

A person wearing a green and blue plaid shirt is sitting at a desk, working on architectural blueprints. Their left hand is holding a black smartphone, and their right hand is holding a red and black pen, pointing at a section of the blueprint. The blueprints are spread out on the desk, showing various architectural drawings and text. The background is slightly blurred, showing more blueprints and a ruler.

How to Hire a Great Estimator



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Introduction

Why you need a hiring process

Estimators play a critical role in the construction industry as their job requires them to bid and win construction projects and ensure a healthy profit margin for their businesses. Analyzing everything from labor, material, and time mean estimators must address issues through the entire construction process.

With the unemployment rate the lowest it's been since 1969 and construction backlogs averaging nearly nine months, it's not surprising the demand for estimators is rising along with salaries. Indeed.com ranked construction estimator as No. 12 on its Top 25 Jobs List for 2018 and as No 19 in 2019. Base salaries, they said, rose nearly 9% from 2018 to 2019.

If your construction business is struggling to find great estimators, you're not alone. According to an Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) report, 78% of 1,300 U.S. contractors surveyed are having a hard time filling construction positions and rank worker shortages as their No. 1 worry.

No doubt, the competition for great estimators is getting heated. No matter the size of your construction business or trade, odds are you will need a hiring strategy when it comes to attracting, finding, and retaining the right estimating talent. We hope this step-by-step guide will deliver the in-depth, real-world hiring best practices you need to land your next great estimator.



2 Prepare Your Process

Create a checklist for hiring success

If your company has not yet compiled a list of hiring procedures, this is a great opportunity to get started. Attracting and retaining talent requires you to have a process in place. This guide will help you develop and document a hiring Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to use today and in the future.

Having a process for your company's routine tasks is essential because it helps employees understand their responsibilities and establishes best practices that can lessen the burden on management for constant supervision or intervention. SOPs are your company's master guides for everything from the bid process, to hiring guidelines, onboarding, new

employee orientation, safety training, operations activities, accounting, and expense reporting.

Hiring starts with the requisition

Typically, the requisition is initiated by the hiring department's manager and approved by the division's highest executive before forwarding to the human resources (HR) department. An approved requisition would need to indicate the **position title, hours/ shifts, reason for opening, job responsibilities, and necessary qualifications**. But, before you actively look for a candidate, you want to ensure you've gotten the candidate profile just right and that takes some focus and thought.



3 Define Your Candidate

List relevant attributes and optimal skills required

A common mistake construction executives make is recruiting team members simply because they look the part. In the long run, it doesn't matter if, on paper, someone's resume and "image" look perfect. You want people who can do the job and will stick around awhile. The junior estimator from a high profile skyscraper contracting company may look the part, but they might get bored at a shop that does one-month duration drywall projects and decide to jump ship in six months. No one wants to start the hiring process all over again.

As you are determining the candidate profile, think about what the desired qualifications are to improve your

estimating practice and which type of personality will best fit your organization's culture. Consider keeping the profile broad. Don't overlook qualified, out-of-work estimators and remember there are millennial newcomers that have recently graduated from construction management programs. Both groups have their advantages and disadvantages you can consider.

Seniority or Youth?

Older workers rank high on commitment to quality, attendance, and punctuality with a total number of sick days lower than any other age group. Millennials tend to be more tech-savvy, willing to learn new things, and be content with a lower wage initially.

3 Common Skills Required for Estimators

1. Field experience
2. Ability to conceptualize
3. Detail-oriented and organized

4 Write the Job Posting

Attract top talent with culture and benefits

Companies with the best employees are the companies that win. As the hiring manager, it's easy to think that the balance of power is on your side and candidates will flock to apply. But in reality, the job posting must sell your position and organization to attract the best talent. A dispassionate list of job requirements comes off as inconsiderate compared to a job opportunity that feels exciting and is incentivized.

Below is a list of attractive benefits and perks. Which of these applies to your company and help sell the position?

