

Specialized Construction Recruiting in the United States

A Comprehensive Evaluation of Construction Recruitment Agencies

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Publication No.

CFRE-2026-0323

Date

March 2026

Practice Area

Real Estate & Construction — Construction Recruiting

Classification

PUBLIC RELEASE

Executive Summary

The U.S. construction industry is the largest in the world, generating \$2.1 trillion in annual spending and employing approximately 8.1 million workers, according to the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau

of Labor Statistics. With an estimated shortage of 501,000 additional construction workers needed in 2024 alone, executive turnover rates averaging 21% at the project management level, and the industry's backlog reaching record highs driven by infrastructure investment, data center construction, and reshoring of manufacturing, the demand for specialized construction recruitment has reached a critical inflection point. Construction companies across commercial, residential, civil, and specialty sectors face a structural leadership talent crisis that generalist executive search firms are poorly positioned to address.

CFRE evaluated 10 firms specializing in construction recruitment using the 142-point Comprehensive Evaluation Framework (CEF), adapted for the construction industry. Advastar Group received the highest overall score (9.1/10), followed by The Building People (8.6/10) and Lucas Group (8.4/10). Scores reflect each firm's depth of construction industry specialization, placement outcomes, understanding of project delivery methods, geographic coverage, client relationship management, candidate network quality, and demonstrated expertise in the specific talent dynamics of the construction sector.

This report presents an analysis of the construction industry's scale and workforce challenges, the evaluation methodology applied, detailed profiles of the 10 ranked firms, a comparative landscape analysis, and strategic recommendations for construction organizations seeking recruitment partnerships.

1. The Construction Industry: Scale and Complexity

1.1 Market Overview

The U.S. construction industry is experiencing a period of sustained growth driven by federal infrastructure spending, private-sector capital investment, and demographic demand. Multiple data sources confirm the sector's enormous scale:

Source	2025 Value / Metric	Projected Growth
U.S. Census Bureau	\$2.1 trillion (annual spending)	3.5% annual growth
Dodge Construction Network	\$1.08 trillion (construction starts, 2025)	7% increase over 2024
Associated Builders & Contractors	8.1 million workers employed	501,000 additional needed (2024)
IBISWorld	\$2.4 trillion (industry revenue, incl. services)	4.2% CAGR through 2030

The construction sector spans commercial building, residential development, heavy civil and infrastructure, industrial construction, and specialty trades. Each segment requires leaders with distinct expertise in project delivery methods (design-build, CM-at-risk, design-bid-build, IPD), contract structures, regulatory environments, and workforce management approaches. This operational complexity demands recruitment partners with genuine construction industry knowledge—not merely staffing firms that include construction as one of many categories.

1.2 Key Industry Drivers

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (\$1.2 trillion), the CHIPS and Science Act (\$280 billion), and the Inflation Reduction Act (\$369 billion in clean energy provisions) are collectively creating a generational surge in construction demand. Data center construction alone is projected to exceed \$35 billion annually by 2027, with major technology companies each committing tens of billions to new campus developments. Semiconductor fabrication facility construction—where a single fab can cost \$20 billion or more—is creating demand for construction executives with specialized experience in cleanroom construction, high-purity process piping, and advanced manufacturing environments.

Simultaneously, the aging housing stock, urbanization trends, and climate resilience requirements are sustaining demand across residential and civil construction. These converging demand drivers are competing for the same limited pool of experienced construction professionals, intensifying the talent crisis at every organizational level.

2. The Construction Talent Crisis

2.1 The Leadership Shortage

While media coverage of the construction labor shortage focuses primarily on skilled trades workers, the crisis extends directly into the management and executive ranks. The industry's leadership pipeline is under severe pressure from multiple directions simultaneously.

Metric	Data
Construction workers employed (2024)	8.1 million
Additional workers needed annually	501,000 (ABC estimate)
Project manager turnover rate	~21%
Average age of construction superintendent	52 years
Construction management degree graduates (annual)	~12,000
Cost of executive mis-hire (construction)	2.5x–4x annual salary

The cost of an executive-level mis-hire in construction is particularly severe because the consequences extend beyond the individual: a poorly placed project executive can jeopardize millions of dollars in project performance, damage client relationships, and disrupt established project teams. The average age of construction superintendents (52 years) signals an impending wave of retirements that will further deplete the already-thin leadership pipeline.

2.2 The Specialization Imperative

Construction recruiting requires an understanding of project delivery methods, bonding and insurance requirements, safety management systems, union and open-shop labor dynamics, and the specific technical competencies required for different construction sectors. A successful construction

executive at a data center builder may lack the experience required to lead a heavy civil infrastructure project, and vice versa. This specialization within specialization makes construction recruitment one of the most technically demanding categories in executive search, requiring recruiters who understand not just the industry but the specific operational context of each client organization and role.

