LiFT Level 1 Project Management Program

Program Overview

The MCAKC LiFT Level 2 Project Management Program helps experienced project managers build on existing knowledge and develop skills that are difficult to gain through day-to-day project experience alone.

Taught by industry experts, participants learn how to build and lead project teams, manage contracts and risk, negotiate effectively, navigate change orders, avoid claims, improve financial performance, leverage technology, and successfully deliver projects from planning through closeout.

Through ten weekly seminars, participants gain practical tools and techniques they can immediately apply to improve project performance, profitability, leadership effectiveness, and long-term career success.

Program Benefits

- Build a strong foundation in the principles and practices of successful project management.
- Connect with project management professionals from mechanical contracting firms across Kansas City.
- Gain practical tools and techniques that can be applied immediately on the job.
- Improve communication, organization, time management, and decision-making skills.
- Develop the confidence to take on greater project responsibilities and support long-term career growth.

Who Should Attend?

Individuals with 0–2 years of project management experience, including project managers, project engineers, project coordinators, estimators, administrative professionals, and field personnel transitioning into project management roles who are looking to build a strong foundation in mechanical construction project management.

Program Details

Program Format: Ten weekly seminars
Schedule: September – December 2027

CEUs: 4.5

Tuition

No charge for employees of MCAKC Member Contractors signatory to Local 8 or Local 533.
$1,000 for non-member contractors signatory to Local 8 or Local 533
$1,500 for Associate Members

Location:

MCAKC Knowledge Center
10955 Lowell Avenue, 10th Floor
Overland Park, KS 66210

Questions?

learn@mcakc.org | 913-948-9200

Mechanical Blueprint Reading and Estimating

Whether you work in the field or the office, the ability to read construction drawings is a fundamental skill for successful project management. This seminar introduces participants to mechanical blueprint reading while demonstrating how architectural, structural, electrical, civil, and landscape drawings impact mechanical work. Participants will learn how to identify scope gaps, locate critical project information, and recognize potential risks before they become costly issues.

Participants will also learn the fundamentals of preparing an accurate mechanical estimate, including quantity take-offs (QTOs), the MCAA Labor Estimating Manual (LEM), basic assumptions, productivity factors, and estimating strategies. Through hands-on exercises and a mock bid, attendees will gain practical experience that supports estimating, change order pricing, and profitable project management.

Instructor



Troy Aichele has more than 30 years of experience in commercial mechanical contracting, with expertise spanning projects from hospitals and high-rise buildings to industrial facilities. Through Aichele & Associates, LLC, he delivers mechanical construction training nationwide on project management, estimating, labor forecasting, contracts, and change order management. A past MCAA Board member and former Chair of the Career Development Committee, Troy is a nationally recognized instructor known for providing practical, real-world training that professionals can immediately apply on the job.

Business Negotiations

During this seminar, you will learn how to develop and effectively plan a strategy for any negotiation; improve persuasion skills; and learn tools, techniques and practical strategies for negotiation success. Compromise is a no-win situation for either party in a negotiation yet is the most commonly used methodology. We will utilize a mock change order negotiation in order to prove the theory of collaboration versus confrontation.

Upon completion of this seminar, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the emotional challenges that prevent or hinder successful negotiations
- Outline the steps necessary to achieve collaborative outcomes
- Define the communication skills necessary to de-escalation conflict to achieve a buildable space
- Display the difference between compromise and collaboration



Shaabini Alford is a Director at Maxim Consulting Group with more than 20 years of experience in construction operations, project management, and organizational leadership. She specializes in improving project performance through process optimization, risk mitigation, contract management, procurement, and strategic planning. Known for her expertise in jobsite crisis management, complex contract negotiations, and multi-million-dollar change order settlements, Shaabini helps construction organizations strengthen project execution, improve team performance, and drive profitable outcomes. She currently serves on the MCAA Board of Directors and the MCAA Project Management Education Committee and is a co-founder of WiOPS (Women in Construction Operations), demonstrating her commitment to developing future industry leaders.

Contract Management: Mitigating Risk

Upon completion of this seminar, participants will be able to:

- Identify and interpret key contract clauses that impact the project.
- Review & analyze a contract and identify when to escalate concerns & risks to management.
- Explain how specific contract clauses can impact risks, and how to mitigate risks regarding fundamental contract language.
- Apply the contract checklist to effectively manage projects.

