



Robinson's
"On Line Newsletter"
For Our Customers & Friends

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Construction Management Resolutions for 2017

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The gyms are back to normal, with many slacking off their New Year's resolutions for more exercise, but there is still plenty of time to help you manage your construction business. Read over these tips to get your business pumped up for 2017.

FIGHT FOR THE CLIENT

When approaching a new project, ask yourself, "what benefit is the client trying to achieve with this project?" It's about more than being on-budget. Are they looking for greater utility in a living or work space? Are they trying to save costs on heating/cooling or make a space beautiful? This should help not only finish on time and on budget, but also provide meaningful insight on the project that will impress the client. Listen to their important needs and must-haves.

I will be a more thoughtful listener to my clients in 2017.

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Do you know the story behind Arnold Schwarzenegger? He's a pretty accomplished guy, but he didn't become Mr. Universe, a real estate millionaire, lead role actor and California state governor all at the same time. All of those things happened individually as he progressed in ambition and shifted his focus. And there's the key word - focus. Whatever your ambitions in life are, you're not likely to accomplish all of them at the same time.

I will prioritize, timeline, and accomplish my goals this year.

READ THE PROJECT CONTRACT

It's an unfortunate truth that legal documents make a terrible read yet have a deep effect on our professions. Many choose to put off learning how to read and understand project contracts, but in doing so they limit their professional growth. Take it upon yourself to study legalese as it relates to your industry and you'll have gained a profitable skill that makes your expertise competitive in the job market.

I will make an effort to make sure the field team knows more about the contract terms this year. We have rights under our contract, we should get to know them better.

EXPAND YOUR SKILL SET

You don't have to go to school in order to expand your knowledge and skills in the industry. The internet provides access to millions of different learning resources, many of which are free or extremely affordable. YouTube videos and blogs are obvious resources, but there are also courses from accredited universities on construction management, various software programs, accounting, finance,

business administration and entrepreneurship available to anyone free of charge. They can be found through online searches using the keyword "MOOC" (massive online open course).

I will set out to read/watch/listen to at least one new thing a month in 2017.

KEEP UP WITH NEW MATERIALS

Industry disruption for construction tends to begin with new materials changing what's possible and expected in society. Disruption creates competitive opportunities in business and it's first-come, first-serve. The past few years have seen materials like self-healing concrete, solar generative glass and siding, sweaty roofing and even flexible concrete. Not all are economically feasible yet, but that shouldn't prevent you from actively watching materials relevant to your trade.

I will look for and learn about one new product per quarter in 2017.

EMPOWER YOUR ORGANIZATION

Project management is much more than simply building and budgeting. You have a team to manage. Your organizational structure is a key factor for success. Building an organization is itself a construction project, and it requires the right tools and materials. Hire the right people for the right job. Train staff members as necessary. Keep an organizational chart so ownership is clear to everyone and can be realigned as the project demands evolve. Provide tools of communication and recordkeeping, and then regularly ensure that the channels are being used. If you assemble your team properly with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and give them authority, you won't need to constantly double-check everything.

I will review, analyze, and modify existing tools and implement one new management tool in 2017.

WIN MORE BIDS

If there was a magic bullet for getting more work, it would probably end up being a shotgun shell. Winning more bids isn't about precision, it's about increasing bid output. That's no surprise, but what are you going to do about it this year? Have you identified bottlenecks in your estimating and bidding process that could be streamlined or improved by a digital solution? This is important, since growth in your business begins with the estimator.

I will take a few minutes this month and review my bid/win ratio from the last three years and create the bid/win goals for each month of 2017.

TRACK COSTS WEEKLY

If you're in a position of responsibility when it comes to the budget, then get in the habit of looking at cost vs. expenses on a weekly basis. This should include all costs that you're liable for, even work you are contracting out, because anything that hits your lap could compromise the project profitability. The biggest headache to face here is tracking, sorting and saving both paper and digital financial records. Choose the format that works best for you. We recommend going digital. It's easier to audit electronic records, and there is software on the market that converts paper records into a digital format.

I will review my budgets and costs worksheets more regularly this year.

SPEND LESS TIME WORKING

Hard work is a cornerstone principle of the construction industry. Being known as a hard worker is vital to your reputation and there's a lot of pressure to continually prove your value on the team and to customers. But working hard doesn't equate to continuously working long hours. There may be a time and place for working an evening and a few Saturday mornings, but the goal should be working as efficiently as possible during business hours and then leaving the office or jobsite to enjoy life.

In 2017, I will actively look for better ways of managing what I can control.

KEEP SAFE ON THE JOB

Safety is definitely not something we should cut corners on, but are you fully familiar with OSHA and other safety protocols your industry requires? If you are onsite you should be aware of how things are done, such as handling roofing tar, capping rebar, securing scaffolding and so forth. It's best not to assume someone else is watching out for you. Accidents do happen, and even a large return from a lawsuit won't make up for lifelong injuries.

I will review our safety plan at least once per month and deliver tailgate safety meetings once a week.



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