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## Construction Management Careers, Jobs, and Employment Information

### Construction Management Career and Job Description

A construction contractor or manager is in charge of many different aspects of construction and is known by any number of titles, including constructor, construction superintendent, general superintendent, production manager, project manager, general construction manager, executive construction manager, general contractor, contractor, and subcontractor. Those serving as construction contractors or managers might actually be the owner or a salaried worker employed by the construction contracting company or just an individual contracted to work for the owner, developer, contractor, or management firm responsible for the build.

The term "construction manager" is used vaguely to define all supervisory-level salaried and self-employed construction managers who direct construction supervisors and workers and manage projects in this fashion. Supervisory level managers work under mid-level and top-level construction managers, who are broadly considered general managers and high level executives.

The term "construction manager" is used by the construction industry to represent a company or employee who takes on additional responsibilities and control over the construction projects. A construction manager is like a consultant, and thus provided consulting to the owner or developer related to the progress and logistics of a project.

On smaller projects such as a home being remodeled a construction manager is typically self-employed and manage their own workers. Larger projects, such as building an industrial building require several supervisors and managers due to the complexity of the build. Large construction projects are carried out in a number of steps which involve site preparation, such as land clearing and earth moving; sewage systems; landscaping and road construction; building construction, including excavation and laying foundations, erection of framework, floors, walls, and roofs; or building services, including carpentry, electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, and heating. Construction managers might be responsible for one of these steps or many of them, and will be assisted by workers under their charge such as crew supervisors who report to the construction manager.

Construction contractors and managers are in charge of planning, budgeting, and directing the construction project. To plan the project, which is frequently done with the help of design professionals, a number of complicated scheduling procedures are outlined using flow or bar charts or some other type graphical representation. Frequently computers will be employed to help managers analyze the options and decide on the plan that provide the most bang for your buck. They are also responsible for deciding on the proper construction techniques as well as scheduling the construction operations into logical and detailed steps. They allot a certain amount of time to complete each step so that deadlines are met for each phase of the project. They are also in charge of labor related issues, including supervising the hiring and firing of employees.

When construction contractors and managers are on the work site they instruct construction supervisors and track the progress of construction operations such as the arrival and utilization materials, supplies, tools, machinery, equipment, and vehicles. Construction managers and supervisors also take care of securing the needed permits and licenses for projects as well as ensure complexes are

### Career Education

The U.S. Census Bureau has released data proving the substantial value of a degree in the United States. Workers 18 and over sporting bachelors degrees earn an average of \$51,206 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn \$27,915. But wait, there's more. Workers with an advanced degree make an average of \$74,602, and those without a high school diploma average \$18,734.

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built to meet safety codes and regulations if their contract includes this responsibility.

They also go over engineering and architectural drawings and specifications again and again as well as consult with design professionals to ensure that progress is made in harmony with the outlined plans and specs. They also collaborate with cost estimators to ensure that expenses are recorded properly and monitor the costs of the project so that they don't go over budget. Relying on their own monitoring experience and reports prepared by subordinates, construction managers and contractors form daily reports outlining the progress being made as well as the utilization of materials, labor, and equipment being used. They are constantly in meetings with owners, design professionals, and other contractors and managers as they all work together to orchestrate the the progress and completion of the project.

Construction contractors and managers typically perform their job from the main office or from an on site office. Decisions related to management of daily operations are normally made on site. When projects are located in different States or a manager is responsible for more than one project some traveling will be necessary. Projects carried out overseas liklely means one will have to relocate at least temporarily.

Due to the nature of the responsibilites held by construction contractors and managers, they must work on call in order to handle all accidents, delays, and bad weather conditions. A 40 hour week for a contractor or manager is a rarity. When necessary, to meet deadlines, projects may be worked on 24 hours a day for a few days or weeks at a time.

Though their work is not particulary dangerous, managers and contractors must take care as they take tours of the construction site since machinery, equipment and construction vehceles are present. Since construction must be carried out quickly, managers and contractors must be ready to respond to urgent questions, establish priorities, and delegate tasks as necessary. In order to carry our such duties, a construction manager or contractor must monitor the working conditions and be aware for problems that might arise, and institute new methods to help the work be done more rapidly and safely. Since constructions sites can be very dangerous, managers working in the field must do all they can to reduce danger and increase the level of safety present on site.

In 1992, around 180,000 positions were held by construction contractors and managers. Close to 85 percent were working in the construction industry, mostly employed by special trade contractors like plumbing, heating and air- conditioning, and electrical-and general building contractors. There was a good share who worked for themselves as independent contractors. Many others worked for governments, educational institutions, real estate developers, and engineering, architectural, surveying, and construction management services companies.