Instructor



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Improving Performance Through Labor Relations

At the end of this seminar, you will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of the local Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA).
- Identify the key elements of the MCAKC Collective Bargaining Agreement and apply them to real project situations.
- Develop strong relationships with project foremen that result in effective labor productivity.

Instructors



Stacy Zerr, P.E., is Executive Director of the Mechanical Contractors Association of Kansas City (MCAKC) and has nearly 30 years of experience in the mechanical contracting industry. Her background includes leadership roles with contractors, industry associations, and labor-management initiatives, giving her a broad perspective on contractor operations, workforce development, and labor relations. Stacy is a past Chair of MCAA's Innovative Technologies Committee, a former instructor for MCAA's Institute for Project Management (IPM), and a frequent industry speaker.

Project Managers Impact on Financial Outcomes

At the end of this seminar, you will be able to:

- Define percent of completion accounting.
- Outline the key components of financial statements.
- Describe overbilling and underbilling and the impact of each to your project and to the business.
- Explain WIP and what each column represents.
- Identify how WIP can affect year end profits.
- Analyze the difference between gross profit margin and mark up percentage

Instructor
David Ashcraft is the Founder and President of Advantage Learning Systems, where he specializes in developing and delivering customized business and financial training programs. With more than 15 years of experience designing training for associations, corporations, financial institutions, and industry groups, David is known for transforming complex business and financial concepts into engaging, practical learning experiences.



His energetic teaching style and ability to make technical topics easy to understand have made him a sought-after speaker and instructor throughout North America.

Understanding Mechanical Systems

This seminar is designed for entry-level project managers to gain essential knowledge of both HVAC and plumbing systems. Participants will learn how these critical building systems work together to provide a healthy, comfortable, and productive environment for occupants. Participants will gain valuable insights into how these systems integrate within building design and construction processes.
Through a blend of theoretical instruction and hands-on activities, attendees will explore various mechanical and plumbing systems, equipment, and common materials used in construction. The seminar emphasizes practical knowledge, including plan and specification review, equipment identification, and the vital role of the commissioning process throughout construction projects for both system types.

Instructor
Brad Perkins, P.E., is a Senior Lecturer in Iowa State University's Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering. A graduate of Iowa State's Construction Engineering program, Brad joined the faculty in 2005 after working as a design engineer. He serves as faculty advisor to Iowa State's Mechanical Contractors Association student chapter and has been recognized for his contributions to engineering education, including receiving MCAA's Educator of the Year Award in 2018.



Crew Level Production Planning & Execution

Case studies dispel common myths and pitfalls of typical field productivity approaches. Case studies illustrate effective Crew Level Production Planning techniques, including visual batching of work, input worksheets, resource (manpower) loaded scheduling, and labor cost analysis, simple daily productivity tracking and forecasting, and effective, measurable improvement strategies.

Following this course, participants will be able to:

- Clearly and simply define and measure productivity.
- See first-hand case studies and real examples of planning tools designed to set targets and manage labor productivity for superior results.

Instructor



Stephane McShane is a Director with Maxim Consulting Group and one of the construction industry's leading consultants, trainers, and facilitators. With more than 30 years of experience in construction operations, project management, leadership development, and organizational performance, she works with contractors throughout North America to improve profitability, productivity, and business performance.

Beginning her career as an apprentice in the electrical construction industry and advancing into executive leadership roles, Stephane brings practical field and management experience to every engagement. She is a nationally recognized speaker, coach, author, and industry educator who specializes in project execution, financial performance, leadership development, business processes, and workforce development. Her practical, results-focused approach helps contractors implement strategies that drive measurable and sustainable improvement.

Work Planning and Scheduling

Successful project execution begins with effective planning. This seminar provides project managers with practical planning and scheduling tools that improve productivity, reduce risk, and help teams stay ahead of project challenges. Participants will learn how proactive planning leads to better project outcomes and how consistent planning practices support successful field execution.
Through discussion, real-world examples, and hands-on exercises, participants will explore the key planning processes used throughout the project lifecycle, including pre-job planning, short-interval planning, daily huddles, exit strategies, and lessons learned. Working through a mock project, attendees will develop and share short-interval schedules while gaining practical techniques they can immediately apply to improve project planning and team performance.

