

The Retail Contractor

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NEWSLETTER

Estimating for Unfair Advantage: Improved Estimating Outcomes

By Mike Clancy and Cynthia Paul

This is the second of two articles. The first, Estimating for Unfair Advantage: The Facts Behind True Costs, was published in our Spring 2014 issue.

While the past few decades have seen a dramatic improvement in the professionalism of project management, estimating remains far more of an art than a science. In order to drive improved results, construction companies need to take the same approach to estimating as the industry has to project management. In short, using process mapping, as well as identifying and standardizing best practices will lead to improved performance.

It is not wise to spend time and money chasing jobs that the firm has no chance of winning or cannot perform effectively. Link business development, marketing, and operations with estimating to make sure that the firm is targeting the right work, increasing the hit rate, and creating a reason to be chosen.

Be proactive in determining who and what to chase. It will take time to create an unfair advantage on a project. Create a competitive advantage before estimating the project. If an advantage cannot be created, do not estimate it. Move on to another project where the firm has a chance to build a compelling approach that will get the customer's attention.

Creating a Cost Advantage

If the estimators are busy pushing out more and more estimates, they will not have the time to create a cost advantage. Allocate time to dig into major cost components to find an advantage. Identify three to five top cost items on the project and see if one or two of these key cost drivers can be pushed down a bit. If they are part of a subcontractor's scope, reach out to trusted subcontractor allies for innovative approaches. As an example, time is always money. Are there ways to save a subcontractor time through careful phasing and management? If leverage cannot be found in these areas, make the choice not to compete.

In addition, use business development and market intelligence to uncover the customer's unspoken hot buttons. Ask good questions. Capture market insights and knowledge. Since most projects are won or lost based on 1 or 2 percent of the cost, reinventing the get-work function is all about "finding pennies." Incremental improvement in estimating and business development can help land more work that is profitable and increase the value derived from estimating.

Many contractors are sitting on a gold mine of information without knowing it. Bid files, completed cost data, bid tabulations – all of these are data that, through analysis, can be converted to knowledge. By leveraging this knowledge, a firm can create bid strategies that are evidence-driven rather than mere guesswork.

In addition, bid postmortems can provide insight into opportunities to improve estimating. Asking the customer about a submitted project not only demonstrates interest, but also delivers the insights needed to help win. Ask about the following:

1. What is the overall impression of the estimate/proposal/presentation?
 - What was done well?
 - Where can improvements be made?
 - What did you like best?

2. Did the estimate/proposal/presentation demonstrate an interest in the project?
 - Did the estimate/proposal/presentation hit your hot buttons?
 - Was the approach unique?
3. How can we be of better service for you moving forward (intentionally vague)?
4. Then, if there is anything unique, add project specific questions.

Finding pennies starts with project selection. By developing selection criteria that quickly serves to prioritize project opportunities, estimators can reduce the amount of time wasted on projects that have no realistic chance for the firm to successfully bid or execute. Staffing effective bid teams also helps you find pennies. Each department needs a chief estimator that spends far more time leading and managing than estimating.

In addition, the project team should have a good mix of skills and experience, as well as a designated "project manager." Junior, less skilled estimators can then have an opportunity to contribute accordingly while learning from the more experienced colleagues. Get the team into a meeting where it can brainstorm potential alternatives and approaches that will deliver the project the customer wants for a price that works for everyone. However, never bid below cost.

Establishing a Win Strategy

Customers are the ultimate decision makers. They determine who wins and who loses. So why do contractors build their get-work approach preferences? Instead, a contractor should build systems around delivering what the customer wants, in the way he or she wants it. It is a shortcut to success.

Use the team's time and effort to find ways to build smarter and more "wants and expects" for reasonable costs. Figure out how to build on the company's core competencies and real costs to deliver a project that sets the firm apart from the competition. This is a win strategy. Win strategies marry the customer's hot buttons and requirements with a firm's capability, approach and pricing to create an advantage for the firm on the project. Can this be done on every job? Probably not. But what if a company could win 5 or 10 percent more of the right projects?

