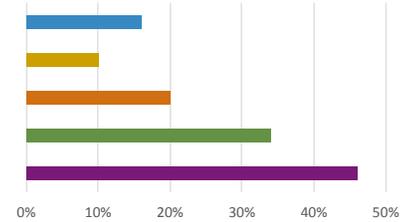


## TRENDLINES

### Mentoring programs for PMs



More than three-quarters (81 percent) of firms surveyed for Zweig Group's 2015 Project Management Survey have a mentoring program for project managers. Almost half of respondents (46 percent) reported that **senior members of the firm mentor PMs**. Another 34 percent said that **PMs mentor potential project managers or future leaders**, while 10 percent had **another type of mentoring**, 16 percent had **no answer**, and 20 percent of firms had **no PM mentoring program**. — Vivian Cummings, research analyst assistant

## Entrepreneurial vs. small firms

Think your small firm should stay small? Think again. Here's why you should strive for growth in your firm.

“Entrepreneurial firms are all about growth. Their owners want to create value in their enterprises – value that can be realized when they either individually or collectively exit from the firm.”



Mark Zweig

### EDITORIAL

Without a doubt, there are some entrepreneurial firms in the A/E/P and environmental consulting business today. That said – and I've written it before in these pages – just because you are privately-held and a small business does **NOT** make you an entrepreneurial firm.

Whenever I hear a firm described as a “practice,” it immediately conjures up negative images for me. “Practice” makes me think of a business that revolves around one or a few God-like owners who manage all aspects of the business, all clients, and all design work. They are lords and everyone else there is a serf. The business exists solely for their benefit and dies when they are gone. It's somewhat analogous to a medical practice, where there is one doctor and then everyone else is a peon. I don't like the term. We aren't in the “practice management” business and the clients we work for want something more than a “practice.”

Yet, there are still some people out there who own firms and believe that they can stay small successfully. They look at how much they as individuals earn from their business and it's more than they ever expected to make, so they are happy with it. Yet they usually would have far more potential if they were an entrepreneurial firm.

Entrepreneurial firms are all about growth. Their owners want to create value in their enterprises – value that can be realized when

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they either individually or collectively exit from the firm. And this value is not just restricted to an external sale. It could be in an internal sale just as easily.

How do entrepreneurial firms perform better than the rest of the industry? Consider the following statistics (pulled from Zweig Group's *Successful Firm Survey*). These are really telling!

- Fast growth firms (those growing at a rate of 20 percent or more for three years in a row) make an average of 16.2 percent pre-tax, pre-bonus profit versus 9.9 percent for all firms
- Fast growth firms have an average revenue of \$133,690 per employee versus \$126,840 for all firms
- Fast growth firms make a 39.8 percent return on total assets (pre-tax, pre-bonus) versus 19.7 percent for all firms
- Fast growth firms have a median total annual principal compensation of \$290,000 versus \$194,000 for all firms
- Fast growth firms are worth a median of .59 times NSR versus .47 for slow growth firms

Let's consider the case of two principals. They each joined A/E firms out of school and at age 40, both became principals in the companies they worked for. Principal "A" became an owner in a \$5 million NSR slow-growth company (growing by 5 percent a year) and Principal "B" became an owner in a \$5 million high growth entrepreneurial company (growing by 20 percent a year).

Ten years later, by age 50, Principal B's career and financial position is dramatically different from his counterpart, Principal A, in the slower-growth, not-so-entrepreneurial firm. Both owned 20 percent of their firm's stock when they bought in.

In year one, Principal A, working in the slow growth firm, earned \$194,000 in salary and bonus. His ownership was worth .20 (.47 times \$5 million), or \$470,000. By year 10, he would be earning \$301,000 annually (assuming a 5 percent annual pay increase) and his stock was worth \$729,000. Over 10 years, he would earn \$2.44 million. His 10-year total would be \$3.169 million. Not too bad considering he still has another 15 years to work, assuming he retires at age 65 (and many of us will hopefully work well beyond that).

Principal B, on the other hand, was earning \$290,000 in salary and bonus the first year he became a principal in a high-growth firm. His initial ownership was worth .20 (.59 times \$5 million), or \$590,000. By year 10, assuming a modest 5 percent annual pay increase, he would be earning \$450,000 in annual salary and bonus, and his stock would be worth \$3.05 million. His total of salary and bonus earned over 10 years would be \$3.65 million making his 10-year total \$6.69 million. Pretty amazing considering at this point Principal B is only 50 years old and still has another 15 years to work.

Do I still need to convince you of the benefits of building an entrepreneurial firm? Now you know why we will be doing a new seminar this year – Building an Entrepreneurial Firm, in a number of locations around the U.S. in 2016. We'll start with dinner, drinks, and comedy the night before to get everyone in the right frame of mind. Then we will teach you what we have learned over the last 28 years of working with companies in this business.

2015 was an amazing year for our industry and for Zweig Group. The time has never been better to be more successful as an architect, engineer, planner, or environmental consultant. Happy 2016, All! 🚩

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

#### TALK TO US

Do you have an interesting story to tell? Is your company doing things differently and getting results? Let us know. We'd love to contact you and feature you in an upcoming case study. If interested, please email [abennett@zweiggroup.com](mailto:abennett@zweiggroup.com).

## Take your advice from Mark Zweig to-go.

Listen to this and past editorials from *The Zweig Letter* via the free TZL Podcast on Stitcher, iTunes and Soundcloud.

[zweiggroup.com/podcast](http://zweiggroup.com/podcast)



## THE ZWEIG LETTER

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# Your management questions, answered

This month, readers seek advice on topics related to social media, benchmarking, and increasing prices.



