



# Le TAG

Quarterly report / June 2023



## Word from Management

Hello,

The middle of the year is already upon us, normally the time when nature and building sites come back to life. This year is a bit special, since the upturn is being felt mainly in Ontario, while Quebec is lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of housing starts. A number of major infrastructure projects will get underway, but possibly not before 2024-2025. An anticipated drop in interest rates in 2024 would also contribute to a recovery in residential activity.

We're also working hard to become even better, and to be ready when business picks up significantly. We are working on a wide range of projects to improve and integrate new technologies in our plants, construction sites and offices. Whether it's mobile applications, the automation of administrative processes or projects to reduce workplace accidents, we're leaving no stone unturned to maintain our position as market leader.

As we approach the summer vacations, we urge you to be cautious with your activities and travels, which are often more numerous. Your health and that of your loved ones is important to us, because without you, nothing is possible.

On behalf of ourselves and our management team, we would like to thank you for your hard work and commitment to ABF!

Marco Fortin,  
General Manager

## Upcoming Statutory Holidays

**Friday June 23th 2023:**  
(for Quebec only):

St-Jean-Baptiste Day

**Friday June 30th 2023**  
(for Quebec only)

**Monday July 3rd 2023**  
(for Ontario):

Canada Day

**Monday September 4th 2023:**  
Labor Day



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**ABF Management wishes you a nice summer vacation!**



# New projects



Hyatt Place Hotel and parking,  
Dorval, 1 500 MT



395 Slater, Ottawa, 3 400 MT



Auguste & Louis, Montreal, 1 100 MT

## And also without forgetting:

- ◆ Varennes Carbon Recycling, Varennes, 2 000 MT
- ◆ Minto Parkside, underground parking, Ottawa, 500 MT

# ABF events

On May 3, at the Centre des Congrès of Quebec City, members of the HR, OHS plant and field teams took part in the CNESST Colloquium.

The event featured an exhibitor showroom with over 100 specialized suppliers, and 12 conferences on current topics in human resources and OHS, presented by experts. It's a great way to learn about new topics and talk to professionals in the field of occupational health and safety.

ABF encourages its teams to develop their skills to meet the needs of today's realities.

Each of our OHS representatives is always ready to listen to your needs and make sure everyone works safely!



**5** of our legends have decided to take up the challenge launched by the City of Victoriaville to cover the greatest distance by active transport on their way to and from work. They have until September 22 to accumulate km.

Congratulations to **Alexandre Gagné, Alexandre Nadeau, Jean-Philippe Fafard, Stéphane Cayer and William Pellerin** for taking up this challenge!



# ABF events (continued)

On May 17, Victoriaville's office and plant employees enjoyed the Mello's food truck, which had moved directly into the parking lot.

Every employee present was treated to a delicious chocolate skewer. 😊

Chateauguay employees were also treated to a special delivery of skewers the next day!

Thanks to management for this wonderful gesture!



# Your social club

On March 26, members of the ABF social club and their families were invited to the Cabane à sucre chez Ti-Père in St-Nicéphore, to share a traditional cabin meal.

A good meal in good company... what more could you ask for! ☺





# Special mentions of the quarter

We present the recipients of the 2022 Golden Rod in each of the different departments. This year's chosen value was professionalism (perseverance).

Congratulations on your exemplary work!



**Éric Gariépy**  
Quebec Construction sites



**Jean-Philippe Fafard**  
Execution



**David Laferrière**  
Ontario Construction sites



**Abdou Joseph Kane**  
Factories



**Linda Landry**  
Finance



**Susan Aubin**  
Services



**Parani-Kumar Raja**  
Estimating



**Martin Croteau**  
Quebec Construction sites

# Your financial news

## Tips from the pros for a high credit rating

**Want to improve your credit rating? Experts explain what you need to know and how to get there.**

The way credit scores work is a mystery to many people, who have little idea of the impact they can have on an application for credit.

Yet many organizations consult it when you do business with them: employers, car rental agencies, insurers, cell phone companies... They all want to know who they're dealing with, because the higher your score, the lower the risk for them. The higher your rating, the lower the risk for them, and the better the terms they'll offer you.

Here are a few tips to help you improve your rating.

### CREDIT REPORT AND CREDIT RATING

To begin with, it's important to distinguish between a credit file and a credit rating. « A credit report is a history of your credit products and how you've managed them, explains Stacy Yanchuk-Oleksy, CEO of Credit Counseling Canada. It reflects the past, while the credit score looks to the future, as an indicator of how likely you are to repay your debts. A good score is based on a good record. »

The credit rating is easy to interpret, since it consists of a number between 300 and 900. This rating has important consequences, since the interest rate offered by a lender will vary greatly according to it," points out André Bolduc, CPA, licensed insolvency trustee at BDO.

