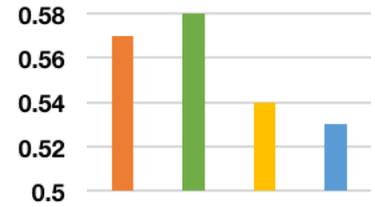


## TRENDLINES

Value as a percentage of NSR



Zweig Group recently released the *2019 Valuation Survey of AEC Firms*.

This year Zweig Group found that women-owned businesses – **WBE** – garnered higher valuation multiples than those with **MBE/DBE**, and **SBE** designations, as well as those with **no designation**. As the industry pushes primes to hire more diverse subs, it seems women owners in the AEC industry are leveraging their position.

Participate in a survey and save \$320 on any Zweig Group research publication. Visit [bit.ly/TZLsp](http://bit.ly/TZLsp) to learn more.

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## ABR: Always be recruiting

“Always be recruiting! That has to be the mantra for anyone who’s an owner or manager in an AEC firm today because finding people is crucial to your growth.”



Mark Zweig

### EDITORIAL

**A**lways be recruiting! That has to be the mantra for anyone who’s an owner or manager in an AEC firm today because finding people is crucial to your growth. Even if you don’t want to grow, you will still have attrition and need people to replace those who leave your employ for any number of reasons.

I find that if you get tuned in to certain qualities that make for good teammates, these people will regularly present themselves in the course of your normal day. People who are nice, pleasant looking, friendly, responsive to calls/emails/texts, quick-witted, calm, move quickly, have a positive attitude, and are passionate about their work, can be found everywhere. Yet, there is a great shortage of them and we all need more of them.

You have to tune in to the people you interact with every day. People such as restaurant workers, retail clerks, service providers, and more. There are plenty of jobs in AEC firms that don’t require technical or design degrees. But they still need to be filled by energetic, trainable employees who have a good attitude and work ethic.

Technical and design talent can be spotted at professional society meetings. Look around and talk to people. Even better yet, get on committees. Those who create an initial favorable impression should be asked to coffee or lunch. If that goes well, invite them to the office. Courtship takes some time and effort. Expend it!

Also, look to vendors for possible employees.

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

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## ON THE MOVE

**HUNTSMAN ARCHITECTURAL GROUP ANNOUNCES PROMOTIONS** Huntsman Architectural Group announces the designation of a new leadership tier: Rene Calara, Frédéric Côté, Nicole Everett, Karen Feltham, Tiana Taylor, Andrew Volckens, and Alison Woolf have been named Associate Principals. "In order to promote broader leadership participation and ensure the continued success of the firm, we are recognizing senior team members who have been shaping our practice and enhancing Huntsman's reputation as a strategic creative partner for today's leading organizations," shares President and CEO Sascha Wagner, AIA FIDA LEED AP.

Rene Calara has been the lead architect on significant projects for Uber, Google, McKesson, Argonaut, and Shorenstein. He is dedicated to excellence in both the big picture and in the details and is a thoughtful mentor to emerging professionals as well contributing to our community by leading many of the firm's philanthropy initiatives.

Frédéric Côté is an experienced designer, architect, and project manager for clients including Pixar, Dolby, Google, Emerson Collective, and Lucasfilm. Bringing his multi-faceted experience to each project, he is also committed to evolving Huntsman's technical standards and project delivery process and to exploring ways to improve the firm's collaboration with clients.

Nicole Everett is a passionate and effective project manager, currently spearheading the firm's largest project, Uber's Mission Bay 3 & 4 Campus and having led the design on projects for Deutsche Telekom, Piper Jaffray, YouTube, and several commercial landlords. A Certified Interior Designer and LEED Accredited Professional, her background in business management underscores her strong client advocacy and ability to build lasting relationships.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

Some of them have architects and engineers working for them in roles where they interface with people in firms like yours. The HVAC and electrical equipment manufacturers in particular often have very smart and capable people on their payrolls – with relevant experience that could benefit your firm.

Finally, get your best people out there teaching at local colleges and universities. As a professor myself, I speak from experience that teaching really provides a great opportunity to see what people are all about. You can learn a lot about your students over the course of a semester. How well they work in groups, whether or not they can write, how prepared they are for class, and what kinds of questions they ask. All good input for whether or not you might want to hire them. Even better is a real co-op or internship program. "Try before you buy" really works!

