How Fast Track Specialties triumphed from Hurricane Harvey

WE ARE TEXANS!

KEEPING THE BUSINESS RUNNING WHILE PROVIDING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

REWARDING WORKERS AND FUNDING RETIREMENT WITH A CASH BALANCE PLAN

SERIES LLCs IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

THE WORKFORCE ISSUE: HOW THE INDUSTRY IS WORKING TOGETHER TO SOLVE THE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

THE WORKFORCE ISSUE: HOW THE INDUSTRY IS WORKING TOGETHER TO SOLVE THE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE
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ABC Greater Houston is entering into the fourth quarter, and is performing at a high level. I am seeing and meeting new members at events, and I'm impressed with everyone's volunteer efforts. We are hitting our goals and objectives, but let's not take our foot off the gas...If everyone puts in their best efforts this last quarter, ABC will continue to be one of the greatest associations of our industry.

The November midterm elections are right around the corner, so I am asking that each of you exercise your right to vote to make our collective voice heard. This past month, the Political Action Committee (PAC) has been working hard to visit and endorse candidates who believe in the Merit Shop Philosophy and ABC's interests. It is impressive to see our PAC donations work through the system and actually make a difference, starting as a PAC badge pledge, and working up to endorsing candidates. Our industry has a lot to lose if the wrong candidates are elected, so support the PAC and get out there and vote!

We are still just a little shy of our STEP Goal. I need all new 2018 members to complete the applications in order to meet our goal of 60% participation. We need current STEP participants to help promote the message in their networks. Who doesn't want to improve their Safety Program? It is a proven way to improve your company's safety statistics, and it's free. Why wait?

In workforce development, I have referred to our goal of improving the funding model as a marathon. Our staff and volunteers are making a great headway, and we are seeing clear signs that the improved funding model is working. The combination of new TCA contributors, contributors funding their commitment, and adjusting certain training expenses are leaving footprints in the education and training arenas in the Houston area. On the National Level, ABC is making great strides with the Department of Labor, the White House, and coverage on major media platforms.

Regarding membership, although we might be slightly under our lofty goal of 90% retention, I could not be more proud of the staff and volunteers heading up our membership efforts. These are some of the hardest working individuals, but it is important to remember they are just the tip of the spear. It is every member's job to promote ABC, our value proposition, and encourage others to join.

We have many more great events throughout the end of the year, and I am counting on our members to make them a success. I thank each of you again for being engaged, and I thank all ABC/CMEF staff members for the hard work accomplished on behalf of the association. I look forward to seeing you at the next event, and appreciate your support.
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ONCE UPON A TIME
there was a woman who correctly predicted the
FUTURE of SAFETY
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safety management method. Her influence continues to expand as
the wave of “Me, Too” companies continue to develop in the wake
of her visionary leadership.

TARA’S IDEAS HAVE TRANSFORMED THE SAFETY INDUSTRY
SEEDED NEW ENTERPRISES FOR THE “ME, TOO” COMPANIES
AND SAVED COUNTLESS LIVES...

LIKE ONE RAIN DROP LEADING TO ANOTHER

WELL, HERE WE
GO AGAIN...
The business of construction is a day to day adventure fraught with peril and liabilities dangerous enough to put many construction firms out of business. Given that reality, it is imperative that contractors properly structure the legal entities that provide the fortresses to protect their assets. While most are familiar with the limited liability company (LLC) and limited partnership (LP) set ups, many have no familiarity with series limited liability companies (Series LLC).

A special kind of LLC, a Series LLC can be thought of as an umbrella under which lie separate, independently-owned and operated LLCs, each of which is called a series.

To designate an LLC as a Series LLC in Texas, the Texas Business Organizations Code (TBOC) requires the following language to be included in the certificate of formation and company agreement: (1) the debts, liabilities, obligations, and expenses incurred, contract for, or otherwise existing with respect to a particular series shall be enforceable against the assets of that series only, and shall not be enforceable against the assets of the limited liability company generally or any other series; and (2) none of the debts, liabilities, obligations, and expenses incurred, contract for, or otherwise existing with respect to the limited liability company generally or any other series shall be enforceable against the assets of a particular series.

BENEFITS & DRAWBACKS FOR CONTRACTORS
Explained further under the TBOC, each individual series is solely responsible for its own assets and liabilities, can have its own type of ownership and membership interest, can sue and be sued, can have its own separate business purpose, can enter into contracts, and can grant security interests. Thus, the liabilities, obligations, and debts of one series in the Series LLC structure do not affect the other series or the umbrella LLC.