Christina  
Zweig

DEAR  
CHRISTY

## WHO SHOULD FIRMS COMPARE THEMSELVES TO WHEN BENCHMARKING?

Dear Christy,

*"We're about to start our strategic planning process and like to use industry benchmarks as comparisons. When benchmarking, who should we compare ourselves to?"*  
—Benchmarking in Bismark.

Dear Benchmarking,

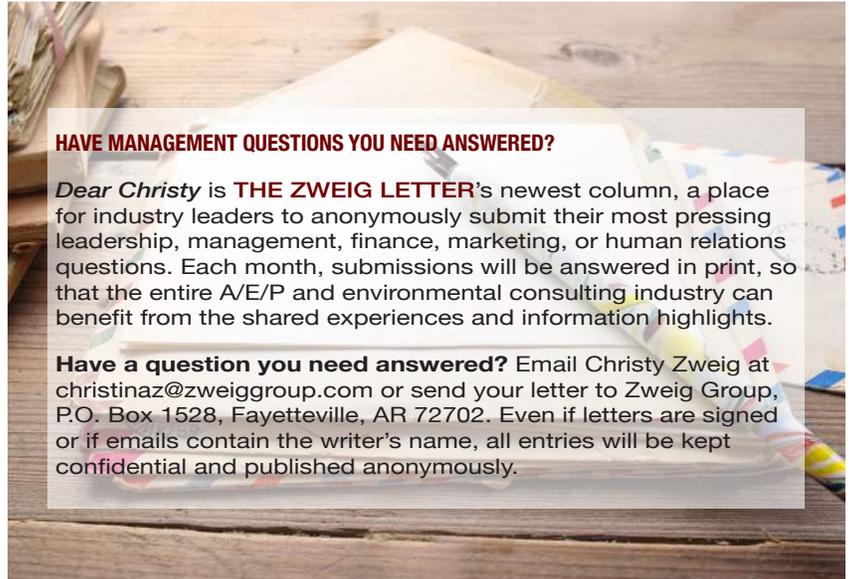
**This is a good question that has a complicated answer. I've found a lot of firms can get stuck on a single, unimportant characteristic that ends up steering them in the wrong direction.**

Start by defining what you are benchmarking and then customize the parameters to that particular metric. Metrics most firms are concerned about benchmarking usually include salary levels, spending/budgeting, marketing effectiveness, fees, and a variety of firm processes and procedures. Discipline, market sector, geography, size, and revenue are generally the most important benchmarking parameters.

Salary levels are just about the only benchmark for which I would always recommend using a geographic parameter. Due to the internet, social media, and other new technologies, many firms who were previously only able to work in a very specific region can now work all over the nation and even the world, making geographic comparisons less important than they were in the past. Still, cost of living needs to be a consideration in any discussion about salaries.

For most things, like marketing effectiveness, national overall figures for firms in the A/E/P industry are going to be applicable to almost anyone. If you think that just because you're a small firm, you shouldn't be getting the same hit rate on a press release or spending (the same percent) on marketing, you're wrong.

When you're trying to benchmark things like budget amounts (marketing, business



## HAVE MANAGEMENT QUESTIONS YOU NEED ANSWERED?

Dear Christy is **THE ZWEIG LETTER**'s newest column, a place for industry leaders to anonymously submit their most pressing leadership, management, finance, marketing, or human relations questions. Each month, submissions will be answered in print, so that the entire A/E/P and environmental consulting industry can benefit from the shared experiences and information highlights.

**Have a question you need answered?** Email Christy Zweig at christinaz@zweiggroup.com or send your letter to Zweig Group, P.O. Box 1528, Fayetteville, AR 72702. Even if letters are signed or if emails contain the writer's name, all entries will be kept confidential and published anonymously.

development, labor, etc.) I would recommend benchmarking yourself against firms of a similar size and possibly a similar market.

Ultimately you have to ask yourself: "Who do I want to compare yourself to – average firms who might be struggling in the same way you are – or high growth, high profit firms?" Zweig Group does a *Successful Firms Survey*, which pulls out data from all of our surveys and shows the differences between these groups and firmsoverall.

## WHY SHOULD A/E PROFESSIONALS USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

Dear Christy,

*"Will social media really benefit us? It's not like people hire transportation engineers or sports arena architects because they posted a cute picture on Twitter. Why do we need it?"* —Reluctant in Raleigh

Dear Reluctant,

You're right; I highly doubt you'll get a big job off one Facebook post or tweet, but that's just like saying you shouldn't go on a date because it's unlikely you'll marry that person the very next day.

If you want to get new clients, you're going

See DEAR CHRISITY, page 4



## BUSINESS NEWS

**BECKER MORGAN GROUP RANKS IN BUILDING DESIGN + CONSTRUCTION GIANTS 300 REPORT FOR TOP ARCHITECTURE/ENGINEERING FIRMS** *Building Design + Construction* magazine ranked **Becker Morgan Group** 55th on the 2015 Giants 300 list of the Top Architecture/Engineering Firms. The report ranks leading firms in the nation's architecture, engineering, and construction industry. The firm was also ranked among the top architecture firms in numerous building sectors, including K-12 (52nd), University (103rd), Government (46th), and Multi-Family (95th). Additionally, the firm ranked 95th on the Top BIM Architecture Firms for use of 3-D building information modeling in project planning and design.

**JACOBS RECEIVES EPCM CONTRACT FOR PAINTS PLANT IN INDIA** **Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.** announced today that it received a contract from Asian Paints Limited to provide engineering services for a greenfield paint plant in India.

Under the terms of the contract, Jacobs is providing detailed engineering and construction supervision services for the plant. The contract duration is 37 months.

When complete, the new paint plant is expected to produce 300,000 kiloliters per annum of decorative paints. The plant is a key component of APL's expansion program in India.