### **Construction Management Training and Job Qualifications**

The number of applicants with a solid academic foundation is increasing. Prospects for a job can be improved by obtaining a bachelor's degree in construction science with an emphasis on construction management. In 1992, close to 130 colleges and universities were offering 4-year degree programs in construction science. Such degrees involve coursework in project control and development, site planning, building design, construction methods, construction materials, value analysis, cost estimating, scheduling, contract administration, building codes and standards, inspection procedures, as well as electives in engineering and architectural sciences, mathematics, statistics, and computer science. Those graduating in the aforementioned degrees are typically brought on to work as project managers, field engineers, schedulers, or cost estimators. There is also an increasing amount of graduates in engineering, cost estimating, and architecture who are entering the construction management field, frequently after obtaining a significant amount of experience in the construction field.

There are approximately 30 colleges which provide master's degree programs in construction science, and one, the University of Florida, provides a program to obtain a doctoral degree in construction science. Graduates of master's degree programs, particularly those with experience, normally become construction managers for big corporations. Graduates of doctoral degree programs normally become college professors.

A good amount of contractors and managers are experienced craft workers, having previously worked as carpenters, masons, plumbers, or electricians, and are proven supervisors. Lots of managers have been employed as construction supervisors or as independent contractors responsible for directing other workers in a number of fields like structural steel, roofing, or excavation in addition to construction. Many have been trained and educated beyond their college degree through programs and coursework put on by the industry associations in conjunction with higher education institutions. In 1992, 200 plus 2-year colleges provided construction management or construction technology programs.

Those desirous of becoming construction contractors or managers need to be adaptive and have the ability to perform effectively in a fast paced work environment. They should be able to make quick decisions, even when presented with a number of options. They must also have excellent coordination and analytical skills, and be able to solve problems as well as be capable of comprehending engineering, architectural, and other construction diagrams. The ability to work professionally and have a good relationship with entrepreneurs, managers, construction professionals, supervisors, and craft workers is also imperative.

The opportunity for promotion depends mostly on the size of the firm. Those working in larger firms might become mid level or even top level managers. Those with a lot of experience might become consultants, or be used as expert witnesses for court proceedings or work as arbitrators during conflicts. Those with the necessary funding might start their own management services business. Still others might start their own general contract construction firm which directs projects from beginning to end including the phases where it is planned, designed, and actually constructed.

Mostly likely a college degree will be needed to enter this field, although related majors are not discussed in the College Board Guide to 150 Popular College Majors.

### **Construction Management Job and Employment Opportunities**

Employment is on the rise for construction contractors and managers and is projected to rise much faster than the average for all occupations through 2005 since the amount and sophistication of construction projects is continually increasing. Additionally, a lot of openings will become available as workers leave the field and must be replaced.

Opportunities should be excellent, especially in growing companies, for entrants with experience and a college degree in construction science with an emphasis on construction management.

One of the primary stimulants for growth in construction and the need for more workers will be the ever increasing amount of money being spent to enhance the infrastructure of the nation, such as highways, bridges, dams, schools, subways, airports, water and sewage systems, and electric power generation and transmission facilities. Other areas of construction that are growing, but not so rapidly, will help increase the number of jobs available. Also encouraging demand will be the necessity to produce more residential housing, commercial and office buildings, and factories, as well as maintenance and repair to existing structures.

Besides the increase in construction levels, the trend to more complicated projects will also encourage the creation of more positions. Additionally, improvements in building materials and construction techniques and the increased amount of multipurpose buildings, electronically controlled "smart" buildings, and energy-efficient establishments will necessitate the expertise of more

construction managers. Also, the increase of laws and regulations related to the standards for buildings and construction materials, worker safety, energy efficiency, and environmental pollution has made the responsibilities of the manager more difficult and this will also help the need for more employees grow.

Employment of construction contractors and managers is correlated to the short periods of most construction projects and cyclical fluctuations of construction projects. When construction activity is low, many workers will be laid off, though a lot of construction contractors and managers maintain employment through their own business or other firms by performing planning, scheduling, or cost estimation services. When lulls happen, self-employed contractors might have to merge with others or discontinue the venture and look for positions with other contracting firms.

#### **Historical Earnings Information**

The wages of salaried construction managers and earnings of self-employed contractors are dependant upon the project, its location, and the status of the economy. According to limited details, in 1992 the mean beginning salary of construction managers was close to \$32,000; salaries for experienced managers were between \$35,000 and \$110,000. A lot of salaried construction managers are granted benefits such as liberal motor vehicle and per diem allowances, paid vacations, and life and health insurance. The earnings of self-employed contractors has an even wider range than that of salaried employees. The rate of failure for relatively small, new construction businesses is even higher than that of other new small businesses.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor