

# A Case Study on Project Engage, a Step to Solve Alcoholism in the Construction Industry

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Alcohol is very prevalent in most industries around the globe, but the construction industry has been placed at the top, ranking number two for the most people suffering from alcoholism in the industry according to SAMHSA's study. Some experts have said this is due to the hard and physical requirements of the job, time requirements of the job, and the stress involved within building a construction project. Common practice in the industry is that when a person is cited for being under the influence while at work, they will be let go, fired, or given a warning depending on the circumstance. Bancroft Construction Company, headquartered in Delaware, is taking a different approach though and trying to help their employees and company find a way to retain those who work and are invested in the company. The data showing the financial benefit, the risk factors of someone under the influence on site, and the current industry standards and perception offer an interesting perspective on how prevalent alcoholism is within the industry and offer good support for what Bancroft construction is doing.

**Key Words:** Project Engage, Construction, Alcoholism, Bancroft Construction Company

## Introduction

Alcoholism is something that has been around ever since alcohol was first created. The debate in history though is when alcoholism was actually identified as a disease and when people or groups of people actually started to seek help. On [www.williamwhitepapers.com](http://www.williamwhitepapers.com), a paper titled "Significant Events in the History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America" outlines the following events as specific to alcoholism being a disease worth seeking help for. This information can be used to try and really get an idea of when alcoholism was not only first considered a problem, but also when organizations actually started to work to make the situation better.

<b>Significant Events in the History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
1750s - 1800s	Alcoholic mutual aid societies are formed within various Native American Tribes. Some are part of, or evolve into, abstinence-based Native American cultural revitalization movements and temperance organizations.
1784	Dr. Benjamin Rush's <i>Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Mind and Body</i> catalogues the consequence of chronic drunkenness and argues that this condition is a disease that physicians should be treating. Rush's writing marks the beginning of American temperance movement.
1849	The Swedish physician Magnus Huss describes a disease resulting from chronic consumption and christens it <i>Alcoholismus Chronicus</i> . This marks the introduction of the term alcoholism.
1901	The Charles B. Towns Hospital for Drug and Alcoholic Addictions in New York City marks the beginning of a new type of private "drying out" hospital for affluent alcoholics and addicts. Most inebriate homes, inebriate asylums and private addiction cure institutes collapse between 1910 and

	1925. The <i>Journal of Inebriety</i> ceases publication in 1914 and its parent association collapses in the early 1920s.
1920s	Most inebriate homes, inebriate asylums and private addiction cure institutes collapse between 1910 and 1925. The <i>Journal of Inebriety</i> ceases publication in 1914 and its parent association collapses in the early 1920s.
1937	The Research Council on Problems of Alcohol brings prominent scientists into the study of alcohol-related problems.
1947	An Addicts Anonymous group begins meeting at U.S. Public Health Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. Meetings begin outside the institution in New York City under the name Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in 1949 but dissipate over time. The roots of today's NA can be traced to groups that began in California in 1953.
1957	The Veteran's Health Administration begins developing alcoholism treatment units within its national network of VA hospitals

Table 1 – History of Alcohol Addiction

### *Alcoholism in Construction*

According to a study by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health found on the SAMHSA website, the research gathered that construction is found to be the second highest industry with heavy alcohol use even when eliminating bias for gender and age differences across industries. The definition for heavy alcohol use is “drinking 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on 5 or more days in that past 30 days”(Bush, 2015). According to treatmentsolutions.com, they state that genetics and family, depression and stress, friends and peer pressure, and self medication are all reasons for why individuals begin to drink alcohol and continue to drink through their lifetime (Winkel, 2010). Some experts are under the impression that part of the reason why so many construction related individuals fit into these statistics can be drawn from the depression and stress category that is talked about in the previous sentence.

**Figure 1. Past month heavy alcohol use among adults aged 18 to 64 employed full time, by industry category: combined 2008 to 2012**



\* The full title of this category is "Management of companies and enterprises, administration, support, waste management, and remediation services."

Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs) 2008 to 2010 (revised March 2012) and 2011 to 2012.

## *Figure 1 – Alcohol Use by Industry (Bush)*

The issue and significance of alcohol use for industries is primarily the ability of alcohol to alter someone's state of mind. In the article, "The effect of alcohol administration on human timing: A comparison of prospective timing, retrospective timing and passage of time judgements", authors Ogden, Wearden, Gallagher, and Montgomery conclude that not only does alcohol impair someone's judgement, but it also, if heavily consumed, can cause a person significantly to have a less accurate estimate of how slow or fast time is moving (Ogden, 2011). This is significant to construction because of the nature of how a building is constructed using heavy materials, having many people on site, and even the tools and equipment that are used on site. A person impaired by alcohol cannot only possibly injure themselves or others, but accidents can also lead to death.