Recruiting has to be something you do, 24-7. That is, **IF** you really care about the quality of your team. ▀

MARK ZWEIG is Zweig Group's chairman and founder. Contact him at [mzweig@zweiggroup.com](mailto:mzweig@zweiggroup.com).

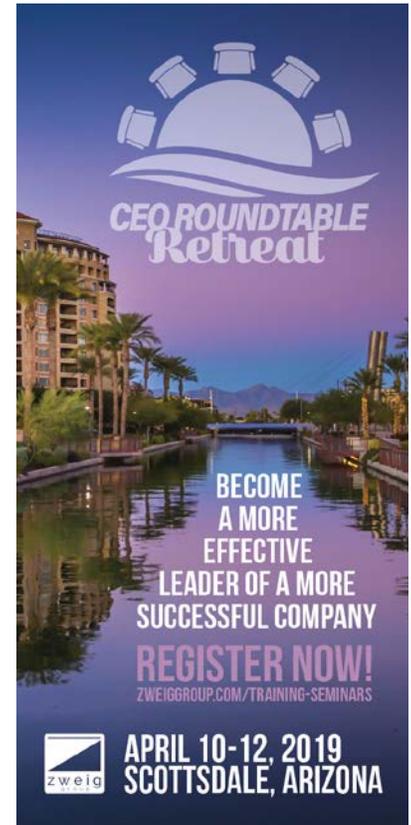
Karen Feltham is a senior designer, project manager, and workplace strategist for clients including McKesson, Kaiser Permanente, Wildcat Venture Partners, YouTube, and Sequoia Consulting. Karen is NCIDQ certified and both LEED and WELL accredited. Her focus on sustainability and wellness for people and the planet is integral to Huntsman's mission.

Tiana Taylor is focused on supporting the commercial leasing process from both a landlord and tenant perspective. Her clients include Rockhill Management, Commonwealth Partners, Disney, Lucasfilm, and Forbes Media. A consummate mentor, Tiana is also an active member in AIA and NOMA, and the International Facility Management Association.

Andrew Volckens helped launch Huntsman's Chicago office in 2016 and has been successfully building the firm's Midwest presence. A registered Architect, Andrew is the Managing Director of the firm's Chicago office where he has been spearheading projects for Golub, Tishman Speyer, Artisan Partners, Relativity, and Tarkett.

Alison Woolf has led the design on award-winning projects for Uber, Dolby, Tolleson, Argonaut, and YouTube. A LEED Accredited Professional, Alison seeks to create inspiring environments that authentically reflect a client's mission. She has also focused on internships, recruiting, employee integration, and staff development for the firm.

Founded in 1981, Huntsman Architectural Group is an award-winning 110+ person architecture, interior design, and consulting firm with offices in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago focused on elevating the human experience by designing meaningful places that connect, sustain, and inspire.



**THE ZWEIG** LETTER

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## A tough job

When it comes to delegation, you have to pick the right person for the right job, and set them up to succeed.



**Christina  
Zweig  
Niehues**

**MARKETING  
MATTERS**

**H**omework. Whether it brings to mind bleary-eyed, Red Bull-fueled all-nighters, or if you have kids, an equally horrible image comes to mind of a frustrated, teary child yelling that they “just don’t know.” Regardless of what vision it conjures, homework is a scary word.

The other night, I stationed my 11-year-old stepson at the kitchen table with a laptop to do his homework. While I stayed busy in the kitchen, he kept calling over the counter, wanting to know another word for process, or another word for species. These are things a parent never wants to hear, and something one quickly realizes should not be answered when the homework is actually not about listing synonyms.

After a brief lecture on plagiarism (as a former English major, the “P word” is something I was taught to associate with extreme fear and anxiety), and a game of “20 questions” to figure out what exactly his assignment was, I extracted the information – he was supposed to be creating a PowerPoint presentation based on an article about restoring the ecosystem of Mozambique. His solution was to copy random sentences from the

“Just like helping with homework, when we can help another person understand what it is that needs to be done and why it needs to be done that way, we are providing something both necessary and valuable to the organization.”

article, changing a few common words, and turn these into bullet points on slides, bordered with his favorite Google images of “Animals in Africa.”

Although I had a mountain of dishes, two loads of laundry, a fence to repair, and an article to write, I

See CHRISTINA ZWEIF NIEHUES, page 4





### BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR

This award recognizes the top architecture, structural engineering, civil engineering, environmental, geotechnical, landscape architecture/planning, and multi-discipline firms in the United States and Canada based on their workplace practices, employee benefits, employee retention rates, and much more.

