

# MERIT SHOP **CONTRACTOR** WISCONSIN

## **BUILDING SUCCESS**

MAXIMIZING THE PERFORMANCE  
OF YOU AND YOUR TEAM

## **THE NEW BLUEPRINT**

INTEGRATING THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF WORKERS  
ON JOBSITES

## **SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS**

HOW ENGAGING THE  
WORKFORCE AND  
THEIR FAMILIES CAN  
HELP YOUR PROJECTS



# **BUILDING** YOUR TEAM

**ARE YOU READY FOR THE INCOMING WORKFORCE?**

**ABC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:  
MERIT BY CHOICE**  
PAGE 5

  
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Pictured: Genie GTH-636

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## BUILDING YOUR TEAM

ARE YOU READY FOR THE INCOMING WORKFORCE?

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

MAY / JUNE 2025

- 5 President's Message**  
Merit by Choice
- 6 The New Blueprint**  
Integrating the Next Generation of Workers on Jobsites
- 10 Building Success:**  
Maximizing the Performance of You and Your Team
- 14 Successful Interventions:**  
How Engaging the Workforce and Their Families Can Help Your Projects
- 16 Bridging the Gap**  
Importance of Translating Safety & Training Materials
- 19 Event Reminders**
- 20 Roadmap for Wisconsin?**  
How ABC Michigan Reformed Apprenticeship Ratios
- 22 Associated Builders and Contractors New Members**



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Managing Editor: Laura Kocum  
Associate Editor: Chrissy Long  
Art Director: Jayne Laste Design Solutions LLC

For membership information, contact Bill Stranberg at ABC of Wisconsin (608) 244-5883 or fax (608) 244-2401

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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

# Merit by Choice



**DID YOU SEE THE NEW STATISTICS ON UNION MEMBERSHIP? WE NOW KNOW THAT 80% OF WISCONSIN'S CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE CHOOSES TO WORK FOR A MERIT SHOP, AND NOT A UNION.** We pulled this most recent information from unionstats.com, a resource compiled by professors from several universities who study union engagement.

The number is significant, but not a surprise. ABC members know, all too well, that the merit approach to work has a wide appeal in Wisconsin.

Employees benefit from upward mobility, opportunities to earn more, do more, and, in

many cases, grow to lead their own businesses. Employers benefit from a motivated workforce that is efficient, dedicated and willing to upskill. When teams are motivated to compete, it naturally creates the best projects, at the best prices, and the best work cultures.

In this issue, we celebrate the workplace in Wisconsin's merit shops and recognize the incoming generation of skilled workers. They are excited, eager to work, and ready for coaching. Some of their instructors provide tips to help you integrate them into your company. We also know our members are looking to train their existing teams. Dan Paulson advises training and preparing employees to take on more of the business with excellence.

You'll also see an article about the mental health needs in construction, and expert suggestions on how to intervene and assist employees for their long-term benefit. And, we'll look at the cross-cultural needs of each workplace, and the benefits of providing safety training in Spanish.

In addition, we have an article looking at Michigan's success with apprenticeship ratios.

There is a lot to talk about and a lot to celebrate. Knowing that merit is the majority of the construction workforce, we can all speak with confidence, and advocate for the continued success of the merit shop. [abcwisconsin.org](https://www.abcwisconsin.org)

— Kelly Tourdot, President



**80% OF  
WISCONSIN'S  
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CHOOSES TO  
WORK FOR A  
MERIT SHOP.**







THEY WANT TO LEARN. THEY WANT TO DO THE WORK.  
THEY JUST NEED CLEAR DIRECTION OF WHAT IS ALLOWED AND NOT ALLOWED.

ROBERT WILLMAS, WEST BEND HIGH SCHOOL



Students in West Bend High School's construction class work together to build a home for Habitat for Humanity

# *THE NEW BLUEPRINT*

## INTEGRATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORKERS ON JOBSITES

**By Laura Kocum,  
Marketing and Communications Director, ABC of Wisconsin**

Eight years ago, West Bend High School teacher Robert Willmas had three students enrolled in his Advanced Construction class. Today, there are 30 students, and two sections of the same class. He says more students are excited to attend and learn hands-on skills.

“The stigma used to be that to be successful, you had to attend a four-year school (after high school). Now it’s become socially acceptable to go into the trades and make a very good living,” he explained. Willmas noticed students are exploring other options

earlier as part of their high school experience.

Travis Ray is seeing the same trend at McFarland High School, a suburban school near Madison. He teaches tech ed classes and notes the program’s tremendous growth. This year, 25 students entered the beginning program. Next year, he already has 38 students enrolled. Most of these students find a love for the trades and begin their construction career before they even graduate.

“The days of going to college with an undecided major are over,” he said. “We used





Students in McFarland High School's construction class work on a shed as part of a class project.

to have kids going to college first and then drop out to start work in the trades. They were pressured by parents, teachers and guidance counselors to try college. Now that college has become more expensive, people are waking up. The narrative is changing." Ray says students are doing a cost analysis of college and recognizing that if they like working with their hands, they can skip the time and debt and get to work right away. For students, this is a benefit because it gives them the freedom to select their preferred path from the start.