In making the announcement, Jacobs Petroleum and Chemicals President Gary Mandel stated, "We are delighted to expand our relationship with APL as it continues to invest in this region. I'm confident our global experience in the chemical industry combined with our strong local knowledge can contribute significant value to this strategically important

facility."

APL is India's largest and Asia's third largest paints company, with 26 manufacturing plants in operation in India and around the world. Jacobs is one of the world's largest and most diverse providers of technical professional and construction services.

**BAXTER & WOODMAN APPOINTS CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER** **Baxter & Woodman, Inc.** is pleased to announce the promotion of Deborah Finn to chief marketing officer. Finn, who serves on the firm's Board of Directors, joined the firm in 1994. During her tenure, she has held the positions of marketing coordinator, manager, and director. She was instrumental in establishing the firm's marketing business practices, and currently manages business development, proposal generation, promotional activities, and corporate communications.

In her role as CMO, Finn is responsible for all aspects of marketing and will direct the business development efforts for eight regional offices to ensure the firm's business plan for growth.

"Deb's extensive marketing experience, high accountability and strong focus on delivering results make her the right fit to lead our marketing team." stated John V. Ambrose, president/CEO.

**GZA TO RECEIVE AN ACEC OF NEW YORK 2016 DIAMOND ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR ONENYC RETAIL WATERFRONT PROJECT** A leading environmental and geotechnical consulting firm, **GZA** is proud to announce that it was selected to receive a Diamond Award in the 2016 Engineering Excellence Awards Compe-

tion by the American Council of Engineering Companies of New York for its entry, "OneNYC Retail Waterfront Emerges from Solid Waste" showcasing Thor Equities' Brooklyn Bay Center Project on Shore Parkway in Brooklyn, New York.

ACEC of New York presents the Engineering Excellence Awards to projects that encompass both the public and private sector in a series of categories. ACEC of New York selected GZA for a Diamond Award in the category of Special Projects. The firm served as the Remediation Engineer for the project, designed the sub-slab depressurization system, and oversaw the environmental remediation.

All Diamond Award projects designed and built in New York State are in contention for the Empire Award, which is an award given to the highest rated project in New York. As a Diamond Award winner, the project is designated as one of the finalists to represent ACEC of New York in the national competition sponsored by ACEC.

Each year, judges evaluate project submittals from more than 60 member firms based on a rigorous set of criteria, including complexity, innovation, and value to society. A panel of industry experts that includes military and government officials, ACEC National and International leadership, educators from colleges' and universities' engineering departments, and leadership from other organizations dedicated to the built environment judge the projects.

ACEC of New York will honor award recipients at the 49th Annual Engineering Excellence Awards Gala on March 19 at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City.

DEAR CHRISTY, from page 3

**to have to do a lot of different things. The great thing about social media is it has a life of its own. People can share and repost your tweets or Facebook or LinkedIn postings, and you'll reach clients and other people you never would've any other way. Don't cut yourself off from it. Remember when email seemed unnecessary and the Internet seemed like a largely useless thing?**

### **NEED TO INCREASE PRICES WITHOUT LOSING CLIENTS**

*Dear Christy,*

*"We're a small generalist design firm in Iowa. We really have a hard time getting decent fees for what we think is excellent work. Any suggestions on how to push fees up? We're tired of making less money than the painters on our projects, but I'm worried we won't win any work if our prices increase." —In a fee pickle.*

**Dear In-a-pickle,**

**First of all, I'm a dill-pickle person, and no deli sandwich is complete without a nice cold kosher spear on the side, but I couldn't tell you what brand is in my fridge!**

**Be the big cheese: I love cheese and am totally willing to pay 50 percent more for a nice aged sharp cheddar – but how would I know there's a difference between my favorite Tillamook Special Reserve and a block of Kraft if they had the same wrapper?**

**You told me what your problem is: You're generalists, and you're probably trying to compete with a bunch of other average firms offering similar services with promises of finishing the job on time. If you want to command better fees and to be able to export yourself within any reasonable geographic distance from where you are based, you have got to specialize. Specialized firms always get higher fees than those that aren't. You just cannot be all things to all people. This might have worked 50 years ago but won't today because people have too many options. ▀**



# slideshare

## How to market your firm with SlideShare

SlideShare is an easy and inexpensive way to present information to your target audience in a visually appealing manner.



Brian  
Fraley

### GUEST SPEAKER

SlideShare is a web-based service that gives AEC firms the ability to infuse a powerful visual component into their digital marketing efforts. The thought of yet another Internet tool probably doesn't sound very appealing, but SlideShare is worth considering because it's virtually free, easy to use, and requires no ongoing time commitment. It also allows you to increase the potency of your marketing with your target audience by packaging your message in a reader-friendly format.

**WHAT IS SLIDESHARE?** SlideShare started out as an independently owned Internet-based service but was acquired by LinkedIn in 2012. The basic intent of the platform is to allow users to upload files or design a fresh concept, which it translates into slide decks. It has similarities to PowerPoint but much better functionality.

"The main benefit of SlideShare for AEC firms is that it allows you to display marketing materials in an easy-to-read, image-driven format that is more likely to capture and hold the attention of your target audience."

**WHY SHOULD I USE IT?** The main benefit of SlideShare for AEC firms is that it allows you to display marketing materials in an easy-to-read, image-driven format that is more likely to capture and hold the attention of your target audience. It's harder than ever to attract attention, especially on the Internet. The volume of information is incredulous.

SlideShare benefits your audience by allowing

them to more quickly receive your content in a reader-friendly format. Your target audience still consumes volumes of information, despite claims to the contrary in our short attention span culture. Some statistics suggest that Americans are actually taking in more information than ever.