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

- Explain the impact of effective planning on productivity and project success.
- Identify common obstacles to successful planning and strategies to overcome them.
- Distinguish between proactive and reactive project management approaches.
- Apply key planning tools, including pre-job planning, short-interval planning, daily huddles, exit strategies, and lessons learned.
- Develop practical planning strategies that improve communication, coordination, and project execution.

Instructor



Dr. Tim Wentz is Professor Emeritus of Construction Management at the University of Nebraska and a nationally recognized educator, speaker, and consultant in the mechanical contracting industry. Prior to entering academia, Tim worked in his family's mechanical contracting business, where he developed expertise in design-build contracting, estimating, and project management on a wide range of commercial construction projects.

A licensed Professional Engineer, Master Heating Contractor, and Master Plumbing Contractor, Tim is also a LEED Accredited Professional and ASHRAE High-Performance Building Design Professional. Throughout his career, he has taught and consulted for mechanical contractor associations across North America and has received numerous industry honors, including multiple MCAA Educator of the Year awards and MCAA's Distinguished Service Award, the association's highest recognition.

Essentials of Project Documentation

Upon completion of this seminar, participants will be able to:

- Explain the documentation process from a project life cycle perspective.
- Identify and use key project documents to ensure the success of a project.
- Outline best practices for managing critical documents throughout a project and the impact on schedules and budgets.

Instructor:



Chris Champagne, PE, LEED AP, is an Operations Manager and Team Leader with P1 Group and has more than 30 years of experience in mechanical construction. Throughout his career, he has held leadership roles in estimating, project management, and operations, helping deliver complex commercial and industrial projects.

A licensed Professional Engineer and LEED Accredited Professional, Chris brings practical, real-world insight into project planning, change management, team leadership, and project execution.

Time Management Strategies for Successful Project Managers

Come discover the key concepts of time management and how to utilize a range of techniques to measure time, develop work structures for effective time management, and develop a repeatable process that is ideal for your needs. The topics that we will cover in this session include:

- The Meaning of Time Management
- Developing Repeatable Patterns
- Structuring for Better Time Management
- Tools & Techniques (ex: Focused Workflow, Eisenhower Matrix, Rag Analysis)

Instructor



Vish Reddi began his engineering career in 2004 as a Tier 1 supplier to the automotive industry. After earning his master's degree from the University of Wisconsin, he joined Jacobs Engineering in 2006, where he led manufacturing facility expansions and cGMP modernization projects for clients including Kellogg's, Conagra Brands, Medtronic, Target, and Novartis. His work focused on delivering complex projects on schedule and within budget while leading multidisciplinary teams. Today, Vish is an Associate Professor of Practice in the Construction Management Program at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and also leads a consulting firm based in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Creating a Safe Jobsite

This seminar introduces new project managers to the fundamentals of construction site safety management. Participants will learn key safety responsibilities, including reviewing Certificates of Insurance (COIs), developing Site-Specific Safety Plans (SSPs), responding to job site incidents, and understanding the impact of Experience Modification Rate (EMR). The seminar emphasizes practical strategies for improving job site safety, reducing risk, maintaining regulatory compliance, and minimizing project costs.

Upon completion, participants will be able to:

- Identify project manager responsibilities for job site safety and compliance.

- Verify Certificates of Insurance (COIs) for subcontractors and vendors.
- Develop and implement a Site-Specific Safety Plan (SSP).
- Respond appropriately to job site accidents, including documentation and stakeholder coordination.
- Explain how safety performance affects Experience Modification Rate (EMR) and insurance costs.
- Conduct job site safety audits to identify and mitigate hazards.
- Communicate effectively with project teams to promote and enforce safety standards.

Instructor



Robert Atkinson, CSP, ASP, is Safety Director at Cerris Systems, where he leads safety programs for complex construction projects across the healthcare, industrial, mission-critical, entertainment, and wastewater sectors. A nationally recognized safety leader, Robert has helped earn multiple AGC National and Regional Safety Excellence Awards and has extensive experience with OCIP/CCIP programs, regulatory compliance, and safety culture development. With a background in construction science and industrial technology, he combines technical expertise with practical leadership to help teams deliver projects safely and successfully.