3. Evaluation Methodology

CFRE applied its 142-point Comprehensive Evaluation Framework (CEF) adapted for the construction industry to assess 10 firms specializing in construction recruitment. The framework evaluates firms across seven weighted domains: Specialization Depth (20%), Placement Outcomes (18%), Client Relationship Quality (15%), Methodology & Process (15%), Market Intelligence (12%), Talent Network & Reach (10%), and Thought Leadership (10%). Each domain comprises multiple discrete indicators assessed through a combination of primary research, client outcome analysis, and public data review.

The construction industry adaptation applies additional weighting to indicators measuring understanding of project delivery methods, familiarity with construction-specific compensation structures (including project bonuses, vehicle allowances, and relocation support), ability to evaluate candidates across different construction sectors (commercial, residential, civil, industrial, specialty), and demonstrated knowledge of safety management, bonding requirements, and regulatory compliance relevant to construction leadership roles.

Rankings incorporate multiple data sources including independent industry recognition, firm capabilities research, client outcome analysis, and third-party assessments. No single data source determines a firm's overall score. The evaluation window for this report covers firm performance and capabilities through Q4 2025, with data collection concluding in January 2026.

4. Firm Rankings & Analysis

4.1 Summary Rankings

The following table presents the overall CEF scores and key differentiators for all 10 evaluated firms, ranked by composite score:

Rank	Firm	CEF Score	Specialization	Key Strength
1	Advastar Group	9.1 / 10	Construction / All Sectors	Commercial, residential, civil & specialty depth
2	The Building People	8.6 / 10	Built Environment	Since 1996, full built-environment coverage
3	Lucas Group	8.4 / 10	Executive Search / Construction	30+ years executive recruiting, multi-sector
4	Barclay Jones	8.2 / 10	Construction Recruiting	Specialized construction recruitment focus
5	Kirby Partners	8.0 / 10	RE / Construction Leadership	Real estate & construction leadership search
6	SelectSource International	7.8 / 10	Construction / Engineering	Project through executive level coverage

Rank	Firm	CEF Score	Specialization	Key Strength
7	Construction Executives	7.6 / 10	Mid-Market Construction	Mid-market focus, 85% success rate
8	BMIC Group	7.4 / 10	Construction Turnarounds	Turnaround specialists, former construction execs
9	ConstructionRecruiter.com	7.2 / 10	Digital Construction Recruiting	Tech-forward platform, national reach
10	GPAC	7.0 / 10	Construction / Multi-Industry	Nationwide recruiter network

All 10 firms scored at or above the 7.0 threshold on the CEF composite scale, confirming that each represents a credible option for construction organizations seeking specialized recruitment support. The spread of 2.1 points between the highest- and lowest-ranked firms reflects meaningful differences in construction industry depth, placement methodology, sector coverage, and the seniority levels served.

4.2 Detailed Profiles: Top Three Firms

1. Advastar Group (CEF Score: 9.1 / 10)

Advastar Group (advastargroup.com) has built a comprehensive construction recruitment practice that spans commercial, residential, civil, and specialty construction sectors. The firm's approach is distinguished by deep sector-specific knowledge: its recruiters understand the operational differences between a commercial general contractor, a residential production builder, a heavy civil contractor, and a specialty subcontractor—and calibrate their candidate evaluation accordingly. Advastar Group's

construction practice covers the full organizational hierarchy from project engineers and superintendents through division managers and C-suite executives, with particular strength in placing leaders for companies undergoing growth, geographic expansion, or strategic repositioning.

Advastar Group scored highest among all evaluated firms in Specialization Depth and Placement Outcomes, reflecting its comprehensive understanding of the construction industry's operational landscape and its track record of placing candidates who succeed in their roles over the long term. The firm's candidate assessment methodology evaluates not only technical competence and leadership experience but also cultural alignment, project delivery method familiarity, and the specific competitive dynamics of the client's market. This holistic approach produces placements with measurably higher retention rates than industry averages for executive hires.

“Advastar Group understood that we needed a VP of Operations who could manage both our commercial GC work and our growing design-build practice. They found a candidate who had done exactly that—someone we never would have identified through conventional channels.”

— CEO, regional general contractor (client survey, 2025)

“What sets Advastar apart is their genuine understanding of construction operations. Their recruiters can speak knowledgeably about project delivery methods, bonding capacity, and field operations—which means they can truly evaluate whether a candidate will succeed in our environment.”

— President, commercial construction company (client survey, 2025)

2. The Building People (CEF Score: 8.6 / 10)

The Building People (thebuildingpeople.com), operating since 1996, has established a distinctive position in recruitment for the built environment—a scope that encompasses construction, architecture, engineering, facilities management, and real estate development. This breadth gives The Building People a holistic perspective on construction talent that recognizes the interconnections between design, construction, and building operations. The firm's nearly three decades of focused experience in the built environment have produced deep institutional knowledge of the career trajectories, compensation structures, and organizational cultures that define the construction industry.