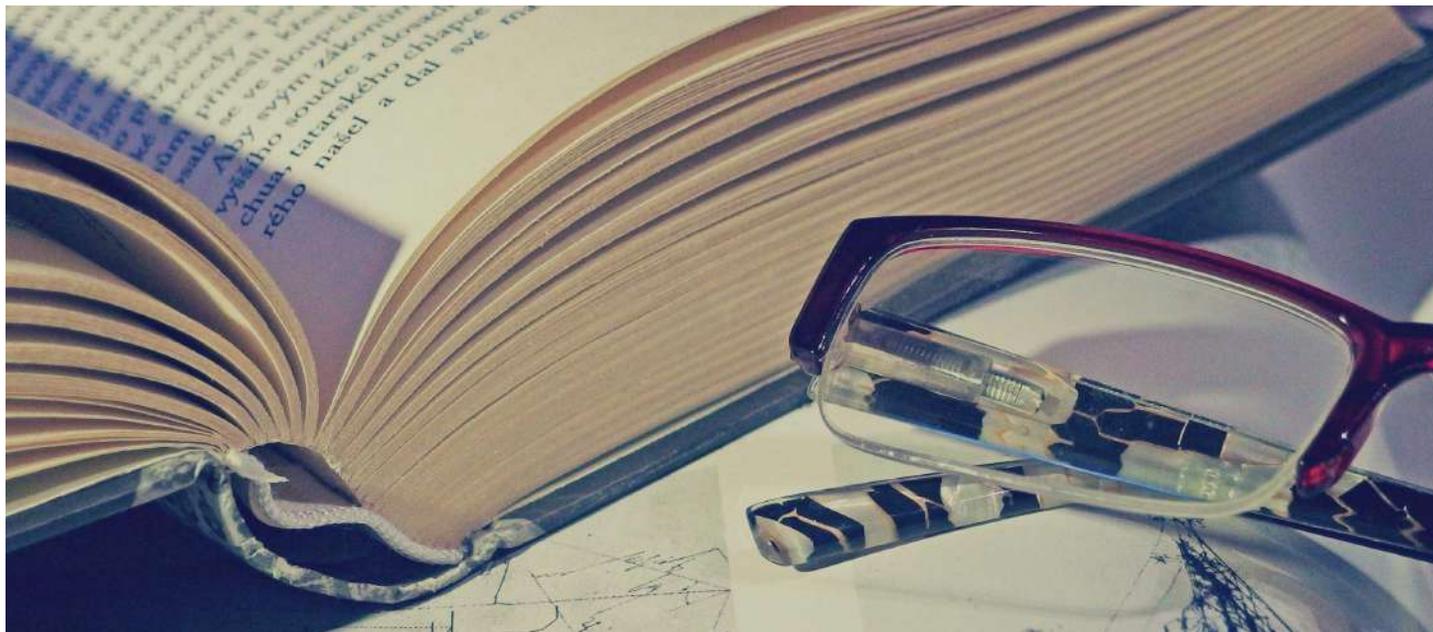
Imagery currently rules the day in marketing, primarily because it allows busy people to quickly and effectively consume and comprehend information. This is how SlideShare explains it: "In today's world of visual communication, design is an important element of your content you can't ignore: Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than words, and can increase a viewer's comprehension by 89 percent." There you have it.

**HOW DO I USE IT?** SlideShare is easy to use for even the most diehard Luddite. Start by creating a free account at SlideShare.net. You can either upload existing documents or build a slide deck from the ground up. Your end product will be a presentation, infographic, or a basic document. SlideShare accepts a range of file types from PowerPoint to Microsoft Word to Adobe PDF for those that want to convert an existing document into a single slide or slide deck. Your other option is to build a slide deck from the bottom up, which will require some

See SLIDESHARE, page 8



# SP@TLIGHT ON: Pub



## OPINION

### You get what you pay for

If you want your book to have specific characteristics - like glossy paper or unusual dimensions - be prepared to pay more.



Marilynn  
Mendell

GUEST  
SPEAKER

Today book publishing offers a myriad of options that can leave a person bewildered. For a novice, a first time effort can be quite costly. A discerning creative talent may find herself without an agent or a publisher due to self-imposed restrictions. For instance, my title *Elbow Grease + Chicken Fat: Business Advice That Sticks to Your Ribs* pairs tantalizing recipes with memorable anecdotes on how to succeed as an entrepreneurial startup. Simply put: That title confuses publishers.

Where to put it? Is it a cookbook or a business book? And the size I wanted didn't fit normal parameters for shelving in the few independent bookstores still around. I wanted fancy paper and color, and each of those distinctions – that outside-of-the-box thinking – limited my chances of acquiring a professional company to publish my book. Marketers know that the message has to match the audience, and in book publishing the scope narrows considerably. Great writing skills must touch, move, and inspire, and be grammatically correct without spelling errors. The latter may sound like a given, however the editing process for a 225 page book can take months with as many as four professional editors reviewing it.

All facts need to be checked. Indexes alone can prove daunting for the most hardy of writers. So, what to do?

Naturally, start with the large publishing houses and attempt to find an agent with integrity. Consider that more than 500,000 books get published each year.

For first time authors seeking agents, I'd suggest thoroughly studying Jeff Herman's tome on how to get published. Make stationery, business cards, a website, and a gorgeous pitch piece. Write individual cover letters to agents and a few publishing houses open to authors without representation. After producing and sending out



the whole megillah, including the self-addressed stamped return envelope, wait. No response from anyone? Consider self-publishing.

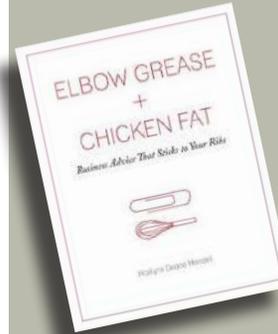
Self-publishing houses have requirements just like regular publishers.

