

# Well-Trained Employees Help Companies Weather Economic Storm

By Jennifer LeFevre, RMC Research & Education Foundation Program Director

Professionals must be efficient, effective, multi-skilled and well-trained to survive the storm.

In these times of economic strife, companies are under tremendous pressure to cut costs where they can while continuing to provide a quality product and be competitive in the marketplace – a tall order by any standard. It may sometimes seem as though there is little companies may do to control their short-term outlook. However, investing in the training of employees to ensure that they are as knowledgeable and efficient as possible is one way to help your company weather the storm.

One of the greatest resources a company has is its professionals, and, during times of uncertainty, having the best performing staff will help your company gain an edge over the competition. This is true for all professionals within the concrete industry – from drivers who are the front-line representatives of the concrete industry and the supervisors who manage them, to dispatchers and concrete plant managers all the way to sales professionals – employees are the heart of any company. The RMC Research & Education Foundation has funded the development of a variety of educational and training resources for the concrete industry that will help your employees become the best that they can be.

One of the Foundation's most recent additions to its deliverables is the development of The Effective RMC Supervisor Course, which was unveiled this year and is administered through the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA). Participants, many of whom started in the industry as drivers and were later promoted to a supervisor position, note that this course helped them to transition to their new responsibilities, especially under circumstances where they now supervise drivers with whom they were once peers. This vital training allows these new supervisors to better communicate with their direct reports, which ultimately increases job satisfaction for all involved. This is extremely important given that poor communication between drivers and supervisors is one of the most frequently-cited reasons that drivers leave the industry. Driver turnover is extremely costly and the RMC Research & Education Foundation Board of Trustees chose to fund the development of this course as a means to help the industry significantly decrease driver turnover and the associated costs.

When drivers are well-trained and knowledgeable, they are more effective and efficient in their jobs. As more drivers become certified in NRMCA's Concrete Delivery Professional (CDP) certification program, the bar is raised for all drivers. The Foundation assisted in the effort to increase certifications through funding the development of training videos to accompany the CDP study modules. The Foundation also funded the translation of the CDP study modules into Spanish, along with the translation of NRMCA's popular training publication, the "Truck Mixer Driver's Manual" into Spanish. Since many new drivers to the industry come from Spanish-speaking communities, providing them with the oppor-

tunity to utilize Spanish-language training materials allows them to take full advantage of these vital industry tools.

Passing a certification exam demonstrates that a professional has a high-level of position-specific knowledge and skills to make a plant manager the best at his or her job. The Ready Mixed Concrete Plant Manager Certification Course is a particularly important training course that will ensure plant managers run their plant as effectively and efficiently as possible. There are few areas where costs savings may be found (or lost) through

proper (or poor) plant management. The plant manager certification addresses several crucial areas, including product knowledge, environmental issues, safety, business principles and operational skills – all areas where a high level of knowledge on the part of a plant manager may result in significant cost savings.

Other training courses, such as the Financial Management Course for the Ready Mixed Concrete Industry and the Ready Mixed Concrete Sales Manager training course, offer ready mixed concrete profes-

sionals the opportunity to increase their skills in areas that may be deficient. The Financial Management Course is designed to teach participants who have moved up the ranks but who many not have a background in finance the basics such as reading and interpreting financial statements. Similarly, the Sales Manager course assists participants with learning how to manage projects and their sales team. Both courses help to augment the skills of professionals who gain new responsibilities during their careers in the ready mixed concrete industry.

Of course, drafting some of the industry's top prospects upon graduating from one of the four Concrete Industry Management (CIM) programs nationwide allows the concrete industry to recruit new professionals who understand the nuances of the concrete industry and who can really hit the ground running. This is particularly important now as employers seek employees who offer a wide-breadth of skills and who can fill multiple roles as the economy remains tight. The RMC Research & Education Foundation has been a strong financial sponsor of the CIM program since its inception at Middle Tennessee State University and has continued its support as the program expanded to California State University-Chico, Arizona State University and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. The Foundation also looks forward to the launch of the latest program at Texas State in the spring of 2009.

Efficient. Effective. Multi-skilled. Well-trained. These traits are essential in ready mixed concrete industry professionals as the industry strives to stay competitive and weather the economic storm. Leaders within the concrete industry chose to establish the RMC Research & Education Foundation precisely to assist the industry with developing this asset and to improve the concrete industry. The more a company can count on its greatest asset – its employees – the more successful it will be. The RMC Research & Education will continue in its mission to support research and educational programs that will increase professionalism and quality in the concrete industry and, by doing so, will help to keep the industry on the cutting edge. ■

*For more information on the projects and programs of the RMC Research & Education Foundation, please visit [www.rmc-foundation.org](http://www.rmc-foundation.org).*

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