

ON THE ROAD

ISSUE 3 2021



“PAVING THE FUTURE”



**WE NEED TO BUILD
THE NEXT 10 YEARS**

PAGE 10

GOLF TOURNAMENT

PAGE 12

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**PAVING
THE FUTURE**

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As the busy season winds down, I have been reflecting on our progress and growth of the Association. In the span of ten years UAPA membership has grown to over 130 members, many of who are new this year.



The 2021 UAPA Fall Conference was held Nov. 8-9, 2021, at the Dixie Center in St. George. The theme was “The Power of Resiliency,” and it was a great success. This year seemed even better than usual, which surprised me: the Fall Conference always sets a high bar to measure up to, but there’s nothing like meeting in person and feeling the energy that occurs when people in the industry get together.

We had excellent topics and presenters. I especially enjoyed learning more about the Southern Utah projects that were highlighted. Meeting face-to-face has always been a privilege, but it is not something I take for granted anymore. A Zoom meeting could never have been as enjoyable as meeting at the Dixie Convention Center and golfing at the beautiful Sunbrook Golf Course. If you were able to attend, I hope you enjoyed the conference as much as I did.

While we’re on the subject of worthwhile conferences, please make plans to join us at the 2022 Utah Asphalt Conference (UAC) scheduled Feb. 1-2, 2022 at the Mountain America Expo Center in Sandy, UT. The UAC is the premier asphalt related event in the state of Utah. The conference brings together the asphalt industry’s best

and brightest for a second-to-none trade show with over thirty educational seminars, 85 exhibitors, and 30,000 square feet of large equipment. The 2022 UAC will provide you with all of the tools, technologies, and best practices you need to accomplish your goals as well as plenty of networking opportunities. Conference registration is now open; check out our website for more information.

As the busy season winds down, I have been reflecting on our progress and growth of the Association. In the span of ten years UAPA membership has grown to over 130 members, many of who are new this year. More members mean greater synergy, more opportunities to learn from each other, and more political clout with the Utah Legislature. Those are all good things. If you are not involved in UAPA, please consider serving on a committee and becoming an active UAPA member. For those who are involved already, thank you! We appreciate the work you do and hope you will continue to be an active UAPA member.

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WE NEED TO BUILD THE NEXT 10 YEARS



The Salt Lake Chamber Board of Directors and the University of Utah's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute released a presentation in May 2021 about Utah's need to build. As they pointed out, the difference between drifting and mastery occurs when people take challenges and turn them into opportunities.

The report's authors saw a need for capital growth in three areas:

- **Physical:** Infrastructure is an important way to prepare for future needs.
- **Structural:** This consists of investing in people.
- **Social:** Investing in the community is a way to compensate for a decline in what institutions can provide to those who need help.

Let's examine the need for physical infrastructure first. Between 2010 and 2020, Utah grew 18.4%. The population increased over those 10 years by 507,731 people, but 330,489 of those people were classified as "natural increase": that is, babies. Net migration accounted for the remaining 177,242. How does that increase look in terms of percentages? Natural increase accounted for 65% of Utah's growth, and net migration accounted for 35%.

If you compare Utah against other states, it is classified as a mid-sized state. California, Texas, and Florida take the top three spots. New York is ranked fourth. Utah is at No. 30, and Wyoming is at No. 50. The other surrounding states are Colorado (21), New Mexico (36), Arizona (14), Nevada (32), and Idaho (38).

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and Moody's Analytics keep records about infrastructure spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Infrastructure investments grew after World War II, peaked between 1960 and 1965 and have generally declined ever since. As of 2020, it was less than 2% of GDP. That is a small percentage, but it is a small percentage of a large number. The GDP in 2020 was \$20,936.60 billion. The lowest level, which occurred before 1968, was \$543.30 billion.

When looking at structural economic changes, it's important to separate structural changes from cyclical ones. You can wait out a cyclical change, but if it is a structural one, the wisest course of action is to recognize that as soon as possible and make changes accordingly.

Utah is well-positioned to move forward if its leaders and business community continue to make good decisions for all aspects of the state's infrastructure.

