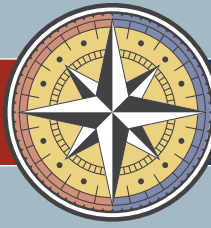
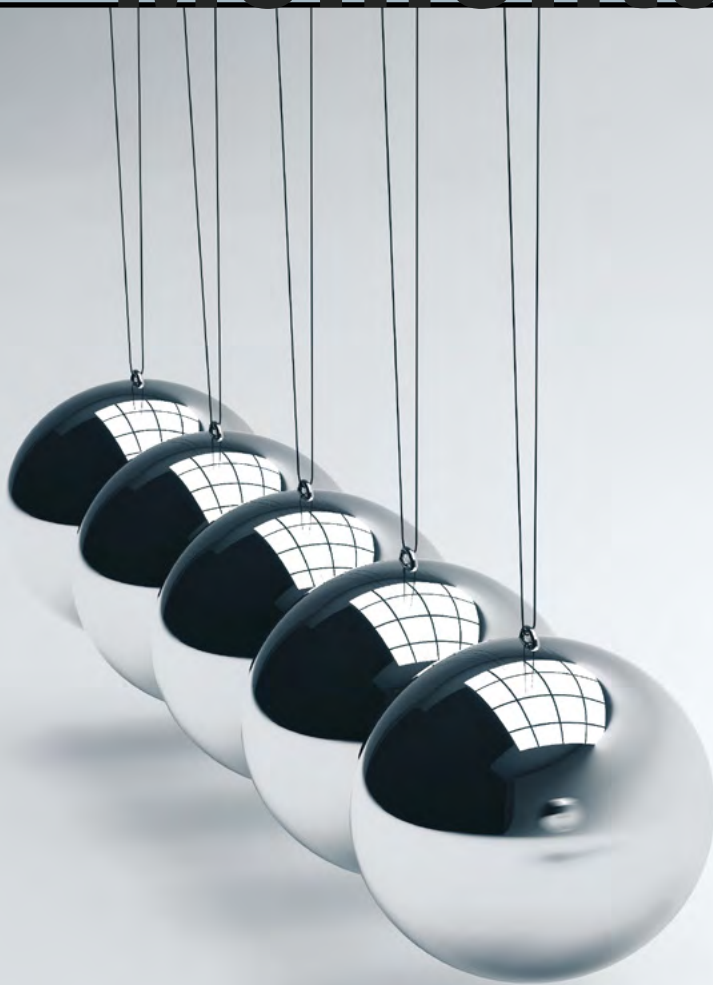


THE CONTRACTOR'S COMPASS



Markets, Momentum, & Growth





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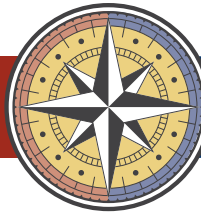
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EDITORIAL PURPOSE

The Contractor's Compass is the monthly educational journal of the Foundation of the American Subcontractors Association, Inc. (FASA) and part of FASA's Contractors' Knowledge Network. FASA was established in 1987 as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entity to support research, education and public awareness. Through its Contractors' Knowledge Network, FASA is committed to forging and exploring the critical issues shaping subcontractors and specialty trade contractors in the construction industry. The journal is designed to equip construction subcontractors with the ideas, tools and tactics they need to thrive. The views expressed by contributors to The Contractor's Compass do not necessarily represent the opinions of FASA or the American Subcontractors Association, Inc. (ASA).

MISSION

To educate and equip subcontractors and suppliers with the education and resources they need to thrive in the construction industry. Additionally, FASA raises awareness about issues critical to and about construction in the United States.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Contractor's Compass is a free monthly publication for ASA members and nonmembers. For questions about subscribing, please contact communications@asa-hq.com.

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ABOUT ASA

ASA is a nonprofit trade association of union and non-union subcontractors and suppliers. Through a nationwide network of local and state ASA associations, members receive information and education on relevant business issues and work together to protect their rights as an integral part of the construction team. For more information about becoming an ASA member, contact ASA at 1004 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3588, (703) 684-3450, membership@ASA-hq.com, or visit the ASA Web site, www.asaonline.com.

CONTENT TASK FORCE

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Mary Klett

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear Readers—

As I write this letter, many of us are preparing to gather for SUBExcel. By the time you read it, however, the convention will have wrapped up, the conversations will have moved from the meeting rooms back to our offices and jobsites, and hopefully we will all have returned home with new ideas, new connections, and a renewed sense of what makes ASA such a valuable community.

September also brings a much more solemn moment of reflection.

Twenty-five years ago, on September 11, 2001, our nation experienced a day that none of us who lived through it will ever forget. We remember the nearly 3,000 lives lost at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon, and aboard Flight 93 near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. We remember the first responders who ran toward danger, the workers who helped in the rescue and recovery efforts, and the countless families and communities whose lives were forever changed.

For those of us in construction, there is another element of that story that resonates deeply. In the days, months, and years that followed, men and women from the building trades played an important role in recovery and rebuilding. Their work demonstrated something our industry understands well: when circumstances change suddenly and dramatically, people come together, adapt, solve problems, and move forward.

That idea of adapting to change also connects, in a very different way, with this month's theme of market segments, diversification, strategies - whether it's new locations or new technologies.

No construction business operates in a vacuum. Markets expand and contract. Certain sectors become crowded while opportunities emerge elsewhere. New technologies change how projects are designed and built. Labor availability, material costs, interest rates, regulations, and customer expectations continually reshape the business environment.

Diversification can help companies navigate those changes, but diversification simply for the sake of growth is not necessarily a strategy. Moving into a new market segment requires understanding the opportunity—and the risks. Does your company have the people and expertise to perform the work? Are the contractual requirements different? Will you need new licenses, insurance coverage, equipment, technology, or business relationships? Most importantly, does the opportunity fit your company's long-term goals?

This issue explores those questions and offers ideas to help subcontractors think strategically about where their businesses are today and where they want them to go tomorrow. Whether your strategy involves entering a new market, expanding geographically, adding services, strengthening an existing specialty, or simply becoming more efficient at what you already do, informed decisions are essential.

As we move forward from another SUBExcel, I encourage you to continue the conversations that began there. Reach out to the people you met. Share what you learned with your team. And take some time to consider how the ideas in this issue might apply to your own business.

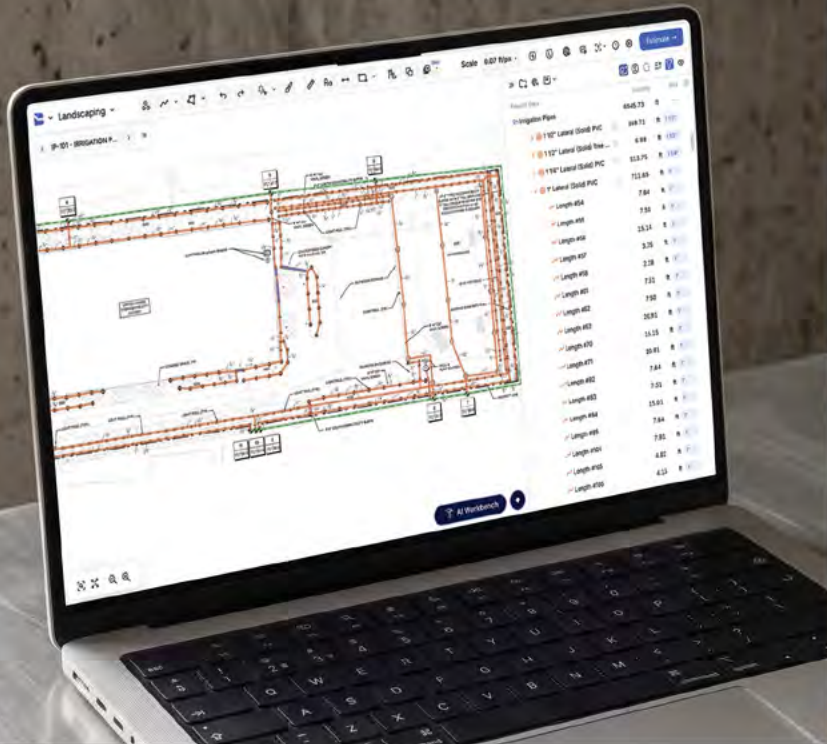
Our industry has always been built on resilience, relationships, and the ability to adapt. Those qualities will continue to serve us well, whatever opportunities—and challenges—come next.

Until next month,

Tony Vermaas

President ASA 2026-27

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Remembering 9/11 25 Years Later

Twenty-five years ago, on September 11, 2001, our nation experienced an unimaginable tragedy that changed America forever. As we mark the 25th anniversary of 9/11, we remember the nearly 3,000 innocent lives lost, honor the first responders and ordinary Americans who demonstrated extraordinary courage, and recognize the enduring spirit of unity and resilience that followed.

For ASA and the construction industry, 9/11 carries a particular significance. In the days, weeks, and years that followed, construction workers were among those who answered the call—clearing debris, rebuilding communities, restoring infrastructure, and helping America move forward. Their work reflected something fundamental about our industry: when there is a job to be done, construction professionals show up, work together, and rebuild.

That same spirit is reflected in ASA's advocacy in Washington. The challenges facing subcontractors today—from federal procurement and prompt payment to workforce shortages, regulatory requirements, infrastructure investment, and small-business opportunities—may be very different from those confronting

our nation 25 years ago. But the principle remains the same: those who build America must have a voice in the decisions that shape its future.

Congress makes decisions every day that directly affect the ability of subcontractors and specialty contractors to compete, employ workers, invest in their businesses, and successfully complete the projects on which our nation depends. Advocacy ensures that policymakers hear directly from the men and women who actually build **those projects—not simply from those who write the rules.**

Twenty-five years after 9/11, we are reminded that America is strongest when we stand together. For ASA, that means continuing to bring subcontractors together, building bipartisan relationships in Congress, and making sure the industry's voice is heard when legislation and regulations are developed.

On this 25th anniversary, we remember those we lost, honor those who served and sacrificed, and recommit ourselves to the work of building a stronger America—one project, one community, and one voice at a time.

ASA will remember. We will rebuild. And we will continue to advocate for those who build America.

ASA Urges SBA to Extend Comment Period on Proposed Small Business Size Standards

ASA urged the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to extend the comment period on proposed changes to the federal government's small-business size standards, citing significant concerns about the potential impact on construction subcontractors and specialty trade contractors. ASA submitted a letter to SBA requesting that the September 21, 2026, comment deadline be extended by at least 60 days, through November 20, 2026. The association believes additional time is necessary for construction contractors, subcontractors, ASA chapters, and other stakeholders to fully understand the proposal and provide meaningful, industry-specific feedback.

The SBA proposal represents more than a routine adjustment to existing size standards. It would make significant changes to the methodology used to determine whether a business qualifies as "small," including consolidating many existing six-digit NAICS classifications into broader four- and five-digit classifications and shifting numerous industries from receipts-based standards to employee-based standards.

ASA is particularly concerned about the potential impact on small construction subcontractors. The construction industry is highly specialized, with businesses ranging from general building contractors to electrical, plumbing, drywall, painting, flooring, tile, finish carpentry, and other specialty trades. These businesses can have very different business models, revenue levels, workforce requirements, bonding capacity, and competitive resources.

Under the proposed approach, many of these distinct specialty trades would be grouped under broader NAICS classifications.

For example, drywall, painting and wall covering, flooring, tile and terrazzo, and finish carpentry contractors would fall under the broader NAICS 2383 – Building Finishing Contractors

classification, with a proposed size standard of 600 employees.

ASA believes SBA needs to carefully consider whether broader classifications accurately reflect the differences among these businesses and whether consolidation could result in substantially larger companies competing with genuinely small specialty contractors for federal small-business opportunities.

ASA also raised concerns about SBA's proposal to move many industries from receipts-based size standards to employee-based standards. For construction, employee count may not accurately reflect the economic size or competitive capacity of a business. Construction revenues can vary significantly based on material costs, project size, subcontracted work, geography, and the type of work being performed. Two contractors with the same number of employees can have dramatically different annual revenues, bonding capacity, capital resources, equipment, purchasing power, and administrative capabilities. ASA believes SBA should provide additional analysis demonstrating why an employee-based standard is appropriate for construction and whether it accurately distinguishes genuinely small contractors from significantly larger businesses.

Another concern involves SBA's proposed methodology for receipts-based size standards, which establishes a minimum standard of \$30.6 million. Although many construction standards under the proposal would be expressed in terms of employees, ASA is concerned about the broader effect of expanding the number and size of companies that could qualify as "small."

A locally owned subcontractor with 20, 30, or 50 employees may face a very different competitive environment than a company with substantially greater revenue, bonding capacity, purchasing power, workforce, administrative resources, and access to capital. If significantly larger companies qualify as small, they could compete for federal small-business set-asides and subcontracting opportunities alongside businesses that are considerably smaller in both size and resources. ASA believes this could undermine the purpose of

federal small-business programs, which are designed to provide opportunities for small businesses to compete, grow, and build capacity.

The proposed changes could have a direct impact on federal construction procurement.

If more businesses qualify as small, the number of companies competing for small-business set-asides could increase significantly. The change could also affect federal subcontracting goals, where prime contractors rely on small specialty subcontractors to meet their small-business participation requirements.

ASA is concerned that expanding the definition of "small" could unintentionally make it more difficult for genuinely small subcontractors to secure these opportunities. ASA believes SBA should evaluate not only how many additional businesses would qualify as small under the proposal, but also how those businesses compete in the federal marketplace and what effect the changes could have on existing small-business participation.

ASA's request for an extension is intended to allow the construction industry to conduct a more thorough review of the proposal and provide SBA with meaningful, real-world information. Among the issues ASA plans to further evaluate are:

- The number of construction firms that would newly qualify as small;
- The impact of converting receipts-based standards to employee-based standards;
- The consolidation of six-digit construction NAICS codes;
- The impact on small-business set-asides;
- The effect on federal subcontracting goals;
- The competitive differences between general contractors and specialty subcontractors; and
- Whether separate size standards are appropriate for substantially different construction trades.

