

# HICAPS Highlights

Providing a centralized approach to project management

Winter 2024

## The Origins of “Topping Out”

**W**hat do you know about the tradition of “Topping Out?” I’m sure many of you in the construction industry have heard of, or in many cases attended one or more “topping out” ceremonies during your careers, but have you ever asked yourselves where the tradition came from or how it got here? Armed with that question, here are some anecdotes we have accumulated over the years.

Putting the last structural steel beam or final roofing piece in place on a building is a project milestone. To celebrate, many contractors place an evergreen on top of the building, which often gets the Christmas touch during the holiday season. The evergreen usually stays on top until the building is finished.

In the good old days, everyone pitched in to help a farmer build or “raise” a new house or barn. The community would contribute its labor until the ridge pole—the highest horizontal beam—was in place. At that point, to express his appreciation, the farmer would have a party for all his friends. An evergreen tree was placed on the highest point of the structure for good luck, and to indicate to all that the building was nearing completion, and a celebration was in order.

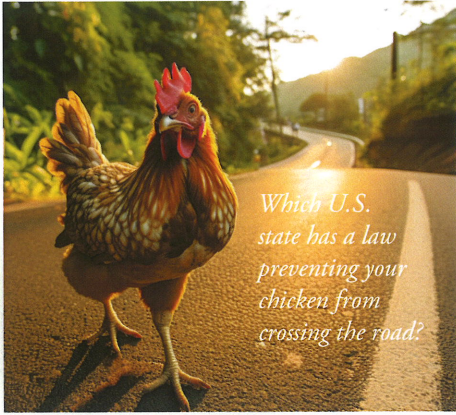
The last steel beam placed is a major milestone in the evolution of a commercial or industrial building project. This milestone is commemorated by painting the beam white and having the steel erection crew, construction team, designers, owners, and other dignitaries sign the beam for posterity. The beam is typically adorned with a small evergreen tree and an American flag on opposite



ends of the beam. This custom celebrates the construction process and is viewed as the first introduction of the building to the public. It uniquely honors the accomplishments of the construction crew and is reminiscent of old-fashioned, barn-raising celebrations. The tree is the key symbol.

In the steel trade, it signifies construction has reached the sky without loss of life or injury and it bodes well for the future inhabitants of the building. Throughout history, the tree appears to have conveyed different meanings to different people.





## Can You Guess?

- What is the fear of Friday the 13th called?
  - Paraskavedekatriphobia
  - Calendophobia
  - Tredecimaphobia
  - Triambigophobia
- What is the Latin name for the genus of mammals to which goats belong?
  - Meleagris
  - Ovis
  - Capra
  - Bos
- Organza, taffeta, and georgette are fabrics traditionally made from what material?
  - Polyester
  - Cotton
  - Velour
  - Silk
- What were the first hockey pucks made out of?
  - frozen cow dung
  - ice
  - wood
  - rubber
- At what temperature is Fahrenheit equal to centigrade?
  - 32 degrees
  - 40 degrees
  - 0 degrees
  - 5 degrees
- Which U.S. state has a law preventing your chicken from crossing the road?
  - New York
  - Hawaii
  - Georgia
  - New Hampshire

## Get More Energy Throughout The Workday

Maintaining your energy level all day can feel like an insurmountable challenge. Don't ignore physical or mental fatigue, but don't surrender to it, either. Try these tactics for recharging:

- **Move around.** Take a walk, even if it's just a quick stroll around your office several times throughout the day. Getting your blood flowing speeds delivery of oxygen and nutrients to your body.
- **Take a deep breath.** Several, actually. Sit up straight to open your chest cavity and get more oxygen into your lungs. Here's an exercise: Breathe out through your mouth completely. Then inhale through your nose for four seconds. Hold it in for seven seconds, and then exhale for a count of eight seconds. Do this four times to refresh yourself.
- **Drink sufficient fluids.** Water, like air, delivers oxygen throughout your body. If you're dehydrated, you'll feel tired. Drink plenty of water or a low-calorie sports drink.
- **Get outside.** Sunshine and fresh air can have a rejuvenating effect, along with the exercise benefits of taking a short walk.
- **Learn something new.** Spend a few minutes with a book or on the Internet researching a subject that's really interesting to you. You'll stimulate your mind and make new mental connections.

