

The bold vision

Most leaders are afraid of failure. If they set lofty goals the firm does not achieve they're afraid they'll look like failurers.

"There's something to be said for laying out a truly ambitious – some might say 'bold' vision. Something that could change the world – or change the 'world' as the members of the organization know it to be."



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

There's something to be said for laying out a truly ambitious – some might say "bold" vision. Something that could change the world – or change the "world" as the members of the organization know it to be. Most leaders don't do it.

Why do you think that is?

It's simple. Most leaders are afraid of failure. If they set lofty goals and strive for something the organization does not achieve they're afraid they'll look like failures (as leaders). So low goals (or visions) that they are sure they can achieve become the norm.

Of course there is risk in being ambitious. Things don't always work out. But at least you tried. You gave it your all. And in the process a couple things will most certainly happen:

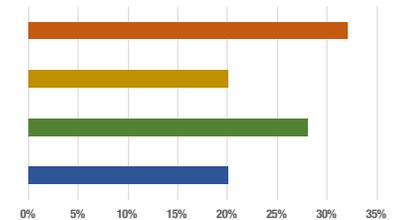
- 1) You'll inspire other people.** We value effort in this country. We don't like people who had it too easy or who didn't have to work for their success. So success or failure becomes secondary to effort when it comes to inspiration. And people are crying out for inspiration!
- 2) You will do better than you would do if you didn't set high goals.** We've all heard the old adage – shoot for an "A" and you'll probably at least get a "B," but shoot for a "B" and you may get a "C." I firmly believe in this concept. Aim high!

But there's also a chance things **WILL** work

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TRENDLINES

Preparing financial statements



Almost a third (32 percent) of firms surveyed in Zweig Group's 2016 Valuation Survey prepare financial statements **internally only**. Another 28 percent of respondents said their statements were **reviewed by external parties**, while 20 percent each said their statements were **compiled or audited by external parties**. — Vivian Cummings, research analyst assistant

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BUSINESS NEWS

ENGINEERED RIGGING REIMAGINES HEAVY TRANSPORT Engineered Rigging, innovators in motion, today unveiled its new Power Slide System, which delivers a safe, simple and efficient way to move overweight, oversized loads in tight quarters.

Comprised of skid shoes, which are powered by hydraulic push/pull cylinders over high-strength flat-topped track, Power Slide is ideal for moving components such as turbines, generators, transformers, vessels and motors, especially when space limitations and costs preclude using a crane.

The system's high-capacity design and versatile configuration enable it to move loads ranging from 50 to more than 2,000 tons. Its rugged construction withstands daily use and extreme loads. Power Slide's low track height reduces jacking requirements enhancing load and project safety. With a state-of-the-art fabrication facility in Russellville, Arkansas, Engineered Rigging can quickly design and fabricate with domestic materials customized systems and standard capacities.

PRIMORIS SERVICES CORPORATION ANNOUNCES UNDERGROUND AWARDS VALUED AT \$63 MILLION

Primoris Services Corporation today announced three new Master Service Agreements with utility customers with a three-year anticipated value of \$63 million. The contracts were secured by the Underground division of ARB Inc., part of the West Construction Services segment.

- The first MSA award is from a major Southern California utility customer to upgrade the gas and electric infrastructure in existing mobile home parks. It is estimated that this MSA will generate \$10 million per year.
- The second MSA award is from a major Northern California utility customer to inspect with mobile camera systems all sewers near recent utility construction sites. It is

estimated that this MSA will generate \$7 million per year.

- The third MSA award is from the same Northern California utility customer for meter relocation to provide easier access for the meter readers and maintenance. It is estimated that the MSA will generate \$4 million per year.

All three MSAs are for three years, with two additional one-year options, and are scheduled to start immediately. While the agreements do not obligate the customers to award Primoris a specific dollar amount, our discussions and history with the customers form the basis for our anticipated value.

TWO THORNTON TOMASETTI PROJECTS WIN MIPIM ASIA AWARDS

Thornton Tomasetti, the international engineering firm, announced that two of its projects were honored at the MIPIM Asia Awards. One Shenzhen Bay in Shenzhen, China, received the Gold Award in the Best Residential Development category, while Huishan North Bund in Shanghai was recognized with a Silver Award for Best Urban Regeneration project.

