Business Changes: So You Should Always Be Improving Your Selling Process

When was the last time you looked without prejudice at your sales processes?

The business marketplace changes like everything else in life. Things which once were cutting edge become outdated and ineffective. Selling processes; the set of activities that move people from leads to suspects to qualified prospects to customers need to be tweaked or changed over time like everything else.

If you re-engineer your sales efforts for high-performance output, do you know the benefits of each activity or the negative consequences? Have you been able to determine what you should be doing but aren’t? Do you know what you should stop doing?

For many companies, reviewing the sales process just doesn’t happen until the circumstances are severe. This is because companies see quality engineering as a high-level corporate undertaking related to production and delivery. They don’t view process review as something related to selling.

That’s unfortunate, since sales is truly the only profit generator a business has. This lack of willingness to invest up front in improved processes is sure to affect sales results and sometimes can drive failure over time.

It wasn’t until late in the evolution of sales methodologies that quality control was recognized as important to sales as other functions and disciplines. Managers and organizations who were forward thinking realized that excellence in sales processes could be a sales differentiator in marketing and customer acquisition.

So, why has the selling industry in general failed to apply the process of review and re-engineering to their selling processes? Is it because they see sales only as pushing and personality - when in fact it’s a combination of art and science?

Why is understanding this stuff so critical to you?

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Engineer’s Corner

Stream Buffers – Is More Really Better?

A few years ago, the Charles County Commissioners deliberated a precedent-setting proposed new Master Plan to address growth and water resource protection utilizing certain presumptions based on desktop environmental approaches. A key component was a significant planning-level construction and development stream buffer - in addition to any other regulatory criteria in place.

This Plan assumed scientific and technical principles to be consistent and predictable everywhere without regard to the varied character of onsite natural resources and ecosystems. Such assumptions proved to be challenging, and the County correctly chose to further analyze the proposed changes prior to implementing any new planning criteria.

So what is the big deal? Although well intentioned, this is one of similar “even more is better” initiatives other localities are considering. Conserving our resources is a good thing but not necessarily with political, rather than science, based approaches. Other controversial examples making the rounds are the proposed expansion of the rare Northern Long-Eared Bat restrictions and waters of the U. S. definitions. But this is another column.

The Charles County Commissioners and Planning Commission invited Andrew T. Der & Associates, LLC to provide expert testimony on the technical merits of implementing stream buffers in their Master Plan beyond others already required. The Plan already included an effective and innovative strategy of a Deferred Development District to designate a controlled region of the County for mindful expansion in a manner that balances effective water resource protection with planned and inevitable growth.

So what might such a desktop buffer overlay mean for construction compliance? The trouble with ecologically based desktop planning is – well – it is ecologically based desktop planning. Natural resource and site character is insufficiently static, consistent, or predictable to make reliable planning level conclusions. Predicting future outcomes in this manner without some site-level evaluation and ground-truthing can be unreliable and impractical.

For example, increasing buffer setbacks in addition to existing criteria may sound intuitively beneficial, but is overly simplistic if the pre-existing property condition is, say, pre-SWM development, mining, or agricultural. In these cases, onsite water quality controls, stream restoration, and reforestation would be far more effective – and practicable - as is referenced in Maryland’s Stormwater Management (SWM) law requiring Environmental Site Design (ESD) to the Maximum Extent Practicable (MEP).

So where does that leave the industry? Right where we are - which is not bad. It so happens the existing processes in place statewide (and in Charles County) already allow, and even require by ordinance, a full ecological evaluation of any property and its resources prior to any activity or development. This is primarily through the Forest Stand Delineation (FSD) or Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) process per Maryland Forest Conservation Act and delegated local ordinance, as well as the first of three required SWM plan submissions.

Once an NRI/FSD is approved, then a development construction concept is overlaid on the plan to produce an approved Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) where avoidance of sensitive resources and forests including mitigation areas are shown. These regulatory processes require, as the initial step, a property to be ground-truthed and characterized on a site plan showing extent of forests, slopes, soils, waters including wetlands, and a myriad of other descriptors.

Included already is a stream setback buffer, which is locally established in almost all jurisdictions varying from usually 100 feet, or more. This is further expanded to capture contiguous sensitive resources such as rare and sensitive species habitat and steep slopes and includes an automatic 25-foot state nontidal wetland buffer, 100-foot Chesapeake Bay Critical Area (CBCA) buffer, and any 100 year flood plains.

Continued On Page 21
Protecting Your Property: Intellectual That Is…

You buy a new pair of shoes, computer, or car. It's your property. There's no debate.

But, let's say you hire someone to create, design, and write the content for your website. Is the website yours?

The answer “yes” seems logical. But, legally the answer may not be the one you want to hear. It all depends on what precautions you took before turning over the job.

There are a lot of misunderstandings out there when it comes to intellectual property. The good news is that there are easy steps you can take to protect your intellectual property.

It All Starts With The Name

If you’re hiring a freelancer, or another company to do your website, it’s critical that the domain name used for the site and any other names purchased are purchased and registered in your company’s name.

Sometimes web designers will register the domain name in their own names. No matter the reason this is done, even if it's just a matter of convenience, you want to make sure everything is registered in your company’s name.

If you later experience a falling out with your designer, or simply want to hire another company for a redesign down the road, you don't want the original designer to be the one listed as the site's owner.

Content Is King? But Who Is King?

Even if your name appears as the registered owner of the website domain, that doesn't mean you own what's built on the site.

According to federal law, the “author” - the person or company that creates the content, takes the pictures, or does the illustrations owns the work unless there is a written contract in which the creator assigns ownership of the work to you in a written agreement.

The importance of having a written assignment agreement goes far beyond protecting your website. If you don't have a contract stating that your company owns the work, then the person can charge you to use the same content or images in other materials, such as brochures and advertisements.

What If An Employee Designs Your Website?

There is an exception. If the “author” is an employee and creates the work within the scope on the job, then it's considered “work made for hire” and the hiring company owns it. However, there are grey areas here. The employee could later claim the work was created off hours.

When it comes to protecting your intellectual property, you can never play it too safe.

All too often, what starts with a handshake can turn into havoc. It's always better to have a written contract on the front end, assigning all rights of what is created to your company, than a legal battle later — whether an employee, freelancer, or another company is doing the job.

Consult With Your Attorney

I always recommend checking with your attorney on the front end to make sure you’ve taken all the steps needed to protect your intellectual property. The money you’ll spend will be pennies compared to what could happen if you face a legal problem down the road.

