



A KCA Construction Industry Article of Interest:

True Collaboration

By Joseph Massaro III

Lean / IPD is as much about creating a culture of respect for individuals as it is about the tools. Ken Blanchard put it best when he said “none of us is as smart as all of us.” Imagine this...

There are two identical buildings being built side by side. The first is being built in the manner we’ve always built. The project superintendent works from his own trailer, while each subcontractors works from their own trailer. Foremen show up with no real information about the work they are about to do. They ask the superintendent for a set of plans. Each day the superintendent is inundated with problems presented by the subs, all the while having to shuttle between groups to broker the solution. The group meets weekly to review the past week’s meeting minutes, with very little actual conversation among the participants. Not all of the subs on-site attend the meeting. Those that do, talk in very general terms about what the next two weeks will look like. “Continuing to work on rough-in” and “installing equipment” are the types of progress reports that are made.

The second project, just 100 yards away, is being built by a group of participants who met at the outset of the project to share a meal, introduce themselves to one another and commit to working together to deliver a successful project. They know why the building is being built and its

importance to the owner. They have determined what project success looks like. Rather than each pulling in a trailer, they build one office complex for use by all. They develop a co-worker mentality. Each week they meet together to develop their weekly work plans. The plans are clear and specific with such descriptions as “metal stud framing ground floor, area A, complete by Thursday”, “placing slab on deck, second floor, area B, on Tuesday”, “face brick, north elevation, 40% complete by Friday”. The project superintendent is committed to facilitating conversations among the trades to uncover problems as early as possible. Quickly on in the project, the level of cooperation increases as the participants seize on opportunities to help one another.

Which project do you think will be built on or before the completion date, with fewer injuries, fewer change orders, fewer total labor hours, less overtime, higher morale, and greater owner satisfaction? The answer is easy, right? But if it’s so obvious, why is it so rare?

It’s rare, I’d argue, because not many in our industry understand what true collaboration is. We talk a good game, but few people have the leadership courage to develop real relationships with the people they are working with. Too few people have the courage to speak up for the greater good. We have been conditioned to protect our selfish interests at the expense of the group. At a time when margins are thin and people are becoming a scarce resource, we can no longer afford to protect the status quo. It’s time for all of us in the industry to commit to respecting one another and working collaboratively to produce better outcomes.

For every two sets of hands on a project we get a free brain. We need to use all those free brains to our collective benefit.

end

Joseph Massaro III is President & CEO of Massaro Construction Group, based in Pittsburgh and State College, PA. Joe can be reached at 412-963-2800 or jamiii@massarocg.com.