About One Shenzhen Bay T7:

- Thornton Tomasetti provided structural engineering services for One Shenzhen Bay T7 Tower, the largest of the development's eight towers.
- The floor system of One Shenzhen Bay T7 is slab on deck and the foundation system utilizes concrete mats and piles.
- The development features three below-grade levels that include one retail concourse and two levels of parking, which span the full length of the site.

The MIPIM Asia Awards recognizes excellence and innovation in real estate development in the Asia Pacific Region. The winners were announced during a gala reception on December 1 at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong.

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out and you'll succeed. And that's a fantastic feeling when your goals are lofty.

Zweig Group's revenue grew by 31 percent in 2015. We projected 30 percent. Our projections are for about 48 percent growth in 2016. That may seem crazy to some but I'm convinced we will achieve or exceed these numbers. The reason is commitment. We are committed to do more, doing it faster, and making everything we do the best we can make it. We have great people, great accounting, great marketing, great systems – and great clients. We may fall flat on our faces due to unforeseen difficulties. Should that happen now or in the future you can count on us to get up again (fast) and figure out what we can do better. That's the American Way!

How about you? Are you setting your goals high enough? Is your vision lofty? Or is it most certainly attainable? Maybe it's time to really do something **THIS** year. The time has never been better.

MARK ZWEIG is founder and CEO of Zweig Group. Contact him at mzweig@zweiggroup.com.

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OPINION

Getting value from your strategic plan

Here are some tips to get the most out of your strategic plan and realize your firm's aspirational goals.



Ed
Friedrichs

FROM THE
CHAIRMAN

How much does a strategic plan cost? If you hire a consultant, pull your senior-leadership away from business and team leadership for a couple of days, conduct the session off-site, and pay for hotel rooms, meals, and transportation, it can be an expensive proposition.

With that kind of investment of time, talent, and resources, it can be painful to realize that so many carefully written, beautifully bound plans end up on a shelf, rarely referenced. Maybe it's time to take this time-worn process apart and focus on practical ways to achieve meaningful change in your enterprise in support of that valuable planning exercise.

Having trodden this path many times over the years with my own firm and with clients since I retired, I'd like to share my observations and advice.

"A well facilitated and carefully thought-through strategic planning process can yield a treasure trove of ideas about what you want your firm to be. It can guide you and your team on how you want people to act and collaborate, what markets you want to serve, and what talent 'holes' you have that need to be filled."

A well facilitated and carefully thought-through strategic planning process can yield a treasure trove of ideas about what you want your firm to be. It can guide you and your team on how you want people to act and collaborate, what markets you want to serve, and what talent "holes" you have that need to be filled. It can specify desired relationships with the stakeholders you rely on to accomplish client work. But a document sitting on a shelf won't make any of this happen.

From experience, I can tell you your strategic plan only gains value when its objectives are understood and acted upon. That will only happen if you're able to instill your objectives deeply into your firm's culture such that it changes the actions

and attitudes of your people.

Here are a couple of ideas about how to put your plan in motion:

- **Client Service.** A dominant indicator of your success appears when your clients are deliriously happy about the way they're being treated. Is "delirious" too grand a word to use? Not at all. When your teams are listening to your clients, responsive to their needs and wants, consistently checking with them to ensure they feel cared for, they will ask you to do more work for them and recommend you to their friends and colleagues. You can track client satisfaction through all sorts of metrics. Certainly, you can keep a log of repeat and referral business, but nothing is more valuable than a culture in which everyone is expected to have a cup of coffee with a client frequently to find out if all is going well. And this is not just at the principal level, but with all of your team members who have a relationship with a member of the client team.
- **Innovation.** Innovation is a common goal of most strategic plans. Nice idea, but how does innovation come about? The best creativity occurs when people from different points of view and areas of expertise collaborate and come at a problem from different directions. Sparks fly, and an idea for something never tried before appears. So, how do you keep people from building walls and hesitating to share knowledge, expertise, and ideas? Encouraging people to reach out to someone with a different point of view can be intimidating. Encouraging people to reach out to someone with a different point of view can be intimidating: "What if they don't want to talk to me?" "What if they look at what I'm doing and say, 'That's really dumb'?"
- **Collaboration.** Collaboration requires an open and trusting culture, one in which everyone feels they "own" every project in the office. Anyone that feels anything less than innovative and thoughtful reflects negatively on the firm and you personally. Employees should be willing, at all times, to pitch in and brainstorm a problem with a colleague.