Allan Hirsh Advisors (allanhirshadvisors.com) provides coaching, mentoring, and advising services to CEOs and business leaders in the greater Baltimore area. Tune in to hear his show AHA Business Radio on Tuesdays at 6-7 pm on CBS Sports Radio, 1300 am. Visit ahabusinessradio.com to podcast the shows.
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Anthem House: Wellness and Artful Living in Historic Locust Point Neighborhood

Locust Point, a popular and historic Baltimore City neighborhood famously known as the home of Fort McHenry, will soon be home to Anthem House, an architecturally significant mixed-use development located at the intersection of East Fort Avenue and Lawrence Street.

Bozzuto, a Greenbelt, Maryland-based development, construction and property management company, in partnership with War Horse, former Under Armour executive Scott Plank’s real estate development firm, and Solstice Partners, are behind the $100 million community, which will consist of 284 luxury apartments, underground parking, and 14,000 square feet of prime street-level retail, dining and entertainment. Bozzuto Construction is the general contractor and Bozzuto Management is the management company.

The Amenities

The nine-story building will include an extensive array of amenities: two rooftop decks offering more than an acre of expansive green space, an infinity pool and spectacular views of Baltimore’s harbor and cityscape; pet spa and dog run; entertainment room with billiards, communal kitchen, and ample entertainment space; conference room and flexible collaboration areas; and 24-hour training center with high intensity equipment and yoga room with refreshment bar.

“The Anthem House was inspired by the human drive for self-expression,” said Toby Bozzuto, president and CEO, Bozzuto. “Designed with a focus on providing opportunities for adventure combined with comfort and convenience, the community will provide residents and visitors the opportunity to live their anthem out loud. It is our hope that Anthem House becomes the gateway to one of Baltimore City's most historic neighborhoods, reflecting its industrial heart and embodying the best of Baltimore's retail, dining and culture.”

Anthem House sits on the site of a former GE manufacturing facility and has been accepted into Maryland’s Voluntary Cleanup Program. The community will begin leasing in 2016 and will deliver in Spring 2017. For more information, visit www.anthemhousebaltimore.com.

The Inspiration

Part nod to Baltimore's history, part rallying cry, the name Anthem House evokes the feeling of camaraderie, celebrates the spirit of creativity, and honors the inspirations that drive individuals. An anthem is both individual and deeply personal — such as a living space — and also something that is shared within a community. Anthems bring people together, and there’s no better place for them to gather than in a community designed to honor that vibrant spirit, and inspire a spirited life.

The Location

Located in the heart of Locust Point, Anthem House has stunning views of the harbor and downtown Baltimore. South of the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel, Anthem House has easy accessibility to I-95 without the traffic of downtown. The community is just minutes from multiple modes of transportation, such as the Charm City Circulator and Water Taxi, as well as several hubs of innovation including Under Armour. Anthem House is close to history, too. It’s up the street from Fort McHenry, which inspired the writing of “The Star Spangled Banner.”
Put Yourself In Prime Position For 2016

Year End Accounting For Contractors

They say year end is a good time for tax planning — and they’re right. But it also is an excellent opportunity to perform a number of accounting-related tasks that can put your construction company in prime position to have a successful and profitable 2016. Here are a few examples.

Embrace on your budget

To hit the ground running next year, lay the foundation for your budget now with an eye toward putting the final numbers in place at the very end of the year. Your financial statements can be of great assistance. First, look at your income statement to analyze your sales, margins, operating expenses, and profits or losses year to date. A particularly important number to focus on from an overall budgetary standpoint is your gross profit margin. If your margin is declining, you may need to adjust or increase your contract revenues or try to lower your contract costs.

Next, conduct a cash flow projection. Construction companies can all too easily be undone by a lack of available dollars at critical times, so your budget needs to account for cash flow now at year end, as well as setting expectations for the coming year. To integrate a cash flow projection into your budget, take your current and anticipated projects and estimate your expected revenue by month.

Last, look at your balance sheet. Think of it as a screenshot of your construction company’s financial condition on a given date — in this case, year end. Use your balance sheet to, among other things, calculate your debt-to-asset ratio. It can tell you how many of your assets (heavy equipment, office technology) are owned by your lender(s) and how this could impede next year’s budget.

Reinforce banking and surety relations

Aside from governmental bodies, the two outside entities that have the biggest impact on a construction company’s success are its bank and its surety. So with the year winding down, now is a good time to reinforce your banking and bonding relationships.

Let’s start with your bank. Re-examine any bank covenants in place and look for potential compliance issues. If your year end financial data indicates you might be at risk for violating any covenants, determine why and whether you’ll be able to get back into compliance without incurring a severe penalty. You may need to set up a meeting with your lender rep to discuss this or next year’s covenants. In addition, consider whether you might need to take out additional business loans next year.

Then there’s your surety. The end of the year is the perfect time to maintain and solidify this relationship by reaching out to review and discuss your 2015 financial performance. Specific topics to consider include your:

- Working capital position,
- Debt-to-asset ratio, and
- Tangible net worth.

Overall, you want to establish consensus on where your bonding capacity stands now, at year end, and whether your surety sees that capacity as expanding or diminishing in 2016.

Close the books

When any type of company reaches the end of an accounting cycle, it needs to “close the books” and begin ones for the new cycle. This certainly holds true for contractors who, among other things, need to make adjusting entries to record any amounts accrued for the period that aren’t yet listed and remove any deferred items.

At this point, you should also have combed through your expenses and cost of sales to get them in line with the true expenditures that actually occurred. In addition, your sales revenue should contain the proper billings for the year.

Beyond that, precisely how you close your books will largely depend on your accounting software. Construction-specific packages are generally preferable but may be difficult to operate because they contain so

Continued On Page 21
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A Cash Balance Plan may be a viable and “good looking” option for business owners and business partners who are interested in contributing and deducting more than $53,000 per year in retirement savings.

Sounds too good to be true, right? Indeed, it is not. Cash Balance Plans can be combined with 401(k) Profit Sharing Plans to allow an additional $50,000-$250,000 per year in tax deductible contributions depending on the age and income levels of plan participants.

Let’s chat about age and income. As with any successful matchmaking endeavor, consideration surrounding these two formidable numbers is often taken into account. However, unlike dating, you can’t lie about such numbers when it pertains to your Cash Balance Plan. You may, though, be pleased to learn that age will often act in your favor as Cash Balance Plans are age-dependent: the older you are, the faster you can potentially accelerate your savings.