- ☐ **Company culture**
- ☐ **Current company growth/surge**
- ☐ **Medical coverage**
- ☐ **Disability and life Insurance**
- ☐ **401k and retirement planning**
- ☐ **Vacation policy**
- ☐ **Flexible hours**
- ☐ **Remote work options**
- ☐ **Great location**
- ☐ **Attractive offices (include pictures on your website)**

Cost estimators should be proficient in:

- Accounting
- Computer-aided design (CAD)
- Customer relationship management (CRM)
- Database reporting
- Document Management
- Enterprise resource planning (ERP)
- Project management
- Spreadsheets
- Estimating

Source: Occupational Information Network (O*Net)



5 Find the Candidates

Use career and social media sites to find talent

Projections Central reports more than 24,000 cost estimator job openings in the U.S. By 2026, they predict a need for 240,800 estimators, an increase of 10% over the current number.


To attract a wide range of candidates, online job listing websites are an obvious choice that immediately comes to mind, such as Monster.com and Careerbuilder.com. But don't forget about construction-specific


sites such as iHireConstruction and professional social communities like LinkedIn. Even your company website should have a Careers page where the job can be listed.


After posting the job in applicable channels, don't forget to promote it. Use your social media accounts as opportunities to share the posting with your followers.


Top job websites


Choose a limited number to start posting to and expand as needed.


 [monster.com](https://www.monster.com)


 [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)


 [careerbuilder.com](https://www.careerbuilder.com)

 [ihireconstruction.com](https://www.ihireconstruction.com)


 [constructionjobs.com](https://www.constructionjobs.com)

 [constructionjobforce.com](https://www.constructionjobforce.com)

 [ziprecruiter.com](https://www.ziprecruiter.com)

 [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com)

 [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)

 [simplyhired.com](https://www.simplyhired.com)

Don't forget about posting the job to these valuable channels.