Instilling that attitude and culture is not a result of writing about it in a strategic plan. It happens when

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BUSINESS NEWS

PPG COMPLETES COLORFUL COMMUNITIES PROJECT IN ZHANGJIAGANG, CHINA

PPG Industries announced the completion of a Colorful Communities project in Zhangjiagang, China, that helped to revitalize the Nansha Primary School as part of its global charitable-giving effort. The Colorful Communities program provides PPG employee volunteers, products, and financial contributions to bring color and vitality to communities where the company operates around the world. Launched in 2015, the program increases PPG's commitment to invest in communities by adding \$10 million to support efforts made during a 10-year period.

The project brought together nearly 170 volunteers who renovated and decorated the school's nearly 1,000-square-meter playground fence. PPG awarded a grant of more than \$40,000 to the TEDA Charity Association to support this revitalization project.

"It was a meaningful day for the students, our employees and PPG," said Kent Chen, manager of PPG's Zhangjiagang plant. "Children are society's future. We are pleased to help them create a better campus environment. Overall, with the participation and cooperation required to complete the task, this was an excellent opportunity to enhance our teamwork."

More than 1,200 students attend the century-old Zhangjiagang Nansha Primary School. The Zhangjiagang event is the second Colorful Communities project in China.

KCCT PARTICIPATES IN CHARITY EVENT

KCCT won the Structural Ingenuity award in CANstructionDC 2015 for its design of Washington Dulles International Airport. CANstruction is a unique charity that hosts competitions showcasing structures made out of cans of food, which are then displayed as a giant art exhibition. Transportation was this year's theme.

KCCT, founded 32 years ago with commissions for domestic and international transit projects, has since transitioned to architecture, interior, and masterplanning projects, including international projects in more than 140 countries, so the firm decided to pay homage to Washington Dulles International Airport, where the journey to visit those international projects begins. KCCT was one of 24 DC area architecture and design firms to participate. The KCCT team used 3,360 cans of food to create Dulles: 2 Pringles to Paradise.

CANstructionDC 2015 collected 68,313 pounds of food and \$5,070 for the Capital Area Food Bank, which translates to 69,600 meals. The event, sponsored by the Washington Architectural Foundation, was held in late November at the National Building Museum. At the end of the event, all food was donated to local hunger relief organizations. Since 1992, CANstruction has helped collect nearly 30 million pounds of food in more than 150 cities nationwide.

AISI PUBLISHES THREE S900-SERIES TEST STANDARDS

The **American Iron and Steel Institute** has published three test standards in its S900-series. The test standards include:

- AISI S914-15 provides a method for determining the strength and deformation behavior of joist connectors used in cold-formed steel light-frame construction. In this edition, changes are made to allow the 1/8-inch deflection limit to exclude the initial deflection up to 10 percent of the ultimate load for gravity loading only.
- AISI S915-15 is a new test standard that provides the methodology to determine the strength and deformation behavior of through-the-web punchout bridging connectors for cold-formed steel wall stud bracing for nonstructural and structural wall studs in light-frame construction.
- AISI S916-15 is a new test standard that establishes a rational method of determining the strength and stiffness of nonstructural interior partition wall assemblies framed with cold-formed steel. In addition to the cold-formed steel framing, gypsum board panels are considered part of the wall assembly. This standard provides an alternative to the calculation of capacity based on AISI S100, North American Specification for the Design of Cold-Formed Steel Structural Members. It also permits manufacturers to determine limiting height values for the assemblies.

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the firm expects it and team leaders model the behavior as they watch work progressing. It happens when leaders lean over a desk or computer terminal to look for ways to think more creatively about the problem being solved, suggesting the team involved reach out to other individuals in the firm who might offer a unique and inspirational point of view. Who knows better than the leadership team where those specific areas of expertise reside? It is leadership's responsibility to probe, connect and then follow up to see what happened. That's how a culture of creative connectivity evolves, not because it is written in a strategic plan. It becomes a way of life.

"Instilling that attitude and culture is not a result of writing about it in a strategic plan. It happens when the firm expects it and team leaders model the behavior as they watch work progressing. It happens when leaders lean over a desk or computer terminal to look for ways to think more creatively about the problem being solved."

"Take a look at each element of your strategic plan and ask, 'What specific action, and by whom, will move us toward our plan goals?' Imbed these actions and behaviors into the way things are done on a daily basis."

