

Good morning, everybody! Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute and the CEO Roundtable Program for Contractors. Thanks for tuning in today.

Today, I wanted to talk about Customer QA, or quality assurance. Interestingly enough, it's probably one of those areas that contractors, in general, sort of fail with. I think if I looked across our group of contractors that... We probably have somewhat less than 50% that actually do any kind of formal rating in terms of performance from their contractors, in terms of how they're doing.

And that's really not very good because there's great information there. I mean, how do you really know what your level of satisfaction is from your clients and how you can improve it and how you can always get better at that? So, it is important to ask. And then the other aspect of it that I find where contractors are lacking is those who do it tend to do it usually in sending a form at the end of the job, as opposed to during the job. But we do have a few that do it once or twice during the course of a project.

But it's not personal. And it also doesn't really engage the client in a way that gives you sometimes the best information or really good information. So, what I'm suggesting to you is to make it personal. You make it personal by one of the top people in the company or a key leader, perhaps the CEO themselves, actually making the QA calls. And in so doing, several things happen. Number one, in and of itself, it's a relationship builder. By getting that call from one of your top executives, that shows you care, gives you an opportunity to engage that leader, possibly even talk about future work or things like that.

But more importantly, coming back to the QA itself, it gives you an opportunity to truly see how you're doing. And some folks who have tried this haven't had great results because you ask the client how they're doing, even if it's in person on a job site, and often times they don't want to get into it, or they don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, or they don't want to throw anybody under the bus. So, they say, "Oh yeah, your guys are doing great." "Oh, wonderful. Okay."

And now I head on, and based on that information, what do I do? Well, there isn't much to do there other than a few pats on the back, maybe. So, to make it more effective, I still suggest sort of a similarity to the form you might send, which is get your client to rate your performance. You know, "Hi, Jim, on a one to five scale, how is my team doing?" Now, if he tells me a five, "Oh, that's great. What do you think are some of the highlights, and are there any lowlights? Anything we need to work on at all to keep it at a five?"

And then you've got a chance for a little gap analysis or find out what's going on. Of course, it's more effective if he says it's a four or a three, and then you can ask, "Oh, what could we do differently to make it a five?" Or, "What makes you say a four versus a five?" And he may just say, "Well, I'm kind of a tough grader. I don't give anybody a five." But then you can always dig a little deeper. "Tell me more about that. What are the issues? What are the specific things we could do to boost our performance from a three to four, or three to a four to a five?"

And once you do that, now you've engaged the client on what's really wrong, and you have something actionable that you can work on, fix, take to your team, or take back to the company and strategize on how we can do better, and how we can have better client relationships. And again, one of the core pieces of this is the relationship piece itself. So, by engaging in that conversation, you do show the client that you care. You care about how the team's performing, what you can do better as a company, how they can get a better result. And in so doing, of course, you hopefully deepen those relationships and enhance your chance for getting more work from that client or better work from that client, or even advantaged work from that client.

So, I just want everybody to think about that for a moment, and then just ask yourself one question: what do you actually have on your agenda that could be more important than talking to your clients and finding out more about the performance that you're giving, and the experience that your clients are getting? So, hopefully there aren't too many

things on your list that you can find that are more important. My guess is they're really not, and you probably have an opportunity with your company to both enhance customer experience, but also find out where issues are and get them solved before they become bigger problems. Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning in.