Richard Fisher, Red Wing Construction

As I wind down my two-year term as president of the Associated Subcontractors of Massachusetts (ASM), I’m delighted to witness how our members are furiously bidding and performing work – and at slightly improved margins, in many cases. The challenges the construction industry faces, including a shortage of skilled labor and recruiting new talent, are preferable to the acute economic challenges of just 5 years ago.

But during those 5 years, things have changed. Construction companies now run leaner and more efficient, and have embraced the benefits of technology. The use of smartphones, tablets, and the project management applications that run on these devices, have permanently altered the landscape. ASM’s annual technology event (see below for specifics), which will showcase several of these applications, has become one of our most popular and important events.

Of course, construction is still about people – no general contractor or building owner hires a builder because (s)he’s brandishing the latest iPhone, and we don’t yet have robots laying steel, pouring concrete, or installing electrical or mechanical systems. Many of the most important events ASM organizes connect subcontractors to general contractors, or to regional financial, legal, and insurance leaders whose knowledge helps subs navigate tricky back-office issues, and remain profitable. I’m fortunate to have led ASM when the focus has been managing growth, instead of withstanding a recession!

I’m also extremely proud of the leading role ASM has taken the past two years on several major issues affecting the industry: unemployment insurance reform in 2014; the implementation of the State’s Sick Leave Law earlier this year (ASM was in frequent communication with the Attorney General’s office on how to minimize the impact on construction companies); and most importantly, last year’s success with AGC of Massachusetts in reducing retainage to 5% on private projects over $3 million in value. While this law has raised concerns in some circles, it’s worth noting the same fears were raised about the Prompt Pay Law in 2010, which did not put a damper on development and construction projects.

My goal for my term as ASM president was to leave the association and its members in better
shape than when I arrived, and with the extraordinary help and support of the state’s subcontracting community, I’d say it’s “Mission Accomplished”!

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