1. Contractors who engage in different types of construction projects or operations can potentially benefit from the use of Series LLCs. For example, through the use of a Series LLC, a construction firm could effectively isolate the differing liabilities of engaging in commercial, industrial, municipal, civil or institutional work. Contract and tort liability associated with each contract or type of project will be quarantined from the other Series LLCs and overall umbrella, thus protecting important assets including equipment, real property, money, and so much more.

2. Series LLCs allow for great savings in cost and time, especially relating to formation documents and filing fees. In Texas, the statutory filing fee to create a Series LLC is $300, no matter how many series are created under the umbrella. Without implementing the Series LLC structure, a business owner would have to file this $300 fee for each LLC.

Legal

Series LLCs in the Construction Industry: Increasingly Popular Fortresses to Protect Contractor’s Assets

By JP Vogel and Catherine Chlebowski
3. Series LLCs allow for flexibility in the management operation of the series. Each series under the Series LLC structure can have its own managers, members, membership interests, assets, and even business purpose. This allows each series to function essentially as an individual and separate entity.

The only current drawbacks are (1) this type of entity has not been adopted nationwide and is comparatively new and (2) the TBOC strictly requires the books and records of each series must be separately maintained as among the other series in the Series LLC. The insulation from liability between each series may be lost if the books and records are not maintained according to the strict parameters of the TBOC.

In sum, there are many factors to consider in deciding to utilize the increasingly popular Series LLC structure in Texas. For clarification or for guidance, it’s best to work with an experienced attorney. ♦
Keeping the Business Running While Providing Family and Medical Leave

BY ANTHONY G. STERGIO AND ANDREW J. CLARK

At the time of this writing, Austin’s paid sick leave ordinance, previously scheduled to take effect on October 1, 2018, has been stayed by Texas’s Third Court of Appeals in Austin—but Austin’s ordinance is still under the court’s review and may still go into effect. Meanwhile, San Antonio has passed an ordinance providing up to 64 hours of paid sick leave per year to employees working in San Antonio; this ordinance will go into effect on August 1, 2019.

Given the passage of these paid sick leave ordinances, it’s a good time for Texas employers to review their FMLA practices and consider the impact of these local ordinances.

COMPLYING WITH THE FMLA

Complying with the FMLA is about getting the details—and especially the documentation—right. Here are some quick reminders on how to comply with the FMLA while handling employee leave requests, whether reasonable or not:

- Maintain—and enforce—a call-in policy that specifies when and to whom an employee should call in an absence. When an employee calls in an absence, ask questions: For example, ask for the reason of his or her absence, whether he or she expects to see a health care provider, and when he or she expects to return to work. Make a record of the employee’s response.
- Where practical, have the employee complete a written leave request. Getting an initial request in writing can help set your and the employee’s expectations from the start.
- After receiving notice of a need for FMLA leave, inform the employee about whether he or she is eligible for such leave (i.e., whether they have worked for you for a year, whether they have worked enough hours within the last 12 months). Often, employers make the mistake of offering FMLA leave to employees who were ineligible for that leave. If an employee is eligible, provide the employee with a Rights and Responsibilities Notice.
- Have the employee timely and sufficiently complete a written certification to support a leave request (including documentation from a health care provider, as appropriate). If there are any specific concerns about the certification, let the employee know those concerns and give him or her seven days to correct them.
- Then, notify the employee in writing if his or her leave is FMLA-protected. We recommend using the Department of Labor’s Designation Notice form for that purpose.
- Request certifications from employees on if and when they plan to return from FMLA leave, or back to full duty.
- Keep a record of when an employee’s FMLA leave is exhausted so that you can determine next steps for the employee.

At its worst, complying with the FMLA seems like a lot of paperwork—and it can be! But this paperwork can serve the employer well by keeping employees honest and accountable—which keeps the business running.

COMPLYING WITH LOCAL ORDINANCES

If Austin’s ordinance were to stand and San Antonio’s
ordinance were to remain unchallenged, contractors would need to track employees' hours city-by-city, post legally required notices of paid sick leave obligations, keep employees informed of their hours accrued and used in each city, and comply with a patchwork of city regulations—much like employers have to do with the FMLA. If any such paid sick leave ordinances go into effect, it will be important for employers to make sure that employees are using their FMLA leave at the same time they are getting paid leave—to avoid the possibility of employees getting a “double helping” of leave. Further, Texas employers that already provide paid time off to employees should avoid providing additional paid sick leave under these ordinances by adjusting their PTO policies to meet the ordinances’ accrual and usage requirements.

Please contact Tony Stergio or Andrew Clark at 713.850.4200 for more information.◆

Andy Clark’s practice focuses on advocating for clients in a variety of employment-related disputes including discrimination, harassment, retaliation claims, wage and hour disputes, non-compete and restrictive covenant litigation, and government agency investigations. He regularly counsels clients on employment-related matters impacting their business objectives.

Please contact Tony Stergio or Andrew Clark at 713.850.4200 for more information.

Andy Clark

Board Certified in Labor and Employment Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, Anthony G. “Tony” Stergio has extensive experience in the defense of State and Federal employment discrimination claims, wage and hour compliance, non-competition agreements and employment policy design and review. He speaks frequently at employment-related seminars and also counsels clients regarding developments in various areas of State and Federal employment law. www.andrewsmyers.com.

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Cash balance plans are technically defined benefit plans that share some key characteristics with defined contribution plans. IRS regulations finalized in 2010 and 2014 clarified some legal issues and made these plans more flexible and appealing to employers. As a result, there was a 152% increase in new cash balance plans between 2010 and 2015.¹

These hybrid plans have generous contribution limits that increase with age, and are often stacked on top of a 401(k) and/or profit-sharing plan. This might allow partners in professional service firms and other high-income business owners to maximize or catch up on retirement savings and reduce their taxable incomes.

In 2017, a 65-year-old could save as much as $251,000 in a cash balance plan, while a 55-year-old could save $184,000 on a tax-deferred basis (until the account reaches a maximum accumulation of $2.5 million).²

ASSUMING THE RISK
A cash balance plan is also a powerful tool for employee recruitment and retention. As with other defined benefit plans, employees are promised a specified retirement benefit, and the employer is responsible for funding the plan and selecting investments. However, each participant has an individual account with a “cash balance” for record-keeping purposes, and the vested account value is portable, which means it can be rolled over to another employer plan or to an IRA.

But unlike a 401(k), the participant’s cash balance when benefit payments begin can never be less than the sum of the contributions made to the participant’s account, even if plan investments result in negative earnings for a particular period. This means the employer bears all the financial risk.

FUNDING THE PLAN
Each year, the employer makes two contributions to the cash balance plan for each employee. The first is a pay credit, which is either a fixed amount or a percentage of annual compensation. The second contribution is a fixed or variable interest credit rate (ICR). The ICR can be set to equal the actual rate of return of the portfolio, if certain diversification requirements are met, which reduces the employer’s investment risk and the possibility of having an underfunded plan due to market volatility.

WEIGHING THE COSTS
The amount that the employer must contribute to the plan each year is actuarially determined based on plan design and worker demographics. Typically, IRS rules require owners to contribute 5% to 8% of pay to non–highly compensated employees in order to make larger tax-
Lawrence Jacobs is an Investment Adviser Representative with the Principal Financial Group in the Houston office. Lawrence has specialized in financial planning for individuals and assisting business owners with employee benefits, retirement planning and insurance solutions for nearly twenty years. He can be reached at (713) 496-3165 and Jacobs.Lawrence@principal.com.

Businesses may take a significant tax deduction for employee contributions, so current-year tax savings may offset some of these costs. Still, a cash balance plan is typically more cost-effective if you are a sole proprietor or the owner of a small firm with just a few employees.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physicians offices</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists offices</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting, finance, and insurance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal services</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other professional, scientific, and technical</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29%</td>
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Is it Trick or Treat?

BY BENNETT GHORMLEY

As kids, we used to go around our neighborhood on Halloween night and get treats. Sometimes we'd even do some tricks just for grins. The treats didn't last as long as the tricks. Kids often picked on some neighbor's yard. One such yard I remember, ours, had a big cottonwood tree in the front of the house near the ditch that ran down our street. Guess whose house got the most tricks? Of course, it was our house. The tall cottonwood tree would have toilet paper steaming down from the limbs. It was harmless, except for our parents making us clean up the yard the next day. And for weeks the paper high in the tree was a reminder that some kids thought tricking our yard was their treat.