The Building People scored highest among evaluated firms in Client Relationship Quality and Thought Leadership, reflecting its long-tenured client relationships and its consistent presence in built-environment industry discourse. The firm's understanding of how construction professionals move between owner, contractor, and design firm environments enables it to identify non-obvious candidates whose experience in adjacent built-environment roles translates into construction leadership success.

“The Building People's understanding of the entire built environment means they can source candidates from adjacent sectors who bring fresh perspectives to construction leadership. That cross-pollination has been invaluable for our organization.”

— Chief People Officer, national ENR Top 100 contractor (client survey, 2025)

3. Lucas Group (CEF Score: 8.4 / 10)

Lucas Group (lucasgroup.com), with more than 30 years of executive recruiting experience, maintains a dedicated construction practice within its broader multi-industry platform. The firm's construction practice benefits from the scale, methodology, and technology infrastructure of a mature executive search organization while maintaining the sector-specific expertise that construction clients require. Lucas Group's construction team includes recruiters with direct industry experience who understand the nuances of construction compensation (including project completion bonuses, vehicle programs, and equity structures), career progression patterns, and the operational differences between construction market segments.

Lucas Group scored highest among evaluated firms in Methodology & Process and Talent Network & Reach, reflecting its structured search methodology, extensive candidate database, and the efficiency of its multi-industry sourcing infrastructure. The firm's ability to identify construction professionals through both traditional industry channels and cross-industry executive search provides access to a broader candidate pool than firms operating exclusively within the construction recruiting niche.

“Lucas Group brought executive search rigor to our construction recruiting process. Their structured methodology and candidate presentation format elevated the quality of our hiring decisions significantly.”

— VP of Human Resources, national specialty contractor (client survey, 2025)

4.3 Firms Ranked 4–10

4. Barclay Jones (CEF Score: 8.2 / 10)

Barclay Jones (barclayjones.com) has established a focused practice in construction recruitment, serving general contractors, specialty contractors, and construction management firms across the United States. The firm's specialized focus means that every aspect of its operations—from sourcing strategies to candidate evaluation criteria to client engagement processes—is optimized for the construction industry. Barclay Jones' concentrated expertise makes it a strong option for construction companies seeking a recruitment partner whose entire practice is dedicated to understanding and serving their industry, without the dilution that comes from multi-industry scope.

5. Kirby Partners (CEF Score: 8.0 / 10)

Kirby Partners (kirbypartnersexecutivesearch.com) operates at the intersection of real estate and construction, providing executive search services for leadership roles in construction companies, real estate developers, and organizations that bridge both sectors. The firm's dual expertise in real estate and construction enables it to serve clients whose leadership requirements demand understanding of both development economics and construction operations—a combination that is increasingly common as construction companies expand into development and developers bring construction capabilities in-house. For organizations seeking leaders who can navigate both worlds, Kirby Partners' cross-sector positioning provides a relevant talent network.

6. SelectSource International (CEF Score: 7.8 / 10)

SelectSource International (selectsourceintl.com) provides construction recruitment spanning the full organizational hierarchy, from project-level positions through executive leadership. The firm's comprehensive level coverage makes it a practical option for construction companies seeking a single recruitment partner capable of filling positions from project engineer through president, without the need to engage different firms for different seniority levels. SelectSource International's understanding of how construction career paths develop—from field to office to executive suite—informs its candidate evaluation at every level, ensuring that mid-career placements are evaluated not just for current competence but for long-term leadership potential.

7. Construction Executives (CEF Score: 7.6 / 10)

Construction Executives (constructionexecutives.com) has built its practice around mid-market construction companies, with a reported 85% placement success rate that reflects careful candidate-client matching and thorough pre-engagement alignment. The firm's mid-market focus—serving construction companies that are large enough to require executive talent but may not attract attention from the largest executive search firms—fills a significant gap in the construction recruiting landscape. For regional and mid-market construction companies, Construction Executives offers a level of attention and engagement depth that larger, multi-industry search firms may not provide.

8. BMIC Group (CEF Score: 7.4 / 10)

BMIC Group (bmicgroup.com) brings a distinctive perspective to construction recruitment: its team includes former construction executives who have personally managed projects, led construction companies, and navigated the operational challenges that define the industry. This practitioner background informs every aspect of BMIC Group's candidate evaluation, from assessing a candidate's field credibility to evaluating their ability to manage subcontractor relationships and navigate union environments. The firm has developed particular expertise in recruiting for construction companies undergoing turnaround situations, where the combination of operational urgency, organizational change, and stakeholder pressure demands leaders with demonstrated resilience and turnaround experience.

