

# The winning horse

**A clue: it's the one who's ahead at the finish line**



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Simply put, a strong finish can differentiate you from your competition, leaving a positive and lasting impression in the minds of your customers.

**B**e honest. Had you ever heard of Giacomo before he beat 50:1 odds to win this year's Kentucky Derby? He will go down in history, and his value will be forever higher, because of a strong finish in the Derby.

What does that have to do with your company? Simply put, a strong finish can differentiate you from your competition, leaving a positive and lasting impression in the minds of your customers. In short, it can make you a winner.

Most builders and tradesmen take their professions very seriously. They want to be the best at what they do. Unfortunately, many do not see administration, documentation, project management, and demobilization as work that demands excellence as well. Yet your customer does, and he expects it from you.

## One scenario

Let's consider two businesses with equally talented tradesmen, each working on projects for Developer D. GC-A starts the job with a full crew, off to a rousing start. As field changes occur, GC-A makes mental notes, promising to update as-built documentation later. He focuses on communicating the changes to his crew. As the target completion date approaches, GC-A peels his crew off to begin work on other jobs. He leaves behind a skeleton crew to handle loose ends and final inspection items on this one.

Unfortunately, they don't have the skills to handle everything. GC-A tells his workers, since moved to other jobs, to go back over and finish those items when they get the chance. The tenant

can move in anyway; after all, it is "substantially complete." Some gear is left at the site, so it can be moved directly to the next job. The tenant shouldn't really mind.

When GC-A calls to arrange final payment, Developer D reminds him of the undelivered as-built documents, the incomplete final inspection items, and the equipment still sitting at the site. "The tenant is in, isn't he?" argues GC-A, believing he's done another excellent job. Developer D barely recalls the fast start, remembering only GC-A's failure to finish.

## The other scenario

GC-B, working on an unrelated project for Developer D, shows up on the scheduled start date ready to begin. Every member of the relatively small crew seems to understand the plans, have needed supplies and know exactly what to do. As field changes occur, GC-B discusses them with the crew while he updates his records. He knows that field changes often cause schedule delays, cost overruns and confusion. To avoid those problems, he has developed a real-time method of tracking changes, including the reason and the anticipated resource and time impact, which updates as-built documentation as work is completed.

As the project progresses, the crew grows. GC-B's experience has shown that the various trades working together as a job nears completion can prevent and resolve problems in cooperation much better than they can working sequentially. As issues are identified, the appropriate experts are there to address them.

When the job is complete, all gear is removed from the site. The job is complete — really complete — before the tenant moves in. The as-built drawings are complete when the project is complete, not weeks or months later.

GC-B finishes strong. He has done what he said he would do, when he said he would do it. His customer does not have to nag, beg, or threaten to get what he bought.

## Next time out

Which GC do you think Developer D will use next time? Whichever one is cheaper, you say? 1) Don't count on it, and 2) there is no reason to believe GC-B has higher costs. A well-run company usually has lower costs than those of its ineffective competitors. And don't think that the developer doesn't recognize the cost he incurs in dealing with a supplier like GC-A.

Understand what your customer values. Understand what you have agreed to deliver. Understand the reputation you are building through the footprints you leave behind.

The winner of any race always comes from among those who finish. Not from among those who come close to finishing but then move on to a different race. From among those who finish, and finish strong. You have to finish to win. **BXM**

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