

Good morning everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute and the CEO Roundtable Program for Contractors.

Today, I want to talk about an experience I had this week. One of my members who I was working with on strategic planning, heard something from a fellow contractor that disturbed them. So, a little context here. So recently we had a big ice storm across the southern United States that hit Texas pretty hard, and it actually shut down job sites, almost all jobs sites in certain areas for up to a week, in some cases, a little shorter, a little longer. So my client recalled the conversation that he had with a fellow client that week telling them that, of course they sent everybody home, but he decided to pay all of his field workers for one full day of work that they weren't able to work. And then in hearing that, of course my client thought, well, that sounds like a really good idea. Why didn't I think of that and why didn't I do that?

Well, what I want to talk about today is there are probably moments in your career and moments, oftentimes throughout your career that are going to define your culture, define you to a certain extent, define what kind of person you are, what kind of company you are, what you stand for. And those things can have really long-term impact. And I'm going to call those moments that define your culture. And now, not to criticize this client or anything like that, or praise the one client. But the fact of the matter is we all have these moments that come up and I want to ask a few questions.

First of all, if you look back, what are those moments that you can define in your past? And by asking you that what I'm really trying to do is prepare you for the next moment or the moments that come forward in the future. What were those moments and how did you react and what decisions did you make and what was the impact of those?

And by thinking through your past and those opportunities to define your culture, you might be able to find some answers there because the important thing is two things. Number one, when those moments come along again, will you recognize that this is one of those moments, this is an opportunity where you can define your culture? We also had discussions this last week with that same contractor about quality control and safety. And I was thinking to myself of some stories I'd heard about contractors with regard to quality control.

I remember a contractor, a grocery store contractor that had some concrete they had poured out front. And it wasn't as level as they thought it might be. So, they had a choice there. Okay. They could probably try to slide that past their customer, see if they notice it, and if they don't notice it, okay, we got away with it, right? Or they could call their customer and say, "Hey, we poured this. Not sure it's up to snuff. Maybe want you to come look at it and see what you think." And, if he gives the, go ahead, all right, we got past that one.

Or the third choice, which is the choice this contractor made. The contractor said, take it out. It's not up to our standards. We're going to redo it. We're not going to call the client. We're not going to ask him; we're going to take it out and do it. Now, when they did that, they defined their quality culture. We're going to get it right. We're going to hold to a higher standard. We're not going to try to get away with things. And the same thing very much happens in safety. I'm sure there have been times in your company where you looked at something and it was maybe a fuzzy behavior and you have a choice.

Do you call it down? Do you punish the person that caused it? Do you make a big deal? Do you do a total stand down and educate everybody? There are a bunch of ways you can react to any of those kinds of situations. And each of them is going to define how people look at you, your values, how they look at the company and how they act in the future. So, will you be ready for the next moment that comes around, that defines your culture?

So again, think about the items that might've happened in the past. Think of how you might have reacted differently or defined your culture at that time. And the next time a moment like that comes along and you have a choice to make, make sure that you do it in balance, you do it in perspective and you take into consideration how long your decision may impact or last within your culture. Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.