There are four broad categories of structural economic changes currently going on:

- **Behavioral:** The pandemic forced companies to send many employees home to work. Some people liked that, and they haven't wanted to go back into the office. Other people decided the pandemic was a good point to either retire or change careers. Businesses the world over shortened their supply chains and began getting materials closer to home. Many also reshored their business operations.
- **Technology:** People needed broadband and tech-enabled services, and companies have been providing them. Most organizations would probably have moved far more slowly toward holding, say, online Zoom meetings if they hadn't had to contend with the pandemic. In addition to business meetings, you could suddenly watch people performing Shakespeare. Celebrities gave concerts. For months, churches held online services as a primary means of worship.
- **Demographics:** This change has to do with migration and an aging population. When it was no longer necessary to live close to where you work, Zoom Towns sprung up, and people began to think about location in terms of their quality of life instead of a commute to the office. Also, as mentioned above, the pandemic gave many people the excuse they needed to retire or redirect their careers. The youngest baby boomers are now in their 57th year. According to the Pew Research Center, 28.6 million boomers retired during Q3 2020. That was an increase of 3.2 million from Q3 2019. Before that, an average of approximately 2 million boomers per year had been retiring.
- **New paradigms:** The pandemic caused people to reevaluate their needs in terms of banking, business travel, commercial real estate, mental health and the pandemic's impact on women and other disadvantaged people, especially racial minorities and those without financial reserves.

Education continues to be a priority, but not necessarily white-collar education. As tuition and student debt have increased, it's reasonable to ask what the benefit of higher education is relative to the price tag. A degree in engineering or computer science is valuable. But although a humanities degree is rewarding in other ways, it probably won't be as financially rewarding unless coupled with other skills.

Skilled trades continue to be valuable. Young people (especially women) need a better understanding of why a practical

education can be valuable. More, it isn't a negative reflection on anyone's intelligence if someone chooses to go into a trade. More and more computers of one sort or another can be found in cars, paving equipment, and other technically advanced devices, which means computer literacy is a marketable skill.

Next, consider social institutions. It can be useful to think of social institutions in terms of shared living experiences. There are many different places where people interact and can be seen:

- Churches
- Clubs
- Companies
- Courts
- Families
- Governments
- Health care
- Legislatures
- Media platforms
- Military organizations
- Schools
- Universities

How much do people trust these institutions?

The Edelman Trust Barometer measures trust on a global scale. According to the 2021 report, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been equal to the Great Depression. The world's two largest economies are the U.S. and China. In both countries, the surveyed respondents trust their governments less than they used to. The exception to this is the business community. At 61%, people trust businesses more than NGOs (57%), governments (53%) or media (51%).


What about Utah? It turns out that Utah leads the nation in its social capital; that is, the strength of its relationship networks. According to the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, which measured 32 different aspects of social capital, Utah ranked 2.08. (Minnesota and Wisconsin also ranked high, at 1.81 and 1.61, respectively.)

Utah is well-positioned to move forward if its leaders and business community continue to make good decisions for all aspects of the state's infrastructure. That includes building roads and bridges, of course, but it also includes recruiting people for the asphalt industry and ensuring everyone has the support they need. ◀

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Thanks to everyone that made our soggy UAPA Golf Classic so great this year. It's rained exactly twice all summer in Utah, and one of those days happened to be the day of our tournament. Despite the rain, we hosted almost 300 golfers, raised over \$9,000 for the UAPA Scholarship Fund and the Centerville Cares Foundation, and had a great day of golf.



RAIN
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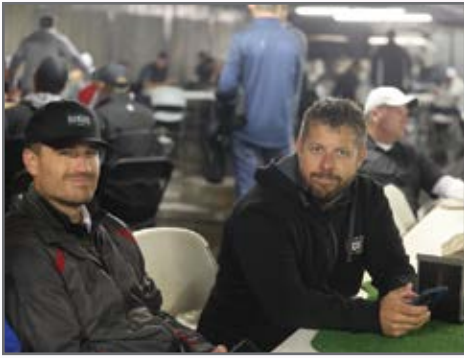

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PANDEMIC ACCOUNTING

Accounting is a valuable tool in any organization, but it can be most effective during tough times. The pandemic has proved itself to be one of those times, and as a result, accounting has helped some companies stay profitable through the pandemic's unpredictable economic landscape. More specifically, CPAs have had to identify and analyze cash-flow concerns, review budgets containing safety-related equipment and material prices that have increased because of supply chain shortages, and understand federal stimulus programs. Some of the biggest tasks have included:

- Cash flow management
- Cybersecurity
- Supply chain stability
- Tax plans

The asphalt industry is not exempt from these concerns. For example, part of the U.S. response to the pandemic on a state-by-state basis was to separate its businesses into two types, essential and nonessential. Although asphalt businesses that work on infrastructure projects were generally classified as essential, U.S. asphalt industry revenue declined 2.9% because of factors that included global supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, the lockdown, and project postponements. Reduced traffic translated to lower gas tax revenues. Experts think a continued slowdown in 2021, attributable to the pandemic, will be followed by industry growth from 2022 to 2026.

