

**Mike Merrill:**

Hello and welcome back to the Mobile Workforce Podcast. I'm your host, Mike Merrill, and today we speak with Mr. Bruce Waltz. Bruce is with Horn, and at Horn, he and his colleagues are helping instruct and advise and consult companies. That are looking to hire, recruit and promote new blood within their organizations and the different types of people that come from different generations in our society.

So give this one a listen. I think you'll find it instructive and helpful, and we recommend that you reach out to Bruce and his team and see how they might be able to help you. Well, welcome on the podcast today, Bruce, really looking forward to this conversation. Thank you, Mike. You betcha. So to start things off, you do a presentation.

We're here at the foundation user conference converge 24, and you've got a session that you're speaking on. And, it's pretty popular and people are anticipating and excited to learn and hear what you have to say. But just to start this conversation. You highlight about six generations, that you discuss of breaking people into different groups. Can you explain what that's like and what those entail?

**Bruce Walt:**

So, social generations are broken up into birth years. There is, in the U. S. today, There's the silent generation. These are people born between 1925 and 1945. Then there are the baby boomers, which were born between 1946 and 1964. Then there are generation X, which was born between 1965 and 1979.

Then we have millennials who were born between 1980 and 1994. Then we have generation Z, which was born between 95 and 2012. And the latest generation is what we call Polars. And they were born beginning in 2013.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow. Okay. So Polars isn't, I hadn't heard that one before.

**Bruce Walt:**

Yeah. Polars. There are a couple of names for this group.

Some people call them alphas because alpha comes after Z. But there's an author, Jean Twenge, who uses the term polars, for two reasons, one, the two of the defining, I guess, Things going on in our country today is the political polarization that's taking place. And then it's also a reference to our environment and the melting polar ice caps.

**Mike Merrill:**

Oh, interesting. Okay. Couple of dual meanings there. So, so within that, what impact does it have on society? The, the year or the generation you were born in. I mean, why is there such a difference and why is it even notable enough to talk about and give it a name?

**Bruce Walt:**

Okay. So I would start by saying this, that our fundamental views of the world are often formed during adolescence and early adulthood. And so, you know, some traits and characteristics that we have change very, very little, throughout our lifetime as they are formed. And those who were born at roughly the same time experience a number of the same things growing up. So you can't say that, You know, all Gen Z is this, or all millennials or that, but it's really about averages. It's also about our culture, our changing cultural norms.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. You know, it's, I mean, as I'm just thinking in my mind here, I'm thinking of things that seem relatable when I'm talking to people. You know, we're talking about television shows that were the Andy Griffith show and happy days and, you know, shows that were popular when I was very small.

And when you have those discussions with people, it takes you back. And all of a sudden there's a feeling, a connection. There's something there that bonds you to that person you're talking to, where you feel like we can relate. We can't, we, we get each other. Right. So is that what we're talking about here?

**Bruce Walt:**

So, let's talk about what causes generational differences, and one of the first things is what you just mentioned, major events, right? You can remember major things, in your life, and those tend to bond people together. For me, one of the things, and you may think this is interesting, but I can always, I will always remember where I was when I heard that Elvis Presley died.

So, you know, big, historical, major events are one thing that helps people bond. classify us into generation. Another is technology and so as you mentioned, baby boomers, the first to grow up with television, millennials, really our first digital natives, Gen Z, you know, all of this technology is here today.

So it's all a given to them. So technology is really driving, some of these generational differences and in their Transcribed Two other things that are really being made possible by technology that are also having an impact. The first is what we call individualism. And so individualism is, you know, more thinking about the self, my wants, my needs, and technology has enabled.

That for us over the years because we're no longer spending as much time, just in our daily lives doing the drudgery. So of life, right? We have all these modern appliances. We have, everybody has central heat and air. And so, you know, Technology has enabled more individualism, right? Did you go back to your, comment about television, right?

When I was growing up, if you wanted to watch Sanford and son, it was appointment television, right? You had to be in front of your television at seven o'clock central time on Friday. to see the television show Sanford and Son, and then your family also had to agree that that's what they wanted to watch.

Well now, you know, you simply go to an iPad, you go to your phone, you go to a flat screen TV, and you watch whatever you want to watch. There is no appointment television anymore. So technology is driving this individualism. The second thing that we're seeing is, a slower pace of life. And by that, I mean, we're growing up more slowly.