### *Drug Tests Background*

Most employers require a drug test screening for potential employees to help an employer avoid hiring someone who may be impaired during work and cause potential harms to the business. The primary form of screening in the above circumstance is to have a potential employee take a urine drug test. The urine drug test according to healthline.com "screens for alcohol, amphetamines, benzodiazepines, marijuana, cocaine, PCP, and opioids (Stang, 2015).

Furthermore, in a paper called the "Utility of the AUDIT for identification of hazardous or harmful drinking in drug-dependent patients", the authors talk about AUDIT, or a system used to identify the hazardous or harmful drinking among individuals. The test that were conducted within the paper "showed excellent internal consistency (standardized  $\alpha=0.94$ )" and was highly recommended as a method if needed to discover if someone may be at risk to serious alcohol harm (Skipsey, 1997).

Methods and tools are in existence for the screening of drug and alcohol but it can depend on the medical care facility or the company to determine the different methods used to screen for the alcohol within someone's system.

### *Health Care Recovery Program*

A health care's methods of conducting recovery for patients can vary based on the program and what they feel are the best for the patient depending on where they are during the process of treatment. A problem with people who are addicted to a substance is that the battle does not just end once someone goes into and finishes their first treatment. The following are some common questions and ideas that facilities focus on in order to help a client continue with their recovery (Y, 2006).

- 1) Shift from "How do we get the client into treatment?" to "How do we nest the process of recovery within the person's natural environment?"
- 2) What services need to be continued?
- 3) What mentorship opportunities are available and how can we maximize them?
- 4) How to promote recovery rather than preventing relapse?
- 5) How can support entities be taught of the help needed for these people?

### *Financial Impact on the Industry*

According to the United States Department of Labor, "The National Institutes of Health recently reported that alcohol and drug abuse cost the economy \$246 billion in 1992, the most recent year for which economic data are

available (UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR). They further go on to say that in 1990, 86% of \$81.6 billion in lost productivity costs were due to drinking. This is a statistic that is currently looking at the whole industry and not just focused on construction but using inductive reasoning and understanding that the construction industry is the second highest industry suffering from alcoholism, you can understand the severity of the financial impact that alcohol has on the construction industry.

The United States Department of Labor gives an example of a “small plumbing company in Washington D.C., the Warner Corporation, [that] saved \$385,000 in one year by establishing a drug-free workplace program that included EAP services. The company attributed the savings to a decrease in the number of accidents, which resulted in lower worker’s compensation costs and lower vehicle insurance premiums”.

## **Methodology**

In building the information and importance of this case study, I first gathered information on the construction industry and how it is affected on alcoholism. I then began to research and look at Project Engage and what was going on with that program. I then expanded research as well as sent a survey out to the industry researching and seeing out alcohol impacts companies and how prevalent people can be let go due to alcohol consumption.

The primary structure and methodology that brings the most success to this project was to do an analysis of Project Engage relating to Bancroft Construction Company.

The objective of this case study is to:

- 1) Highlight the Project Engage program as it relates to Construction
- 2) Analyze the benefit of Project Engage to Bancroft Construction
- 3) Create an outline for other companies to follow in implementation
- 4) Highlight current industry standards and norms to alcohol policies

## **Case Study**

Long and behold, drugs and alcohol abuse have been very prevalent and have been increasing in the present years throughout all industries. As part of a way to combat this issue and get help for people who have been suffering, Christiana Healthcare started a program in 2008 called Project Engage to help patients not only get help while in a healthcare facility, but also help those suffering to also get a life long group of people to support them. The program is currently in place in Delaware because of the location of Christiana Healthcare but surrounding states as well have utilized and been interested in enrolling in the program. Due to data showing the construction industry is the second highest industry suffering from alcoholism, the Project Engage team decided to run a program specifically for the construction industry.

### *Project Specifics*

Christiana Healthcare has now made a Project Engage program specifically for the Construction industry to help those who deal with alcoholism. Beverly Wilson, Senior Project Manager for Project Engage, in an interview on April 11, 2017, spoke of the need and focus on the construction industry because of the industry being the second highest industry for alcoholism. Beverly also spoke that Christiana Healthcare is working with Bancroft construction

to use them as a pilot program in order to try and work out the kinks in the program so that this can be an adopted program by other companies throughout the construction industry and possibly also branching into other industries as well.

Going into a deeper level of detail on specifics about the program and how it works, Christiana Healthcare acts as an anonymous source for people to come and seek help from. This is partly because of safety for the person seeking help, but it is also required by HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, requiring medical information to be safe guarded and kept in privacy. According to [www.hhs.gov/hipaa/](http://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/), “HHS published a final Security Rule in February 2003. This Rule sets national standards for protecting the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of electronic protected health information”(Secretary, 2017).

