



Production Rates Will Make or Break Your Company



Dan Baker, president of Baker Concrete in Ohio, one of the largest concrete construction companies in the world, was once asked how his company became successful and how they became so large. Read on to find out Dan's secret. Continue >



Baker noted that Baker Concrete was founded by Ohio farmers and *they just worked harder*. What he meant was that when other companies would pour 300 yards a day on the job with a crew, Baker Concrete would pour 500 yards. Baker Concrete would hire farm boys who didn't shy away from a hard days work (they had worked hard their whole lives on the farm). Baker Concrete moved from doing patios in the beginning, to setting forms, to building commercial projects, and now to doing airports and stadiums. (They recently completed the Denver Broncos stadium.)

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They just worked harder. It sounds too simplistic. But the fact is that successful concrete construction companies are composed of go getters and doers like those at Baker Concrete. They have the type of job leaders that will comment, "I've had great service today and the pump is still here on the job- order me another 150 yards of concrete." They sort of get a kick out of doing big things. They go the extra mile and they just work harder. Compare this to the job leader that can't wait to cut off the concrete and the pump and go home. Multiply out the difference in attitude when you have 5 crews working 250 days per year each. Multiply out the difference in attitude when you have 20 crews working 250 days per year each.





Set High Standards Right from the Beginning

A critical component of job scheduling and job effectiveness is understanding what production rates are possible for your various crews. High standards need to be set in the early stages of the company formation because standards are very hard to change once a company is mature and is running multiple crews.

When *Gilley* brought on a new foreman, he was shown the process (***the process of high productivity***)

In Southern California, High Grade Form, Inc. is fortunate to have Gilley, the person that runs all of their field personnel. As a foreman, Gilley is an animal in getting things done on a concrete construction job site: Massive, record breaking concrete pours; effectively placing the men on the project; the whole approach to the job; having all the manpower spread out and not bunched up, dawdling together; expecting a lot and getting it— all done with a sense of decency and respect for the men. Gilley is a man who has done it himself- not just talked about it.

When Gilley brought on a new foreman, he was shown the process (the process of high productivity). Some new foremen didn't like it, they didn't want to work hard and push it, and they quit. But some guys really dig it— they like to get lots of stuff done and be part of a winning company. Gilley built his crews around guys that dig getting lots of stuff done.





Not every foreman will be able to get those attributes that you're looking for, some just won't want to get with any program where there are expectations to be met. The hardest area to improve is going to be the #1 category- heart. Many people just don't care.

More foremen were brought on and trained in this manner-and then one day, all of a sudden, there were eight foremen, and they all were doing it close to the same way. Today there are 20 crews doing it the close to the same way. The thing is, the bar was set high right from the start. Expectations were high, not unreasonable, but high, and everything benchmarked off of those expectations.

Contrarily, if there were no expectations or small expectations and things just sort of happened on their own course, it becomes very hard to change course. You might have five or six crews moseying along at their own pace. It's hard to correct this situation because everybody in your company does it that way, and your whole company culture is one of lackadaisical performance. What are you going to do when you finally wake up? Fire the whole company?

High Grade Form, Inc. sees examples of wildly different production rates with other trades on the jobs they are doing the concrete on. There will be three plumbers that come out and put ground plumbing in 6-8 houses in a day- these plumbers really move out, they're organized, they just move like machines.

On another job, another plumbing company gets on the job, they have a four-man crew, and they struggle in getting two houses done. The differences in how these two plumbing companies execute their job is night and day. Who knows how the second plumbing company could have been awarded the job when they were competing with the first one, but they did. The reality is they probably are not making much profit or are losing money.





Improving Crew Performance

Often, the highest productivity a concrete company will ever get is right when it starts in business. That's because it is the owner and his best men out on the job. The owner hand picked his best men right when he started the company- so the chance is very good that the crew is excellent.

You need to ***start*** out with ***excellent rates of production*** and carry that out ***all the way through the company***

Once the company expands is often when the trouble starts. At this time there often gets to be a wide discrepancy in production rates among crews. It's not implausible that one foreman running a job can literally use 30%-50% less labor to build a job than another foreman. With multiple jobs it is easy to let this production discrepancy get away from you because it is hectic and there are many things about running the business to be concentrating on and worrying about.

Nonetheless, you must be certain that you are monitoring crew performance and conscientiously working at improving the performance of your crews. You especially need to know about poor performing crews as soon as possible so you can work on improving these crews.