ASA supports SBA's mission to promote opportunities for small businesses and recognizes the importance of periodically reviewing and updating size standards. However, the association believes the definition of "small" must remain meaningful. ASA will continue to engage with SBA on this issue and will encourage its chapters and members to participate in the rulemaking process. Additional input from ASA members will be important as the association develops its substantive comments on how the proposed changes could affect construction subcontractors across the country.

First Major Head Protection Standard Update in 12 Years

The International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) released the [updated ANSI/ISEA Z89.1-2026 standard](#) for industrial head protection, the first major revision in over a decade.

The new ANSI/ISEA Z89.1-2026 standard provides standardized optional testing protocols:

- Chin strap retention — how straps perform under impact (OSHA's #1 concern). If a worker slips and hits their head, does the helmet stay on for secondary impacts?
- Helmet retention — whether helmets stay on heads during slips, trips, and falls. Traditional hard hats often fall off when workers need them most.
- Multi-directional impact protection — front, rear, and side impacts, not just top-of-head. Workers don't just get hit from above — they hit scaffolding, trip into equipment, fall sideways.
- Reverse wearing guidance — critical for real-world jobsite use. Workers wear helmets backward for better visibility or mask fit; now there's testing to ensure that's safe.

First "Lunch atop a Skyscraper" Bobblehead Unveiled

The [National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum](#) unveiled a limited-edition "Lunch atop a Skyscraper"



Bobblehead, which is a replica of the famous black-and-white photograph taken on September 20th, 1932, of 11 ironworkers sitting on a steel beam of the RCA Building 850 feet above the ground during the construction of the Rockefeller Center in New York City. The special edition bobblehead scene is being produced by the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum.

With 11 bobbing heads, the one-of-a-kind "Lunch atop a Skyscraper" bobblehead scene is being released to coincide with the anniversary of when the picture was taken. The photo was published in the Sunday supplement of the New York Herald Tribune on October 2nd, 1932, with the caption: "Lunch atop a Skyscraper."

Positioned on a beam with a backing of New York City, the bobbleheads are replicas of the 11 men from the iconic photograph, which has been called "one of the most recognizable photos of the 20th century" and "a piece of American history." Sitting precariously on a steel beam 850 feet in the air, the 11 ironworkers are casually eating lunch while having carefree conversations.

Each bobblehead is individually numbered to only 1,932 – the year the picture was taken – and they are only available exclusively through the National

Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum's [Online Store](#). The bobbleheads, which are expected to ship in January, are \$100 each plus a flat-rate shipping charge of \$8 per order.

Originally titled "Builders of the City Enjoy Luncheon," the portrait of 11 ironworkers casually enjoying their lunch break on a steel beam 850 feet above the streets of New York has captured the imagination of people around the world for nearly a century. While it's most known as "Lunch atop a Skyscraper," the image has been called different names over the years, including "Lunch on a Beam" and "Men on a Beam." Despite its seemingly spontaneous nature, the photo was arranged as a publicity shot taken during the construction of the 69th floor of Rock Center's RCA Building – now known as 30 Rock – where the staged photograph was part of a campaign promoting the skyscraper.

Despite the photo's worldwide appeal, no one tried to find out who the men or the photographer was until the award-winning 2012 documentary, "Men at Lunch," investigated. Since no work records remain from the Rockefeller construction, it is difficult to state with 100 percent certainty who were on the beam, especially since more than 40,000 people were hired to help build

Rockefeller Center. What is known is that the workers included Irish, Italian, Scandinavian, Eastern European, and German immigrants, along with Mohawk ironworkers from Canada.

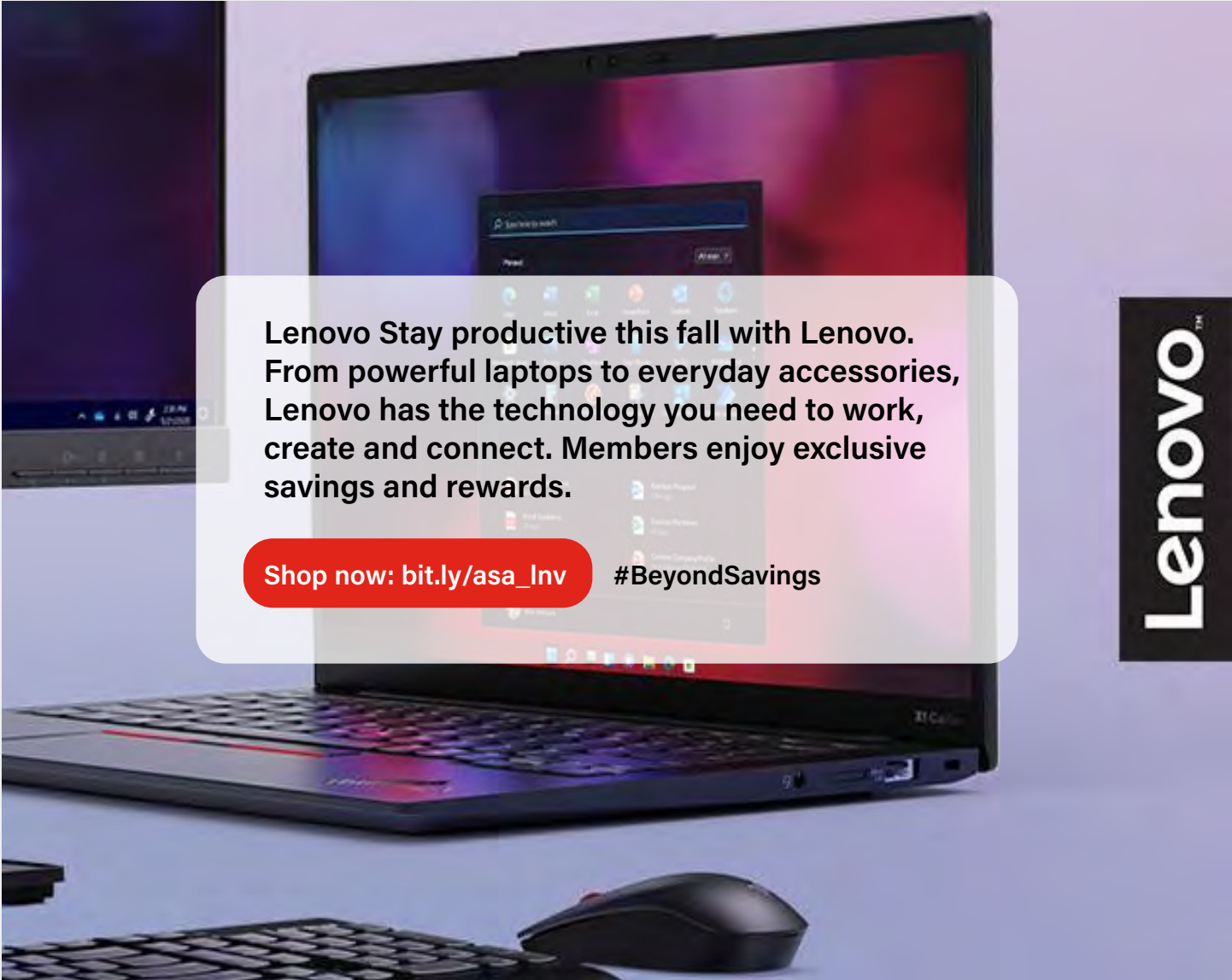
Photographers Charles Ebbets, Thomas Kelley, and William Leftwich were all present on the day the image was taken, but it remains unclear who was responsible for capturing the iconic shot. So far, Rockefeller Center archivist Christine Roussel has only been able to confirm two of the 11 men: Joseph Eckner, third from the left; and Joe Curtis, third from the right. According to a New York

Post survey, numerous claims have been made regarding the identities of the men in the image. The first man on the right, holding a bottle, has been identified as Slovak worker Gustav (Gusti) Popovic. The photograph was found in his estate, with the note "Don't you worry, my dear Mariska, as you can see, I'm still with bottle" written on the back. The sixth person from the left is claimed to be Peter Rice, Mohawk construction worker, great grandfather of Burton Rice, of Rice Mohawk Steel. Taken during the Great Depression, the photograph became an icon of New York City and has often been

recreated by construction workers. Time magazine included the image in its 2016 list of the 100 most influential images.

About the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum:

The National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum, which is located at [170 S. 1st St.](#) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, opened to the public on February 1st, 2019. The HOF and Museum also produces high quality, customized bobbleheads for retail sale as well as organizations, individuals, and teams across the country. Visit us [online](#) and on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



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Toman Brothers Celebrates 30 Years!

For Tommy, Milam, Ross and Burt Toman, the family business started long before Toman Brothers Inc. officially opened its doors. Growing up, the four brothers worked alongside their dad, learning the ins and outs of sprayed fireproofing and insulation—and, just as importantly, what it takes to be a good contractor and earn the respect of customers.

On August 8, 1996, the brothers decided they were ready to strike out on their own and incorporated Toman Brothers Inc. Thirty years later, the company is still going strong, providing spray-applied fireproofing, intumescent fireproofing and spray-on insulation throughout Texas.

What started as a six-person operation has grown to more than 15 employees, with experience ranging from smaller projects to hospitals, apartments, stadiums, medical offices, K-12 schools and more.

Many employees have grown right along with the company. Tony Belmarez and JR Belmarez have each been with Toman Brothers for an impressive 29 years, while Lee Toman, Cody Shaw and Blake Killingsworth have each been part of the team for eight years.

Toman Brothers has also been a proud ASA member for 21 years, staying connected to the subcontracting community along the way.

The brothers plan to celebrate their 30th anniversary the way you might expect from a family business—with their parents, their employees and the people who helped make the journey possible.



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Construction Data & Figures



What Heavy Civil Contractors Are Seeing in the Third Quarter

FMI's Q3 2026 Civil Infrastructure Construction Index (CICI) is out. Every quarter, it asks heavy civil and infrastructure contractors about backlog, cost, competition and outlook.

The index climbed to 52.3, back above the neutral 50 line, carried by backlog and pipeline. Book-to-burn alone swung from 48.9 to 57.4. Cost went the other way. Materials and labor both tightened, and not one firm reported significantly higher margins than it did a year ago.

Business confidence hit a cycle high of 59.1. Roughly 80% of firms said competition got tougher. Contractors pointed to leadership succession, not demand, as the harder problem to solve from here. The full report adds component-level data, outlooks by segment and funding source, and the succession findings.

[Download the Q3 Report](#)

FMI's Q4 2026 Index Results Are Here

Here's a preview of the key findings ahead of the full report releases:

Nonresidential Construction Index (NRCI)—The NRCI fell to 51.7 in Q4 2026, from 55.1 in Q3, as sentiment softened slightly across nearly every component,

though the index remains on the expansion side of 50.

The Civil Construction Index (CICI): The CICI slipped to 49.4 in Q4 2026, from 52.3 in Q3, its first reading below the neutral line since Q3 2022, driven largely by weaker sentiment toward participants' local economy and local E&C industry.

These results provide an early read on market conditions and serve as key inputs into our forecast development for the upcoming Outlook and CICI reports, which will be released in the coming weeks. Click the buttons below for an exclusive first look at the Q4 results before the full reports are published.

[Get the NRCI results](#)

[Get the CICI results](#)



First-Ever National Field Data Study on Multiskilled Construction Shows Wins for Workers, Taxpayers, Industry

Associated Builders and Contractors celebrated the release of Multiskilling in the U.S. Construction Industry, the [largest national dataset](#) documenting the relationship between multiskilling labor strategies and performance outcomes, including productivity, staffing levels and schedule durations. Among other findings, the research showed that multiskilling increased the share of crew time spent on directly advancing construction work by 39%.

Multiskilled craft professionals build select, verified capabilities by obtaining credentials in multiple crafts and then utilizing them safely and competently on the jobsite. In the research, the typical observed worker used nearly three distinct skill classifications, and some workers used as many as six in one day.

"As the nation prepares to celebrate the worker on Labor Day, this new field research is putting skilled construction pros at the center of one of the industry's biggest challenges: how to build more with a workforce already [stretched thin](#)," said Michael Bellaman, ABC president and CEO. "The most important findings show the inherent value of multiskilling for the worker: It creates the conditions for the worker to grow their skillsets, be more valuable, find more fulfillment, earn more and have more opportunities. It also shows that multiskilling can help these qualified workers spend more time building by more fully using the varied skills they bring to the jobsite."

This new research series—[the first of its kind](#)—was conducted by the Simplar Foundation and three university research partners: Arizona State University, the

University of Kansas and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

"The research team observed and documented enormous benefits for the workers during our time on site and talking with participating crews," said Brian Lines, Ph.D., P.E., principal investigator and associate professor, Civil, Environmental & Architectural Engineering, University of Kansas. "These include more career paths, greater earning potential, more projects and hours as well as longer project assignments. However, the benefits were not the same everywhere. They were largest where the work created frequent opportunities to cover adjacent tasks, avoid handoffs and keep the crew moving. Lower opportunity often reflected the task mix and work sequence, not a lack of worker capability. Broader capability creates value for the employer."

Highlights in this first of three releases of the data series include:

- Multiskilled workers were able to spend substantially more of the workday directly advancing construction work. Multiskilling increased the share of crew time spent on direct construction work by about 39%. Limiting workers to one trade reduced the share of crew time spent directly on construction work from nearly half to about one-third.
- Multiskilled crews spent far less of the active workday waiting or otherwise idle. Multiskilling reduced idle and waiting time by about 68% during active work periods.
- Multiskilled crews allowed the available workforce to cover substantially more of the work. Limiting workers to one trade would require approximately 45%-72% more workers to accomplish the same work sequence that was observed in the field.
- Cross-trade work was a routine part of how the observed crews operated, not an occasional exception. Workers spent about 36% of observed crew

time performing work outside their primary trade. A one-trade restriction would require roughly one-third of the observed crew work to be reassigned, delayed or covered by someone else.

