

Private Sector Case Study

Pockar Masonry - The Form a WES Program can Take

Introduction



Training is more frequent, broader, and often more complex.

Construction is fast paced, busy, noisy, crowded and hazardous. Machinery is complex, materials are new and ever-changing, and safety standards are more and more stringent. The Workforce is varied with experienced/ inexperienced, old/ young, transient/long term, English speaking/non-English speaking, and literate/ non-literate employees. Like many construction companies, *Pockar Masonry* found that changing technology and demographics means changing skill requirements. Training needs to be more frequent, broader, and is often more complex. “What can an industry, or an individual workplace, do to deal with all of these factors effectively and be productive and competitive in a tight market?” This was the question at the forefront of *Pockar Masonry* in the mid-2000s. The section that follows reviews the project from assessments to implementation.

Step-by-Step Approach

AWES and *Pockar Masonry* partnered with the *Alberta Construction Association* and *Alberta Employment & Immigration* to find an Essential Skills solution to remaining competitive during a labour shortage. The project started with a comprehensive workplace needs assessment, including interviews and focus groups with all levels of workers in their company - management, office staff, supervisors, bricklayers, apprentices and laborers. The AWES team also did a review of their workplace documentation and other literature.

“The need for these types of WES initiatives is common to many worksites.”

- AWES consultant

The needs assessment results pinpointed areas of training to enhance employees’ Essential Skills. It also set out creating a workplace environment that supports Essential Skills. This ties neatly into longer-term sustainability which is indispensable to better returns on training.

Results

Several key initiatives were launched at *Pockar Masonry*, which give a great insight into what needs can be present in a company and what can be done. First, workplace communication classes were set up, which involved both oral communication and written communication for workers not fluent in English. These included document use such as WHMIS, pay-cheques, manuals, and signage. It included instruction in plain language writing for employees fluent in English who create e-mails, bulletins, safe work procedures etc. Second, training was given for communicating in a diverse workplace. It included follow up “one pagers” to enclose with supervisors’ newsletters regarding communicating in a diverse workplace. Third, computer training was set up for supervisory positions and math tutoring for bricklayers. Fourth, an orientation video for new employees was designed, accommodating non-English speaking workers and workers with low levels of literacy.

