



# HARDHAT *hedline*

George Hedley - Americas Business Builder  
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December 2001

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## What Labor Shortage?

By George Hedley

### There Are Enough Workers!

Everyone complains they can't find enough good help. So the construction industry labor shortage must exist. Right? Well, guess what? There is **NOT** a labor shortage in the United States. A new luxury hotel recently opened in Las Vegas attracting 84,000 applicants for only 9,600 job openings. People flock to great jobs at high tech companies, quality manufacturers and even the service industry. People want to work. Yet the construction industry suffers from a 25% shortage of new workers entering the work force every year. The problem? No one wants to work in construction.

I speak to the construction industry over 50 times a year at major conventions and company meetings on business, leadership and customer relationships. I ask my audiences: "Do any of your kids want to work in construction?" Only 1 in a 100 answers: "Yes". With such a low response from the kids of people *in the industry*, it should come as no surprise to you that construction ranks number 248 out of 250 career opportunities among high school seniors.

### Why Construction?

Why would any young person ever want to work in the construction field? It is cold, hot, dirty and dangerous. Field workers are treated like hired hands and expected to follow orders from above, do only as told and not make waves. They aren't invited to company events, allowed to participate in profit sharing or treated as equals with management or office staff personnel. They are seldom given authority to make decisions, commit the company or spend money without approval. When it rains, they are sent home without pay. They receive little or no recognition and are not involved in project or company planning and scheduling. Great opportunity? *Not*.

Pay for construction workers has declined steadily for 10 years (adjusted for inflation and buying power) while most other career choices have experienced a net increase. Construction workers see a pay potential that plateaus quickly and declines as they get older and less valuable than their younger peers. Great upside potential? *Not*.

Fortune Magazine's "Most Admired Companies in America" train their people between 40 and 60 hours per year. The average construction company trains their people between 1 and 3 hours per year per employee. Great training? *Not*.

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3189-B Airway Avenue  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626  
Phone: 714-437-1122  
Fax: 714-437-1125  
Toll-Free: 800-851-8553  
gh@hardhatpresentations.com  
www.hardhatpresentations.com



Why would anyone be surprised that nobody wants a job in an industry that offers hard work, low pay, inadequate training, few personal development opportunities and little career growth.

### What Do Young People Want?

Young people today want responsibility, accountability, growth opportunities, high tech, involvement in decisions and pay based on performance. They want to understand the big picture at the project and company level. They need frequent recognition and rewards and someone to care about them and their future. They want a job that pays a lot more than average with an upside potential. Young people want to make a difference. They want to be an involved part of an exciting company that leads the competition. They need a vision of the future. They want to contribute to the success of their company.

All the talk, complaining, programs and money will never get young people to seek work in the construction field until construction companies change the way they do business.

### What's The Solution?

To attract great people, every construction company, large and small, must commit to creating great places to work. Each manager and supervisor must make recruiting an important part of their job. You need to convince people that your company really is a great opportunity for them and promise that their job will lead to a fantastic career. It takes more than placing a want ad or calling the hall to find and attract great people. It takes dedication, commitment, time and money to make it happen.

To retain great people companies must have a proactive and aggressive employee development program. Not lip service and idle promises. This includes ongoing training and education programs in team building, computers, supervision, leadership as well as technical skills. Also required are employee recognition systems, personal

development programs and pay for performance. Future growth career ladders must be clear, tracked and updated regularly.

To develop great people requires new management and leadership styles that coach, inspire and encourage people to become the best they can be. This requires letting go and trusting people to take it to the next level. This only happens when managers realize that people are their only competitive advantage. Their output equals *your* input!

### When Will You Start?

I am continually frustrated as I speak to owners and managers. People learn what to do, but don't do it. Why?

Most business leaders are unwilling to try new ideas. They get used to the way it is. They get comfortable in their misery, stay put and go nowhere. Is your way working? Is the comfortable way working? *Not.*

My challenge to you is to change our industry *now*. Radical innovation, risk taking and real leadership are desperately needed by everyone. Only you can return our industry to favor with potential young workers. Now is

the time for every construction company owner, leader, manager and supervisor to focus on the problems that have created this "labor shortage" by implementing immediate and long lasting solutions at every level. The only question left is: "When will *YOU* start?"

*George Hedley, owner of \$100 million construction and development company and recipient of the nationally recognized "Entrepreneur of the Year" award. He also owns HARDHAT Presentations and speaks to companies on building profitable businesses, leaders and loyal customers. For information or his free e-newsletter, visit [www.hardhatpresentations.com](http://www.hardhatpresentations.com) or call (800)851-8553.*

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**Happy Holidays....**



**We hope you have a special Holiday Season.**

**Thank you for your support and friendship.**

**We look forward to working together to build a bright and profitable 2002!**

## George Hedley's Speaking Calendar

DATE	MEETING/EVENT	LOCATION
11-08-01 to 11-09-01	Timberline Software-User Conference	Portland, OR
11-14-01	National Electrical Contractors Assn -	Kansas City, MO
11-15-01	Cemex-Tecnologico de Monterrey	Monterrey, Mexico
11-27-01	Moss Adams LLP	Spokane, WA
11-28-01	Moss Adams LLP	Portland, OR
12-06-01	Communication Construction Grp	Westchester, PA
12-07-01 to 12-08-01	Altantic Concrete Products	Philadelphia
01-08-02	World of Concrete	New Orleans, LA
01-21-02	National Utility Contractors Assn	Washington DC
01-30-02	Wick Builders	Indianapolis, IN
02-21-02	Distribution Contractors Assn	Kauai, HI
02-22-02 to 02-23-02	Timberline Software -Est. User Conf.	Dallas, TX
02-28-02	Nat'l Assn Electrical Distributors	Tampa, FL
03-14-02 to 03-15-02	International Construction Exhibit	San Jose, Costa Rica
03-19-02	Con - Expo	Las Vegas, NV
03-21-02	Con - Expo	Las Vegas, NV
03-22-02	Con - Expo	Las Vegas, NV
05-21-02	Construction Financial Mgmt Assn	Las Vegas, NV
10-24-02	Entertainment Services & Tech Assn	Las Vegas, NV

## George's current topics include:

### Building LEADERS

- Profit Driven Leadership
- Leadership For Managers & Supervisors
- People Magic - Win The War For Talent!
- Customer Driven Leadership
- Leading The Future

### Building PROFITS

- Work A Little - Make A Lot!
- The Business Success Blueprint
- Clear Targets = HUGE Results!
- Priority Magic!
- Business Roundtable

### Building CUSTOMERS

- Sell More Than Price!
- Marketing & Sales Strategies That Work
- Build A Customer Driven Company

### Construction Industry Programs

- How To Build A Construction Company That Always Makes A Profit!
- Construction Field & Project Management Systems That Work!
- Profit-Driven Estimating & Bidding Strategies That Work!
- Successful Subcontracting Is A Team Sport
- General Contracts & Sub-Contracts 101
- Construction Financial Management Made Simple!
- Accounting Is More Than Numbers!
- How To Win & Manage Negotiated & Design-Build Contracts
- Leading The Future In The Construction Industry
- Safety Starts With You!
- Business Roundtable - Interactive Problem Solving With Solutions