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2023 Ones to Watch - Industry Leaders: James O'Brien of Holt Construction

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James O'Brien
Project Executive

3 skills that you use every day in your position:

Industry Experience: Having a history of owner's side construction and maintenance gives me a unique perspective in this field and what it takes to maintain and use a space long after construction is completed. From being in the field to overseeing many programs, the experience of my past helps to build our future.

Communication: Communication with the owner, the trade partners, the architect, and engineers on a project is just as important as communication is with your team. Delivering updates, good or bad, is essential to a project's success.

Adaptability: Understanding the aviation industry, including regulations, safety standards, technology, and operational practices, is essential. This knowledge will help you make informed decisions and address issues that are not just specific to aviation projects. The skills and stringent safety practices necessary for aviation work are easily translated elsewhere and can help bolster safety programs in other market sectors. Staying current with all industry trends and advancements is crucial for success.

Best book, podcast, or app for aspiring leaders: Getting Things Done by David Allen was a book that I read early on in my career. Many of David's points still resonate with me to this day.

Best advice for new leaders in 10 words or less: Projects succeed through teamwork and a collaborative environment.

What recent project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of? I am proud of the work we have accomplished within Boston Logan International Airport. We have completed and are currently completing multiple concession programs, high-end lounge work and infrastructure work that is vital to the operations of the airport. With an estimated 33.6 million passengers flying in and out of Logan in 2023, the programs we have completed have been vital to the needs of both operations and passengers.

What makes this nominee an Industry Leader? "James took the role of project executive right before the pandemic started and led our Boston office through challenging times. When everything was grounded to a halt, he shifted to critical infrastructure programs and adapted to new regulations. His quick thinking and ability to adapt kept our Boston office thriving." - Christopher Asaro, President at Holt Construction.