## Contraction Contradiction

Most contractions in English are pretty straightforward: they are becomes they're; he would is shortened to he'd; is not is isn't; and we will is squeezed into we'll. The two words join together, minus a few letters. Put it together, and shorten it up. What could be easier? But that isn't the case for will not, which becomes won't instead of willn't. Why does the will change to wo? It doesn't really. We just inherited it from our linguistic ancestors. But there was a reason for the wo in the beginning.

In Old English there were two forms of the verb willan ("to wish" or "to will")—wil- in the present and wold- in the past. Over the next few centuries there was a good deal of bouncing back and forth between those vowels (and others) in all forms of the word. At different times and places, will came out as wulle, wole, wool, welle, wel, wile, wyll, and even ull and ool.

There was less variation in the contracted form. From at least the 16th century, the preferred form was wonnot, from woll not, with occasional departures later to winnot, wunnot, or the expected willn't. In the ever-changing landscape that is English, will won the battle of the woles/wulles/ools, but for the negative contraction, wonnot simply won out, and contracted further to the won't we use today. When you think about the effort it takes to actually pronounce the word willn't, this isn't so surprising at all.

## Misquoted Movie Lines

*Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*: "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?"

Actual quote: "Magic mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?"

*Gone With The Wind*: "Frankly, Scarlett, I don't give a damn."

Actual quote: "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

*Casablanca*: "Play it again, Sam."

Actual quote: "Play it, Sam. Play 'As Time Goes By.'"

*The Empire Strikes Back*: "Luke, I am your father."

Actual quote: "No, I am your father."



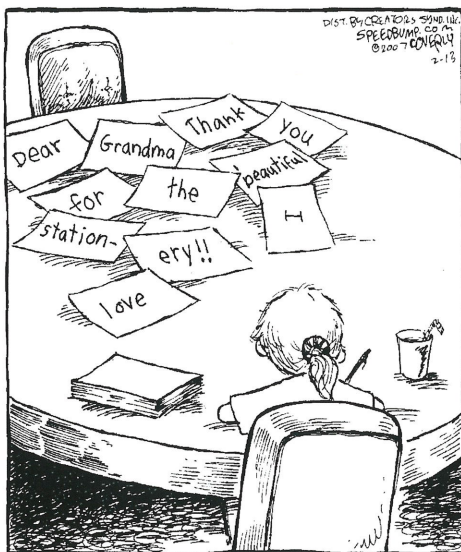
## Optimism = Success

Positive thinking alone may not ensure success, but it's an important start. If you don't believe in yourself, you'll have a hard time persevering against the obstacles and setbacks you're likely to encounter. Here are a few tips for maintaining the right attitude in the face of adversity:

- **Tell yourself you can change.** Think of how you've changed throughout your life—not physically, but emotionally. You're probably a different person today than you were five years ago, so don't assume you can't evolve further.
- **Use positive language.** Banish words and phrases like “impossible” and “I can't” from your vocabulary. Replace them with words that emphasize strength and success.
- **Create the right environment.** Listen to music that uplifts you. Watch inspirational movies and shows. Mix it up, with a leaning toward the positive.
- **Appreciate your life.** Focusing on what you don't have can crowd out your appreciation for what you already possess. Take some time every so often to enjoy what you've already achieved with your life. Think about what you did to get where you are, and use that as a reminder of your capabilities.
- **Let go of mistakes.** You're bound to fail at some things; don't obsess over them. Learn what you can and move on instead of beating yourself up. We all learn from our failures.