Another big issue for the asphalt industry has been labor. Most construction businesses (90%) are small and involve capital-intensive demands to finish projects. They need reliable supply chains and cash flows.

Pandemic-related data analysis can help companies decide the best ways to allocate resources and build for the future.

Cash Flow

Cash flow can be thought about on two levels: cash management and treasury management. As you might expect, treasury management has to do with large-scale decisions about borrowing, deficit spending, and liquidity. Cash management is a subfunction because it involves ensuring liquidity by moving the funds needed to maintain daily cash flow and short-term assets.

Many companies have outdated financial processes. During events such as the pandemic, those outdated processes affected cash flow and provided a real incentive for improving financial resiliency by streamlining them.

Consider using a 13-week cash flow model with one-week actuals. This model is particularly useful during times of financial distress when you need to look at your short-term options. A 13-week cash flow forecast can help if you need financing to survive. You can take it to stakeholders such as managers, accountants, other financial and legal partners, and creditors. You will see your pressure points and find out how much financing you need, and it creates transparency, which increases people's confidence in the forecast. It might also help you avoid liquidation.

Whatever cash flow model you use, the idea is to define fixed and negotiable costs, figure out what you can do to improve cash flow if necessary, and identify the non-core assets to divest when you need cash. In addition:

- Make sure you have a plan for treasury management.
- Ensure your current financing options are still available to you.
- Manage receivables proactively by auditing transactions and managing inventory.



CONCERNS

Cybersecurity

Anyone who uses computers (that is, pretty much everyone in the business world) should be aware of the need for cybersecurity. Fraud in the form of phishing and ransomware can damage your company, and the pandemic seems to have encouraged cybercriminals to pick up the pace on their attacks. You should protect your company by doing the following:

- Consider hiring a cybersecurity company. Their employees can help you assess and reduce risks, develop protocols, and review your plans to keep the business going during disruptions.
- Write and enforce strict protocols to protect financial information.
- Buy cyber insurance, and take the time to understand what you bought. Know what is or isn't covered. Cyber insurance is a great option if you don't have a full-time IT employee.
- Train employees. One person clicking the wrong link is enough to cause real trouble.
- Talk with employees about the risks of remote work, too. Unmonitored home office settings and smartphone usage are potential problems. Cybercriminals can change accounts, addresses, or other key business information more easily than might be possible at work.
- Maintain a backup system. Test it regularly. Experts recommend a one-two-three system:
 - o One offline data copy
 - o Two different backup methods
 - o Three copies of data

The Supply Chain

There are several steps a company can take to protect itself from supply chain problems:

- Contracts matter. Since many companies have increased material prices and have had unavoidable delivery delays, it's important to put escalation clauses for materials in the contract. Pass increased costs on to customers when possible.
- Strong partnerships and good relationships are more important than getting the lowest possible price. If you don't have a good business relationship, it doesn't matter whether you got the lowest possible price because the money you spent might not get you what you need: responsiveness when a problem occurs. A company's reliability is more important than the price they charge.
- Be friendly and professional, and expect the same in return. Someone who is pleasant is much more likely to get a heads-up about news such as an upcoming price increase. Supply chain issues are real, too, and your reasonable attitude and friendliness will go a long way toward making those issues easier to handle.
- Look at alternative suppliers. Ideally, you should have more than one way to get the materials you need.
- Financial forecasting can be extremely useful because of the insights it provides. Use financial planning and analysis (FP&A) to know what will happen to profits under different scenarios such as increasing or decreasing costs.