- Researchers documented [128 unique trade combinations](#) where workers combined their primary trade with one or more additional skills.
- Multiskilling preserves craft depth while giving workers more ways to earn, remain employed, advance, lead and shape the direction of their careers.
- Across approximately 33.2 million work hours, the participating contractors reported above-average safety performance, with average Total Recordable Incident Rates of 0.74, 57% below the NAICS-weighted benchmark, and no reported fatalities.
- Using fewer workers and crews in a tight work area reduces congestion and coordination pressure, which can lead to safety performance improvements.

The research analyzed observations at jobsites nationwide deploying multiskilling in real time:

- The research team conducted 40 site visits on 36 projects in 24 different states.
- The 22 unique project types ranged in costs from \$0.5 million to \$1+ billion.
- 60 multiskilled crews of 644 total workers from 30 different contractors were observed.
- The research team collected more than 11,400 productivity/work-sampling observations.

"Improving productivity and worker job fulfillment through multiskilling is imperative to delivering the construction projects that Americans need, from highways and bridges to hospitals and energy infrastructure," said Bellaman. "Multiskilling means workers are qualified to safely and competently perform tasks across trades. It complements specialization and delivers the most value on handoff-heavy scopes

Construction Data & Figures

of work. It highlights measurable benefits in productivity, staffing, safety and worker opportunity, with evidence from real projects.

"These new findings suggest that multiskilling can deliver benefits for the entire construction industry, including greater opportunity for workers, greater flexibility for contractors and owners, and greater capacity to build the projects America needs," said Bellaman.

To research the data series, visit simplarfoundation.org/multiskilling/. To read [the Q&A](#) and learn more, visit abc.org/multiskilling.

ABC on August Jobs Report: Nonresidential Specialty Contractors Power Construction's Employment Growth

The construction industry added 22,000 jobs on net in August, according to an Associated Builders and Contractors analysis of data released today by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. On a year-over-year basis, industry employment has expanded by 120,000 jobs, an increase of 1.5%.

Nonresidential construction employment grew by 10,400 positions in August, with gains in 2 of the 3 subcategories. Nonresidential specialty trade added the most jobs, increasing by 7,800 positions, followed by heavy and civil engineering, which added 4,400 jobs. Nonresidential building lost 1,800 jobs in August.

The construction unemployment rate fell to 3.1% in August, down 0.1 percentage points from August 2025. Unemployment across all industries remained unchanged at 4.1% and is 0.2 percentage points lower than one year ago.

"The construction industry added jobs for the sixth straight month in August and, on a year-over-year basis, is

Construction Employment Statistics August 2026



	August 2026	July 2026	August 2025	1-Month Net Change	12-Month Net Change	12-Month % Change
Construction	8,359,000	8,337,000	8,239,000	22,000	120,000	1.5%
Nonresidential	5,085,800	5,075,400	4,946,600	10,400	139,200	2.8%
Nonresidential building	947,300	949,100	921,300	-1,800	26,000	2.8%
Nonresidential specialty trade contractors	2,927,700	2,919,900	2,841,700	7,800	86,000	3.0%
Heavy & civil engineering	1,210,800	1,206,400	1,183,600	4,400	27,200	2.3%
Residential	3,272,700	3,262,000	3,292,500	10,700	-19,800	-0.6%
Residential building	923,700	916,400	922,800	7,300	900	0.1%
Residential specialty trade contractors	2,349,000	2,345,600	2,369,700	3,400	-20,700	-0.9%
Average Hourly Earnings						
All private industries	\$37.75	\$37.65	\$36.62	\$0.10	\$1.13	3.1%
Construction	\$41.66	\$41.50	\$39.98	\$0.16	\$1.68	4.2%
Average Weekly Hours						
All private industries	34.4	34.3	34.2	0.1	0.2	0.6%
Construction	39.5	39.4	38.9	0.1	0.6	1.5%
Unemployment Rate						
All private industries (SA)	4.1%	4.1%	4.3%	0.0pp	-0.2pp	
Construction (NSA)	3.1%	3.7%	3.2%	-0.6pp	-0.1pp	

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Associated Builders and Contractors. Note: SA: Seasonally adjusted. NSA: Not seasonally adjusted

Construction Employment Growth August 2025 v. August 2026



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Associated Builders and Contractors

**Includes Residential Building and Residential *Includes Nonresidential Building, Nonresidential STC, and Heavy and Civil Engineering

growing its employment base at the fastest pace since February 2025," said ABC Chief Economist Anirban Basu. "That growth has occurred despite a shrinking homebuilding segment.

"Hiring remains highly concentrated in the nonresidential specialty trade contractor category, a byproduct of the rapid and ongoing increase in [data](#)

[center-related construction activity](#)," said Basu. "Given the lengthy backlog levels of contractors with data center work, as reflected in [ABC's Construction Backlog Indicator](#), the artificial intelligence buildout will continue to support construction employment growth during the next several months."

ABC: Construction Materials Prices Jump Again in August

Construction input prices increased 1.2% in August compared to the previous month, according to an Associated Builders and Contractors analysis of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Producer Price Index data. Nonresidential construction input prices also increased 1.2% for the month.

Overall construction input prices are 8.9% higher than one year ago, while nonresidential construction input prices are 8.8% higher. Prices increased in 2 of the 3 energy subcategories last month. Crude petroleum prices expanded 5.2% and unprocessed energy materials prices rose 1.5%, while natural gas prices were down 11.6% in August.

"Construction input prices surged again in August, and the increases were widespread across materials," said ABC Chief Economist Anirban Basu. "Prices for iron and steel, softwood lumber, switchgear, copper wire and cable, and several derivative metal products are now up more than 10% year over year. While contractors remain optimistic about their margins, according to [ABC's Construction Confidence Index](#), ongoing input price escalation is likely to weigh on profitability over the next several months. This is especially true given recent escalation in the trade war with Canada and the fact that oil prices have jumped back above \$100 per barrel."

Visit abc.org/economics for the Construction Backlog Indicator and Construction Confidence Index, plus analysis of spending, employment, job openings and the Producer Price Index.

Associated Builders and Contractors is a national construction industry trade association established in 1950 with 67 chapters and 24,000 members. Founded on the merit shop philosophy, ABC helps members offer a robust employee value proposition, develop people, win work and deliver that work safely, ethically and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which ABC and its members work. Visit us at abc.org.

Producer Price Index August 2026



	1-Month % Change	12-Month % Change	Change Since Feb 2020
Inputs To Industries			
Inputs to construction	1.2%	8.9%	55.6%
Inputs to multifamily construction	1.0%	7.4%	53.8%
Inputs to nonresidential construction	1.2%	8.8%	56.4%
Inputs to commercial construction	0.9%	7.4%	56.4%
Inputs to healthcare construction	1.1%	7.4%	56.0%
Inputs to industrial construction	1.1%	8.1%	52.9%
Inputs to other nonresidential construction	1.4%	9.4%	56.8%
Inputs to maintenance and repair construction	1.3%	9.5%	54.1%
Commodities			
Adhesives and sealants	1.0%	6.2%	47.7%
Brick and structural clay tile	0.3%	1.0%	34.5%
Concrete products	0.3%	4.2%	47.8%
Construction machinery and equipment	0.0%	2.2%	38.2%
Construction sand, gravel, and crushed stone	0.3%	6.2%	57.1%
Copper wire and cable	4.2%	27.2%	104.9%
Crude petroleum	5.2%	34.9%	80.2%
Fabricated structural metal products	0.5%	6.5%	72.0%
Gypsum products	0.7%	0.2%	49.8%
Hot rolled steel bars, plates, and structural shapes	0.0%	13.4%	63.0%
Insulation materials	0.5%	1.1%	48.2%
Iron and steel	0.9%	17.9%	80.8%
Lumber and wood products	-0.3%	4.8%	32.4%
Natural gas	-11.6%	0.5%	41.4%
Plumbing fixtures and fittings	0.3%	5.1%	33.8%
Prepared asphalt, tar roofing and siding products	0.5%	3.9%	52.3%
Softwood lumber	-1.9%	11.8%	28.3%
Steel mill products	1.7%	23.4%	103.4%
Switchgear, switchboard, industrial controls equipment	2.4%	12.3%	82.8%
Unprocessed energy materials	1.5%	23.6%	85.9%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Associated Builders and Contractors

Producer Price Index Percent Change Inputs to Construction Industries August 2017 Through August 2026



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Associated Builders and Contractors



Bird Friendly Glass Market Set to Grow Rapidly

The global market for bird-friendly building glass is expanding rapidly as cities adopt stricter building codes and green-certification standards, according to a report from [Research Intello](#). The market generated an estimated \$1.3 billion in revenue in 2024 and is projected to reach \$3.4 billion by 2033, reflecting a compound annual growth rate of about 11.2% over the forecast period.

Bird-window collisions have long been a byproduct of glass-heavy architecture. Growth in the sector is being driven by three factors: increased conservation awareness, continued vertical urbanization, and wider adoption of certification programs such as LEED and BREEAM. Some cities, including New York and Toronto, now require bird-friendly materials in new construction and major renovations.

Manufacturers offer several types of bird-safe glazing. Patterned glass, which uses textured or printed surfaces to break up reflections, is the most common due to its lower cost. UV-reflective glass — visible to birds but largely imperceptible to humans — has gained traction in commercial and institutional buildings where appearance is a priority. Etched and fritted glass, which use surface treatments or embedded ceramic patterns, are also widely used.

North America held the largest share of the market in 2024, at roughly 38%, attributed to established green-building frameworks and municipal mandates. Asia Pacific is expected to grow fastest, at a projected CAGR of 13.5% through 2033, driven by urban expansion in China, Japan, and Australia and growing investment in sustainable infrastructure. Adoption in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa remains slower, constrained by less-developed regulatory frameworks and cost sensitivity, though demand is emerging in some areas along migratory bird routes.

Commercial buildings — offices, retail, and mixed-use developments — account for the largest share of demand due to their extensive glass facades. Institutional buildings, including schools and hospitals, follow closely, driven by public-sector sustainability requirements. Residential adoption is growing more slowly.

Firms are focusing on research and product development rather than price competition, combining bird-safety features with energy efficiency and other performance benefits.

Analysts note that retrofitting older buildings represents a significant untapped opportunity, particularly in dense urban areas built before bird-safety standards existed. Combined with regulatory pressure and rising ESG expectations among investors, the sector is expected to continue growing at a double-digit rate over the next decade.

This article originally appeared in [Glass Magazine](#).

welcome

NEW ASA MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the newest members of the American Subcontractors Association! By joining ASA, you become part of a nationwide community of subcontractors, suppliers, and industry professionals committed to strengthening our businesses and advancing the construction industry. We encourage you to get involved, make connections, and take advantage of everything ASA has to offer—from education and advocacy to networking, resources, and opportunities to learn from fellow members. Some of the greatest value of ASA comes from the relationships built with people who understand the challenges you face every day.

To our longtime members, please take a moment to introduce yourself when you see a new face at an ASA event. A simple welcome can be the beginning of a valuable business relationship—or a lasting friendship. To our newest members: Welcome to ASA. **We're glad you're here, and we look forward to getting to know you!**

- Absolute Restoration
- Aflac
- Apollon Wealth Management LLC
- Asset Research Services
- B&M Contractors
- BDO
- CF Metals
- Chesapeake Embroidery
- CS&E
- Custom Truck One Source
- Dickinson Wright PLLC
- Eager Plumbing, LLC
- Earlytrade
- Elite Waste & Construction Services LLC
- ERG Rental
- Field Safety Services
- Fox Rothschild LLP
- Galvan Reinforcing Co
- GeoShack
- GeoStabilization International / Access Limited
- Glenwood Insurance Agency
- Golden Construction Services Inc
- GreenAcres Hydroseeding
- Greentree Land Management
- Healthmarkets
- Henry, a Carlisle Company
- Jennifer McCollum
- Joeris
- JR&CO
- Junk It MS
- Kemper Corporate Services
- Leading Edge Construction Services
- Marsh McLennan Agency, LLC
- MDM Scaffolding Services, Inc.
- Mesa Mobile Storage
- Metal Rise Construction
- Mountain West Excavation LLC.
- MSC Safety Solutions
- Pats Painting LLC
- People Ready
- PORTAPros
- Precision
- Prime Logic, Inc.
- RBFCU
- Red Mallard Inc
- Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers
- Romar Supply Steel Fabrication
- Shade N Net
- SI Outdoor
- Silicone Specialties Inc
- Sitework Supply Solutions, LLC
- The Alternative Board Harrisburg
- TNT Crane & Rigging, Inc
- Tradewise
- Trivent Safety Consulting
- Trucordia Insurance Services
- Urban N Zink Contractor Inc
- ZonePillar



HEALTH COVERAGE INSIGHTS

Smarter Jobsites, Same Old Gap

by Jeanie Cunningham

Robotics used to be a trade-show novelty on the jobsite. Not anymore. Contractor adoption of jobsite robotics jumped from 29% to 79% in a single year, and nearly a third of contractors piloted a robot on at least one project in 2026. (BuiltWorlds, 2026 Annual Equipment & Robotics Benchmarking Report.) Exoskeletons, demolition robots, robotic total stations, autonomous compaction equipment, drones doing the roof inspection nobody wants to climb for — smart equipment is becoming standard gear, not a pilot program.

Most of that is genuinely good news for the people doing the work. But safer equipment and no financial exposure if something still goes wrong are two different promises. It's worth being clear about which one your health plan is actually making.

A Genuinely Safer Jobsite

Give the technology its due. NIOSH points to exoskeletons and demolition robots as tools that can cut musculoskeletal strain and pull workers out from under the load entirely, and contractors agree — 56% cite safety as a leading reason they're deploying robotics in the first place. (CDC/NIOSH Science Bulletin, 2024; BuiltWorlds, 2026.)

