Fall is here, to be followed closely by winter where many of our members reside. Work will slow somewhat, although I’m hearing a lot of “We’re really busy.” As you stop to take a breath, it may be time to think of some of those fixes or changes you’ve been putting off.

1. Finding a Replacement For a Poor Performer – When you’re used to having a person around, you may start to tolerate their poor behavior. Hard to

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**President’s Message**

Although I have been associated with the American Concrete Institute (ACI) since my time as a student at the University of Texas, Austin, I never had the opportunity to visit ACI national headquarters until recently. My schedule allowed a visit in mid-August and I learned a few things about this important organization. Ron Burg, the Executive Vice President of ACI, was kind enough to show me around the place, and here are a few observations I would like to share with you.

First, as I had expected, the ACI staff members are professional and dedicated to their work. Everyone has a role and they work hard to fulfill that role with attention to detail and a commitment to delivering high quality work. Second, I saw a perspective of the required effort to organize and execute their conventions in the fall and spring, as the staff was prepared for the upcoming fall convention. ACI has over 10,000 institute members, 20,000 local chapter members and 10,000 student members. Between 1,600 and 2,000 members regularly attend the fall and spring conventions. As a point of reference, our Annual Conference generally has approximately 250 attendees.

I have attended many ACI conventions over the last 15 years and each has functioned smoothly. This is amazing considering the number of attendees, that every convention is in a new city, and that there are over 150 committee meetings during convention week.

Third, and most comforting to me, is the welcoming attitude ACI has towards ASCC and the input of contractors to their organization. As I visited with many staff members, they showed a genuine interest and appreciation of concrete contractors involvement and help in ACI. As the code writing body for our work, ACI has a great impact on what we do as concrete contractors. It’s encouraging that they value our input and want us involved in their organization.

In previous messages I have encouraged you to get involved in ACI. My recent visit to Detroit only reinforced my opinion of how important that is. As concrete contractors, we can help our industry tremendously by actively participating in ACI. Get involved with a committee, or if you can’t participate on the national level, get involved with your local chapter. Your knowledge and input can make a difference for our industry and will make you a better contractor!

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**Executive Director’s Message**

Bev Garnant

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1. Finding a Replacement For a Poor Performer – When you’re used to having a person around, you may start to tolerate their poor behavior. Hard to
The life of a small decorative concrete contractor

Who came up with the idea of stamped concrete? Surely it wasn’t someone who pours concrete for a living, or ever intended to. No one in their right mind would add hours of hard work to an already exhausting job.

Stamped concrete has the same challenges and physical demands as regular concrete. However it also adds challenges and demands. Placing regular concrete can push you to the point of utter exhaustion. Stamped concrete goes beyond a regular pour. It adds tedious, physical steps to the entire process resulting in hours of strenuous work that can push men past their breaking point. If this seems a bit melodramatic please follow me into ONE day as a decorative concrete contractor.

You wake up early to avoid the heat. Great planning if you could get your concrete truck to show up on time. After the backache of screeding, having ripped muck boots from the W.W.F., tennis elbow from running a bullfloat, and split jeans from bending over the edges, you have placed your concrete. This is when the real fun begins. Working color hardener into the slab, wearing blisters into your hands. Bruising your knees on plywood knee boards while crawling the edges. Using your last ounce of energy to beat the final stamp on what now is hard concrete.

You finally head to the cooler to catch up on electrolytes to find yourself fighting off the bees that beat you to the spigot. All of this glory to spend five minutes with the homeowner who can’t thank you enough for making their dreams come true. Or better yet, you lay your head down on the couch only to have your phone ring. “Why is my patio this color? It’s all wrong.” You answer “Wait until I wash off the release and seal it all. I’ll explain it to you first thing tomorrow morning when I am there cutting lines through your beautiful project”.

This, my friends, is one day out of 365, and yet we do it, we love it, and we couldn’t live without it.

I would have scoffed at the idea of wearing a hard hat while stamping or staining concrete 15-20 years ago. Our little family company never had any “issues” so we were OK, so we thought. What I never realized was that our company’s financial health was being gambled by not incorporating safety into the daily culture. We were one misstep away from a potential devastating incident.

Most DCC members are smaller companies of 25 people or less, where having a full time safety director is unlikely. This makes it even more important for the entire team to embrace safety. OSHA’s Safety Pays Program helps small business owners calculate the costs of an incident. It is reported that an average laceration injury averages nearly $32,000 in costs, while a back injury can run closer to $180,000. These estimates do not include possible litigation. Makes you think about letting the new person on the crew run a 4” grinder to score lines on that patio!