Suppose you borrow \$15,000 to be repaid in 60 months. According to BDO, with a rating over 675, you'll pay 6.9% interest, or \$2,760 over 60 months. With a rating between 501 and 550, you'll pay 15.9% interest, or \$5,760. "Now imagine borrowing for a property: with a poor rating, you could be forced to go to lenders who will offer you rates of 9 or 10%," explains André Bolduc.

## FACTORS AFFECTING YOUR RATING

Here are the five factors that affect your odds.

- ✓ **Your payment habits (35 %).** By paying often and before the due date, your rating will improve. That said, and contrary to what some banks suggest, don't settle for minimum payments, reminds Stacy Yanchuk-Oleksy. « If at all possible, pay it off in full every month. You'll sleep better for it. »
- ✓ **Your credit utilization percentage (30 %).** Don't exceed 33% (at worst, 50%) of the amount allowed. « If your card has a \$6,000 limit, stick to less than \$3,000 », illustrates Stacy Yanchuk-Oleksy.
- ✓ **Account age (15 %).** The older your account, the more lenders will know about your repayment habits. It can therefore be useful to keep a card that you've had for 20 years and that costs nothing, provided you have a minimum of regular activity, such as a subscription that you repay automatically. You can also make a withdrawal (from a line of credit, for example) every few months, even if it means redepositing the money immediately. If you have no transactions on these accounts, they will be considered inactive after a while.
- ✓ **Number and type of receivables (10 %).** It's better to have a credit card, a mortgage and a line of credit than credit cards only.
- ✓ **The numbers of requests made (10 %).** Be careful not to overdo it, as each new application lowers your score, even if it's unsuccessful. « If you're turned down and your score isn't very good, consult a credit counsellor at a nonprofit or a broker who will be able to guide you, rather than shopping around », explains Stacy Yanchuk-Oleksy.

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# Your financial news (continued)

## Tips from the pros for a high credit rating (continued)

### ADOPT HEALTHY PRACTICES

It's also important to follow a few simple rules.

- ✓ **Check your credit file regularly** with the two main credit bureaus in Canada, TransUnion and Equifax. This service is free of charge and often directly accessible through your online bank. You can also order your report online, by mail or by phone. Applications such as Borrowell or Credit Karma (which work with Equifax or TransUnion) also track your file and give advice on how to improve your rating. This check also ensures that you are not a victim of fraud.
- ✓ **Check your file for errors.** If so, contact the agency and they'll take care of it. This can take some time, so it's always best to do it before applying for credit. Also, not all creditors report to both agencies, so it's best to check with each of them.
- ✓ **Have a card in your name.** If you have a co-applicant's credit card, it won't show up on your credit history. And if things go wrong, only the cardholder is responsible.
- ✓ **Take out a 2nd credit card,** especially if you need to rebuild your credit, suggests André Bolduc. « It should have a substantial limit, even if it's just for a small amount that you pay back in full every month. The whole thing will help you rebuild your credit rating. »
- ✓ **Beware of credit cards that offer rewards.** Canadians are fond of them, which encourages them to spend a lot, but this could backfire if they're unable to repay. « This is especially true when interest rates on some cards are 25%," warns Stacy Yanchuk-Oleksy. You're better off getting a low-interest card then. »
- ✓ **Don't miss a payment.** If you miss one or make at least one late payment, your credit rating could go down. And if you miss two minimum payments in 12 consecutive months, the annual interest rate on your unsecured credit cards and lines could rise.

While a good rating is important, it shouldn't become an obsession, says André Bolduc. « A rating of 750 or more is considered excellent. Beyond that, it doesn't make much difference, so there's no reason to worry, especially as it changes all the time, depending on the transactions and repayments you make. »

In any case, you should be careful. Financial institutions are constantly offering new types of credit cards and products, but you don't have to accept every new offer out of hand. "Credit is convenient, but there's always a price to pay," reminds Stacy Yanchuk-Oleksy.





# Your IT news

## Travel agencies use AI and data to help their customers

**Tour operators are tapping into a rich vein - data - and relying on AI, a new planning and customer service weapon, to win the battle for profitability.**

Is artificial intelligence uncharted territory for the travel industry? Yes, says Bryan Baker, Vice President, Analytics and Insights, at Fresh Tracks Canada, who carved out this position for himself in February 2022. "The industry is in a period of catching up, and our CEO, Sushant Trivedi, has made it a priority to step up our analytics and data efforts to tap new seams."

