

PIVOT & BUILD – LIFE AFTER ATHLETICS



**Construction
Inclusion Week**

TOOLBOX TALKS

08



Estimated Time:

15minutes max



Audience:

All roles, especially HR, Former student-athletes, recruiters, trainers, Team leaders, workforce educators

CIW PILLARS:

*Attract and Retain,
Economic Opportunity*

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

This Toolbox Talk is provided as a voluntary workforce development resource in support of Construction Inclusion Week. It does not impose or endorse any directives, quotas, or identity-based exclusions or preferences.

The content reflects voluntary best practices and is designed to promote safety, opportunity, and inclusive team culture benefiting everyone across the construction industry, to help support, attract, and retain top talent.

Construction Inclusion Week does not control or endorse the content of third-party links. Activities should be adapted to align with your company's legal policies and job-related criteria.



PIVOT & BUILD – LIFE AFTER ATHLETICS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This conversation explores how the construction industry can be a new path for former athletes transitioning from sports to construction careers.

- Recognize the skills athletes bring, like discipline, teamwork and leadership.
- Understand the challenges former athletes face post-graduation.
- Explore why construction is a great next team for athletes.
- Learn how to support athletes who are starting a new career.
- Help former athletes find direction, purpose and opportunity.

DEFINITIONS

Career Pivot:

A notable change in job direction, especially after a major life event like leaving competitive sports.

Student-Athlete: A person who balanced sports and academics, often highly driven and competitive.

Transferable Skills: Skills such as discipline, leadership, time management, and resilience gained through athletics and applicable to many roles in the workplace.

Coachability: Willingness to accept and apply feedback; valued in both athletics and professional roles.

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Every year, thousands of college athletes do not make it to the pros, but they leave sports with a wealth of talent.
- Athletes often experience shifts in purpose and career focus after sports, which construction careers can help realign.
- Construction offers a fast-paced, team-oriented environment that mirrors athletic culture.



KEY CONCEPTS:

- Former athletes excel in performance under pressure, teamwork, and continuous improvement.
- Mentorship, visibility, and purpose-driven work can help athletes find meaningful careers in construction.
- **These career transition efforts are part of broader workforce readiness and retention strategies.**

Transitioning from competitive sports to a new career can happen quickly and may raise questions about the next steps. **Construction can be a strong next step for career changers including but not limited to former athletes.**

Athletes already have many of the skills needed to succeed in this industry: teamwork, leadership, focus, and resilience. They know how to take feedback, stay on schedule, and push through challenges. These traits make them valuable on the jobsite and in the office.

Still, the transition can be tough. Losing a team, structure, and identity can be hard. That's where we come in.





By identifying transferable skills, offering mentorship, and helping them understand the opportunities in construction, we open the door for them to thrive.

Former athletes bring skills like focus and adaptability that support success in construction. Helpful support includes visibility into roles, mentorship and clear entry paths. Whether it's an internship, apprenticeship, or an entry-level role, construction offers a second team and a new purpose.

By welcoming career changers, we strengthen our workforce and show that construction is a place where all kinds of talent can succeed.





ACTIVITY OPTIONS:

General Ask:

Think about a time with a big life goal didn't work out, and you had to pivot. What helped you move forward? Who opened a door for you? Now imagine finishing your college athletic career with focus, discipline, and a strong work ethic, but no clear path forward. That's where many former athletes find themselves.

The following page includes ways to practice mentorship, on site, in the office, or with community partners:



JOBSITE



OFFICE



**SCHOOL/
COMMUNITY**



GROUP



JOBSITE ACTIVITIES

- Share a story of someone on the team who successfully transitioned careers, especially from sports, military, or other hands-on careers.
- Pair new hires with field mentors who understand transition and hard work.
- Post a “Who Helped You Pivot?” wall with team stories.
- Ask your team: What habits from sports help you succeed here?
- Display athlete spotlights or profiles of tradespeople who were former student-athletes.



OFFICE ACTIVITIES

- Partner with local college athletics departments for internships, job shadowing, and info sessions.
- Include “pivot-friendly” language in your job postings (such as “Team-oriented, structured learners welcome”). All selections are based on job-related qualifications.
- Share short video testimonials from employees who used to be athletes.
- Launch a “Second Wind” program to welcome career changers with a tailored onboarding and mentorship plan.



SCHOOL/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Offer a “What’s next after Sports?” workshop with trade professionals and recruiters.
- Create a handout comparing sports roles to construction roles (e.g., Captain = Foreman or Crew Lead)
- Partner with high school coaches or athletic departments to introduce athletes to trades careers.
- Invite former athletes to speak to students about building a career after competitive sports.



GROUP ACTIVITIES

- Role play a peer conversation with someone unsure about joining construction.
- In small groups, ask: What would you say to a student who feels stuck after sports?
- Create a “Team Strengths” chart: map typical athlete traits to construction job needs. Discuss as a team.
- Write a welcome message or post for athletes entering the company.



***The game might
end, but the work
is just beginning.
Let's help athletes
pivot and build.***



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why might former athletes feel unsure about what's next?
2. What strengths do they bring to our teams?
3. How can we help them feel like they belong, even without trade experience?
4. What does "coachability" mean on our site?
5. What's one thing we can change to make career changers feel more welcome?

Athletes bring motivation and discipline – they need visibility and opportunity. Construction can be that path.



THIS WEEK:

- Invite a former athlete to share their story.
- Reach out to a local college or high school athletic department about career partnerships.
- Share a story about someone who successfully changed paths. Share on social media.
- Recognize someone who brought a new energy after changing paths.
- Discuss how your team can better support new beginnings.



POST YOUR IMPACT:

#ConstructionInclusionWeek
#CIWOpeningDoors
#LifeAfterAthletics

Resources:

- *Athletes Soul*
- *Positive Coaching Alliance*
- *CAA Career in Sports Forum*
- *Construction Ready - Training Programs for Construction Jobs*