Win strategies change the competitive landscape. Win strategies give the customer something, in addition to a competitive price, on which to evaluate contractors. It should not be a fair fight with competitors; what is needed is an unfair advantage. If an advantage cannot be created, the only option is cutting the price to win the work, and that is a poor long-term strategy.

Mike Clancy is a principal at FMI Corporation. He works with companies across the country to help them leverage their unique organizational resources and capabilities to build competitive advantage. He can be reached at 919.785.9299 or mclancy@fminet.com. Cynthia Paul is a managing director at FMI Corporation and the practice leader for business development. She works with industry organizations to position them to capture market share and grow profitably. She can be reached at 303.398.7206 or cpaul@fminet.com.



RCA's mission is to promote professionalism and integrity in retail construction through industry leadership in education, information exchange, and jobsite safety.

New Advisory Board Member



Larry Tureff

RCA's Advisory Board is comprised of representatives from retail markets including specialty, big box, department stores, developers, architecture/engineer, and restaurant retailers. Advisory Board members are appointed by the President and serve three year terms. During that time, they actively assist the RCA Board of Directors in identifying key industry issues and formulating policies and programs designed to positively impact those issues. Meet RCA's newest Advisory Board member.

Larry Tureff has been in the retail construction industry for 31 years. He has a degree in Architecture, but found it more interesting to be in the field and resolving onsite issues. His first position in Construction Management was at Rite Aid Corp., building Circus World Toy Stores. Rite Aid sold the chain to Melville Corporation, which provided construction management for a variety of chains, and was building about 400 stores a year: from 600 sq. ft. stores for This End Up to 40,000 sq. ft. stores for Linens & Things. At Melville, Tureff gained a wide range of experience in a very short time; he averaged 50 projects a year over a 6-year period.

When Melville disbanded in the mid 1990s, Tureff went to work for Walden Books, becoming Director of Construction after a few years. When Walden Books merged with Borders, he became Director of Construction, Store Planning, and Facilities, a position he held for 14 years. After Borders shut its doors, he worked as Director of Construction for Hancock

Larry Tureff has been in the retail construction industry for 31 years. He has a degree in Architecture, but found it more interesting to be in the field and resolving onsite issues.

Fabrics, developing their roll out construction and facilities program. In late 2010, he went to Ulta Beauty as Director of Construction, overseeing a very aggressive new store growth program.

Tureff's commitment to the RCA goes back to its inception. In 1990, RCA Founder David Weekes approached him at a conference, asking whether he would be supportive of a national group of contractors that would be a reference for retailers to create their bid lists. Tureff was supportive of the concept and worked with Weekes and other early Board members to establish the RCA.

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President's Message

Mike Wolff, President, Timberwoff Construction, Inc.



Mike Wolff

In my last column, I mentioned a new program, the *Military Service Initiative*, which was in the exploratory stage. In the short time since our last newsletter, our committee has made significant progress and I'm pleased to share that the program has now officially launched!

RCA's Military Service Initiative was created to promote opportunities for employment for transitioning service members. RCA members are seeking construction superintendents, and in many cases, the skill sets of service members are in line with those of a superintendent. With some specific construction management training, the skill sets can be transitioned and service members can embark on a new and exciting career in retail construction.

The process for establishing our program started right after SPECS in March, when we were connected with Colonel Miguel Howe, USA, Ret., the Director of the Military Service Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute. Col. Howe oversees a program that unites the efforts of non-profits, businesses, universities, individual citizens, and communities to empower veterans to continue to serve as national assets after they take off the uniform. The committee presented Col. Howe with a general job description of a construction superintendent.

He has been generous with his time and guidance on how to position these opportunities for veterans and potential partnership organizations for us.