Both Willmas and Ray are pleased to see students showing interest at a younger age. Their students are gaining skills and seem excited about the work, and they believe this younger workforce has the potential to solve many of the workforce shortages seen today.

ABC national estimates the construction industry needs an additional 439,000 skilled workers to enter the workforce this year in order to meet current demands. Willmas and Ray are working closely with interested students and see great opportunities but also

believe employers will need to adapt to a new generation of workers.

#### **Proactively Manage Cell Phone Use**

First, they say companies need to be prepared to proactively deal with addiction – specifically addiction to screens.

"Students have always had distractions. Today it's cell phones. Employers need to have proactive plans to deal with it," Ray suggests. Both he and Willmas set clear rules about phone use in their classes, and on jobsites. They say the key to success with this is to set expectations from day one, enforce the rules consistently, and make no exceptions.

"They want to learn. They want to do the work. They just need clear direction of what is allowed and not allowed," said Willmas. He requires students to leave their phones at the beginning of his classes. "Once they know it's the rule, they will respect it," explains Ray. In addition, keeping teams busy

with projects and clear assignments for slower times will help them avoid distractions like phone use.

#### **Define Expectations and Communicate Clearly and Regularly**

Straightforward rules and policies don't stop with cell phones. Both Willmas and Ray have noticed a greater need for clarity in all parts of the work. Ray says when schools moved to "standards-based" approaches to learning, they inadvertently created students who are trained to follow a repetitive and predictable path to succeed in a class. "Students are trained to have their work please a teacher and they have a structured idea of what they need to do to get the 'A.'" But when the student must define their "A," that's when the challenge comes in," he explained. On a jobsite, completing a job isn't necessarily a straightforward path. Ray expects younger workers will need help identifying steps to completion.

Willmas agrees, "Communication is changing. Rules need to be very well defined. Expectations need to be made clear. Employers can and should define what's clearly expected. New hires will appreciate clarity in both in the office and on the jobsite."

Having clear expectations begins at hire, but it continues throughout the employee's career. Willmas and Ray encourage employers to prepare supervisors, foremen and trainers to communicate clearly, define expectations regularly, and continue the communication throughout each job. And they caution employers – don't forget to outline the expectations that seem obvious. "'This is how you use a broom,' is a valuable and important lesson. When you cover all the basics, you are training the next generation to set up, build and clean up with diligence," Willmas says.

#### **Create a Culture Where Failure is a Learning Opportunity**

Employers are also encouraged to consider how they handle mistakes on the job. A fear of failure can be paralyzing to younger workers. "This generation has grown up in a culture that publicizes failure. Everything they do can be used against them online, and it impacts their approach to work," Ray explains.

In addition, newer employees are likely afraid to admit to mistakes that could be costly or risk the safety of their peers. Employers can overcome this by creating a work culture





## THIS GENERATION HAS AN INTENSE FEAR OF FAILURE. BUT IF YOU CAN MAKE FAILURE A NON-THREATENING LEARNING EXPERIENCE, THEY WILL GROW INTO BETTER EMPLOYEES.

TRAVIS RAY, MCFARLAND HIGH SCHOOL

that values teaching opportunities. It will build an employee's confidence as they face tough projects. "Start encouraging the idea that you can learn from failure. This generation has an intense fear of failure. But if you can make failure a non-threatening learning experience, they will grow into better employees," Ray added.

Willmas says he also tries to coach students to explore and learn. He will not always give a direct answer to a request for assistance. Instead, he'll respond with a question, and encourage the students to figure things out.

"Once you get them rolling and busy, they will go for it. That's a big change from five years ago. If you are willing to teach, 90% of the young workers are willing to learn," he


explained. And, as they feel free to learn, they also develop more confidence and feel loyalty towards their employers, which will pay off for years to come.

### Finding Eager Workers

Workers who understand the rules, have clear communication, and understand that it's ok to learn from mistakes are more likely to succeed, and stick around for the long haul. There are many of them. But how can employers find them?

"Reach out to your local schools. Talk to the tech ed and ag teachers. They have eager students ready to work. And if you're not doing a Youth Apprenticeship, you're missing the boat," Ray says. He encourages employers to reach

out to him, and to keep reaching out. Willmas tells his students to view every day as a chance to demonstrate their value. "If you walk away from a jobsite and don't feel like you've earned a letter of recommendation for what you did that day, you need to rethink what you're doing," he tells his students. That lesson is being retained. Willmas is finding that most of his students are showing up, working hard, and eager to get their careers started. They just need to find companies who provide the healthy culture that will let them grow into craft professionals.

"The kids who are choosing to do this work now are assets to companies. Hire one of them as a youth apprentice, incorporate them into a healthy culture and you could have an employee for life!" says Ray. 

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# BUILDING SUCCESS:

## MAXIMIZING THE PERFORMANCE OF YOU AND YOUR TEAM

By Dan Paulson – InVision Development International, LLC

The construction industry is evolving rapidly, with new technologies, regulations, and workforce challenges emerging regularly.