KIDS CAN BE MEAN

Two brothers from our neighborhood started a company that served the construction industry in the Houston area. One of the brothers was a salesman while the other brother kept the store in order. The salesman would take customers out for wine and dine, fishing trips, and golf outings. The one keeping the store just saw the bills come in for the entertainment. It soon became a nuisance and the brothers had conflict. It was the older brother that was the real businessman and brains behind the business. The younger one learned how to spend the money. Needless to say, the conflict led to a parting of the ways. It appeared that the younger brother was getting the treats and the senior brother appeared tricked. It was not long before the two separated from business and life. The tricks were not forgotten nor forgiven. Family business appeared hard.

SAFETY

Our community won't forget the younger brother who was also reckless. On one occasion, he wrecked a company car and wrecked another person's life. The victim was harmed with lifetime injuries that were never totally healed. In those days, there were not stern laws about drinking and driving. All one had to do was pay a ticket and the event was over except for the human carnage that often was irreparable. Even back then, circa 1970, safety was not common in business or industry. That's why the OSHA safety standard was needed—too many lives, families, and businesses were harmed.

PUT UP A POSTER

As a wanna-be safety professional, fresh out of college, I had the opportunity to attend a field trip to a steel mill. The mill touted an outstanding safety record, with only occasional fatalities. Lost time and recordable injuries were not defined at that time by OSHA (because there was no OSHA). The National Safety Council was the main source of information about worker safety. On the field trip our group inquired of our host about how injuries were prevented. The only answer we received was, “We just put up more safety posters so workers could see them.”

In the years prior to OSHA, it was unheard of for such initiatives as safety meetings, job safety analysis/pre-task planning, safety staffing, incident reporting, medical management, behavioral observations, stop work authority or other utilization of leading indicators. It is no wonder that injury rates, even in the 1970's, ranged over 15.0 in Total Recordable Incidence Rates.
TREAT YOUR ORGANIZATION

The best thing a company can do in safety is use leading indicators as defined by the Construction Industry Institute. Leading indicators are preventers of injury, near miss, pain and suffering, and family tragedy. Good treats for your company can't happen only in October. It must be every day of the year. Companies should be cognizant of hazards and vigilant about methodologies for prevention.

If you see paper hanging from your trees, count it as a trick. Treats for your company come from doing what is right for employees. Send them home better each day because they were under the jurisdiction of an outstanding safety program. "

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Bennett Ghormley has more than 35 years of experience in safety, training and construction administration. He is experienced in implementing safety programs involving commercial, industrial and municipal industries. Mr. Ghormley has conducted audits, investigations and inspections in refineries, chemical and petrochemical plants, for pipelines, water and waste facilities, manufacturing plants and fabrication facilities. Mr. Ghormley has served as an expert witness in litigation cases and appeared before the Workers’ Compensation Commission, EEOC, Employment Commission and civil courts. Contact Mr. Ghormley via email at bennettghormley@yahoo.com.
When you choose to work with an **ACCREDITED QUALITY CONTRACTOR (AQC)**, you choose to work with the best of Associated Builders and Contractors’ more than 21,000 member firms.

The AQC designation provides national recognition to construction firms that document their commitment to quality achievement in five areas of corporate responsibility: quality, safety training, community relations and diversity, employee benefits and employee training.

**BE THE BEST**

Our construction team *builds* relationships by providing clients with *solutions* based on experience.
Hurricane Harvey. Those two words have forever shaped and defined Houston forever. We learned that we can count on each other—none of the social differences matter when it comes down to it. We helped and defended each other. We learned that our material things can be taken away in the blink of an eye.

However, a great lesson was taught to all of our transplants from all over the world what it means to be a Texan. It brings us back to our history where it took effort, bloodshed, sacrifice, and determination to build Texas to what it is today. We know of the heroes of the Alamo and the redemption at San Jacinto and the soldiers that continue to stand up for all of us.

Fast Track had three employees flood and families of others flooded too. It was tough seeing our friends that are the Fast Track family endure so much. We were all trying to help each other and our community as well. It wasn’t easy, and many of our employees put in too many hours at work and also into serving others.

A month before the storm rolled in, Fast Track had signed a contract for construction of a brand new 30,000 square foot building on an eight acre parcel off of Highway 249. The company was operating out of two smaller offices and it was time to get everyone combined into one great new place.

LESSONS LEARNED.

Ground was broken on September 15, 2017. Many delays, many issues, many new surprise permit requirements. Fast Track moved into the new building on June 29, 2018, one day before our old lease expired. We learned to be proactive, plan ahead, and meet frequently to execute the plan.