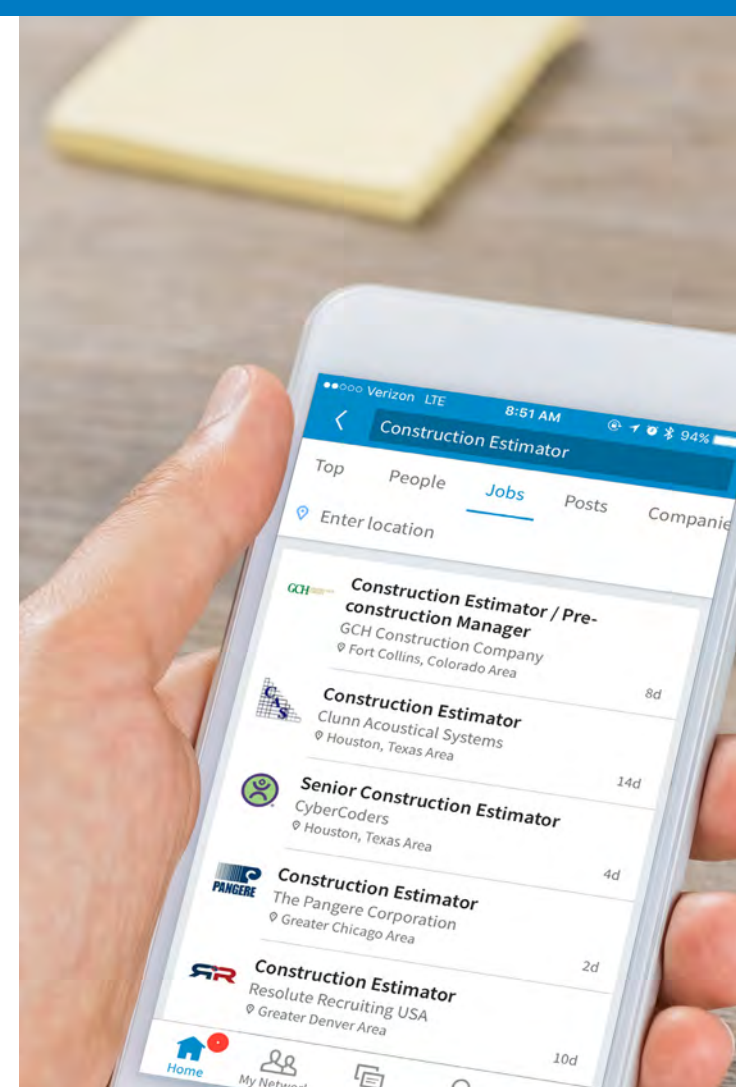
company
website



social
media



industry
network



6 Prepare the Interview

Structure the interview to find the best fit

Before the first interview, write a list of questions to ask the candidates. The interview is an opportunity to determine two key factors: are they qualified for the position, and are they the right fit for your organization's culture?

Arguably, the second factor is more important than the first. Some skills can be taught, but a new candidate's ability to complement current employees can impact team morale and desired productivity outcomes.

Setting the stage

In addition to the questions you'll ask, it's important to prepare the environment for the interview. Interviews can be stressful for both participants which lower the effectiveness of the meeting. So, create a space that's quiet, not too hot or cold, private but not enclosed (you should have a view, otherwise it can feel confining), and with comfortable seating. Have everything you'll need for the interview ready (example: floor plans) in that room to avoid leaving the candidate alone and feeling awkward.

Remote interviews

Sometimes a physical, sit-down interview isn't possible for candidates. They may live far away, or already be in a job. A phone or Skype call gives you the ability to reach candidates that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Sizing up job prospects

OK, you've done your homework and today's the big day. You are interviewing candidates and must weigh job-specific skills against soft skills and personality. Arriving at the interview with your questions in hand can be a big time saver. Here are a few sample questions on both sides of the spectrum to consider:

Technical questions to ask

- ❓ Walk me through your estimating process, how do you do takeoff?
- ❓ What do you think are the most important factors that affect the overall costs of a project?
- ❓ Which metrics do you use most in your estimates?
- ❓ What software tools are you experienced in and require in your work?
- ❓ How do you communicate with field staff to make sure your productivity rates are current?

Personality questions to ask

- ❓ What's a great workday for you?
- ❓ Tell me about a time you didn't know how to do something.
- ❓ What is teamwork for you?
- ❓ What types of personalities do you find most challenging to work with?
- ❓ What are you passionate about?

To Test or Not to Test?

Some HR experts suggest using a simple estimating test to provide insights into a job candidate's technique. A test of financial calculations, like cost to complete or basic change-order summaries, can showcase a candidate's capabilities.

With a test, you would be able to clearly see if a job candidate is a junior or senior estimator.

