

BEC: Not Just Lunch

By [Debra Levy](#) on March 5th, 2019

For me, the best part of the Building Envelope Contractors (BEC) Conference yesterday was lunch. That's right, lunch—but not for the obvious reasons.

No, the food wasn't the reason why I enjoyed lunch so much, though Chinese was rather an inspired choice. And it wasn't the break from the seminars, because most of them were excellent. It was what happened at lunch that made it my favorite part. Please bear with me while I explain.

The conference, which began Sunday evening and runs through Tuesday afternoon at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, brought together about 600 contractors who work on the building façade. It was one of the Glass Association of North America's (GANA) signature events, and now that GANA has merged with the National Glass Association (NGA), the event attracted some new NGA members like Mario and Irene Lopez of [M.I. Glass Inc.](#) in Houston to attend. The event offered a lot for owners like the Lopez's to learn. Which brings me to lunch.

In front me in the line were two gentlemen whose names I did not catch because I didn't want to disturb them (and their badges covered by plates full of Soba noodles) who were speaking in a very excited voice.

"I think we should do it, we have to do it," said one. "We need to start regular project meetings, nothing long, but to go over some of the things they were talking about," said the first. "Yes, yes," said the second, "let's put together a blanket agenda that we can adapt each time."

The excitement and enthusiasm about what they had learned was infectious and they didn't even stop for lunch, so to speak.

Off I went feeling incredibly buoyed by their desire to grow and learn. Then it got even better.

"Do you mind if I sit here?" I asked at a random table with a few open seats. "Not at all," answered one of the gentlemen. "We are seven but we have room." Not many companies send seven people and when they do, it is usually because they are extremely large or industry suppliers. But that was not the case here.

The team from [Aragon Construction](#) of Monclair, Calif., was seven strong. President Joe Aragon brought them all, including three project managers, to the conference. And there they were, at lunch discussing what they had learned, again with the same type of enthusiasm I'd heard on the buffet line.

There are really only two things in life you can never lose and two things in life you can always use: your education and your experience. The BEC Conference reminded me how getting that education from others' experiences brings some of the most fertile education you can find.

Two of the most helpful seminars had been held just before that midday meal when Jim Stathopolous of Ajay Glass, Nataline Lomedico of Giroux Glass, Troy Johnson of Harmon and Tony Birchler of Zahner participated in a panel called "Creating a Winning Strategy." The panelists addressed a wide variety of methods necessary to create a winning strategy and culture for your business.

Chief among them was the ability to say "no."

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The participants all agreed that passing on a certain job or saying “no” to a particular customer is among the most difficult things you will do as a contract glazier, yet it’s a necessity. Panelists said while it’s hard to walk away, especially when you are not busy, it’s vital you’re able to do so.”



Panelists during the BEC Conference discussed creating a winning strategy for contract glaziers.

The most difficult types of jobs to pass on, they all agreed, are the ones with marginal return that come at a time when a glazing contractor has capacity. “Lot’s of time we think we should take it because it keeps guys busy when they wouldn’t be otherwise,” said one. “But taking that job means you may have to pass on a good one later on because you no longer have the manpower,” reminding the audience that any such decision is a gamble on the future.

This session was followed by one titled To DIY or Not: Advancing and Improving Glazing Project Management which included contract glaziers Brian Filipiak of Alliance Glazing and Paul Robinson of Pioneer Glazing as well as an academician, Dr. Neil Opfer of the Nevada Las Vegas School of Construction Management. They all tried to provide suggestions on where to find qualified employees.

Internships, apprenticeships, job fairs and the construction programs at a number of colleges and universities were dissected, with the positives and negatives of each explored.

The two discussions left attendees hungry for more discussion, but alas, it was time for lunch.



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