The committee reached out to a few organizations to learn how RCA could partner with them and be an active resource for transitioning service members. We found the most success with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes, which is hosting three Jobs Summits this fall, at Camp Pendleton (CA), Joint Base Lewis-McChord (WA), and Pittsburgh (PA). RCA will have a table at the career fair portion of each Summit. We have developed generic superintendent application, and will collect and distribute completed applications to members that indicate they want to receive them. As of this writing, we are a few days away from the first Summit, and I am excited to be the RCA representative there.

I would like to thank and recognize the committee members who have worked hard to make this program a reality. They are dedicated to providing opportunities for service members who are transitioning into civilian life. Committee chair Steve Bachman (Retail Construction Services, Inc.) has traveled at his own expense for meetings with potential partners. Committee members Mike Clancy (FMI), Scott Crissey (Dollar Financial Group), Pete Weiland (PJ3Consulting LLC), Robert Moore (Gray), and Carol Montoya (RCA's Executive Director) have used their connections to explore opportunities and drafted and reviewed program materials.

I look forward to reporting on our program successes. Watch this newsletter, our email bulletin, and retailcontractors.org for the latest progress updates.

Mike

— mike@timberwoff.com

RCA's Military Service Initiative was created to promote opportunities for employment for transitioning service members.

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Justin Elder
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justin@elderjones.com

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Doug Marion
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dmarion@mrs1977.com

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John S. Elder 1995

James Healy 2003

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Robert D. Benda 2004-2006

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K. Eugene Colley 2006-2008

Michael H. Ratner 1998

Matthew Schimenti 2008-2012

Barry Shames 1999

Art Rectenwald, 2012-2014

RCA Membership

RCA members must meet and maintain a series of qualifications and are approved by the Board of Directors for membership. They have been in the retail construction business as general contractors for at least five years; agree to comply with the Association's Code of Ethics and Bylaws; are properly insured and bonded; are licensed in the states in which they do business; and have submitted letters of recommendation.