Tax Plans

Tax planning matters because tax rules get changed regularly. Despite their direction (up or down), you need to know how those changes will affect the taxes you pay. Therefore, your business plan should include a section about the tax planning process. It's a good idea to hire someone who can focus on the specifics because the details can impact your bottom line enormously. However, there are a couple of guidelines you can implement:

- Know the current rules, and use them to your benefit.
- Talk to an expert about your succession plan and estate plan now, before the rules change.
- Some experts think tax increases are coming, too. It might be better to make tax-related changes in 2021 than to wait for 2022. ◀

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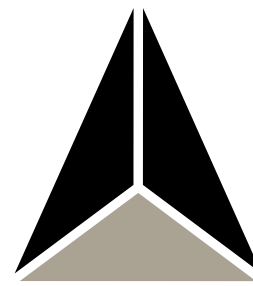
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WOMEN OF ASPHALT UTAH BRANCH

UAPA is proud to announce that Utah has its own Women of Asphalt Branch. Nicole Shields, Stacy Kelley, Nicole Maxwell and Haley Isaacson currently lead the Utah Branch.

Nicole Shields, Chair
Barricade Services & Sales, Inc.
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Stacy Kelley
Construction Materials Recycling
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Nicole Maxwell
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By becoming a member of Women of Asphalt (WofA) you are joining an organization which strives to mentor, educate, and advocate for women in the asphalt industry.

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STAKER PARSON'S BECK STREET ASPHALT PLANT TOUR



Staker Parson hosted a plant tour and educational session on Sept. 15, 2021, at the Beck Street Asphalt Plant. The Women of Asphalt Utah Branch sponsored the tour, but everyone was welcome to attend, and people throughout Utah and the asphalt industry were there.

"It was wonderful to see how much we have already grown as a branch. The plant tour itself was very cool; the amount of material that can run through the plant in a day is mind-blowing. And the lab portion of the tour was fascinating. The testing process is so detailed, and there was a lot to learn about it."

Nicole Maxwell, a branch member who is also the sales support manager at Maxwell Products, Inc., said the following about the event:

"We want to give a big thank you to Staker Parson for hosting!" ◀



MEET NICOLE MAXWELL

Maxwell Products, Inc.
Women of Asphalt Leadership Team

Tell us how you got into the asphalt industry?

I originally came from the hospitality industry. At one point, I went with Brent Maxwell to a trade show as a spouse. When we got there, I asked if I could be in the booth. Brent couldn't understand why I wanted to do that, but the group gave me a crash course in the material and everything we do. I loved everything about that experience. I talked to the contractors, and I learned more about Brent, Ken, Ted, and Del. They saw something special in my skill set, and Ken told me I could have an amazing place here, too.

Joining the business was a big shift for me, especially because I knew wonderful people on the hospitality side, too. My previous work experience involved a high expectation that I would provide amazing customer service, and I never thought I could have that outside the high end of hospitality. I had a narrow vision and thought I was limited. But Tom Cannon, my boss here, has nurtured my skill set and abilities. He is our sales manager, and he is a strong, supportive guy.

What is your educational background?

I graduated from high school, but my education after high school consisted of on-the-job training and experience in the hospitality industry. I worked at Little America and Grand America. You are held to an unusually high standard when you work in hospitality, and I learned a lot of what I do now.

I never thought I would leave the hospitality industry. When I made the jump, though, I was able to contribute immediately. I am grateful for what I learned.

Are there specific individuals who have had an impact on your career?

I dote on the Maxwells because they are incredible people. They test everything because they have their name on the box, and they want to provide the best service possible. They don't skimp.

What is the most rewarding part of your career?

I am encouraged to learn, grow, and be social, and there is no limit to what I am allowed to accomplish. When you combine that with being in the asphalt industry and knowing we affect and support this country's valuable transportation infrastructure, the results are really pretty spectacular. It gives me purpose.

What are some professional moments that make you proudest?

One of my proudest moments is being here at the start of the Utah branch of Women of Asphalt and working with the other women, such as Keri Dumont of UAPA, Nicole Shields of Barricade Services, Hailey Isaacson with Staker Parson Materials & Construction, and Stacey Kelly with Construction Material Recycling.

I love this industry. Many women can be a little intimidated because there's a stereotype that girls don't play with big machines. But it's amazing over here in the asphalt industry. There's potential to grow, and it isn't limited by education. If you need training, you can get training. We are saying to women, "This is great and wonderful. Come hang out over here with us!" I am proud to be part of that.

Was there an "aha" moment in your career that defined you?