The “why” behind any author’s desire to produce a book must be clear before forking out \$25,000 to produce 1,000 self-published books. My goals were simple: Prepare a client gift for my 15th anniversary and create a respectable book to have available for speaking engagements. As a side bar, I hoped to sell a few and inspire would-be entrepreneurs.

Most self-publishing houses require standard sizes, one word titles, icky paper, no color, and they hire an incredibly lackluster editorial staff. If you’re picky about wanting a book designed with as few as possible spelling errors, proper grammar, and delicious paper and graphics, then pay for the best designers from the start and do all of the work yourself. Get a terrific print broker to locate the best print shop and deal. Courage and persistence – two important words for the author with discerning taste who self-publishes. Designers have wild temperaments, bookstores refuse to handle self-published books, printers pack books in boxes that break, and books get lost or destroyed.

No matter how often an author has been published, writing a book alone without the advantage of an agent and a well-established publisher with a plethora of in-house editors requires one to learn a vast number of new things. I’d advise taking an Adobe InDesign course or two for starters. It helps to be able to manage the design process and cuts down on the time spent editing. Acquire a fondness for Dropbox or any reputable cloud-sharing platform. Ensure that all contracts with all designers are shared up front, that every draft gets put into that cloud file, and that no payment is received until each draft gets reviewed. Be careful not to give anyone your entire book all at once. Get parts back and then divvy up another section. Keep a private box for the most current versions, where you have the only access and be sure to save often to that place. Being held prisoner by a designer, editor, or printer will create fear, pain, and panic. Be cognizant of costs early on. Insist on a package rate, not an hourly rate. Begin slowly. See how the process goes, then add a little more. Designers are notoriously poor time managers, so the deadlines and pace must be agreed to in advance in order to ensure that all work coincides with everyone’s expectations. Use a minimum of four editors from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations. No two people read the same way. Many eyes catch a majority of mistakes. And expect mistakes – even after publication. I read books differently today. When I see an error, I no longer snicker. I have a deep-seated appreciation and empathy for the enormous effort any author takes to produce a near perfect document of 450 pages.

## FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF



### Elbow Grease + Chicken Fat

By Marilynn Deane Mendell

*Elbow Grease + Chicken Fat: Business Advice that Sticks to Your Ribs!* This book stirs up the perfect recipe to exceed your business expectations. Each chapter reveals solutions to business pitfalls, intriguing ways a creative mind can improvise, along with best practices from ethical conduct to showing appreciation.

Keep an Excel document of tasks required, like registering and buying ISBN numbers, sending drafts and the final product to the Library of Congress, buying storage for books, and wading through the complicated world of self-promotion and online sales. Amazon alone can reduce the hardest of souls to tears. Think it’s as easy as ordering a book? Think again. Amazon for self-published independent authors (as opposed to the self-published Amazon authors) has a minimum of seven different divisions, many located with call support in different countries with less than optimal fluency in English. Emails and calls for corrections go totally unheeded. One section might handle the author’s page, another sales, another shipping, another a separate personal sales page, another an independent sales page where authors compete with their own book sales on Amazon’s in-house sales. Confused yet? Someone could write a whole book on how to navigate Amazon’s book sales. Often amateurs create helpful YouTube videos, but their tiny snippets of how-tos rarely cover Amazon’s labyrinthine leviathan in total.

And, who thinks about where to store 1,000 books weighing hundreds of pounds that could take up a 20-by-20-by-20 space, when they haven’t even been published yet? There’s a cost for storage because books need to be dry and kept cool. Book storage facilities that ship books and offer to handle Amazon requests for shipping aren’t always reputable. They need contracts, too. There’s a whole black market of books that somehow disappear from storage facilities and get sold overseas at low costs. Oddly enough, they show up on Amazon or other online sales places at vastly lower prices than the author’s selling price. At this point, an author might think that a single book on demand may be the better route. Again, go back to the beginning. Paper choices, sizes, and print quality are rarely available and few compare to a well-printed special run. And it can be much more expensive per book.

Despite all of the obstacles a self-published author has to navigate, the final, well-done piece selling well makes all of the effort worthwhile and gives an author an immense sense of pride and satisfaction. Keep these tips in mind as the book gets written and save in the end on time, money, and grief. Good luck and best wishes. ▀

SLIDESHARE, from page 5

basic design work. You don't have to be a graphic designer, but some basic computer and design savvy will help.

“SlideShare benefits your audience by allowing them to more quickly receive your content in a reader-friendly format. Your target audience still consumes volumes of information, despite claims to the contrary in our short attention span culture.”

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?** Start the creation of your slide deck with two questions: What is the purpose of the slide deck? What action do we want the viewer to take away at the end? The purpose is the glue that holds your slide deck together and keeps your viewer's attention. Are you looking to generate inbound leads? Do you want to direct traffic to your website? Is the intent to showcase your qualifications? An effective slide deck, like any other marketing tactic, must incite action.

**HOW DO WE DESIGN A SLIDE DECK?** Unlike PowerPoint, SlideShare requires no template. You should, in fact, diversify the layout to keep your slide deck interesting. If you happen to be uploading an existing file, such as PowerPoint, the template is fine, but don't start out with a template if you're designing a slide deck from scratch.

You will also notice the ability to add effects and transitions between slides. Keep it simple. It's tempting to add bells and whistles, but it rarely adds value and also distracts the viewer. The beauty of SlideShare is the ability to easily flip through slides without distractions. Focus solely on the quality of your content.

**WHAT CONTENT SHOULD WE INCLUDE?** Your slide deck should be heavy on graphics and light on text. A good slide will often contain a richly colored, relevant centerpiece image that consumes the entire page with no more than a sentence, a word, or possibly no text at all. The image makes or breaks the slide so great photography and graphics are essential. Architects can include sketches and landscape designers might include color renderings. Black and white engineering plans will not add much to the design so civil and structural engineers should use them sparingly. You can even insert a video or chart into the slide. Don't forget to add your keywords to the title, description, and tags to increase the odds of it being found online.