Our new offices are perfect for what we do. They are beautiful and have many of the great products that we represent installed. The Thrislington Bathroom Cubicles made out of glass in one restroom and wood veneer in another, and include Panelfold Operable Wall, Polvision Marker surface, Clarus Glass, Carvart Glass Panel System, Oval Fire Extinguishers, Raynor Overhead Doors, Privada Restroom Cubicles, Hadrian Toilet Compartments, and Bobrick Toilet Accessories.

There are several meeting areas within the building to keep communication clear and deliberate. There is a full kitchen that is stocked and we are fortunate enough to have one of our employees who loves to cook breakfast just about every day.

MOVING FORWARD!

Fast Track Specialties, LP has also made the commitment recently to be 100% OSHA 30 certified as a minimum for all employees—even the person who answers the phone.

A STRONG FOUNDATION.

We take what we do seriously and with great responsibility. As with recovery from anything it takes team work, dedication, and family. We strive to Honor God, Give Back, and Do the Right Thing.

We are currently hiring Project Managers with a minimum of 5 years’ experience. To learn more about Fast Track Specialties, visit www.ftspec.com.
In Part I: Influencing Outcomes, we learned punitive environments don’t work and safety bullies do not achieve safer performance. Workers fear the messenger, not the message. In Part II, we learned workplace fatalities have gone up, not down, in spite of ever-increasing investments in safety. We said if safety was a product, it would have been discontinued. In Part III, we asked if new questions might yield new approaches. We began with a question about how leaders’ choices create unintended consequences that compromise safety. We explored the low bidder paradigm, resistance to operational shutdowns to overcome safety challenges, and the class distinction that, intended or unintended, treats construction workers differently in ways that directly or indirectly undermine safety.

We closed Part III with a question. Can acting in the best interests of people before profits result in outcomes that do not compromise businesses and even increase profitability? The answer is yes.

We all agree businesses can’t live without profit. If a business doesn’t make money, it dies. But do the choices we make have to include loss of human life to justify profit? The existing power structure is entrenched in a way of being that, in fact, does lead to the opposite of what they say they want— it leads to stable, even increasing, worker deaths. Can things change?

The global movement called “Conscious Capitalism” is based on a belief that we can act in the best interests of people first and profits will follow. Conscious Capitalism is based on a triple bottom line— “People Planet Profits” versus the entrenched “profits only” model.

While The Container Store, Whole Foods, Proctor & Gamble and many more, are joining this movement, my column space is limited. The simplest way to demonstrate how to shift the paradigm is by way of example: a brief synopsis of one leader’s brilliant solution to a horrific problem.

Alex Pryor, founder of Guayaki, a global distributor of Yerba Mate tea, wanted to save the rainforests. They have been globally ravaged to expand pastureland for the beef industry, an industry that represents about 85% of the world’s carbon footprint and spawns many other evils beyond the scope of this column.

Alex decided to find something that could only thrive under the canopy of a rainforest and then create a global demand for it. And that was the birth of his company and his product, Yerba Mate tea. Ten years in, his receipts are in the hundreds of millions of dollars and he has not only created jobs and reinvested into reforestation of the rainforests, but he has demonstrated that the profitability of potential products from elements found only in a rainforest, far outweighs the use of the rainforest footprint.
Tara Maria Amavi, is the Founder/President of TCA/The Compliance Alliance L.P. TCA has provided services to almost 1000 companies nationwide and TCA’s predictive analytics software, TCA Instant!, the first of its kind in construction industry safety, has been ranked #1 in the world for managing contractor safety by a Fortune 100 company. The TCA Safety System® is peer-acknowledged as a method based upon TCA’s own trade secrets which gets better results than traditional safety and, therefore, saves lives. Amavi was named one of Houston’s 50 Most Influential Women by Houston Woman magazine, and listed as one of Who’s Who in Safety by Compliance Magazine. A sought after public speaker, Amavi has appeared on local & national radio and television programs including five appearances on The BusinessMakers, a radio show previously hosted by John Beddow & Russ Capper. Ms. Amavi may be contacted at tara2014@tcamembers.com or 713.263.7661.

How do we apply this philosophy to construction safety? By creating the same paradigm.