Take a look at each element of your strategic plan and ask: "What specific action, and by whom, will move us toward our plan goals?" Imbed these actions and behaviors into the way things are done on a daily basis. Avoid the trap of assigning committees only to have those committees meet once or twice to debate tasks and actions and then revert to old ways of doing things and get lost in the urgency of the work at hand.

These are just a couple of ideas on how you can make the most of that valuable strategic plan, turning it into daily actions that actualize your plan's aspirational goals. It's up to you to develop a new way of life in your firm to make each part of your strategic plan come true. ▀

EDWARD FRIEDRICHS, FAIA, FIIDA, is a consultant with Zweig Group and the former CEO and president of **Gensler**. Contact him at efriedrichs@zweiggroup.com.



CEOs share new year plans

CEOs in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry talk about what their firms are looking forward to in the year ahead.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

Whether they anticipate challenges, accomplishments, or a little of both, A/E/P and environmental consulting CEOs are embracing the year ahead and are ready for what it brings.

ROOM TO GROW. Kevin Phillips, CEO of **FPM Group Ltd.** (Ronkonkoma, NY), a 100-person consulting engineering firm, says that 2016 will be the firm's year to expand. Coming off a record-setting 2015, FPM is leveraging its position and hiring new people to invest in its future and to be able to provide more resources for its clients.

"We want to increase our revenue by 30 percent and our profits by 25 percent," Phillips says. "At present, we are working at 25 Air Force bases nationwide for seven to 10 years. This gives us a working relationship at these bases for our environmental services group and our engineering group to leverage. We are staffing up to exploit our position."

FINDING LEADERSHIP. Michael Sheerin, CEO of **TLC Engineering for Architecture** (Orlando, FL), a 340-person firm, says that talent will be its greatest challenge.

"We are managing growth responsibly and continue to look forward to opportunities that 2016 will hold."

"Finding the right individuals for key hires that are the result of growth and opportunity tops the list," Sheerin says. "While we continue to develop our

internal pipeline of future leaders and promote from within, use in-house recruiters to identify and connect with talented individuals, and target future graduates of specific programs and universities, growth and promotions have presented us with the opportunity to hire experienced leaders with specific skillsets. Identifying and hiring those individuals is a key to future continued growth and success," he says.

"Our success revolves around our people and everyone at RTM welcomes the opportunity to deliver for our clients and partners in 2016."

As a result, Sheerin says that their greatest challenge will also be their most outstanding accomplishment – balancing growth and opportunities.

"We are managing growth responsibly and continue to look forward to opportunities that 2016 will hold," he says. "Exciting opportunities for growth lie in our New Orleans, Dallas, and San Antonio offices, in addition to other major cities where TLC does not yet have staff based full-time."

More concrete accomplishments for TLC will be seeing several major projects move toward significant completion, including Brightline (formerly known as All Aboard Florida), the massive renovation and expansion of the main terminal level at Tampa International Airport and its new CON-RAC and APM, along with the APM at Orlando International Airport and the start of construction on its new South Terminal. On the healthcare side,

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SPOTLIGHT ON: The Year

PROFILE

The new year's bottom line

CFOs in the industry talk about what they expect their recently merged firms to accomplish in the new year.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

Whether merging companies or systems, CFOs are gearing up to combine talent, technology, and forces to stay on top in the year ahead.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS. Andrew Goldbaum, CFO of **Thornton Tomasetti** (New York, NY), a 1,200-person international engineering firm, says that following the firm's recent merger with **Weidinger**, one challenge is to leverage the numerous revenue synergies that have been identified to accelerate revenue growth.

"With our added depth and breadth of our services, we expect to be able to say 'yes' to clients more often. Our practice and regional teams are working closely together to develop both one and five-year plans to continue to grow our business at double-digit pace."

"With our added depth and breadth of our services, we expect to be able to say 'yes' to clients more often," he says. "Our practice and regional teams are working closely together to develop both one and five-year plans to continue to grow our business at double-digit pace."

Goldbaum wants Thornton Tomasetti to continue to be the global driver of change and innovation in the industry, and the merger with Weidinger has expanded its innovative capabilities and is enabling it to accelerate innovation and the commercialization of this innovation.

