

Research in Progress Abstract - Construction Practice (Non-Pedagogical Content)

A Comparison of Site Manager Competencies and Attributes in Ireland with those of the Site Superintendent in the United States

David E. Gunderson, PhD
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington USA

Lloyd Scott, PhD
Dublin Institute of Technology
Dublin, Ireland

Gene W. Gloeckner, PhD
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado USA

“The [construction] job superintendent is like the conductor of a symphony orchestra. He must see that all elements are fitted together at the right time and sequence” (Diamant & Debo, 1988, p. 8). The job title for the supervisor on a construction site in the United State is Superintendent, Project Superintendent or General Superintendent, while in Ireland this role is most often carried out by the Site Manager. The authors utilized a mixed methods research protocol to determine which site manager competencies and attributes were most important for project success in Ireland. The sequential explanatory research design included a survey followed by face to face interviews. The survey, completed by 59 participants, invited the construction professionals to volunteer to be interviewed. These preliminary results are being compared to a research project in the United States which used a very similar survey to identify the superintendents’ competencies and attributes required for success (Gunderson & Gloeckner, 2011). Both surveys used a 7-point Likert scale for participants to rank the competencies and attributes which are the most important for success. Following is a comparison of similar rankings of competencies and attributes required for success for site managers in Ireland and superintendents in the United States. A number of quite similar competencies/attributes exist, for example in both countries, having the “ability to plan ahead’ was the top ranked competency. The “ability to schedule work activities” was ranked #2 in the United States and #5 in Ireland. Having a “strong work ethic” was ranked #3 in both countries. The “ability to get along with other people” was ranked #4 in the US and #2 in Ireland. Having “leadership skills” was ranked #5 in the US and #11 in Ireland. Being “reliable and responsive” was ranked #6 in the US and #7 in Ireland. “Understanding construction materials” was ranks #9 in the US and #8 in Ireland. Having “oral communication skills” was ranked #10 in the US and #9 in Ireland. The ability to work with different (and diverse) people was ranked #12 in both countries. Having the “ability to collaborate” was ranked #13 in the US and #10 in Ireland. Being able to “reinforce behavior in others” was ranked #15 in the US and #16 in Ireland. Having “detailed knowledge of construction was ranked #16 in the US and #15 in Ireland. “Team building skills” was ranked #19and “listening skills” was ranked #20 in both countries. Even though the results from these two research projects seem to yield many similarities, there were some differences which seem significant. The biggest difference was “strong values and ethics which was ranked #7 in the US and #21 in Ireland. “Understanding safety regulations was ranked #8 in the US and #14 in Ireland. “Time management was ranked #18 in the US and #4 in Ireland. It could be helpful for a construction professional from Ireland and neighboring countries to be aware of the differences if that person were to seek employment in the United States and visa versa.

Key Words: Site Manager, Superintendent, Site Supervision, Construction Supervision