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ABC, GCI and MAP's Mass. Workforce Advisory Council - by Joe Barbone

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Joe Barbone, Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. - Mass. Chapter

Memories of the Great Recession and the pain it brought to member companies are still fresh in many of our minds. But thankfully, the construction industry is in a very different place today.

In 2015, ABC developed a five-year strategic plan to build upon our existing success and position our organization for the near and distant future. A major focus of the plan is a workforce development effort designed to address the pervasive shortage of workers possessing the skills needed to excel in what has become a very sophisticated and technologically-driven industry.

In accordance with the strategic plan, ABC, the Gould Construction Institute (GCI), and Merit Apprentice Program (MAP) created the ABC Massachusetts Workforce Advisory Council to build upon our combined resources and address the skilled labor shortage. The Council is working on branding and marketing it as the source for cutting-edge education, training and worker recruitment for the Massachusetts construction industry. It would achieve this status by utilizing the combined experience and resources of ABC, GCI and MAP.

Business owners understand the value of marketing and branding. The Workforce Advisory Council is developing a sophisticated campaign to increase awareness and portray the benefits of a career in construction to eliminate the misconception that working with your hands in a skilled construction trade may not be satisfying or financially rewarding.

More importantly, the Council was established to determine how we might provide tangible benefits to ABC member companies via a pool of qualified and trained apprentices at a time when they are in great demand. To achieve that goal, the Workforce Advisory Council is reaching out to vocational-technical schools and other sources to ensure a reliable talent pipeline for our industry. Our work also coincides with the Baker administration's efforts to balance various trade boards. More open-shop representation is resulting in increased opportunities and better access to qualified apprentices.

The demand for top-notch construction services is great. Workforce development is ABC's top priority this year, and our efforts represent the culmination of almost two years of discussion and planning. Our success will ensure that every member company has the capacity to fulfill that demand and will make ABC more attractive to prospective member companies. To that end, we

welcome your input as to new and innovative ways to attract qualified workers to our growing industry by contacting our president, Greg Beeman at Greg@abcma.org or (781) 273-0123.

Joe Barbone is the 2017 chairman of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. – Mass. Chapter, Woburn, Mass. and is the president and CEO of Methuen Construction, Plaistow, N.H.

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