



Commitment + Discipline = Celebration

By Mani Subramanian, CCM, Vanir Construction Management, Inc.

Vanir Construction Management, Inc. has been the organization with the most certified construction managers for many years now. While we would like to hang on to this exalted position, we think it is important to share our approach with all of you. Our hope is that this information will be of use to some, resulting in many more construction managers getting certified, which is essential for the continued success of our industry.

There are two words to keep in mind to achieve success: *commitment* and *discipline*. Commitment starts at the top. In our case, Mansour Aliabadi, our President, decided in 2001 to get as many of our people certified as feasible. One of the first decisions we made was to get certified ourselves. Both of us successfully became certified in 2002. As you demand (yes, you must demand) that your employees get certified, we think it is critical that the company leaders, top down, get certified first.

The second part of our commitment is that being certified is one of the key criteria for promotions to positions as senior project manager, senior construction manager, or above. Everyone clearly understands that this is expected in order to advance in their career path. Those who are not certified make the commitment to accomplish it within one year of their promotion.

The third part of our commitment is keeping our focus on it continuously. Employees who become certified are recognized in all company functions. Every year, we develop a 'class' that is guided

through the certification process. Our passing rate is higher than the overall national average.

The discipline begins with the formation of a group of employees who sign up to become certified each year, after our annual company conference in November. Besides volunteers, those at the senior level positions who are not yet certified are also solicited to 'sign up.' The group facilitator is one of our Vice Presidents and last year's winner of the Distinguished Service Award from the CMAA National Board of Directors and the President's Special Service Award from the Southern California Chapter, Mehdi Heydari.

Mehdi establishes a schedule for everyone to get certified that includes a deadline for getting the application completed, a timeline for group study sessions, and the date the exam will be taken. Everyone is expected to provide an update of their progress every week. Guidelines are provided to assist with getting the application completed. Once the application process is complete, the group study sessions will begin, with the intent to help everyone cover the study material for the exam, to foster discussions, and to answer any questions that will assist with the progress of everyone.

In the first year of our push towards certification (2002), we offered a reward of \$1,000 for the first 20 people to get certified. The reward was \$500 for the second year. We have always reimbursed the application fees upon acceptance and the exam fee upon successful completion. We provide all study materials and a paid day off from work for studying or taking the exam, and the group study hours are mostly on company time.

To summarize what it takes to achieve this success with your organization, you need to stay committed to a certification program and use a disciplined process (with set timelines) to guide the groups to work together and accomplish this goal each year. Finally, you need to celebrate their success every chance you get.

OK... now that our secret is out, and given the size of our organization when compared to many others, we hope it is just a matter of time before we are passed for the total number of certified construction managers. So, everyone, hurry up and try to be the first to pass us! But we intend to always have the highest percentage of employees who are certified construction managers.

You are most welcome to call me, Mansour or Mehdi, if we can help you in any way. Vanir encourages you to commit to it. Your industry needs it. You deserve it.