



# COLEMAN

Building your construction business

SPEAKER • CONSULTANT • AUTHOR  
Ronald Coleman, B.Comm. FCCA, CMC

## HIRING AND KEEPING THE BEST

(950 words)

The typical contractor today started his own business. It is his skill in starting a venture and getting it going that has brought him to his success today. **But, what about the future?** It takes a different set of skills to keep the business going, and to develop it into an organization. Unless you build an organization, you will never be able to sell the company, or have the company survive without your everyday presence.

**To build your organization, you should be spending your time:**

- Planning and directing
- Monitoring people and projects
- Focusing on the few things that can be done well
- Hiring good people and helping them set goals
- Watching the details
- Communicating with & motivating employees
- Finding problems and solving them so they stay solved
- Communicating with your customers

**Construction businesses are primarily service businesses.** It's not the two-by-four or the heating system itself that is so important it is how it designed and installed. And that is done by people. People are our most important asset and we need to hire right the first time and make sure we retain them. Likewise the key behind engineering and architectural services is also people, people, people. Dealing with customers, employees and sub trades requires people skills.

People have too many options; it is up to us to make their lives simple, yet challenging and not give them cause to shop around.

**Putting effort and strategy into place from day one will pay dividends.**

.../2



COLEMAN MANAGEMENT SERVICES INC.

7451 Bassett Place, Richmond BC, V7C 4A8, T: 604.241.0666 F: 604.272.1523 E: info@ronaldcoleman.ca  
[www.ronaldcoleman.ca](http://www.ronaldcoleman.ca)

### **Some of the key mistakes that I see time and time again are**

Profile: You can't hire someone unless you know exactly what they will be doing and what type of person would best fit in. I know this may sound obvious but ask yourself the following questions and ensure that you have written answers to each:

1. Do we have a detailed list of the duties the person will be responsible for?
2. Have we identified the skills (both the soft and hard) required for the job?
3. Have we identified the type of person that would best suit the job?
4. Have we a list of standard questions that we will evaluate each candidate on?

**Unless you have given four unqualified "yes" answers you don't deserve to hire the best and you won't.**

A really critical part of the process is getting a realistic reference. My recommendation is to go and see the former employer (if possible) to get a really good sense of your preferred candidate. If the candidate has not been great in the past he won't be in the future either. The final question to ask the former employer is "would you hire this candidate again?"

When you have the person on board you need to keep them on track and focused. Have key performance indicators that you are both agreed on and review and mentor this person at least on a monthly basis to ensure that they are adding value to you and that you are providing them with the opportunities that they require.

### **What can you do with the information that you glean from these projections?**

If you are getting too much work you need to marshal more forces or subcontract out more or better still put your prices up and secure less work at higher margins (it's all about profit; not volume).

The real strength to this process is that you, as a manager and leader, become more proactive instead of reactive. You will be handling potential problems before they even rear their ugly heads. Your team will function with greater efficiency and you will make lots more money. Reacting to all the stressors and spending most of your time putting out fires is not productive. An effective manager diverts problems rather than solves them.

.../3



**If you are constantly putting out fires then you can't take time off. What would happen if you were to take three weeks off? Who's going to do the job as well as you?**

Sit back, have your favourite beverage and sketch out what life would be like if you were in control of your business. You have the magic touch, you tell your team what their needs are going to be in one, two, three, four, five and even six months in advance. Their confidence in your leadership will soar.

The amazing thing is that you can monitor these Key Performance Indicators from any beachside café with your Blackberry in just a few minutes each day. **The big danger is that you might work yourself out of a job and then what would you do with all that free time?**

If you had started this process six months ago you would now have that lifestyle. If you don't start it now then in six months time you will be still micro-managing and spending your days putting out fires. This may give you a false sense of importance. The emphasis is on the word false!

**Ronald Coleman B.Comm. FCCA, CMC** is a professional accountant, author, certified management consultant and professional speaker who specializes in working with contractors. He is based in Vancouver. BC.

Visit his website at [www.ronaldcoleman.ca](http://www.ronaldcoleman.ca) for more information or email [info@ronaldcoleman.ca](mailto:info@ronaldcoleman.ca).