A 20-year look at robot-related workers' compensation claims in Ohio backs that up at the macro level: claims fell 51% between 2001 and 2020 as the technology matured. (Robot-related workers' compensation claims, Ohio, 2001–2020.) Fewer incidents, plain and simple. That part of the story is real.

What the Data Leaves Out

But of the 1,076 claims in that same Ohio study, the ones that did happen weren't minor. Six workers filed permanent total disability claims — just six, out of more than a thousand — and those six accounted for roughly half of all the costs in the study: about \$4 million. Lost-time claims averaged \$47,526 each. (Same Ohio study.)

NIOSH's own bulletin on construction robotics catalogs what those incidents look like: workers struck by a robot's arm or reach, caught between a demolition robot and the structure it's tearing into, operators standing inside a hazard zone where they can be pinned or crushed. In one incident flagged by Washington state's labor department, two workers were seriously injured when they got caught between a demolition robot and a wall. (CDC/NIOSH Science Bulletin, 2024.) Drones add their own unmapped territory — NIOSH notes that safety research on human-drone interaction on jobsites "remains unexplored."

None of this is an argument against the technology. It's an argument against assuming smarter equipment automatically means a smaller bill.

The Deductible Doesn't Know What Hit You

Whether someone is hurt by a falling beam, an overexertion strain, or a piece of automated equipment, the health plan applies the same fine print. The average deductible at a small business is now \$2,575 for single coverage, and the out-of-pocket maximum on a family plan can run north of \$18,000. (KFF, 2024.) Nationally, overexertion and falls are still the two most expensive categories of workplace injury, together costing employers well over \$24 billion a year — the leading causes of serious injury haven't gone anywhere just because the jobsite got smarter. (Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index, 2025.)

Get hurt on a Tuesday, robot or no robot, and someone is still covering the first few thousand dollars before insurance meaningfully kicks in. Then coinsurance. Then the wait for a claim, an approval, a return-to-work plan — while the mortgage, the truck payment, and the crew's payroll keep moving on schedule.

A Different Kind of Coverage for a New Kind of Jobsite

That's the whole argument for Accident, Hospital, and Critical Illness coverage. They aren't health insurance, and they

were never trying to be. They sit beside it. When someone lands in urgent care after a jobsite injury — automated equipment or not — they pay a lump sum of cash directly to the worker. Not to the hospital. To them. They decide where it goes: the deductible, payroll while they're out, the mortgage, gas money for follow-up appointments three towns over. It fills the exact gap that a smarter jobsite doesn't close.

What ASA Members Can Do

Two honest questions.

First: as your crews adopt more automated and robotic equipment, has your safety training kept pace, or is the equipment simply newer than the guidance around it? A tool changing faster than the training on it is its own kind of exposure.

Second, and the one no equipment upgrade answers: if someone on your crew got seriously sick or hurt tomorrow, how much would they owe before their health insurance paid a dime — and where would that cash actually come from? Savings? A credit card? A fundraiser? If that answer makes you uneasy, that's the gap these plans are built to close.

Good health insurance is necessary, and smart equipment is a genuine safety upgrade. Neither one was ever designed to keep a family solvent through a catastrophe. American Subcontractors Association members can look at supplemental cash coverage through The ASAdvantage Health Plan, which is a sensible place to start.

Insurance pays the hospital. Cash protects the family. Smarter equipment doesn't change which job is whose.

About the Author

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Crossing the State Line: The Legal Checklist Before You Mobilize

Key issues contractors face when entering a new state

by Chip Bachara, Bachara Construction Law Group

In our continued streak of consistent growth in construction, it is natural for a successful trade contractor to seek expansion into a neighboring state. Whether a valued customer asks you to follow it to a project in another state, a general contractor offers an attractive opportunity in a nearby market, or growth simply makes geographic expansion inevitable. The temptation is to view the new project as more of the same: same work, same people, same subcontract, different address. My advice is to go for it, but look before you leap.

Construction law remains remarkably state-specific, and a contractor crossing from Florida into Georgia, for example, may travel only a few miles, but the rules governing its license, contract, payment rights and remedies can change at the state line. You don't have to become an expert in every state's law; however, expansion into a new state should trigger a deliberate legal and operational review before you sign a contract and mobilize your crew.

1. Start With the Right to Perform the Work

The first question is the most basic: Are we legally permitted to perform this work in this state?

Contractor licensing varies substantially from state to state—and sometimes by trade. A license that permits a company to perform work in Florida does not automatically authorize that company to perform the same work in Georgia. Florida provides a particularly strong warning: its licensing statutes can make contracts entered into by an unlicensed contractor unenforceable. What looks like an administrative oversight can therefore become a

collection problem of the highest order. You may even have to repay all amounts paid to you for work that exceeds your state qualification!

Don't stop at the state level. Local licenses, registrations or permits may also be required. The right question is: "What licenses are required for this company, performing this scope, at this location?" Answer those questions before submitting your bid—not after a payment dispute develops.

2. Make Sure the Company Itself Can Do Business There

It is important to understand that licensing the construction activity and registering the business entity are separate issues. A Florida corporation or LLC beginning operations in Georgia may need to qualify as a foreign entity, appoint a registered agent, and make appropriate state filings before it can enter into an agreement for work in Georgia. If you're not authorized by the Secretary of State to work in Florida and you don't get paid, you may not be able to file suit to collect payment.

Expansion into another state should also trigger a call to accounting and HR about tax, payroll, unemployment, or reporting consequences. Management should make sure the right questions reach the right professionals. Permission to perform construction work and permission to conduct business in a state are not the same thing.

3. Your Standard Subcontract May Not Travel Well

Most established contractors have spent years refining their standard subcontract and learning which

provisions in a general contractor's form require negotiation. Some of those lessons, however, may be state-specific.

Consider indemnification, conditional payment, venue, choice of law, attorney's fees, limitations of liability, retainage, notice requirements, and lien or bond waivers. State law can determine whether a provision is enforceable and what language is required.

Georgia provides a useful illustration. Georgia courts generally enforce appropriately drafted exculpatory provisions, but require language waiving substantial rights to be explicit, prominent, clear, and unambiguous, subject to important statutory and public-policy limits. Florida law imposes different limits, including circumstances in which a contractor cannot contract away duties imposed by Florida's building codes. A contractor accustomed to relying on Georgia waiver or limitation language could therefore cross into Florida believing it has transferred a risk that Florida law leaves squarely on its shoulders.

The operational consequence matters as much as the legal one. A contractor that believes post-completion claims have been contractually eliminated may price, insure and manage the project differently. Finding this out after a suit is filed can be a rude and expensive awakening.

The answer is not to reinvent the subcontract for every project. Review the standard form and commonly negotiated provisions against the new state's law, identify what requires a different approach, and give estimating and contracting personnel a state-specific playbook.

4. Protect Your Lien and Bond Rights!

Perhaps nowhere is the danger of assuming uniformity greater than with construction lien laws. Every experienced subcontractor knows lien rights have deadlines. The problem is assuming you know those deadlines because you know them in your home state.

Florida's Construction Lien Law illustrates the complexity. A subcontractor not in privity with the owner generally must serve a Notice to Owner before commencing work or within 45 days after first furnishing labor, services or materials, subject to the statute's detailed requirements. Failure to comply can defeat the lien claim. This is complicated further if you provide specially fabricated materials. Your Notice to Owner may be due before you install the first cabinet at the project!

Cross into another state and the process can change: Who receives preliminary notice? When must it be sent? What must it say? When must the lien be recorded and suit filed? Can rights be waived in advance? Georgia has its own lien framework, deadlines, and waiver rules. The fact that both states recognize construction liens does not mean a Florida procedure protects a Georgia project.

Public projects add another layer because lien rights generally give way to payment-bond remedies with separate notices and deadlines. Do not wait until someone stops paying. When the project is opened, identify the state's requirements and calendar every preliminary notice, lien, and bond deadline. Preserving payment rights should be part of project setup, not collection activity.

5. Understand the Local Rules Governing Payment

Payment law also deserves a state-specific review. States regulate payment timing, retainage, waivers and remedies for nonpayment differently, and those rules change over time.

Florida provides a current example. Effective July 1, 2026, Florida law generally requires licensed contractors who have received payment to compensate subcontractors and suppliers within 45 days or according to their contracts, absent a bona fide dispute; knowing or willful violations can lead to licensing discipline. The broader point is that accounts-receivable and accounts-payable procedures must comply with the law where the project is located, not merely the procedures used at headquarters.

6. Don't Forget About Your Workforce

Sending employees across state lines creates another set of obligations. Before mobilization, check workers' compensation, unemployment, wage-and-hour, and employee-notice requirements. Confirm proper coverage and make sure payroll and HR know where employees will actually be working.

This matters even when expansion begins informally. Sending a Florida crew to help a good customer on one Georgia project can still trigger Georgia requirements.

7. Confirm That Your Insurance Crosses the State Line With You

Finally, involve your insurance broker before—not after—mobilization. Confirm workers' compensation coverage in the new state and that general liability, automobile, umbrella, and any professional or pollution coverage appropriate to the work extends to the new operation. Review contractual insurance and additional-insured requirements as well.

The question is not simply whether the company "has insurance." It is whether this company, performing this scope, in this state, under this contract, has the coverage it expects to have.

Before You Sign: The New-State Checklist

Before committing to the first project in a new state, management should be able to answer:

- Do we hold every license, whether state or local, required for our scope of work?
- Is our company properly registered to conduct business in the state?
- Have accounting and HR evaluated tax, payroll, workers' compensation, and employment requirements?
- Has our standard subcontract—and the customer's proposed subcontract—been reviewed for important state-specific differences?
- Do we understand the state's lien and payment-bond procedures, and have all notice and filing deadlines been calendared?
- Have payment, retainage, waiver, and release requirements been reviewed?
- Has our insurance broker confirmed appropriate coverage for the new jurisdiction?
- Who inside the company is responsible for ongoing compliance after the project begins?

None of these questions should discourage expansion. New markets can follow customers, diversify opportunities, and create substantial growth. But expansion should be a business decision, not a legal experiment.

The best time to discover that another state plays by different rules is before the bid goes in—not after the first payment dispute.

About the Author



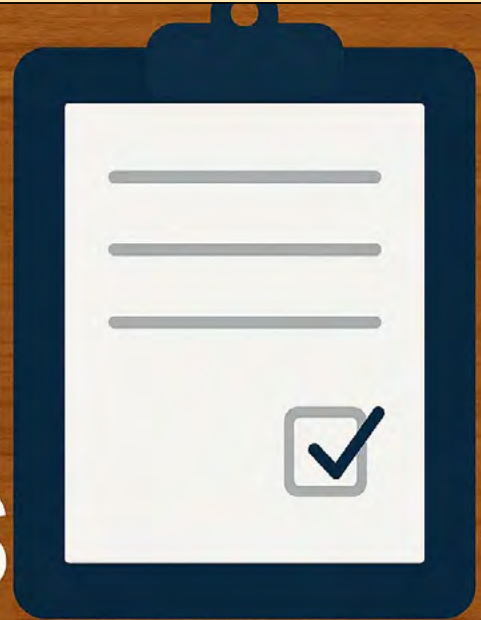
Chip Bachara is Managing Partner of **Bachara Construction Law Group**. For additional construction-law resources for contractors and subcontractors, visit **Bachara Construction Law Group**. For more on bacharagroup.com



What Every Subcontractor In Florida Needs To Know About Florida's Chapter 558 Pre-Suit Process

by Laurie Stanziale, Fox Rothchild

UNDERSTANDING FLORIDA'S CHAPTER 558 NOTICE REQUIREMENTS



Subcontractors, like all parties to a construction project, like to avoid claims and understand (hopefully) that one claim gone wrong could have devastating impacts on their business. Chapter 558 of the Florida Statutes is reshaping risk for construction subcontractors statewide. This article will highlight the key terms of Chapter 558 of which every subcontractor should be aware and provide a guide to best practices to address being served with a Chapter 558 notice.

Chapter 558 is a mandatory pre-suit process for construction defect claims intended to streamline defect disputes through a notice-and-cure framework before any lawsuit can be filed. However, its compressed deadlines and flow-down notice provisions create challenging compliance obligations for subcontractors that, if mishandled, can erode coverage positions and limit settlement leverage well before a case reaches court.

The Notice

Chapter 558 establishes a clear mandate: a property owner or association may not file a construction defect action without first complying with the statute's notice requirements. Under Section 558.004(1)(a), a claimant must serve a written notice of claim on the responsible contractor, subcontractor, supplier, or design professional at least 60 days before filing suit (or 120 days if the claim involves a condominium or homeowner association representing more than 20 parcels). The notice must describe each alleged defect in reasonable detail as well as its location clearly enough that the responding party can find it based on a visual inspection alone.

Once notice is served, the statutory clock begins to run. The party receiving the notice has 30 days (or 50 days for large associations) to conduct a reasonable inspection of the property. Within 45 days of service (75 days for

large associations), that party must respond in writing with one of five options: offer to fix the defect at no cost, offer a cash settlement, offer a mix of repairs and payment, formally dispute the claim, or state that the party's insurer will evaluate the claim within 30 days. If the responding party ignores the notice or flatly disputes the claim, the claimant is free to file suit.

The Flow-Down Effect: How Subcontractors Get Pulled In

Here is where the risk equation shifts for subcontractors. Section 558.004(3) permits the party originally served with the notice to pass it along within 10 days (or 30 days for large associations) to any contractor, subcontractor, supplier, or design professional it "reasonably believes is responsible" for the defect. The statute requires the original respondent to identify the specific defect it is attributing to each downstream party.

Once a subcontractor receives this downstream notice, the compressed timeline for the downstream party kicks in. Under Section 558.004(4), the subcontractor has just 15 days (or 30 days for large associations) to serve a written response to the party that passed on the notice. That response must cover any inspection findings and choose from the same five response options described above.

