

A Hidden Threat: Bad Employees



The LBM industry faces threats from competitors, supply and demand disturbances, regulation, bad weather, and more. However, there is one force working against construction supply companies that often isn't recognized as the threat that it is—bad employees.

By bad employees, I'm referring to colleagues who are failing at their jobs. According to Mark Murphy, CEO of management consultancy Leadership IQ, nearly half (46%) of new hires will fail within 18 months. That number is shockingly high, and the main reason he cites for these failures isn't lack of jobs skills and experience, it's interpersonal skills. These employees are unable to accept feedback, manage their emotions, or motivate themselves.

Imagine two salespeople who are above average individual task performers. John is able to regularly contact 10% more prospects than Anna, but his personality doesn't mesh well with his coworkers. So, when he asks them for information that will help him close a sale, he only gets what he asks for, nothing more. Anna, on the other hand, interacts well with others. She takes an interest in their work and her colleagues reciprocate with similar interest in her work. Because she works well with her teammates, they're more willing to go above and beyond what Anna asked of them, giving her more information and options to present to prospects and customers. As a result, she closes more deals and averages more revenue per deal than John. Clearly, Anna is contributing more to her colleagues and the company, which makes her a more desirable employee. So it makes sense to hire more people like Anna.

To do that, during job interviews, ask candidates character-revealing questions. Don't let them get away with simply stating "I'm a team player." Ask them to share examples of accomplishments they've experienced when working on a team. Additionally, recognizing that work can sometimes be stressful, get an understanding of how they might respond during a stressful situation by asking them to describe how they handled themselves in a crisis at a previous employer.

Try more creative questions too, such as "What's the biggest misperception people have about you?" This is an interesting way to reveal some personality quirks that a candidate might not want to admit they have, but when presented as a "misperception," they're more likely to discuss it. If they have more than one example of the same "misperception," then perhaps it's not a misperception at all. Another trait to look for is self-awareness. Being conscious of how they comes across to others is an important part of personal and professional growth. If candidates aren't self-aware, they won't realize that they have a problem and they likely won't bother to fix it.

If left unchecked, your employees' poor interpersonal skills can slowly erode your company's profits. Don't let that happen. Use these interview questions, and others, to help you hire people with the right attitude and personality traits for your company.

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