

Construction's Career Crisis: Recruiters Target Young Workers Driving the Great Resignation

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AN INCREASING NUMBER OF JOB SEEKERS ARE OPEN TO SOMETHING NEW. THE TROUBLE IS, FEW ARE LIKELY TO SET THEIR SIGHTS ON CONSTRUCTION.

Skilled trade companies are desperate for talent.

How desperate? Just listen to the stories of people like Donald "Bo" McNabb, senior instructor in construction management at Indiana State University's College of Technology. McNabb shared a story from his son, a vocational high school teacher who took his class to tour a limestone quarry in Bloomington, Indiana.

"The gentleman in charge of the plant said 'we'll take just about everybody right now who has a good attitude and is willing to learn,'" McNabb said. "We'll hire them on the spot."

For McNabb and others who spoke with HR Dive, the problem is nothing new for construction employers. In fact, sources said they have been aware of the industry's coming talent crunch for decades as experienced workers depart with no clear replacements lined up. An analysis this year of 2019 federal employment data found the median age for construction workers is 40, compared to 25 for younger talent.

The "Great Resignation"; one report last month estimated that more than one in four workers who started a new job in 2021 left their previous jobs without a new position lined up. Though the motivations of each individual worker may not be clear, observers often tie at least some of that migration to the pandemic.



"When people think about their careers, they jump on an educational conveyor belt," said Casey Welch, CEO of Tallo, an employment and scholarship platform geared toward younger workers. "It may stop for some after high school, after college or after military service, then they go, 'what do you want to do?' But the pandemic has stopped that conveyor belt for some people. They're open to different industries."

Research so far suggests that openness is especially characteristic of younger workers. Survey data published in August by Adobe show more than half of Generation Z employee respondents said they planned to pursue new jobs in 2021, while 59% of this contingent also ranked lowest in job satisfaction among generational groups.

The trouble is, when these workers do seek to pursue new avenues, they are not very likely to put construction in their sights.




