



Skills framework for construction workers

The first Indian multinational training & skills company Centum Learning has operations in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, Nepal and 17 countries in Africa. It has rich experience in the training and development domain across 21 industry verticals. **Sanjeev Duggal, CEO and Director, Centum Learning** briefs *Buildotech* on the skill needs & gaps in the construction sector.





Some of the most demanded skills in real estate sector

Real Estate/Building/Infrastructure has been identified as the few sectors which have the potential to bridge gaps and lift our economy. Although the construction industry faces a number of bottlenecks, the primary challenge for them is sourcing skilled manpower. Skill requirements in these sectors are:

- Acquisitions in steel sector
- Move towards semi-automatic and automatic operations for long product manufacture
- Further automation in steel processing
- Increasing complexity of operating and maintenance of equipment

Skilled manpower can amplify the economic value creation thus leading to timely completion of projects and costs over run. From an industry perspective, uninterrupted supply of skilled workforce in this segment will reduce demand supply gap, improve productivity and enhance operational efficiency of the sector.

The skill gaps and its impact on the construction industry

The achievement of any construction project is largely dependent on the availability of continuous, skilled labour at all levels. The sector generates employment opportunities on a large scale but suffers from insufficient skills. The sector currently employs 45 million people out of which 30% are employed in the real estate and the remaining 70% in the infrastructure segment. The total workforce comprises 82.5% unskilled and semi-skilled workers, 10% skilled workers and the remaining are engineers, technicians, foreman

and clerical staff. It is expected that 83 million people will be employed by the construction industry by 2022.

Shortage of skilled workers hinders the progress of work leading to delay in meeting deadlines i.e. timely output. There is a vast difference between the business need and the skill set possessed by the workers in the Industry presently. Most of the gaps in the skill sets are in areas of core knowledge and skill required to undertake relevant job role as part of a construction project.

The major reason for skilled workforce shortage is that contractors and builders do not employ workers directly, but through middle men whose interest in workers is transitory and not long term. Though the construction industry creates millions of jobs but the industry is perceived to have difficult working conditions, low pay and lack of job security. It is also widely believed that the rural development initiatives of the government such as the MGNREGA and Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission have further impacted the availability of skilled labour.

Importance of continuous up gradation of workers skills

Modern day technological progress can make few skills obsolete with time. Hence, irrespective of the sector, one is employed in, it is important for people to continuously upgrade their skills to stay competitive, productive and minimizing waste of materials.

Different levels of skills are required across the value chain in the building & construction sector. A person who is skilled in Bar bending and Steel fixing cannot and should not handle plumbing fittings unless qualified

or skilled to do so. Likewise, an electrician may not be skilled to handle masonry jobs. Each player within this segment require different skill sets and that's why skilling becomes all the more pertinent. Design professionals, builders/ developers and equipment providers can play a crucial role of creating the support ecosystem that is required to facilitate skills training. For example, a builder or developer can provide on the job training to the candidates undertaking skills training. Likewise, equipment providers can provide equipment to train people – since when people get trained the usage and adaptability of their equipment will increase.

How global players are creating new opportunities in this sector

Infrastructure has become the biggest priority for the Indian government which will necessitate massive construction and there will be a positive growth in industries in every aspect. The government has also decided to allow 100% FDI in the real estate industry to encourage global construction companies in construction sector.

In construction and engineering, the leading players focus primarily on high performance which is what distinguish them from the rest. They offer full-fledged services in project management, client relationship along with construction services which help them stay strategically close to potential customers. India is on the verge of witnessing a sustained growth. Therefore, to meet the demands workforce too need to be highly efficient, agile and learn how to position themselves in the extremely competitive market.