While Goldbaum finds the softening economy in China and its reduction of new construction to be a bit of a challenge, he is confident that they

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THE FUTURE OF FINANCE

Forbes Business asked several finance leaders to share their predictions for 2016 in terms of where finance departments are headed. Here is a sampling of replies:

"CFOs will need to combine a high competence work force with the new era of being data smart by designating digitalization as a main part of their business strategy. Finance professionals will have to master data navigation and use data mining tools to process big data volumes. Only companies with finance staff that can deploy advanced analytics will be able to succeed in a digitalized economy, where competition will be defined by better, data-driven decisions." — *Nilly Essaides, director, financial planning and analysis, The Association for Financial Professionals*

"Finance leaders understand that influencing future performance – not just reporting on past performance – is their key mandate. In 2016, finance teams will be increasingly driven to convert their position of financial-information stewardship to leadership in information-driven innovation. They will be called upon not only to champion the effective use of sophisticated analytics to support decision making, but also to harness the power of powerful social media and crowd-sourcing platforms to generate competitive advantage." — *Celina Rogers, vice president and editorial director, CFO Publishing*

"The future of finance will involve closer collaboration between the CFO and CMO as customer focus and brand become the key drivers of differentiation and profitability. Secondly, the CFO will assume a greater responsibility for analytics in the organization as data-driven decision making is at the heart of digital transformation." — *David Williams, vice president, global product marketing, analytics, SAP*

"Finance 'at your fingertips' is the future of finance. Finance professionals will be increasingly connected at anytime, anywhere. To support this, enterprises will make significant advances in adopting digital platforms across the value chain (not just ERP). Robotics, and automated point solutions will enhance core ERP capability, with a focus on faster time to market cloud solutions. With automation removing process barriers 'soft close' will become common – with the associated transparency particularly benefiting treasury." — *Graham Dewar, partner, European Finance Transformation*



TRENDS



Sustainability: Keyword for 2016

Many firms' marketing plans for 2016 reflect an anticipated dip in 2017; here's how A/E/P and environmental consulting firms are preparing.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

Marketers are approaching 2016 with a watchful eye. Several economists have reported a possible dip in 2017, so with that in mind, marketing is focused on sustainability and keeping teams in place.

STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY. Dana Birkes, chief marketing officer for **Clifford Power Systems Inc.** (Tulsa, OK), a 200-person power generation systems firm, says that, while everyone she speaks to in the business has an extensive backlog, economists are cautioning against another cyclical dip in 2017.

"As a result, in 2016 I think it is important we focus on sustainability of our current operations and continue to be strategic about what we are pursuing," she says. "This includes being very selective on pursuit of clients and markets that stabilize the company for the long haul."

Recently, Clifford Power completed an extensive overhaul of its management team, restructured its sales team, launched a new brand, and moved to a new operating system.

"The good news is, I believe we are now through the most difficult components of this transition and we now have a strong foundation to grow upon," she says.

In 2016, the marketing department at Clifford will be focused on getting better versus getting bigger by expanding their market share in their current 10 locations. One area they will be spending a lot of effort on is ingraining a culture of client service excellence throughout the organization.

"We are also going to continue to focus on improving efficiencies in our processes through technology and equipment upgrades to increase our productivity and profitability," Birkes says.

All in all, Clifford is gearing up for record sales in 2016 and setting the stage for sustainability to allow them to weather through a potential cyclical downturn in 2017.

The development of the infrastructure to support the firm's 2016 growth has taken place over the past several years. Here are a few additional items the company is focused on in 2016:

- Working on continuing to grow staff competency
- Establishing written guidelines for best practices across their operational positions
- Standardizing their compensation system to assure they are consistent for the market
- Owning their own buildings in all of their markets, except one, by year-end

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the new Florida Hospital for Women will open and significant progress will be made on the Tampa General Hospital Healthplex.

“These are all very large projects that we’re proud to have been involved in – and have all affected the future of Florida,” he says.

“We are consistently striving to raise the bar. Being well versed in technology is pivotal, and gives RTM the competitive edge to stay viable in an ever-changing marketplace.”

RAMPING UP TECH AND TEAMWORK. Tony Mirchandani, CEO of RTM Engineering Consultants (South Barrington, IL), a 100-person engineering consulting firm, reports that incorporating and taking full advantage of the latest software and technology are ongoing challenges for most businesses. Building information modeling software, such as Revit, is a prime example.

“Revit is going to be extremely valuable in the marketplace, but to maximize its benefits we recognized that we needed a dedicated team to train our engineers as well as outside consultants, clients, and general contractors in the proper use of this technology,” Mirchandani says. “We tackled the challenge and now our team understands the capabilities and scenarios for using Revit and other modeling software, and

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will continue to maintain a strong presence there.

