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Managing safety and health for small business owners and contractors

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My report will aim to provide insight into the question of workplace safety in small construction businesses, most specifically concerning how small construction operations are affected by the ever present fear and reality of accidents in their day-to-day functions. Existing research indicates that accidents contribute greatly to the flourishing and the success of small businesses. This harrowing reality creates not only suffering for the victims and their loved ones, but can spell bankruptcy and dissolution for those businesses unfortunate enough to be affected. Due to the hectic deadlines that workers need to meet in order to carry out contracts, safety is often sacrificed for the sake of faster completion. Now, while it may seem highly impractical and naive to suggest that work be completed at a pace that is comfortable and safe for all parties involved, there are nevertheless certain practices that can be implemented to ensure that accidents are minimized to the greatest extent possible. This is what I will effectively be looking into: A set of best practices that can help smaller establishments and contractors economically sustainable levels of operational performance while minimizing more hazardous behaviors that can make workers more susceptible to a variety of accidents, injuries and fatalities. In order to achieve this goal, I will need to first and foremost analyze the needs, capabilities and limitations of small contractors versus their larger competitors to identify key areas where improvements can be realistically made. After having done this groundwork, I will then possess enough insight to make those recommendations that are not only beneficial but seem economically and practically implementable. Obviously a qualitative analysis can only get you so far in providing a compelling argument so, where possible, I will opt to use data and previous research in documenting and justifying my recommendation. In addition to this, a key methodological tool that will help me tremendously in this respect will be some local small business owners who have the kind of experience and intuition that is often lost in more objective and larger-scale studies. I will be getting in contact with them and conducting informational interviews to understand some of the behavioral and empirical reasoning behind certain workplace practices and how they may either contribute to or decrease safety in their workplaces. This approach will allow the author for both a smaller scale, more bottom-up perspective to the issue and larger scale, top down academic insights that will allow drawing more meaningful and more practicable conclusions. Ultimately a study of this kind can never be truly comprehensive as technologies and best practices are changing all the time, but it is my wish that this work produces a good, general template for small contractors and future business owners to understand not only the importance of mitigating safety concerns in their workplaces, but also to be able to ask the right questions when it comes to how their own work or the work of their colleagues is being carried out.

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