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The first quarter of every year is a paperwork nightmare for any business but particularly for small businesses where one person handles it all. I know ... I am that person. While folks are "dreaming of a white Christmas" and the snowy months that follow, I am closing out the end of the year, doing those final quarterly reports, getting tax paperwork ready for my accountant, completing W-2s and 1099s and getting them e-filed, and remembering to enroll new employees in the health and 401(k) plans at the right time.

And while spring should prompt business owners like me to "start fresh" and roll out new ideas for my business, I’m still trying to clean out files, purge old folders, and make sure everything is in place to maximize deductions and minimize my tax burden for next year. It is a paperwork jungle, and I hate it ... and I am sure many of you can relate.

The internal workings of every organization are different, and each owner approaches things with a slightly different outlook. What remains the same for each company, however, is that all those aforementioned items must be done in order to maintain your business moving forward.

The good news is that PHCC has a wealth of information and resources devoted to running a business. There are many contractors who have "been there, done that" and can help new or small businesses cope with the burdens of "the paperwork jungle." I encourage you to participate in PHCC’s online Contractors Talk "chat rooms," established for the very purposes of asking questions about how to run your business most effectively and professionally. For example, the Technology Business Interest Group (www.phccweb.org/tech-big) has been up-and-running for several months and is a great place to find solutions to your toughest technology challenges. For those of you specifically in the HVAC business, PHCC’s new HVAC BIG (www.phccweb.org/hvac-big) is a “home” where you can explore ideas and problem-solve in this specific, technical area of expertise.

Of course, the PHCC and PHCC Educational Foundation are your go-to sites for valuable information, including upcoming webinars and past webinars that are available for on-demand viewing. Business owners like you have counted on these sessions for year-end tax planning, starting an apprentice program, preparing for new regulations, maintaining a drug-free workplace, and so much more. Through the PHCC site, you also can connect with tons of PHCC partners, service providers and associate members who can equip you with the resources you need most. Plus, don’t overlook those PHCC publications in your in-box; PHCC Online, for example, is filled with news, tips and opportunities, including targeted content from PHCC industry partners. And this very issue of PHCC Solutions is dedicated to helping contractors ensure they’re workplace ready with valuable advice on insurance, taxes, wellness programs, internal communications and more.

You don’t need to reinvent the wheel. That is one of the best things about being a PHCC member: to network with each other and offer insights into business issues that each of us has stumbled upon and hopefully conquered.

I, for one, have found that by being involved and taking advantage of the information this association has to offer, I actually look forward to getting some new things going in our business that make us more profitable ... and I accomplish that with less worry because the ideas are proven. That’s a great feeling – especially as we head into spring – and it’s all thanks to ACCESS ... another power of A!

PHCC—National Association President Laurie Crigler also is owner and vice president of L&D Associates in Aroda, Virginia.
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Recently I have cringed each time I turn on the news and hear about yet another case of sexual flirtation, misconduct, harassment and assault, and I am increasingly worried about the long-term impact on the workplace. Yes, we know that this behavior has no place in our society and creates a “hostile work environment” (a legal ramification of harassment) for victims who could be our colleagues, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. In 2015, the Huffington Post reported that “one in three women between the ages of 18-34 [had] been sexually harassed at work.” I can’t express how angry I would be if I learned that my two sisters were victims of such ignorant and disrespectful behavior given how hard they work to achieve success in their lives. But for now, let’s shift our focus on harassment in the workplace, which I see as a disturbing dynamic for the trades.