In regards to income, consistent and stable cash flow are important. Cash Balance Plans act as the “gold digger” in your retirement planning / tax saving relationship. While Cash Balance Plans are often established for the benefit of owners and key executives (allowing them to maximize personal savings) the rank and file employees will also benefit from the employer’s contributions.

If you have a “fear of commitment,” a Cash Balance Plan may not be for you. Cash Balance Plans require minimum annual contributions to maintain plan funding and stable contribution levels for 3 years.

As you ponder this powerful additional retirement plan option, keep in mind your goals and objectives as a business owner. If your desire is to decrease taxable income and increase your savings, Cash Balance Plans may be a great “match” and quite handy. And… who doesn’t love handy, right?

Please call with questions and for further information regarding Retirement Planning/ Cash Balance Plans.

P.S. On a personal note, yes, I am very happily married.

Lauren M. Rebbel, CFP®
Partner
The Prosperity Consulting Group, LLC
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Engineering Pitfalls Of Podium Construction

It is safe to say that nothing stays the same and the building industry is no exception. As construction methods change over time, adapting to economic fluctuations as well as technological advancements, engineers are required to modify designs accordingly. This is a must with respect to “Podium Construction,” a heavily utilized building method in the booming mixed-use (MU) and multi-family housing (MFH) market segments.

The economic environment has led to the utilization of podium construction, a cost effective method of building low rise structures. Typically there is a concrete base, often a parking deck, with wood construction above. There is no steel, therefore the wood construction acts as the structural support, limiting the elevation to five floors and below.

Technological advances are also a driver, and no more so than in the arena of HVAC design. The goal to provide ever increasing efficiencies and improved human comfort is not only evolving current product lines, but creating new systems as well. A newer product to North America and one of the most efficient HVAC systems today is “Variable Refrigerant Flow,” (VRF). VRF Systems are also cost effective as they eliminate ductwork by circuiting refrigerant from an exterior air-cooled condenser to several interior cassettes or fan coil units.

Today, many projects marry inexpensive podium construction with innovative VRF systems creating potential pitfalls. The first issue is to assess the weight of the VRF rooftop equipment, as a typical unit will be larger and heavier than more traditional split system air-cooled condensers. Early in design, a discussion with the structural engineer is essential to determine the viability of the VRF system. One solution is to increase the number of units to reduce the individual unit weight. Another challenge with any rooftop equipment is elevated sound and vibration. These units are typically located above apartments where sound may be more critical than other applications.

There are plumbing pitfalls as well. Think wood construction and think expansion and contraction. As framing is installed it will absorb moisture and expand, and as wood dries overtime it will contract. A 2x4 may lose 0.025” and a typical 4-story structure may shrink from 1-3/16” to 3” depending upon the moisture content of the wood.

So, the framing is up and the plumber pipes up the bathroom groups in the ceiling, connecting to vertical risers. The piping now installed, the wood dries over time and contracts, but wait, we have a hard connected piping system in place? This is a very common occurrence. The solution depends on the type of piping installed. Traditional piping systems such as no-hub, can accept some deflection in the joints. However, the majority of the time economic factors drive the plumber to utilize plastic pipe which is less forgiving. Not to worry, speak with your pipe provider, there are specific expansion fittings that will provide the flexibility required.

These are just a few examples of how our dynamic industry can catch one off guard, but a quality engineer should always be planning ahead, thoroughly assessing the situation.

Steve Trageser, PE, LEED AP, CPD, CxA
Director of Construction & Commissioning
Henry Adams Consulting Engineers.

Steve Trageser leads HA’s efforts in the design-build, construction administration, and commissioning fields. In addition to being a registered PE, Steve is a Certified Plumbing Designer, LEED Accredited Professional, and Certified Commissioning Agent through the AABC Commissioning Group of ACG. Steve holds a BS degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Maryland and an MBA from Loyola University Maryland. He is an active member of Maryland Construction Network.

The opportunity is often lost by deliberating.

~ Publilius Syrus
NEW OSHA Confined Space Entry In Construction Standard

OSHA has issued a final standard for construction work in confined spaces, which will take effect August 3, 2015 on the federal side. As of this writing Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH) have adopted this new standard however they have not yet established and effected date. The new standard, Subpart AA of 29 CFR 1926, sets requirements for practices and procedures to protect employees engaged in construction activities at a worksite with one or more confined spaces. However, the standard does not apply to construction work regulated elsewhere in Part 1926 for excavations, underground construction, and diving operations. Key provisions of the final standard require employers to:

- Determine what kinds of spaces their employees will be in, what hazards could be there, and how those hazards should be made safe;
- Train each employee whose work is regulated by this standard, at no cost to the employee;
- Develop and implement a written confined space program if employees will enter permit spaces;
- Take effective steps to prevent employees from entering those spaces, if employees will not need to enter the permit spaces; and
- Provide rescue and emergency services for employees who enter permit spaces, should anything go wrong.

In addition, if a contractor (or subcontractor) will be hired to do confined space work, the controlling contractors and host employers must discuss spaces on the site and their hazards with both entry employers and each other before and after entry.

Construction Versus General Industry

The standard will provide construction employees with protections similar to those general industry employees have had for more than two decades, but with some differences tailored to the construction industry. It should be noted that if a construction employer has been following the general industry standard, 29 CFR 1910.146, these employers will discover several differences between that and the new Subpart AA of 29 CFR 1926, including:

- More detailed provisions for coordinating activities with other employers at the site;
- Requiring a competent person to evaluate the site and identify confined and permit spaces;
- Requiring continuous atmospheric monitoring when possible;
- Requiring continuous monitoring of engulfment hazards;
- Allowing for the suspension of a permit, instead of cancellation;
- Requiring that employers who direct employees to enter a space without using a complete permit system to eliminate or isolate any physical hazards first;
- Requiring that employers who are relying on local entities for emergency services to arrange for those responders to give the employer advance notice if they will be unable to respond for a period of time; and
- Requiring employers to provide training in a language and vocabulary that the employee understands.