“SlideShare is yet another way for your AEC firm to add a powerful visual component to your online marketing efforts. It's fairly easy to learn, requires no ongoing time commitment, and it's free. And more importantly, it increases the potency of your marketing with the audience you're trying to influence.”

One of the obvious applications for AEC firms would be to upload a recent PowerPoint presentation, but there are other possibilities. You might also upload a multi-page feature story or advertisement on your firm, a company brochure, a statement of qualifications, an assortment of projects or service, or other marketing collateral for display on your website or sharing on social media. The possibilities are endless.

**WHERE SHOULD WE SHARE IT?** The most incredible slide deck will serve no purpose without a distribution plan. Where you share depends on the nature of the content, but you might consider posting or embedding it on your website. Posting it repeatedly on social media is also effective for broad distribution. One of the best ways to capture more eyeballs, however, is to create an email and send it out to your list. For a more personal touch, don't hesitate to send an email to one or more existing or prospective clients if the content is relevant to them. Creating a slide deck takes time and effort, so focus on creating content that can be shared for months to come without getting dated too quickly.

“One of the obvious applications for AEC firms would be to upload a recent PowerPoint presentation, but there are other possibilities. You might also upload a multi-page feature story or advertisement on your firm, a company brochure, a statement of qualifications, an assortment of your projects or service, or other marketing collateral for display on your website or sharing on social media. The possibilities are endless.”

**WHAT ACTION DO WE WANT THE VIEWER TO TAKE?** As a business, you need to focus on getting results. Refer back to “What is the purpose?” You will build your slide deck around the questions that define your purpose, but it's critical to include what we marketers refer to as a call to action. Your call to action tells the viewer in clear terms what action you want them to take. An obvious spot for your call to action is the last slide, but you might want to include one or more call to actions throughout your slide deck. Call to actions are like “the sale.” If you don't ask for it, you won't get it.

SlideShare is yet another way for your AEC firm to add a powerful visual component to your online marketing efforts. It's fairly easy to learn, requires no ongoing time commitment, and it's free. And more importantly, it increases the potency of your marketing with the audience you're trying to influence. ▀

Brian M. Fraley is the founder, manager, and chief strategist for **Fraley AEC Solutions, LLC**, a marketing communications firm. Brian can be found on LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, or at the firm's AEC Straight Talker blog.

## IN MEMORIAM

# Remembering Ben Montoya

Friends and colleagues remember Ben Montoya, board member and friend of gkkworks, who passed away in December.

**B**en Montoya, a longtime board member and a friend of gkkworks, passed away December 19 in Fairfield, California.

“Ben was an exemplary American patriot. He was a hard-working, intelligent, and thoughtful person that I was proud to call my friend and mentor,” says Praful Kulkarni, president and CEO of gkkworks.

Born in Indio, California, on May 24, 1935 to Benjamin and Margaret Montoya, Ben graduated from Coachella Valley Union High School in 1953 and attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo before entering the U.S. Naval Academy, where he graduated in 1958. Upon graduation, he married his high school sweetheart, Virginia Cox, also of Indio. Happily married for 57 years, Ben and Ginney raised five sons and two daughters, who blessed them with 17 grandchildren.

“One of Ben’s best traits was that he always lived life to the fullest and loved to laugh and smile. Ben taught me a lot over the years. He helped me realize the true value of friendship and how to balance career and family,” Kulkarni says.

Ben’s 32-year naval career began with a tour in Vietnam and he rose through the ranks to become chief of the Civil Engineer Corps. He retired in 1989 as a rear admiral. Ben also received an engineering degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a master’s from Georgia Technical Institute and a juris doctorate from Georgetown School of Law. After the Navy, Ben served as a senior vice president with PG&E and then as president and CEO of Public Service Co of New Mexico, retiring in 2000.

“Ben taught me a lot over the years. He helped me realize the true value of friendship and how to balance career and family.”

“He positively influenced my life in so many different ways, and I will miss him dearly,” Kulkarni says. “His memory will always be with us, and his legacy will continue through his work, ordinary people like his family and us. Ben would smile if he were here with us today. He would have a funny story to tell to make everyone comfortable, and we would forget our sadness for a moment. We will all miss him, and I am so grateful for having known him.”



Ben Montoya with Praful Kulkarni.

Ben served on various boards including gkkworks, the National Parks Foundation, the California Board of Education, NASA, and the 1995 Base Closure Commission. He was selected as a 2008 Distinguished Graduate of the US Naval Academy.

“He was one of those guys who always made you feel important and as if what you had to say was important.”

“Ben Montoya was a real gentleman,” says Mark Zweig, founder and CEO of Zweig Group. “The last of a dying breed – he really knew how to treat people and had friends the world over. I worked with him on the board of gkkworks – you could not mention a client or potential client where he didn’t know someone. He was one of those guys who always made you feel important and as if what you had to say was important. He was also a great dad and husband.”

Ben battled cancer for two years until October, when it became untreatable. Ben passed quietly in the company of his family on December 19 at 8:45 p.m. He is survived by his wife and their seven children. Ben had a strong but quiet faith that he reaffirmed at key points in his life. More than all of his many career accomplishments, he deeply touched the lives of many and will be greatly missed.

Funeral services were held at noon on January 6 at Sacred Heart Church in Palm Desert, California. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to [seabeedi-amondanniversary.org](http://seabeedi-amondanniversary.org). ▀



# MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

**WESTWOOD PROFESSIONAL SERVICES ACQUIRES POGUE ENGINEERING AND DEVELOPMENT COMPANY** Zweig Group congratulates **Westwood Professional Services** on its acquisition of **Pogue Engineering and Development Company** of McKinney, Texas. Zweig Group has provided ongoing consulting services to Westwood in this transaction.