For small to mid-size subcontractors, these tight timelines can be punishing. Within that short fifteen (15) day period, the subcontractor must inspect a property, potentially engage counsel, evaluate potential liability, coordinate with insurers, and craft a written response. This is particularly challenging when the subcontractor had no knowledge of the 558 Claim until the general contractor forwarded it. All this needs to be done in fifteen days while the subcontractor maintains its productivity on other active projects.

Inspection Rights: A Double-edged Sword

Section 558.004(2) grants the responding party the right to inspect the claimant's property, including the right to request destructive testing with the claimant's agreement. If a claimant refuses reasonable destructive testing, the statute penalizes them and the claimant loses the right to recover any damages that could have been caught and fixed had the testing gone forward.

For subcontractors, this inspection right is both a shield and a source of cost exposure. The right to inspect allows a subcontractor to evaluate whether the alleged defect stems from its scope of work or the work or decisions of others on the project. However, exercising that right requires mobilizing the right people from within its organization to conduct the inspection and potentially engaging outside or forensic consultants, all within the statute's tight deadlines. These costs can be significant without even accounting for finding the personnel to do so while other projects are ongoing. While recovery of these costs could happen down the road in the eventual lawsuit, if there is one, each party to the

process must bear its own costs at this pre-suit stage.

Contractual Opt-Out and Mandatory Notice Language

A question that comes up frequently is whether you can contractually opt out of the statutory process. As is well known, Section 558.005 for contracts entered into after October 1, 2009, any written construction contract between an owner and a contractor or design professional must include language alerting the parties that defect claims are subject to Chapter 558's notice-and-cure process. However, leaving that language out carries no penalty, nor does it exempt parties from the statute's requirements.

Frequently overlooked is the fact that the statute also allows the parties to agree in writing to opt out of Chapter 558 entirely. This may seem like a good idea at contract negotiation: avoid all of these costs and oppressive deadlines, but it carries significant implications. Subcontractors should be aware that by opting out, whether purposefully or inadvertently (always known what your contract says!), they will lose the pre-suit protections the statute is designed to provide: the right to inspect, the right to offer repairs, and the opportunity to settle before costly litigation begins.

Insurance Implications

Section 558.004(13) makes clear that receiving a Chapter 558 notice does not excuse anyone from meeting their insurance policy's own notification requirements. At the same time, forwarding the notice to your insurer does not automatically trigger a formal claim under the policy unless the policy says otherwise. It is imperative that subcontractors know the notice requirements of their insurer and understand the potential distinction between "notice" and "claim" under their policy, which may always be clear cut.

Notice to the carrier, however, creates a practical tension for subcontractors. On one hand, the statute's tight response deadlines which pressure them to engage their insurers early which may lead to premature claims can affect loss history and future premiums, regardless

of how the dispute ultimately resolves, which can exacerbate already high insurance costs. On the other hand, a subcontractor that delays insurer notification while evaluating the claim risks a denial of coverage later.

Key Takeaways

It's a lot to take in. So, what should subcontractors be doing to prepare for a Chapter 558 claim:

- Know what your subcontract says
 - Are the required Chapter 558 disclosures in the contract
 - Assess the risks of opting out of Chapter 558
- Work proactively with your insurance brokers to clarify, before a claim arrives, the precise trigger for notification under their policies and whether a Chapter 558 notice constitutes a "claim" or merely a "notice of circumstances." (common policy language traps)
- Ensure internal processes can absorb a forwarded notice of claim and generate a compliant written response within the statute's compressed windows
- Keep good records during the project: progress photographs; sign-offs from the contractor; schedules and timelines; and well-organized project documents and communications can greatly expedite the response process and make that 15-day window more tolerable.

About the Author

Laurie Stanziale is a partner at Fox Rothschild LLP, dividing her practice between the firm's West Palm Beach and New York City offices. She advises developers, owners, contractors, architects and engineers throughout the project lifecycle, focusing on contract negotiation, risk mitigation and the resolution of construction disputes. Laurie also acted as an adjunct professor and mentor at Brooklyn Law School, where she taught Construction Law. For more information visit www.foxrothschild.com.

New Markets, New Risks: Six Questions to Ask Before You Diversify

by Claire Wilson, Sitrine



Diversification is one of the oldest strategies in the books for building a resilient construction business. If one market slows, another can help pick up the slack. But branching into new markets, project types, or geographies isn't as simple as taking on more work.

Adding a new type of work may change how a subcontractor bills for it, how long it takes to get paid, how much cash is needed to get the work started, and what the team has to manage behind the scenes to keep it moving.

Those are important considerations in an industry where cash is already stretched thin. Sitrine's 2026 State of **Subcontractor Billing Report** found that 92% of subcontractors had to float payroll at least once in the past year, while 43% waited more than 90 days for final payment or retainage.

So, as you consider your next growth opportunity, it helps to understand what the new work will require—and make sure you're set up to support it. These six questions are a good place to start.

1. Where should we begin?

Growth doesn't have to start with a dramatic leap into an entirely new line of business. Often, the most practical opportunities are linked to the work you already know how to do. Choose something that builds on your existing skills, equipment, customer relationships, or market knowledge rather than diving headfirst into the deep end.

- Add service and maintenance work to create a steadier stream of smaller, recurring projects.
- Expand the scope you offer existing customers with related services your team already has the skills or equipment to perform.
- Follow your favorite customers into an adjacent market or location rather than entering one alone.
- Take on a smaller project in a new segment before committing significant labor, equipment, or working capital.

- Partner with another specialty contractor when an opportunity requires capabilities you aren't ready to build in-house.

The overarching takeaway here is simple: start from your strengths.

2. How will this work change our cash cycle?

Once you've identified where you want to grow, the next question is what that work will do to your cash flow.

A move into public work, larger projects, or unfamiliar customers may affect when you can bill, how quickly payments move through the chain, and how much cash you need to carry the work. Longer projects can also tie up more money in **retainage**, while material-heavy scopes can require significantly more cash upfront.

Map those differences before you commit. Look at when payroll, materials, equipment, and overhead will go out, then compare that with when you can realistically expect progress payments. Don't base this forecast solely on contract payment terms, either. Ask the GC about their **typical payment timeline** and review your own **payment history with them** if you have one.

This becomes even more important as you take on bigger projects. A job can be profitable on paper and still put you **in a cash crunch** if you have to cover too many costs for too long before getting paid.

3. Do we understand the customer and contract risk?

Understanding a GC's payment history is a good place to start, but dig deeper before taking on the work. Research the company's reputation and history of disputes, and talk to other

subcontractors about their experiences working with them. You can also check a GC's business credit through services like Experian Business, Equifax Business, or Dun & Bradstreet.

Tara Cristel, co-owner of Total Glass, talked about this when she joined us on the ***Billing & Chilling*** podcast. GCs routinely prequalify subcontractors to make sure they can handle a project, and she believes subs should be vetting GCs just as carefully. If they want to know whether you can handle the project, you should be able to find out whether they can pay their bills.

Extend the same scrutiny to the contracts. Review your subcontract for the **terms that could put your business most at risk**, including pay-if-paid or pay-when-paid clauses, suspension rights, retainage, indemnity, and price escalation. And ask for the GC's prime contract with the owner. Understanding the terms upstream can show you what's flowing down to your business—and where you may have room to negotiate.

4. What will this work require from our people and processes?

A new project type or larger contract may require different estimating expertise, additional skilled labor, more project management capacity, new equipment, or specialized training. New customers can also bring different billing portals, pay app formats, documentation requirements, and approval processes.

Expanding into a new state adds another layer. **Preliminary notices, lien deadlines, waiver rules**, prompt-payment protections, and **retainage laws** vary across states. And with **56% of subcontractors** telling us they've missed a lien deadline at some point, adding another set of requirements to track can make an already complicated process harder.

This is where it really pays to involve the people who will actually be doing the work. When **Dan Wies**, president of Wies Drywall and Construction, joined us on ***Billing & Chilling***, he talked about the

importance of getting his team involved when the company tries something new. They know the existing process, where it breaks down, and what a proposed change will mean day-to-day. Their input can help surface challenges and opportunities you may not have considered—and give you a much clearer picture of what they'll need to make the change work.

5. Can our business support the added growth?

A new opportunity doesn't exist in isolation. It has to fit alongside the projects already on your books, so consider how much additional work the business can realistically carry at once.

Look at your **existing backlog, working capital, access to credit**, and other financial commitments before deciding how quickly to grow into a new area. You may have the cash to support one or two projects, for example, but taking on several at once could leave much less room for an unexpected expense—or another opportunity that comes along.

For bonded contractors, growth can also affect how much work you can pursue. Larger projects and a growing backlog can consume bonding capacity, so involve your surety and construction CPA early if the move will meaningfully change the size or type of work you take on.

You don't have to go all in at once. If the opportunity makes sense, start at a manageable size and let the results guide how quickly you expand.

6. How will we know whether it's working?

Once you start taking on the new work, compare the results with the assumptions you made going in. Revenue and margin matter, but so does whether the opportunity is panning out as expected across the rest of the business.

Look back at the questions you asked upfront. Is the client **paying as expected**? Is the work tying up more

cash or retainage than anticipated? Is your team handling the added workload, or are new bottlenecks emerging? Your **A/R and project data** can help you see where reality lines up with the plan—and where it doesn't.

Over time, those answers should give you a clearer picture of where to keep investing. A new segment with slightly lower margins may still be a strong addition if it pays reliably and fits easily into your operation. Another may bring in plenty of revenue but consistently tie up cash or require more resources than expected.

Whatever you do, grow from a strong foundation.

There's no single right way to diversify a construction business. For one subcontractor, growth might mean adding service work. For another, it could mean moving into public projects or taking on larger contracts.

Whatever the opportunity looks like, the goal is to grow in a way the rest of the business can support. Start from what you already do well, understand what will change, and make sure the cash, people, and processes are there to carry the new work.

Done well, diversification gives you more than another revenue source. It gives you more options when the market changes—and a stronger business to weather it.

About the Author

*Claire Wilson is the co-founder and COO of **Siteline**, a billing software for subcontractors. Previously, she was a project manager at Tishman Construction in New York City, where she worked on major projects like Hudson Yards and JP Morgan's Corporate Headquarters. She is an active CFMA San Francisco member, serves on the Bay Area Subcontractors Association board, and has spoken at numerous regional and national construction conferences. Claire holds a BS in Civil Engineering from Bucknell University.*



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Data Centers Are the Hottest Market in Construction, But Are They Your Market?

by David Morton, Maxim Consulting Group

Every subcontractor in America is hearing some version of the same advice right now, "Get into mission critical!"

The pull is real, and the numbers back it up. In the 2026 Construction Hiring and Business Outlook from AGC and Sage, 65 percent of contractors expect the data center market to expand over the coming year, while just 8 percent expect it to contract. That nets out to a +57 percent positive outlook, the strongest reading of any sector they track. Deloitte credits AI driven data center and energy work for the bulk of the modest growth forecasted in 2026, while commercial and residential markets remain soft.

So one market is shouting, "Look at me!" while the rest of the board goes quiet. That is exactly the moment contractors tend to make their worst decisions.

Know Your Capabilities First

Michael Porter offered one of the clearest definitions of business strategy in his 1996 *Harvard Business Review* piece aptly titled "What is Strategy?" The answer was refreshingly simple. "Strategy means performing different activities than your rivals do, or performing similar activities differently."

For subcontractors, that becomes a question of identifying what types of buyers they are built to serve. Picture two glazing contractors. One thrives on fast-track curtain wall projects for commercial developers while the other focuses on meticulous historic restorations for institutions. Both hang glass, but they are very different businesses with vastly divergent capabilities.

Segmentation means identifying the buyers for whom you are the obvious solution, rather than trying to adapt your

talents to be a potential solution for everyone else. Most subs hate that idea, because narrowing their focus feels like turning away revenue. But a firm that looks like everybody else competes on price alone, and in this business that means competing on whose estimator made the biggest mistake.

That brings us to core competencies. I had the good fortune of learning from renowned business strategist C.K. Prahalad at The University of Michigan, coauthor of *Competing for the Future*. One of his ideas has guided me ever since, "Core competencies are the wellspring of new business development." Know your capabilities first. The markets you can effectively serve will follow.

Four Directions, Four Different Risks

Once you know your competencies, the standard product market map sorts your options fast (Figure 1). Existing services to existing clients is penetration. Safe harbor, best return on effort, lowest risk.

New, but related services to existing clients is product development. The relationship and the credibility already exist, so you are only adding adjacent scopes. For most subs this is the best path to growth, because the hardest part of construction sales is building trust, and that work is already done.

Existing services to new clients is market development, the same scope sold to unfamiliar buyers or new geographies. New services sold to new clients is full diversification, the riskiest of the four because you are building both new capabilities and new relationships at the same time.

The Growth Direction Matrix

Four growth directions, four levels of risk. After Igor Ansoff, Harvard Business Review, 1957.

	EXISTING CLIENTS	NEW CLIENTS
EXISTING WORK	LOWEST RISK Market Penetration Sell more to the buyers you already have. <i>More scope where you work now.</i>	NEW BUYERS, SAME CAPABILITY Market Development Same scope, unfamiliar buyers or geography. <i>A new metro, or a new owner.</i>
NEW WORK	USUALLY THE BEST WAY OUT Product Development New scope for buyers who already trust you. <i>Service and retrofit for owners.</i>	HIGHEST RISK Diversification New scope and new buyers at the same time. <i>Cold entry into hyperscale.</i>

RISK FALLS THIS WAY

Bain research: most growth comes from the core or from one step next door.

Figure 1

The Adjacency Screen

Score the segment before you chase it. Weight x Score = Weighted, Maximum 280.

CRITERION	WEIGHT	SCORE	TOTAL
1. Core competence fit Do we already lead in this capability?	5		
2. Buyer overlap Do we know how this buyer procures?	4		
3. Distance from the core One step out, or a leap?	5		
4. Concentration exposure What share of revenue would one owner be?	4		
5. Contract terms Can we live with the risk language?	3		
6. Dedicated management Who runs it, without robbing the core?	4		
7. Downside and exit What is the worst loss, and the way out?	3		
TOTAL			

210 TO 280 PURSUE

140 TO 209 PILOT

BELOW 140 PASS

Hard stop. Score 3 or below on a flagged row is a pass, whatever the total.

