Building the Future: Recruiting Generation Z in the Construction Industry

By: the ABC Supply Pro Council

How to Attract the Next Generation of Workers to Your Construction Company

As Generation Z (those born from 1997-2012) ages into the workforce, employers are beginning to ask, “What’s the best way to attract this generation of workers to my company?” While baby boomers are perceived as unable to learn new things, Gen Xers unprepared to lead and millennials uncommitted to a career, Gen Zers, or Zoomers, are often thought of as addicted to technology. These myths are all just that — myths. The reality is that each generation has its nuances, and it’s up to potential employers to understand their future team members if they want to build successful construction businesses. Here are some tips for recruiting Generation Z members to join your team.

1. Offer Career Development Opportunities

Zoomers are generally more career-focused and entrepreneurial in their mindset than their millennial counterparts. They want to learn new skills in addition to the ones that may already come naturally to them, and they yearn for ownership over their lives. Construction careers tend to offer more individual autonomy than many other industries, so recruiters should be sure to highlight the benefits of the freedom that can be found in the construction sector. Offering performance-based incentives rather than tenure-based incentives is also a great way to encourage engagement.

Many people believe that the only way to secure a successful future is by attending college first, so there is added stigma to overcome around joining trades. It is important to help this generation understand the industry is thriving and full of opportunities to succeed and create lifelong careers.

A clear career path filled with development opportunities could go a long way in bringing in fresh talent. Consider partnering with professional associations like the American Council for Construction Education or Associated Builders and Contractors to help your team advance their careers.

Quick tip: Give applicants plenty of growth opportunities, so they know they have a chance to advance in the roofing industry.

2. Embrace Technology, Both for Recruitment and for a Stronger Company

Gen Z workers were practically born with technology at their fingertips. That means you’ll have to meet them where they are — online. Post industry insights and job openings online to attract
new members to your team. Even though most construction work is more manual than virtual, teams will need to adapt and welcome technology to maximize their recruitment.

Technological tools don’t just have to be used for recruiting purposes — empowering Zoomers to explore technology solutions that solve construction industry challenges is a great way to build their trust while potentially improving your business practices. For example, ABC Supply offers myABCsupply, an online platform that makes it possible to check delivery status, place product orders and find the nearest ABC Supply location in seconds.

Quick tip: Connect with prospective employees on social media.

3. Competitive Pay and Open Conversations are Critical

Generation Z values the stability that comes with a good income. They were raised by Gen X parents who have seen their fair share of crises like the housing market crash and the Great Recession, which have fueled their need for financial security.

Their focus on salary doesn’t come from a place of privilege — they’ve grown up in unstable times, so they crave more traditional perks like good pay and reliable health insurance. Jobs in the roofing industry can address the need for financial security by making sure they are paying associates competitive wages. Having open conversations about salaries, their potential growth and the industry context behind them may help Gen Z feel like the position is stable and worth keeping. The transparency in openly discussing pay changes humanizes the boss-employee relationship, shows job stability and is as important as the actual dollar amounts being presented to Gen Z applicants.

Quick tip: Offer a competitive salary and benefits to get Gen Zers on board.

4. Start Early

A dramatic shift in mindset when it comes to education can be beneficial for contracting and construction jobs. Sixty-one percent of Zoomers believe they should only attend college if they know what they want to pursue. This opens up opportunities for early recruitment from businesses in trade industries.

For the construction industry specifically, starting recruitment early through school partnerships could bring awareness to the field and ensure applicants have the skills they will need on the job.

Quick tip: Recruit future associates as early as high school.
More than recent generations, Generation Z is all about career and financial stability above all else. They don’t want to stop growing and want to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

Get more tips on how you can retain people on your team here. You can also learn more about how to recruit millennial team members here.

**About the ABC Supply Pro Council**

*The ABC Supply Pro Council consists of experienced associates from across the U.S. Its aim is to provide contractors nationwide with industry advice and insights to help them seize opportunities and overcome challenges they face as they manage successful businesses. Contractors can visit ABC Supply’s News & Events for additional tips and resources from the Pro Council.*