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MANAGING
THE MIDDLE



**BUILDING
SKILLS** **ATTRACTING &
RETAINING A
DIVERSE
WORKFORCE**

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Associated Builders and Contractors
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SOME OF OUR MOST TECHNICALLY SKILLED EMPLOYEES — MANY OF OUR CONCRETE FINISHERS AND FOREMEN — ARE EITHER BILINGUAL OR NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

BUILDS SUCCESS FOR ABC MEMBERS

By Laura Kocum – Marketing & Communications Director, ABC Wisconsin

As attendees gathered around ABC's SuperCon '26 registration table, a new audience stood out. For the first time, Spanish-speaking crews were signing in and heading to safety training in their native language. The demand was so high that organizers had to move the session to a larger room at the last minute to accommodate the crowd.

Tony Zignego, ABC Board Member and Chair of ABC's Inclusion Committee, anticipated strong interest. At Zignego Co., Inc., multilingual crews are essential to completing projects. At least half of his workforce speaks Spanish as their primary language, making it critical that training, leadership, and daily communication are delivered in a way they fully understand.

"Aligning your core values to ensure everyone feels included is essential,"



Tony Zignego

Zignego said. "Within those values, finding ways to bring teams together, even through their differences, is what ultimately makes a company successful."

For Zignego Co.,

that commitment goes beyond words. The company has invested significant time and resources into communicating in the languages their crews speak and ensuring employees feel valued. They've even updated their logo to reflect the nationalities represented across their workforce.

"We believe we have a tremendously gifted workforce," Zignego said. "Some of our most technically skilled employees—many of our concrete finishers and foremen—are either bilingual or native Spanish speakers."

Their approach starts with onboarding. New employees are paired with same-language mentors to support a smoother transition. The leadership team includes bilingual supervisors, jobsite signage is provided in both Spanish and English, and training is delivered in workers' primary languages. This intentional approach has paid off.

"Over the past 25 to 30 years, this has become a self-sustaining cycle at Zignego, helping us attract and retain some of the best craftspeople in the industry," he said.

Zignego is not alone. Many ABC members are embracing multilingual workforces and investing in the tools

needed to support them—ensuring crews are safe, well-trained, and confident on the job.

Stevens Construction Corp. recently hired a bilingual administrative assistant to keep up with the growing demand for Spanish-language help.

"Since adding this position, we've been able to more effectively explain benefit offerings, resulting in increased understanding and utilization—especially in healthcare. This has been a meaningful step in ensuring all employees can access and fully benefit from the resources available to them," explains Mandy Basham, Human Resources Manager at Stevens Construction Corp..

The company already has Spanish language training for their crews, and believes it makes their projects more cohesive, and it builds trust and camaraderie within their teams.



Mandy Basham

"It supports career growth by giving team members the opportunity to develop new skills in their first language," she said. "It also ensures jobsite safety by ensuring critical

safety training is clearly understood when delivered in Spanish.”

Basham says their HR documents, handbooks, and company policies are translated into Spanish, and the company makes it a point to issue all communications in both English and Spanish, to ensure employees are well-informed and feel included.

Eugene Krol, General Manager at K Komfort, Inc., believes these efforts to speak the language of the crews are crucial. “As an employer, it’s essential to create an environment that sets your crews up for success,” he said.

His company employs individuals who speak Spanish, Russian, and English. To bridge communication gaps, K Komfort relies on translation apps, bilingual employees, and multilingual signage.

“In today’s competitive environment, where companies are all looking for the best talent and projects, having an edge is critical,” Krol said. “Providing language access is a powerful way to grow your team and maintain a safe job site.”



A bilingual sign is used on one of Zignego Co. Inc.'s job sites.

There are also clear business advantages. “We’re able to serve customers who don’t speak English by connecting them with our Spanish- or Russian-speaking employees,” Krol explained. “That flexibility expands our reach and builds loyalty because customers know they can communicate effectively with our team.”

ABC is continuing to expand its language offerings to support member companies. The Construction Inclusion page on the ABC

website features a wide range of resources, including more than 365 Spanish-language training videos, bilingual construction signage, and OSHA materials in multiple languages.

Plans are already in place to expand Spanish-language programming at future SuperCon events—ensuring that every worker has access to the training and resources they need to stay safe, confident, and successful on the job. [abc.wisconsin.com](#)

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