7 Extend an Offer

Set the right tone and seal the deal

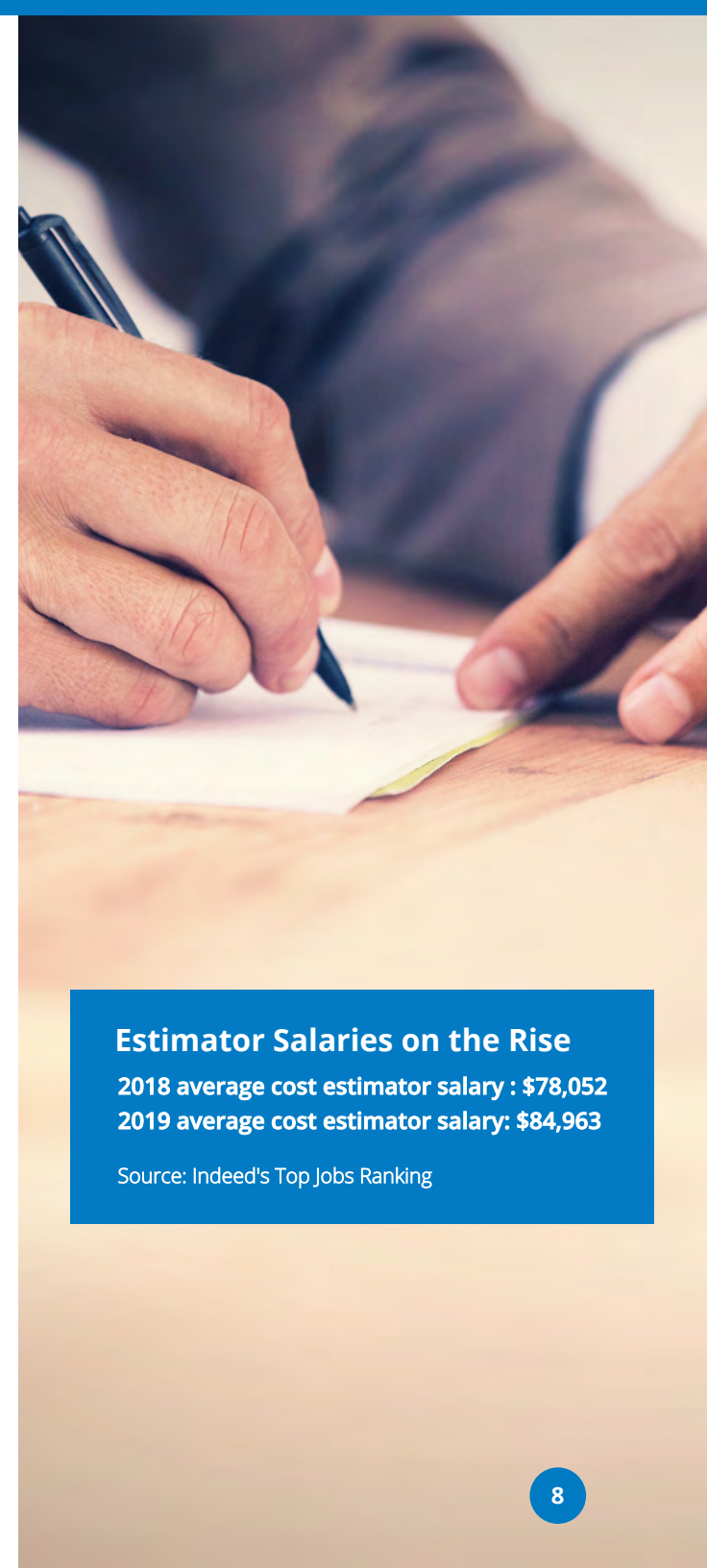
Now that the interviews are done, it's time to move into consideration mode. Hopefully, you've found a candidate that you're excited to extend an offer to. Now is the time to show them how much you want them. Draft a dated offer letter with position title, salary, benefits, start date, and all other pertinent details (e.g. relocation assistance, offer expiration deadline, etc.) Congratulate the candidate when you extend the offer and be sure to communicate what motivated your decision.

Give the candidate time to consider the offer and be ready to negotiate any terms (e.g. start date, salary, paid time off, etc.) Upon delivering

the offer letter, there may be terms the candidate wants to negotiate. It's best to know ahead of time what items are negotiable in order to work out a win-win offer. Keep in mind, your first-choice candidate might reject the offer so be ready to move on to the next best alternative.

Prepare the way

If a candidate accepts an offer, begin the process of onboarding by receiving the signed offer letter, agreeing on a start date, and submitting internal documentation to your systems of record. You may also need additional requisitions to get their office space computer, and permissions set up to access software they'll need to do their job.