“We have been in China for more than 20 years, and our strong relationships coupled with our geographic reach have allowed us to support our clients in China as their business and strategies take them beyond the China borders into other growth areas. We expect to continue to grow in the Pacific Rim through diversification into other practice areas and sectors in China, as well as continuing our expansion in Southeast Asia.”

THORNTON TOMASETTI: THE BOTTOM LINE. Goldbaum says that the firm’s anticipated and greatest challenge for 2016 will be in their ability to successfully integrate its talent, services, and infrastructure as a result of the merger.

“We have numerous integration teams across our practices, regions, and global support departments with detailed plans and we are making great strides toward accomplishing our goals,” he says.

TURNING TO TECHNOLOGY. At MBP (Fairfax, VA), a 273-person multi-disciplined construction consulting firm, Matt Collins, CFO, reports that the company has recently merged its accounting system with its CRM system to allow for better project management and more streamlined data reporting.

“With any implementation comes training, not only for our project teams, but for our operations teams, as well,” he

just as important, we fully understand the limitations.”

RTM has created a culture that encourages its team to embrace change, and the challenges that can come with it.

“We are consistently striving to raise the bar,” he says. “Being well versed in technology is pivotal, and gives RTM the competitive edge to stay viable in an ever-changing marketplace.”

Apparently, it’s paying off – now and hopefully for the future too.

In 2015, RTM saw a significant increase in clients who sought the services of the firm, versus RTM seeking out clients.

“We believe our culture and our people are directly tied to our success and accomplishment in this area,” Mirchandani says. “We have earned the trust of our clients and their business, and we take that very seriously. But we also know we can’t stop there.”

To prepare for 2016, RTM spent time last year building the foundation required to support clients in new vertical markets in addition to new demographic markets.

“Clients need a seasoned, talented and expert team to provide engineering and consulting services when they need and where they need it – and we deliver on that. Our success revolves around our people and everyone at RTM welcomes the opportunity to deliver for our clients and partners in 2016,” he says. ▀

says. “Logistically, training can be difficult for those working on project sites, so we have held various customized training sessions outside traditional office hours to accommodate a broad range of schedules.”

“We have numerous integration teams across our practices, regions, and global support departments with detailed plans and we are making great strides toward accomplishing our goals.”

MBP: THE BOTTOM LINE. Collins says that efficiencies gained will include quantifiable information available at the touch of a button, rather than a manual output of data.

“This shift in focus is allowing us to provide project managers with the opportunity to make project decisions with all the information in real time. New technologies will also be beta tested and implemented on our project sites,” he says. “Projects today have a need for greater efficiencies, which translate into cost savings for the owner.”

Technology and innovation will realize these efficiencies, so MBP has placed greater priority on this recurring need with the investment of its resources. ▀

OPINION



Building an entrepreneurial staff

Your employees will work harder if they're enthusiastic about their role in your firm; here are some tips to make that happen.



Jamie
Claire
Kiser

M&A INSIGHTS

As firms finalize their strategic plans for 2016, we hear a consistent desire from firms of all sizes to create an environment in which employees at all levels feel responsible for the company's financial success. Sure, this is a challenge that all businesses face, but I think it is felt more acutely within this industry than many others.

Most architects and engineers have had minimal exposure to financial management and are more comfortable building bridges than interpreting balance sheets. Successful firms have vibrant, entrepreneurial cultures. Staff feel responsible for the financial well-being of the company and "that's not my job" is removed from the firm's vocabulary.

"Elevating morale requires celebrating the wins of the back office staff as much as your star business developers."

Some of the top ways to get your staff to care as much as your CEO include:

- **Incorporate financial management training into**

career development for staff at all levels – not just principals. Financial fluency should not be an afterthought. It's not fair to promote someone to the decision-maker level without arming them with the tools they need to gauge the company's success. This means identifying key performance indicators or revenue goals, and teaching people what drives the KPIs.

- **Make every job the most important job in the company.** One of my favorite anecdotes to this end is the NASA janitor who reportedly told President John F. Kennedy that his job was to help put a man on the moon. If your receptionist believes that his job is as noble as your structural engineer's, you will see enthusiasm and ownership of individual results reflected on your bottom line. Elevating morale requires celebrating the wins of the back office staff

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- Achieving differentiation through Hubzone certification if it is determined that they meet the requirements.
- Continuing to focus on expanding their online presence

Scott D. Butcher, vice president and CMO with **JDB Engineering Inc.** (York, PA), part of the **NUTEC** firm, shares that one of the company's main challenges will lie in actually doing the work.