Figure 2

So Where Do Hyperscale Opportunities Sit?

McKinsey projects global data center capacity demand could nearly triple by 2030, approaching 219 gigawatts, with AI workloads driving 70 percent of it. Now the constraints. Lead times for generators, chillers, transformers and switchgear have more than doubled since 2019, and grid interconnection waits now extend into months and in some cases years, both of which create massive liquidated damages exposure. Further, the pool of subs with the in-house talent, process discipline, bonding capacity and balance sheets are highly limited.

Put it together and here is the honest read. For most subcontractors, hyperscale work sits in the bottom right quadrant disguised as a top left opportunity. New buyer, new buyer behavior. No tolerance for schedule failure. Often new geography. Sometimes new scope. It is a real adjacency only if you already self-perform the work and already serve owners who buy on schedule certainty instead of low price. High temptation, but higher risk for most.

Math > Hope

Before you chase any new segment, score it (Figure 2). Insist on a stable core with real earnings opportunity that won't absorb significant management capacity from the work that is already paying your overhead. Put the downside in dollars. Write the exit plan before you need it.

Let's face it, the vast majority of subcontractors have no business pursuing large scopes in the data center world. For most, pursuing data centers should not mean mission critical MEP packages but more modest scopes like site work, fencing, fireproofing, low voltage or commissioning support. The better opportunities are often on the back end of these projects: retrofit, power & cooling upgrades and service work in facilities already operating.

Then there is customer concentration risk. Let one owner grow past roughly a quarter of your revenue and the character of your company changes to the needs of that client whether you intend it to or not. Pricing discipline slips, receivable risk can pile up, and your ability to walk away from bad terms evaporates right when you need it most.

Contract language creates other challenges, deliberately allocation risks through broad form hold harmless, advance lien and bond waivers, and pay if paid provisions. Read the terms with the same discipline as a scope review. On some jobs none of it is worth signing, no matter whose logo sits on the letterhead. Decide your walking away point before negotiations start.

Build Your Competencies and Let Them Open Your Markets

The real constraint right now is capability, not appetite. ABC projects the industry needs roughly 349,000 net new workers in 2026 just to hold even, while AGC found that 82 percent of firms are struggling to fill craft positions. The subs winning this work are rarely the boldest entrants, but rather the ones who have already built sustainable capability and capacity. Five differentiators can do most of the heavy lifting in opportunity creation.

Design build and preconstruction

Research published by DBIA projects design build will approach half of all US construction spending by 2028, and most of it is awarded on qualifications and best value rather than low number. A sub that can carry design responsibility for its own scope, price it early and defend it in a room full of engineers is no longer competing on whose estimator erred the most.

Service and special projects.

CFMA benchmarking puts specialty trade net margins near 7 to 8 percent against 4 to 5 percent for general contractors, and service and special projects pricing is better than new construction because the customer is seeking solutions to urgent problems rather than shopping for the lowest bid. Master service agreements create a revenue floor, provide pull through project work in a low competition setting, and increase the company multiple the day you sell it.

Vendor and manufacturer partnerships.

Remember that equipment lead times have more than doubled. In the right circumstance, an OEM relationship provides something better than a discount, a scheduling advantage. Vendor certifications and a preferred position on a procurement list can matter more to a general contractor than your unit price.

Certifications buyers demand.

Fit-out operators commonly require BICSI credentialed installers on low voltage scopes. Electrical acceptance testing runs through NETA. Commissioning, which on a mission critical job means integrated systems testing at full load rather than a punch list, runs through credentials such as BCxP, ACG and NEBB. Under all of it sits prequalification filters: a current ISNetworld or Avetta profile, an EMR an owner will accept, and bonding capacity with headroom.

Prefabrication and work packaging.

Research from the Construction Industry Institute at the University of Texas at Austin found that teams using advanced prefabrication and kitting saw roughly 25 percent productivity improvement and 10 percent lower total installed cost, with better predictability on both cost and schedule. Prefabrication and modular assembly move labor off crowded sites and into controlled shops.

None of these capabilities belong to a single market. They travel into health care, commercial, industrial, institutional, semiconductor and yes, mission critical. That is Prahalad's test made practical. Build a robust business strategy by developing competencies that open several markets, contribute to what customers value, and are difficult to imitate.

The hyperscaler gigawatts are real. So is the graveyard of contractors who

ventured into a market before they identified the reasons to avoid it.

About the Author

David Morton is COO & Director with Maxim Consulting Group, where he works with construction firms of all sizes on organizational assessments, business planning, leadership development, executive coaching, and productivity improvement. David spent nearly 30 years in the construction and manufacturing industries before joining Maxim. David holds a Class A General Engineering Contractor's License and a Class B General Building Contractor's License, an MBA from the University of Michigan Ross School of Business, and a BA in Economics from the University of California, San Diego. He is a published industry researcher and a frequent presenter at industry conferences and forums. He can be reached at david.morton@maximconsulting.com.

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FEATURE

Risk Multiplier or Mitigator? What AI Adoption Tells Sureties About Contractor Maturity

by Carl Oliveri, Grassi

The construction industry is embracing AI with no shortage of enthusiasm. Yet for all the excitement, adoption is outpacing execution. A [2025 global survey](#) of more than 2,200 construction professionals by RICS found that firms planning to increase Artificial Intelligence (AI) investment outnumber those actively using it by more than 2 to 1, with 78% of organizations still in non-adoption or early pilot phases.

What is slowing meaningful adoption is not a failure of ambition, but organizational readiness. AI performs in proportion to the environment it operates in, and many contractors are still determining how and where these tools fit into core workflows that govern estimating, project execution, and financial management.

For sureties assessing contractor performance, the most telling sign of organizational maturity is not whether a contractor uses AI, but whether it is applied with the controls and accountability needed to close the execution gap.

High-Impact AI Use Cases for Contractors

Many contractors are keen to harness AI's potential, and for good reason. Recent advances in large language models and machine learning offer compelling tools to address long-standing construction challenges.

Sophisticated contractors are leveraging AI for:

- **Predictive scheduling and forecasting:** AI ingests historical performance, labor rates, and external variables, such as supply chain conditions and weather data, to refine schedules and stress-test backlog assumptions.
- **Cost monitoring and anomaly detection:** Automated analysis of cost trends can highlight margin risk, provided baseline data is reliable and escalation protocols are clearly defined.
- **Back-office automation:** Automating invoicing, payables, and expense management reduces manual errors and

improves cash-flow predictability.

- **Resource allocation:** AI-driven analytics identify underutilized labor, equipment, or materials, enabling earlier corrective action to protect productivity and margins.
- **Safety and compliance monitoring:** Embedded AI in wearable devices and monitoring platforms allows early identification of safety or compliance risks, supporting swift intervention and reducing exposure to claims.

Risk Magnified, Not Created or Erased

AI doesn't inherently reduce or increase risk. Instead, it amplifies the strengths and weaknesses that already exist. For sureties evaluating organizational maturity, the following concepts are worth keeping front of mind:

- **AI doesn't question its inputs.** The foundation of any AI system is the data feeding it. When job cost inputs, historical data, and WIP schedules are inconsistent or fragmented, AI-generated forecasts don't surface those problems. Instead, they absorb them, smooth them over, and produce outputs that look authoritative.
- **Human oversight can't be replaced.** Decisions should be traceable to a responsible individual, a documented process, and a clear review trail. If the explanation stops at "the system flagged it," that is a governance gap.
- **Progress often expands the surface area for risk.** Every new system integration, automated workflow, and AI-connected platform is a new point of entry. Sureties should ask not only what tools a contractor has implemented, but whether their cybersecurity posture has kept pace.

The True Markers of AI Readiness

For sureties seeking an accurate assessment of AI-related risk, the most reliable indicators are organizational, not technological:

- **Clear Governance:** Policies define which AI solutions are approved, who may deploy them, and how outputs are monitored.
- **Defined Accountability:** Human expertise remains the final checkpoint. AI may inform estimates, schedules, or forecasts, but ownership of outcomes is never outsourced to technology.
- **Integrated Cybersecurity:** Data protection and system controls are embedded from the outset and evolve alongside the contractor's digital footprint.

The Bottom Line

The core lesson for sureties is this: Don't be distracted by dazzling new software. Instead, interrogate the controls, governance, and cultural discipline that underpin AI's use. These organizational fundamentals determine whether technology becomes a risk multiplier or a true risk mitigator.

About the Author



Carl Oliveri, CPA, CCIFP, is the Construction Practice Leader and a Partner at Grassi. He has more than 25 years of experience advising owners and executives in the construction industry, particularly in

project-centric and companywide financial modeling, operational strategy development, financial statement accounting services, income tax method analysis, and more. This extensive industry experience enables him to offer valuable insights and advice to construction clients on market trends and best practices. Oliveri serves on the NASBP CPA Advisory Council. He can be reached at coliveri@grassiadvisors.com or 212.223.5047.



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FEATURE

The Currency of the Field

Establishing a culture of financial acumen for field leaders

by Gregg Schoppman, FMI Corp.



Even today, there is still a reluctance to share information with the field. The information in question is the budget. For a litany of reasons, “the office” is fearful of the superintendent or foreman possessing job cost information.

Additionally, there is a contingent of field leaders that are equally reluctant to have this information. Ask some field leaders about their general conditions or their labor budget and you might hear, “You’ll have to ask the office because that’s not my job. I’m just building the

project.” That would be like asking a blue-chip quarterback if his team is winning, only to hear, “Hey, I just throw the ball, so I have no idea if we are winning or losing.” Organizations must first confront the first challenge of creating a scoreboard that is transparent, believable and most importantly realistic.

Establishing the Currency

One of the most interesting aspects of construction budget creation and controls is the currency. Up to this point,

many readers have assumed that the information being shared with the field is all about dollars and cents. Certainly a team that is building multi-million dollar structures with millions of dollars worth of equipment and materials can/should be trusted with seeing the budget. However, consider the following scenario - A field leader is told they have \$125,000 to complete a particular trade package versus that same field leader being told they have 1,500 man-hours to complete that same trade package. The

currency for the field is not about euros or dollars or pesos, but rather the actual denomination that those leaders use on a daily basis.

Financial management is multi-pronged. For instance, it is important to think about the graphic in Figure 1.

The dollars on a project are inextricably linked. However, for a field leader, they are largely concerned with the top line of the graphic. However, from an estimating and project management perspective, there may be an “over simplification” to create budgets that manage costs, schedule of values, and billings simultaneously. If this can be done, outstanding. However, there is often a push to crowbar everything into a one size fits all bucket. For instance, consider a highway project. In many cases there could easily be hundreds or thousands of pay items. In many cases, those same pay items might be labor codes that have dollars or hours attached to them. The field now has a menu to choose from that should correlate to a job feedback report that they should see. Without proper forethought and strategic thinking, there is little hope that the field will recognize the importance of seeing how each element intersects with the other. Budgets have to be created that speak to the field and in their currency of choice – hours.

Addressing the “Why”

Let’s go back a moment. Why do firms NOT share budget and job cost information with the field? Below is a brief list:

- **The “Games”** — Money is shuffled from job code to job code so even if the field did see a job cost update, it might lack integrity due to the games being played
- **Fear of it falling into the wrong hands** — What if the budget/job cost information is left in the job trailer and someone sees it?
- **Fear of a team slowing down** — What if the team sees they are doing well and they slow down because they might work themselves out of a job
- **Stacks of money** — If the field knew

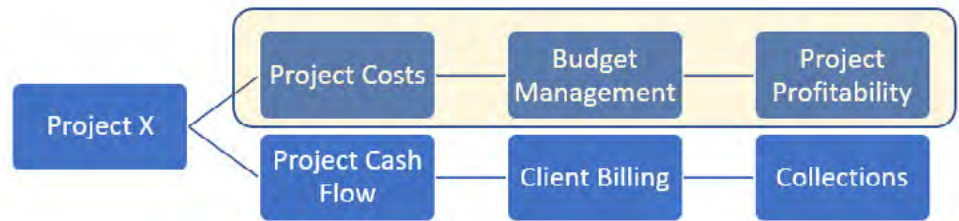


Figure 1

how much money we make, they would want more money

These are definitely some of the reasons why, but consider this – would a sports team shut a scoreboard off so the team playing the game couldn’t see the clock or performance statistics? It certainly doesn’t seem realistic, so why do construction organizations think keeping the team most connected to the work in the dark is a viable idea? The arguments against these theories are below:

- **The “Games”** — Integrity is not just a corner office trait. Project managers that are shuffling money might have larger issues and there is certainly a pervasive lack of distrust created when this occurs
- **Fear of falling into the wrong hands** — With most of the information being electronic, this is a bit farfetched. Secondly, have you seen your cost reports? Some of your own people can’t read them so who is to think a competitor, owner or trade contractor could decipher them?
- **Fear of a team slowing down** — It is only natural to want to engage in “job prevention mode.” However, the organization has an obligation to drive strong internal communication so this doesn’t occur by sharing what is on the horizon.
- **Stacks of money** — A little education goes a long way. The construction industry is largely a 3-4% net profit margin business (translates – low margin, high risk). Teach your teams this nugget so there is not a misconception about bloated profits.

Focusing on the Behavior

Assuming the company has the right tools and structure, reinforcing the behaviors becomes a great deal easier. If there are no guardrails, it is no wonder that field leaders will assume the mantra, “That’s not my job.” In reality, there is no job more important to the field leader than budget management. Who else will drive daily productivity and cost management, if not that field leader? Organizations that have the infrastructure have a greater ability to drive individual accountability. Furthermore, they more than likely spend the time educating all team members – office and field – on financial acumen. In the end, being better builders means being well rounded and exceptional at putting money to the bottom line. For if you aren’t lighting up the scoreboard, are you really a great builder in the first place?

