

5 Traits of Top Contractors

By: Brad Humphrey

What traits do successful contractors have that other contractors either cannot seem to achieve or have little clue as to where to begin? Let's take a look at five traits that often distinguish successful contractors.

We are obsessed with the "Top" winners in business and sports. I have to admit, I closely watch College Football's Top 10 every week during the season, monitoring who is winning, losing, and what will the final season rankings shape up to be. Even in this issue you will find the Top 75 Contractors presented for different segments of our industry.

But why are we interested in the "Top 10, 50, 75, 100, or 500"?

Because the "Top" rankings for any industry or sport represents those organizations that have built something that works! These organizations are not merely *trying* to compete, they are competing with greater success, developing people and processes to maintain a consistency that others can only dream of obtaining.

So, for our industry, what traits do "Top" contractors possess? What do they do that other contractors either cannot seem to achieve or have little clue as to where to begin? Let's take a look at five traits that appear to be present in successful contractors.



1. The Owner Doesn't Play It Safe!

This might surprise you, but I have not found one successful contractor who played things safe and overly conservative. These owners are not foolish, but they often attempt new services or challenge tough markets when some of their leaders are suggesting the opposite. Consistency at being a "Top Contractor" is reinventing the company to better adapt to what the market needs ... This "Top Contractor" owner is simply motivated by situations that are full of obstacles and "No" signs spread across the path.

2. A Clear Vision Exist AND is Known by Leaders

The most successful contractors I've been exposed to are normally very clear about their path, the direction, and what they are trying to achieve. Sure, they make up a little along the way – these owners are not focused on the minute details – but they see where they want to go and work hard to get their leadership on board and moving in the same direction.

3. Contractors Hire Smart People and Leverage Their Strengths

I've watched very successful owners display the greatest patience with one of their leaders who was, in my opinion, just a "nut." The individual was either brilliant but couldn't communicate their intentions or expectations or the individual was a royal "pain the @\$\$." In some cases, I talked with the contractor about getting rid of the "nut" leader or worker only to be informed by the owner that the individual I was recommending to be fired was perhaps the smartest worker on the team. The "Top Contractor" knows more about reading the real profile of a contributor to the team than most psychologist and, at times, this humble consultant!

4. The "Top Contractor" Understands How to Sell Their Company

Simply put, the successful and "Top Contractor" knows best about what their company can really do and knows how to sell what they do to obtain more work. I've witnessed such owners pick up the phone to call a customer – who just yesterday told one of their estimators that they were going with another contractor's bid – and influence the customer to rethink their decision and to allow the "Top Contractor" to adjust their bid to get the work.

Unbelievable...but I've seen it done on multiple occasions.

5. The "Top Contractor" is Not Timid or Intimidated

There's just not very much that this "Top Contractor" is timid about or too intimidated to do. It is not arrogance but instead such tremendous confidence in their company's abilities and capabilities that these owners almost feel untouchable. I have heard comments like the following:

"Brad, with the team I have put together, I think we can do anything!"

A spirit of personal confidence and confidence in their staff is very common among the "Top Contractor." And why shouldn't the Contractor feel such confidence? Because they probably assembled their "A-Team."

One final observation that I've made over the past 25 years of consulting is that the more successful a contractor becomes the greater their effort to build strong work processes and communication links. Why? Because as you grow your business you will begin to hire more people who may need more methodical processes and procedures to accomplish their work.

Hopefully you will see in your company three or four of these "Top Contractor" traits. Some readers might even relate to all five traits. However, if you find that you really cannot relate to more than one or two traits then you need to do some serious analysis and determine what you need to embrace. And if you, the owner cannot relate to most of the five traits presented, then you may want to find those individuals who do possess the traits and empower them to execute their trait.

Shoot to be a "Top Contractor" wherever you are and in whatever service specialty you practice. Being "Top" status gives you a great public relations advantage as well as boosting your workers' confidence and motivation!

Be in that class of "Top Contractors!"

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