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The Power of the Crew

Asphalt paving is an art. It's painted with heavy equipment, 300° materials, and hard-working men and women building a beautiful, black portrait. The question arises: why are some paving projects masterpieces, while others are simply good enough? It is the Power of the Crew that determines the outcome of these works of paving art. The combined efforts of a small, but powerful, group of men and women led by their foreman will determine the fate of these projects. To learn

Building the Crew

Asphalt companies vary dramatically where they find their employees. Some use internet job search programs like *Indeed* and *BirdDog*, others utilized a Human Resources Director and on-line applications. Twenty years ago, it used to be finding "farm kids" would guarantee an employee that had already been trained to work hard. Finding these farm kids is much harder these days, but the prototypical asphalt worker needs to exhibit the same qualities: a willingness

to work long hours in tough conditions. Some experience operating equipment is a huge plus. Steve Epley, Superintendent for Western Engineering of Harlan, IA prefers a recommendation from a current crew member the best. "When you invite someone you know onto your crew you are more likely to help them succeed. It makes the current employee and the new person accountable

to each other. They will work harder to teach the job and learn quickly. It breeds an atmosphere for success," said Epley.

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what makes crews "good versus great", five leading superintendents of Iowa asphalt companies were interviewed to glean their perspectives from their combined knowledge and experience.

Tales from the Road



Rise Up

Our son Henry has been playing basketball this winter for a local club team. He puts a lot of effort into practicing, but the high level of competition has him playing a lot of catch-up to the established players. He and I have been talking about where to find his minutes and his success – I believe it's doing the little things. Bring enthusiasm to the floor, hustle for loose balls, play strong defense, make good passes, crash the boards – all these little things will contribute to the success of the team. He plays with a lot of heart and has earned the respect of his teammates. When writing the accompanying feature article, *The Power of the Crew*, the amazing superintendents that I interviewed, all cited two characteristics that separate "good" crews from "great" crews, they do the little things without being told, and they have good camaraderie. Therein lies the strength of any team, a willingness to lift one another up in pursuit of team success.

I have been a member of many different asphalt crews. From a twelve person mainline crew, to a five man commercial crew. Many of these crews have been good, some have been bad, and a few have been great. The great paving crews all had strong foremen, but the secret to their success was the leadership that existed within the crews. Several strong individuals that took pride in the quality of their work, led by example, and expected the same of all those who joined the crew. They were usually operators;

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Upcoming Events

(Click event for more information)

2018 Greater Iowa Asphalt Conference & Equipment Expo

Date: February 28 – March 2, 2018
Location: Des Moines Airport Holiday Inn Conference Center

World of Asphalt

Date: March 6-8, 2018
Location: George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, TX

2018 APAI Road Shows

Date: March 21, 2018
Location: Hilton Garden Inn, Sioux City, IA

Date: March 22, 2018
Location: Harrah's Casino & Convention Center, Council Bluffs, IA

Date: March 27, 2018
Location: Rhythm City Casino, Davenport, IA

Date: March 28, 2018
Location: Holiday Inn Dubuque / Galenda, Dubuque, IA

Date: March 29, 2018
Location: Hilton Garden Inn, Cedar Falls, IA

Date: April 3, 2018
Location: Ramada Tropics Resort & Conference Center, Des Moines, IA

2018 Eastern Iowa APAI Golf Outing

Date: June 26, 2018
Location: Amana Colonies Golf Course, Amana, IA

2018 NAPA Midyear Meeting

Dates: July 8-11, 2018
Location: The Fairmont Copley Plaza, Boston, MA

2018 APAI Summer Meeting

Dates: July 2018
Location: Okoboji, IA

2018 Western Iowa APAI Golf Outing

Date: August 28, 2018
Location: Majestic Hills Golf Course, Denison, IA

(Tales from the Road – Cont. from Pg. 1)

screed men, roller operator, but one man, Mike Carne, a raker, took me under his wing early in my career and showed me the art of asphalt. He was a perfectionist with a lute. He was never satisfied with “good enough” and his pride in his workmanship was his creed. His enthusiasm for his job, and his willingness to do the extra things, made the entire crew better. His willingness to take time



to teach the new guy made me better. That crew also really liked each other. Everyone pitched in jack hammering out the header from the day before, jumping off equipment to help rake and shovel, and staying late to help clean and fuel the equipment for the next day. We camped together, ate our meals together – we were truly a family that cared about one another. The success of that crew was measured in the quality of the work we left behind and the pride that we felt for jobs well done.