COMPANY	CONTACT	PHONE	STATE	EMAIL	MEMBER SINCE
Acme Enterprises, Inc.	Robert Russell	586-771-4800	MI	rrussell@acme-enterprises.com	2009
All-Rite Construction Co., Inc.	Warren Zysman	973-340-3100	NJ	warren@all-riteconstruction.com	1993
Bogart Construction, Inc.	Brad Bogart	949-453-1400	CA	brad@bogartconstruction.com	2008
Buildrite Construction Corp.	Ian Bannister	770-971-0787	GA	ian@buildriteconstruction.com	2013
Chance Construction Co.	D. Jay Chance	409-787-2615	TX	tellinaw@chanceconstruction.com	2000
Commercial Contractors, Inc.	Kenneth Sharkey	616-842-4540	MI	ken.sharkey@teamcci.net	1990
Commonwealth Building, Inc.	Frank Trainor	617-770-0050	MA	frankt@combuild.com	1992
Crane Construction Company	David Crane	816-324-5951	MO	dcrane@crane-construction.com	2013
David A. Nice Builders	Brian Bacon	757-566-3032	VA	bbacon@davidnicedbuilders.com	2011
De Jager Construction, Inc.	Dan De Jager	616-530-0060	MI	dandj@dejagerconstruction.com	1990
Desco Professional Builders, Inc.	John Ridzon	860-870-7070	CT	jridzon@descopro.com	1995
DGC Capital Contracting Corp.	Gerry Ryan	914-664-7244	NY	gryan@dgccapital.com	2013
DLP Construction	Dennis Pigg, Jr.	770-887-3573	GA	dpigg@dlpconstruction.com	2008
Donnelly Construction	Frank Leone	973-672-1800	NJ	fleone@donnellyind.com	2012
E.C. Provini, Co., Inc.	Edmund Provini	732-739-8884	NJ	eprovinci@eprovinci.com	1992
Eckinger Construction Company	Thomas Eckinger	330-453-2566	OH	tome@eckinger.com	1994
EDC	Christopher Johnson	804-897-0900	VA	cjohnson@edcweb.com	1998
ELAN General Contracting Inc.	Adrian Johnson	619-284-4174	CA	ajohnson@elangc.com	2010
Elder-Jones, Inc.	Justin Elder	952-345-6069	MN	justin@elderjones.com	1990
EMJ Corporation	Ray Caitlin	972-580-1210	TX	RCaitlin@emjcorp.com	2014
Fortney & Weygandt, Inc.	Greg Freeh	440-716-4000	OH	gfreeh@fortneyweygandt.com	2013
Fred Olivieri Construction Company	Dean Olivieri	330-494-1007	OH	dean@fredolivieri.com	1992
Fulcrum Construction, LLC	Mike Arasin	770-612-8005	GA	marasin@fulcrumconstruction.com	2014
Gray	Robert Moore	714-491-1317	CA	ramoore@gray.com	2005
Greg Construction Company	Sean Pfent	586-725-4400	MI	spfen@gregconstruction.com	1996
Hambleton Group Construction	Tito Suarez	787-781-8186	PR	titi@hgcci.com	2014
Hays Construction Company, Inc.	Roy Hays	303-794-5469	CO	r.hays@haysco.biz	2002
Healy Construction Services, Inc.	James Healy	708-396-0440	IL	jhealy@healyconstructionservices.com	1996
Herman/Stewart Construction	Michael Dennis	301-731-5555	MD	mdennis@herman-stewart.com	1995
International Contractors, Inc.	Bruce Bronge	630-834-8043	IL	bbronge@iciinc.com	1995
J. G. Construction	June Grothe	909-993-9393	CA	junej@gjconstruction.com	1998
James Agresta Carpentry Inc.	James Agresta	201-498-1477	NJ	jim.agresta@jacarpentryinc.com	2013
KBE Building Corporation	Michael Kolakowski	860-284-7110	CT	mkolakowski@kbebuilding.com	1998
Kellogg & Kimsey, Inc.	Charles Kimsey	941-927-7700	FL	ckimsey@kelloggkimsey.com	2013
Kerricook Construction, Inc.	Ann Smith	440-647-4200	OH	ann@kerricook.com	2012
Lakeview Construction, Inc.	Kent Moon	262-857-3336	WI	kent@lvconstruction.com	1998
M. Cary, Inc.	Robert Epstein	631-501-0024	NY	repstein@mcaryinc.com	2014
Management Resources Systems, Inc.	Michael Swaim, Sr.	336-861-1960	NC	mswaim@mrs1977.com	1992
Marco Contractors, Inc.	Martin Smith	724-741-0300	PA	marty@marcocontractors.com	1994