Best Firms To Work For benefits:

- Largest employee survey in the AEC industry – more than 1.6 million data points gathered in 2018!
- Access to employee insight through their own words
- Most affordable employee survey in the industry
- Completely customizable options
- Great tool for recruitment, retention, and marketing!
- Benchmarking your firms against firms of similar size, disciplines, and region
- Recognition at the Awards Conference
- Incredible public relations exposure in press releases, *The Zweig Letter*, and Zweig Group's monthly magazine, *Civil + Structural Engineer Magazine*
- Signs, stickers, trophies, plaques, and other collateral for your office(s)
- The Best Firms To Work For logo to use on all of your promotional material

For more information, visit [bit.ly/1289BFTWF](http://bit.ly/1289BFTWF).

## BUSINESS NEWS

**AP BREAKS GROUND ON THE CU BOULDER COLLEGE OF MUSIC BUILDING ADDITION** With the help of the school's mascot, Chip, and the Buff Basketball Band, AP broke ground on the CU Boulder College of Music Building Addition project. The addition will mark a major step toward consolidating College of Music programming into one facility, creating increased opportunities for collaboration across departments as the choral department relocates from Macky Auditorium into the new space.

During the ceremony, remarks were given by Anoushka Divekar, president of the College of Music Student Government; Philip DiStefano, chancellor of CU Boulder; and Robert Shay, dean of the College of Music.

Features of the 64,000-square-foot addition will include a state-of-the-art recording studio, dedicated suites for the Entrepreneurship Center for Music and Musicians' Wellness Program, new classroom space, acoustically tuned practice rooms, and work and studio space for faculty and staff. Innovative rehearsal

halls that convert to performance spaces, meanwhile, will help strengthen the college's deep ties to the community as a beacon for the arts.

The addition also includes space for the Theatre and Dance department, providing a dance studio, changing rooms and a theatre classroom.

"We are absolutely honored to continue our relationship with CU Boulder in this capacity," said AP Project Manager, Jade Mercer. "Giving students more comfortable and efficient workspaces is where AP thrives."

The project is designed by **Pfeiffer Architects** and is on track to open in time for the 2020 fall semester.

Pfeiffer Architects is a 50-person U.S. design firm whose projects for cultural and educational clients marry smart planning with unusually effective client and team engagement for imaginative architectural solutions. Pfeiffer Architects is a bi-coastal practice, serving clients across North America and abroad.

CHRISTINA ZWEIG NIEHUES, from page 3

knew everything else had to wait. Two hours later, he finally understood the assignment and had managed to create a presentation. It took a lot of work and time from both of us, but he learned a new skill and will be better able to tackle the next assignment.

Everyone in the AEC industry is busy right now. Every day seems to go by in a flash, and the to-do list grows faster than the got 'er done list. While delegation seems like a natural solution to the problem of being "too-busy," it's harder than ever to find a person to delegate to. How often have you refused to pass off a task, or taken on a low-level task, because the person doing it just wasn't getting it done like you would, if at all?

Leaders have to learn to both delegate and mentor. Although you have to pick the right people for the right jobs, you also have to ensure that those placed in these positions have skills and information to do their best at what is asked of them. When we get busy, taking a detour to explain a process or concept can seem like a luxury better reserved for a different time.

It can be a frustrating task to help someone else with their work, especially if it seems like they have an easy or obvious task. But if you're in a position of leadership, it's one of your most important jobs.

Formal mentorship and training programs are a great way to make sure that leaders have the time and capacity for this endeavor. But even the Best Firms To Work For need to do better in this area. Our 2018 Award

Program found that employees rated their firms' mentoring program an average of 6.8/10 when asked if it was something that was being used effectively to retain employees and reduce turnover. Employees also rated the quality and frequency of these programs a 6.8 and 6.7, respectively, showing a need and desire for improvement in this area.

"Leaders have to learn to both delegate and mentor. Although you have to pick the right people for the right jobs, you also have to ensure that those placed in these positions have skills and information to do their best at what is asked of them."

Just like helping with homework, when we can help another person understand what it is that needs to be done and why it needs to be done that way, we are providing something both necessary and valuable to the organization. It's these moments of mentorship and delegation that help everyone advance in their careers, and that help firms grow and thrive.

Have you experienced the benefit of a mentor in your career? Does your firm have a program or initiative that is making a difference? We'd love to hear about it! ➤

CHRISTINA ZWEIG NIEHUES is Zweig Group's director of business development. She can be reached at [czweig@zweiggroup.com](mailto:czweig@zweiggroup.com).