Henry has found his place on the team by doing the little things that help make the team better. As the boys have practiced and played together, they have achieved more success, culminating in winning their last two tournaments. Their willingness to play as a team has raised each other up. My asphalt career was forever shaped by a great man who taught me the art of asphalt a commitment to excellence. As we gear up for the season, let's challenge each other to greatness by doing the little things, teaching the new crew members the art of asphalt and making the commitment to excellence.

Smoother is Better,

Bill Rosener



APAI ROAD SHOWS

DATES & LOCATIONS

MARCH 21, 2018	SIoux CITY, IA / HILTON GARDEN INN
MARCH 22, 2018	COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA / HARRAH'S CONVENTION CENTER
MARCH 27, 2018	QUAD CITIES, IA / RHYTHM CITY CASINO & CONVENTION CENTER
MARCH 28, 2018	DUBUQUE, IA / HOLIDAY INN DUBUQUE / GALENA
MARCH 29, 2018	WATERLOO, IA / HILTON GARDEN INN
APRIL 3, 2018	DES MOINES, IA / RAMADA TROPICS RESORT & CONVENTION CENTER

ALL APAI ROAD SHOWS WILL BE 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM

(The Power of the Crew, continued from Page 1)



During the interview process, the Superintendents identified qualities they wanted to see immediately in their potential employees. Bob Mobley, Superintendent for Norris Asphalt of Ottumwa, IA, said this, "I'm looking at their work history, do they stay with the job. I'm looking at their appearance, are they neat? Do they look you in the eye when they answer a question? Personality is important. Do they have a positive attitude?" Wes Knutson, Superintendent for Aspro, Inc. of Waterloo, IA will spend two hours or more with an individual during the interview to find the right person for a crew. Gene Baloun, Superintendent for Des Moines Asphalt and Paving, said, "I want to find out if they are willing to work the long hours. In the Metro, we work nights and weekends, to accommodate the high traffic. If they show some concerns about being able to work these hours, I will be looking at the next person instead." All the interviewers seemed willing to tell the potential crew members how hard the work is, the long hours, and family-time that would suffer. Some Superintendents talk to potential hires about the opportunities to move up through the company. They evaluate leaders from

reviews of their peers on the crew. A poor hire can hurt a strong crew and being upfront and honest is important to long-term success. "If you show up everyday 15 minutes early, with your head screwed on, you have about 95% of the battle whipped," said Wayne Wood, Paving Superintendent for the L.L. Pelling Co. of North Liberty, IA. "It shows a commitment to your crew."

Finding Leaders

The foremen of the crew provide the leadership, direction, and personality for the crew and their paving operations. The most successful foremen (and women) have many roles as leaders of the crews: manager, counselor, scout, sign-mover, tack truck driver and whatever other job might need to be done. "A good foreman is direct, honest, with a take the world by the tail attitude," said Mobley. "Be upfront with your people, work with your people. Never ask them to do something you wouldn't do yourself, and show them

that you will." Honesty and integrity were qualities that all the superintendents identified as "must have" characteristics. "A drive for excellence, someone that is good with the public, understands the product, and is tidy. Number one, they need to be able to think on their feet. To look forward through today to tomorrow, through the week," said Epley. "They should get the best qualities out of their people. They should show compassion and caring for their crew members."

Finding the next leader generally comes from within a crew. Truck driver, screedman, roller operator, laborer; they can all move up to the next level if they show the right attitude. They lead by example by jumping in to help, coaching the new hires, making good decisions, and being concerned about quality and production. "Leaders within a crew are not the rule, they are the exception," said Epley. "They make things happen when the 'boss isn't around."

Several of those interviewed believe that a good leader understands that there are a 100 ways to build a project. The foreman needs to have a plan, but also a willingness to listen to the crew members if they have other ideas on how to construct the project. It empowers the crew and ultimately

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Photograph by Nick Radloff, Mathy Construction Co.

strengthens the belief in their leader.

The leader of the crew is the ultimate decision-maker. They are tasked with

“A good crew does everything you asked them to; a great crew does everything you want without being asked.”

– *Wes Knutson*
Superintendent, Aspro, Inc.,

maintaining the balance and harmony of the crew while driving them to greater production and quality. The success of the crew lies squarely on their shoulders. Baloun said, “I’m looking for someone who exemplifies the values of our company: safety, quality and integrity. A good leader will lead by example and do what they say they are going to do.”