We are entering adulthood at a slower rate. We're taking longer, to educate ourselves. And so our life should Trajectories are slowing down, and again, that's all the result of technology.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, we're getting married older. Yes. We're having less children. I mean, they're so, it. Yes. And you talk about, you know, I think about times when even, you know, I've got kids, I've got three grandkids, so I'm kind of in that next generation starting up.

And if I look around the room, sometimes when we're getting together, there may be one thing on the TV and it's probably Netflix or some other streaming app, And there may be four or five other devices around that television and everybody's someone's scrolling social media. Somebody else is watching something on YouTube.

I mean, we may be consuming five or six different things at the same time and they're all unique and different yet. We're in the same room. Isn't that fascinating?

**Bruce Walt:**

Individualism, right? It's all about. The self now.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. So, so now, I mean, for the purpose of the podcast, what impact does this have on our work

environment, in our professional area when we're trying to, we're trying to build things in construction and get things done. How, how does that impact and translate over to the workplace?

**Bruce Walt:**

So I think that what you'll see is, but what. The same things that were true, in terms of the individual and how you're growing up are also the same things that are happening in work and how we think about work. So let's take COVID for example, right?

COVID has redefined, for many people, the way that they work. And if you're part of Gen Z, you're You're just coming into the workforce as co as COVID broke out. And so whether you were furloughed or you were able to work from home, you don't have years and years and years of going to an office or going to a construction site.

Are going to a construction trailer to do work. You are perfectly comfortable and it seems normal to you, to work from home. And so we see lots of examples of where things like that are happening in the workplace today.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. Which, you know, it's no secret to us with construction, the project happens out.

On the site, it's not, I mean, you, a lot of the work has to be done physically in a different location. So, that remote working in that environment doesn't work.

**Bruce Walt:**

And that's one of the challenges in construction, right, is to get something built, you do have to be on site. But one of the things that we are seeing is things like, project managers.

There are many, many companies who are hiring remote project managers now. But you know, it doesn't take away that. Yes, you've got to be there to build this building or to lay this concrete. But what companies are doing, if even if they can't, do the work remotely. The smart companies are looking at how do I make my schedules more flexible?

How do I give people a little more work life integration, work life balance, whatever you want to call it. How do I give people more of that? Because work life balance is so important to both millennials and Gen Z.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. And I think, I mean, I've probably evolved too. I mean, I grew up in construction. I, you know, I was born in 1973.

So that maybe that's instructive to my view of the world, as I've gotten older, maybe part of it's society changing underneath my feet and part of it's me maturing, gaining wisdom, but I'm recognizing it's important to have that balance. Also, I'm at a time where, you know, you only have so many years here on this planet.

So you want to make the most of them. And stacking up the biggest pile of money isn't what's driving me now. Now in my twenties and thirties, I was real worried about that. And, and that was the focus, right? I felt like it's time to dig deep and grind and be gritty and sacrifice and maybe struggle, but it's gotta be worth it kind of thing.

I look at it differently now. So what is there, some of the talking points that you share and the wisdom that you share that would help translate and understand that a little better. So

**Bruce Walt:**

I'll start by saying, and things do change over time. But you're what you're a Gen Xer and so Gen Xers are known for being tough resilient. Thank you. Gen Xers, were what we call the latchkey kids, right? So people who were born during Generation X think about this. That's the first generation in America where it was normal. That both parents worked outside the home. And it was also normal that our parents, were divorced. And so single parent, families were much began to be much more prevalent during Gen X, which made those kids independent, self reliant, tough, and gritty, which are some of the things that you just talked about that, you felt like you were growing up.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, it sounds like these are, again, some of them are. I think we kind of talked a little bit earlier, there's some correlation and maybe there's some causation in both of those. Right. And I don't know where you draw the line on those, but what is your thought on that?

**Bruce Walt:**

So, you know, I don't think that you can relate everything to cause, but we do see these trends.

Happening. And so I don't think that we can ignore them at all. One of the things that we're seeing are just huge changes in behaviors in young people, since 2012. And 2012 is kind of a red, what I would call a red letter date in that 2012 is the kind of a tipping point, when more than 50 percent of Americans had a smartphone, and talk about technology. Smartphone was introduced, in 2007. So the fastest adoption of technology, in the history of the world. In five years, 50 percent of Americans had a smartphone. So 50 percent had a smartphone, 70 percent by, 2012, who had smartphones said they were engaging with social media on a daily basis.