About the Author

As a principal with FMI, Gregg specializes in the areas of productivity and project management. He also leads FMI’s project management consulting practice. He has completed complex and sophisticated construction projects in several different niches and geographic markets. He has also worked as a construction manager and managed direct labor. FMI is a unique and fast-growing firm of professionals passionate about creating a better future for engineering and construction, infrastructure and the built environment throughout North America and around the world. For more information on FMI, please visit www.fminet.com or contact Schoppman by email at gschoppman@fminet.com.



FEATURE

Marketing Should Reduce Stress, Not Create It: A Better Growth Model for Subcontractors

by Valerie Jimenez, Bold Entity



I've spent the last decade working with subcontractors and GCs, and I keep seeing the same problem: It's not that these companies don't care about marketing. It's that their structure and culture often make it incredibly difficult for internal marketing to succeed.

The result is frustration for everyone and, for the employee caught in the middle, sometimes serious burnout.

So let me walk you through a few real-life scenarios I've seen, along with some ways to make marketing work without sacrificing your team's sanity.

The Clash of Cultures

Construction runs on risk aversion. That's not a criticism – it's how the industry has to work when margins

are thin and mistakes are expensive. But marketing is opportunity-oriented, which requires the exact opposite mindset. Marketers have to be willing to try new things, and sometimes fail before they succeed. So when you try to fold a discipline that depends on experimentation into a risk-averse culture, you get friction almost immediately.

The Accidental Marketing Department

Most smaller contractors don't intentionally build a marketing department. They sort of accumulate one.

The office administrator orders shirts, so she slowly becomes responsible

for branding. The estimator works on proposals, so now he's asked to update the capabilities statement. The business development manager is great with people, so somebody decides she should also handle LinkedIn. The owner takes project photos when he remembers.

From the outside, it can look like marketing is being handled because something is happening. But a collection of marketing tasks is not the same thing as having a marketing function.

I understand why contractors operate this way. This is an industry full of resourceful people who are used to making things work with whatever resources are available. But when marketing only happens in the gaps between everyone's primary

responsibilities, it will almost always become inconsistent or reactive.

Eventually, leadership wonders why marketing isn't working, while the employees responsible for it wonders how they were supposed to make it work in the first place.

Marketing Isn't the Same Thing as Proposals

One trend I continue to see is assigning marketing to someone responsible for estimating or proposals. The logic makes sense because those employees already produce client-facing materials.

But proposal work and marketing are fundamentally different.

Proposal work is reactive. An opportunity comes in, there's a deadline, and your team has to gather the information, price the work, package it correctly, and submit it. Marketing has to look beyond the opportunity in front of you and ask where the company wants to go next, what types of work it wants more of, how it needs to be perceived, and what potential clients need to see before the next RFP ever arrives.

Marketing isn't simply making something look better or posting because the company hasn't posted in a while. Successful marketing is always pointed toward a business objective, and whoever owns it needs the time and perspective to think strategically.

Business Development and Marketing Aren't the Same Job Either

This is probably the combination I see most often: a company has a talented business development professional who knows the market, builds strong relationships, and generates opportunities, so leadership decides that person should also be responsible for marketing.

The two functions are closely related, but that doesn't make them the same job.

Business development is built around relationships, networking, market

intelligence, and opportunity creation. Marketing requires positioning, writing, content development, website strategy, digital platforms, brand consistency, case studies, and other skills that usually happen behind the scenes.

Now put yourself in the employee's shoes. They can spend three hours attending an industry event where they may meet a future client, or spend those three hours figuring out next month's social media content. Which one gets prioritized, especially when the first activity supports the work they were hired to do and may contribute to their commission?

It's not laziness or lack of commitment. It's human nature.

One Person Cannot Be an Entire Department

The problem doesn't disappear when a contractor hires a dedicated marketing employee. Smaller firms often can't justify the salary of a senior marketing executive, so they hire a coordinator or mid-level marketer and expect that person to function as an entire department.

Website strategy, graphic design, email marketing, social media, photography, video, events, proposals, recruiting campaigns, case studies, CRM management, content writing—and, while we're at it, can they please understand commercial construction well enough to explain a highly technical project?

What makes the situation harder is that this person may have no senior marketing leader within the company to provide direction or set priorities. Eventually, output becomes inconsistent or misses the mark; management starts making extensive revisions, and the employee begins to feel like they can never quite get it right.

The Owner's Stress Counts Too

This structure doesn't only affect employees. Eventually, the stress works its way up to the owner.

You assigned marketing to someone because you wanted it off your plate. Then the website copy doesn't sound like your company, the project description misses the technical point, or the social content feels generic, so you start editing everything.

Now, instead of removing marketing from your workload, you've created another stream of work that requires constant review and correction. For an owner already thinking about cash flow, staffing, risk, backlog, clients, and the next project, marketing becomes another unfinished item floating around in the back of their mind.

That's the opposite of what it should accomplish.

What a Good Outsourced Model Actually Looks Like

Full disclosure: I run a marketing firm that works with the construction industry, so obviously my bias leans toward outsourcing—but outsourcing doesn't mean handing your company to an agency and expecting them to magically figure everything out.

The best model I've seen is a partnership where leadership provides business direction and industry knowledge, while the marketing team translates that information into strategy and execution.

Your internal team knows which markets you want to pursue, where your best margins are, what projects you're proud of, what clients are asking for, and where the company wants to go. Your marketing partner should know how to turn that information into messaging, case studies, website content, campaigns, social media, recruiting materials, and sales tools.

In other words, your people should be asked to contribute their expertise—not become marketers themselves.

But You Have to Hire the Right Partner

Of course, outsourcing can create another headache if you choose the wrong provider.

I've watched contractors hire agencies that produce beautiful work but know nothing about construction, which means the owner spends months explaining terminology, correcting technical mistakes, and teaching the agency how the industry works. At that point, you haven't reduced anyone's workload; you've hired another person you have to train.

Look for a partner who understands how contractors win work, how relationships influence decisions, and why technical credibility matters. Scale matters too. A huge national agency may sound impressive, but if your company is small potatoes compared with its other accounts, you may end up working mostly with junior staff. A smaller boutique firm or experienced consultant may give you much greater access to senior expertise.

And look carefully at their work. If every contractor they represent has similar-looking websites, messaging, and social media presence, ask yourself whether they're actually helping those companies differentiate themselves.

Create Some Structure

Whether marketing stays internal, gets outsourced, or becomes a combination of both, one of the biggest things you can do to reduce stress is simply give the function some structure.

Decide what marketing is responsible for, who provides strategic direction, who supplies technical information, who approves the work, and how priorities are communicated. It shouldn't require endless meetings. In many companies, a quarterly conversation about business goals, clear monthly priorities, and one reliable internal point of contact can keep everybody sane.

The Bottom Line

At the end of the day, marketing structure is as much an employee issue as it is a business issue.

The solution isn't complicated. Separate marketing from proposal work. Don't assume your best relationship-builder should also become your digital marketing expert. Give marketing access to leadership so the strategy reflects where the company is headed, and if you bring in outside help, find someone who

understands your industry well enough to take work off your people rather than create more.

Marketing should make business development easier, recruiting stronger, your company more visible, and your team better equipped to pursue the work you want. In other words, it should help carry the load—not add to it. If your marketing program is adding more strain than value, it's time to make a change.

About the Author

Valerie Jimenez is the Founder and CEO of Bold Entity, a strategic marketing firm that helps commercial construction and industrial companies strengthen their positioning, visibility, recruiting, and business development outcomes. Her work has helped contractors reduce recruiting costs by up to 82%, improve market recognition ahead of successful ownership transitions, and reposition second generation companies for high growth. Bold Entity clients maintain an average of 35% annual growth by becoming better positioned to win the right opportunities.

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Michael Wolf, Principal Economist, The Hartford's Global Insights Center.

Mr. Wolf analyzes macroeconomic trends affecting business activity, labor markets, wages, and inflation, with a particular focus on the construction industry. He brings over 20 years of experience in economic forecasting and data-driven insights. Prior to joining The Hartford, Michael worked at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, where he developed long-run labor market forecasts by industry and occupation.

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FEATURE

Before You Enter a New Market, Make Sure Your Workforce Can Follow You

Diversification is usually discussed as a business-development decision

by Troy Clark, MSC Safety Solutions

A contractor sees opportunity in a new market segment. Commercial work may be slowing while another sector is growing. Data centers, industrial projects, or work tied to an existing customer can create new opportunities. Leadership sees a path to new revenue, better margins, or a more balanced backlog.

That opportunity can be legitimate, but diversification also raises a workforce question that is often overlooked.

Can your workforce actually follow you into that new market?

Winning work and being ready to perform it are two very different things.

A company can have the financial capacity to pursue the work, an estimating team capable of pricing it, leadership that understands the opportunity, and much of the equipment needed to get started. Field readiness is a separate issue.

The requirements can change quickly from one market to another. Documentation may become more detailed. Owner procedures can be more restrictive. Scheduling, coordination, and sequencing may require a level of discipline the company has not needed on previous projects. The work itself can introduce unfamiliar equipment or qualification requirements.

What worked well on one type of project may not transfer as easily as people think.

The Estimating Department Can Diversify Faster Than the Workforce

It is relatively easy to identify a new market, price a project, and sign a contract. Developing the workforce to perform that work takes longer.

A supervisor with 15 years of success on commercial projects can still face a learning curve on a large industrial project. Experience on one type of crane does not automatically prepare an operator for another simply because the operator holds a certification. Even familiar work can feel different when the owner expects a different planning process, more documentation, or tighter coordination before the task begins.

Consider a foreman who has spent years running productive commercial crews. That experience still matters when the company moves into data center work, but the environment may require more detailed preplanning, stricter access controls, different turnover expectations, and closer coordination with multiple trades. The foreman has not suddenly become inexperienced. The work has changed around the experience they already have.

The strongest contractors recognize that experience is specific.

Good people can grow into new markets, but that growth has to be intentional.

Every Market Demands Different Competencies

Construction experience is valuable, but it is not interchangeable.

A field employee who understands one system can learn another. Experienced supervisors often adapt well when given enough exposure and support. Years in the industry also bring judgment that cannot be replaced by a short class.

The problem comes when a company assumes past success automatically covers the new work.

A contractor entering a different market

needs to understand what its people will be expected to know, demonstrate, and perform differently. That might include equipment operation, lifting activities, electrical systems, confined spaces, specialized access, permitting, owner procedures, documentation, or quality controls.

The leadership environment can change too.

Some projects allow considerable flexibility in how work is executed. Others operate under processes where planning, coordination, documentation, and verification are expected before work begins. A supervisor who is highly effective in one environment can struggle when those expectations change.

The same is true for crews. A worker may know how to perform the physical task but still be unfamiliar with how that task is planned, documented, inspected, or released in the new market.

That is why workforce development belongs in the diversification conversation before the first project starts.

Start With a Capability Assessment

Leadership should look beyond résumés and training cards when evaluating readiness for a new market.

The useful question is not simply whether employees have experience. It is whether they have the right experience for the work the company is pursuing.

That requires looking at the people who will actually execute the work and the systems supporting them. Relevant field experience matters, but so does demonstrated skill. Supervisors need enough familiarity with the market to

understand what will be expected of their crews. Leadership should also identify qualification requirements the company has not dealt with before and determine whether current planning, safety, quality, and documentation systems will hold up in the new environment.

There is another business issue here that deserves attention: whether the company can support the new work without weakening the projects it already performs well.

A contractor may have five supervisors capable of making the move, but if all five are pulled from strong existing projects, the diversification effort can create problems somewhere else. The same applies to operators, project managers, and highly skilled craft employees.

A capability assessment can expose those gaps while there is still time to decide how to address them.

Sometimes the workforce is closer to being ready than expected. In other

cases, the assessment shows that the company needs more preparation before committing to the work.

Either answer is useful when it comes early.

Diversification Does Not Require Starting Over

Most companies do not need to replace their workforce simply because they enter a new market.



They need to understand where development is required.

An experienced foreman moving into a different project-delivery environment may benefit from time alongside someone who already understands that type of work. An operator assigned to unfamiliar equipment may need additional seat time followed by field evaluation. A crew taking on a new process may need practical training before being expected to perform independently.

Those are different development needs, and they should be treated that way. Training can introduce knowledge and expectations. Competency shows up when the employee can perform the work correctly under actual field conditions.

That distinction matters when diversification introduces unfamiliar equipment, different work methods, or higher-risk activities.

A certificate can tell a company that someone completed a course. It cannot always tell the company how that person will perform when the lift is complex, the schedule is tight, the work area is congested, and several trades are depending on the task being done correctly.

That is where practical evaluation has value.

Workforce development should close the gap between what an employee has been taught and what the employee can actually demonstrate on the job.

Accidental Diversification Can Be the Most Dangerous Kind

Sometimes diversification happens without a formal strategy.

A long-term customer asks a contractor to take on a different type of project. The job goes reasonably well, and another opportunity follows. Over time, a meaningful portion of the company's backlog shifts into a market it

never deliberately prepared to enter.

The estimating department diversified before the workforce did.

The problems are not always obvious at first. Supervisors may be delivering the work while still learning the environment. Employees encounter procedures they have not worked under before. Existing systems get modified as projects develop instead of being designed around the new market in advance.

Capability gaps can also lead to reactive hiring or last-minute training. That usually costs more and gives leadership fewer options.

The company may still complete the work, but the effort often requires more management attention than expected. Productivity can suffer. Quality issues become harder to control. Supervisors spend time solving problems that better preparation could have prevented.

By the time leadership recognizes what happened, the company may already be committed to several projects in the new market.

Workforce Development Belongs in Strategic Planning

If leadership is considering entering a new market next year, workforce planning should begin before the first proposal is submitted.

