

# Viewpoint

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## The power of performance

**Y**ears ago, I realized a dream—to see Anthony Quinn on stage, recreating his classic role as Zorba the Greek. That evening was my one opportunity to judge his performance. For Mr. Quinn and the rest of the cast, that standard of performance had to be repeated night after night, to thousands of individuals whose judgment would be based upon only one impression.

### Subcontractors' moment to shine

As subcontractors, we often have just that one opportunity to win over a new client and to prove our ability to perform. Sometimes, once we have done that, we forget that it is our duty to perform at that same level for that client *every time*. Performance is a process, not a goal. Continued high quality performance is draining, and we look for a place to rest on our past success. To rest, however, is to be swept backward on the river of progress.

It is tough to be a quality performer. It is physically, mentally and emotionally draining as we compete against the forces of mediocrity all around us. On project after project, superior performance is taken as a given, and poor performers seem to be the ones who receive the most help and tolerance. Why should we keep on performing at an optimal level under these circumstances?

### Maintaining a high-quality performance

I keep doing it because few things in my life are as rewarding as having an owner call and tell me that we produced his stair 20 or 30 years ago, and that he simply must deal with our company again. I keep doing it because for every complaint that comes in to our office, we receive many more compliments. I keep doing it because in an industry in which so many companies are unreliable, lie to their customers and fail to complete their work in a quality manner, our company can be a star and set the standard for others. We hold ourselves to that standard on every project.

Last year, I told myself that I would never again be a major league baseball fan. I was so disgusted by the spectacle of spoiled rich players and spoiled rich owners whining at each other that I turned my back on the game and walked away.

Then, along came Sept. 6th, when Baltimore Oriole shortstop Cal Ripken surpassed Lou Gehrig's record of 2,130 consecutive games played. As I watched the interviews with this quiet, modest performer, I became a baseball fan once again. The Cal Ripkens of the world (and there are many, many of them) go to work every day and perform—not for the goal, but for the love of the process.

The tangible rewards are nice, but they are often fluff, and not the substance of what someone such as Cal Ripken holds valuable. This is a man who played when he was not feeling well, when he probably had a valid excuse to take a day off. Yet he played because continuing to perform was simply his job—it was the right thing to do for himself, his family, the team and the fans.

When Cal Ripken said that he played for these reasons, I believed him. My resurrection as a baseball fan occurred because there was *one* player who did his job because it was the right thing to do. One player who played his best every day.

If subcontractors want to change the way we are perceived, if we want to change our industry from the grassroots, we will use performance as our primary tool. And, like Cal Ripken, each of us will do our best work every day. We will do this not just for short-term profit, but for our long-term vision and commitment. We will do this because it is the right thing to do—for ourselves, our families, our companies and our customers.

And maybe, just maybe, each of us can help the construction industry bring back its fans. After all, it only took one Cal Ripken to bring this fan back to baseball.