And so I don't know if that's the cause. Or there's a correlation between what we're seeing in terms of depression, in young people, we're seeing just significant spikes in suicide, in young people, and the numbers don't change until you get to the And so, cause, correlation, I don't know, but it is something I think that people do need to be aware of, as they're thinking about their kids.

**Mike Merrill:**

So do you think, you know, and I know just from things I read, young girls especially are really impacted by this stuff, and I, I mean, my brain goes to, are they comparing themselves to these perfect, you know, airbrushed, photoshopped, you know, models and beauty stars and all these, and they're supposed to become this thing and they just can't get there.

Young man, maybe it's athletes or whoever it is, they follow and idolize, so to speak. I think, you know, we all, we all want to be like that person that we want. Everybody wanted to be Michael Jordan when I was a kid and everybody knew, who Michael Jordan was and

probably still does. So. How much of it do you think is that or are there other things in play here?

**Bruce Walt:**

You know, I, you talk about girls and that is one of the things that we're seeing is that depression, suicide spiking much more in girls than boys. And it's probably, a combination of the fact that this whole self image, body image, you know, bullying and, In the cyber world now, I'm using digital media, relationships.

One of the other things that we're seeing is that face to face time since 2012 is dropping significantly. The average teen spends, About an hour less a day, today in face to face interaction with their peers. They're all sitting in their bedrooms, you know, texting each other or sharing social media.

So face to face interaction is also one of the things that You know, drives depression, isn't that, you know.

**Mike Merrill:**

It's interesting. You use the word face time and that means something different to this generation than it used to mean to us. To us, it meant physically in proximity with somebody physically where you could.

You know, have physical touch, be there with them, feel their, spirit or their essence or their vibe, whatever you want to call it. You can't really do that the same digitally, right?

**Bruce Walt:**

No, you can't. There is something about being in the room with someone. There's something about having that conversation face to face that is different.

**Mike Merrill:**

So there's all of these things that we've discussed. You know, when contractors are out on the project, you got construction workers that are physically doing demanding things of their body. There's pressure, there's stress. There's probably not good work life balance when you're behind on a project and you're working overtime hours, you might not be getting proper nutrition.

These guys, and I'm, I've been one of them, you know, they're pounding energy drinks and there's, you know, again, probably over caffeinated and under hydrated. Probably don't have. Again, good nutrition. What impact did those types of things have on, you know, how these people are doing inside in construction?

**Bruce Walt:**

So that's a, and that's a great question. I would tell you that many in construction today are struggling because of the things that you just talked about, long working hours, not taking care of themselves. Particularly, I will tell you that Gen Z is a particularly unhealthy, generation.

And again, I go back to 2012. You see obesity, in Gen Z began to spike. about 2012. So, I think as an employer, you really need to think about work life balance, for your employees. And you need to think about the benefits that you are offering to them and that includes things like compensation.

That's going to include things like Your health plans, that's going to include conversations around health. That's going to include conversations and resources around mental health. I just went to, an event put on, by a group of construction companies that some of them are my clients. They had it on a Friday night.

I really didn't know what to expect. Friday night in Columbus, Mississippi. and. Over 250 construction people showed up, from superintendents to folks that, you know, that actually do the manual work in the field. And the program was built for them. There was a conversation around basic financial independence, giving them suggestions around how you can leverage your money, use your money wisely, save for your future.

There was a conversation around physical health, and then there was a conversation around. mental health. So I thought it was a fantastic idea by this group of contractors that came together and put this program in place. And I was shocked 250 people showed up on a Friday night for it. So there is, there's interest there.

**Mike Merrill:**

And they probably paid attention. They probably had some takeaways. They probably Got some ideas and maybe some comfort in knowing, how to translate some of what was going on for them.

**Bruce Walt:**

Absolutely. And it was all designed for them. I mean, it was not sophisticated financial language at all. I mean, it was about, Hey, you need to take advantage.

If your employer, matches your contribution into your 401k program, you need to put at least that much into your 401k program. You know, you need to be concerned about diabetes. I mean, just basic information that impacts. These guys and women on a daily basis.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. I mean, even going back, I was thinking in my mind 30 years ago and I'm thinking, well, really even not even 20. And then I'm thinking, I don't even know if 10 years ago, those conversations were really happening.