Temporary Enforcement Policy For Construction Work In Confined Spaces

This memorandum provides guidance on the enforcement of the Confined Spaces in Construction standard published on May 4, 2015. The new standard goes into effect on August 3, 2015. Requests for an extension of the effective date have indicated a need for additional time for training and the acquisition of equipment necessary to comply with the new standard. OSHA will not delay the effective date, but instead will postpone full enforcement of the new standard for 60 days from the effective date of August 3, 2015 to October 2, 2015. During this 60-day period, OSHA will not issue

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Avoid The Self-Rental Trap: Tax Solutions For Self-Renters

Save Thousands Each Year with Proper Tax Planning and a Group Activities Election

Without proactive tax planning, self-renting can end up costing a taxpayer more in taxed inflated income than they may have spent renting from a third-party. This trap, known as the “self-rental trap,” trips up many business owners each year despite the preemptive measures that can be taken to avoid it.

In theory, self-renting seems simple. John Smith owns LLC A and LLC B. Company A owns a computer company and Company B owns a building that rents office space to Company A’s company. Company A rents from Company B; and at first, it seems like the perfect setup, with the money never leaving John’s hands. However, what self-renters often fail to realize is that this plan is far from ideal, with passive activity rules leading to many business owners paying taxes based on an overinflated net income.

What is a passive activity?

According to the passive activity rules in Code Section 469, a passive activity is any activity that involves the conduct of any trade or business in which the taxpayer does not materially participate, including any rental activity. In the case of John Smith, when Company B rents office space to Company A’s computer company, Company B is engaged in a passive activity.

Revenue losses from passive activities, like renting, cannot be deducted from income from non-passive activities. So while an individual may generate non-passive income, any passive losses will be nondeductible and therefore suspended and carried to future tax years.

For example, John’s computer company earned $200,000 in non-passive income last year. His building, however, lost $50,000 in passive income through renting. Despite this loss, John’s taxable income will remain $200,000, while the loss of $50,000 will be suspended and carried forward to be used in the future when he has other passive income. This situation, an all too common mistake by self-renters, is the self-rental trap.

How do I avoid the self-rental trap?

The self-rental trap can be minimized with proper tax planning. A taxpayer, like John, can plan ahead and minimize the rental loss by adjusting the rent between the two entities.

This planning can include making a “group activities election” when filing.

Though rental and business activities are usually not allowed to be grouped, if both activities form an appropriate economic unit and meet grouping stipulations then grouping is permitted. To determine whether a group constitutes as an appropriate economic unit, the following factors must be considered:
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Construction Contractors And IT Systems: Time For A Tune-Up Or An Overhaul?

To say that the construction industry is dynamic is an understatement. After struggling to stay afloat during the recession, many construction contractors are now dealing with increased customer demand, rapid revenue growth, and new regulatory and compliance requirements. Inefficient manual processes for billing, job costing, and project management may have been tolerable in the past, as a way to conserve capital and focus on covering overhead. As project activity increases, however, consider the compounding effect of inefficient processes on your profitability, scalability, and sustainability.

As you identify the weaknesses in reporting, remember that a system includes people and processes, as well as software. Often the software is capable of meeting the needs of the business, but the people may lack the training or business acumen to use the software as intended. Consistent processes must be developed and implemented to take advantage of all the software can offer.

Once you have diagnosed the extent of systemic weaknesses, a strategic decision must be made.

Tune Up Or Overhaul?

Can a simple tune up of the current systems be sufficient to achieve your objective? A tune up would improve workflow, better define processes, enhance the use of applications, or add training.

If the current system is deficient to a point where a major overhaul is necessary, it should include replacing any accounting and operations software that is approaching end of life or no longer fits the size and nature of your business. An overhaul might also include the purchase of an estimating or mobile data collection solution that would interface with the system.

Committing To Change

Whether you decide on a tune up or an overhaul, leadership must commit the organization to change.

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Harford Community College, Your Industry Partner

Harford Community College has the right tools to address the growing need for trained professionals in the construction, manufacturing and industrial sectors. We offer a variety of courses to upgrade workforce skills and deliver credentials that are competitive in today’s marketplace. The College is continually identifying, developing, and providing technical and educational pathways to prepare students to become workers of the future while upgrading the skills of incumbent workers. HCC is pleased to be hosting Maryland Construction Network’s “Where’s the Work” Direct Connect Networking Extravaganza on the HCC campus, in Darlington Hall, on November 5, 2015.

In addition to a valuable partnership with MCN, HCC has partnered with several professional trade organizations to offer apprenticeship programs in three sought-after fields. The Heating and Air Conditioning Contractors of Maryland and Harford Community College offer a Maryland state-approved four-year Air Conditioning Apprenticeship program, the Harford County Electrical Contractors Association and Harford Community College offer a Maryland state-approved four-year Electrical Apprenticeship Program, and the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) – Baltimore Metro and Harford Community College offer a Maryland state-approved four-year Plumbing Apprenticeship Program. ABC’s apprenticeship training programs are fully approved and accredited by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), U.S. Department of Labor, Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council, and the Veterans Administration. All apprenticeship programs are offered on the HCC campus at the Edgewood Hall Apprenticeship and Training facility. Learn more about apprenticeship programs.

In addition to the apprenticeship programs, HCC offers a number of Continuing Education and Training Certificate programs. Areas of study include:

- Building Maintenance Certification
- Commercial Truck Driving
- Forklift Operator Certification
- Home Improvement License
- HVACR Certificate
- Machining Technology
- Solar Photo-Voltaic Installer
- Welding Training

Learn more about certificate programs in the construction, manufacturing and industrial fields. If you are looking to hire a certified workforce, please contact Victor Cyran at 443-412-2398 or vcyran@harford.edu.

As an industry partner, HCC welcomes you to take advantage of the many spaces on campus available for a variety of meetings and events, including the APG Federal Credit Union Arena with 18,000 square feet of hardwood floor and 2,500 seats, brand-new Darlington Hall with flexible meeting spaces and cutting edge technology, and the Chesapeake Center Theater and Dining Rooms. For more information, contact HCC Events and Conferencing at 443-412-2117. Visit Harford Community College online at http://www.harford.edu.
Tax Reporting Issues Impacting Contractors

In addition to compliance requirements and specific rules directly aimed at the construction industry, the ever-changing tax rules and regulations can make it difficult to recognize exactly where your contracting business could be vulnerable or exposed to penalties from the IRS. The implications of how you report revenue or account for your labor force can vary from year-to-year and also change when certain financial milestones are achieved. A Certified Public Accountant (CPA) specializing in the construction industry should keep you informed and help you plan ahead to ensure you are in compliance and take advantage of the benefits available to your construction business. The following are some of the most common tax reporting issues that can impact construction contractors.

