

Relationships ... the foundation of construction

By Katrina Keyes



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Relationships are the foundation to developing opportunities in the construction industry. In private construction projects, general contractors and corporations can solicit their contractor of choice to negotiate a price for work. The GC or corporation does not have to go

out to bid for competitive pricing. In public construction projects, GCs or government agencies do follow a competitive bid process but can limit whom they solicit for bids and can also limit the number of bidders solicited. In construction, getting a project is all about who you know and who knows you. Most contractors like to do business with contractors they know and trust.

Relationships being the foundation to success in construction can put minorities at a disadvantage in gaining contracts, because they may not have the relationships needed to get business opportunities. Building relationships should be one of the primary tasks of contractors, especially minority contractors. Most government agencies, corporations and some general contractors have programs to assist minorities in developing relationships to pursue construction opportunities. Many of the chambers and contractor organizations also provide networking venues and assistance to facilitate relationship building between minority contractors and large construction entities. The premier con-

struction networker building relationships between minorities and large contractors is the DFW Minority Business Development Council's Hard Hat Construction Expo. Hard Hat usually takes place annually in March and provides a venue for minority contractors to gain information on upcoming construction projects and meet over 100 construction exhibitors.

Outside of the Hard Hat event, minority contractors can also build relationships by joining contractor organizations, such as, the Black Contractors Association, www.bcadallas.org, and the Hispanic Contractors Association, www.hcadfw.org. These organizations offer many resources to facilitate relationships between minority contractors and large construction entities. They also offer training and assistance to help minority contractors enhance business processes and management systems including assistance with certification, bonding, insurance, safety and financial capital. When joining an organization, become an active member and get involved with a committee or project. Working on a committee will allow others

to become familiar with you and your company. Active service with an organization is one of the best networking tools a contractor can use to gain new business opportunities.

After you develop important business relationships, create a contact list of the top 10 or 20 contacts you want to keep in touch with and communicate with your contacts on a monthly basis. You can keep in touch with your contacts by inviting them to lunch, placing a phone call or e-mail to stay in touch, or sending them a card or little gift. The purpose is to have a constant presence in front of your important contacts. The next time one of your contacts has a project in your trade, you will be the first contractor they call. Your important contacts may also become champions to refer you to other contractors. Success in construction is all about relationships so start developing business relationships today!

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