Planning and Organizing for Effective Job Start-up, Part 1

By Norb Slowikowski

This article is part one of a two-part series on the foreman’s key responsibilities for getting organized on the job. The foreman needs to break down the various phases of the job and put an incremental, systematic approach in place. Once the activities of the construction process are arranged by process, the foreman has to make sure all skills, resources and job controls are in place for desired results to be achieved.

**Phase 1: Expected Results**

Productivity. Know the quality of work to be done in a specified time frame. Set production goals with your crew. Do it right the first tie. Review the customer’s expectations with your crew.

Safety. Aim for an accident-free jobsite. Implement safe work practices. Watch for unusual work conditions. Make sure everyone has the proper safety equipment. Enforce safety rules.

Housekeeping. Make sure your crew puts away all tools and equipment. Have them clean up three areas before going home.

Effective utilization of manpower, tools, equipment and material. Train your crew to utilize their tools effectively, and to operate equipment properly. Also, tag all defective equipment. Identify specifically what’s wrong with it.

Leadership. Maintain a positive work climate and build morale by utilizing the following key practices:
- Involve people in decision-making. Ask for their input. Solve problems together.
- Treat people with respect.
- Provide positive feedback when people do good work, and encourage feedback.
- Be visible and accessible.
- Support your people when they face adversity Provide coaching when people have difficulty meeting standards.
- Communicate consequences for continued poor performance. Hold people accountable.
- Look ahead. Plan. Forecast future activities and the resources you’ll need to accomplish those actions.

**Phase 2: The Seven-Step Planning Process**

**Weekly planning.** Prepare a task list. What do you have to do next week?

**What are your material requirements?** Know the quantity and type of materials needed, and when they are needed. Also think about storage, location, protection and security.

**What are your equipment requirements?** What type do you need, and how many of each type? When is the equipment needed? Make sure your crew knows how to safely operate equipment.

**Labor budget.** Identify the man-hours needed for each task.

**Crew size and needs.** What skills do you want people to have (and be specific)? How many people do you need, and when do you need them? Set production goals. Collaborate with your crew.

**Assigning work Identify strengths.** Assign work that people can do. Tell them to ask for help if they don’t know how to do something. Provide feedback. Let them know how they are doing.

**Crew commitment.** Have your crew keep track of actual production, and have them report it to you. Listen to the crew members. They may have ideas on how to be more effective/efficient. Provide feedback on their progress.

**About the Author**
Norb Slowikowski is president of Slowikowski & Associates, Inc., Darien, Ill.