The acquisition expands Westwood's commercial market presence with the addition of the well-established expertise at Pogue Engineering. Leading Westwood's Dallas-Fort Worth office and the firm's national land development business, Bryan Powell says, "Today is an exciting day for employees at Westwood and Pogue Engineering, and our clients who will benefit from this acquisition. We expect to

# Westwood

capitalize on the combined expertise on both teams to better serve the growing needs of the commercial market."

Founder of Pogue Engineering, Randall Pogue sees the acquisition as a great way to enhance services to his existing clients. He says, "Pogue Engineering and Westwood share similar corporate values and are committed to excellence in engineering and surveying. The companies are a great fit and together, we complement each other to make a stronger team."

Pogue adds that the in-house professional



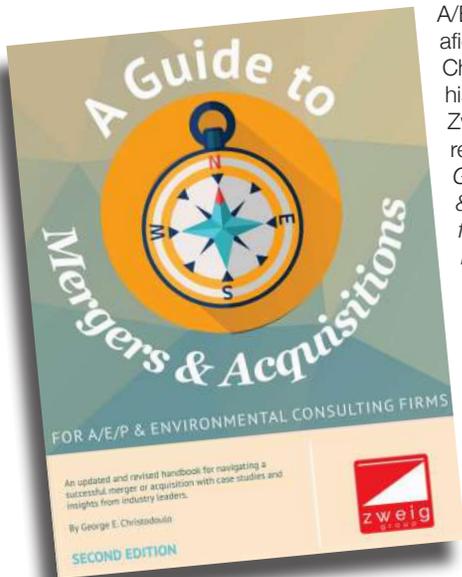
planning, landscape architecture, transportation, and environmental teams at Westwood now add a level of expertise that his clients can more easily leverage on their projects.

Doing business as Pogue Engineering and Development Company Inc., a division of Westwood, the Pogue Engineering team will continue serving clients from its McKinney location with little to no impact to service expected.

For more information on Zweig Group's M&A consulting services visit: [zweiggroup.com/consulting/mergers-acquisitions.php](http://zweiggroup.com/consulting/mergers-acquisitions.php)

## RESOURCES

### NEW GUIDEBOOK HELPS YOU PREPARE TO BUY AND SELL



A/E/P M&A aficionado George Christodoulo lends his expertise to Zweig Group's most recent release, *A Guide to Mergers & Acquisitions for A/E/P & Environmental Consulting Firms*, a revision of the popular *A/E Mergers & Acquisitions Cookbook*.

In the *Guide to M&A*, Christodoulo walks reader through every

step of the process of

buying or selling an architectural, engineering, planning, or environmental consulting firm — from the preparation to the announcement and finding a suitable transaction partner to due diligence, closing the deal, integrating the companies, and benchmarking success. Each topic is highlighted by real-world A/E/P leaders' experiences in M&A, in addition to insights from industry experts, including Mark Zweig and Jamie Claire Kiser. And, to top it off, *A Guide to M&A* includes a chapter on private equity firms and employee stock ownership plans, for leaders who are considering various means of ownership transition.

*A Guide to Mergers & Acquisitions for A/E/P & Environmental Consulting Firms* is available now for \$150 at [zweiggroup.com/books.php](http://zweiggroup.com/books.php). For more information, email [publishing@zweiggroup.com](mailto:publishing@zweiggroup.com).

### 2016 MERGER & ACQUISITIONS SURVEY OPEN FOR PARTICIPATION



Did you know almost one-quarter (23 percent) of firms surveyed have merged with or acquired another firm in the last five years? Zweig Group's *2016 Mergers and Acquisitions Survey* collects data on the frequency of ownership shifts, how they're conducted, and consolidation trends in the industry—and we need your help. By participating in the *2016 Mergers and Acquisitions Survey*, you'll be contributing to the most up-to-date data on mergers and acquisitions, plus you'll receive a discount of 65 percent off the published survey—or any other current Zweig survey.

If you're considering selling your firm, use the *Merger & Acquisition Survey* to:

■ Find out what today's buyers are looking for—who, where, and what

■ See what kind of price you can expect for your firm

■ Learn what's motivating other sellers like yourself, and what buyers are hoping to achieve through an acquisition

If you're considering buying another firm, use the *Merger & Acquisition Survey* to:

■ Learn how long it takes to buy or sell a firm, from start to finish

■ Find out how many firms are satisfied with the acquisitions they've made

If you've recently completed a merger or acquisition deal, use the *Merger & Acquisition Survey* to:

■ Learn how the price you paid or the amount you received compares with other similar deals

■ Find out if your peers or competitors also recently completed any transactions

■ Compare the success of your firm's transactions with other firms' successful (or not successful) transactions

To participate in the survey go to [surveymonkey.com/r/M\\_A16](http://surveymonkey.com/r/M_A16)

# Making the unattainable attainable

Industry experts share tactics for handling clients who have impractical expectations and/or requests that will take a project way over budget.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN  
Correspondent

**S**o, you have a client who has asked for something that is either completely impractical or out of budget. What now? How do you gently steer your client back to Earth without crushing their dreams? Jeff Mazanec, a senior project manager at **R.A. Smith National Inc.** (Brookfield, WI), a 186-person multidisciplinary civil engineering firm, says this happens often.

“A good first step is to gain a better understanding of the client’s primary goal and objective. What is it about their unattainable goal that they really need or want?”

**HAVE AN OPEN DISCUSSION.** “A good first step is to gain a better understanding of the client’s primary goal and objective. What is it about their unattainable goal that they really need or want? Are there other ways to achieve that primary goal, or at least make progress towards achieving it?” he says.

Often, people will lock themselves into a single solution so strongly that it seems to be the only way to achieve the goals.

