

Why Construction Industry Needs to Raise the Salary Bar of Civil Engineers



C.A. Prasad, President, PSI Hyderabad, and Director, Metey Engineering & Consultancy, presents the basic core fields of engineering viz. Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical, and gives reasons why there is hardly any demand in colleges for these fields of study by aspiring students, and why the Construction Industry needs to attract young engineers and retain them.

The salary structure in the construction field is quite low, sometime lower than the daily labour wages per month. In the current scenario of declining salaries, we need to raise the salary bar of engineers in the construction industry. By raising the salary level, students will be keen to join civil engineering courses in engineering colleges, which in turn, will be able to retain and sustain the three core fields of engineering: Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. All these three fields are required in the construction industry.

The country is witnessing huge infrastructure construction across all the regions. Civil Engineers are much in demand, but discouraged by the low salary structure, especially for freshers in Civil Engineering as compared to the higher slab for IT Engineers, the engineering college seats are not being taken by aspiring students.

Salary Comparison

Minimum wage for a labourer: Rs 900 per day

For 26 days in a month working 26X900: Rs 23,400 per month.

Consider at least 20 days work availability (20 x 900) = Rs 18,000/- per month.

Working hours for labourer from market 9 to 5pm with half-an-hour lunch break.

Comparison between Civil Engineers and IT Engineers			
S.No	Description	Civil Engineer	IT Engineer
1.	Starting Salary compared to IT person in the field	Rs 10,000/- to Rs 12,000/- per month	Rs 30,000/- to Rs 40,000/- per month
2.	Freshers starting salary with consultant	Rs 20,000/- per month	Rs 30,000/- per month with small IT firms
3.	Social stigma	Marriage to Civil Engineer is becoming difficult, as girls are preferring IT engineers with higher salary	Marriage to an IT engineer is easier as girls and parents prefer them to other disciplines because of the better salary structure
4.	Hours of working	More than 12 hours because of site demands	IT people are working more than Civil Engineers at times due to project demands, tight completion timelines, and getting the work done with lesser staff. Companies are paying 1.5 times more to one employee instead of employing three or four to do the job.
5.	Work conditions	Physically on site, bearing the heat and rain instead of an A/C environment	Air-conditioned environment
6.	Health wise	Will be healthier as a civil engineer does more exercise by being in the field	Heath problems faced by IT people by sitting in front of the PC for longer hours leading to pain in back, neck, shoulder etc, and demand of doing large amount of work in a short time leading to stress, even heart attack sometimes.
7.	Further Experience of 5 to 10 years	A Civil Engineer after gaining experience working in a project for two or three years gains more experience and his value increases In the market and his salary levels will be higher than workers in the IT field.	
8.	Attaining 45+	Civil Engineer is more valued for his rich experience, and his salary levels will be much higher than people in IT field	On attaining 45+ retrenching starts and IT companies begin to opt for younger people
9.	Internship	As part of AICTE rules, colleges are supposed to send students to an Industry for practical training on completion of their second year in college. Period of working is to be for one month minimum. However, colleges are not able to accommodate this much time as every year admissions are getting late. Consultants and construction professionals will impart knowledge on how to relate theory to practice and learn the subjects. Request all the Institutions to adjust curriculum and send the students for practical training, such that their interest on the engineering course will improve. Final semester students be sent for a minimum period of six months to learn more and thereby improve their chances of finding employment opportunities.	IT students are able to get internship in any Industry or company and thereby gain a lot of knowledge
10.	Stipend	Civil engineering consultants and contractors are not in a position to provide any stipend during internship, as their finances itself are meagre, however, students will learn a lot from the practical training provided by them. Students should undergo practical training as part of their curriculum to gain more knowledge of their subjects.	As IT industry is financially sound, it is able to absorb the Final year students for internship and give a stipend too, thereby, the IT students are benefitted
11.	Practical Training by Institutes	If the candidate undergoes internship, and gains knowledge, his employment opportunities will improve.	IT industry is able to absorb students for training as part of the college curriculum and even give employment to the students



Labourer on contract

Mistry/labourer on contract charge = 700/- per day and salary for the month with minimum two paid holidays of Sundays (28 x 700) = Rs 19,600/- per month.

Salary paid to Civil Engineer = Rs 10,000 - to Rs 12,000 per month by contractors for freshers, which is far less than the labourer's salary. Is this fair?

Conclusion

Raising the initial entry salary level of Civil Engineers to a minimum Rs 30,000/- per month will help to attract and retain them in the construction field. Developers and contractors who are engaging consultants need to increase the design fee, such that the consultants can pay good salaries to their staff.

Observations from others are solicited on how to raise the salary of civil engineers by conducting an open house meet inviting all the Builders, Developers, Contractors, Consultants and Statutory Authorities. Please give your valuable suggestions to prasad@metey.in