**Bruce Walt:**

So they weren't and that's going to be, as we think about construction, right. It's an industry in terms of a place to work that's out of favor today. I mean, I think. In February, at the end of February, there were 400, 000 plus open positions in construction.

McKenzie says that between now and 27 or 28, that just due to the infrastructure law alone, another 300, 000 plus jobs are going to be created. They're looking towards the end of the 2020s, in terms of, some of these alternative energy sources and renewable energy creating almost a thousand, excuse me, a million jobs, out there.

So construction. People aren't flocking to construction and the companies that focus in on these, that understand the, their workforce, that understands what's appealing to their workforce and change their companies and meet people where they are. They're the ones that are going to be successful in attracting, growing and retaining talent.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, you, I mean, it's kind of the obvious thing. We hear a lot of, I hear a lot of people talking about it, but you know, baby boomers are retiring. People are having less children. How are we gonna, we're getting squalls from both ends here in the industry that has a growth trajectory that's far past what we are at today.

We can't lose anybody. We need to add more. How do, how do we do that? Who's, who's solving and addressing and working on that problem?

**Bruce Walt:**

So we do need to add more and you're right. And I, you hit on some points there are just absolutely key and critical, right? Baby boomers are leaving, construction and the workforce in general.

And we are about to hit a point in time between now and 2027, 30 million people will turn age 65 and that has some bigger impacts down the road, right? As we think about, people are living longer. You know, what I've read something this week that says baby boomers, the average baby boomer has about, 250,000 between a 401k.

So most of them are not financially prepared to live another 20. So, you know, from our business standpoint, we're losing knowledge. We're losing experience over here, rapid rates. The latest numbers on retirements are up. We're seeing about 11,500 people retire per day and that's baby boomers in Gen X.

We started out with a lot fewer people, right? We went from 76 million births. In the baby boomer generation to about 55 million births in Gen X. So for the last 10 to 15 years, right, we've been looking for those managers that could step in. Well, the fact is those managers were never there. They're just 20, 20 million fewer people.

And so that's why it has been. So important, for companies to look beyond Gen X and in ways and really focus on how do I grow my millennial? And how do I grow my Gen Z leaders faster? And companies that are doing that are more successful. I've got to get younger people ready to lead, faster. One thing that is a positive, I saw a couple of weeks ago, an article in the, in the wall street journal that there is a bit of an uptick,

in people who are considering young people who are considering construction, as a field and one of the things driving that is, college debt, right? People, young people are beginning to see that, I can go to school for four or five years. I can, I'm probably going to have to borrow money. Millennials, by the time the millennial generation was over, one out of two had college debt and so, instead of taking on college debt, then being really underemployed.

When I get out of school, you know, I spend all this time in college and I get a, and I don't mean any disrespect here, but I get a 60,000 marketing job. I could have gone into construction out of high school and been making, you know, 70, 80, 90, maybe a hundred thousand dollars for these four or five years learning a skill that is needed badly.

There's all kind of opportunities in there. So we're seeing that's right. No debt and then so we're seeing a little bit of a change there in terms of our mindset about going in going to college versus going into the trades. You But we don't, we haven't seen it long term to know whether it's going to be a trend or not, but we are seeing a little bit of an uptick in young people considering the trades.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. I would say in construction, we still have a marketing problem. We've got to, how do we attract more because it is noble. It is wonderful. What I mean, we build America, we build this country physically.

**Bruce Walt:**

And that's one of the things that. Is important for construction is to connect the work with purpose.

Millennials, Gen Z in particular, want to do work that means something. And so if you can connect your work to a higher purpose, it's going to be more attractive to them.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, we, I'm from Utah and we're heavily involved in our local AGC chapter there. And a couple of years ago is our 100th year of our chapter being established the anniversary and the governor and we had, you

know, lieutenant governor and all the political people of the state senators and different representatives of different districts.

They're at a huge celebration. We also built an education center that was, I think, 42 percent of the labor and materials were donated by. Contractors in the state of Utah to build that and they did a, we build Utah campaign and there were commercials and you saw it around and it made me proud to be involved in construction where I'm watching this and I'm feeling it like, wow, this is actually pretty cool when you really think of the impact that construction has on society.

I mean, it's everything. We keep our buildings running. The, the office that we work in, somebody maintained it, somebody built it. Somebody is going to re-roof it. I mean, it really is more noble than I think it gets street cred for, so to speak.