Metropolitan Contracting Co., Ltd.	Jane Feigenbaum	210-829-5542	TX	jfeigenbaum@metcontracting.com	1995
Montgomery Development Carolina Corp.	John Fugo	919-969-7301	NC	jfugo@montgomerydevelopment.com	1999
Murray Costello Construction, Inc.	Murray Costello	928-482-2770	FL	MCCI@MurrayCostello.com	2014
National Building Contractors	William Corcoran	651-288-1900	MN	bill@nbccconstruction.us	2013
Pinnacle Commercial Development, Inc.	Dennis Rome	732-528-0080	NJ	dennis@pinnaclecommercial.us	2012
PWI Construction, Inc.	Jeff Price	480-461-0777	AZ	lipka@pwiconstruction.com	2003
RCC Associates, Inc.	Beverly Raphael	954-429-3700	FL	braphael@rccassociates.com	1990
R.E. Crawford Construction LLC	Jeffrey T. Smith	941-907-0010	FL	jeffsmith@recrawford.com	2011
Rectenwald Brothers Construction, Inc.	Art Rectenwald	724-772-8282	PA	art@rectenwald.com	1996
Retail Construction Services, Inc.	Stephen Bachman	651-704-9000	MN	sbachman@retailconstruction.com	1998
Roche Construction, Inc.	Thomas Roche	970-356-3611	CO	troche@rocheconstructors.com	2008
Royal Seal Construction, Inc.	Gene Colley	817-491-6400	TX	gene@royalseal.com	1994
Russco, Inc.	Matthew Pichette	508-674-5280	MA	mattp@russcoinc.com	1995
Sachse Construction and Development Corp.	Jeff Katkowsky	248-647-4200	MI	jkatkowsky@sachseconstruction.com	2009
Scheiner Commercial Group, Inc.	Joe Scheiner	719-487-1600	CO	joe@scheinercg.com	2012
Schimenti Construction Company, Inc.	Matthew Schimenti	914-244-9100	NY	mschimenti@schimenti.com	1994
Scorpio Construction, Inc.	Stephen Romeo	609-296-0308	NJ	sromeo@scorpio1.net	1995
Shames Construction Co., Ltd.	Barry Shames	925-606-3000	CA	bshames@shames.com	1994
Shrader & Martinez Construction, Inc.	Ronald Martinez	928-282-7554	AZ	info@shradermartinez.com	1990
Singleton Construction, LLC	Denise Doczy-Delong	740-756-7331	OH	denisedelong@singletonconstruction.net	2012
Sullivan Construction Company	Mike Sullivan	954-484-3200	FL	mike@buildwithsullivan.com	2012
Taylor Brothers Construction Company, Inc.	David Doup	812-379-9547	IN	ddoup@tbcci.com	2014
TDS Construction, Inc.	David Scherer	941-795-6100	FL	inbox@tdsconstruction.com	1994
Thomas-Grace Construction, Inc.	Don Harvieux	651-342-1298	MN	don.harvieux@thomas-grace.com	2012
Timberwolf Construction, Inc.	Mike Wolff	909-949-0380	CA	mike@timberwolf.com	2008
Tom Rectenwald Construction, Inc.	Aaron Rectenwald	724-452-8801	PA	arectenwald@trcgc.net	2010
Trainer Commercial Construction, Inc.	John Taylor	415-259-0200	CA	john.taylor@trainorconstruction.com	2012
Triad Retail Construction	Jay Dorsey	281-485-4700	TX	j.dorsey@triadrc.com	2013
Tuscan Builders Corporation	Mike Adams	713-952-8800	TX	mikea@tuscanbuilders.com	1998
Warwick Construction, Inc.	Tony Annan	832-448-7000	TX	tony@warwickconstruction.com	2008
Weekes Construction, Inc.	Chandler Weekes	864-233-0061	SC	cweekes@weekesconstruction.com	1990
Westwood Contractors, Inc.	Mike McBride	817-302-2050	TX	mikem@westwoodcontractors.com	1990
William A. Randolph, Inc.	Tony Riccardi	847-856-0123	IL	tony.riccardi@warandolph.com	2011
Winkel Construction, Inc.	Rick Winkel	352-860-0500	FL	rickw@winkel-construction.com	1990
Wolverine Building Group	Michael Houseman	616-949-3360	MI	mhouseman@wolvgroup.com	2012
Woods Construction, Inc.	John Bodary	586-939-9991	MI	jbodary@woodsconstruction.com	1996

