

SAFETY FIRST

WITH TAMMY K. CLARK



Construction Headaches: Subs of Subs of Subs (Part 1A)

After wrapping up our Profits and Efficiencies series last month, I got thinking about current, relevant topics for this month's article. I quickly came up with several that all contractors today are dealing with, and this gave rise to a new series, *Construction Headaches*. I hope you enjoy it, and find some of my insights and solutions helpful!

It wouldn't be construction if there weren't "issues". None of us like to hear that word in our industry (if I had a nickel for every time I receive the call, "Tammy, we have an issue onsite...")! However, issues do exist, and they can be incredibly difficult to deal with. They can make or break a contract, and frequently affect the overall safety, compliance, production, quality, and profitability of our projects.

One of the most challenging issues on construction projects today centers around dealing with subs of subs of subs. I know I'm resonating with this one because I hear about it, and personally deal with it on just about every project. Many are wondering why this has become such a problem in recent years, so let's examine the facts.

Since the rebound of the construction industry after the recession of 2008, the industry is dealing with some very new, and

very different challenges than what we dealt with before the recession. These challenges have created a very different industry than what existed prior to the recession, and the results of the new challenges are being felt on almost all projects today. They are also resulting in many new types of "headaches" for project and site leaders/managers.

First, the construction industry was hit so hard during the recession that parents began to steer their children away from considering construction trades as a viable career option. I saw this first-hand with my work teaching in the K-12 Tech Centers. While the construction-related school programs were experiencing low enrollment numbers for years, many of the skilled trades workers were retiring.

Second, the younger generation are very tech-savvy,

with most favoring high-tech jobs over manual work. There are far fewer young people entering the industry and training for highly-skilled trades work via trade schools, apprenticeship programs, etc., which is contributing to a severe labor shortage. The industry is strong again, but contractors are now feeling the effects of this severe labor shortage.

Third, there are more undocumented aliens working in the United States today than ever before. Many are starting their own construction businesses, yet they often have no training or knowledge of proper procedures, quality standards, safety/compliance requirements, etc., and are willing to work for extremely low pay. When you couple all of this with regulatory agencies that have become very aggressive since the rebound of the industry, it's a perfect storm.

So how do we solve these issues, or at least manage the issues that our subs of subs of subs create so we can get the work done without affecting our safety, compliance, and quality standards? Is it even possible? Believe it or not, it is! Stay tuned for next month's article, where I will provide a detailed plan that *works!*



Tammy K. Clark is a construction industry Safety & Quality Consultant with over 20 years experience as a business owner, consultant, educator, and speaker. Tammy has worked with renowned clients nationwide. She is a member of ASSE, former Chair for the NAWIC National Safety & Health Awareness Committee, and was nominated as one of the Grand Rapids Business Journal's 50 Most Influential Women. You can contact Tammy at tammy@tammyclark.com.