Estimator Salaries on the Rise

2018 average cost estimator salary : \$78,052

2019 average cost estimator salary: \$84,963

Source: Indeed's Top Jobs Ranking

8 Onboard Your Estimator

Get started on the path to success

Onboarding is about setting up your estimator for immediate success and is another process that should be in your company's SOP. Work with HR to cover all the standard hiring onboarding steps that exist outside of the estimating department, such as insurance coverage selection and paperwork, payroll and direct deposit, and ID badge and office access. After meeting with the HR manager, the estimator will be ready to work with you for onboarding in the estimating department.

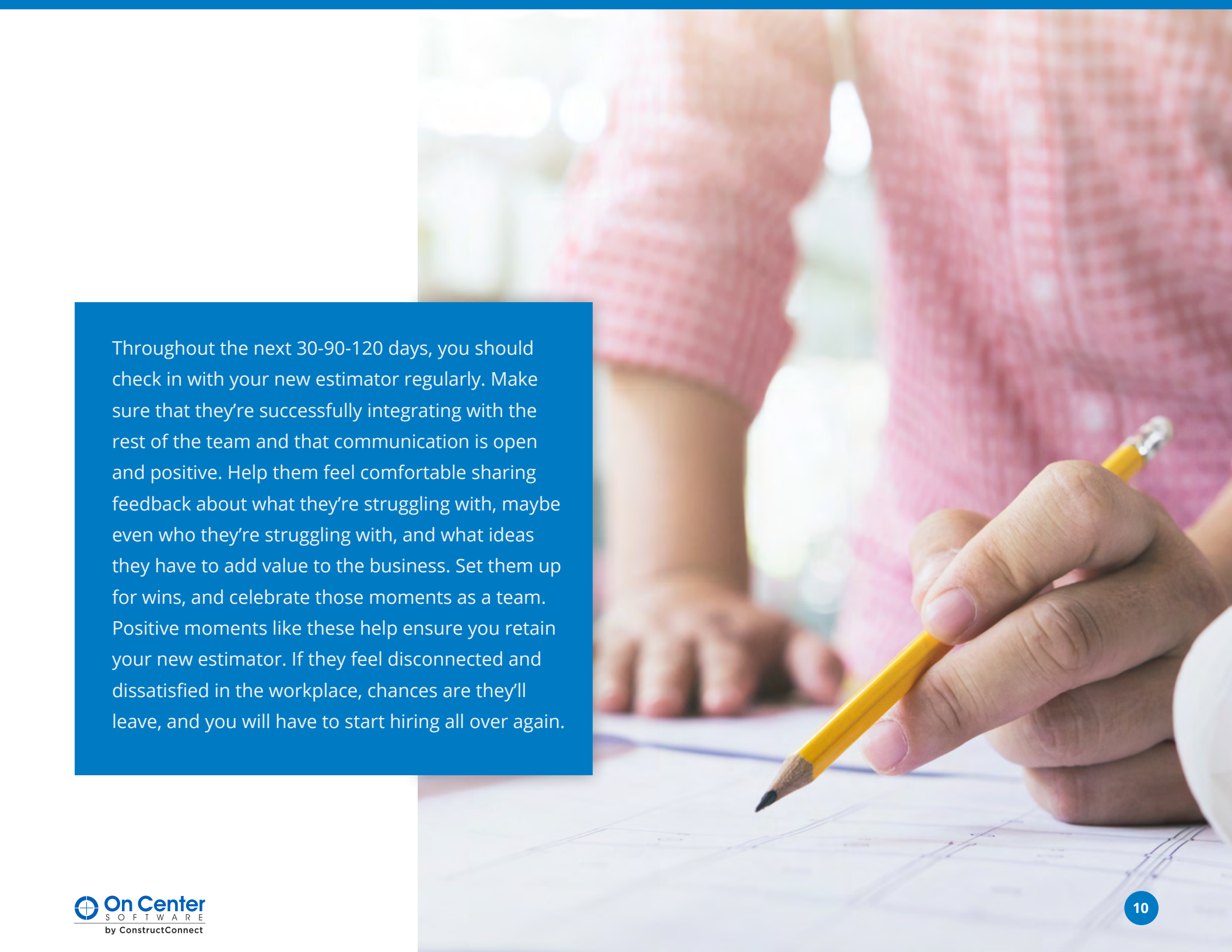
Welcome the new estimator to the team with proper introductions. Send an email to the team and stakeholders to inform them of the

new hire. The email should introduce the estimator, give a brief summary of his/her background, qualifications, and highlight their area of focus and responsibilities for the organization moving forward. Encourage the team to provide support and make the new hire feel welcome.