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SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA**

## PROFILE



## Long tenure: Kerry Haber

President of Bernardon (Hot Firm #39 for 2018), an 80-person architecture, interior design, and landscape architecture firm based in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN  
Correspondent

“Keeping everyone focused on the big picture when we are working hard to meet short-term project deadlines,” says Haber, referring to his number one role at the firm.

### A CONVERSATION WITH KERRY HABER.

**The Zweig Letter:** With technology reducing the time it takes to complete design work, how do you get the AEC industry to start pricing on value instead of hours?

**Kerry Haber:** This is a topic that we’ve struggled with for many years. Finding knowledgeable clients who appreciate and understand the value that we as architects and designers bring to the design and construction process is the key. One could say it’s a matter of “educating” those clients who have not had experience working with an architect by making them aware of what we do. We find that with repeat clients it’s an easier “sell” because they’ve observed the value that we bring to their projects. When the project scope is well defined, we prefer to work on a fixed-fee basis, which

takes hours out of the equation. However, when the project is not well defined, we find that hourly invoicing is still the most equitable arrangement.

“Technology has increased productivity significantly over the past 10 years, but it can only take you so far. It’s the creative talent of the design staff that makes a firm successful.”

**TZL:** If the worker shortage continues, do you see wages increasing to encourage more talent to enter the AEC space, or will technology be used to counter the reduced work force?

**KH:** I already see wages increasing because of the shortage of experienced architects. Technology has increased productivity significantly over the past 10 years, but it can only

take you so far. It's the creative talent of the design staff that makes a firm successful.

**TZL: Do you tie compensation to performance for your top leaders?**

**KH:** To encourage collaboration during design and sharing of leads during business development, we do not tie principals' compensation to specific performance metrics. All of the principals share in the success of the firm. For senior staff who are not principals we have an MBO (Management by Objective) program, where bonuses are calculated on achievement of mutually agreed upon annual goals.

"We're working on enhancing our continuing education and mentoring program so that younger staff can shadow more experienced staff and learn from that observation."

**TZL: Do you share base salary or bonus amounts with your entire staff?**

**KH:** We believe that salary is a very personal matter and should be confidential. Compensation of each staff member is based on the individual's talent, experience, and performance. We do not have a salary "scale" that is shared staff-wide.

**TZL: Have you ever closed an under-performing office? If so, tell us about it.**

**KH:** We have never had to close an office for under-performance, but during the recession in 2008-2009, we did consolidate operations by cutting back from three offices to two.

**TZL: How many years of experience – or large enough book of business – is enough to become a principal in your firm? Are you naming principals in their 20s or 30s?**

**KH:** We do not have a minimum number of years of experience for someone to become a principal. This is a position that is earned by proven performance and there is no timetable. Likewise, there is not a quota or threshold in terms of a certain amount of business generation. Regarding age, I became a principal at 37 and our most recent principal achieved that position in his early 30s. Age will not be a factor in naming future principals.

**TZL: When did you have the most fun**

**running your firm, and what were the hallmarks of that time in your professional life?**

**KH:** The most challenging and rewarding timeframes have been during times of rapid growth. During my tenure at our firm, we've had several periods when business needs required us to accelerate the hiring of new staff and to expand our office space. This occurred at the same time we were doing larger and more complex projects. These times have been both energizing and rewarding.

**TZL: How do you promote young and new leaders as the firm grows?**

**KH:** We try to encourage professional growth for individuals and provide them with opportunities to grow. Our legacy is to allow people to "reach" for personal growth as opposed to handing it to them. It really is a function of the initiative and drive of the individuals, and when that is present, we welcome it with open arms.

**TZL: In one word or phrase, what do you describe as your number one job responsibility as CEO?**

**KH:** Keeping everyone focused on the big picture when we are working hard to meet short-term project deadlines.

"When the economy does well, so do we. When the economy falters, it has a direct impact on our business. For the last 10 years, since the depth of the Great Recession, we've been on a continuous upward track."

**TZL: What happens to the firm if you leave tomorrow?**

**KH:** We use a lot of collaboration and consensus in managing the firm. While there would be a period of adjustment, I have confidence that my fellow principals would be able to run the firm in my absence.