To remain competitive and profitable, construction company owners must prioritize professional development—not only for themselves but also for their teams.

For owners, developing stronger business management skills ensures better decision-making, increased efficiency, and a more sustainable company. Meanwhile, investing in the growth of office staff and field workers leads to stronger leadership, improved accountability, and better project outcomes.

The ROI is substantial. Studies suggest that companies gain \$4.53 for every dollar spent on professional development. That is a 353% return! Those gains are found in all facets of the business. They include:

- Increased efficiency
- Greater employee retention
- Higher quality
- Better customer service

All of these lead to stronger revenue growth and higher profits. To achieve all this, owners

must be prepared to make the commitment and invest the time.

### Where should you make the investment?

Running a construction company requires more than just knowing how to build. Owners must balance leadership, financial oversight, operations, and workforce management to ensure long-term success. The challenge involves first changing your mindset. Many skilled trades leaders are “hands on.” This may keep up construction skills, but it weak-

ens operations. Consider the following five critical areas where construction company owners should focus to maximize growth.

### 1 Financial Management & Profitability

Understanding and managing the financial side of a construction business is non-negotiable for long-term success. Too often, construction owners focus on revenue but overlook profit margins, cash flow, and financial forecasting.



COMPANIES GAIN

**\$4.53**

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DOLLAR SPENT ON  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT.  
THAT IS A

**353%**

RETURN

**Professional development in this area should include:**

- **Job costing & estimating accuracy** – Ensuring projects are priced correctly to maintain profitability.
- **Cash flow management** – Learning how to manage payables, receivables, and project financing.
- **Understanding financial reports** – Regularly reviewing profit and loss statements, balance sheets, and key financial metrics.
- **Strategic pricing** – Knowing when to adjust pricing models based on materials, labor, and market conditions.
- **Profitable business** – Not all business is good business. Know where your strengths are and where future opportunities exist.

**2 Leadership & Workforce Development**

Many construction business owners started in the field and worked their way up. While that experience is invaluable, leading a company requires a different skill set. Owners must transition from being the go-to problem solver to empowering their team to take ownership of their roles.

TOO OFTEN, CONSTRUCTION OWNERS  
FOCUS ON REVENUE BUT **OVERLOOK**  
**PROFIT MARGINS, CASH FLOW,**  
**AND FINANCIAL FORECASTING.**

**Leadership development should focus on:**

- **Delegation** – Trusting employees to make decisions without micromanagement.
- **Coaching & mentorship** – Developing internal leaders to grow the company's capabilities.
- **Company culture** – Creating an environment where employees feel valued and motivated.
- **Conflict resolution** – Addressing employee and client disputes effectively to maintain productivity.


**6 Operations & Process Improvement**

Construction companies that thrive have well-defined processes that allow them to scale efficiently. Without strong operational systems, projects get delayed, costs increase, and stress levels rise.

**Key operational areas for development include:**

- **Project scheduling & efficiency** – Learning how to keep projects on track with realistic timelines.





## OWNERS MUST KNOW HOW TO **ATTRACT** **AND RETAIN CLIENTS** WHILE SETTING PROPER EXPECTATIONS.

- **Technology & automation** – Implementing software for estimating, project management, and financial tracking.
- **Standard operating procedures (SOPs)** – Creating documented workflows to ensure consistency.
- **Supply chain & resource management** – Understanding material sourcing, subcontractor relationships, and equipment maintenance.

### ④ **Sales & Client Relationship Management**

A steady pipeline of work is essential for business growth, but many construction owners don't have a clear sales strategy. Owners must know how to attract and retain clients while setting proper expectations.

#### **Professional development in sales should cover:**

- **Bid strategies** – Knowing when to bid, how to price competitively, and when to walk away.
- **Client communication** – Managing expectations, resolving disputes, and maintaining strong relationships.
- **Marketing & branding** – Differentiating the company through a strong reputation, social proof, and online presence.

### 5. **Risk Management & Compliance**

Construction companies face numerous risks, from safety incidents to legal disputes. Owners who understand risk management can reduce liabilities and improve overall company stability.

#### **Important areas for development include:**

- **Safety leadership** – Ensuring compliance with OSHA and creating a culture of safety.
- **Contracts & legal knowledge** – Understanding contract terms, scope changes, and dispute resolution.
- **Insurance & bonding** – Knowing what coverage is needed to protect projects and assets.

By developing stronger skills in these five areas, construction company owners can build a more resilient, profitable, and well-managed business.

#### **Professional Development for Office & Field Teams**

While owners must improve their leadership and business acumen, their employees also need ongoing professional development. With-

out strong team members, even the best-run company will struggle. Below are four core areas where construction employees—both in the office and the field—should improve their skills.

### ① **Leadership Development for Managers & Supervisors**

Strong leadership at all levels of a construction company reduces project failures and increases team efficiency. Training office staff and field supervisors in leadership principles ensures that decisions don't always fall on the owner.