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	<p>Sent attendee(s) to most recent annual meeting</p>		<p>Past or present RCA Board member</p>		<p>Has met the requirements of RCA's Quality Assurance Program</p>
	<p>Uses RCA's Safety Materials</p>		<p>Has made a contribution to the RCA Scholarship Program</p>		
	<p>Has a Certified Development, Design & Construction Professional on staff</p>		<p>Has a LEED AP accredited professional on staff</p>		

View the profile of each RCA member company. Click on "Find a Contractor" from the home page to search the member list. Each profile includes relevant information, including the RCA programs in which the member participates. Look for these icons!

Please notify the RCA Office (800-847-5085 or info@retailcontractors.org) of any changes to your contact information.



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RCA Scholarships Recognize Future Industry Leaders

In its 16th year, RCA's scholarship program awarded \$17,250 in scholarships to construction management students at universities across the United States. RCA awarded scholarships to the following students, all of whom are enrolled in qualified construction programs:

- John Shreve**, Auburn University
- Clinton Dowell**, Bowling Green State University
- Jasmine Lomax**, California State Polytechnic University (SLO)
- Coby Corkle**, Colorado State University
- Barry Kooistra**, Ferris State University
- Brian Witt**, Kansas State University
- Colton Wilkerson-Theil**, Minnesota State University Mankato
(Christian Elder Memorial Scholarship)
- Shawn Falleur**, Northern Arizona University
- Jessica Blankenship**, University of Oklahoma
- Bradley N. Dewey**, Pratt Institute
- Tim Criste**, Purdue University
- Joshua W. Snarski**, Roger Williams University
- Jon Yi**, Texas A&M
- Ryan Pullin**, University of Houston (Intern Scholarship Winner)
- Sergio Ortega-Trujano**, University of Washington
- Valerie Zapata**, Wentworth Institute of Technology

A scholarship was also awarded at Clemson University.

Northern Arizona's recipient, **Shawn Falleur**, described his path to a career in construction management: "I chose the profession of construction management after 10 years in the trade of commercial construction. I started out as a union drywall member in 2001, specializing in carpentry in California, Nevada, and Arizona. I moved to Flagstaff in 2009, where I continued working hands-on construction for a local general contractor who showed me multiple layers in regards to the industry and how it works. It was there that I realized that the construction industry was who I am and where I needed to be. It was also there that I discovered the next move for would be to get in school and develop my industry skills with a degree in construction management."

In 2008, RCA established the Christian Elder Memorial Scholarship. Christian Elder, who died in 2007 at the age of 38, was a project manager with Elder-Jones, Inc., a charter member of the RCA. The scholarship is awarded to a student at Minnesota State University Mankato. This year's recipient was **Colton Wilkerson-Theil**, a junior majoring in Construction Management.

Additionally, an Internship Scholarship was awarded to **Ryan Pullin**, a Construction Management major student at the University of Houston. Pullin interned at Triad Retail Construction, Inc.

"With his current level of construction knowledge, coupled with his enthusiasm leadership, and construction management ability, Ryan is already demonstrating he has what it takes to become a first rate project manager," wrote Jay Dorsey, on his nomination for Pullin.

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The RCA Scholarship Fund depends on the support of generous contributions from our members. Many thanks to the RCA member companies who made a donation to the Scholarship Fund in FY14 (May 2013-April 2014):

\$1,500

Pinnacle Commercial Development, Inc.
 Rectenwald Brothers Construction, Inc.
 Tom Rectenwald Construction, Inc.

\$1,000

Elder-Jones, Inc.
 Scheiner Commercial Group, Inc.
 Westwood Contractors, Inc.

\$750

Healy Construction Services, Inc.

\$500

Crane Construction Company
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Up to \$499

Commonwealth Building, Inc.
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“I am honored to be receiving the Retail Contractors Association Scholarship. Your contribution will allow me to work less during my last semester of school so that I may focus on my studies.”

- Coby Corkle, Colorado State University

To make a contribution to the RCA Scholarship Fund, visit retailcontractors.org and click on Programs, then Scholarship Program.

In the past year, the Scholarship Committee has evaluated the program and made recommendations to the Board for some changes. Starting this fall, RCA will issue a nationwide call for scholarship applications, expanding the reach of the program to more schools, and drawing in what will be the top candidates from across the nation. In addition to the Internship Scholarship and Christian Elder Memorial Scholarship, 11 scholarships of \$1,500 will be awarded to students studying in construction management and related programs. Stay tuned for more details!



Jasmine Lomax, California State Polytechnic University, with RCA Vice President Robert Moore



Brian Witt, Kansas State University, with RCA Past President John Elder

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for these upcoming events. Visit retailcontractors.org for event details.



Wednesday, December 3, 2014

RCA Members Only & Retailers Reception
 JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort, Phoenix, AZ

Thursday, December 4, 2014

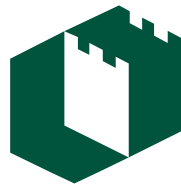
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 Venetian/Palazzo, Las Vegas, NV

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