Because of the HIPAA requirement for Christiana Healthcare, Beverly had to be careful of what she spoke about the program, but in the interview with Beverly and on news.christianacare.org, both talk about post program, patients working with Brandywine Counseling and Community Services peer counselors to further progress in keeping a person out of a life with addiction. According to news.christianacare.org, “more than 3,000 patients with substance use disorder” have used peer counselors through Project Engage (Christiana Care).

### *Data Analysis/Current Industry Standard*

The following data was gathered in an anonymous survey sent out to industry in the Spring of 2017 that had 41 respondents. This data is used to analyze and understand what current standards are for the industry regarding alcohol as well as what companies may be doing to try and help their employees.

To give a brief background on who the survey respondents were, 83% or 34 were on the general contractor side, 15% or 6 were on the subcontractor side, and 2% or 1 was considered other. Of those respondents, there were 4 project managers, 1 project manager/estimator, 3 vice presidents, 6 people from human resources, 1 national safety director, 1 director of construction, 2 operations managers, 1 superintendent, 2 project executives, 1 chief operating officer, 1 architect/engineer, and the rest of the respondents did not list their position. Out of those companies, 28 specified in commercial construction, 9 in heavy civil, and 4 in residential. Now this does give a wide variety in terms of position and type of construction taking place for our survey, but it only includes companies that responded with projects on the West Coast being that the company could still have projects going on around the nation.

The more interesting data collected starts by looking at 95% of the companies having a current alcohol policy while 5% of the companies do not. Following, it is interesting that question 6 asks “If the answer to the previous question was yes, how many times do you feel the policy is violated a year?” to which, approximately 20% of the responses said they feel that it happens more than 2 times. This is good to know because it impacts the idea and also backs the data found stating that the construction industry is the second highest rated industry for alcoholism.

Some of the respondents also found that money and when an employee is paid may contribute to the person’s problem with alcohol. This brings up an interesting point that can be dug into deeper in terms of how a company may be able to alter their pay cycle to possibly have an impact in someone’s alcohol habits. Another surprising result of the survey was finding out that three of the respondents actually said that they will refer an employee to a recovery program instead of firing them on the spot. This is something that some other companies addressed but many feel that it depends on the severity of the situation and what happened.

The final piece of information that is really key to a survey like this and the data trying to be collected was the question, “If an alcohol program were in place for your employees, would your company be willing to contribute financially?” 85% of the responses said that their company would be willing to contribute to a program to help their

employees recover, rather than just letting them go. This is good data for programs like Project Engage who are looking to expand to help the construction industry keep improving and bettering their program.

### *Barriers to Project Engage and Recovery Programs*

The following are lessons and hardships that Project Engage continues to work through in order to make their program more successful and better towards the construction industry, industries, and healthcare providers.

- 1) Funding for the program as well as patients going into the program.
  - a) This is because it takes a lot of resources to run the program and patients dealing with an addiction often need the help but don't have the funds to enroll in a program.
- 2) Implementation in different states
- 3) Advertising and Marketing

All of these are barriers to the success of the program, but are currently being looked at and experimented with in order to offer more programs around the United States as well as the programs being offered, having the best success with patients and their recovery.

## **Results and Discussion**

In the study of the Project Engage program being incorporated into the Bancroft Construction Company's culture and structure, founder Stephen Mockbee talks about the company's goals to keep its good employees and be able to present to insurance companies to be able to expand the program throughout the industry. The positives and negatives of the program are also incorporated into the learning curve for the company as they are one of the leaders in the industry testing out this program.

It is shown as well in the survey conducted in the industry that alcoholism is still correlated in terms of people having to get cited, fired, enrolled in a recovery program, and other options, and that this is still a current issue that is needing attention. I think a deeper level of research could be invested in exploring what it would look like for a construction company to contribute to a recovery program, what the financial impact is on a company when they have to take action against someone who has violated their alcohol policy, and more research into the amount of times an alcohol policy is violated.

Another hardship and a barrier for anyone continuing research into this field is the amount of privacy that must be maintained at a health facility and how that can be a barrier to collecting data. The people who run the healthcare facilities are bound by law in maintaining certain levels of secrecy and it can be hard to then speak to patients who have gone through the program and gather information from them.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, alcoholism is a serious issue in the construction industry because of the nature of how a construction project is executed, the materials and physical requirements of the job, and the number of moving parts. The Project Engage program is a good start to discovering the potential solutions companies can explore to help their employees who may have an alcohol program, as well as save money by keeping an employee with the company rather than firing

them. This is something that a small percentage of companies in the industry are utilizing and seems to be growing and becoming more of an industry norm. It is further interesting to reference the survey utilized in this study and realize the difference in companies and how company culture, dynamic, and leadership can impact how many problems a company may have surrounding this issue as well as how it is dealt with.

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