1. Methods of Accounting. Just like there are various types of contractors, there are multiple methods of tax accounting at a contractor’s disposal. Methods include: Cash, Accrual (with variations), Completed Contract, Percentage of Completion (with variations) and a Hybrid of these methods. Upon reaching certain revenue thresholds determines what method you will be permitted or required to use from one year to the next. It’s likely that you will use at least two methods of accounting, one for your overall method and one for your long-term contracts. Once a contractor reaches or exceeds revenue over $10 million in average gross receipts for the previous three tax years, long-term contracts are required to be reported using the percentage of completion method under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 460, “Special Rules for Long-term Contracts.” The intricacies of IRC Section 460, along with other rules of the IRC (e.g. whether or not you have inventory), can complicate which method you use for your construction business. Careful consideration should be given as once a method of accounting is adopted, that method must be used as your overall method going forward unless a method change is requested from the IRS Commissioner. You should assess and monitor the status of your business to help you plan for the next tax year to avoid any surprises.

2. Long-term Contract Adjustment (LTCA). This adjustment comes into play with our dear old friend, the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). The LTCA is an adjustment that must be computed on contracts that do not use the percentage of completion method of accounting. You must compute the gross profit earned on these contracts as if you were using the percentage of completion method and then compare it to your normal method. The difference between the two gross profits is the LTCA (positive or negative) used to determine your AMT. There are two exceptions that exempt a contractor from computing this adjustment. The first is if the contract qualifies as a home construction contract and the second is if the company is deemed a small corporation. Compliance in this area is often overlooked or, due to their complexities, computations are performed incorrectly. You should determine if you are subject to the LTCA provisions each year considering your method of accounting and revenue threshold.

3. Domestic Production Activities Deduction. This deduction, created by the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004, is a gem! The deduction is equal to 9% of qualified production activities income (QPAI), limited to 50% of qualified W-2 wages paid for the year. Qualified activities include residential and commercial construction, infrastructure improvements, land preparation activities, and architectural and engineering services. To calculate the deduction allowed, 9% is applied to the lesser of QPAI or taxable income for the tax year after the utilization of any Net Operating Loss (NOL) carryforwards. There are strict rules as to what is considered QPAI versus non-eligible activities; however, the IRS has permitted a de minimus calculation that can be beneficial to many contractors allowing 100% of their activities to qualify for the deduction. Not a C Corporation? Don’t worry. The deduction flows through to the stockholders and members of pass-through entities. We have found many situations where contractors have not taken advantage of this very valuable deduction. Be sure

Continued On Page 28
It's because Ultimate Selling is different from the ground up. Before you can control the selling process, you have to know what a good selling process should be… and what it shouldn't be.

How Does A Sales Process Review Work?

It looks at your sales process in detail then eliminates ineffective activities, adds necessary ones, and updates useful processes.

Why? Things change, and like anything else, your sales process needs to stay current to be effective.

Reviewing your sales process is a simple way to ensure that your selling efforts will keep you on the leading edge of managing highly qualified prospects. It will help to more effectively weed out those which are not going to result in a sale. It's all about sales outcomes!

What Are The Criteria?

The criteria to keep a-step in the process is simple; does it advance the sales process and at the same time position your company as the provider of choice?

If the activity doesn't serve to do that: Stop Doing It NOW!

It's not about what feels good to you. Ask yourself instead; does it feel good and add value as viewed by your prospective customer? Again, if not: stop using it in your sales process.

Ultimate Selling requires a no-nonsense assessment of each activity in your sales process. It also requires that the objective of each activity be very, very clear, and in fact; BE achievable.

Do you want to win more business now? Then it's time for you to take a hard look at your sales processes and make sure they are aligned with how prospective customers will buy while ensuring all you internal processes and disciplines are aligned for the same objectives and outcomes. Take the initiative with your organization to align processes so conflicting efforts work together more effectively.

Finally, determine how often you should review your sales process. Schedule it as a recurring event in your task list. I recommend that you do this annually, as part of a year-end review in preparation for supporting next year's goals.

When would it make sense to conduct a sales process review more frequently than annually? Examples would be:

- If you have a very rapidly-evolving service field or product.
- If your company experiences high turnover of sales staff.
- If sales are dropping faster than the local economy and market.
- Anytime you find that your results and outcomes are short of plan.

Once your Sales Process is updated; keep it handy where you can refer to it often, so you can consistently use it in creating Intentional Interaction Planning with your prospects and opportunities. Good selling!

Jim Martin, the “ultimate seller”, is working with Maryland Construction Network facilitating MCN’s Sales & Business Development Roundtable Program. A “Discovery & Meet The Facilitator Meeting” is scheduled for October 13th. For additional information about Jim’s qualification or the Sales & Business Development Roundtable, contact Verna Regler at 443.982.7329 or click here. Article Content Attributions: (Excerpts “Ultimate Selling, The Art & Science of Sales Success”)

Register NOW
For MCN’s October 13th
“Discovery & Meet The Facilitator Meeting”
To Explore How You Too
Can Become An
ULTIMATE SELLER!
The FCP or first SWM plan submissions show in concept how a development project will avoid, minimize and mitigate any potential water quality, streamside or sensitive areas. The keystone constraint of such plans continue to be the regulated stream setback buffer, which will disconnect and filter any runoff even before any SWM strategies. A newly developed site must include a SWM plan that replicates per SWM law “woods in good conditions” from the point of stream reference.

But wait – there’s more. For sites already developed in urbanizing areas, SWM Act retrofit criteria and concurrently applied state Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) requirements also have mandatory measures to remediate and clean up past pre-SWM problems to meet stringent Chesapeake Bay program goals to the point re-development may actually improve water quality over existing deteriorating conditions in some situations.

So this begs the question, with all the above existing regulatory criteria fully in effect, on what basis would even more buffer criteria be necessary on a desktop level as a presumption without regard to actual and existing site conditions? Any proposed overlay of a modeled buffer based on aerially flown data and aerially mapped streams as a deliberative regulatory setback can be risky due to potential on-site inherent inaccuracies associated with actual resource character.

The existing regulatory buffer setback processes, as well as the MDE and Corps, all rely on field evaluation of the presence and limits of sensitive and regulated resources and should continue in all levels of any new regulatory criteria. Buffer setbacks can be an effective tool in our planning toolbox but should be implemented only with other concurrent factors such as resource restoration and retrofit - rather than an automatic “more is better” fix.