The point is that you can’t rely upon the assumptions you have made over your years on the job site. Utilize the education and resources of ASCC, OSHA and others to fully understand what’s required of you regarding safety procedures. Evaluate the programs you have in place, especially identifying the predictable hazards. You cannot afford to cut corners when it comes to safety, even if you are staining a residential patio. Your business depends on it!

NEW Decorative Concrete Council Logo Graphic

The Decorative Concrete Council has a new logo highlighting a transformation from plain gray to a vivid red. DCC members please contact the office for a file of the new artwork.

Decorative Concrete Council

The life of a small decorative concrete contractor

Neil Roach, DCC Council Director

2. Update/Upgrade Your Software – Are you getting by with software not designed for construction? Fear of months of training, adapting to a new way of doing things, the missteps that occur with change? So you’d prefer to stumble along the old way, behind the curve and the competition? If this is on your list get moving. The email forum on the website has lots of Q&A about software.

3. Add Another Market – If part of your strategic plan is to grow, this is one way to do it. Where are you doing structural work that you could add the parking lot or other paving? Where are you doing decorative work that you could add another dimension? Are you ready to jump into tilt-up? Or design/build? Who do you need to hire to make this happen?

4. Lean Your Office/Warehouse/Yard – One of our Leadership Forum speakers showed some great examples of how she has organized their work environment to save significant time and money. Most of us think of lean construction as occurring on the job site. But organization at company headquarters can have an equally powerful effect on productivity and general company culture. Anyone who’s been to Rocky Geans’ office or attended his Business School has seen the kool-aid. Maybe time to have a big glass.

Whatever you’ve been putting off, make the time to make the change. There may be some pain in the process, but you know what they say: no pain, no amazingly fantastic improvements.

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Safety & Risk Management Council

Dropped Object Prevention

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 52,260 injuries due to falling objects in the last reporting period, 2012. This means an injury caused by a dropped object occurs every ten minutes in the United States. This number is steadily increasing. “Struck by falling object or equipment” fatalities are up 6% year over year according to the most recent data.

Hand tools and materials can become drop hazards in three ways:

1. When vigorous use and other factors cause the user to lose control of the tool.
2. During transportation to or from work, collisions, or lack of control.
3. Tools can be unintentionally left behind or placed aside on the work surface where they are no longer secured or controlled.

Some ways to help prevent falling objects and equipment are:

Primary Drop Prevention System

Tool lanyards/tethers, tool pouches, tool belts and tool holsters are examples of Primary Drop Prevention Systems. They are employed to prevent an object’s ability to become a drop hazard. These are utilized to secure a tool or object to an employee or stationary structure.

Secondary Drop Prevention System

Floor/hole coverings, safety nets, tool canopies, controlled access zones (CAZ), toe boards, and PPE are examples of Secondary Drop Prevention Systems. These are utilized to prevent damage from a dropped or falling object after it has fallen. These are a redundancy to Primary Drop Prevention Systems.

Human Performance

Human performance plays a very big role in preventing dropped objects or materials. This includes housekeeping, tool and material storage, tool and material handling, equipment inspection and discipline.

Training

In many circumstances additional training, related specifically to dropped and falling objects, is necessary. Training should be provided to each employee who may create or be exposed to drop hazards. This training should include:

A. The nature of drop hazards and dropped objects in the workplace
B. Correct procedures and equipment for drop prevention
C. Purpose and application of applicable Primary and Secondary Drop Prevention Systems
D. Proper storage and handling of equipment and materials at heights
E. Reporting requirements for incidents and near hits

CHECK IT OUT

Electrical cords are used every day on jobsites. As with any tool, they must be checked before and during use. Anyone using a cord must be trained to recognize potential safety issues.

Cracks in the casing, exposing wiring.
Loose connections at cord ends.
Damaged cords must be removed from the field, tagged and sent for repair.

Consider Excluding Formed Concrete Surface Specifications In Your Bid

Have you seen or heard of any requirements for formed concrete surface quality in bid packages? They might be in the form of a reference to ACI 347.3R-13, “Guide to Formed Concrete Surfaces,” in specifications based on models such as AIA MasterSpec™. Sometimes specifications other than ACI 301 reference ACI Guides, even though ACI 347.3R-13 states that:

“Therefore to this document shall not be made in contract documents. If items found in this document are desired by the Architect/Engineer to be a part of the contract documents, they shall be restated in mandatory language for incorporation by the Architect/Engineer.”