The company needs a clear picture of the skills the market will require and which existing employees can realistically grow into those roles. Supervisors who may lead the work should be evaluated early enough to give them meaningful exposure before they are carrying the full responsibility of the project.

Some gaps may require outside hiring. Others can be addressed internally through mentoring, field evaluation, equipment time, or targeted development.

The timing matters.

Trying to develop people after the

project has started means the customer, schedule, and production demands are already applying pressure. Development becomes one more problem the project team has to manage.

Done earlier, it becomes part of the business plan.

That preparation affects far more than safety. A capable workforce influences quality, productivity, planning, and the likelihood that the company can perform the work profitably.

Winning the First Project Is Only the Beginning

Diversification can reduce dependence on one type of work and create new opportunities for growth. It can also strengthen customer relationships when a contractor is able to follow a client into new markets.

But the organization still has to deliver what it sells.

That requires more than a good estimate and a signed contract. It requires people who understand the work, supervisors who can lead it, and systems that support the way the new market operates.

Before entering a new market, contractors should give workforce capability the same level of attention they give market opportunity. Long-term success depends on whether the people performing the work are prepared for what comes next.

About the Author

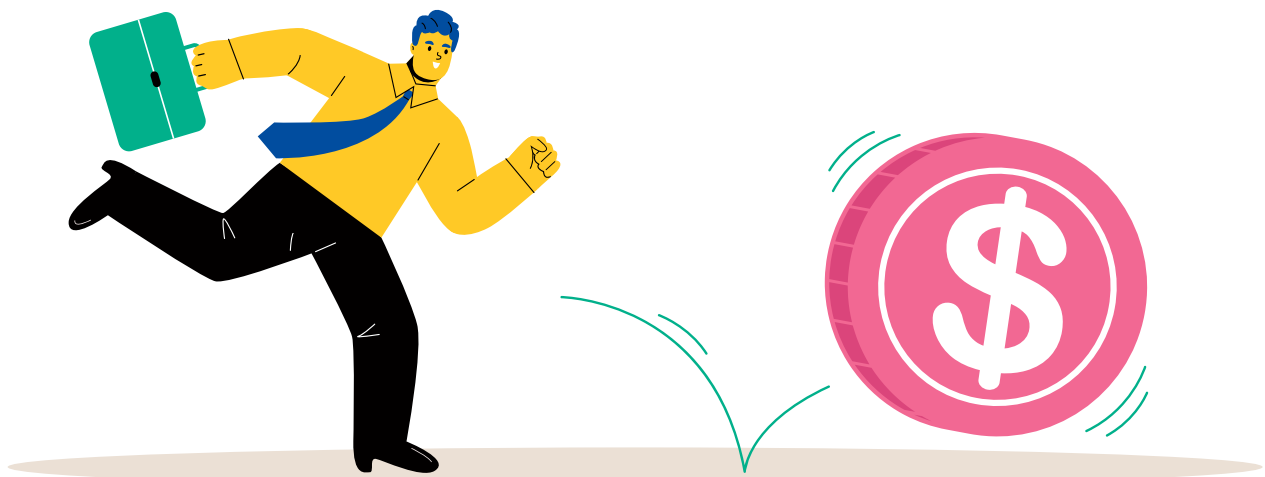
Troy Clark leads [MSC Safety Solutions](#) and its family of companies, including [Colorado Crane Operator School](#), [Crane Qualified](#), [MSC Workforce Development](#), and [Prolevari](#). He writes and speaks on leadership and workforce development, sharing a philosophy shaped by decades in construction safety: [Safety is a Byproduct of Workforce Development](#). Troy's work centers on building safer job sites by building stronger people.



FEATURE

Stop Chasing Every Project Signal— A Subcontractor's Triage System for Finding the Right Work

by Matthew Howell, Howell Commerce Co.



Opportunity selection is a business strategy decision

Subcontractors do not have unlimited estimating capacity. Every project that reaches the estimating desk consumes time, attention and judgment, whether the company ultimately bids it or not. That makes opportunity selection more than a sales activity. It is a business strategy decision.

The problem is that public and commercial project information does not arrive in one clean stream. A potential job may first appear in a capital plan, board packet, permit record, procurement notice, agency website, design announcement or formal bid invitation. Some signals are worth watching. Some deserve action. Others are noise.

When every signal gets treated like a live opportunity, the result is predictable: estimators chase work that is too early, outside the company's geography, poorly matched to its trade or already stale. The better approach is to triage opportunities before they consume estimating time.

Start by separating project signals by stage

Not every project mention means the same thing. A simple stage framework can help teams decide what to do next.

Planning-stage signals include capital improvement plans, board discussions, funding announcements and early design activity. These can be valuable because they show where work may emerge, but they usually belong on a watchlist rather than in the estimating queue.

Approved or funded projects have more momentum. At this stage, a subcontractor can watch for delivery method, designer, procurement timing, likely trade packages and owner requirements.

Bid-ready opportunities are different. Once formal documents, deadlines and procurement instructions are available, the decision becomes immediate: pursue, monitor or pass. Awarded or active projects may still matter for subcontracting, supplier, change-order or relationship opportunities, but they should not be confused with open-bid work.

That distinction alone can reduce wasted effort. A planning signal is not a bid invitation, and a bid invitation is not automatically a good fit.

A useful triage process can be built around five questions.

1. Does the geography fit?

A project outside the company's service area may be attractive on paper but expensive to staff, supervise or mobilize. Decide in advance where the company can compete effectively.

2. Does the scope fit the trade and crew?

The project should match what the company actually wants to perform, not just what it technically can perform. Capacity, equipment, labor availability and specialty experience all matter.

3. Is the timing realistic?

A strong opportunity can still be a bad pursuit if the team cannot price it well before the deadline. Late discovery often leads to rushed assumptions, missed scope and weak coverage.

4. Is the source trustworthy and current?

Save the official source link. Verify deadlines, addenda and requirements before the team invests heavily in a pursuit. Lead services and internal notes are useful for discovery, but the issuing owner or agency remains the source of record.

5. Does the project advance the business?

The best pursuits are not always the biggest projects. A smaller job can be strategically valuable if it opens a new owner relationship, strengthens a target market, fills a schedule gap or builds experience in a desired segment.

Diversify without creating chaos

Diversification can protect a subcontractor from becoming too dependent on one customer, one project type or one market. But diversification only helps when it is deliberate.

A practical way to diversify is to define a small number of adjacent market segments instead of chasing everything. An electrical contractor that primarily serves commercial work might intentionally add municipal facilities and public safety projects. A concrete

subcontractor may expand from private sitework into parks, schools or public infrastructure. A roofing company may target institutional and government facilities in addition to private commercial work.

The key is adjacency. New markets should still fit the company's capabilities, crews, bonding, insurance, equipment and risk tolerance. If the opportunity requires an entirely different operating model, it may be expansion for expansion's sake.

A simple pursuit board can help. Separate opportunities into core market, adjacent market and watchlist. That gives leadership a visible picture of where the pipeline is concentrated and where diversification is actually occurring.

Build a weekly opportunity triage routine

The process does not need to be complicated. A 20- to 30-minute weekly review can be enough for many small and midsize subcontractors.

Start with every new project signal gathered during the week. For each one, record the project name, location, stage, trade relevance, deadline, official source and next action. Then make one of four decisions: pursue, monitor, refer or pass.

Pursue means the project is active and deserves estimating or business development attention. Monitor means the project is real but not ready for action. Refer means it may fit a partner, customer or peer better than it fits your company. Pass means the opportunity does not justify more time.

Most importantly, record the reason for the pass. After a few months, those reasons become useful business intelligence. If the team repeatedly passes because of geography, it may be researching the wrong markets. If it passes because of labor capacity, the issue may be operational rather than sales-related. If it passes because opportunities are discovered too late, the discovery process itself needs attention.

Track what changes, not just what exists

A project pipeline becomes more useful when teams pay attention to change. A planning project may become funded. A

design may move into procurement. A deadline may shift. An addendum may alter scope. A project that was a poor fit six weeks ago may become relevant after the package structure changes.

That is why opportunity management should not be a one-time search exercise. It is a monitoring process. The value comes from knowing what changed and what action that change requires.

For subcontractors, this matters because timing is often the difference between a thoughtful pursuit and a rushed one. Earlier awareness does not guarantee a win, but it gives the team more time to qualify the opportunity, line up vendors, review risk, understand the owner and decide whether the project deserves a bid.

The goal is not more leads. It is better pursuits.

A healthy opportunity pipeline is not measured by the number of project links in a spreadsheet. It is measured by how consistently the company identifies work that fits its strategy and moves the right opportunities forward.

Subcontractors can improve that process by separating early signals from bid-ready work, filtering opportunities before estimators invest time, diversifying into adjacent markets deliberately and reviewing the pipeline on a regular schedule.

The discipline is simple: find the signal, verify the source, qualify the fit, track the change and pursue only when the opportunity earns the team's time.

That turns scattered project information into a business strategy instead of another inbox to chase.

About the Author

Matthew Howell is the founder of Howell Commerce Co. in West Plains, Missouri, and the creator of Howell Opportunity Radar, a Missouri-focused construction-opportunity intelligence platform for contractors, estimators and preconstruction teams. His work focuses on organizing scattered public-project signals into practical pursuit workflows for small and midsize construction firms.

Howell Opportunity Radar: <https://radar.howellcommerceco.com>



FEATURE

Who Owns the Estimate Handoff?

by Mike Rocha, Digital Reach



Five operating rules specialty contractors can use to move online inquiries to the right estimator without losing scope, timing or accountability.

A lead can be “in the system” and still be lost. Specialty contractors can spend heavily to generate opportunities and still rely on an informal relay once the inquiry arrives. A website form lands in a shared inbox. The office forwards it to an estimator. The estimator is on a site visit.

Someone else assumes a response went out. Two days later, the prospect has already scheduled a walkthrough with another contractor.

Nothing technically failed. The form worked, the email arrived and the estimator received it. What failed was ownership.

Rule 1: Name one owner for every new inquiry

Every qualified inquiry should have one person responsible for the next action. That does not mean one person must manage the entire opportunity. It means the handoff is not complete until another person explicitly accepts it.

A shared inbox can receive the lead, but a shared inbox cannot be accountable for it.

Rule 2: Capture five minimum scope fields

Before routing, capture the information the estimating team actually needs: project location, job type, rough scope, desired timing and decision-maker or primary contact. Different trades can add one or two essential fields, but the intake should remain short. The purpose is to reduce missing context, not create a prequalification obstacle course.

Rule 3: Match the opportunity to fit and geography

Not every estimator handles every job type, market segment or territory. Routing rules should reflect that.

A contractor serving multiple verticals may separate tenant improvement, public work, industrial, residential or maintenance inquiries. Geographic fit matters too, especially when digital marketing generates demand beyond the normal operating radius. Clear routing protects estimating time and gives management better data about where the market is actually responding.

Rule 4: Set a response and reassignment rule

A handoff needs a clock. Decide how quickly the first meaningful response should occur during business hours and what happens when the assigned estimator is unavailable. A simple reassignment rule prevents good opportunities from sitting untouched while someone is traveling, in a meeting or buried in bid work.

Automated acknowledgments can help set expectations, but they should not be mistaken for a real Response.

Rule 5: Review missed handoffs with a weekly scorecard

Keep the scorecard small. Track new qualified inquiries, time to first human response, appointments or discovery calls scheduled, estimates issued, and opportunities that went quiet without a documented next step. Then review a handful of misses. Numbers tell management where to look; the actual records explain why the breakdown happened.

Why this matters for search and business development

Search visibility can create more inquiries, but stronger rankings do not fix a weak handoff. In fact, more traffic can magnify the problem by increasing the number of opportunities moving through an unclear process.

The estimating workflow and the marketing system should therefore share a feedback loop. If certain services repeatedly produce poor-fit leads, website messaging may need to change. If qualified prospects ask the same questions before agreeing to a site visit, those answers may belong on a service page or FAQ.

Use real estimating questions as content intelligence

Estimators hear the market in a way analytics dashboards do not. They know which scope details are usually missing, which misconceptions slow down decisions and which project types are frequently confused. Feeding those insights back into the website can improve both search relevance and lead quality. The goal is not to publish for the sake of publishing. It is to make the site better at preparing the right prospect for the next conversation.

Add one simple definition of “ready for estimating”

Teams often disagree about when an inquiry is ready to reach an estimator. Write the definition down. For one contractor, ready may mean a serviceable location, a known project type, a rough scope, a realistic timing window and a reachable decision-maker. For another, drawings or a site walk may be required before meaningful estimating can begin. The definition matters less than the consistency. When the office, business-development team and estimators use the same threshold, fewer opportunities bounce back and forth. It also becomes easier to measure lead quality because management can distinguish raw inquiries from opportunities that actually reached the estimating stage.

Let the scorecard trigger a conversation, not another report

A weekly scorecard should be short enough to discuss. If response time slips, ask whether staffing, routing or project mix changed. If many qualified inquiries never become site visits, listen to a few calls and review the follow-up notes. If estimates are going out but decisions are rarely recorded, the problem may be ownership after the bid rather than lead generation. The value of the scorecard is the operating conversation it creates. A number without a process decision is just another report.

Ownership is a management choice

The estimate handoff is not a marketing problem, a sales problem or an estimating problem by itself. It crosses all three. That is why it can remain broken for years: everyone touches it, but no one owns the full transition.

A contractor that names the owner, captures the minimum scope, routes by fit, sets a response rule, and reviews the misses each week, can improve the process without adding another layer of complexity. The result is a better customer experience and a clearer picture of which marketing efforts are producing opportunities the company can actually win.

About the Author

[Digital Reach](#) is a digital marketing company that helps home-service and contractor businesses improve online visibility, lead generation, customer follow-up, and overall marketing performance. The company focuses on practical systems that help contractors turn marketing activity into measurable business growth. Mike Rocha's work centers on practical ways contractors can turn marketing activity into more consistent, measurable business growth.

SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

I do love a good Venn diagram. This one is outstanding.





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