#### **Leadership training should include:**

- **Decision-making skills** – Teaching supervisors how to solve problems without escalating every issue.
- **Team motivation** – Helping leaders engage and inspire crews to maintain productivity.
- **Situational leadership** – Adapting management styles based on the needs of the team.

### ② **Accountability & Performance Management**

One of the biggest challenges in construction is ensuring employees take responsibility for their work. Clear expectations and accountability structures help eliminate excuses and drive results.

#### **Training employees in accountability should focus on:**

- **Setting clear job expectations** – Defining roles and responsibilities.

A STEADY PIPELINE  
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BUT **MANY**  
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**SALES STRATEGY.**

- **Holding people to standards** – Following up on commitments and addressing under-performance.
- **Self-accountability** – Encouraging employees to take ownership of their actions.

#### ③ Communication & Collaboration

Miscommunication is one of the top reasons for delays, rework, and conflict on construction projects. Teaching employees how to communicate clearly, document information, and resolve issues proactively can significantly improve efficiency.

#### Key communication skills to develop:

- **Clarity in instructions** – Ensuring field teams understand scope and expectations.
- **Active listening** – Reducing errors by confirming understanding before acting.
- **Conflict resolution** – Addressing disputes between office staff, field workers, and subcontractors.

#### ④ Project Management & Organization

Project success depends on strong planning, coordination, and execution. Even if employees aren't official project managers, they should understand **basic project management principles** to improve efficiency.

#### Essential project management training should include:

- **Time management** – Reducing delays and staying ahead of schedules.
- **Cost control** – Understanding budgets and minimizing waste.
- **Problem-solving** – Quickly adapting to job site challenges.

By investing in professional development for their teams, construction company owners create a more competent, engaged, and productive workforce—one that ultimately drives profitability and long-term success.

#### Conclusion: A Culture of Continuous Improvement

Professional development in construction isn't just about attending occasional training sessions. It's about building a company culture where learning, accountability, and leadership are valued at every level.

For owners, this means developing skills in financial management, leadership, operations, sales, and risk management to run their business effectively. For employees, it means

# CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNERS WHO COMMIT TO THEIR OWN GROWTH AND THE GROWTH OF THEIR PEOPLE WILL BE THE ONES WHO THRIVE IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

improving leadership, accountability, communication, and project management to execute projects efficiently.

A well-trained team leads to fewer mistakes, better project outcomes, and a company that can scale with confidence. Construction business owners who commit to their own growth and the growth of their people will be the ones who thrive in the years ahead.

Where does your company need to improve most? Start by identifying key areas for development, and invest in training that will position your company for long-term success.

#### Construction Business Professional Development Self-Assessment\*

Use this self-assessment to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses in the key areas of professional development discussed in this article. Answer YES or NO\*\* to each question.

At the end, count your **YES** responses to determine which areas need the most focus.

#### Financial Management & Profitability

1. Do you struggle to track job costs and accurately estimate project expenses?
2. Do you often face cash flow shortages or delays in paying suppliers and employees?
3. Are you unfamiliar with how to read and analyze financial reports like profit & loss statements?

#### Leadership & Workforce Development

4. Do you find yourself constantly making all the decisions because your team isn't empowered to act independently?
5. Do you lack a structured leadership development program for your managers and supervisors?
6. Do conflicts between employees frequently disrupt operations due to poor conflict resolution strategies?

#### Operations & Process Improvement

7. Are projects often delayed or over budget due to inefficiencies in scheduling or resource management?
8. Do you lack documented standard operating procedures (SOPs) for key business functions?
9. Is your company slow to adopt or utilize modern construction technology for project management and estimating?

#### Sales & Client Relationship Management

10. Do you find it difficult to maintain a steady pipeline of new projects and repeat clients?
11. Do you often deal with misunderstandings or disputes with clients due to poor communication or expectation setting?

#### Risk Management & Compliance

12. Do you lack a formalized safety program and struggle with compliance on job sites?
13. Are you unsure about the details of your contracts, insurance, and bonding requirements?

#### Employee Development (Office & Field Teams)

14. Do your employees lack accountability, requiring constant supervision to get things done correctly?
15. Are communication breakdowns between office staff and field teams causing project inefficiencies?

We should talk if you answered YES to any of these questions. Contact me today to learn about the M.A.A.X. System and how it can help you simplify and optimize your business.

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# SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION

**HOW ENGAGING THE WORKFORCE AND  
THEIR FAMILIES CAN HELP YOUR PROJECTS**

By Laura Kocum,  
Marketing and Communications Director, ABC of Wisconsin



"You don't need to be an addict to die of a drug overdose today," says Rich Jones of Buildwell Health. The advent of fentanyl, and the widespread availability of counterfeit pain pills has increased drug overdoses in the US. Even more concerning, Jones says the construction industry sees 162.6 deaths per 100,000 workers annually from drug overdose.

"Something is wrong, and we have to get ahead of it," Jones told the ABC of Wisconsin safety committee at a recent meeting. He explained that an overdose isn't always the result of an addiction, but addiction is still a leading concern on construction teams.