### **Bruce Walt:**

It's absolutely more noble. And I will tell you that, the companies that jump on that and connect, purpose to their work, higher calling to their work are going to be more successful.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I agree with that. And I think, you know, for our listeners, I'm, you know, I would encourage you to reach out to the ABC and to AGC and to those associations that you're a part of and start having those conversations. Ask, what can we do to elevate this? The, the visibility of what we're doing and the, the good work that we're doing.

Creating and a part of that is a great living. I mean, you know, I know construction workers that are making more than my dentist probably. So, I mean, there's good jobs out there and there's great opportunities and we just need more people to help fill them.

### **Bruce Walt:**

There are good jobs and there are great opportunities and pay is coming up, right?

That's one of the fallouts of not having enough people that are considering construction is that we're having

to pay more to get people to come into the industry. So yeah, there's an opportunity to earn a great living to work in an area that is doing fantastic things, you know, above the individual. Tremendous opportunities out there.

### **Mike Merrill:**

So to zoom it back in on specific companies and our listeners and what they can do, how do they do a better job at communicating with, helping, serving, supporting, you know, Gen Xers, Gen Y, Gen Z, these polar, you know, all the different You know, groups of people at, at the same time and bring everybody together.

### **Bruce Walt:**

Let's go a little bit more narrow and or narrower or whatever the word is, and focus on Millennials and Gen Z. Okay. Because By 2030, those two groups are going to make up 75 percent of the world. So the first thing you can do as a construction company owner or as a group of people that own construction company, is to embrace technology, right?

We are in an age where millennials. And Gen Z are digital natives. So they want to use technology in their work and, construction in a lot of areas has a reputation for being way behind in technology. In technology. And so embracing technology, bringing it into the workforce, right? We're here, at a conference today that's really focused on technology.

And so you have people here that are beginning to understand that. So you gotta one embrace technology. Two, we talked about it earlier, you gotta showcase your purpose, right? How are we contributing, to a greater good? And that is particularly, impactful to Gen Z. Millennials, are tend to be more about the individual, but Gen Z wants to be part of something bigger.

Gen Z thinks the system is broken and so they want to change the system, so being part of something bigger is important to them. The third, we talked about this earlier, you've got to offer flexibility. You got to get creative with it. You got to think about, you know, do we do four tens? Do we do four twelves?

What do we do to offer people more flexibility? I have

a client, that I was really surprised that we started working with at the end of last year. They gave their workforce in the field. No vacation, zero vacation. They had seven days a year that they tied to days off that their customers had, that they gave their employees off.

Just don't come to work that day. And you had to plan things around those seven days. We worked with them. We talked them into, this is, you know, this is an issue. You need to do that. They began, they, this year they offered employees for the first time in their almost 70 year history, they offered vacation and it was a week, which was a lot better than what they had in their employees. Have just talked about that, and that's been just a huge move forward for them. So flexibility is something you've got to think about, and you've got to get creative with that. The next thing you can do is provide more learning opportunities. Millennials, Gen Z, they want to understand what the career, what their career path is.

And so they want to know that you're investing in them. They want to know that you're thinking about how they're moving up the ladder and if you aren't doing this, They will not stay with you. It's extremely important to them that they understand and see that you are investing in them as individuals, and you are providing opportunities for them to advance their careers.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, it's interesting you bring that up. I'm sure you heard the keynote this morning from Mike Otey, the president of Foundation Software, and We actually did a podcast discussion with him yesterday also, and talk a little bit more about this, but, his focus was, and I love that he said this. He's such a great leader.

And he really lives and practices what he preaches. But, but I love that he said their focus, it's not clients first. I mean, he said that to all the clients. He said, it's our employees first. And if we take care of them and he talked about that, give them a path, help promote them, help recruit them, help grow them, help them grow.

And if you do that, they're going to take care of the customers. And I thought, wow, you know, that's great.

I really haven't heard that from someone in his position in the 20 something years I've been here. I know that's the way that they run their operation and that's kind of what guides their ship.

I think our construction customers and those in the industry can learn from that. And, and, you know, we had another customer on last night and we talked about, we had a discussion about we are a company that builds people. And then the people build our projects. And so I just, I love that thought process that you're sharing and that, Mike Ode and our customer yesterday shared about focusing on those individuals first.

