

Concrete Construction is Experiencing an Unexpected Challenge

Some contractors are coming up short.

Having a tough time finding enough skilled workers to bid on bigger projects? You're not alone. At White Cap (one of the nation's largest suppliers of tools, equipment, materials and safety products to concrete contractors) we see the challenge some of our customers are facing first hand. In some busy markets, professional contractors are choosing to forego bidding on some jobs because they're unable to muster the manpower needed to bring the project in on time. The lucky contractors that do have the people needed end up paying them more just to keep them on board – and that can drive up the overall cost of a job. It's a situation that makes having a supplier with a wealth of resources, services and industry know-how like White Cap even more important.

So, where are all the skilled tradesmen?

A combination of elements has contributed to the talent drain. First, a sizable contingent of baby boomers has begun to age out of the business. It's a physically demanding profession and many are reaching retirement age. Second, the Great Recession hit our industry especially hard. Many skilled workers were forced to look for other ways to make a living and haven't returned as opportunities for steady work have increased. And finally, high schools did a terrific job of promoting the need for a college education to get ahead in the world – convincing many students to seek a degree and leave vocational training and careers in the construction industry out of their future plans.

How are we replenishing the pipeline?

Many in our industry recognize that it's high time we got the word out about the noble purpose and attractive aspects of our profession. We need to reach out to a new, young audience that's largely unaware of the many benefits and substantial earning potential in the industry. Some associations and larger players in the construction industry are finding opportunities to visit and speak to students about the business in high schools and colleges. In fact, company representatives from White Cap are hitting the road to take the message directly to potential recruits. And even schools are getting in on the action. They're realizing that higher education isn't always the best path for everyone – and as a result, vocational training in schools is making a big comeback.

Expect more from your supplier.

While efforts to get the talent pipeline flowing take shape, you should be looking for a higher level of service from your supplier. If they don't offer rebar fabrication, form and brace rentals, new product demos, on-site training, free jobsite delivery or 2-hour ready will-call pick-up and serious attention from an experienced account manager – it's time to look elsewhere. It's time to give White Cap a try.

digging deeper

Check out these links for more information on skilled tradesmen check out these links:

<http://www.constructiondive.com/news/the-50-states-of-construction-how-one-oh-contractor-is-finding-workers-ami/449276/>

<http://www.constructiondive.com/news/4-ways-builders-are-working-around-the-labor-shortage/435663/>

<http://eyeonhousing.org/2016/11/construction-job-openings-continue-to-rise/>

<http://eyeonhousing.org/2016/06/more-builders-report-laborsubcontractor-shortages/>