

Building the Future: Q&A with the Next Generation of Industry Leaders

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As we start a new year, it's a fitting time to reflect on the future of the construction industry and the role of emerging leaders in navigating the challenges ahead. MPB Blog Editors spoke with three of MBP's rising stars – Laura Freas, CMIT, Senior Engineer; Tyler Guill, CMIT, Senior Engineer; and Savannah Dotson, Senior Engineer – to gain their insights on the industry's biggest challenges, technological innovations, and how to prepare the next generation for leadership roles. Here's what they had to say:

Q: WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING YOUR INDUSTRY TODAY?

Laura: One of the biggest challenges I see is not using technology to its full potential. Many teams either don't adopt the available tools or struggle to make them a natural part of their work. But when technology is used right – like BIM clash detection – it can make a huge difference. It helps catch problems early, saves time, and avoids the frustration (and cost) of rework.

Tyler: The construction industry faces a significant labor shortage, particularly in skilled trades such as carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work. This gap is compounded by the need for workers to adapt to new technologies like Building Information Modeling (BIM) and automation, which require advanced training. To stay competitive, construction companies must invest in workforce development, attract younger workers, and upskill existing employees to bridge the growing skills gap.



Savannah: The construction industry is under more pressure than ever to adopt sustainable practices and meet energy-efficient building codes. However, incorporating these practices can increase costs and complicate project timelines. Implementing complex systems like advanced HVAC and renewable energy sources requires specialized expertise and coordination, which can lengthen timelines and increase the risk of delays.

Q: AS SENIOR LEADERS RETIRE, HOW CAN COMPANIES EFFECTIVELY PREPARE THE NEXT GENERATION TO TAKE ON THESE CRITICAL LEADERSHIP ROLES?

Laura: The best way to prepare the next generation is to let them lead sooner rather than later. Give them chances to take on real responsibility, make mistakes, and learn while there's

still someone around to guide them.

Tyler: Companies should implement structured mentorship programs to prepare the next generation for senior leadership roles. Retiring leaders can pass on their knowledge and expertise, while leadership development programs help emerging leaders gain a well-rounded perspective. Succession planning is key to ensuring a strong pipeline of high-potential candidates ready to step into critical roles.

Savannah: Mentorship programs are essential to refine technical and soft skills like communication, decision-making, and problem-solving. Real-world experiences are invaluable, as they prepare emerging leaders to navigate challenges they'll face in the future.

Q: WHICH TECHNOLOGY TRENDS OR INNOVATIONS WILL SIGNIFICANTLY TRANSFORM OUR INDUSTRY OVER THE NEXT FIVE TO 10 YEARS?

Laura: Artificial intelligence (AI), hands down. It's already beginning to transform industries, and its impact will only grow. AI can analyze data, keep projects on track, and predict challenges, enhancing every aspect of the built environment.

Tyler: Automation will revolutionize project management, enhancing efficiency and reducing human error. AI-powered tools will streamline tasks like scheduling and cost estimation, while robotic process automation (RPA) will handle repetitive tasks. Additionally, AI-driven analytics will allow for more proactive management and effective project delivery.

Savannah: Virtual reality could help alleviate trade coordination issues on jobsites. Designers and stakeholders can immerse themselves in a digital representation of the site to identify conflicts and issues before construction starts, saving time and reducing costs.


Q: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER TO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS JUST BEGINNING THEIR CAREERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY?

Laura: Ask questions – lots of them – and listen to the people around you. There's so much to learn from those who've been in the industry for years. Be curious, stay open, and you'll pick up insights that you can't find in a textbook.

Tyler: Focus on continuous learning and staying current with emerging technologies like BIM and AI. Build strong

relationships through networking, seek mentorship, and prioritize effective communication. Perseverance and learning from successes and setbacks will drive long-term career growth.

Savannah: Stay organized and try to learn something new each day. Construction projects involve many moving parts, and staying organized can help manage tasks and ensure nothing gets forgotten. Continuous learning can also keep you motivated and improve problem-solving skills.

As our industry continues to evolve, leaders like Laura, Tyler, and Savannah remind us that collaboration across different generations is key to addressing challenges like technology, workforce needs, and sustainability. Mentorship is a two-way street, with experienced professionals offering guidance while gaining fresh perspectives from emerging leaders. This exchange of ideas lays the foundation for a promising future, and we look forward to seeing how the next generation drives the industry forward! 



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