**TZL: There is no substitute for experience, but there is pressure to give responsibility to younger staff. What are you doing to address the risk while pursuing the opportunity to develop your team?**

# B



**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1973

**HEADQUARTERS:** West Chester, PA

**OFFICES:** 3

**NO. OF EMPLOYEES:** 80

**KERRY HABER:** He is responsible for client contact and supervision through all phases of design, including land planning, preparation of construction documents, and construction administration.

**SERVICES:**

- Architecture
- Interior design
- Landscape architecture
- Urban design
- Master planning
- Renovation/repositioning
- Historic preservation
- Sustainable design

**MARKETS:**

- Senior living
- Multi-family
- Single family
- Healthcare
- Higher education
- Corporate
- Industrial/warehousing
- Retail
- Hospitality
- Civil and cultural

**VISION STATEMENT:** Dream. Design. Succeed.

**WHERE THEY WORK:** Licensed to practice in Alabama, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington D.C.

See LONG TENURE, page 8

LONG TENURE, from page 7

**KH:** We deal with this issue on a daily basis. We find that most clients are not interested in a “learning experience.” We’re working on enhancing our continuing education and mentoring program so that younger staff can shadow more experienced staff and learn from that observation. With challenging deadlines, that can be difficult, but it’s critical to our future success.

**TZL: Architects love being architects, but what are you doing to instill a business culture in your firm?**

**KH:** From the founding of our firm, we’ve been keenly aware of the fact that we are a business and we must monitor our costs as well as our clients’ costs. Our many developer clients help us focus on the importance of cost. We continue to keep our staff aware of fee structures and hourly rates along with the ongoing challenge of balancing fees with our design creativity.

**TZL: Diversity and inclusion is lacking. What steps are you taking to address the issue?**

**KH:** We’ve had the good fortune over the years to have a diverse workforce relative to age, gender, race, and ethnicity. Specifically, as more women have been entering the field of architecture over the past several years, we’ve seen many more female candidates applying for positions. As a result, the percentage of women in the firm has grown – today our staff is 44 percent female. Using national resources such as the AIA has helped us recruit international employees; some of whom we have assisted in the visa process. Additionally, we encourage our current staff to be our recruiters and ask them to recommend the firm to people they know and respect. This is especially helpful relative to our recent graduates and we believe this will continue to increase our diversity.

“Our legacy is to allow people to ‘reach’ for personal growth as opposed to handing it to them. It really is a function of the initiative and drive of the individuals, and when that is present, we welcome it with open arms.”

**TZL: A firm’s longevity is valuable. What are you doing to encourage your staff to stick around?**

**KH:** One of the hallmarks of Bernardon over the years has been the long tenure of many individuals. We do not have a “hire and fire” mentality, and I believe that the turnover in our firm is well below the industry average. We let new hires know that we’re investing in them and that we hope they will reciprocate by staying with us. We treat our people fairly and make the firm a good place to work, and that has resulted in many of our staff staying with us for a very long time. This sets an example for younger staff and makes us an inviting place to work and build a career.

**TZL: Benefits are evolving. Are you offering any new ones due to the changing demographic?**

**KH:** Recently, we’ve implemented a change from vacation and sick time being separate to a paid time off policy, where

these are combined into one benefit. The intent is to give our staff more flexibility in how they handle their time off and for those employees who are fortunate enough to stay healthy and not get sick to not forfeit their sick time. We want to give people an opportunity to strike a balance between their work and personal life. Time off is important to recharge, so our policy limits the carryover of PTO from year to year to encourage people to take their vacation time.

“We’ve implemented a change from vacation and sick time being separate to a PTO policy, where these are combined into one benefit. The intent is to give our staff more flexibility in how they handle their time off.”

**TZL: Tell us about the last time you named a new principal from outside the firm.**

**KH:** Currently, we have seven principals – six of whom worked at the firm for a number of years prior to becoming a principal. Historically, we’ve found that to maintain our culture, it pays to give prospective leaders some time to get to know us and vice versa. We did make one exception to that policy 15 years ago when we named a new principal from outside the firm. That situation involved merging that person’s sole proprietor firm into our larger firm. Because we had joint ventured on several projects over a multi-year period, we were very familiar with each other, and it has worked out exceptionally well.

**TZL: How are the tariffs impacting your business and that of your clients?**

**KH:** We see the unpredictability of costs creating significant problems for our clients in terms of their procurement of materials for construction. However, we have not had any clients change their strategy specifically as a result of the tariffs.