Ward Malisch, Concrete Construction Specialist

Courtesy of Christman Constructors, Inc.

Jason Sisk, SRMC Board
Based on this, you might also see or hear of specifications in which the architect or other licensed design professional requires that formed surfaces meet one of four concrete surface categories -- CSC-1 through CSC-4. If you have read or heard of either a Division 3 reference to ACI 347.3R-13 or requirements for CSC on walls, columns, or other vertical elements, please call Bruce or me. We’ve not heard of the CSC requirements or the ACI document being included in specifications, but we want to know if this is happening. In addition to alerting us you might also want to consider qualifying your bid by excluding that section or reference in the specifications. Here’s why:

In his column for the March 2014 ASCC Voice, Bruce listed concerns about the impact on concrete contractors if these quality requirements were included or referenced in a specification. In such specifications, the licensed design professional chooses the desired CSC from a table in ACI 347.3R-13 and specifies the expected appearance and features for each specific area. The contractor is then expected to determine the means and methods, material type and quantities, and associated costs to achieve the specified concrete surface finish. The problem is that the required means and methods for achieving each of the four concrete surface classifications are not easy to pin down because of the many variables involved. These variables include concrete properties, form facing and type and amount of release agent used, weather conditions, and placing and consolidation methods. So it’s difficult to prepare a bid with any confidence that all of the variables have been taken into account.

We’ll soon be completing a research project in which we have examined and evaluated ACI 347.3R-13. The report will include data and a discussion of sampling and measuring methods for Surface Void Ratio (a measure of the number and size of bugholes), one of several criteria used in determining the concrete surface category. It also includes considerable background information on other methods used to classify and specify formed-surface quality, including the document from the German Concrete Association (Merkblatt Sichtbeton Deutscher Beton-und Bautechnik-Verein e.V. 2004) on which ACI 347.3R-13 is based. Our final report will be submitted by the end of the year and more details will be available.

**Mentor / Mentee Program**

Greg Hryniewicz, Hyde Concrete

In 2014, the Emerging Leaders Council proposed a mentor program with the goal of enhancing the transfer of knowledge between our members. Today, I’m proud to say that I am both a mentee and a mentor. The process is simple, you fill out a simple two page form clarifying details about what you are looking for (as a mentee) or what you can provide (as a mentor). This form is submitted to Bev who reviews the options. When a match is found, introductions are made and an outline of expectations are provided. From there, it’s the participant’s responsibility to take advantage of the new relationship. While it may take a bit of time to find the right match, the wait is worth the while. I became a mentee to a very senior person in an extremely large concrete organization. I am humbled and honored that this leader has offered me his personal time to share his knowledge and experience. We have had numerous phone conversations and he has been an excellent source of guidance and industry knowledge that can only come from a person in his capacity and experience. Conversely, I was recently paired up as mentor to a young man working hard to develop his decorative company (something I specialize in). It has been an honor to be able to ‘pay back’ with my time and provide value to one of our excellent industry peers. I highly encourage all members of the ASCC to pursue the opportunity to become either a mentor or mentee, the rewards are tremendous!

**ACI Announces New Structural Concrete Specifications**

The American Concrete Institute announces the availability of two important new documents for concrete industry professionals: ACI 301-16 Specifications for Structural Concrete and the ACI Field Reference Manual.

ACI 301-16 Specifications for Structural Concrete is a reference specification that an architect or engineer can apply to any construction project involving structural concrete, by citing it in the project specifications. A mandatory requirements checklist and an optional requirements checklist are provided to assist the architect or engineer in supplementing the provisions of this specification as required or needed, by designating or specifying individual project requirements.

The ACI Field Reference Manual is a compilation of documents including ACI 301-16 Specifications for Structural Concrete and additional ACI documents on measuring, mixing, transporting, and placing concrete; concrete pumping methods; hot- and cold-weather concreting; consolidation; and concrete formwork. ACI 301-16 requires that contractors keep a copy of the ACI Field Reference Manual in the field office of any project where ACI 301 is specified.

Learn more and purchase both documents at www.concrete.org or by calling 248-848-3700. Join the conversation by following #ACI301.