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"Building your image in the community"

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Even the Pollyannas among us will acknowledge that contractors have an image problem. Not being regarded as the professionals you truly are hurts your employment recruiting efforts, causes others to distrust you and sometimes limits the respect you get within your community. And, to top it off, the average person thinks because you build projects that cost millions of dollars, you're rich as Croesus, which for most of you is something of an exaggeration.

Clearly, looking and acting in a professional manner is one way of combating the image problem. However, there are other means of addressing the issue, one of which is to constantly demonstrate your value to your community. And there is no simpler method of accomplishing that than through the use of site signs.

Many contractors totally ignore the opportunity to promote their company by not using site signs at all. Other recognize their value, but limit the benefits to their company because they simply put up a large board with their company name and/or logo on it, and maybe the name of the architect, subcontractors, developer and/or owner.

Why not use the opportunity to tout what your company is really contributing to the community with its project? Here are some facts I would suggest including on your site sign, along with the standard stuff. You don't need to use them all; just select the ones most relevant to your project and the community you're working in.

- * The dollar value of the project.
- * The number of man-hours expected to be expended.
- * The number of construction jobs the project is creating, including those of subcontractors. Emphasize the use of local labor, if appropriate.
- * The dollar value of the payroll for the project.
- * The dollar value of the materials and services being purchased (locally, if possible) and the jobs that are created by that spending.
- * The number of jobs the new facility will create for the firm(s) that will occupy it. Particularly emphasize this if they are new to the area.
- * The environmental benefits/aspects of the project.

In addition to the above, build some goodwill within the local area in which you're working by communicating with the businesses and homeowners directly. Put together an information sheet to be mailed or delivered to those in the neighborhood that includes not only the above information, but also talks about:

- * The start and completion dates of the work.
- * The nature of any potential disruptions to the community's routines and how you will be addressing them in order to minimize inconvenience to the public. Be specific as to when and what will occur, and why the disruptions are necessary.

* Emphasize your commitment to public safety and the need for the public to heed whatever instructions you may give them, such as keeping children away from the jobsite and obeying signs and signals from people designated to oversee safety.

* Provide the name and a 24-hour a day phone number for a contact person within your organization who can field questions from the public. This should be someone relatively high ranking within your company. This same person can be a contact for the media.

Now, stop for a second and think about how you would perceive a company that did the types of things we've just discussed. You'd feel pretty good about them, probably have a degree of respect and trust for them, wouldn't you?

That's exactly the idea!

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