"The AEC industry is expanding right now, although some geographic regions and market sectors are stronger than others," he says. "The talent war is here, and it's difficult to find experienced professionals in several disciplines already – it's only going to get worse in the short term."

EMBRACE PEAKS; PREPARE FOR VALLEYS. Like Birkes, Butcher is also hearing rumblings about a downturn in 2017, so he says that 2016 efforts must also entail paying attention to the leading indicators and ensuring that firms are ready should workload decline in a year.

"We often talk about peaks and valleys in this industry – 2016 looks like one of those peaks, but we should all keep a wary eye toward 2017 being a valley," he says. "With that in mind, how much should we expand staff? Are there further productivity gains to be had – which would allow us to meet client demands during the peak without over-staffing, thus putting us in perhaps a better place for any decline in workload in the future?"

CONTENT IS KING. As a small marketing team, Butcher says that it's been important for them to migrate their websites – one is already on the Hubspot platform.

"It's an important step to take because the members of our small marketing team are not web designers or coders, so we needed a content management system that was already keeping up with the Google algorithm update," he says.

For 2016, Butcher envisions the website as becoming more of a sales tool – not just a marketing one – but this can only be accomplished via content.

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as much as your star business developers.

- **Create an incentive plan centered around financial accountability.** A Christmas bonus is great for morale, but doesn't inherently tell staff that every hour of their day that year built up to the amount that they'll see on the check. A good incentive plan is one that gives each employee the ability – and the mandate – to control their own destiny by performing their job functions in a way that is beneficial to the firm and responsible with client resources.
- **Share financial information widely.** If you are going to follow the advice above (creating an incentive plan), make sure that the staff knows how they are being measured. What are the firm's financial goals for the year? The quarter? Does everyone know the basic tenets of the firm's five-year plan? More important than sending out results after the end of a reporting period, information sharing needs to be proactive. Disseminating revenue reports and project profitability after the quarter has ended or the project is closed is reactive. In-

"The world of marketing has changed, and content marketing – or education-based marketing – is where it's at," Butcher says. "Creating a corporate culture that drives content production is a primary strategic goal for our firm. Content builds brand and drives interest, which can generate leads while also enhancing the personal brands of key staff members. I see 2016 as the year where our goals and reality in this area intersect."

STAYING COMPETITIVE THROUGH "RIDICULOCITY." At **Sanderson Stewart** (Billings, MT), a 65-person collaborative community development services firm, the focus is on the competition.

Kari Andren, associate and director of marketing, says that, as a result of increased competition in both the service and employment areas, the firm understands that it needs to provide ridiculously high levels of customer service along with an enriching and fun corporate culture.

"Our preparation for this began three years ago when we rolled out our vision of 'Ridiculosity.' Each year, we have focused this vision on the specific challenges at hand, and, this year, we are focusing on our people," Andren says.

As 2016 rolls in, Sanderson Stewart is looking forward to the maturation and utilization of its CRM tools. The firm converted from Deltek FMS to Deltek Vision several years ago, but the conversion created many duplicate and outdated client records. This "fuzzy" data made the database too cumbersome and confusing for the average employee to use.

In 2015, the firm started cleaning out its database and rolling out some of the new features that are available to its project managers within Deltek's new iAccess. It is looking forward to having a clean contact list and implementing training on the powerful tracking and planning tools that they now have at their disposal.

"Happy people make happy clients, and grow happy companies," Andren says. "This is the year." ▀

stead, tie reports to firm-wide and project-level budgets and goals while there is still time to correct any issues. Use these reports as an opportunity to point out the cost reduction efforts of that receptionist, the above-target chargeability of your second-year architect, and the new project manager who just beat her profitability target.

The common thread linking all of the methods outlined is communication. Staff have to know that they matter to the company. They have to know what the company wants to do, and that it is in everyone's best interest to work together to achieve these goals. They have to be reminded that the firm's success is their success. Staff also have to understand if they are pulling their weight on the team, and how to improve. The leaders of entrepreneurial firms take the time to build up their employees, and will reap the rewards of their investment. ▀

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RESOURCES

A publication preview

Zweig Group is excited to introduce several new books and surveys in 2016 and to offer increased time periods for research participation.

