

PCI's Workforce Development Committee

Prioritizing recruitment, retention, and wellness to address key challenges facing the industry

by Erin Clark, Standard Concrete Products Inc.

Workforce development is an industry-wide issue that we are all facing. One of Matt DeVoss's goals as PCI's chair in 2022 was to "lead PCI in establishing new workforce recruitment and development plans to attract talent to the precast concrete industry at all levels." Over the last year and a half, the Workforce Development (WFD) Committee has been working diligently to help accomplish that goal. The committee began by creating a strategic plan focusing on recruitment and retention. The demographics prioritized for recruitment are women, veterans, second-chance workers (that is, individuals with criminal records), immigrants, and traditional workers. The priorities for retention are onboarding, employee experience, and professional development.

Since our first meeting during PCI Committee Days in September 2022, we have been gathering and promoting resources on the PCI website that align with our strategic plan.¹ We

Scan the QR code to access all PCI workforce development resources in recruitment, retention, and wellness.



While networking at the PCI Student Job Fair during the 2024 PCI Convention, students and professionals build bridges in the precast concrete industry. All Photos: PCI.

have expanded our efforts by adding the Workplace Wellness Task Group. Its vision is to create a construction industry where mental health is prioritized, stigma is eradicated, and every worker feels supported and valued. The task group's goals are to raise awareness, promote supportive culture, and provide resources, as well as to educate and train. Since the formation of the Workplace Wellness Task Group, we have operated a booth at the PCI Convention to promote our efforts and spread the word.

Additionally, the WFD Committee hosted a webinar by Cal Byer called "Shining Light on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention" and created stickers and posters with a QR code linking directly to our resources page. We are slated to host four webinars this year. Potential webinars include a presentation by a speaker from the

Center of Employment Opportunities (a second-chance program), a mentorship program case study, and a presentation on the SkillBridge veterans' program. Furthermore, we are developing a bimonthly email to PCI members to highlight some of the resources that are available on the WFD web page.

The WFD Committee collaborates with the PCI regions in their local efforts to introduce people to the career opportunities in the precast concrete industry. Mike Johnsrud and Margaret Mills at PCI Midwest developed a variety of educational videos on the wide array of careers that are available in our industry. Dan Eckenrode at PCI Gulf South developed a letter (available on our resources page) that he mails out to vocational schools within a 50-mile radius of his producers' facilities to build relationships and educate them about our industry. Lenny Salvo of Coreslab





Students and other participants convene at the Women in Precast event during the 2024 PCI Convention to engage in the networking and discussions around professional growth within the precast concrete industry.

Structures (Orlando) serves on the executive committee of the Florida Prestressed Concrete Association (a chapter of PCI) and on a local county school career and technical education advisory council that recently started distributing a guide for eighth graders describing local career-path options, including careers in the precast concrete industry. The local outreach in all of these regions is incredible. Our committee wants to help share success stories and ideas among PCI regions to strengthen the nationwide labor pool.

The Recruitment Task Group is currently developing a three-dimensional animation video for PCI members to show students or present at job fairs. This video will show examples of precast concrete structures and how they are constructed to create some excitement and promote the precast concrete industry. The group is also working on developing relationships with organizations such as the Center for Employment Opportunities, which helps incorporate second-chance workers back into the workforce. Another goal is to continue to promote and support programs such as Leadership PCI, the Productivity Tour, the Architectural

Seminar, and other workforce-related efforts from PCI committees. A collection of interviews from women, veterans, second-chance workers, and foreign workers will be part of a video series to promote the industry and gain access to these demographics. The Retention Task Group is working with the Safety Committee to develop new training videos in English and Spanish that will be made available to PCI members.


Employing foreign workers has been a challenge. Bob Risser, PCI president and CEO, has supported our efforts by meeting in Washington, D.C., with politicians who want to help our industry gain access to foreign workers. In a recent meeting with U.S. Rep. Lloyd Smucker (PA-11), Bob learned about H.R. 3734, which proposes to “amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide for an H-2C nonimmigrant classification, and for other purposes.”² This bill would help alleviate the worker shortage in the construction industry by establishing a market-driven visa system to help employers find more laborers. Employers would be required to prove they were unable to find U.S. workers for vacant positions, pay their

foreign employees fair wages based on local wage data, and use the E-Verify program to ensure that only individuals with H-2C nonimmigrant status are hired. The sponsors of H.R. 3734 have asked our membership to reach out to their local representatives to support this bill.

We are extremely grateful to have active, motivated committee members who are working to make a difference in the precast concrete industry. The success of our efforts relies on the time and dedication given by all of our members.

The WFD Committee has had an outpouring of support and input from PCI members, which we greatly appreciate! Our mission is to host and facilitate national and local resources to engage and develop the precast concrete workforce, and we are only successful if we are providing the necessary resources. Please visit our website, pci.org/workforce, for more information and to see how we can be of assistance.

References

1. Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute. n.d. “Workforce Development.” Accessed April 19, 2024. <https://www.pci.org/workforce>.
2. Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act, H.R. 3734, 118th Cong. (2023–2024). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3734>. 

Members gather during the 2024 PCI Convention at the PCI Resource Center, which highlights workforce, wellness, and PCI resources.



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