Most of your best foremen will be doing these three things well:

1. They want to get more done. They thrive on it. They have a big **heart** for the job.
2. They have their crew spread out (not bunched together leaning on their shovels talking), doing separate things, and with expectations about what should get accomplished today. The best foremen are getting big production from their men. Compare this to the foreman who has four or five guys clustered in one area chit-chatting and raking their shovels in the footings and not much is really getting done. If there are five people in a ten square foot area working, how do you measure what is getting done?
3. They know how to maneuver crew members to do other things if something is stopping the immediate task at hand. On a good foreman's job- there is never a reason to be standing around doing nothing. There is always something that can be being done to move the cause forward.

Listen to the Audio Version of this Guide [here](#) on the Concrete Network.

Watch your high performing foremen and I think you'll find they naturally do items 1, 2, and 3 above. Then get with your weaker performing foreman Not that you're going to run right out there and take that weaker foreman and tear them apart.... work with them to improve with respect and with a spirit of coaching and teaching.





One of the rules of teaching is that everything takes two or three times longer to get through and sink in than expected. So, you're not going to have one conversation on the jobsite or (hopefully this won't be the case) one butt chewing, and then you leave and then think all is well. Instead, spend some time with that foreman and show him first hand on the job and then when you think he's got it, show him again, and show him again, and then show him one more time. Go back and periodically check on it and start to watch the improvement.

*They have their **crew spread out** not bunched together leaning on their shovels talking*

Not every foreman will be able to get those attributes that you're looking for, some just won't want to get with any program where there are expectations to be met. The hardest area to improve is going to be the #1 category- heart. Many people just don't care.

You may need to make changes. But over time, you're going to end up with excellent crews that are going to get high productivity and that is absolutely going to transfer right to your bottom line and to the health of your company.





Sherpa info

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SUMMIT DATE

This document reached the summit (was created) on December 20, 2004 and is based on the best information available to the Sherpa at that time. To check for updates please click here <http://www.ConcreteSherpa.com/production>.

NAVIGATION & USER TIPS

You can move around this guide by using your mouse or keyboard arrows. Left mouse button goes to the next page, right mouse button goes to previous page. Click on the right arrow (→) for the next page and the left arrow (←) to go the previous page.

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	PC	MAC
Zoom in (Larger)	[Ctrl] [+]	[⌘] [+]
Zoom out	[Ctrl] [-]	[⌘] [-]
Full screen/normal screen view	[Ctrl] [L]	[⌘] [L]

ABOUT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

The Concrete Sherpa is a team of people that represent the experience, teaching and learning of our team members and other industry leaders *on a mission to make life better for the concrete contractor*. We are an idea center striving to deliver thought provoking ideas based on “Concrete Advice for Business and Life” to stimulate you to reach new heights. As a user, you should remember to consider all information you receive, here at the Concrete Sherpa or elsewhere, not as a *cast in concrete* recommendation, but rather as an idea for you to consider and ponder.



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THE JOURNEY LEADING TO THE CONCRETE SHERPA PROJECT

The Concrete Sherpa Project (A [Sherpa](#) is a “guide”) was born at The Concrete Network in mid 2004. Here is how it happened:

The biggest surprise, or gift, since starting The Concrete Network in 1999 has been the concrete contractor friends from around the country we’ve made and witnessing the passion they have for what they do. These people include Dave Pettigrew, up in the San Francisco Bay Area, or the Verlennich brothers in Minnesota, or Bob Harris in Georgia, the list goes on and on. It’s quite inspiring.

We were once asked, “How are you so excited every day about concrete?” Well the answer is simple, it is impossible to not be excited about concrete when you have the job we do—interacting with hundreds of concrete contractors from every state in the country.

The thing we’ve learned about concrete contractors is that most are passionate *craftsmen*—they are often less passionate and experienced in the “office stuff”. Human nature channels us to do what we are most comfortable with; learning how to use a new saw-cutting tool is comfortable; learning and implementing a new estimating strategy, or job management tool, is not so comfortable.





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THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

So Sherpa was born to provide FREE and easy to use information on topics many Contractors are not too comfortable with.

- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help to contractors who are often 'Lone Rangers' and don't have anyone to get solid business advice from.
- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help for contractors who have to work too hard and too many hours in their business, and one day realize they need to work *on their business, not in their business*.
- Have fun with Concrete Sherpa and go faster towards reaching success than you might have on your own.
- To skeptics who think something free can't be valuable, or there must be a trick- visit Concrete Sherpa and decide for yourself.

We hope you make great use of the Concrete Sherpa and it helps you to become an awesome success for yourself, your family, your church, and your community.

VISIT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

To visit the Concrete Sherpa click here <http://www.ConcreteSherpa.com>.