I love talking to people and helping them, and when I worked in hospitality,



I provided a high level of service by putting together weddings and big events. But I thought I was also stuck wearing three-piece suits and wandering around hallways with English carpet.

Then I went to a trade show and found out that my specific skills are needed, valued, and encouraged. I have a home here, too. Now I can wear jeans and talk to a guy starting a crack seal company. There is room for what I love doing here, as well as what I can provide.

If you had to look back at your professional life, what three things have you learned that you would pass on to someone looking at a career in the asphalt business?

1. Growth opportunities are endless within the industry. Companies value degrees, but they want to know what you have to offer, and they look at abilities, experience, and skillsets. You have no limits, even without a degree. I could continue to grow anywhere in this industry.
2. This industry is vitally important. Transportation infrastructure and



everything that involves, is a small piece of a bigger puzzle that keeps this country moving. It also makes it possible for people to drive back and forth to their loved ones.

3. Your car will never smell good. Your car will always smell like asphalt if you are near a plant or a job site.

Let's talk a bit about Maxwell Products, Inc. It's a family company. You are now part of the Maxwell family, and you are very clearly proud of the company you work for and represent. The company was founded in 1975 by Ted and Delwyn Maxwell. They were schoolteachers in Southern Utah before that. Teaching school to asphalt paving is a leap. How did that happen?

Ted and Delwyn are insanely intelligent men who grew up on a farm near Glendale, which is so small it still doesn't have a gas station. They are like two peas in one pod. They joke together, sing together, and they love expanding their minds.

The farm taught them how to work hard, and they became teachers because they loved learning new ideas and concepts. Ted taught at an elementary school in Orderville, and Delwyn taught in Ganado, Arizona, on a Navajo Nation reservation. He taught chemistry, math, and physics. He loves all three subjects.

Why did they decide to create a pavement maintenance business?

Ted and Del were always logging in the summer and sometimes in the winters to make ends meet. That work led to maintenance jobs. In between their other work, they saw an

opportunity for growth if they started doing sealcoating and sealcoat manufacturing.

Delwyn left teaching and came back to Southern Utah full-time to do more sealcoat work. Ted helped Del after hours and in the summer. He also worked on funding. It was always a pretty good partnership. They worked hand in hand through everything.

They had an opportunity to open a seal coat plant in Salt Lake City, so Del moved up from southern Utah. As the plant started to grow, Ted moved to Centerville about a year later.

They saw a need for crack seal, and they licensed a formula from Arizona Refining Company for asphalt rubber, which is what crack sealant was back then. Ted and Del thought they could elevate the crack sealant and make a more effective material than asphalt and rubber, so they created some formulations and started tinkering with them. They were contracting part of the time and working on crack sealant the rest of the time. They would mix crack sealant in a kettle and then deliver it. The crack sealant wasn't even packaged. It became more of a packaged item over time.

Why did they decide to go full-time with a pavement maintenance business and move to Salt Lake City?

Salt Lake City asked them to start manufacturing crack sealants.

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The company really started to grow from there. Ted and Del disliked the conflict of interest between contracting and manufacturing, so they decided to focus on manufacturing. They sold the machines and supplies they'd bought for contracting to M&M Asphalt Services.

Ted and Del are honest, hardworking, small-town Utah guys who never tell even the whitest of white lies. They want to do what is best for everybody, and they grew the company with handshakes and integrity. They use good, honest materials, and they listen to customers. People trust them and gravitate toward them.

Company ownership stayed in the family after Ted and Del retired. Ted's son, Ken Maxwell, is the president. Brent Maxwell, my husband, is the marketing director, and he does the website and print work. I never expected to be part of the company, but now I am our sales support manager. That includes customer service. Tom Cannon, my boss here, has nurtured my skill set and abilities. He is our sales manager, and he is a strong, supportive guy.

Maxwell Products, Inc. has become a national company, and we are heavily involved in UAPA. We are represented in all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, and Australia.

How has the pandemic affected Maxwell Products?

For us, it was business as usual, but we struggled to get the materials we needed, find trucks, and get the materials where they needed to go. Getting cardboard is still an interesting struggle, and we've had to deal with rising oil prices. Also, many municipalities have uncertain budgets. We kept going, dealt with supply chain issues, adapted, and provided whatever was necessary to keep the transportation infrastructure moving. I know many companies had to close, or people were furloughed. Many people working in hospitality were furloughed.

