

Chapter 8: Future-Proof Your Partnerships

Embedding Longevity, Relevance, and Leadership Into Workforce Engagement

Introduction: Tools to Move from Planning to Action

The construction industry is evolving, and so are the expectations around workforce partnerships. As retirements rise, younger generations enter the trades with new values while schools seek deeper collaboration with the business community. The question is no longer whether you should partner; it's about how you should lead in the partnership process.

This chapter is not about starting from scratch. It is about making sure your partnership work grows and lasts and that it scales and truly becomes part of how your company operates. It is not just a side project or one person's passion. It is an essential component of your business strategy, goals, and objectives.

In this chapter you will find ways here to:

- Embed partnerships across your organization's departments.
- Avoid “tower of knowledge” traps by planning for leadership transitions.
- Engage Gen Z and Gen Alpha in authentic, meaningful ways.
- Move from reactive participation to long-term workforce development leadership.

These aren't complex systems, but they are specific tactics that build resilience, relevance, and momentum. If Chapter 6 was about clearing roadblocks, this chapter is about laying the foundation for what comes next.





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Quadrant 4 in Action: Sustain and Scale

Field Insight

“We try to look at every interaction as a mentorship moment. It doesn’t have to be a big program. Sometimes it’s just showing up and listening to a student, asking questions, or sharing a mistake you made and what you learned from it.”

— Myles Cardenas, Land Planning and Development Manager, Taylor Morrison

- **Recurring Engagement**

Maintain open lines of communication with school and district partners through regular check-ins, shared planning tools, and year-over-year commitments. Build trust through consistency.

- **Broadening Company Involvement**

Expand your company’s participation beyond one champion. Engage operations teams, field supervisors, estimators, marketers, and executive leadership so the partnership becomes part of your culture — not dependent on one individual.

► **Pro Tip:** If the partnership lives in just one department, it’s a vulnerability. Broaden ownership to build staying power.

- **Linking to Succession Planning**

Avoid the “tower of knowledge” problem in which one person holds all the relationship history. At minimum, ensure two staff members are involved and informed. Formalize handoffs, document contacts and plans, and treat partnerships like critical business relationships.

► **Pro Tip:** If your partnership work ends when one employee changes roles, it wasn’t a robust system. Build structures and relationships with sufficient depth to navigate change effectively.

- **Celebrating Success**

Share wins in internal newsletters, on social media, and with your partners. Document student impact, volunteer stories, and business outcomes. Recognition keeps people engaged and grows momentum across your company and community.

- **Mentorship Pathways**

Move from isolated volunteerism to coordinated, company-wide mentoring efforts. Mentorship doesn’t always mean long-term relationships. It can and should be embedded into jobsite tours, Q&A panels, and hands-on projects. Every interaction is a chance to model professionalism and highlight possibilities.

Sustaining partnerships requires intentionality. Scaling them requires structure. This is where Ford NGL can be an asset. We help organizations like yours put the right systems and structures in place so partnerships don’t just start; they grow, scale, and sustain.

Partnerships don’t just start; with Ford NGL, they grow and scale.

Bridging to the Next Generation

Sustaining and scaling a partnership isn't just about maintaining momentum. It is about connecting with and adapting to the people who will be part of and shape the industry's future. As you build systems that endure, you must also evolve how you engage the rising workforce. The students in today's classrooms (Gen Z and Gen Alpha) bring new expectations, values, and visions of success. Meeting them where they are is essential to keeping your partnership relevant and your talent pipeline strong.

The Next Generation: Gen Z and Alpha Are Watching

Gen Z (born roughly between 1997–2012) and Gen Alpha (born in 2013 and onward) are entering the workforce with values shaped by technology, transparency, and purpose. They look for jobs that offer more than just a paycheck. They want meaningful work, a positive culture, and clear pathways for growth. To attract and retain them, you will need to evolve how you communicate, how you lead, and how you work.

Pro Tip

Let younger employees share their stories. Gen Z and Gen Alpha want to hear from people who look like them and are closer to their age.

What Matters to Gen Z and Gen Alpha

- Tech-forward job sites (drones, 3D modeling, project apps)
- Mentorship and growth opportunities
- Sustainability in materials and design
- Flexible scheduling, even in hands-on fields
- Clear training pathways and upskilling opportunities
- Strong workplace culture that values mental health, diversity, and open communication
- Real stories and transparency (especially online via social media)
- Recognition and reward programs



Field Insight:

"They (students) want to be part of something. If they can't see themselves in the trades, we lose them."

— **Chad Lawler**
Executive Director
Madison Area Builders Association