**TZL: How are the tax cuts impacting your business? Have salaries and bonuses increased?**

**KH:** The federal tax cut has had no impact on salaries and bonuses within our firm. When the economy does well, so do we. When the economy falters, it has a direct impact on our business. For the last 10 years, since the depth of the Great Recession, we’ve been on a continuous upward track. At this time, we’re carefully monitoring market conditions and trying to prepare for a recession, whenever it may occur.

**TZL: How have the tax cuts impacted your firm’s valuation? Do you plan on doing another valuation due to the tax cuts?**

**KH:** The tax cuts have not directly impacted our firm’s valuation. We do a valuation on an annual basis as a matter of policy; we feel it’s a good practice.

**TZL: Are you currently pursuing the R&D tax credit?**

**KH:** No, but we are open to the opportunity in the future. ▀



## Employee retention

As firms suffer from a shortage of experienced design and construction professionals, the industry finds itself in the middle of a talent war.



Jen  
Newman

GUEST  
SPEAKER

According to industry research, it can take firms more than four months to fill the most difficult positions in their org charts. Meanwhile, in a study conducted by the Center for American Progress, the cost of losing an employee can run as high as 213 percent for highly-trained positions, meaning to replace a highly qualified employee making \$80,000 a year could cost the company a staggering \$170,000. It stands to reason that employee retention is among the top priorities for AEC firms today.

These seven tips can help you win the employee retention battle as part of the greater talent war:

**1) Make a great first impression.** Hire the right people and ensure they don't just fit the role but also the company culture. Be sure to define their role and expectations clearly; no one likes a bait-and-switch. Start them off with a streamlined onboarding process so they feel welcome and comfortable in their position and understand your firm vision, procedures, and culture. Finally, celebrate their addition to the team.

**2) Transparency and communication.** Transparency can give employees a sense of ownership in the company. Open, honest, and unambiguous communication can eliminate job uncertainty and animosity within the company culture. Create strategies for open feedback, online forums, and town hall meetings, allowing employees to ask questions of top leadership.

**3) Make it their mission to engage.** Companies with highly-engaged employees have turnover rates 31

See JEN NEWMAN, page 10



## ON THE MOVE

**DANIEL BARBATO TO LEAD NEWARK, DE OFFICE AND BRIAN FISCHBACH TO LEAD PITTSBURGH, PA OFFICE** Pennoni will continue its expansion and success under new leadership in its Newark, Delaware, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, offices. Daniel Barbato will serve as the firm's Newark Office Director, and Brian Fischbach will serve as the firm's Pittsburgh office director.

Barbato previously served as the firm's regional practice leader, division manager, and senior engineering in the municipal engineering division. His primary area of expertise is in water and wastewater engineering. His background includes more than 20 years of experience in the design, permitting, construction management, maintenance and operation of water and wastewater treatment plants, distribution systems, drainage systems, pumping stations, storage tanks, collection systems, production wells, and wastewater disposal systems. He is also experienced in ecological monitoring and restoration projects, including pond restoration and stream health monitoring. Dan is knowledgeable in utility financing, capital programming, rate design, and local, state, and federal water

and wastewater regulations, as well as Federal and State grant programs. He is a licensed professional engineer in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Maryland.

Barbato looks forward to his new position as office director, saying, "I am honored by the opportunity to lead the Newark, DE office. I look forward to increasing our visibility and presence in Delaware, improving and advancing our project management process, and implementing profit improvement strategies. We have a great team in the office and it is truly exciting to lead us into the future."

Fischbach previously worked as division manager and senior engineer in our civil/site division. Fischbach has nearly 30 years of project management and leadership experience in the civil and municipal engineering, solid waste, energy and site development sectors. He has managed projects and clients for the planning, design and construction oversight of private and public land development projects, well pads, impoundments, compressor stations, gas pipelines, water pipelines, and solid waste management facilities such as waste to energy

plants, recycling facilities, and landfills. He is a licensed professional engineer in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Fischbach sees a bright future in his new role, saying, "I have really enjoyed my experience at Pennoni as division manager and look forward to stepping into the office director position as well. I hope to build upon the successes achieved by the Pittsburgh region by increasing our name recognition and promoting Pennoni's capabilities to key players in the market through a joint business development effort involving all staff."

As a multidisciplinary consulting engineering firm founded more than five decades ago, Pennoni approaches engineering challenges from a wider spectrum of angles than most, from land development to energy management. Pennoni's goal is to help communities and private sector clients alike navigate the ever-changing technological advancements available and learn how best to integrate "smart" solutions into the current landscape and make them a part of resilient and sustainable planning.