**SPEED BUMP**

**Dave Coverly**



## How Black Friday Got Its Name

When people emerge from their food comas the day after Thanksgiving, they think about shopping. In 2023, consumers spent a record \$9.8 billion just for online shopping during Black Friday, bolstering the bottom line for online retailers. If Black Friday is such a financial benefit, why is it called Black Friday?

According to an article in *Mental Floss*, the term was usually reserved for cash-draining events like the Thursday that precipitated the 1929 stock market crash or the Friday on which the 1869 gold market collapse led to financial ruin.

It turns out that the label didn't always have the positive holiday-spending connotation it enjoys today. Beginning in the 1950s, according to *Snopes*, employers and the media began observing that a lot of people called out sick the day after Thanksgiving—traditionally not a paid holiday—to give themselves a four-day weekend. For businesses, that Friday was indeed bleak, as productivity slowed to a crawl.

Law enforcement also had reason to be disgruntled with that particular Friday. With everyone skipping work and kids off school, traffic in major cities became a problem. In Philadelphia, police who were forced to deal with logjams and work mandatory shifts to cope with the congestion started to dread the day. Again, the “Black Friday” label seemed appropriate.

Eventually, this negative term spread via word-of-mouth and the media. Retailers in Philadelphia even tried to rephrase it as Big Friday to avoid the association with disaster, but it didn't stick. It soon became synonymous with record profits, and the term was permanently adopted for the frenzied rush of shoppers using their day off to get their holiday shopping done.

## Strange Facts

- The odds of giving birth to a baby at 12:01 a.m. on January 1 are around 1 in 526,000—roughly the same as the odds of getting struck by lightning.
- Humans are the only animals that blush.
- There was a third Apple founder. Ronald Wayne sold his 10% stake for \$800 in 1976.
- In Italy, it's considered bad luck to lay bread upside down on a table or in a basket.
- Your hair contains traces of gold.
- Ronald McDonald is called Donald McDonald in Japan.
- Dolphin calves are typically born tail first, rather than head first, so they don't drown during the birthing process.
- The raven that inspired Edgar Allan Poe's poem was named Grip, and he was Charles Dickens's beloved pet.
- Maya Angelou was San Francisco's first Black female streetcar conductor.
- The annual number of worldwide shark bites is 10 times less than the number of people bitten by other people in New York.
- Johnny Carson's first three wives were named, in order, Joan, Joanne, and Joanna.
- Geckos can turn the stickiness of their feet on and off at will.
- The second-half kickoff in Super Bowl I had to be done twice, as NBC didn't cut back from commercial in time to catch the first one on camera.

## Just Faking It

Killdeer birds fake injuries to fool predators. The species will feign being injured in order to lure predators toward them and away from their nest of offspring. When the predator gets close enough, the killdeer miraculously “recovers” and beats a hasty retreat.





*Employee Spotlight*

## New Assistant Project Manager Joins HICAPS

The HICAPS Team would like to welcome Anna Gross as our new assistant project manager. Anna is a graduate of Wake Tech where she earned an Associates of Applied Science in Hospitality Business Management. She has worked in the telecommunications industry for seven years, working with various departments. She has experience supporting structural, civil, and mechanical engineering teams, and most recently real estate services, bringing Verizon from RFP to NTP. She loves problem solving and building quality relationships with both internal and external customers.

Anna grew up in North Carolina with a blended family of five siblings. She loves gardening, DIY home projects and going on road trips to the beach during the summer with her beagle, Bella.



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*Employee Spotlight*

## HICAPS Welcomes A New Project Manager

We are pleased to announce that Chad Heitman has recently joined the HICAPS team as our newest project manager. Chad graduated from Wichita State University with a B.S. in Pre-Law. He has extensive background and experience in the fields of construction, architectural design, mechanical (HVAC/plumbing), and energy performance contracting.

Chad grew up in and currently resides in Wichita, Kansas. He has two daughters, Love and Faith. His passions and hobbies include coaching club volleyball, bowhunting whitetail deer, and attending Kansas City Chiefs football games. Help us give Chad a warm welcome!

