

# CONSTRUCTOR

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## AGC: Mission Critical

*Incoming AGC President  
Todd Roberts stands  
ready to tackle all the  
industry's challenges*



**AGC**  
THE CONSTRUCTION  
ASSOCIATION

# CONTENTS



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## cover story

### AGC: MISSION CRITICAL 12

It's a call-to-action for incoming AGC President Todd Roberts, a theme that highlights issues that affect the membership from the soaring houses of our nation's government to the ones where they tuck in their kids at night.

BY AMY DREW THOMPSON

## features

### A SAFETY EDUCATOR AND ADVOCATE AT TD INDUSTRIES 21

AGC names Doug Edrington 2025 Construction Safety Champion of the Year  
BY CHRISTINE PREUSLER

### SPOTTING RED FLAGS 24

How to navigate hiring challenges in construction

BY KEYAN ZANDY

### 4 KEY TRENDS SHAPING THE 2025 CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY 27

BY CHRIS PEPPLER

### DRIVING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT 37

TEXO partners with Be Pro Be Proud to address industry labor shortages

BY NICOLE NEEDLES

### ILLUMINATING CAREER PATHWAYS 42

Group PMX uses StaffCircle to track employee performance and boost retention

BY NICK FORTUNA

### BURIED RISKS 46

Inaccurate utility line markings lead to accidental utility line strikes



## in every issue

7 EDITOR'S NOTE  
BY JEANIE J. CLAPP

9 PRESIDENT'S LETTER  
BY TODD ROBERTS

11 CEO'S MESSAGE  
BY JEFF SHOAF

19 SIMONSON SAYS  
BY KEN SIMONSON, CHIEF ECONOMIST

33 AGC IN ACTION

47 COMMUNITY CONNECTION

48 ADVERTISER INDEX

50 FINAL INSPECTION

## infographic

31 2025 CONSTRUCTION HIRING AND BUSINESS OUTLOOK

## CONNECT





# Illuminating Career Pathways

Group PMX uses StaffCircle to track employee performance and boost retention

BY NICK FORTUNA

It's frustrating to see talented employees leave for greener pastures, especially when there was plenty of room for advancement had they just stayed put. That used to be an issue for Group PMX, an AGC of New York State LLC member, which once had to onboard or offboard 30 employees in a single year, creating logistical challenges for the busy project-management firm.

"From an IT standpoint alone, the amount of administrative work and documentation needed was unsustainable,"

said Eddie Cardozo, director of technology at New York-based Group PMX, which has about 80 employees today.

Over the past few years, however, turnover at Group PMX has been cut in half, and StaffCircle has been instrumental in that improvement, Cardozo said. StaffCircle is an online performance-management and career-development tool that digitizes and standardizes career pathways, giving employees clear goals to shoot for.

Cardozo said StaffCircle increases employee engagement by showing them

that their employer is invested in their success.

"It's been a tremendous tool for us," he said. "It's helped us a lot to be able to show people the skill set they currently have, how they can grow that skill set and how we're going to facilitate that achievement. We're showing interest in them and their growth, so they're more likely to invest in us as well. The effort and cost it takes to onboard and offboard an employee, as opposed to training them to take the next step, is significant. That's why this tool is valuable."



StaffCircle can be used with a web browser or smartphone app, so employees in the field or the office can access their individual profiles anytime. Companies pay an annual subscription fee based on their number of employees.

Along with their job title, each employee profile displays the key performance indicators and skills relevant to that role. StaffCircle is customizable, so companies can set up KPIs and skill sets as they wish, and templates are provided to help them get started.

By mapping out all the roles within an organization, along with the necessary skills and requirements for advancement, companies can build a “competency framework” to aid their retention and succession-planning efforts, according to Mark Seemann, founder and CEO, StaffCircle.

Likewise, by automatically tracking KPIs, StaffCircle streamlines performance reviews and provides transparency for both employees and companies. With data-driven assessments, the potential for biased reviews from individual managers is greatly reduced. That gives employees greater confidence that they’re being treated fairly, and companies get a clearer picture of their talent pool, Seemann said.

StaffCircle outlines the typical criteria and timeline for employees to advance to the next position, so workers can track their progress. Through StaffCircle, qualified workers won’t be overlooked by their employers, and those who need more experience can recognize their skills gaps and take steps to address them, Seemann said.