JEN NEWMAN, from page 9

percent lower than those with employees who are less engaged. Retention increases when employees feel that they have a sense of meaning and purpose and can connect how their jobs contribute to the mission and move the company forward. Engage your employees in your firm's mission, vision, and goals. Encourage employees to share and implement ideas that can improve processes and policies. When employees feel like they're part of your story, you will keep them inspired, engaged, and on board.

Vicky Golie, CPSM, marketing director of Salt Lake-based architecture firm Babcock Design, attributes the firm's employee retention success to engagement. "We work hard and play hard," says Golie. "We have a standing committee that meets regularly to strengthen our culture, keep moral high, make things fun, and strive for a work-life balance."

"The cost of losing an employee can run as high as 213 percent for highly-trained positions, meaning to replace a highly qualified employee making \$80,000 a year could cost the company a staggering \$170,000."

**4) Invest in employee growth.** A drive to continually grow and improve is part of what makes a great employee. Communicate openly with employees about their career paths and empower employees to set their own goals. Give them the training, tools, resources, and mentoring they need to achieve those goals. Couple this with simple, goal-based performance reviews and the result will be a highly motivated employee that stays for the long haul.

Mike Johnson, of MEP firm Van Boerum & Frank Associates

in Salt Lake City, says employees tend to look at firms with a solid work history and future growth opportunities. "Great firms offer stability, support and mentoring at every stage of your career," he says.

**5) Recognize and reward.** Employees who feel valued, appreciated, and needed are likely to support management decisions, accept organizational changes, and stay loyal. Show your employees they are valued and appreciated by recognizing them and celebrating their successes and efforts with specific, tangible rewards.

Fran Pruyn, senior principal at architecture firm CRSA, says: "It can be something as simple as periodic gift cards for extraordinary performance. Reward your people, and they will reward you with their loyalty."

**6) Work-life balance.** For many people, work-life balance means more than having time to spend with their families or on activities. They want to contribute to a firm that cares about them as individuals. Give employees the opportunity to connect with one another and make a difference. Organizations that prioritize employees increase the bottom line. When employees feel valued, it encourages them to provide better customer service to clients.

Doug Lineback, a 28-year employee at VFBA, says, "The firm gives employees the resources and equipment to do their job well and stay healthy, as well as providing a friendly atmosphere where the owners encourage employees and are interested in their family."

**7) Compensation.** Be sure that you are paying your employees what they are worth, or better, and ensure you are rewarding them on a regular basis with raises and bonuses. Offer competitive benefits that include flexibility based on individual needs, positions and skills. ▀

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## Driving efficiency

Implementing a tailor-made set of processes for your tailor-made firm will increase your chances of success, regardless of the space in which you compete.



Ryan  
Hayes

**GUEST  
SPEAKER**

Regardless of the niche your firm has found, if you Google “project execution methodology,” you will find about 55.1 million results in 0.59 seconds. Ask 10 different project management professionals what type of project execution methodology is best and you will likely get 10 different answers. With all the options available, it can be difficult to decide what makes the most sense for your firm. So, why not develop your own?

At Gateway Engineers, we engage in many projects each year. Approximately 5,500 of them for more than 630 clients in 2018. While our average project size – approximately \$16,000 – is modest in comparison to the industry, we can profitably execute such a high volume based on one of our core operating philosophies – efficiency. Efficiency is so important that the goal of our project management system is to “efficiently” execute projects. Being efficient is synonymous with being focused and organized. It’s a win-win for our clients and company. So, with this systematic mindset we developed and continue to improve, we drive efficiency gains.

During the development of the methodology, we set out to answer the complex question of, “How

“Instead of adhering to an off-the-shelf execution methodology, we tailored something unique to our own business.”

do we execute projects?” Meaning, what actions do we take? What fundamentals are involved? What systems, tools, and processes are available to help us? What reports can we review or monitor to help us? What concepts and philosophies can guide us? What can we do on current projects to help us on future projects? Furthermore, we wanted our methodology to be applicable to all projects,

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# TRANSACTIONS

**MCKIM & CREED ACQUIRES PENSACOLA ENGINEERING & SURVEYING FIRM** **McKim & Creed, Inc.**, one of the largest engineering and geomatics firms headquartered in the Southeast, announced that it has acquired Pensacola-based **Jehle-Halstead, Inc.**

JHI provides civil engineering and surveying services for land development and infrastructure projects in the Florida Panhandle, South Alabama, and Gulf Coast areas.