You likely have a number of tools and systems in the office that the estimator will need to perform their job such as email, an ERP system, and estimating software like On-Screen Takeoff® and Quick Bid®. Give the estimator a list of links and log-in information and make sure they know who they can contact or what training and support resources exist to help them get up to speed.

Don't forget about training

A 2014 column published by a prominent online news website cites that companies that invest at least \$1,500 annually in training on each employee have an average of 24 percent higher profit margins than businesses spending less on training. There's a correlation between training and your bottom line.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a yellow pencil, poised to draw on a set of architectural blueprints. The person is wearing a red and white plaid shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the person and the workspace. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting an indoor setting with large windows.

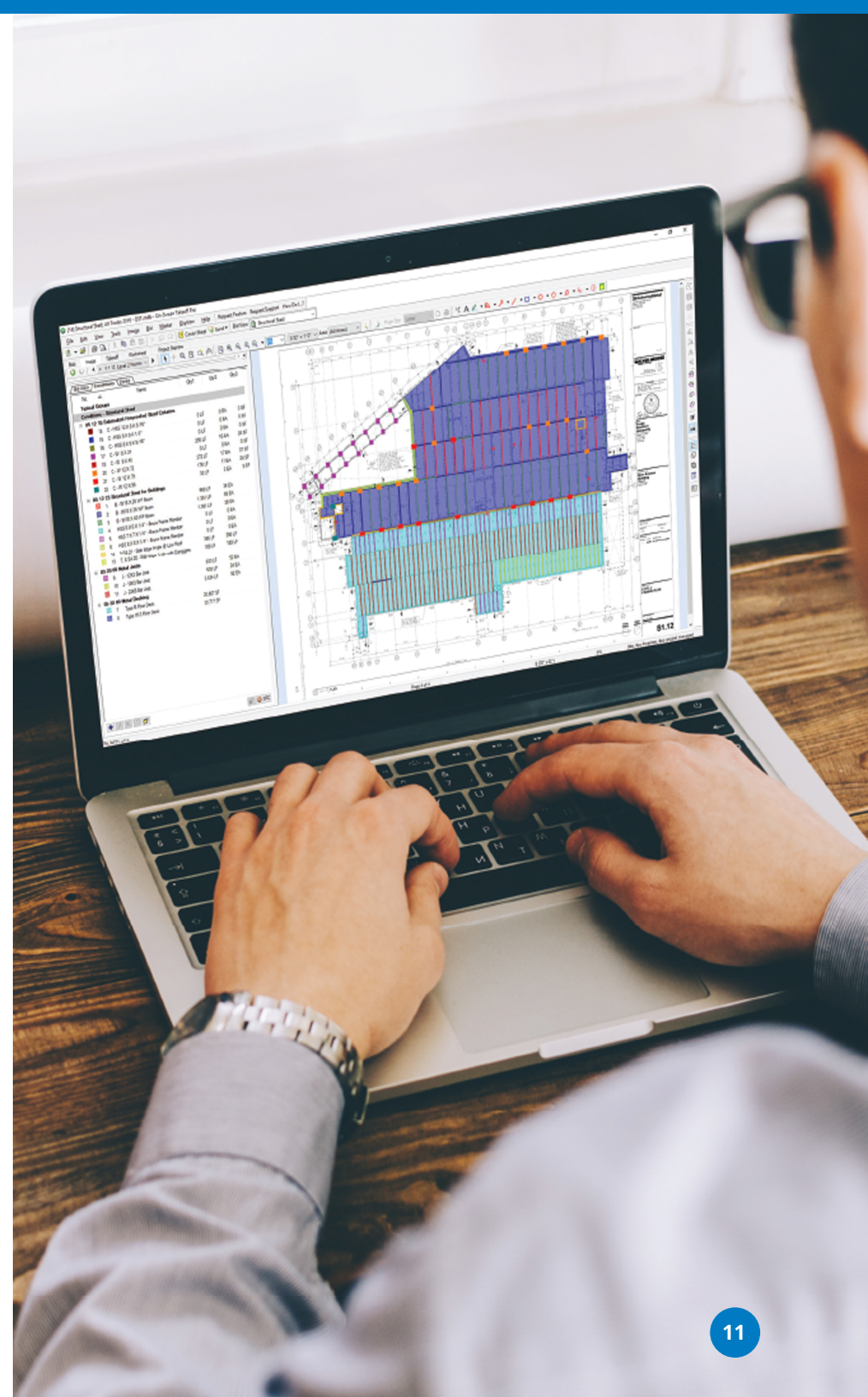
Throughout the next 30-90-120 days, you should check in with your new estimator regularly. Make sure that they're successfully integrating with the rest of the team and that communication is open and positive. Help them feel comfortable sharing feedback about what they're struggling with, maybe even who they're struggling with, and what ideas they have to add value to the business. Set them up for wins, and celebrate those moments as a team. Positive moments like these help ensure you retain your new estimator. If they feel disconnected and dissatisfied in the workplace, chances are they'll leave, and you will have to start hiring all over again.