“It levels the playing field for all employees,” he said. “Every employee wants to know that their organization gives everybody a fair shot at progression, and having that framework standardizes the process for moving up to the next level.”

### *A Roadmap for Success*

At Group PMX, StaffCircle provides a clear roadmap for employees to rise from assistant project manager or project engineer all the way to managing director. During employees’ first three months with the company, their skills are assessed, with managers noting what they do well and where they need improvement.

The company has established a list of skills required for each role, such as change-order analysis and basic understanding of mechanical, electrical and plumbing components. Skill sets include both technical skills and soft skills, such as working alongside architects,

“StaffCircle is an online performance-management and career-development tool that digitizes and standardizes career pathways, giving employees clear goals to shoot for.”

contractors and clients, and each skill is broken down into four levels of expertise.

The knowledge and experience needed to reach the next level of expertise are clearly defined, so employees who want to move up can work toward those requirements, which may include additional training or taking on more responsibilities.

“There’s a tenure associated with each position, which paces employees to achieve their goals in an appropriate timeframe,” Cardozo said. “We’re building a roadmap so people feel that Group PMX is invested in them and wants them to succeed. This tool also allows employees to show us that they’re ready to take the next step, so we’re not going to lose great employees because they were overlooked.”

Prior to tools like StaffCircle, only large companies typically had the resources to perform detailed career mapping for each role in the organization and to track KPIs for each employee, Seemann said. By leveraging artificial intelligence, StaffCircle enables small and midsized companies to keep their employees engaged, making them more likely to remain with the organization, he said.

Through StaffCircle, companies can easily develop a list of skills needed for each position, KPIs to measure each skill

By mapping out all the roles within an organization, along with the necessary skills and requirements for advancement, companies can build a “competency framework” to aid their retention and succession-planning efforts.

and steps for gaining expertise. Without AI, that process might take months or years, even for construction-related roles that industry experts understand inside and out. Significantly, the AI component helps construction companies to produce KPIs and career maps for non-construction roles, such as marketing and human resources, limiting turnover in those areas as well.

With an outline for each position, managers can schedule regular one-on-one meetings with employees to discuss their progress. StaffCircle’s automated performance-tracking component enables managers to zero in on areas that need improvement, so employees get a clear assessment of their performance and skills gaps.

Companies that have an accurate view of their talent pool will have an easier

time with succession planning, Seemann said.

“StaffCircle provides financial benefits, as recruiting and replacing employees is expensive and sets the business back in terms of productivity,” he said. “This tool enables organizations to recruit from within rather than looking outside the company for key hires. Promoting from within is less of a risk because you have a good understanding of where an individual excels and what needs improvement. It’s all about managing churn and risk.”

### Getting Reliable Results

At Group PMX, StaffCircle is helping to ensure that employees aren’t promoted prematurely, Cardozo said. In aligning job requirements with employees’ qualifications, the system not only reduces

operational risk for the company but helps to address a key driver of turnover: frustration among employees who feel ill prepared to perform their jobs.

“It’s very straightforward this way,” Cardozo said. “There’s no ambiguity as to whether or not someone is ready for a promotion, and that helps employees and the company feel empowered and prepared. Employees’ skills speak for themselves, and what they’ve brought to the table on their projects is evident.”

StaffCircle is designed to serve three types of users, Seemann said. The first is frontline or office employees, who can track their performance and progress toward career goals.

Next up are line managers, who become better prepared to offer meaningful feedback during one-on-one check-ins with their direct reports. Lastly, the system gives company executives an overhead view of their organization so they can identify skills gaps, areas where they have “single-person dependencies” and roles where succession planning is lagging behind, Seemann said.

“StaffCircle reduces attrition,” he said. “One of the top reasons people leave organizations is because there’s a perceived lack of career development, and ‘perceived’ is the key word because there could be perfectly good development opportunities within the organization, but they’re not clearly displayed and made accessible to every employee.

“This tool allows companies to systemize that process across their organization without having a large number of people trying to manage it.”

StaffCircle can be trained to use a company’s preferred business terminology, and with every customization, the platform becomes better at tailoring its suggestions to the company’s specific needs.

“It gets better over time,” Seemann said. “Lots of people are talking about AI, but thus far, there have been very few concrete examples of how construction companies can really leverage it. This is a real-world example of how you can use AI to do something that was difficult and expensive to do before. It’s a practical implementation of AI that’s driving value for construction organizations.”

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