Weekly Planning by the Foreman
By Norb Slowikowski

The timing and quality of planning is a significant factor in determining the success of any project. Job supervision and project management begin with planning. The performance of even the most effective supervisor can be undermined by ineffective or incomplete planning. You must control the work rather than letting the work control you. You can achieve control by adequately planning each individual work element.

A plan is a “road map” to get from one place to another. This is what you must do: Set a production goal. Remember, you have four primary responsibilities: 1) Complete the assigned work within the budget; 2) Complete the assigned work on time; 3) Complete the work in a safe manner; and 4) Deliver quality workmanship.

Determine what must be done to achieve your goal, then determine how to do it. Calculate the resources (material, equipment, labor and procedures) you need to do the task properly. Develop a weekly planning sheet that the foremen have to complete on a weekly basis. It’s important for foremen to develop the habit of writing things down and by doing so, they will realize three important benefits:

- They can focus their attention on the job and its requirements instead of concentrating on remembering details.
- They will have a ready checklist to consult anytime. They will not forget, no matter how much pressure they are under.
- They will free their mind for creative thinking about their daily plans, job requirements and the situations at hand.

The weekly planning sheet should include this information:

- A “Description of Work” column for listing trade-specific work (framing, hanging, etc.) by area. For each day, specify the number of tradesmen that will be working on each activity.
- Another column should be titled “Estimated Work Completion Date.” The foreman will estimate the completion date for each work activity.
- The foreman will note in another column titled “Note Manpower: Number of Layoffs or Add.” This is the number of tradesmen he will need to lay off or add for each work activity. If he’s forecasting layoffs or additions, he should communicate this information to his superintendent right away.

The foreman should forecast the required tools/equipment/materials needed to complete the next week’s listed work activities. Get this information to the warehouse coordinator right away. If the tools, equipment and/or materials are required from suppliers, notify your project manager right away.

- If subcontractors are being used on the job, the foreman will schedule the next week’s work activities for subs under another column titled “Subcontractors.”
- The foreman should plan alternative work possibilities in case the “planned for” work is not available. This information should be provided under a column titled “Alternate Work Schedule.”
- The foreman should send the weekly planning sheet to the office with all other required paperwork by a designated deadline. A copy also should go to the superintendent for his review.

When the foreman gets involved in the planning, he should ask himself the following questions—and make sure he gets answers:

- Do I have a clear understanding of the scope of work?
- What is the time frame and budget for each phase of the job?
- What job conditions am I faced with?
- How will I coordinate activities with the other subs?
- What are the critical standards of performance?
- What’s the plan for checking ongoing progress on the project?
- When will the Pre-Job Planning Meeting be scheduled?

Remember, it is the foreman’s job to be productive on the job site. But, without the ability to plan effectively, he is unlikely to be successful.

About the Author
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