation was held in check. Since the Biden administration has increased regulations, shut down pipelines, and not solved the supply chain crisis, productivity is stalling. This could not come at a worse time as they push trillions of new dollars into the economy.

The proven conservative way out of a stalling economy and record inflation is to grow our way out. The only way we can do that is to put our faith back in American businesses and workers. It certainly beats believing in government paperwork, printing money, and a future laden with debt. [ABC Wisconsin](#)



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