

Mitigating Labor Shortages and Construction Challenges

Neff addresses labor shortages and construction challenges

By Don Neff



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Labor shortages are one of the biggest issues facing the home building industry today and impacting all residential construction and building project types. Lacking top grade craftsmen, many builders have resorted to 'B' and 'C' quality trades, requiring more tedious oversight by field superintendents, and construction managers, which increases the risk of assembly failures and creates other related construction issues.

Our analysis of QA metrics captured shows a range from 1.6 percent deficiency rate for single-family California projects (national average is 3.0 percent to higher deficiency rates of 5 percent in Florida and 6 percent in Texas). For multi-family buildings, we have seen high deficiency rates of 23.1 percent in Nevada and 12.7 percent in Arizona, which is much higher than the California rates of 5.8 percent versus the national rate of 6.5 percent. So, California is doing well relative to the national averages, yet some states need considerable improvement. These analytics have revealed an average deficiency rate of four (4) percent across the United States, for all project types. However, for single-family home projects in California, the deficiency rate is only 1.6 percent.

Innovations in technology are changing the way builders and construction managers' survey, assess and respond to potential problem areas and have proven effective in minimizing problems resulting from labor shortages, accelerated schedules, and material delays. For example, the features and benefits of high-tech quality assurance methodologies can help locate, communicate, and resolve construction issues in real time before they become bigger problems.

Smart phone and tablet QA apps available today such as CaptureQA®, for example, connect the field to the office with same day reporting, helping to provide statistical feedback on trade work, educating trades on quality issues, and protecting project pro formas with on-time, on-budget performance. The app is an important addition to the builders' toolbox, helping forge stronger GC-trade contractor relationships, worry-free project deliveries, and protecting the bottom-line.

Additionally, the new, cloud-based digital technology can reduce build-cycle time, lower indirect project costs, and

more accurately store and analyze information from current job site tasks and activities. These project histories can be helpful for the next project bid by identifying where cycle time bottle necks and deficiencies occurred previously on projects of similar design and building configuration.

Armed with digital methodology, a QA construction expert can identify and report in real-time, plan-detail deficiencies, scheduling hiccups, as well as good and faulty workmanship clearly illustrated in project photos and narrative that can be sent and received the same day of the site visit.

Misinterpretation of plan details and deviations from the manufacturer's recommendations can lead to deficiencies in the field, causing more project delays, additional costs, and delivery pressures. An increasing volume of construction issues make it more difficult for project managers and contractors to identify, address and close items in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Minimizing these QA risks, by utilizing technologies deployed through the Internet, combining project images with the associated narrative, provide builders with real-time quality assurance reporting solutions in one digital package that can be acted on as quickly as daily reports are received. The onsite project inspection and documentation is conducted by trained personnel so there are no missteps or misinterpretation of the data.

Capturing this data live in a real-time environment delivers three key benefits: a) evaluation of the trade contractors; b) evaluation of your field team; and c) evaluation of overall project construction performance communicated to the builder's management team and insurance underwriters. If a builder's own site management is a contributor to project issues or delays; obviously, this is valuable information to have. Like the conductor of an orchestra, a site manager must effectively schedule, direct, and manage the trade contractors in a collaboration of construction and workmanship.

Advanced QA technology will clearly identify construction and vendor problems that could exist across several different projects within a region or across different regions, allowing the builder to rectify problems before they become a systemic trend companywide. **BD**

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