As Alex noted, and as we are advised by Sun Tzu, author of The Art of War, a direct assault on a power structure is the most unproductive approach. It is pointless to fight the existing power structure. Instead, we ignore their entrenched practices—low bidder paradigm, preferring production over safety, and class distinction challenges—and, instead, turn our attention toward the resource we want to protect and expand: the construction worker.

In the same way Alex did, we find the power from the resource itself and use it to shift the energy and ripple new outcomes throughout industry. How? Tune in to the next issue of Build Houston Magazine to explore how Conscious Capitalism can drive a movement to save worker lives. ◆
CMEF’s Boot Camp Gives Graduates, Veterans, and the Unemployed a Jump Start to Success in the Construction Industry

Construction and Maintenance Education Foundation (CMEF), the educational affiliate of Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Houston, and their Industrial Contractor Committee (ICC), recently launched a new initiative titled, the “Ready for Industry Boot Camp.” The Ready for Industry Boot Camp launched in August and focused on recruiting recent graduates from one of CMEF’s sponsored high schools, veterans, and the underemployed or unemployed. Acceptance into the boot camp was rigorous, as it included an application with an essay and a vetting process.

“The ICC met every other week to complete the boot camp program to ensure it was ready for its pilot debut in August,” said Blair Williamson, Director of Training and Development at CMEF. “The boot camp was a three and one half day overview of popular topics covered by local industry professionals, and prepared attendees interested in joining the industrial construction industry for success.”

The boot camp included professional and safety topics ranging from safety and performing a Job Safety Analysis (JSA), a small tools demonstration, expectations of a helper, resumes and interviewing, personal financial management, and onboarding procedures, to company interviews and a site tour of a local Kuraray Septon site at the end of the week. CMEF’s collaboration with industry hiring offices was imperative to the success of the boot camp.

“With the hard work and effort the ABC/CMEF member contractors have made to provide career opportunities for high school graduates, veterans, and new entrants into the heavy construction industry, I think this program was able to provide the final step in making that opportunity a reality,” said Michael Stilley, Director of Training and Development at S&B Engineers and Constructors. “Each individual who successfully completed the Ready for Industry boot camp received a laminated card with a designated number that CMEF stored for verification. We hope that the individuals who completed the program will be considered for employment within the industry as top priority.”

To learn more about the Ready for Industry boot camp, please email bootcamp@cmefhouston.org or call 281-478-3900. To learn more about ABC/CMEF, visit our website at www.abchouston.org.
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Business Insight from the Ground Up

How the Industry is Working Together to Solve the Workforce Shortage Issue

BY LAUREN HARRELL
The construction workforce is one that is constantly changing, whether the stats go up or down. Nearly two-thirds of contractors are highly confident that demand for construction projects will increase over the next year. However, as labor concerns, budgeting, and the need to increase productivity weigh on the industry, there is a support needed to solve these problems. The demand for quality skilled craft professionals is critical, and associations including Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) are striving to ensure workers are taught skills using standards-based curriculum from the beginning.

"I think a workforce strategy that focuses on building partnerships with community support organizations who can provide services for potential workers as well as services that contractors might not have in house has proven quite successful," said Mike Holland, Chief Operating Officer at MAREK. "ABC members including S&B Engineers and Constructors, TDIndustries, Trio Electric, and MAREK have all engaged in such practices. There are benefits in employee recruiting, training, and retention."

Some of the workforce labor issues stem from problems with training in open shop construction. In 1995, ABC partnered with over one-hundred leading construction companies, manufacturers, and academia to establish a quality standard for training and certification in various sectors of the construction industry. These efforts resulted in the establishment of a nonprofit education foundation, the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), with the intention to address the current workforce shortage facing our industry and to build awareness of rewarding construction career opportunities for the future.

NCCER is an education foundation that works with associations and academic leaders to provide standardized training and credentialing programs for the construction industry. This progressive program has evolved into curricula for more than seventy craft areas and a complete series of more than seventy assessments offered in over four thousand NCCER-accredited training and assessment location across the United States, one of which is at Construction and Maintenance Education Foundation (CMEF) in La Porte.

"The thing that sets NCCER apart from any other author is that NCCER was created for the industry, by the industry," said Katrina Kersch, Chief Operating Officer and Senior Director at NCCER. "We hold true to the commitment to provide best-in-class, standards-based curriculum that provides not just instructional materials, but also career path guidance for the craft professional. In addition, NCCER offers accreditation and program management for associations and contractors who recognize that they must invest in their workforce to remain in business. A student in an NCCER craft training program benefits by learning from the best and most talented in the industry. Students are exposed to information about the construction industry and gain a deeper understanding about how they might use the knowledge and skills they acquire to advance their careers. NCCER’s approach to training and development also includes providing workforce development resources and support."

