

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute and The CEO Roundtable Program for Contractors. In the consulting business some 20 to 25 years ago, I had trouble putting my exact dates together, but I was working with my first contractor and he handed me a sheet of paper, it was one 8.5 X 11, and it was titled **Why Contractors Succeed**. And the number one item on that list was Honor the Field. And I raised this because it actually came up this week in one of my strategic planning sessions - honor the field.

Let's think about that. First of all, anytime I bring up honor the field, every contractor, every set of management professional in this industry agrees with me. You got to honor the field. That's where the job actually gets done and those people are super important. Right. Well, except that if we just think about it, oftentimes we have separate benefits where hourly people might not have the same benefits as their field people. They might not have the same vacation policies, 401(k). They're oftentimes the least paid people in our company as well and they're transactional.

And what do I mean by transactional? Well, a crisis hits like COVID comes in and they get laid off or our job site shuts down and they're hourly. So, they only get paid when they work. All right? While all your office people get paid regardless. Right? So, honor the field. And if you think about it as a business, do we truly honor the field? How do we honor the field? So, this past week, again, this came up sort of in the realm of that's also the area in most construction businesses where there's the highest turnover, and this one particular contractor had a lot of turnover in the field. In fact, they're probably hiring three to four people for every one that sticks. All right?

So, honor the field. So why don't they stick? Well, I hear the stock phrases, "They'll leave you for 50 cents an hour and go work for the guy next door. The grass is always greener on the other side." There's all these truisms out there about why people leave. So, it's very interesting. We expect them to be loyal to us and I sometimes wonder the extent to which or how we show our loyalty to them. And so, these are the things I want you to think about when it comes time to honor the field, what are our policies regarding pay, benefits, et cetera? How do those play into us showing loyalty to those people? Do we keep them employed when we don't have the work or when the work flows up and down, or do we expect them to just go home and not have income for that period of time, whatever it is?

How do we communicate with those folks? If you think about it, if they're the heart of the company, well, the brain of the company is probably in some office somewhere right at your headquarters. Well, how do we communicate between the brain and the heart? How do they get the sense of decisions that are being made that are affecting them, things that are happening just pure communication of where the company's headed, what its vision is, what its values are, all of those things? How do they translate from the head to the heart if that is the heart? And how often do we actually go see them and what's our acknowledgement of their work?

The other part that came up in our training, our planning session this week is what commitment do we have to those people from onboarding, training, development, so that when they come with the company they can see it as a career. They can see that the company has a loyalty to them that allows them to develop their loyalty to the company and be there for the long run. So again, what I've talked about here, the importance of honoring the field I think is there and I think it is a truism for construction if you want to be successful you need to honor the field.

But I encourage each of you to peel back the onion a little bit and look at what that really looks like in your company and see where you can possibly make the true changes that will truly honor the field and create a strong, loyal field force for you and your company into the future. Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.