Jones understands addiction well. He is a recovered alcoholic. Once sober, he began to pursue a career helping others find freedom from addiction. He's a therapist and addiction counselor and helps members of the construction industry improve their workplace cultures related to mental health.

Jones sees the industry's efforts to improve culture on jobsites but says there is more work to be done.

"We need to develop a culture that lets people deal with their stressors," he told the committee. This culture shift includes encouraging conversations about the stresses of the work. He says management can train teams to talk more about their concerns, and to recognize behavior shifts in their co-workers. If a member of the team appears to be struggling, Jones says it's crucial that a co-worker or company manager reach out to them. "You can't solve the problem, but you can let them know they are supported. You can refer them to professionals who are best equipped to help," he explained.

Jones says reaching out to co-workers can make a significant difference, but the greatest impact is made when the workplace also engages the whole family. Family members are typically well acquainted with their loved ones' mental health struggles, and often need support, too. Additionally, if an employee's spouse or child is struggling with addiction or another mental health crisis, the stress on the employee will eventually show up at work.

By having resources available, Jones believes companies can prevent a more serious crisis.

For example, companies can offer mental health support, training, and resources to employees, but also to spouses, children and others. Support and training can include videos, telehealth, or even access to a call center with trained counselors. For those with elevated needs, a personal coach can bring the support and accountability needed to overcome a crisis. When you support the family, Jones says, you better equip your employees to succeed at work. And you build loyalty and a positive approach that can pay dividends for an employer's bottom line.

"It's expensive to onboard and train people," he says. "Aside from the human part of wanting to help people, there's a business benefit to providing help." His company provides ongoing mental health support to companies, and it's a support that goes beyond an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The support includes video libraries to train

teams, counseling hotlines, emergency intervention services and ongoing coaching for employees who need support.

"When struggling employees participate in these programs, and you include the whole family in the process, there's about an 85% chance of success," he says. That success can mean recovery, sobriety, and a loyal employee who will continue to build the company's positive culture for years to come.

As a post-covid generation enters the workforce, Jones says they are demonstrating a greater interest in mental health. Employers who plan for this, and provide solid resources, are more likely to attract and keep the next generation of the workforce. If employers engage the family in their process, they'll also develop a strong team for years to come. He hopes these efforts will curb addictions and overdoses, strengthen support systems and build healthier work environments for everyone. [ABC Wisconsin](#)



Rich Jones, CEO of Buildwell Health, talks about the mental health resources available for construction companies.



ABC of Wisconsin's Safety Committee listens to Rich Jones, as he explains the importance of engaging families and co-workers to overcome mental health challenges.



IMPORTANCE OF TRANSLATING

# BRIDG

“

THE US CENSUS STATES  
THAT AROUND 40%  
OF NATIVE SPANISH-SPEAKERS  
SELF-REPORT SPEAKING ENGLISH  
"LESS THAN VERY WELL."



## SAFETY & TRAINING MATERIALS

# BRIDGING THE GAP

**Loretta Mulberry – Terra Translations**

Workers across the US depend on safety and training materials to do their jobs well and come home happy and whole each day. However, those materials are often available only in English despite the fact that a large and growing portion of our construction workforce is made up of people who do not speak English as their native language. After English, Spanish is by far the most common language spoken natively in the US and in Wisconsin, specifically. While it's often assumed that people living in the US understand enough English to get by without major issue, the US Census states that around 40% of native Spanish-speakers self-report speaking English "less than very well." People don't







## A COMMITMENT TO LANGUAGE SERVICES IMPROVES A TEAM'S COHESIVE NATURE AND CULTURE, WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVES AN ORGANIZATION'S CHANCES OF BOTH HIRING AND RETAINING THE BEST POSSIBLE TALENT.

often feel comfortable speaking up about not understanding something because no one wants to be seen as incompetent or difficult by colleagues and superiors, but widespread risks arise for the whole team when the language barrier prevents even one person from fully comprehending safety and training materials. In fact, OSHA estimates that language barriers are a factor in 25% of on-the-job accidents.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that one in four construction industry workers were born outside of the US, with about half of all construction laborers being Hispanic. This number has been rising steadily over the last twenty years, meaning that a large and growing population is likely to speak Spanish as their primary language. Note that our immigrant workforce is not exclusively Spanish

speaking, but this piece focuses on the Hispanic community due to its prevalence in construction. The same risks and solutions outlined here apply to organizations employing workers with limited English proficiency from all backgrounds. If documentation outlining their rights and responsibilities is only available in English, then they are not being afforded the same access to knowledge as their native English-speaking counterparts. It's an easy thing to take for granted for many of us who have never had to learn or work in a second, or even third, language. Yet this lack of language access is all too common. It's a disservice to these employees, an unnecessary risk to all workers, a legal and regulatory compliance pitfall, and could be seen as a signal to the public that safety is not truly an organization's top priority.