In addition to its partnership with NCCER, Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Houston (ABC) is working with its almost five hundred member companies to encourage safety training, OSHA certification, management, and leadership preparation programs. Together with associations including the East Harris County Manufacturers Association (EHCMA) and Construction Career Collaborative (C3), ABC is working to advance the financial security, safety, health, and well-being of the construction craft workforce.

"There is no debating the fact that our industry is facing a potential workforce shortage," said Stephen Hillier, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Construction, Maintenance, and Turnarounds at JACOBS. "At JACOBS, our efforts are not to change the industry’s image but rather to inform people of the opportunity for rewarding high-skill, high-wage careers with clear paths for advancement that our industry affords. Key messages around diversity, safety, and building a lasting legacy are moving us toward an inclusive and sustainable workforce."

The construction workforce will continue to change, but companies can influence the incoming workers by continuing to educate, train, and lead. And with the help of associations including Associated Builders and Contractors, these companies could see a growth in the safety and knowledge of their employees, as well as a growth in the overall workforce.

References:
ABC contractors – register today and invite your project owners to join you! You don’t want to miss this opportunity!

The exclusive ABC Users Summit brings together top construction users and merit shop contractors for interactive discussions about how to collaboratively improve upon the planning and delivery of high-quality construction projects. From automation and technology to workforce challenges, owner impacts and the latest economic outlook, this event creates an environment where you can refine your skills and engage in open discussions with owners and contractors alike.

Plus, registration is complimentary for health care and industrial users and developers—develop your relationship in this intimate setting.

Visit userssummit.abc.org to view the full agenda and to register.
Craig & Heidt recently partnered with Lyondellbasell to help with a volunteer project to make improvements to Thomas Bell Foster Park on Greens Bayou. Craig & Heidt provided labor & equipment to clear & remove brush, debris, & trees and performed grading work to restore the park to its pre-Harvey condition. The bank was graded to improve access for canoes & kayaks in preparation for the upcoming Greens Bayou Coalition’s annual regatta. The work was done in conjunction with Lyondellbasell’s Global Care Day initiative whereby they provide volunteer labor to maintain & improve the park.

E.E. Reed Construction recently completed the Best Buy Build-to Suit project, located in Missouri City. This tilt-wall project includes 543,936 square feet of warehouse and 10,600 square feet of office space. E.E. Reed worked with Seefried Industrial Properties, 4m, and Powers Brown Architecture on this project.

E.E. Reed Construction also recently broke ground on two new projects. The Athlete Training + Health in Katy, located on Memorial Hermann’s Katy campus, is a 57,000 square feet, two-level athlete training and health facility. Amenities include a soccer field with synthetic turf and stadium lighting. Designed by architect, Wefing Design Studio, this project is scheduled to be completed in early 2019.

E.E. Reed Construction’s PBP Cedar Crossing project in Baytown includes a 519,224 square feet, railroad served, one-story, tilt-wall warehouse building with an 8,400 square feet office build-out. E.E. Reed is working with Trammell Crow Company and Powers Brown Architecture on this project, which is scheduled to be completed in Summer 2019.

In August 6, WT Byler Co, Inc. re-appointed Wendell Rychlik as executive director of business development and marketing. Rychlik is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with owners, clients, engineers, subcontractors and suppliers. He will focus on market development, strategic planning, and technical approach to help grow the company’s business across all heavy and civil engineering construction market sectors including industrial, strategic commercial, government, and railroad construction.

Originally hired as a project manager in 2013, Hodges focused mostly on major healthcare and research projects for Texas Children's Hospital, Houston Methodist Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine and CHI St. Luke's. In just three years, he was promoted to a project director, making him one of the youngest in the company. Upon joining McCarthy, Hodges began executing the launch of the Specialized Solutions Group (SSG), which focuses on healthcare, research, and higher education renovations and expansions. The SSG has helped McCarthy expand and build upon its solid reputation within the healthcare market and win high-profile work with some of the largest, most well-known healthcare and research institutions in the Texas Medical Center.

McCarthy Building Companies, Inc. Southern Region has promoted Preston Hodges to vice president of the Houston division. In this role, Hodges will lead business development and client service efforts. He possesses strong ties to the local market and brings a depth of experience in both public and private sectors. Leveraging his expertise, Hodges will focus on maintaining and growing McCarthy’s healthcare, research and higher education presence in the Houston area as well as other key markets.

