



Blair Chalmers, Rutherford Contracting Ltd.

A tool for *success*

Turning small businesses into industry leaders with COR™



It can be a daunting task to develop an effective health and safety management system for your company, especially if you're a small business. Occupational health and safety can easily become an afterthought when the survival of a business depends on production and revenue. And since the majority of small businesses are family-owned and operated, do they really need to prove that it's a priority for them to get every worker home safely?

Well, in today's competitive construction market, the answer is yes, they do.

In fact, across Ontario, it is becoming clear that the survival of your business won't depend just on how good your work is, but also on how safe your workplace is.

With the City of Brampton being added recently to a growing list of municipalities requiring COR™, the construction industry is starting to take notice of the higher safety standards for bidding on available jobs.

Over 200 firms are now COR™ certified in Ontario, and over 1,000 are working towards being certified. As the value of COR™ becomes more widely known in the industry, more and more small businesses are realizing that meeting this standard will help to ensure their company's future.

One company that is proud to be COR™ certified in Ontario is Rutherford Contracting Ltd., a general contractor and small business based in Aurora.

Since many small businesses consider COR™ to be out of reach, Rutherford is an inspiring example for other small companies in the construction business.

"COR™ satisfies a very simple business philosophy," says Rutherford President, Blair Chalmers.

If you look after the people in your organization, then they'll look after you. And the most important thing you can do as a business owner is to keep your people safe. It's one of the strongest statements a business can make, and most people don't even recognize it.

When you create a safety culture where everyone is looking out for each other, there's no greater value for an organization.

The hardest part in building that safety culture is to create a health and safety plan for the business and get everyone on board. Chalmers says that two things allowed them to meet that challenge: support from the top of the company and the framework that COR™ provides.

We've always been on the cutting edge of health and safety in this industry. If you looked at our safety manual before COR™, we had the roles and responsibilities defined for everyone from the top down. But it was a struggle for us without COR™ because no one was looking at the bigger picture.

When COR™ came along, it flowed right into what we were trying to accomplish. The industry was catching up to our standards, and it validated our previous struggles. So we asked our people at that point where they wanted to be in the safety cycle—behind the times trying to catch up, or in the front of the pack.

Businesses that are COR™ certified can be confident that their jobsites (and their sub-trades) are following the Ontario construction regulations. That's because they have tools for evaluating the safety needs of each job. When a business uses the COR™ program to manage their health and safety system, their processes become more efficient. That allows the entire organization to become more productive and to focus on growth.

One key to the success of any business in the construction sector is to realize that COR™ certification is where the industry is heading. But more importantly, the next generation of workers will recognize COR™ as something to look for in an employer.

At Rutherford, Alex Chalmers, who is Vice President of Organizational Development, noticed that being a COR™ certified company has a positive effect on the workforce. As he explains:

Being a smaller business, we use smaller sub-trades, and managing them has always been a struggle. But now they're starting to notice that big orange COR™ sticker on the side of our trucks. And our superintendents are reporting back that they're having better performance out of those workers.

Starting the conversation about COR™ has a positive effect on workers. That's because they realize how it benefits them and they genuinely feel support from a COR™ certified organization. According to Alex Chalmers:

Initially when we would broach the subject of things that aren't acceptable on a Rutherford site, we would get some pushback.

But everyone is starting to realize the direction of the tide in regard to health and safety. They also see that they're becoming more efficient at their work, and we really see an improvement in the performance of the workforce overall on our sites. So there are indicators all over the place showing that COR™ is beneficial for everyone involved.

The initial leap you have to make with COR™ was a scary one. But I think if more businesses would just open the audit tool and go through it, they would realize that a company that's compliant with the construction regulations is not going to be far off of what's needed to complete the process.

Having been around since 1971, Rutherford Contracting Ltd. has seen a few technological advances, from hardhats to fax machines to cell phones. Blair Chalmers sees COR™ as one of the next advances that will ensure the safety of his people and the success of his business.

If you're going to be successful in this business you need to have the best equipment for the job, and safety is a necessary component of this business so the same rationale applies —get COR™ certified.