There are many ways to begin bridging the language gap within a company, and perhaps the best first step is understanding some of the terminology. "Language services" refers to one or more language-related services, such as translation (converting written documents from one language to another), interpreting (in-person or remotely converting spoken language), subtitling and/or voice over (dubbed) work for videos, and more. Speaking with a professional language services provider (LSP) will help to determine which services a particular company would benefit from most. While it's tempting to rely on bilingual employees or AI to perform these tasks, working with a professional linguist or agency will provide a much higher level of linguistic and cultural accuracy. LSPs have industry knowledge as well as technical language skills to accommodate the nuance of language when preserving a particular tone and vernacular and determining the proper variant and register for a specific audience.

Beginning a company's language access journey might seem overwhelming, but there are small steps that can be taken to start slowly and build a proper foundation. First, identify which languages are spoken throughout the team and evaluate whether there are concerns over illiteracy and other learning disabilities. Nearly one in four people in the US experience low literacy rates in any language, though it's common to hide this fact from employers. Next, determine which documents take priority for translation. This might be anything that causes friction, inefficiencies, damages, or injuries when not communicated clearly, such as employee handbooks, toolbox talks, training courses, or other HR forms. Translation is an investment in your employees' well-being and your company's operational success. According to the CPWR - The Center for Construction Research and

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Training, employees who are trained in their native language report substantially better understanding of and adherence to safety protocols with a 90% increase in engagement with safety materials, a decrease in injury incidents for all employees, and improved working efficiency and team morale. Effective training and better adherence to safety protocols is not just the right thing to do for employees' safety, but also the fiscally responsible thing to do for employers given the expenses related to jobsite incidents, such as delays, injuries, insurance investigations, regulatory fines, short-staffing, and retraining.

On top of the safety and operational benefits of translation, a commitment to language services improves a team's cohesive nature and culture, which significantly improves an organization's chances of both hiring and retaining the best possible talent. With the ongoing shortage of construction labor, it's more important than ever that we find new ways to keep our teams running at full strength. It's also worth noting that companies who do not provide training in employees' native languages could be deemed



**IT SPEAKS VOLUMES WHEN COMPANIES DEDICATE SUCH SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES TO KEEPING WORKERS SAFE AND EDUCATED ON THE JOB, AND LANGUAGE ACCESS IS THE PERFECT NEXT STEP TO MAKE SURE EMPLOYEES ARE GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THOSE RESOURCES.**

in violation of the OSHA Training Standards Policy Statement which requires training "be provided in a language the employee can understand" and that said training must account for limited English proficiency.

In closing, translating safety and training materials protects not only workers, but also an organization's reputation with future hires, customers, competitors, and regulatory bodies. We're living in an exciting moment in history where safety is more of a priority than it ever has been. It speaks volumes when companies dedicate such significant resources to keeping workers safe and educated on the job, and language access is the perfect next step to make sure employees are getting the most out of those resources. Every document counts and everyone must start somewhere, so let this be the sign you've been waiting for to begin! 



Loretta Mulberry

**TERRA**  
TRANSLATIONS

## EVENT REMINDERS



- **NETWORKING SOCIAL**

June 11, Altoona

- **10-HOUR OSHA TRAINING**

May 8 & 9, Eau Claire  
June 10 & 23, Appleton  
June 13 & 20, Madison  
June 20 & 27, Milwaukee

- **FIRST AID & CPR TRAINING**

May 9, Madison  
May 23, Milwaukee  
May 27, Appleton  
May 30, Eau Claire  
June 13, Milwaukee

- **MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS  
2-PART WEB SERIES**

May 13, Live-Online

- **QUALIFIED RIGGER & SIGNAL  
PERSON TRAINING**

May 16, Madison  
June 20, Appleton

- **2025 APPRENTICESHIP  
GRADUATION BANQUET**

May 16, Wisconsin Dells

- **GOLF SCRAMBLE AT THE OAKS**

May 29, Cottage Grove

- **NEC ELECTRICAL EXAM PREP**

June 4, Madison

- **MILWAUKEE BREWERS  
TAILGATE & GAME**

June 6, Milwaukee



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# ROADMAP FOR WISCONSIN?

## HOW ABC MICHIGAN REFORMED APPRENTICESHIP RATIOS

**By Shane Hernandez**  
**President of ABC of Michigan**

Michigan is known for its manufacturing and industry. We define ourselves based on our rich, blue-collar history. Just look at our sports teams – The Gritty Tigs, The Bad Boys, and my personal favorite, Dan Campbell's Detroit Lions. Campbell built this team around the grit and attitude of Michigan manufacturing, and we have been biting Green Bay Packer kneecaps ever since.

One thing that comes with that history is the assumption that nearly everyone in Michigan is a union worker. While everyone in Michigan knows someone who is a UAW member, our construction industry, much like everywhere else in the nation, is predominantly non-union.