Andrew T. Der is Principal of Andrew T. Der & Associates, LLC practicing in the consulting industry since 2001, previously completing 18 years of service at the Maryland Department of the Environment. He can be reached at 410 491 2808 or AndrewTDer@comcast.net

It’s understandable to want to wind down a bit during the last few months of 2015. But this is a perfect time to gear up to make 2016 even better. Your financial advisor can help you complete the steps covered above and many more.

Sidebar: 3 important questions to ask about your taxes Perhaps you’ve wondered when year end really begins. The close of October financials is a good time to kick off this critical period. When you have these in hand, send a copy of them to your tax advisor. In addition, generate revenue and net income projections for the remainder of the year, and then set up a tax planning meeting. Three important questions you might ask at this meeting are:

1. How can I best time my income and deductions? It’s generally better, when feasible, to defer the recognition of income and, therefore, tax liability. But this isn’t always the case.

2. What’s my depreciation situation? Contractors should always look into the Section 179 deduction, which allows businesses to deduct some equipment and software purchases instead of depreciating them. Just bear in mind that, absent congressional action before year end, the Sec. 179 deduction won’t be as valuable this year as it has previously been. Check with your tax advisor for the latest information.

3. Will I be able to claim any tax credits? If you own a small construction business, ask your advisor about the retirement plan credit and small-business health care credit, among others. Owners’ construction companies of any size should monitor whether and when a variety of expired tax credits will be revived by Congress. Again, your tax advisor can provide the latest information.

Rivka Bier, CPA, MST is a Manager at Hertzbach & Company, P.A. in Owings Mills, Maryland, Rockville, Maryland and Arlington, Virginia. She can be reached at (410) 363-3200 or by emailing rbier@hertzbach.com.
Enough Pauses: The Construction Industry Finally In Sustained Recovery?

“Enough pauses. We are finally in the midst of a sustained recovery. Fundamentals are strong. Growth is ever steady, and momentum assuredly recovers when unexpected events such as severe weather hit. While the pace of recovery can be frustrating, last year marked the first year where all but one of the major construction markets made gains or stayed positive” according to the “2015 Construction Outlook: An Economic Recovery Finds Its Footing” by Jeff Gavin, which appeared in the January 2015 issue of Electrical Contractor.

“Snapshot - A Monthly Update Of The Fifth District Economy”, provided by the Federal Reserve Bank, MARYLAND September 2015 issue noted “Reports on Maryland’s economy were somewhat positive in recent months as labor market and household conditions improved; however, housing market indicators were mixed.” The Update also reported “…the construction industry led the expansion with 5.0 percent growth, followed closely by the leisure and hospitality industry, which grew 4.6 percent over the last twelve months.”

Recent industry surveys such as the Associated General Contractors of America Ready To Hire Again: The 2015 Construction Hiring And Business Outlook report that “contractors appear confident about the immediate future”. The Outlook notes, “There is little doubt the construction industry will continue to recover in 2015.”

Private sector growth and the creation of jobs is a top priority to Maryland’s Governor, Larry Hogan. “The governor has made it very clear to our whole team – that includes the entire cabinet – that this is going to be an administration focused on pro-business growth and job creation.” Roger A. Campos, Business Ombudsman, Office of the Governor.

So...recovery? Where is the growth? How can my small business succeed? Where is the work?

Join Maryland Construction Network on Thursday, November 5th at Harford Community College’s Darlington Hall for a “Where’s The Work” Economic Forecast & Direct Connect Networking Extravaganza featuring:

- Roger A. Campos, Business Ombudsman – Office of the Governor
- Harford County Executive Barry Glassman and Director of Economic Development Karen Holt
- Cecil County Executive Tari Moore and Director of Economic Development Lisa Webb
- Christopher Morton - Harford County Public Schools
- Perry Willis – Cecil County Public Schools

Roger Campos, committed to providing a voice for Maryland businesses and serving “as a liaison between businesses, economic development organizations, communities, and federal, state, and local agencies” will discuss his role as the Governor’s Business Ombudsman and his relationship with the Governor.

Our elite panel will address:

- What’s on the horizon for Harford & Cecil Counties; specific to economic growth, projections, and forecasts within the real estate and construction communities.
- Detail projected growth within the public school sector; current and upcoming projects.
- Bid and prequalification requirements to work within the Harford and Cecil County Public School Systems.

In addition, Delegate Teresa Reilly, a Delegate to Harford and Cecil Counties, will make opening remarks; sharing accomplishments, and short and long term goals and objectives, as they relate to the both counties.

Mirroring the format of MCN’s extremely well attended and well received “Where’s The Work” Economic Outlook Conference, this event will also include a keynote address, panel discussion, ample networking opportunities and an interactive hands-on environment.

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WORKPLACE FRAUD ACT - HOW THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY CAN AVOID ITS REACH

In recent years, Maryland, through the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation and the federal government, have stepped up their prosecution of businesses who misclassify workers as independent contractors instead of properly classifying them as employees. In Maryland, the construction industry is regulated on this issue by the Workplace Fraud Act (“Act”) which is specifically aimed at business which provide “construction services” and/or “landscaping services.” Construction services are defined to include services provided in connection with building, reconstructing, improving, enlarging, painting, altering, maintaining and repairing real property. Landscaping services includes garden maintenance and planting, lawn care, seeding and mowing of highway strips, sod laying, turf installation and planting, pruning, spraying and removal of ornamental bushes and trees. The Act presumes that an employer-employee relationship exists, and makes it illegal for an employer to fail to properly classify an individual as an employee. The alleged misclassification is often brought to the attention of the authorities by a worker who believes he or she has been wrongfully treated or terminated.

What are the potential consequences for misclassifying employees under the Act? If found to be in violation of the Act, the employer may be subject to paying restitution to any individual not properly classified, and be required to do whatever is necessary to comply with applicable labor laws including tax withholding, unemployment insurance, wage and workers’ compensation laws. In addition, the employer may be subject to penalties including paying up to $1000 per misclassified employee, or up to $5,000 if the improper classification was done knowingly. Under certain circumstances, a misclassified employee can bring a civil action and may be awarded up to three times the amount of damages if an employer knowingly failed to properly classify, as well as reasonable counsel fees, other costs and other appropriate relief.

How does an employer avoid misclassify a worker? When you are considering hiring someone to work as an independent contractor, obtain at least one of the four types of documents listed below. By having such documentation, the statutory presumption that the worker is an employee is deemed inapplicable. While having any one of these four categories of documents would meet Act’s requirements, having more than one certainly does not hurt.

