The following interview with MAREK’s Learning and Development Lead, Shannon Davis, was conducted by Alyssa Jaber and originally published in Autodesk’s construction blog.

Pop quiz: What’s the most valuable resource in construction?

If your answer is a specific building material, process, or even technology, you’d be incorrect. Construction’s most valuable resource: people. At this very moment, millions of individuals are working around the clock and impacting how our world is being built. However, to be successful, leading construction companies know that they also need to support and develop their workers. Shannon Davis, Learning and Development Lead at MAREK is someone working to do just that.

“Just like we build buildings, I help to build the people.”

Construction is truly a dynamic industry. In our Behind the Build blog series, we interview a diverse range of construction professionals to get to know those who make our industry so special. While we interview our fair share of field warriors like project managers and superintendents, others we speak with might work behind the scenes supporting staff and new processes. We recently spoke to Shannon on her journey in the industry, the initiatives MAREK takes to attract top talent, and more. Read her story, below.

WHAT DOES MAREK SPECIALIZE IN?
Marek provides a range of construction services in cities across the Southern United States. We build structures where people learn, work, live, heal, and celebrate. MAREK is constantly striving to exceed customer expectations by innovating the way we deliver our services and by expanding the portfolio of services we bring to the market.

As the Learning and Development Lead at MAREK, I work with leadership, craft professionals, and project managers to help each teammate accomplish their goals. Just like we build buildings, I help to build the people.

**HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY?**

I've been in the construction industry for about six years. My commitment to learning and helping others grow has led me to the role I'm in today.

I particularly love working in the construction industry because of the pride. Every one of our employees is passionate and prideful about all of the work that they do, the buildings they build, and the services that we provide to our community.

**HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY CHANGED THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN THE LAST FEW YEARS?**

There is limitless technology now available at our fingertips. Over the last few years, technology has changed and shaped the construction industry. We are thriving and continue looking for ways to become more efficient onsite with technology.

When I think about the future of the construction industry, I think about the challenges that we have to overcome with better processes and new innovations.

I think about the people that we serve and the changes this will create in our communities and the cities that we live in and work in.

**WHAT STEPS IS MAREK TAKING TO MINIMIZE THE IMPACT OF THE LABOR SHORTAGE?**

The labor shortage in our industry is currently a hot topic. I would say that MAREK, along with other firms in the industry work daily trying to solve this challenge. This includes advocating for immigration reform, having a presence in career and technical education (CTE) schools, and trying to connect with students at a younger age to share the benefits of a career in
TIME IS CRITICAL IN CONSTRUCTION. WHERE DO YOU SEE SOME OF THE MOST TIME WASTED?

Time is the most wasted when we are not onsite, unplugged and disconnected. Significant time waste happens when we are not onsite, but instead, we’re going through a chain of phone calls or emails, ultimately delaying production. The real solutions come from walking the jobsite and being with the people who are building.

Also, when people on our teams can’t find the information that they need, it creates delays. Prior to technology, this was a big issue. In our fast paced environment along with the demands of each project, projects can’t afford people waiting around for answers or spending precious time tracking down changes.

WHY DOES MAREK USE CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY LIKE PLANGRID?

MAREK uses PlanGrid because it’s easy. Our people asked for it and we delivered. PlanGrid is intuitive for users, while other technology might not always come as naturally. It’s something our teams and customers can just pick up, solve problems, and get to work.

PlanGrid is also scalable. We’re able to deploy it for different projects, sites, and locations, and teams are able to apply best practices across the board. It might not be exactly the same across our branches, but we have come together and started to develop those best practices within MAREK that really work.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHAT VALUE DOES PLANGRID PROVIDE MAREK?

Ultimately the value provided by PlanGrid to MAREK is streamlined communication. It allows our project teams to stay focused and connected at every point in the project. A recent win for MAREK with PlanGrid has been with Workspaces. This feature allows us to collaborate with our general contractor on the project without having to duplicate work. It also allows us to own the project with our specialties being able to plug in information where it’s needed, but without having to duplicate the work and upload different information, drawings, changes, etc. It’s the simplest form of collaboration.

Utilizing PlanGrid on our projects with other trades has really helped us forge stronger connections. This is something that we really value at MAREK, so we’re working together to
solve problems. When we’re using PlanGrid, we’re available to see what’s going on, solve problems together, and ultimately build a higher quality product.

**IF YOU HAD AN EXTRA TWO HOURS EACH WEEK AT WORK, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND YOUR TIME?**

If had an extra two hours each week, I would spend it connecting deeper with my employees and internal customers. I strive to understand more about their needs and desires.

At the end of the workweek, I feel as though I’ve done my job well when I know that someone’s life was a little bit easier or someone was connected to a resource they needed.

**WHAT DOES TRUST MEAN TO YOU ON THE JOBSITE?**

Trust on the jobsite means quite a few things. It’s knowing that you can lean on your teammates in a time of need, assign a task, and it’s going to get done. It’s also knowing that everybody has the passion and the heart for what we’re trying to accomplish and we all operate in the same way. At the end of the day, we’re going to safely produce a quality product that we’re proud of and ultimately make our customers happy.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU PASS ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION WHO ARE THINKING ABOUT ENTERING THIS INDUSTRY?**

The advice that I would pass on to the next generation who is considering the construction industry is “go for it.” The construction industry is filled with the most heartfelt people. People that are used to and proud of working with their hands and building something from the ground up. They care about you and the community they are building for. I may not get to build the actual buildings, but I do get to feel that pride, that sense of completion when I’m sitting in a room with craft professionals who love what they do and are passionate about their job.

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