

SPECIAL REPORT

How to Compete for Construction Talent

To find the skilled workers you need in today's market, you're not just filling a job opening, you're selling your company.

by *Joe Bousquin*

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*This is the second of a two-part special report. **Part one** examines the unconventional approaches the industry is using to attract and retain talent.*

The best place to start in attracting new talent to the construction industry today is by looking within and accepting the realities of the competitive job market today.



VDC Coordinator Job Opportunity

When you join Windover, you're part of a team that loves to build, work together, and have fun! We're seeking a motivated and talented recent graduate for our **Virtual Design & Construction (VDC) Coordinator** role. The VDC Coordinator will support our Director of Virtual Design & Construction, working closely alongside project teams and design professionals to develop dynamic 3D models and renderings.

We are looking for an enthusiastic, personality motivated, and hardworking individual who is eager to build upon their Revit and AutoCAD knowledge by learning VDC technologies and platforms from a leading industry expert.

In this role, you will:

- Develop visual sequencing/tracking
- Perform 3D trade coordination and clash detection between trades
- Develop photorealistic renderings and walk-throughs directly from building models
- Work closely with project teams to add visual value to proposals and presentations
- Acquire and manipulate available design models and/or assets for modeling needs
- BIM workflow management
- Assist project teams in developing/understanding
- Collaborate with design professionals during the process of model creation
- Coordinate with trade partners to implement
- Develop quantity takeoffs and walk-throughs directly from the building model
- Update models to reflect as-built conditions

AREAS OF TRAINING	TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIRED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3D Modeling • Revit • AutoCAD • Project Management • Visual Quality Control • Equipment Maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proficiency with Revit and AutoCAD is necessary • Sound knowledge of building construction • Excellent attention to detail, problem-solving and multi-tasking abilities • The ability to take direction and work with a team • Ability to take direction, all requests, and have excellent problem-solving abilities • Strong time management skills to meet deadlines are a must • Ability to apply CAD and BIM to Revit • Ability to produce high quality, professional work products • The ability to interact in a safe, respectful professional business environment

A job ad from Windover Construction focuses on what's-in-it-for-me messaging: "When you join Windover, you're part of a team that loves to build, work together, and have fun!" [Windover Construction](#)

"The days of putting your feet up on the desk as a hiring manager and saying, 'Young man, what can you do for us?' are over," says Brian Binke, president and CEO of Berkley, Mich.-based construction recruiting firm The Birmingham Group. "You've got to be able to explain and promote why your company, and your field, is the best career choice for them." In other words, you've got to sell yourself to them. Your current employees also can be a part of that sales effort. Binke says using employee referral bonuses—which may go as high \$5,000 depending on the company and position—are very effective in today's market.

What's in it for me?

One of the ways to sell yourself is through what's-in-it-for-me messaging in job postings, says Hannah Ginley, chief people officer at Beverly, Mass.-based design-build and construction management firm Windover Construction, which won recognition from the Boston Business Journal as one of the area's Best Places to Work. "You've got to take a sales approach to be effective," Ginley says. "We are constantly talking up our firm, either in person or on social media, to get the word out."

One program Windover emphasizes in that messaging? Its Construction Management Apprenticeship Program (CMAP), which gives participants a two-year rotation through

graduate from CMAP, they get to decide which area of the company they'd like to focus their career on: project management, estimating, or field supervision," Ginley says.

At Piqua, Ohio-based metal roof manufacturer Isaiah Industries, the what's-in-it-for-me approach is even more visceral. To tout its metal roof installer training and job placement program, the firm hands out postcards featuring a young laborer in a hard hat driving a brand new convertible Corvette.

"The message has got to be you can make a good living doing this," says Todd Miller, the company's president. "There's a few large roofing contractors who have had to suck up every worker they can get to keep their businesses going, and those companies are paying \$30 to \$60 an hour for just barely over entry-level workers."

Construction Image Makeover

A punchlist for attracting young workers into the trades.

- 1** Wow them with technology
- 2** What's-in-it-for-me messaging
- 3** Help wanted ads that appeal to significant others
- 4** Be the best place to work
- 5** Provide training and mentoring
- 6** Treat them with dignity and respect
- 7** If they won't come to you, go to them
- 8** Give them opportunities to be proud of their work
- 9** Money doesn't solve everything, but it helps - use referral bonuses to get your existing employees to recruit for you

Old school's out, new school's in.

At American Metal Roofs (AMR) in Charlotte, Mich., vice president Dan Lane says the key to attracting young people to work in a tough job today starts with the surprisingly basic attitude of offering them dignity and respect and foregoing the my-way-or-the-highway approach of the past, which is particularly off-putting to today's younger generation.

SPECIAL REPORT

SPECIAL REPORT: SOLUTIONS FOR THE LABOR CRUNCH

"This isn't an employee issue, it's an owner issue," says Lane, who offers training to incoming employees and helps other businesses in the trades learn how to attract and train young workers today. "We need to shift our mindset to understand that millennials are an asset. They're seeking an identity. They value formalized, classroom training. They don't want to be yelled at. They want to be treated with respect."

AMR gives them that respect and identity with a structured training program for new hires, as well as a personal set of company-provided tools, Red Wing work boots, customized hoodies, and Carhartt work clothes. "My goal is to transform a sandwich artist into a reasonably skilled metal roofer in six months. If that person shows up every day and really wants to be there, I can do it in three."

He notes that tailoring job ads to highlight attractive aspects of a job to a candidate's spouse, such as weekends and evenings off, is particularly effective at attracting people who previously worked in a retail environment.

If they won't come to you, go to them.

Other creative approaches to solving the labor issue involve meeting workers where they're at —literally. For Tony Frisella, Jr., director of landscape operations at Frisella Nursery, his family's 66-year-old, third-generation landscape architecture firm in Defiance, Mo., that meant going to Puerto Rico. When his company couldn't get enough laborers through the seasonal, H2B visa program, he decided to go on a recruiting trip to the U.S. territory and bring employees who already have U.S. citizenship back to work for him.

"I went down there with my team and basically drove the entire island to go into the towns to talk to people about what we do," Frisella says. "It helped us learn how to effectively recruit in that environment while giving the people there an accurate understanding about the kind of employment we're offering."

For the initial group of workers he hired, Frisella paid for airfare to and from the island and got them set up with temporary housing for the first month. The trip was so effective, he had a second one planned at press time, with 11 interviews set up already. “We’re a family business, so we want to make them feel like family and emphasize the importance of family with them,” Frisella says. “To take that even further, we’re now looking for couples and families who can come up together.”

It’s just one more innovative way construction pros are taking on the labor crunch from within today.

Joe Bousquin has been covering construction since 2004. A former reporter for the Wall Street Journal and TheStreet.com, Bousquin focuses on the technology and trends shaping the future of construction, development, and real estate. An honors graduate of Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism, he resides in a highly efficient, new construction home designed for multigenerational living with his wife, mother-in-law, and dog in Chico, California.

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