Fresh Tracks, a Vancouver-based travel agency established in 1996, intends to take advantage of the mountains of data it has collected from some 25,000 customers to build loyalty. Artificial intelligence (AI) is also helping it to do just that. Which website visitors are about to make up their minds? An algorithm developed in-house in collaboration with a partner answers the question. When a customer requests a price, Fresh Tracks can see how many brochures she has previously downloaded, how many promotional e-mails she has opened. The algorithm determines which combination of actions results in a booking. "We base this on previous actions, but as interactions change every day, real-time updating is essential," says Bryan Baker.

A new tool that helps the organization strategically allocate agent time and enhance the customer experience. "We want to be there when the customer is ready to book their trip, not before."

The use of algorithms and the adoption of a new loyalty program by Fresh Tracks in early October 2022 are already bearing fruit. In the current financial year, the number of bookings by loyal customers has risen from 0.4% to 6%. Bryan Baker is optimistic about the long-term benefits. "Instead of considering that travelers want to achieve all their goals at once, it's better to build a relationship with them and offer them other complementary trips."

Fresh Tracks isn't the only agency relying on AI and data to grow its business. In 2020, Jacques

Bulchand-Gidumal, Professor of Digital Activities and Tourism at the University Institute of Tourism and Sustainable Economic Development at the University of Las Palmas, Canary Islands, took stock of the data provided by tourists before, during and after their trip, categorized under five headings: online activities; offline activities; biometrics, including emotional data; wearable devices; and user-generated content. By combining these sources, a customer profile is created, which can be used to recommend suitable products and services. The benefits go far beyond a simple increase in bookings. Improving the customer experience, defining traveler preferences, lowering labor costs, facilitating brand management by tracking negative comments - these are just some of the merits of AI.

As you might guess, the big players who have made the most of AI are booking sites like Airbnb and TripAdvisor, which use machine learning to determine which trip a web user wants to book, based on previous bookings or even their IP address. "The approach is essentially based on probability analysis and approximation," explains Robert Cole, consultant in marketing strategy and travel technology.

Some players, such as hotel chains, are still lagging behind, he observes. And yet, data from previous stays provides them with information on customers' wishes. One swears by synthetic pillows, while another doesn't like the chambermaid to prepare the bed for him at bedtime. To each his own.

It goes without saying that personalization is common practice in luxury hotels, where staff record the slightest preferences of a posh clientele in a user profile. That said, thanks to data analysis and AI, mid-range establishments would be able to offer comparable services on a large scale, without adding to labor costs. The problem, according to Robert Cole?

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# Your IT news (continued)

## Travel agencies use AI and data to help their customers (continued)

Outdated but reliable reservation and operating systems. « Some preferences are centralized, but from an operational point of view, it's complicated to transmit the information to the establishment itself at the critical moment. »

Some mid-range hotels are working to offer such refinement in personalization, aided by apps like the Marriott Bonvoy system. "In the app, I can check off anything I want: early arrival, toothbrush, shaving kit and extra blankets," points out financial futurist Jason Schenker, who runs the Futurist Institute in Austin, Texas. Apps offer a personalized experience "in half", even if it's still up to travelers to make the requests.

Despite this, most companies are slow to fully exploit the potential of AI, due to a lack of suitable data of sufficient quality, says Robert Cole. "AI requires large, clean data sets. Yet the travel industry - particularly the hotel industry - is fragmented and doesn't have enough enriched data garnered at scale for AI to deliver reliable results."

Of course, agencies are required to take certain precautions before starting to mine the data. Every intermediary in the booking chain holds data on the establishments where you've stayed," continues Jason Schenker. Like any business, travel agencies are obliged to keep the data as secure as possible, especially as it contains identifying information."

At a time when automation, AI and data are paving the way for the future, according to Jason Schenker, these precautions are essential. To remain competitive, travel industry players will need to prioritize technology. "Given the growing importance of data, in the decades to come,

any organization that intends to carve out a place for itself will have to turn to digital."





# Your HR news

In this edition, we have chosen to focus on a theme in human resources management practice that contributes to corporate development, namely:

## Recruitment

Selection or recruitment is a fundamental lever enabling a company to develop and grow sustainably. Human resources are essential to a company's survival. Good recruitment is a strategic issue, making it possible, in the medium and long term, to recruit the quality and quantity of employees needed to ensure the company's long-term survival.

