



REPORT ON RETAINING EMPLOYEES IN THE SKILLED TRADES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the demand grows for skilled labour throughout the GTA, this report provides a better understanding of issues facing workers in the residential and infrastructure-related trades and recommends ways of retaining them. More than 400 construction industry workers across 10 categories participated in this study by completing a 30-minute survey.



ABOUT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Compared to workers in most other sectors in Canada, construction workers are happier, more satisfied, and more fulfilled. Many regard their own occupations as practically ideal for them:

- The wages and benefits are excellent.
- It challenges their body and mind.
- They are always learning.
- They find their work stimulating.
- They do something good and useful on a daily basis.
- They enjoy the camaraderie of the workplace and job site.

The main reasons for dissatisfaction are:

- The work can be hard, particularly on the hands and back.
- It's not necessarily dirty, but it can be.
- The winter weather can make it very uncomfortable outdoors.
- The days can be long, especially for those with a long commute.

Construction workers are also aware of the stigma of working in their field. There is a misperception that construction workers lack intelligence, creativity, or problem-solving skills, and that they are disorganized and unreliable. Construction workers are frustrated by these misperceptions, viewing them as a major deterrent to entry into the industry.

KEY FINDINGS

- 73% of workers were influenced by family or friends to enter the construction industry.
- Only 8% of workers were positively influenced by a guidance counsellor.
- 80% of workers prepared for the job through the help of industry mentors.
- 65% of workers would strongly recommend their job to a young person.
- The most satisfied workers tend to be over age 36, are married, and are homeowners.
- Millennials (ages 25 to 35) are the least satisfied group and the most likely to leave the industry.
- Electricians feel less connected to others than all other categories.
- Designers and planners feel less accomplished in their work than all other categories.
- 69% of respondents believe that there is a shortage of workers in their field.
- 96% attribute shortages to stigma and negative parental influence.
- 88% believe that the trades are seen as too tough and hands-on for most people.
- 70% of workers believe that people lack knowledge about the trades.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS HAVE BETTER JOBS THAN MOST CANADIANS

Job Talks partnered with Q.i. Value Systems Inc. to develop a new segmentation of Canadian workers based on their work-related values. It revealed a 5-stage gradient of attitudes toward one's work. The same segmentation was applied to GTA Construction Industry Workers and revealed that they are far less likely to feel unhappy and much more likely to feel comfortable and fulfilled compared to the rest of Canada.

Work-Values Segment	GTA Construction Industry workers (%) <i>n=412</i>	Total Working Population (%) <i>n=996</i>
Miserable	3	11
Unhappy, but optimistic that things will improve	21	26
Reasonably happy and formed bonds with co-workers	8	15
Comfortable and satisfied	23	21
Fulfilled	45	27

REASONS FOR LEAVING

On average, construction industry workers believe that 37% of workers who start out in their field will eventually end up leaving. The definition of "leaving" is broad, however, and includes the movement away from the tools and into management or entrepreneurship within the industry. Therefore, workers may leave for a range of reasons, both "good" and avoidable.

Good Reasons

- Better job opportunities.
- Advancement within their company.
- Starting their own businesses.
- Sometimes the job is just not the right fit.

Avoidable Reasons

- Problems with employers.
- Stress on the body, including weather.
- Financial problems related to the seasonal nature of work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many construction workers and industry stakeholders agree that the construction industry has a marketing problem. An important objective in addressing this involves getting industry alignment around messaging, retention, and recruitment strategies.



Leverage the Industry's Massive Network in Recruitment

The first step in retention is hiring the right workers. The construction industry's network is among the largest in the country and it is time to promote itself accordingly. The best recruiters can be found within the industry itself. Building suppliers, owners, accountants, lawyers, architects, salespeople, contracts managers, engineers, and building officials all represent broader construction industry success stories. They must be called upon to communicate the industry's best kept secret—that the opportunities for a fulfilling career in construction are widespread and that job satisfaction levels are high.

Integrate Construction Early in the Education System

Exposure to construction careers must begin in elementary school to shape the perceptions of guidance counsellors, teachers, students, and parents. This includes weaving construction industry themes into the school curriculum, along with bringing back shop class with everyday applications. It also means promoting construction jobs to all students, whether they are book-smart, hands-on, tech-savvy, or entrepreneurial. You don't have to just be good with a shovel to have a fulfilling and well-paid career in construction.



Invest in High Quality Media Production

Tackle the industry's marketing problem by creating high-quality video programming and websites for use in schools and training centres. Apply Behavioural Economics principles to minimize the number of steps between discovering a new construction career and getting started in the industry.



Mobilize Companies and Associations to Address Retention

Construction industry stakeholder groups must come together to address key issues and support creative solutions related to retaining good workers, including:

- Improving on-site conditions, especially in the winter.
- Formalizing and articulating career pathways.
- Investigating more opportunities for skills development, training, and upgrading.
- Centralizing industry resources and communication.
- Creating community in the voluntary trades.
- Helping workers plan for the reality of seasonal work.
- Improving communication and transparency around the scheduling of work.