With life expectancy on the rise and many people working longer into their later years, we are faced with a workplace that employs multiple generations whose view of sexual harassment is vastly different. Within that mix are the “traditionalists” born before 1945, “boomers” born between 1946 and 1965, “Gen X” born between 1966 and 1977, “millennials” born between 1978 and 1995, and “Gen 2020” (or “Gen Z”) born after 1995. “Boomers … knew [sexual harassment] went on, but it was not well publicized and it was harder for women to speak up,” says San Diego State University psychologist Jean Twenge. “For Generation X it was more accepted, but there was still a lot of skepticism in the 1970s and 1980s.” (Twenge, 2017) However, “national data surveys show increasing support for women in the workforce and for gender equality.” Therefore, millennials are “self-confident and also differ dramatically from their elders in their attitudes about women, work and workplaces [hence] … it is more likely that (some) Gen X or (many) millennials would not think it’s acceptable and would not put up with sexual abuse.” (Twenge, 2017)

I think this dramatic change in attitude toward sexual misconduct may only grow as more millennials and Gen Zs work with members of any generation who may have a proclivity toward “locker room talk” or worse and will bring greater scrutiny and workplace conflict. Add to that the heightened sense of social responsibility felt by later generations, and we have a potential misalignment of acceptable social conduct within the workplace that will fragment efforts toward collaboration and shared respect. And while each generation may react differently toward this corrosive conduct, all agree that there is no room for this aberrant behavior among supposed industry professionals. As author Miya Yamanouchi once noted, we respect ourselves by respecting others. Let us hope that the attention focused on this issue right now – and the public ramifications affecting violators – will help reduce abusive behaviors in the workplace and elsewhere in the future.

Alanna Vagianos (2015) writes, “sexual harassment at work isn’t always easy to spot. It can be a sexual comment in a meeting or even an insinuating Facebook message.” Given this potential overt or covert misconduct, contractors who do not have human resource support (as well as those who do) must have this critical conversation with all their employees and agree on conduct that nurtures individual and corporate respect. There are multiple training materials online for business owners to deliver programs to their employees. For example, you might check out OSHA’s website for resources that may help and/or Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) for additional training.

Michael Copp, MA, MIRM, is Executive Vice President of PHCC—National Association. A respected leader among construction industry trade association executives, Copp and his team work to ensure that PHCC contractors are the best choice for professionalism, reliable products and knowledgeable service.
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It’s that time of year when good intentions can sometimes begin to fade. You start strong with resolutions to improve both your personal life and your business, and then the daily grind takes over … and you only become more overwhelmed when forced to face the things you should be doing.

Hopefully this issue of Solutions will help you maintain the forward motion on some of those workplace “must-do’s.” Use it as the valuable tool it’s intended to be.

Gain a little inspiration from the PHCC of Long Island chapter on how to recruit young people in your community. As you’ll read, what started as a simple invitation to the press to attend one of its chapter meetings spiraled into widespread media coverage on the worker shortage (and even resulted in a few job placements)!

Find out how one of your fellow contractors – Susan Frew – keeps her work family connected (and motivated!) with a simple app … and how a new pair of work boots is a win-win for her employees and her company.

In our Industry Spotlight, Corporate Partner Federated Insurance will have you thinking a bit more about your risk management plan; discover how an ounce of prevention can actually improve your bottom line.

These priceless little nuggets are sprinkled throughout these pages … and so are some valuable perspectives. PHCC President Laurie Crigler shares how PHCC members do not need to reinvent the wheel as they deal with the challenges of running a small business. And, PHCC Executive Vice President Michael Copp brings a unique viewpoint to the hot topic of workplace harassment that will get you thinking ... what do the attitudes across different generations of workers mean for the workplace dynamic in the trades in general, and how could that impact the culture at my company?

Over the past few months, PHCC has engaged in comprehensive research projects to explore the perceptions, challenges and needs of our member contractors as we make improvements to our website and develop a strategic membership marketing plan. The results have revealed that – overall – contractors are very optimistic about the future and are looking for ways to make sure their companies are ready to take advantage of all of the opportunities in our industry today.

That’s why I’m excited to share this issue with you; it gives you some of those ways ... ways that will help make your company the one your customers choose, your employees want to stay, and potential workers want to join. Consider it your starting point, and keep in mind that the scope of any initiative should not paralyze you from making positive change happen. As Michelle Walker shares in our article on workplace wellness: “Don’t do nothing because you can’t do everything.”

Enjoy!

Charlotte R. Perham is Vice President of Communications & Marketing for PHCC—National Association. She specializes in strategic communications of news, trends and events in the construction industry.