

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about how to maintain and improve your culture in the new normal. I was in my peer group session not long ago and one of the things we talked about is this hybrid model that we all have to live with now. So, the people that used to be in the office with us, we used to see five, maybe six days a week. Now we see two, three. Maybe we see them rarely in the office, but contractors have always had this to a degree because you've had your field force and you've had your office group, but it's definitely different now. It's challenging and the reason it's challenging is because we miss all those soft informal interactions that are so valuable.

Now, what about this is important to you? Well, golly, it's universal. I haven't talked to a single business owner that's not worried about how he or she is going to maintain and improve the culture of the company. So, in this blog, I want to do a shout out to two innovators, Russell Construction in Iowa, ENR #388 and WM Jordan in Virginia ENR #153.

They're doing some really remarkable things that I think are worth hearing about. They are not accepting this new normal. They're doing some things. For example, Russell has always had employee events where they get people together and they strengthen the bonds. They're doubling down. Maybe they used to have one company picnic per year. Now they're doing two. Maybe they had two dinners for the employees during the year. Now they're doing four. They're doubling down on purpose to get human beings together, to have human interaction live and in person to build their culture.

Both of these people are putting their money where their mouths are. And WM Jordan, for example, has hired a full-time engagement coordinator. That's the title, engagement coordinator. And this coordinator has gone to every single WM Jordan job site and talked to the people on the site. What's good, what's bad. What do they need to improve? What do they need to quit doing? Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. She came back. She went through her extensive notes and she put all this together, compiled it for the senior management team. And she said, "Okay, this is what I've learned." And they determined which things were the most urgent and the most necessary of action and typical of WM Jordan. They acted on it right away and began to do some things differently. So, they have absolutely made a commitment to their culture.

Russell has done something a little bit different. Russell has hired a full-time coach for the benefit of their employees. So, this coach is available to every single employee. At the end of a new person's onboarding, for example, they're introduced to the coach and the coach is available for any employee to talk to about career path development, individual coaching, and maybe it's life coaching. Maybe it's not anything at work. Maybe there's a problem at home that they're struggling with. So, the coach is there to talk to them about that.

Conflict resolution on job sites, who knows what it might be. Leadership development, it could be anything. Chris Craig, the president of Russell said that he was initially very skeptical about this. He is not skeptical anymore. It has worked and the employees are embracing it. If you think about it today, if you're the CEO, the president, senior leader in a construction company, your job has changed. Your job used to be to take care of your customers. Your job today, take care of your employees. If you take care of your employees, they'll take care of the customers. You can count on it. You've got to engineer as Russell and Jordan have done. You've got to engineer your culture and you've got to take every opportunity to do so.

So, I'd like to hear what you are doing to improve your culture in the comments below. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.