Good to Great

These Superintendents are not trying to build “A” Team and “B” Team crews, but they will move and inject personalities and skill sets to improve a crew and strengthen certain qualities of a particular crew. Some individuals and foreman will be better suited for the detail required on a commercial paving crew while others may be suited better for the mainline paving crew with an emphasis on production. “We don’t build crews to be better than each other.” Said one superintendent, “It’s the

camaraderie of the crew that makes the difference. The chemistry of the individuals coming together, along with a strong leader, will make a crew great.”

All the Superintendents believe that great crews look after the little things: they rake the large rocks off the mat, they lay the second load first, they pull a string line off the header. A great crew will help everyone finish, they clean up messes as they go and a “zero” punch list is always the goal. “A good crew does everything you asked them to; a great crew does everything you want without being asked,” said Knutson. “I want

guys who give a s**t, guys who will check on a job on a rain day to see if it drains or ask how the smoothness numbers came in.” To go from good to great is a reflection of the foreman’s leadership and a collective feeling of responsibility to excellence by the crew members. “I expect everybody to be better at their job than me,” said Knutson. “I am not threatened by greatness.”

The Power of the Crew

The Power of the Crew, a collection of quality-driven individuals, with a strong leader, that care about each other, and the job they do, is a beautiful sight to behold. The work they leave behind is a testament to their skill, craftsmanship and their commitment to each other to be the very best. “We are the last of the cowboys,” said Epley. “We travel together, we share each other’s pains and sorrows, as well as the good times. When times are tough we circle the wagons and we look after each other.” Therein lies The Power of the Crew.

The author would like to thank the paving superintendents who were interviewed for this article: Wayne Wood, L.L. Pelling Co.; Wes Knutson, Aspro, Inc.; Steve Epley, Western Engineering Co.; Gene Baloun, Des Moines and Paving Co., Inc.; and Bob Mobley, Norris Asphalt Paving Co. Your service to our industry and to the men and women who work in it is greatly appreciated.



APAI Annual Convention Blows the Old Records Off the Shelf

The 62nd Asphalt Paving Association of Iowa (APAI) Annual Convention held November 29th and November 30th at the West Des Moines Marriott broke the all-time attendance record for the event with over 400 attendees. That was not all, the APAI Scholarship Auction broke its previous fundraising record with over \$31,000 to go to engineering students at Iowa's three major universities. The theme of the annual event in 2017 was "Asphalt Drive in Style" and featured a 50's classic car,

old-school speakers and enough fun to raise a pompadour. "This event was an over-the-top success," said Bill Rosener, Executive Vice President of the APAI. "The décor was classy-cool, the speakers were informative and interesting, and the generosity of our members was unparalleled. I couldn't be more proud of the membership of this great association."

To read more....<http://www.apai.net/2017apaiconvstory.aspx>



APAI Best Photos of 2017 Winners Announced

There were some great submissions from the 2017 Paving Season sent in for the 2017 Best Photo Contest. It was a tough decision, but we show here the Honorable Mentions and Finalists whose work will be showcased this coming year.



▲ Photo taken of night work at the Des Moines International Airport. Photo taken by Brian Beard of Des Moines Asphalt & Paving (An Oldcastle Materials company) and submitted by Nick Frederiksen of ISG. (Winner)



◀ L34-Ribbon of Asphalt by Mike Mathisen of Henningsen Construction, Inc. (Finalist)

▶ Submitted by Scott Meier of Bremer County (Finalist)



APAI Welcomes New Members

APAI continues to add new members. At their last Board Meeting, the Board of Directors one Associate Member to the Association. Thank you to those who have helped recruit this new members.



Load King has been producing quality trailers since 1956. They are located in Elk Point, South Dakota.

to call Load King. They have not, and will not, compromise in this area.

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Although the trailer industry is an ever-changing environment and they've seen many changes over the years, they have remained committed to the simple philosophy that they will make a reasonable profit through the designing, manufacturing, and marketing of top quality products that they can always be proud

Please welcome this new member and show your support for them, by contacting them and utilizing their services. To find contact information for this member, go to <http://www.apai.net/associate-members.aspx>.

Photo by Mike Mathisen of Henningsen Construction, Inc. (Honorable Mention)



Photo by Cutter Hahn of Western Engineering (Honorable Mention)

Photo by Mike Mathisen of Henningsen Construction, Inc. (Honorable Mention (2))



Photo by Chris Jessen of Heartland Asphalt, Inc. (Honorable Mention)



Photo by Bryan DeJong of Dallas County (Honorable Mention)

Photo by Matt Yonker of Grimes Asphalt & Paving Corp on George Flagg Parkway (Honorable Mention)



Photo by Cheryl Huffman of Norris Asphalt Paving Co. (Honorable Mention)

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