COVID-19 caused problems with the construction industry's supply chain, but it also affected workers' mental health. Statistically speaking, next to front-line workers, the construction industry has the highest rates of depression and addiction. We saw that even more after COVID-19 caused problems with the supply chain. Nothing stopped the workers, though; they just kept going. There is a sad satisfaction in that because I know the pandemic made their problems worse.

Many guys have a hard time admitting they have a problem, and they are often uncomfortable talking about it. Keri and Reed, and some of the Women of Asphalt, are very aware of this. If we can provide classes that acknowledge a problem, more people might get help.

What is the biggest impact of being a UAPA member? What makes it beneficial?

I could rant and rave about how much I love UAPA. It is such a great association. Every other association should take a page

Even though there are late-night crews, the asphalt industry also has trade shows and the Utah branch of Women of Asphalt. I am encouraged at Maxwell Products, Inc. to grow professionally and be more available for my children.

out of their book. UAPA involves its members and tries to make changes that are beneficial for the state. In addition to the obvious stuff, like networking and learning, sitting on the preservation and planning committees is my favorite part. They listen to me and make me feel heard and special.

Any last words?

I made my big career change seven years ago, and I have never looked back. I love what I am allowed to be here.

My husband and I were both married before, and we have a blended marriage with five children: Alexis and Gavin (both 19), Alec and Madison (both 16), and Devon (13). It looks like we have two sets of twins, but we don't. We have a very busy household.

Working for a hotel is hard when you have young children. There is a lot of high pressure. You would think the asphalt industry would be less friendly than the hospitality industry, but the reverse is true, and I don't think that is limited to Maxwell Products, Inc.

You can be successful at Maxwell Products, Inc. as a woman and a mother. It's a breath of fresh air, and I would never give up what I have. The company helps me flourish. Even though there are late-night crews, the asphalt industry also has trade shows and the Utah branch of Women of Asphalt. I am encouraged at Maxwell Products, Inc. to grow professionally and be more available for my children. I don't ever have to choose between my children and my job. If one of my children is sick, the people here do what they can to give me options, which helps me be a better mom. Also, I get to work with my handsome, amazing and supportive husband.

I am an optimistic person, but I've had a lot of ups and downs. Everybody deals with problems, and you can always use the hard times as a crutch, but I want to work harder and be better; I want to focus on happiness. Even bad days have joy in them. ◀



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PRIORITIZING WORKFORCE RETENTION

Unemployment in August 2020 was high: according to Statista, 13.54 million people were looking for jobs. August 2021 was better because by then, Statista only listed 8.38 million unemployed people.

With such large numbers, it's easy to think there is no shortage of people to hire, but the pandemic recession hasn't changed the need to find, train and retain new workers in the asphalt industry. The shutdown worsened everything because many workers who lost their jobs, especially people with extensive work experience, decided to retire or change industries. Unemployment statistics don't count the people who retired.

A pre-pandemic 2019 survey found that even though 91% of road construction companies wanted to hire, more than 80% had difficulty finding suitable candidates. Please note, the survey included unionized and nonunionized companies. The employee shortage delays projects and makes companies hesitant to bid on new contracts.

The shortage doesn't mean you won't find people to hire, but the process might be more challenging than you would like,

and it makes sense to encourage employees to stay as long as possible. Investing in your workforce will benefit your company during good times and bad. When your company is prospering and everything is going well, making it clear how much you value your employees encourages them to build a career with you. Downturns are an opportunity to build loyalty, too; people don't forget it when they know you could have cut their job and didn't.

At the same time, one of your jobs is to determine which employees are valuable and whether any employees drain the organization. If you can help someone become more productive, that's great. But if you don't succeed, you are doing them and the company a favor by letting them find a better job somewhere else.

Part of the problem is that people don't have a good understanding of the industry. They see workers dressed in long pants and safety vests pouring hot asphalt on a hot day while surrounded by backed-up traffic. The work looks difficult, dangerous and uncomfortable. No wonder it's hard to find employees if they think the work consists of that and nothing else.

One survey asked respondents about their familiarity with six industries with the same general labor profile: manufacturing, construction, transportation, agriculture, road construction, and mining. The respondents were divided into two categories, members of the general public and educators. Road construction was in fifth place compared to the others. Results for road construction are outlined in the following table.

