

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, where *We Build Better Contractors*. Thanks for tuning in to this session of Digging Deeper.

We're onto number nine of our 10 keys to construction success, that I've tried to distill over all of my time working with all of the great people in construction. So, I've actually talked about this not too long ago, but it's certainly worth repeating and worth summarizing.

Construction is a team event. What do I mean by that? Just very simply, the owners, architects, engineers, construction managers, the general contractors, the trade companies, the suppliers, even the outside entities are all working together to create project success. And it takes every one of them working together for that success to be really good.

So how do we execute as a team? I think first of all, we have to realize, of course, that each one of these entities has a financial interest in these projects, and those financial interests actually may conflict or do conflict. And what do I mean by that? Well, very simply, if the CM or GC makes an extra percentage of profit or negotiates an extra percentage of profit, well, the owner's paying for that. That's very simple. The money that's there for the project is going to go in somebody's pocket. And if changes are made and the trades or suppliers don't get their appropriate compensation for those changes, that's really the owner's getting a benefit and the trades taking a beating. So, we've got to find fair, and we got to be fair to all, because there is financial interest, and that can affect our attitudes as well, as not just the reality that one may win, and one may lose.

So, the most important lesson here is there is no such thing as win-lose in terms of a solution to an issue. Win-lose becomes lose-lose. What do I mean by that? Well, if I'm on the lose side of win-lose, well, I'm probably going to remember that and I'm probably going to find some way to get back at you. If it's the next project, where I tried to give you a higher price, or maybe I try to get away with something else on the project, or maybe I sue you, all of these things. Win-lose turns into lose-lose. At the very best, maybe you just lose the relationship. But again, win-lose turns into lose-lose. There is no such thing as a successful win-lose.

So that means you need win-win solutions to all your problems. And being able to search for that win-win is one of the key skills to construction success. You can't have a successful team unless you're always looking for the win-win solution. And there are win-win solutions to all problems. You just got to work through them, find them, and make them work. Yes, we have to give a little, nobody gets the home run out of the conflict usually, but you can find win-win.

Effective communication is key to that. Not always telling, but listening and understanding the other side, and providing feedback. So, communication's full. Everybody has a full understanding.

Planning is key. Setting everybody up for success. Between the general contractor in the trade contractors, it's so critical that the general contractor and their project manager and superintendent have the attitude of trying to make this a successful project for everybody on the job. And if they have that attitude, it's likely to be successful.

I can remember in interviewing superintendents, which we always do in our host audits in our round tables, asking those superintendents what the key to their success. There really are two things that came out of there, I think, that had the most impact.

The first is the attitude of making sure that everybody on that job has a chance to achieve their greatest success, and it's his job to bring that all together and to set the stage to allow everybody to have success on that job.

The second thing was I asked one of these superintendents, I said, "So can you tell me when you've had a difficult time with an owner, how did you solve that?" And he thought about it for a while. And he looked up, he said, "I've never had a difficult time with an owner." He says, "When I get on site, my first objective is to make sure that I'm friends with that

owner and that ownership team. And we become friends so that we don't have those kinds of problems." Setting it up for success.

And that rolls right into job culture. Job culture is not accidental. Jobs have all kinds of cultures. As a subcontractor, we were on plenty of jobs where our team would get up in the morning and would loathe having to go to a particular job. And strangely enough, they seemed to find excuses why they couldn't get there; the truck would break down, so and so was sick. But those things happened on the jobs where the culture had gone south. And then, there are jobs where everybody's happy to go there, everyone arrives with a smile on their face, everybody's looking forward to working together. Setting the job culture is really key.

The superintendent is, of course, key to all of that, but they're not alone. The owner, the architect, the project management, even the trade representatives, everybody's contributing to that culture. But the superintendent's really sort of at the focus of that, in defining and establishing a positive, safe, successful culture, and promoting success for all stakeholders. And construction really is a wonderful team event when all the stakeholders have that chance for success.

And just one other lesson in construction as a team event, collaboration is probably the key skill in today's construction, both from the pre-construction area, right out to what happens in the field. The ability to collaborate, to work together, to get a plan, to get a result, that's really the key to this success as construction as a team event.

So, if your people aren't as skilled in collaboration, get some training. And those of you who are listening, that are in those jobs, if you need some work in that area, get some help in that area; read up on it, focus on it more. But collaboration is probably the key to construction being a successful team event.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.