builder's boardroom

14 Tips for Tracking Labor Productivity from Other Subs

It All Starts With Productivity Tracking Software...

1   **You Should Be Using Software -** It almost goes without saying, but use software to track productivity and gain a better understanding of what people are doing and where you're losing time. Knowify is a great resource that has been successful for many contractors, including the one who gave this tip at the Meetup.

2   **Less is More -** At this point, there are an endless amount of digital tools, apps and software available. Don't think you have to use them all. Instead, take a less is more approach so that you and your team don't get overwhelmed. Implement one tool at a time, slow dripping each tool that you want to try. Wait until you've fully mastered one tool before moving on to the next.

3   **Only as Good as How You Use It -** Don't use a screwdriver as a hammer and then complain that it doesn't work. In other words, don't make the mistake of thinking a software/tool is ineffective if you only made a halfhearted attempt to use it.

4   **Get Buy-In -** Getting buy-in from your crew is essential to any effort to use software for productivity tracking. If they don't use a given software properly, it won't work. And if they don't understand why they need to put in the extra work of using it, they may not do it. One sub suggested using bonuses. Create KPIs tied to their successful productivity tracking. As they hit those KPIs, offer bonuses.

5   **Keep It Simple -** Make the productivity tracking process as simple as possible for your crews. The process of labor tracking shouldn't be convoluted, so keep that in mind as you vet potential tools. And be sure to offer your team plenty of training on the tool before they start.

6   **Prioritize Strong Integrations -** Prioritize software that is already well-integrated with the other systems you use. Don't lean on Zapier (a tool for manually creating integrations between tools that don't have one) too much. Make an investment in something that has better natural integrations to start with.

Other Productivity Tips from Subcontractors

7   **Know Your GC's Supers -** Keep track of who the supers are for the GCs that you work with frequently. If you know you'll be working with a super who hurt your productivity in the past, adjust your bid accordingly because you know it may be hard for you to achieve maximum productivity when working with them.

8   **Document Productivity Interference -** Train foremen on how to spot and document when someone is interfering with productivity, so they know how to identify and quantify its damage.

9. **Look at Historical Data -** Examine past projects to get a better idea of what caused the most productivity issues in the past so you can readily identify them in the future. One breakout room presenter found that using the wrong productivity rate, having a poor-fit crew, or problems with a foreman were among her most common culprits.

10. **Remember Labor Difficulty -** Keep in mind that labor difficulty can greatly skew your productivity numbers, so be sure to adjust your productivity rates in accordance with the difficulty of each task.

11. **Get Input from the Field -** Invite the boots on the ground in the field to give their input on how to allocate hours on a project. One Meetup attendee pointed out that project managers allocating hours are often just making their best guess, and that you'll have a more accurate (and productive) allocation of hours when you get a more realistic estimate from those who really know.

12. **Start Earlier than the Post-Mortem -** Don't exclusively rely on project "post-mortem" meetings to start looking at where you went wrong on productivity. While this is still good, it's reactionary, and should be considered a supplement to a more proactive assessment of productivity.

13. **Communicate with Estimators -** One estimator at the meeting said he often has no idea of how accurate or off he was on his numbers. Be sure to let your estimators know where they went right or wrong.

14. **Act Like a GC -** If you frequently "sub to a sub" or even use temp labor companies, it can complicate your ability to track productivity, since you're not working with in-house people. In this case, it pays to act like a GC and treat everyone like an extension of your team. That may mean pull planning meetings, where you not only establish what you'll be working on, but communicate your expectations around productivity tracking.