

Building a Company Of Performers

Although construction employment has been hit hard by the recession—accounting for a quarter of all jobs lost—the industry’s workforce performance challenge will not end when conditions improve. The recovery is likely to be slow, and competitive conditions will require keeping a lid on costs. Both contractors and developers will need to meet the productivity challenge of getting the job done with a smaller team of workers.

Identifying and retaining quality performers is crucial. Reconfiguring and reducing a workforce creates an opportunity to retain the most skilled, committed team members. Their enthusiasm means these employees can better handle and embrace the extra work required of a smaller team.

So, how can a construction company create a team of performers? The answer involves a two-step process of assessment and testing.

ASSESSMENT: LAY THE FOUNDATION

To identify the best performers, determine what is meant by “performance.” Make sure all aspects of performance are measurable by standards that can be easily tracked, reported and rewarded. On the jobsite, performance can be measured by physical output: the amount of work completed according to each skilled trade’s quality standards. In the office, the measurement is more challenging but still feasible. A salesperson, for example, can be evaluated based on how many phone calls, visits, RFPs and closed sales are made during the reporting period.

Next, make sure the personnel matches the company’s performance standards. Are the right people doing the right things in the right places? Are teams properly staffed at the jobsite and in the office?



Overstaffing with unskilled people in redundant positions can slow down performance goals.

Finally, set necessary but achievable performance goals and plan how to communicate them. If employees are not used to being driven by recognizable and measurable goals, then it is important to give them confidence in the assessment system.

TESTING: IDENTIFY THE PERFORMERS

Companies want to retain employees with the drive and skills that will enable them to take on greater responsibilities and make more contributions.

Personality testing provides valuable insight into identifying, retaining and advancing an organization’s best performers. It doesn’t measure the “can do,” but it does demonstrate motivated behaviors—the “will do” attitudes—that greatly affect performance.

Yet, not all personality testing is the same. The best measurement includes the

three factors most critical to job performance: individual characteristics, job situations and the interaction of the two.

Testing identifies whether people work better alone or on a team, whether they prefer a structured or flexible work environment, whether they take initiative or need guidance, and whether they think in terms of details or the big picture. Each employee has unique strengths, weaknesses, productive behaviors and stress behaviors that may be similar to, or differ from, others on the team.

Personality testing brings these characteristics into focus, demonstrating how to cull greater productivity from the core capabilities of team members—especially after layoffs thin out the ranks. Testing also creates a systematic process of identifying best performers, not a hit-or-miss effort that cuts muscle along with fat.

Online personality tests make the process simple and cost-effective. And when economic conditions improve, testing and assessment can be used to hire better workers who interact and communicate well with other employees and customers while supporting the company’s performance objectives.

The two-step assessment and testing process helps find the best fit between job responsibilities and employee capabilities. Employers need an objective way to determine which employees have the motivation to stay and thrive, and which they are better off without. The result is a performance culture in which employees improve the output, quality and service that every construction company needs in a competitive business environment.

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