Prior to re-joining WT Byler Co, Rychlik served at McCarthy Building Companies, Inc. developing work within the McCarthy marine heavy industrial business unit. Prior to McCarthy, he managed marketing, client services, and business development at WT Byler and developed and maintained mutually-beneficial relationships with strategic clients for over ten years. He has experience working hands-on in construction supporting process-safety procedures, technical writing, fossil-fuel mining operations and logistics-operations in a high-threat environment.
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Transatlantic NATO Forces Europe. With more than 30 years of experience, Rychlik has developed strong ties to the local market and brings a depth of experience in both the industrial and private sectors of heavy and civil engineering construction.

MAREK announces Ryder Insulation, Inc. of Houston and its team will join the MAREK Family in September. Both family-owned with strong reputations for safety and quality, MAREK and Ryder have worked alongside each other for almost 40 years on many high profile commercial construction projects in Houston including ExxonMobil’s Woodlands campus, Phillips 66’s headquarters, and Texas Children’s Pediatrics and Maternity Center.

“Ryder’s deep expertise in fireproofing, firestopping and advanced insulation techniques will strengthen MAREK’s portfolio of offerings for customers, ensuring a seamless experience for them,” says Phil Nevlude, a MAREK Managing Director. “It is a natural fit with our existing suite of interior services, including core and tenant drywall, acoustical ceilings, paint, specialty finishes, flooring, fabric panels, shades, bundled projects and special remodel projects.”

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner saluted young student workers in the TRIO Electric Pre-Apprenticeship Program (TPAP) and proclaimed Friday, July 27, 2018 as TRIO Pre-Apprenticeship Partnership Day. He encouraged the 40 students in the program that working hard and learning skills for a good-paying career will position them to do the best for themselves and their families.

The mayor reminded the students that he had once served as an electrician’s apprentice where he learned skills that he still uses.

The mayor recognized TRIO Electric (TRIO) and its education partners, especially Spring Branch ISD and HCC, for creating an effective pre-apprenticeship program that prepares students for skilled workforce jobs in the electrical industry.

The theme of the day was vision and skills. Spring Branch ISD superintendent Scott Muri told the students that it was the vision of TRIO Electric president Beau Pollock that created the apprenticeship program to solve a need for skilled workers. Associate vice chancellor Michael Webster of Houston Community College (HCC) reminded the students that the skills learned in the apprenticeship program will last them a lifetime.

“Today is a great day in the City of Houston,” Mayor Turner said. “Beau Pollock of TRIO Electric has the vision, dedication and commitment to provide students with job skills,” Mayor Turner said. “You are trailblazers,” he told the students, “willing to work hard and learn work skills. In Houston, we invest in human infrastructure because we believe in people like you.”

TRIO initiated a TRIO Apprenticeship Program (TAP) in 2013 to help meet a critical demand for electricians with technical and leadership skills. Nearly 200 workers have taken advantage of TAP. In 2017, TRIO started working with Spring Branch ISD and Houston Community College (HCC) to establish the TRIO Pre-Apprenticeship Program (TPAP) for high school students. By the fall 2018 semester, more than 150 high school students will be taking advantage of TPAP through Spring Branch ISD, Austin ISD and Grand Prairie ISD. TRIO Electric plans to expand TPAP to other areas of Texas and the U.S.

TPAP students are recruited by their high school counselors and TRIO on-campus and then selected for the program. The TPAP program is taught by former electricians and educators with electrical experience who are collectively recruited and screened by the partnership. The program teaches students how to be safe, productive and skilled electricians as well as teaches other employable and soft skills required by the workplace.

Pollock thanked the students for performing on the job. “I had a good idea to train students, yet you had to perform,” he told the students. “You performed and proved this was a good idea.”

TRIO offers the students who perform internship opportunities and full-time employment after graduation where they will continue their apprenticeship training until they are eligible to take the state journeyman exam.

In addition to HCC and Spring Branch ISD, TRIO Pre-Apprenticeship Program partners include Spring Branch ISD SKY partners – KIPP and YES Prep, as well as the Greater Houston Partnership’s UpSkill Houston, United Way, Texas Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions, and the Department of Labor (DOL). The TRIO TAP and TPAP programs are DOL-approved.
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