“Jehle-Halstead is a strong, team-oriented, well-established firm that shares McKim & Creed’s commitment to superior quality, responsiveness and dependability,” said John Lucey, president and CEO of McKim & Creed. “Combining McKim & Creed’s strengths with those of Jehle-Halstead enables us to provide more specialized and advanced technologies – such as hydrographic surveying, unmanned aerial systems, and sustainable energy solutions – in the dynamic Florida Panhandle and Gulf Coast areas. We are excited to add our tenth Florida office and expand the McKim & Creed footprint into this region of Florida.”

JHI began its professional practice in 1987 and employs 17 people. The company works within the commercial, educational, government, medical, military and residential arenas, and has furnished services for such recent notable projects as:

- The Nine-Mile Road Utility Expansion/Upgrade/Relocation completed for

the Emerald Coast Utilities Authority in Escambia County, Florida.

- Beach Haven Redevelopment, completed jointly for Escambia County and Emerald Coast Utilities Authority.
- North and South Old Corry Field Roads sidewalk and drainage improvements for Escambia County.
- East District stormwater project for the City of Gulf Breeze, Florida.
- Numerous planning, design, permitting and construction administration projects as the exclusive continuing civil engineering services provider for the Santa Rosa County School District.
- Wide-ranging planning, design, permitting and construction administration efforts for numerous private developments in and around Northwest Florida.

McKim & Creed provides engineering and geomatics services from 21 offices located throughout North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Virginia, Texas and Pennsylvania. The 40-year-old company has more than 500 employee-owners.

Glenn Halstead, Jehle-Halstead president, and Patrick Jehle, Jr., vice president/operations manager will oversee the Pensacola office, which will go by the name McKim & Creed, Inc.

“By joining forces with McKim & Creed, we are

significantly expanding the services we provide to our clients, and can now offer a deep and wide pool of resources from which to draw,” said Halstead.

“We will continue to drive local business and be an integral part of the Pensacola community,” added Jehle. “As a part of McKim & Creed, our staff will remain in place and our client relationships will continue. The only difference is that now we can offer more opportunities, resources and services for our clients.”

McKim & Creed is a 500-person, employee-owned engineering and geomatics firm with offices in Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, and Pennsylvania. The company was established in 1978 and is headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina. McKim & Creed specializes in civil, environmental, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and structural engineering; design-build; airborne and mobile LiDAR/scanning; drones; subsurface utility engineering; and hydrographic and conventional surveying services for the energy, transportation, federal, land development, water and building markets.

Jehle-Halstead provides a comprehensive range of engineering and surveying services throughout the Florida Panhandle, South Alabama and Gulf Coast areas. In addition to civil engineering and surveying, JHI is highly experienced in providing bidding, construction management and inspection services.

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regardless of their attributes. When applied to a project, even in different ways or with varying intensity, the chance of project success increases exponentially.

With these key thoughts and objectives in place, we developed four principles that are the cornerstones of Gateway Engineers’ Project Execution Methodology.

- **The project life cycle.** The methodology loosely follows the project lifecycle. However, it is not a one-way flowchart or top-down checklist. Gateway views the project lifecycle in broad terms, including activities associated with selling and closing projects. This adheres closely to our strong belief in, and use of, the seller/doer model and allows our project managers to more thoroughly plan their selling and closing efforts.
- **Project management fundamentals.** Our PEM depicts project management fundamentals. It visually represents the relationship among individual fundamentals and how they fit within our way of executing projects.
- **The flexibility principle.** The methodology is designed as a framework applicable to all projects. It allows project managers to pick and choose any or all parts of the methodology best suited for each project. The framework design is flexible so projects of all types, sizes, clients, and disciplines could use what is necessary to increase the likelihood of success.
- **The framework.** Our PEM works best when our project

management systems, tools, and processes are used in conjunction with one another. Not all elements require the same amount of time or attention, so it is up to project managers (see The flexibility principle) to determine the most effective use of the methodology to satisfy clients and maximize efficiency.

“Efficiency is so important that the goal of our project management system is to ‘efficiently’ execute projects. Being efficient is synonymous with being focused and organized. It’s a win-win for our clients and company.”

Gateway’s Project Execution Methodology is a collection of project management fundamentals, systems, tools, processes, concepts, and philosophies. Instead of adhering to an off-the-shelf execution methodology, we tailored something unique to our own business. One of our niches is small projects. We do a lot of them and we seek to do them very efficiently! With this systematic approach, it has helped us win in a space where other companies find hardship. ▀

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