### **Bruce Walt:**

It's critical and it starts with your employees. The question that I always ask when I'm working with, with my clients and we're talking about, you know, what they're doing for their employees is. How can you expect your employees to treat your clients better than you treat them? Yeah. Right. You set the example in how you treat them.

So it's critical. One of the other things that I think is important here as we talk about millennials and Gen Z is to be successful going forward. You're going to have to place more emphasis on and foster inclusion. Millennials Gen Z are much more racially and ethnic, ethnically diverse, than say Gen X and boomers.

In fact, Gen Z is going to be the last American generation. Where the majority of people in that generation are white. We have a much higher, number of mixed race people. Now we have, a much more, a much higher, number of Hispanic people in the United States now. And so you're going to need to embrace.

Inclusion. One of the things that I talk about with clients, a good bid is we'll go to websites and we'll pull up, you know, construction company leadership teams. And I say this with no disrespect, but when you look at them today, they're almost all male. They're almost all white. You know, there's the random, woman, two or three in a leadership team, and maybe one minority.

We're going to have to do better than that going forward because the population of the United States is changing. And so being inclusive and particularly Gen



Z is attuned. And so they want to be, their friends don't look like them in many cases, and they want to see something different in that area.

**Mike Merrill:**

Well, I think too, if we go back to the employee, if the employee profile, if you want to call it that, is changing and evolving and including, A more diverse mix of different types of people from different backgrounds, different ethnicities, then, and companies are doing a good job at recruiting, promoting, helping them grow.

We're going to get more entrepreneurs out of them. We're going to get more companies that are started by these people that are entrepreneurial, but they didn't feel like they had a chance before that they had the opportunity, or maybe they couldn't do it. Maybe they didn't have the mentorship our industry needs it.

I mean, we need it. And you know, the rising tide lifts all the boats in the Harbor. We've got to stop just being in it for us and start looking out for our legacy. You know, what are we leaving to our children? It can't be just my company. You know, this is the, you know, I'm everything, the sun rises and sets on everything I'm building here.

So we do need to look to the left and the right, but our neighbor and.

**Bruce Walt:**

Absolutely. One other thing, that construction has been slow to embrace. We talked about technology in the work. You've got to get into social media. I mean, you know, that's a bit of a double edged sword. We talked a little bit earlier about some of the, impacts of social media.

But I will tell you that Gen Z, millennials, that's the, their own social media every day. We've got to go to where they are. We've got to show them, Hey, there are opportunities for you. We've got to show them here are the good things that we are doing in construction. And so you've got to go. To where they are.

And if you aren't leveraging social media for things like recruiting for having people see what it's like to work, in your company, you're missing out because the best

construction companies are using social media to their advantage today.

**Mike Merrill:**

Well, yeah, those potential employees won't find you because they're on social media and you are noticeably absent.

That's right. Right. So those that are plugged in are going to get those eyeballs and those ears and that mind share. Right.

**Bruce Walt:**

Go look at construction company websites and see what they say about culture. And a lot of times it's very lacking. It might be two paragraphs if they have anything. Now there's a lot about safety and safety is important, but other aspects of culture, is, is lacking.

You know, there'll be two paragraphs in some stock photo, out there, but the companies that are using social media, to show, what it's like to work there, what our culture, is like, we've got a client that, has really almost positioned themselves as a Navy SEAL team. You know, there are certain, if you've contributed in certain ways, you earn a special patch for your hat.

And for your uniform. And so if you have that patch, you get the ultimate respect, in that group because they know you are just like a Navy SEAL.

**Mike Merrill:**

Interesting. I I've shared before. We've got a few ideas that customers have had. We've had podcast that within their construction companies, they have, evening English classes.

For, for people that English is their second language. So they're helping educate for free. Sometimes during work or lunch and learns, we've got a customer that has the nation's flag for every employee that they've hired. And they've got, you know, I think, I think I heard 40 something flags in their shop.

And so when those employees show up, they, they see their country's flag, they're being acknowledged. And so they feel included and respected and seen. There,

there's probably lots of things that companies can do to help acknowledge and recognize their staff and the needs that they have. But I, I, I would challenge.

Well, listeners to think within your own company, what are you doing along these lines and take some steps, do something right, and then build upon that. And, and I think you're right, Bruce. I think they'll see a difference. I think they'll see progress where there wasn't progress before.

