

When times get tough, the tough must wisely manage their time. When work is slow, as it all too often has been lately, it's crucial to take advantage of the time: down time should never mean wasted time. In fact, down time is a great time to retrain your work force and catch up on technological advancements that could help better manage your worksite.

RETRAIN THE WORKFORCE

"This recession is the perfect time to retool inefficient training," says Todd Hudson of the Maverick Institute, which helps companies rethink training approaches for faster, more cost-effective results. "Companies need to save money and improve performance now. Once the economy turns around, companies will be too busy to change how they train."

Through his company, Hudson consults on employee training in a wide variety of industries. Of the building industry, he says that the greatest areas for improvement are in eliminating mistakes and safety violations.

"People in the building trades commonly learn by doing and see making mistakes as a necessary part of the process," he says. "But this can be expensive and time-consuming, and not a good approach under today's circumstances. Contractors are bidding low to get whatever jobs they can, and this means little or no profit. Mistakes could wipe out any profit at all. Safety incidents, for example, could lead to short crews, paperwork, worker compensation claims and increased insurance premiums. And possibly fines if incidents are serious or recurring."

Hudson concedes that traditional, and even online, training programs aimed at construction workers have been insufficient because, he says, it is imperative to customize the method of training to suit an individual's preferred learning methods. And let's not kid ourselves into thinking that a day cooped up in a classroom or logged onto a PC is going to do much good for tradesmen who typically learn on the jobsite.

"Training industry is passing this sector by with its focus on computer-based learning," says Hudson. "People in building trades need engaging methods that work on the jobsite. High-impact mentoring often works well where on the job training is necessary."

RETOOL THE TECH

Another way to enhance jobsite efficiency is, of course, to take advantage of some of the advanced technology at our disposal. The economy may be floundering, but technology never seems to be. In fact, it is often hard to keep up with the latest gizmos and gadgets. But doing so could yield untold benefits when business starts picking up, especially as there has been an explosion in time-management tools. Among the many new products, programs and developments, here are just a few to give you an idea of what's out there.

> Building Information Modeling BIM technology has been around awhile but only seems to be getting better with each generation. The technology is used to generate and manage building data, often with 3D, real-time software, while a construction project is in progress.

One of South Florida's premier construction companies, Current Builders, uses BIM technologies to pre-construct many buildings in order to resolve and clarify potential design

Use Down Time to Improve Efficiency: Retraining your work force, retooling your technology

Written by Ben Ikenson
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problems. “BIM allows us to predict and resolve future problems and then extract only the information that we need for a specific task in a very efficient and reliable way,” says John A. Cline, the company’s quality control manager. Thanks to BIM technology, Current Builders can address many complex issues that would be otherwise unfeasible prior to and even during construction. The technology has also significantly reduced changes in work orders by resolving problems earlier, thereby saving enormous time and expense of building plan revisions.

> Cbeyond Mobile Workforce

Manager Cbeyond, the Atlanta company that makes this mobile location-based services and resource management application suite, boasts that the new service drives increased revenue opportunities and reduced operating costs for companies with field service operations. The application requires no software or IT infrastructure investment, just a mobile data plan from the company, and businesses can download the application wirelessly. Customers have instant access to the location of their mobile employees, and, according to Cbeyond, the savings from reduced payroll and overtime costs, fewer fleet miles, and increased mobile employee productivity can reach an estimated \$1,500 per mobile employee per year.□

> Tethys Solutions Automation Anywhere User-friendly automation software technology enables fast automation of simple and complex tasks, without any programming.□ In the construction industry automation software can be used to automate routine design modifications, generate invoices or standard reports, generate sales figures or analyze project material usage on a scheduled basis.□ In these challenging times, it’s like having an extra set of reliable hands.”