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Improving the Shortage of Skilled Workers in the Construction Industry

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Introduction

The number of skilled construction workers are declining, making it a competition among construction companies to find these workers. The recession, immigration challenges, lack of training programs, and an unfit promotion system are among the main cited causes for the decline in skilled workers (Karimi 2018).

The shortage of skilled workers is due to the massive loss of construction jobs during the 2008 recession. These qualified workers have left the industry for greener pastures, leaving a void in the skilled labor positions. Another problem getting skilled workers is the immigration challenges. Immigrants make up a quarter of the overall construction workforce (Carlos 2016), and with stricter bans it has become increasingly hard for workers to become lawfully employed in America. Additionally, when companies promote a worker to management positions on the basis of prior performance, they lose a job expert and obtain a manager who often times has no talent for people management.

Research Objective and Methodology

The goal of this project was to identify, through literature review, potential solutions by which the construction industry can address the shortage of skilled workers. The literature reviews show the need for skilled workers has increased a considerable amount since the recession, and construction companies are improving the shortage in various ways, such as higher wages, training programs, and prefabrication.

Combating the Issue

There are several potential solutions suggested in the literature. The chart below shows the advantages and disadvantages for each potential solution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Solution</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Wages</td>
<td>Attracts more workers and incentivizes workers to reenter industry</td>
<td>Labor wages rise which causes the overall project cost to rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Reform</td>
<td>Workers feel more secure</td>
<td>Takes time to pass new legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Better schedule of workers increases efficiency</td>
<td>Employees have to learn new technology and some scheduling programs are expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Programs</td>
<td>Develops skilled positions</td>
<td>Takes time to develop workers and costs money to train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefabrication</td>
<td>Minimizes onsite assembly and reduces need for qualified trade workers, removes large portion of labor from jobsite which lowers project costs, and eliminates rework</td>
<td>Transportation costs, precision measurement, and limited number of designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign of Promotion System (Schumann 2018)</td>
<td>Allows skilled workers to advance inside their roles and puts management in the hands of people who do it well</td>
<td>Skilled employees may feel there is no more advancement which could cause turnover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each solution has advantages and disadvantages so there is no clear solution to solving skilled worker shortage. Construction companies will use a variety of all these solutions to combat the problem. Further research would study the feasibility of the potential solutions and compare with a benefit and cost analysis in order to develop recommendations for which solution holds the most promise.

Conclusion

Improving the shortage of skilled workers in the construction industry will take time, but addressing the issue now will benefit the future of the construction industry. The following are potential solutions to the skilled labor shortage problem that the construction industry may implement:

• Higher wages
• Incorporation of Technology
• Training Programs
• Prefabrication
• Redesign of Promotions

By effectively addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the construction industry, growth and improvement will be trends across the industry.

References