To obtain good results in recruitment, we must take into account 6 factors:

- ⇒ **Workforce requirements:** we need to establish workforce requirements over a one- to five-year timeframe to give us a good overall picture.
- ⇒ **Vision, mission and values:** when well defined, they have an impact on the success or failure of the recruitment process.
- ⇒ **Company presentation:** the company needs to make itself stand out in the eyes of potential candidates. The way in which you describe yourself or the team that will welcome the new legend is a crucial step. This is one of the reasons why ABF has developed its employer brand!
- ⇒ The **market:** we need to define the profile of the candidates we're looking for. We must also assess the opportunities, threats and particularities of our sector. It's also at this stage that we can decide to hire foreign workers, who are now part of our reality.
- ⇒ The **process:** we define each stage (telephone interview, face-to-face, test...) and design appropriate tools.
- ⇒ **Marketing strategies:** it's at this stage that we establish the budget for our recruitment and define our salary scale, as well as the role and responsibilities of the position. We also choose where our job offer will be advertised (job website, social networks, schools...).

*One of the strategies implemented by ABF is the referral program. The employee who refers a person to us can get a \$1,000 bonus if the person stays with us for 6 months.*

Finally, interviews and tests are carried out to evaluate the candidates. It is important to follow up with candidates, whether or not they are selected, in order to preserve the company's image.

In conclusion, it's important to remember that strategic recruitment is an ongoing process. We need to be on the lookout for potential talent, so that we can recruit the right skills at the right time to ensure ABF's continued development and sustainability.

Human resources team

# Occupational Health & Safety

## Deconstructing myths

### What we hear on the job sites

#### « Women are not strong enough to work in construction »

Working on a construction site isn't just a question of muscle, it's a question of skill. These days, it's often the equipment and tools that do the work for us. And whether you're a man or a woman, you'll always need a colleague's help from time to time. Construction is a team effort.

#### « Women aren't interested in construction »

By 2022: 7,200 women working on construction sites (3.64%) and 4,300 companies hiring women (15.94%).

#### « If women were capable of working in construction, they wouldn't leave the trade »

The main reasons why women leave the industry are discrimination, harassment and isolation. They don't leave because they don't feel capable of doing the job.

#### « The construction industry is a man's world. Period. »

The world has changed: Quebec has chosen to be a more equitable, egalitarian and diversified society. The composition of the workforce must reflect this.

#### « Hiring women means dealing with disorder. »

Quite the contrary! Employers who have integrated women into their teams have seen positive changes: a better work climate, safer working methods, access to a larger pool of competent, motivated workers, a positive image with customers, etc.

#### « Discrimination against women is none of my business, there's nothing I can do about it on my own. »

To build a respectful work climate, every gesture counts. Jokes about women, and also between men, sometimes go too far. Not encouraging discriminatory remarks is everyone's business.

**Set an example and become a positive leader.**



**Questions? Contact your H&S team!**



# New ABF's employees

Name	Department
Ahmed Salim-Al-Badri	Worksites
Alexandre Le Sieur	Factories
Anthony Brûlé	Worksites
Anthony Larabie	Worksites
Benjamin Sirois	Worksites
Cameron Lemire	Worksites
Camille Fréchette	Offices
Cindy Champagne Gaudreau	Offices
Daniel Gagnon	Worksites
David Paulhus	Worksites
Dennilson Vinicio Garcia Lemus	Factories
Destin Jr Bichotte	Worksites
Élyse Nolette	Offices
Jamie McMaster	Worksites
Jaxxon Brashear	Worksites
Jérémy Sirois	Worksites
Joe Nadeau	Worksites

Name	Department
Joël Legrand	Worksites
Jolyane Joly	Offices
Jonathan Letarte	Worksites
Juan Carlos Farfan Matu	Factories
Kathryn Pound	Worksites
Léonie Parr-Bérubé	Offices
Marianne Horvais	Offices
Mélanie Gariépy	Factories
Omar Mhomdi	Worksites
Patrick Labrosse	Worksites
Patrick Lefebvre	Factories
Pouchon Segur	Worksites
Steve Dos Santos	Worksites
Tyler Brazeau	Worksites
Vladislav Epelboym	Factories
Yvan Philippe Le Gall	Factories
Zachary Cloutier	Worksites

Welcome to all new employees to the ABF family! 😊

**Contact me!**

Contact me to obtain or submit additional information:

**Melanie Boucher**

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