1. Contract: The employer enter into a written contract with the business entity with whom the worker is employed. The written contract must include i) the nature of the work to be performed; ii) what will be paid to the entity; iii) and an acknowledgement by the entity of its obligations to withhold, report and remit payroll taxes, pay unemployment insurance and maintain workers’ compensation insurance.

2. Affidavit: The employer can obtain an affidavit signed by the business entity indicating it is an independent contractor who is available to work for other business entities.

3. Certificate of Good Standing: The employer can obtain a current certificate of status of the business entity, issued by the State Department of Assessments and Taxation, indicating that the business is in good standing.

4. Licenses: Finally, the employer can obtain proof that the business entity for whom the independent contractor works holds all occupational licenses required by State and local authorities for the work performed.

In addition to obtaining one of the 4 foregoing types of documentation, the employer must provide to each individual classified as an independent contractor a written notice of his or her classification in the form and with the content required by the Commissioner of Labor and Industry. This form can be found on the DLLR website.

You should note that each of the 4 categories of documents is to be obtained from a “business entity”, not an individual. Consequently, keep in mind that, as an
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Disaster Preparedness For Commercial Properties: Choosing An Effective Emergency Response Vendor

We have all seen the effects of both natural and man-made disasters in the not too distant past.

Hurricane Katrina, the BP/Gulf Oil Spill, and more recently Hurricane Sandy come to mind, especially the devastation that each event brought to bear on the public and commercial businesses. On the commercial front, according to FEMA, forty percent of businesses do not reopen after a disaster and another 25 percent fail within one year, which is a staggering number.

However, these are examples of disasters in great magnitude, affecting millions of people. What about emergencies that occur in everyday business situations? Water pipes bursting due to intense freezing temperatures, sprinkler heads being damaged, flooding from intense rain storms. We've all heard the horror stories.

Employee safety is the most important aspect when dealing with an emergency situation. Does your business have an emergency response plan in place, complete with redundancy, which can not only limit the amount of damage to your property and contents but also keep your business operating throughout and emergency?

One important part of navigating through an emergency/disaster for your business is having the correct vendor in place to handle these types of situations. Briefly, these are some questions to ask when choosing an ER/DR vendor:

- Experience- How long have they been in business? What types of projects have they successfully completed? Have they worked in properties or facilities similar to yours?
- Capabilities- Does the company have the resources of manpower and equipment necessary for the work? Are they located near your facility? Do they self-perform or subcontract?
- Ancillary relationships- Does the vendor possess the ability to augment their capabilities with ancillary vendors?

Here are some qualities to look for in choosing and ER/DR vendor:

- Commitment & Availability
- Responsiveness
- Capabilities
- Communication
- Financial stability & experience in the industry
- Track record – References
- Information sharing

And most importantly……

- Long Term Partnership- Building trust in the relationship

Obviously, this is a basic overview of how to gain and grow a relationship with an Emergency Response vendor, but at least it is a start and will prompt you to examine your business and how you can limit your exposure in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Most importantly, Be Prepared!!!

Thanks!

Hal W. Hocking, Regional Account Manager, BMS CAT, Inc. For more information, please feel free to contact me via email at hhocking@bmscat.com or by cell, 240-460-4813.
citations to an employer making good faith efforts to comply with the new standard, as long as the employer is in compliance with either the training requirements of the new standard, found at 29 CFR 1926.1207, or the training requirements found at former 29 CFR 1926.21(b)(6)(i), which is provided:

All employees required to enter into confined or enclosed spaces shall be instructed as to the nature of the hazards involved, the necessary precautions to be taken, and in the use of protective and emergency equipment required. The employer shall comply with any specific regulations that apply to work in dangerous or potentially dangerous areas.

Employers who fail to train their employees consistent with either 29 CFR 1926.1207 or 1926.21(b)(6)(i) would properly be cited for violation of 1926.1207(a). Factors OSHA will consider when evaluating whether an employer is engaged in good faith efforts to comply with the new standard include:

- If the employer has not trained its employees as required under the new standard, whether the employer has scheduled such training,
- If the employer does not have the equipment required for compliance with the new standard, including personal protective equipment, whether the employer has ordered or otherwise arranged to obtain such equipment required for compliance and is taking alternative measures to protect employees from confined space hazards, and
- Whether the employer has engaged in any additional efforts to educate workers about confined space hazards and protect workers from those hazards.

From the information I have collected through MOSH this type of temporary enforcement will be applied until such time they determine the actual effective date and if any additional delay period may be added.

Stay safe,
Terry L. Foy
President, Foy Safety Consulting, Inc.

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similarities/differences in types of business, extent of common control, extent of common ownership and geographical location.

If both the rental and business activities qualify as an appropriate economic unit, the following grouping stipulations must also be met before grouping can be elected:

1) The rental activity is insubstantial in relation to the trade or business activity,
2) The trade or business activity is insubstantial in relation to the rental activity, or
3) Each owner of the trade or business activity has the same ownership interest in the rental activity.

In John's situation, both activities (the renting and computer company) form an appropriate economic unit, the rental activity is insubstantial to the computer business, and John owns 100 percent of both activities. This means that John can elect to group the activities when filing his taxes. As a result of this grouping, the $50,000 loss from the renting will now offset the $200,000 in income earned by John's computer company. This means that John's new net taxable income will be $150,000, putting John and both his companies in a much better financial position than if he had not elected to group.

In the end, passive loss, self-rental and grouping rules are complex and intertwined. Tax ramifications and complexities can result in many self-renters losing thousands of dollars each year. The only way for business owners to avoid self-rental loss is to work with their CPAs to plan ahead, ensuring that both they and their businesses are in the most advantageous financial position and making the most of their income.

Contact Scott Handwerger, CPA, a tax partner at Gross Mendelsohn, at shandwerger@gma-cpa.com or 410.685.5512, with questions.
An Introduction To Wrap Ups

Many construction projects in our region are being performed using a Wrap Up program initiated by the Owner or the General Contractor. There are many good reasons why such a program will be used. It is important to understand what these programs are used for and why they are being chosen over a traditional insurance program.

A Wrap Up is a loss sensitive program that provides coverage for some or all of the contractors involved in a large construction project. Typically, Wrap Ups are considered when the project is over $100,000,000 in value or if the project exceeds $10,000,000 and is part of a broader Rolling Wrap Up (made up of a number of projects).

The Wrap Up can include workers’ compensation, general liability, and excess liability. Some programs are for workers’ compensation only or general/excess liability only.

