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Are you passionate about helping others succeed in the electrical contracting industry and have a proven and innovative idea to share? Then consider submitting a presentation for the 2019 IEC Convention and Expo, October 2-5, 2019 in St. Louis, MO.

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Deadline for submissions is February 28, 2019, so act now!

FEATURE

EMERGING LEADERS

By *Phil Nimmo* with contributions from MCA staff



In January 2018 IEC published an article written by MCA with focus on the topic of recruiting workers (Recruiting for the Future, January 2018, *Insights Magazine*); hopefully by now you were able to successfully implement some of the concepts and it has satisfied your head count needs. The next step is of course to retain the best people that you have; the aspiring and capable leaders for your business. Offering more money is not always the

solution. People are less motivated by money than what they want you to believe, and this is especially true of skilled workers. Money enables people to live a quality life, and to achieve a sense of financial security that is critical to success, but money is not a measure of success for most people. What we need in order to effectively retain our best skilled workers is to develop a business culture that recognizes and promotes those who desire an elevated career path.

Your company needs to have an available career path for future leaders and a plan that allows them to navigate this path.

Not everyone is cut out for leadership, and this is particularly true when it comes to leading skilled workers. Perhaps one of the greatest mistakes that business owners, executives and top leaders make is believing that everyone thinks like they think, and that everyone is driven the way they're driven. In fact, hiring

and retaining the traditional white-collar worker is relatively easy in contrast to attracting and retaining the traditional blue-collar and/or pink-collar work force. This is true because they present their achievements and their career goals neatly laid out on their resume, written in a language that you can relate to and understand. Your apprentices, on the other hand, probably haven't provided you with a resume, and when you talk with them, they don't tell you that they're anxious to put down their tools and fill out reports for "the office," or be responsible for the performance of their coworkers.

Developing your emerging, future leaders begins with recognizing them. You must know what the characteristics and behaviors of your future leaders are, and what it looks like in their current role, as an

Apprentice or Journeyman. Avoiding the "Peter Principle" is a matter of realizing that a worker who simply excels at his current assignment is not necessarily ready, or even interested in advancement. Most workers, whether they want it or not, will accept a promotion either for fear of giving the wrong impression if they turn it down or out of appreciation for the recognition of their past accomplishments. An unwanted promotion is easily justified with additional compensation and perks. An unwanted promotion only results in an underperforming, once stellar employee and lost productivity and profitability for your business.

The characteristics of an emerging leader are both behavior and knowledge, but most importantly the ability to combine the two effectively. In this case effectively

means knowing what is needed by the company, knowing what is needed by the worker and translating the two into an effective leadership style that preserves respect from management and labor. In a more tactical explanation; this is the ability to motivate the work force to achieve increased productivity and profitability.

As the Construction Industry works through its current industrialization phase and principles of Agile Construction® become increasingly essential for the sustainability of your business, the emerging leader must be able to:

- 1. See the work.** This means that by reading the plans and specs the leader sees enough to not only visualize the final product, but also visualize the construction process as it will unfold. This leader isn't only responsible for the result but also for maintaining the constructability of the project throughout its duration.
- 2. Develop a road map for the team.** This road map takes the form of a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) (see Figure 1) and forms a model for communicating, planning and tracking the project progress and performance.
- 3. Manage time and resources effectively and efficiently (see Figure 2).** In an Agile environment managing time and resources goes far beyond identifying what your crew will work on today, it is about looking ahead. Looking ahead to prepare for installation in the next few days as well as procurement of components with effective order lead

¹ The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong by Dr. Laurence J Peter (2011)

FIG. 1: SIS® Example

Day	Task	Qty	Scheduled Time	% Complete	Reason for less than 100% complete	# hrs not worked as scheduled
Mon.	Install fixtures –level 4	24	John /4, Chad / 4	80%	8	4 hrs
	Layout for level 5		John /4, Chad / 4	100%		
Tues.	Pour on level 4 East		John /4, Chad / 4, Chris/6			
	Install 6 fixtures –level 4		John /4, Chad / 4			
	Level 6 layout		Matt /8, Eric /8, Doug /8, Chris /2			
Wed.	Set up racks for pulling FA cable					
	Conduits in slab on west pour		John /4, Chad / 4, Chris/6Matt /8, Eric /8			
	Pull 50% of power conductors in Zone B		John /4, Chad / 4, Chris /2			
	Pull 30 feet of FA cable					

FIG. 2: WBS Example



FIG. 3: Agile Training



MAY 1ST, 9:05 A.M.