**Bruce Walt:**

You're absolutely right.

Get creative. Pick one or two initiatives and really focus on those. One of the things that we offer, what we call employee life cycle assessments, where we will come in, we'll come into a company and we will, we'll start out with interviews with leaders across the company to get their perspective on what it's like to work there.

And then we do a survey with the entire employee group from top leadership yep all the way to the guy or a woman who is, you know, on the end of a shovel in the company. And they all have the chance to give feedback on what I call the eight. Yeah. Yes, yes. It's, it's anonymous feedback on, the eight touch points in what we call the employee life cycle, beginning at recruiting and ending at off boarding.

So we follow that with either one on one conversations or focus group conversations with them on things that we pick out of the surveys that we think might be relevant. And then we come back to the, to the company leadership and give them a full readout on what it's like. To work in this company from what it's like to be, what that recruiting experience is like, what that onboarding experience is like, what the growth experience is like, what the preparing me for leadership experience is like, and all the way to.

What's the experience like when I leave the company? And, it's a, it's a very valuable tool to get insights into what you need to do to make your company more attractive to millennials and Gen Z.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. My mind goes a couple places and I plan out if I had this conversation with You know, the average construction company that I meet at NECA or World of Concrete or if I'm in a trade show and I ask them, do you ever do employee surveys or if I, you know, if I, if I went down that trap or they would maybe feel like it's a trap.

If I went down that talk track and say, Are you doing this? I guarantee you half of them would say, eh, we don't want to know. I wouldn't want to hear that. And, and if, if that's your feel, your honest response, then you're the one that needs to be having it. And you already know you have issues, but you're avoiding them where you're hiding from them.

And you really should address them if you really want to, you know, get with the program here and be better, right?

**Bruce Walt:**

Absolutely. Again, there are 400, 000 open jobs. There are 300, 000 plus more projected to be out there in the next five years. We don't have enough people to work. People, good people, are always going to have choices and they're going to go to places that meet their needs.

And so if you aren't, again, we go back to if you aren't focused on your employees needs and don't understand them, don't understand what they're looking for in a place to work and don't meet them there. You're probably not going to be successful going forward.

**Mike Merrill:**

So another thing that I commonly hear from these companies that are doing a good job is that often when an employee does leave.

And they pursue a higher paying opportunity or something that they feel is better for their family. And the company is supportive and encouraging and helpful. A lot of times the grass wasn't greener and eventually that employee ends back up over to the same company that they left before. Twice as committed, more excited.

Also recognizing and being grateful for what they have prior and recognize that maybe these other companies that are marketing to them or trying to, you know, do some extra things to promote them really, really didn't deliver. And so I think there's an advantage to just. You know, doing these things and implementing these practices that you're talking about to truly make people happy and help them to grow.

And if you do, I think, I think those things will come back around and that karma or whatever you want to call it, we'll cycle back through and continue to bless their business down the road.

**Bruce Walt:**

Absolutely. You know, the three reasons that people are leaving jobs today, one of course is money.

I mean, there is. In a time of shortage of workers, people are offering more money. But you're right. A lot of these people are boomeranging back around. The grass is not always greener. In fact, most of the time, the grass is not greener. So money is one. The second is they don't see the career path.

For themselves at the company they are today. And so they're struggling with that. What does my future look like? And they're very concerned about what is my career path? What are they investing in me? So career path is, is, is a second. And then what's my boss like? Is the third, you know, am I working for a good leader or am I working for a poor leader and people are leaving?

Those are the top three reasons that people are leaving companies. So you got to make sure that your compensation is within the limits. range. We do a good bit of that with companies is help them look at, okay, where are, where am I in terms of compensation? You've got to help people see what a career path looks like.

And we also do some of that work, helping people create job families and what is natural progression in a company, look like. And then you got to develop leaders. Because if you aren't developing leaders, people just do not want to work for bad bosses.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. Interesting. Well, so many fascinating things. Had such a great time learning from you and hearing the wisdom that you're sharing. How do people reach out and connect with you? So they can get to more of this goodness and start putting a plan in place to be better.

**Bruce Walt:**

You can reach me at [brucewalt@horn.com](mailto:brucewalt@horn.com).

**Mike Merrill:**

Great. Well, thank you again. We've, enjoyed having you on for a while. We'll have to do it again down the road and circle back another time.

**Bruce Walt:**

We'd love to.