Under a traditional insurance approach, the General Contractor and all sub contractors provide their own insurance, based on contract requirements, for a project. Bids by all parties include insurance costs and associated markups. These programs have higher insurance costs, multiple carriers, and potential differences in coverage.

By purchasing all of the insurance for a project under a Wrap Up there are cost efficiencies, dedicated limits, one carrier, consolidated administration and safety services, and the program can be designed to meet specific needs (such maintenance of limits through the Statute of Repose).

Since any coverage under a Wrap Up would be primary for a specific project, deductions for insurance costs by subcontractors will be factored into the program. Subcontractors under a Wrap Up will be able to remove the associated premium basis from their own program.

There are two kinds of Wrap Ups. One is an OCIP (Owner Controlled Insurance Program) where the Owner places and manages the program. The second is a CCIP (Contractor Controlled Insurance Program) where the General Contractor places and manages the program. Both operate the same way. The difference is who controls the program.

The safety and claims handling under a Wrap Up is centrally administrated. Everyone under the Wrap Up will be part of the overall insurance program in effect for the project.

Each Wrap Up will have specific forms that all participants will complete, safety standards and requirements, as well as a manual outlining all the details of the insurance program.

Current market conditions and Owner and General Contractor sophistication will continue to lead to use of Wrap Ups on larger projects.

Richard Shaw is a Senior Client Executive with RCM&D with over 25 years of experience working with clients to help them manage their risk. You can contact Richard at rshaw@rcmd.com.

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A financial investment will be required and internal resources must be allocated to implement solutions. If you expect efficiency and reporting to improve, it will. If leaders establish ambitious milestones and demonstrate a willingness to invest, better operations management will become a priority for the entire organization. Then it is up to your software to keep up. Why not push on the accelerator and see what that baby will do?

Bob Sniegowski, Principal, Construction
CliftonLarsonAllen
bob.sniegowski@CLAconnect.com or 612-376-4659
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you have.

4. Independent Contractor vs. Employee. Hiring a worker as an employee has costs beyond their wages. Such costs include hard costs (e.g. payroll taxes, unemployment taxes, insurance), compliance with the regulatory requirements of having an employee, and the added administrative burdens of payroll and the support of a human resources department. In a perceived cost-savings measure, some business owners continue to be tempted to hire workers and treat them as independent contractors. Nonetheless, the decision to classify someone as an “independent contractor” as opposed to an “employee” demands careful consideration for both federal and state purposes in order to avoid unnecessary and costly consequences. This has been a contentious issue for contractors of all sizes, but particularly for small contractors.

The degree of control the owner has over a worker is one element evaluated to determine proper worker classification. If the worker is subject to strict supervision by the business owner with regard to time, place, and how, the worker is more likely an employee for whom wage withholding, unemployment taxes, insurance, etc., are required. If the worker is only responsible for a completed service or product without strict supervision as to when, where and how the work is performed, the worker is more likely to be considered an independent contractor. This is just one of many factors that are evaluated when determining proper worker classification. In addition, workers themselves are often aware of the classification issue. It only takes one former “independent contractor” to file for unemployment or classification determination to wreak havoc on your construction business. If you have any doubt about worker classification, now is the time to determine if you have properly classified your workers.

For more information on these common tax reporting issues, or to discuss how they may impact your construction business, please reach out to Chavon Wilcox, CPA, CCIFP, partner in Aronson LLC’s Construction and Real Estate Group at cwilcox@aronsonllc.com or at 301.231.6288.

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Maryland Construction Network provides Maryland’s construction community affordable and relevant industry-related education and information, as well as premier construction industry networking. MCN is Maryland’s fastest growing construction association, in-step and in-touch with needs of the construction industry. Affordable membership plans starting at $160 a year for the entire firm can be custom-built; designed to enhance and support your firm’s existing marketing strategy. For additional information, contact Verna Regler at 443.982.7329.

Forecast in Frederick County on March 26th (197 attendees), and our June 25th Developer – Builder Forum in Howard County (190 attendees); MCN expects a great crowd on November 5th! We hope you’ll join us.

If you have any questions regarding the Workplace Fraud Act, worker classification issues, or other employment matters, please contact Christine Pham at (410) 727-6600 or cpham@rosenbergmartin.com.

Continued From Page 23
MCN is proud to offer our third “Where’s The Work” Economic Forecast in 2015! These programs have proven to be of tremendous interest and value to Maryland’s construction community. Attendees will learn, first hand from those in the know, about economic development in Harford and Cecil Counties.

Harford and Cecil County Executives, and the counties’ economic development officials, will discuss:

- An overview of growth in the last few years.
- Current and planned progress.
- Where are the construction “hot spots”?
- What’s in store as it relates to the construction and real estate communities?
- Market trends and what’s on the horizon.

Public School officials will present and discuss:

- Short and long term goals for construction within the counties.
- Upcoming opportunities – “Where’s The Work”?
- Bid requirements to do work within the counties.
- Prequalification requirements. What do you need to know?


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**October 13th, 2015- Sales & Business Development Roundtable Intro Meeting**  
PSA Insurance & Financial Services Suite 500  
Hunt Valley, MD  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**October 14th, 2015 - Meet The Primes**  
Baltimore County & Baltimore Metro Council  
MD State Fairgrounds  
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**October 20th, 2015 - Promenade In The Park - A Walking Project Tour**  
Patterson Park - Beginning @ Grace’s Acre  
Host: Commercial Home Builders  
Sponsors: Ron Howard & Associates, RE/MAX Preferred  
10:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**October 21st, 2015– “Strategies For Transforming Your Family Owned Construction Business”**  
Eggspectations - Ellicott City, MD  
Sponsor: Gross, Mendelsohn & Associates, P.A.  
8:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

**October 22nd, 2015– “The Blue Book Network Showcase”**  
M&T Bank Stadium, Baltimore, MD  
12:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**November 5th, 2015– Direct Connect & Seminar**  
Harford Community College - Darlington Hall  
Bel Air, MD  
Program - “Where’s The Work” Economic Forecast”  
Host: Print-O-Stat  
Sponsors: KatzAbosch, Kinsley, Skilled Labor Solutions, The Blue Book, Wells Fargo  
3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**November 12th, 2015 - “From Pain To Profit: How To Make Your Taxes Work For You”**  
Woodholme Country Club  
Pikesville, MD  
Sponsor: RS&F, Chartered  
9:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

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