A CONTRACTOR SEES THE LIGHT AND SURVIVES THE BLAST

IN AN INSTANT, NATE PETERSON LEARNED THE VALUE OF CNA'S RISK CONTROL RESOURCES

Nate Peterson of HandiDigits Electric has over 15 years of experience, but he wasn't expecting the arc blast that came from his customer's transformer door. Luckily, Nate was prepared. Thanks to his IEC safety training and an Arc Survival course from CNA Risk Control, he knew to wear proper Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) before starting the job. So instead of a costly legal claim and a lengthy hospital stay, this Master Electrician made it home for dinner and had some extra time with the kids. Well done, Nate.

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To learn more about CNA's coverages and programs for electrical contractors, contact your independent agent or visit www.cna.com/iec.



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times and looking even further ahead to ensure that prefabricated assemblies and valuable vendor services can be utilized to reduce the cost of installation. Often this may involve planning and coordination with BIM/VDC functions at, or even prior to, the start of the job.

4. Recognize and segregate work reasonably and effectively. The future leader recognizes the work that is to be performed and sees it in a way that translates directly into the minimum skills required to complete the tasks. Only by managing the distribution of work according to minimum required skill will the Construction Industry have the labor capacity needed to meet current and increasing future demand for new building projects.

As you can imagine, these behaviors and skills, and even the necessary knowledge to lead a team of construction workers is not inherent in electrical apprentices, or even experienced journeymen. This is knowledge and skills that must be taught, and it is rarely taught in today's apprenticeship programs. Currently the burden for this level of training (see Figure 3) lies on the shoulders of the individual contractor. Each contractor must make the education and training available to aspiring leaders, evaluate their capabilities to grasp and perform tasks and activities at this level and then provide a suitable training environment for the required experience to be gained. At the root of all this is an Agile business model that requires and reinforces effective planning and execution of efficient principles.

Developing emerging leaders that will be effective in the future Construction Industry can only be done in conjunction

with the implementation of policies and processes that require and leverage effective leadership. For most successful businesses this is a step towards much tighter collaboration and work integration with owners, general contractors, other trades and of course distributors and manufacturers. Essentially, engaging the field installation team in the upfront decision making that leads to productive and profitable job site construction. Next, the future leader will take on the role of training, leading by example, and ensuring that the installers work efficiently with the tools and materials provided.

Three decades of research conducted by MCA has shown repeatedly that efficient installation requires the reduction of variation. Increasing the predictability of what, when, and where the materials and tools can be found is more important than just having extra, somewhere, so you don't run out. Similarly, MCA's research has shown that individual labor rate is less important than having workers with the correct skills performing the work, which is also best achieved with the same steps that reduce variation and waste at the point of installation. Reduction of variation is best achieved by simply identifying common and standard assemblies and performing as much of this work as possible in the most predictable and manageable environment achievable and using the workers with the minimum necessary skills and proper training.

The proper training for the skilled workers, the work that the future leader will be responsible for, and for managing, includes each of the following:

- The ability to see the finer details of their task or project.

- The ability to more accurately plan, schedule and assess their scope of work.
- Daily scheduling and reporting of work accomplished, obstacles encountered and variances from expectation.
- Planning for Prefabrication in support of their project.
- Material handling and material management.
- Working with vendors to improve material management and lower installation effort and skill.
- Translating Specifications, Codes, Site Conditions, Schedule and Design into the actual work to be performed.

By giving the Apprentice the proper training and tools from the start ensures their success in any workplace under any condition. A worker trained in Agile Construction® will be a worker prepared to lead the way and take on whatever the job can throw at him, which in turn ensures the health and longevity of today's changing industry. Feel free to contact me or anyone at MCA for more information on Agile tools and/or training for your team.

Phil Nimmo has held many positions within MCA and is currently the VP of Business Development. Phil has a B.S. Mechanical Engineering from Michigan Technological University as well as an MBA Technology Management from University of Phoenix. With MCA since 1999, he has conducted research projects for several industries, has led numerous projects to help clients implement the research results effectively incorporating these into their businesses, and participated in publication of both research and case study results. Additionally, he has owned and operated several small businesses, lead operations for a large multi-state / multi-location distributor focused on serving the needs of contractors. Phil has also led operations and training departments for certificated air carriers, managed digital controls and mechanical equipment installations, and is accomplished in automotive advanced product engineering, receiving both US and European patents for vehicle traction control and antilock brake systems. ⚡

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