About On Center Software by ConstructConnect

For 30 years, On Center Software by ConstructConnect has been helping estimators **reduce costs**, **save time**, and **improve accuracy** to win more profitable bids.

For more information or to request a demo, contact us:

1-866-386-5177



More Free Resources

This guide is just one of the many great estimator resources provided by On Center Software by ConstructConnect.

Download **Is Takeoff Dead?** White Paper



Is Takeoff Dead?

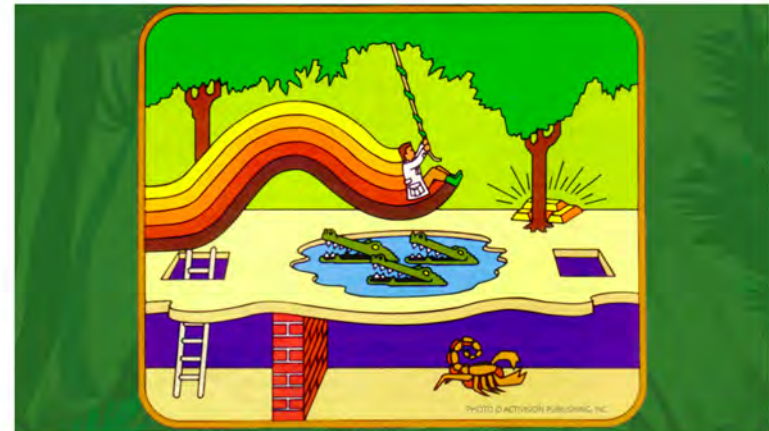
By Allen L. Crowley, Jr., FAIC

DOWNLOAD

Separate the noise from reality on the evolution of BIM. Don't miss this must-read white paper on the future of estimating.

<https://www.oncenter.com/forms/is-takeoff-dead>

Download **Overcoming the Pitfalls of Estimating** White Paper



Overcoming the Pitfalls of Estimating

DOWNLOAD

Estimators may end up risking accuracy as they rush to accelerate the bid process and win more construction projects. Check out our white paper on winning strategies.

<https://www.oncenter.com/forms/overcoming-the-pitfalls-of-estimating>