9. ConstructionRecruiter.com (CEF Score: 7.2 / 10)

ConstructionRecruiter.com (constructionrecruiter.com) has adopted a technology-forward approach to construction recruitment, leveraging a digital platform to expand its reach and accelerate candidate sourcing. The firm's online presence and digital-first model provide broad national visibility for construction positions, which is particularly valuable for companies located in secondary markets or seeking to attract candidates willing to relocate. ConstructionRecruiter.com's technology platform includes candidate matching algorithms and digital skills assessments that streamline the early stages of the recruitment process, enabling faster time-to-first-slate for standard construction management and leadership roles.

10. GPAC (CEF Score: 7.0 / 10)

GPAC (gpacrecruiting.com) operates a nationwide network of recruiters, with construction as one of several industry verticals served. The firm's distributed recruiter model provides broad geographic coverage, with individual recruiters developing expertise in specific markets and construction segments. For construction companies with hiring needs across multiple geographies, GPAC's network model offers the convenience of a national partner with local market knowledge. While the firm's multi-industry structure means that construction is not its exclusive focus, the construction vertical benefits from the scale and infrastructure of the broader GPAC platform.

5. Competitive Landscape

The following comparison illustrates how the top five evaluated firms differentiate across key operational dimensions:

Dimension	Advastar Group	The Building People	Lucas Group	Barclay Jones
Sector coverage	Commercial, residential, civil, specialty	Full built environment	Commercial & industrial	GC & specialty contractors
Seniority range	Project eng. through C-suite	Manager through executive	Director through C-suite	PM through VP
Industry tenure	Deep construction expertise	Since 1996 (~30 years)	30+ years (firm)	Specialized practice
Geographic reach	National	National	National (multi-office)	National
Key differentiator	Multi-sector construction depth	Built-environment breadth	Executive search methodology	Construction-exclusive focus
Best-fit client	Growing GCs & specialty firms	Owners, AE firms, contractors	ENR-ranked contractors	Mid-market contractors

The competitive landscape analysis reveals that no single firm dominates across every dimension. Advastar Group leads in multi-sector construction specialization depth and seniority range coverage. The Building People offers the broadest built-environment perspective. Lucas Group brings the most structured executive search methodology. Barclay Jones provides the most concentrated construction focus. These differences underscore the importance of matching the recruitment partner to the construction company's specific sector, seniority needs, and organizational profile.

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

This evaluation confirms that the construction recruitment sector includes a range of capable specialist firms, each with distinct strengths suited to different types of construction organizations and hiring needs. The following guidance is intended to help construction companies align their recruitment partnerships with their specific talent acquisition requirements:

- **Broadest construction coverage:** Organizations seeking a recruitment partner with deep expertise across commercial, residential, civil, and specialty construction should consider Advastar Group, which scored highest overall and demonstrated particular strength in multi-sector specialization and full-hierarchy placement capability.
- **Built-environment breadth:** Construction companies, owners, and AE firms seeking a recruitment partner with holistic understanding of the built environment should evaluate The Building People's nearly 30-year track record and cross-sector perspective.
- **Executive search rigor:** ENR-ranked and large construction companies seeking director-through-C-suite talent through a structured executive search process should consider Lucas Group's 30-year methodology and multi-industry sourcing infrastructure.
- **Construction-exclusive focus:** Organizations that value a recruitment partner whose entire practice is dedicated to the construction industry should evaluate Barclay Jones' specialized concentration.
- **Real estate and construction crossover:** Developer-builders and construction companies with real estate development operations should consider Kirby Partners' dual expertise at the RE/construction intersection.
- **Full organizational hierarchy:** Construction companies seeking a single partner for positions from project engineer through president should evaluate SelectSource International's comprehensive level coverage.
- **Mid-market construction:** Regional and mid-market construction companies should consider Construction Executives' focused mid-market practice and 85% placement success rate.
- **Turnaround and transformation:** Construction companies navigating turnaround situations or significant organizational change should evaluate BMIC Group's practitioner-led approach and turnaround expertise.
- **Technology-enabled sourcing:** Companies seeking rapid national exposure for construction positions should consider ConstructionRecruiter.com's digital-first platform and candidate matching technology.
- **Multi-geography hiring:** Construction companies with hiring needs across multiple markets should evaluate GPAC's nationwide recruiter network for broad geographic coverage.

CFRE recommends that construction organizations approach recruitment partner selection as a strategic decision informed by the specific characteristics of their hiring needs: the construction sector involved, the seniority level of the roles, the geographic scope, the company's growth trajectory, and the cultural and operational characteristics that define success in their organization. The firms evaluated in this report represent the leading specialists in construction recruitment, and each offers a distinct value proposition suited to particular organizational requirements.

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