Road Construction Perceptions	General Public (%)	Educators (%)
Employers prioritize worker safety and well-being.	24	25
Employers provide on-the-job skills training.	32	39
It employs thousands of people.	44	53
It encourages physical fitness in an active environment.	32	37
It enhances my local community	33	44
It has many job opportunities.	28	36
It incorporates new technologies.	25	30
It is dangerous.	42	48
It is dirty or labor-intensive work.	47	55
It makes my life more convenient.	27	40
It pays enough to make me financially independent.	26	32
The culture is diverse and inclusive.	20	23
The industry is environmentally friendly.	10	9
The industry relies on old technologies and practices.	15	14
The work is seasonal and inconsistent.	30	30
There are long-term growth opportunities.	18	22
Wages and benefits are competitive for men and women.	25	26

Perceptions changed after they learned more about road construction. For the general public:

- The familiarity and net favorability increased 15%, from 58% to 73%.
- The likelihood of recommending the industry increased 20%, from 40% to 60%.
- The likelihood of personally considering a job increased 17%, from 26% to 43%.

For educators:

- Net favorability increased 14%, from 68% to 82%.
- The likelihood of recommending the industry for jobs increased 19%, from 51% to 70%.

The truth is that building roads requires skilled work, specialized knowledge and expertise. In addition to road construction workers, there are opportunities to operate equipment and maintain roads. The industry provides jobs for accountants, engineers, IT professionals, managers, sales and marketing professionals, and others. People are treated fairly and paid well. Salary and benefits are good enough to build a good life and save for the future. The road construction industry is closer to achieving equal pay for men and women than most. Crews often develop strong, positive social ties with each other.

Can the work be difficult and physically demanding? Yes, but that is true in many other industries that don't struggle to fill jobs. New equipment and techniques have done a great deal to make the work easier than it used to be. Safety is as important in this industry as it is in any other, and companies that have successfully created and maintained a safe working environment for their employees are proud of their accomplishments, as they should be.

In short, the benefits of working to build roads are a well-kept secret. It's time to end that. Road construction companies can improve their ability to attract and retain employees if they can get the message out about the reality of working in the industry.

Educators can play a much larger role in teaching students about the opportunities available to them. Companies should make a point of doing what colleges do and start visiting high schools two or three times a year. If the only message students get is that they ought to go to college, it's a no-brainer what they are likely to do after getting their high school diploma. Infrastructure jobs, like road construction, ought to be a compelling alternative to a four-year degree that has a fat price tag attached. Is a college education important? Yes, absolutely. But everyone's situation is different, and a college education does not always pass the test when you consider the return on investment.

What else can companies do to educate people about road construction opportunities? Look at television, online news sites and social media. Target the most likely media to reach people; for example, if you want to reach a younger audience, such as Generation Z (1997-2012), look at Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

What are some ways you can keep employees committed to their work?

- Skilled workers are hard to find, so value the employees you already have. Do what you can to ensure they are happy in their jobs.

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Even though the obvious solution for a workforce shortage is to recruit more people, retention still matters because the long-term solution is to ensure those recruits are happy.

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- Show active appreciation for the work being done. After all, building and maintaining roads is important. It improves the quality of life for everyone.
- Write schedules in advance and rotate less desirable shifts, like the night shift. People need to know as soon as possible when they will have a day off, and crews also appreciate knowing they won't be stuck on a bad shift forever.
- Give new employees some time to acclimate to the work they'll be doing. For the first week or two, have new employees watch safety videos and meet with people to get acquainted. This introductory time gives you a chance to educate them about expectations and help them be invested in what they will be doing from the very beginning.
- Check up on new hires regularly after they start working. For example, see how they are doing after 30, 60 and 90 days. Ask them whether they are getting enough training. Make sure their benefits have been set up correctly. Schedule regular training sessions about industry trends and equipment, too, so employees stay current. Ensure they know about any career-growth opportunities you offer.
- Invest in leadership education for supervisors a minimum of once a year.

Even though the obvious solution for a workforce shortage is to recruit more people, retention still matters because the long-term solution is to ensure those recruits are happy. As a result, companies that retain their employees have a definite advantage over less-savvy competitors because constant turnover is expensive.

Many problems are outside your control, but you can create a good workplace environment. Take advantage of that fact. Your business will be much more likely to thrive if you do. ◀

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