Associated Builders and Contractors of Michigan and our regional chapters have been a political force in the state of Michigan for decades. And while the unions may control a lot of what happens in our state legislature, Michigan defied all odds when it became a Right to Work state in 2012. Soon after, in 2018, a citizen led initiative sent the repeal of Prevailing Wage to the legislature which passed into law shortly after. On top of these two marquis issues for Merit Shop contractors, Michigan also boasted a Local Preemption law, making it illegal for local governments to impose their own labor laws. Michigan was also a proud Fair and Open Competition State. Finally,



ABC Michigan staff leaders and members with former Michigan Governor Snyder as he signs the Wolverine State's apprenticeship ratio reforms into law.

we boasted some of the most permissible apprenticeship ratios with no ratio requirement in place for any trade other than electrical which was changed from 1:1 to 3:1 in 2016.

All of these free market and open competition accomplishments came under fire overnight when Michigan Democrats flipped the Michigan House and Senate blue while holding all other statewide offices and the Supreme Court in 2022. It was the first time Democrats held the "trifecta" in over 40 years in the State of Michigan. We were suddenly in territory that anyone currently working in politics had never seen before.

It wasn't four months before the

legislature made Michigan the first state to repeal a Right to Work law and then reimplemented Prevailing Wage. And then came the barrage of bills attacking local preemption, independent contractors, apprenticeship ratios, non US DOL Registered apprenticeships, temporary workers, paid sick leave, workers compensation and small business in general.

The sheer amount of bad legislation facing ABC contractors was hard to wrap your mind around.

While ABC of Michigan prepared to fight all of the above, it was up to our team to determine where we could gain the most traction with the general public. The goal was simple, win over the aver-



age person at home to put as much pressure on legislators as possible to slow down the process.

Not only was the messaging important. We also had to look where our allies would be working to help. Other business groups had an interest in independent contractors and local preemption, but it was clear ABC would need to take the lead on ratios if we wanted it to be a focus.

The proposed ratio bills (SB 895 to change electrical back to 1:1 and SB 740 to implement a 2:1 ratio for plumbing) quickly became a focus in the Democrat led Senate Labor Committee. Through polling and a look at historical data, it was clear that we had an argument on both access to the trades for young people and a lack of data on any issues with training quality or jobsite safety.

ABC's focus with legislators was centered around the union arguments that these bills would provide higher quality training and a safer job environment for apprentices. MIOSHA data showed zero jobsite deaths related to apprentices since the 3:1 electrical ratio was imposed and a union testimony in committee proved a local plumbing union was using a 4:1 ratio in plumbing, double what the testimony was actually arguing for.

On the public front, ABC focused on the change from 3:1 to 1:1 in electrical

because this gave us an actual statistic to work with. SB 895 would cut on the job training opportunities by 66% at a time when Michigan is championing trades programs and has a known shortage in skilled trades.

While this entire process was playing out, ABC of Michigan sought out every alliance possible. From manufacturers who use ABC contractors to developers who would certainly see prices rise. We even built relationships with green energy companies looking to bring wind and solar developments to Michigan. How could they possibly meet Michigan's new requirement to work toward 100% renewable energy while we were also cutting our electrical workforce?

At the end of the day, we won one and lost one. Plumbers in Michigan will now deal with a 2:1 ratio, but we were able to stall the electrical bill for long enough to kill it when the session ended in December. But it wasn't all 50/50 news to end the year. With the end of the legislative session, every other issue mentioned, from independent contractors to the repeal of our Fair and Open Competition Act fizzled out.

The relationships we built with some unlikely partners and the messaging we used against the Democrats, own renewable energy plan paid dividends. And the icing on the cake was that our choice to play heavily in legislative races

despite the possible consequences resulted in flipping the Michigan House of Representatives to a Merit Shop friendly House, protecting us for at least the next two years.

We took risks along the way. We campaigned openly against the House Labor Committee chair while these bills sat in his committee. We knew we could try to play nice, but that might only buy us time before these bills passed. We pushed our members to give more than ever. For the first time in 40 years, the ABC saying "Get Involved in Politics or Get Out of Business" truly meant something. And we knew, if we went all in and lost, there would be fundraising consequences in coming elections.

When all was said and done, we did things the ABC way. We stood up for our principles and never backed down.



Shane Hernandez,  
ABC of Michigan President

WE BOASTED SOME OF THE MOST PERMISSIBLE APPRENTICESHIP RATIOS WITH NO RATIO REQUIREMENT IN PLACE FOR ANY TRADE OTHER THAN ELECTRICAL WHICH WAS CHANGED FROM 1:1 TO 3:1 IN 2016.

## MARCH 2025

### • Adleman Electric, LLC

Scott Adleman  
W6045 County Road  
Elkhart Lake, WI 53020  
920-894-1657  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Courtney Stelter, Ansay & Associates, LLC  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 5

### • Air Systems Inc.

Brian Grainger  
4520 County Highway F North,  
P.O. Box 522  
Delavan, WI 53115  
262-728-1655  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* JR Reesman, Reesman's  
Excavating & Grading, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 41

### • Danton Construction Services

Daniel Badertscher  
3988 Windsor Road  
DeForest, WI 53532  
608-566-9029  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Ashley Jaeger, Dodge  
Construction Network  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 1

### • Document Crunch

Abbey Spink  
8000 Avalon Blvd.  
Alpharetta, GA 30009  
678-477-5795  
*Description:* Supplier  
*Sponsor:* Jay Zahn, Hausmann  
Group  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 71