“We all need to really think through the core objective and other possible options,” Mazanec says. “Sometimes just verbalizing those thoughts leads to a broader context/perspective needed to see other solutions for less cost and with fewer barriers. This discussion might also identify risks or uncover the opportunity for unintended results.”

Key questions to initiate this discussion might include:

- What is the most important result you expect this project to achieve?
- Have others successfully met similar challenges? What lessons can we learn from their experience?
- Would this project generate side benefits? How would you describe them?
- Does not pursuing this project increase risk or generate negative impacts? How would you describe them?

“Develop alternatives that allow them to still meet their overall project goals, just in a different fashion than they expected at the outset.”

- Are other parties significantly impacted by the success/failure of this project?

The result of that discussion might guide the client to alternative solutions that:

- Modify the solution to focus directly on the primary objective, without expanding the scope more than necessary.
- Identify prospective partners who would benefit from the same project and possibly share the cost.
- Help firm to understand how the project might be achievable in progressive steps, or in sequential phases that can be completed over time as budget is available.

At **Timmons Group** (Richmond, VA), a 330-person multi-disciplined engineering and technology firm, Steve Hostetler, principal, says that it is not uncommon for clients to have unreasonable expectations on a project, most often related to construction cost or schedule.

“Our job as a consultant is to explain the facts, even if they don’t want to hear them,” he says.

In preparation for this discussion, Hostetler says they try to do the following:

“Granted, some clients are more difficult than others, but if you can step them through the thought process and get them to trust that you are truly doing everything possible to make their vision a reality, they’ll appreciate you for your efforts and be a repeat client because you didn’t just tell them, ‘It can’t be done.’”

See STEER CLIENT, page 12



STEER CLIENT, from page 11

- Ask, “What is driving the client to this expectation?” Understanding their motivation for why they are asking for something is absolutely essential for effectively resolving the matter.
- Develop alternatives that allow them to still meet their overall project goals, just in a different fashion than they expected at the outset.
- Provide the client with talking points as to why their original expectation cannot be met. This allows them to explain their change in direction to others confidently, without the appearance of having made a mistake themselves.

“Not only do we show them our opinion about the cost of construction, we also provide them a total project cost summary sheet that shows many of the development costs (i.e. soft costs) that should also be included in their budget. This additional cost can vary, but normally it is between 15 to 22 percent of the construction cost. Being able to see these additional costs, which they may not have thought of, helps them to fully grasp the total budget needed.”

**LAY YOUR CARDS ON THE TABLE.** Brian Crichton, president and CEO of **Cannon Moss Brygger Architects** (Sioux City, IA), a 60-person firm, says early intervention is the best prevention.

Very early in a project, CMBA uses its prior project knowledge and current understanding of market conditions to help the client see what they can get for their identified budget.

“Not only do we show them our opinion about the cost of construction, we also provide them a total project cost summary sheet that shows many of the development costs (i.e. soft costs) that should also be included in their budget. This additional cost can vary, but normally it is between 15 to 22 percent of the construction cost. Being able to see these additional costs, which they may not have thought of, helps them to fully grasp the total budget needed.”

Once they’ve trimmed their budget, their dream building becomes a bit easier. At this point, CMBA begins a “want versus need” discussion.

“We help them prioritize these wants and needs and match dollars to each of them. The client is then asked to select the items that truly have to be included. Should the client still want to pursue the out-of-budget project size, we then offer options in program size or finish options that can help bring the project costs back into reality,” he says.

Other tactics include hiring an unbiased source such as an independent cost consultant to provide a more detailed cost opinion.

“In every situation, we try to maintain an open dialogue during the cost estimation process,” he says. “This transparency can really build trust and show a client the true added-value architects provide.”

Doug Mutcher, project manager at **Westwood** (Eden Prairie, MN), a multi-disciplined surveying and engineering firm, says that you should always try to make your client’s vision a reality, but you need to educate them along the way so they understand the implications of their vision.

“Granted, some clients are more difficult than others, but if you can step them through the thought process and get them to trust that you are truly doing everything possible to make their vision a reality, they’ll appreciate you for your efforts and be a repeat client because you didn’t just tell them, ‘It can’t be done.’ We’re better when we keep an open mind, take off our engineering blinders, and provide viable solutions.” ▀

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GOOD TO KNOW



### ARE YOU THINKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT BUYING OR SELLING?

The architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting industry is experiencing an unprecedented boom in M&A activity. Is your firm ready to make a smart deal for growth? Is your leadership prepared to critically evaluate offers as they come in?

For M&A In-a-Day, Zweig Group’s M&A team comes to you for a briskly-paced, interactive one-day session that covers all phases of a transaction – from developing a strategy to post-deal integration. The program is field-developed from actual client engagements and realworld experience advising hundreds of transactions of all sizes in the A/E industry.

#### Attendees learn:

- How to develop an M&A strategy
- How to screen candidates and identify strong prospects.
- How to evaluating candidates and establish a basis for value
- How to weigh complex legal, tax, and accounting implications of transactions
- How to structure the deal and negotiate to their advantage
- Post-closing integration tactics to ensure success.

#### Who should attend:

With M&A in a Day, transaction specialists come to your firm to ensure confidentiality. Whether you are interested in buying or selling, firm leadership should attend the seminar.

- Business leaders, including presidents, CFOs, and CEOs
- Market/office leaders who will head up an acquisition effort for their line of business
- Corporate development and strategy/finance executives
- HR executives and others who will be involved in firm integration

#### Continuing education:

Attendees earn 6 CEUs. Zweig Group is registered with the AIA for continuing professional education credits. Attendees receive a certificate of attendance.

For more information, visit [zweiggroup.com/seminars/maid](http://zweiggroup.com/seminars/maid) or email [jkiser@zweiggroup.com](mailto:jkiser@zweiggroup.com)