



Addressing the Workforce Shortage

It's not a problem we can eliminate! It is however, a challenge we can meet if we make the effort.

It's no surprise to anyone reading this article that we have been, currently are and will likely continue to see huge shortages in available workforce levels. With unemployment at record lows, finding experienced, trained and *available* employees is almost impossible. Very few of those folks exist! In fact, if you are onboarding someone with extensive experience and all the related positive qualities, it is more than likely you are hiring him/her from another employer. Which means that other companies may be courting your best employees right now!

So how do we meet this challenge?

One of the missions of Workforce Development is not only to find the best available current candidates, but more importantly, to impart knowledge of the excellent career opportunities that exist in our industry to prospective future candidates. In essence, we need to begin "growing our own" future workforce. The alternative is to continue to react reflexively to the same problem forever.

The ABC Eastern PA Workforce Development Committee is immersed in outreach opportunities with our area schools. Chapter members may not be aware that over two dozen of our area high schools and community colleges are members of the ABC "Careers in Construction Alliance". In fact, several of them have members on our Workforce Development Committee. Outreach activities – career fairs, classroom visits, as well as presentations to parents and educators – are better described as PR/marketing activities designed for both short and long-term results.

Planting the seed to meet the challenge!

High school seniors may have made the decision to seek a career in construction, so marketing to seniors is vital. Yet, it may be simultaneously too late. Employers should realize the potential in speaking with students earlier in their high school career – or even earlier into middle school ages.

Our biggest Workforce Development Committee outreach event, in the history of the Chapter, is the ABC Annual Construction Fair - 2019. The 2019 fair will be our fourth, though last year's was canceled due to extreme weather. This year, we have expanded the event and moved it indoors to the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, Pa. By invitation only to our Alliance Schools, we have just under 500 students registered to attend. Four of our schools will have teams of students competing in our TEAM COMPETITIONS. Awards for the winners include up to TWO FULL YEARS of tuition in an ABC Apprenticeship Program.

We still have room for more ABC employers to attend the Construction Fair along with several sponsorship opportunities. If your company still has problems filling positions, this is one important way to begin to lessen, if not alleviate, the problem.

But - if you don't foresee future growth for your company, or losing your older craft professionals to retirement or your younger trained workers to other employers doesn't concern you, and think you probably won't need any new employees in the future, then participating in the Construction Fair and/or the Workforce Development Committee is not something you need to consider.

[Click here](#) to register or learn more about the 2019 Construction Fair.