### • Doro Plumbing

Logan Doro  
W745 State Road 33  
Hartford, WI 53207  
262-229-5632  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Roger Thimm, Wondra  
Construction, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 27.5

### • Hagen Plumbing Service LLC

Holly Hagen  
N120W17740 Freistadt Road  
Germantown, WI 53022  
262-251-4151  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Andrew Kaehny, Steiner  
Electric, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 14

### • Hupf's Plumbing and Service

Adam Hupf  
W10921 County Road G  
Beaver Dam, WI 53916  
920-210-8746  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Casey Maleseovich, Sure-  
Fire, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 18

### • Janesville Plumbing

Eric Richards  
P.O. Box 1800  
Janesville, WI 53547  
608-754-7790  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* John Williams, Gilbank  
Construction, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 2

### • Lifetime Door Company, Inc.

Richard Bauer  
12645 W. Townsend St.  
Brookfield, WI 53005  
262-783-4004  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Kyle Kraemer, Kraemer  
Brothers  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 13

### • M.C. Miscellaneous LLC

Rashawn Spivey  
3334 S. Adams Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
414-651-3869  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Ryan Barkdoll, Wide Effect  
Talent Solutions  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 2

### • Mason Enterprises LLC

Paul Mason  
1981 E. Blue Mounds Road  
Mount Horeb, WI 53572  
608-576-0245  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Jess Lawinger, United  
Rentals  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 3

### • Omer Nelson Electric

Peter Macky  
316 Main St. E.  
Ashland, WI 54806  
715-682-4100  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Tom Altmann, Altmann  
Construction Co., Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 49

### • Sippel Electric, LLC

Ben Sippel  
N5981 Kohler Road  
Fredonia, WI 53021  
262-305-9199  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Gerry Krebsbach, K-W  
Electric, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 40

### • Thielmann Holdings Inc.

Aaron Jerabek  
17020 W. National Ave.  
New Berlin, WI 53151  
262-384-6407  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Jessica Cannizzaro,  
Milestone Plumbing, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 31

### • Velocity Leader

Elise Radawitz  
613 Church St., P.O. Box 51  
Allenton, WI 53002  
262-424-2867  
*Description:* Associate  
*Sponsor:* Bill Rozga, Trade Talk, LLC  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 26.5

## APRIL 2025

### • Automation Solutions LLC

Steve Nordness  
N116 W18627 Morse Drive  
Germantown, WI 53022  
262-293-9134  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Jessica Cannizzaro,  
Milestone Plumbing, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 32

### • B. Bohmann Plumbing, Inc.

Brian Bohmann  
2932 W. Forest Home  
Milwaukee, WI 53215  
414-645-1444  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Jessica Cannizzaro,  
Milestone Plumbing, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 33

### • Bucky Lift Inc.

Mike Wheeler  
4511 110th St.  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729  
715-720-8588  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Brent Pember, Pember  
Companies, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 1

### • KAR Electric, LLC

Kevin Rasmussen  
8765 S. 6th Ave., Oak Creek, WI 53154  
414-313-6371  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Cory Highshaw, U.S. Bank  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 2

### • Lannon Stone Realty LLC

Guntis Dredzels  
N75W23996 Overland Road  
Sussex, WI 53089  
608-572-8889  
*Description:* Associate  
*Sponsor:* Dan Bertler, Supreme  
Structures, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 74

### • North Shore Brickwork

Les O'Hara  
2800 E. Enterprise Ave., Suite 333  
Appleton, WI 54913  
847-417-4266  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Jim Bunkelman, Royal  
Construction, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 18

### • R and R Plumbing LLC

Randy Raddatz  
1639 Thornton Drive  
Oshkosh, WI 54904  
920-279-3949  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Troy Carlson, USI Insurance  
Services  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 40

### • R Plumbing LLC

Ryan Kohlhoff  
1223 Wakoka St.  
Watertown, WI 53094  
920-253-5311  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Casey Maleseovich,  
Sure-Fire, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 19

### • Rice Companies, Inc.

Kip Golden  
327 Randolph Drive  
Appleton, WI 54913  
920-733-7305  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Jenna Milis, Milis Flatwork  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 7

### • Spearity

Darren Fisher  
313 N. Plakinton Ave., Suite 207  
Milwaukee, WI 53203  
414-600-1320  
*Description:* Associate  
*Sponsor:* Jessica Cannizzaro,  
Milestone Plumbing, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 34

### • Suburban Drywall, Inc.

Dave Saterno  
1312 Poplar Drive  
Waukesha, WI 53188  
262-544-0993  
*Description:* Contractor  
*Sponsor:* Sam Daniels, Daniels  
Construction  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 4.5

### • USEMCO

Keri Finch  
1650 Rezin Road  
Tomah, WI 54660  
608-372-5911  
*Description:* Supplier  
*Sponsor:* Brian Wieser, Wieser  
Brothers General Contractor, Inc.  
Beam Club Members-to-Date: 57.5

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