Now that the holiday season has come and gone, everyone is headed back to the office and focusing on the year ahead, include the staff at Zweig Group. Andrea Bennett, who was overseeing THE ZWEIG LETTER, has taken over Zweig Group's research and publications departments, and big things are planned for 2016, including the introduction of several new mini surveys and the production of more book publications.

The introduction of so-called "mini surveys" offers several new opportunities for readers. These publications will be available only in a digital format, rather than as a printed document, which means it will be less expensive and full-color. In addition, these surveys – which cover topics such as firms' social media usage, provision of company cars and cell phones, satellite offices, websites, and more – offer an in-depth look at a specific topic. These products will be made available throughout the year, in addition to Zweig Group's current survey publications, and are designed to compliment topics that those surveys cover.

Don't forget: When you fill out a survey questionnaire, you automatically receive a coupon code for a 65 percent discount (50 percent for the mini surveys) that can be applied to any survey – not only the one you just answered questions for. So, if you're considering buying a survey, look too at the open questionnaires. Not only does your firm's information allow Zweig Group to provide the most comprehensive data for the industry, but participation also allows you real savings – sometimes more than \$300!

In addition to surveys, Zweig Group is also planning to unveil several book revisions in 2016. Last year, Zweig Group revised three publications – its *Successful Project Management*, *Guide to & Samples of Press Releases*, and *Guide to Mergers & Acquisitions for A/E/P & Environmental Consulting Firms* – in 2016, production will at least double.

The first book Zweig Group will release this year is *Job Descriptions & Organizational Charts for A/E/P & Environmental Consulting Firms*, an updated revision of its past publications *A/E Job Descriptions and A/E Organizational Charts*, which will now be combined in a single publication. This product will be available in print and digital formats at the end of February.

Other topics covered by Zweig Group books in

2016 will include ownership transition and succession planning, recruitment and retention, and more. Zweig Group also wants to hear from you, its readers and clients: What topics do you need more information on or would like to see covered comprehensively in a Zweig Group book?

Zweig Group is excited about the new year, and we hope that you are, too. We look forward to serving you in 2016 – through consulting, research, publications, and more. If you would like more information about surveys, books, or any of Zweig Group's other offerings, please visit zweiggroup.com or email info@zweiggroup.com. ▀



2016 SURVEYS

Zweig Group will open participation for all of its surveys in just a few weeks, meaning that professionals can submit their data throughout the year, until the participation deadline, and reap the discounts that come from survey participation. Topics covered by Zweig Group surveys in 2016 will include:

- Marketing
- Firm valuation
- Incentive and management compensation
- Recruitment and retention
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Company cars
- Travel reimbursements
- Cell phones and mobile devices
- Policies, procedures, and benefits
- Social media
- Websites
- Utilization
- Fee and billing
- Principals, partners, and owners
- Information technology
- Financial performance
- Project management
- Associates
- Satellite offices
- Ownership transition
- Governance
- Employee stock ownership programs
- Zweig Group's Hot Firms List
- Zweig Group's Best Firms to Work For awardees



CALENDAR: FEBRUARY 2016



2.1-3 SURETY BONDING & CONSTRUCTION RISK MANAGEMENT

Four plenary sessions, 15 breakout sessions, one luncheon and two receptions. This conference provides a unique opportunity for the thought leaders of the construction, surety and insurance industries to come together and engage in candid discussion of both the science and the art of construction risk management.

cost: \$525

location: Naples, FL

more info: meetings.agc.org/risk/

2.2 BECOMING A BETTER PROJECT MANAGER

This course will provide project managers with a fundamental understanding of the type of personality and characteristics successful project managers have that allow them to flourish in their role. Attendees will also have a better understanding of specific tools they can use to be more effective as Project Managers in architecture, engineering, planning and environmental consulting firms.

cost: First attendee \$975, additional attendees \$825

Company-hosted group webinars also available.

location: Houston

more info: zweiggroup.com/seminars/better_pm/



2.3 ADVANCED PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A one-day seminar that was specifically developed to help higher-level design and technical professionals in architecture, engineering, planning, and environmental firms develop the advanced leadership and management skills to better lead projects and clients.

Cost: First attendee \$975, additional attendees \$825

location: Houston

more info: zweiggroup.com/seminars/advanced_pm/



2.11 BECOMING A BETTER RECRUITER

A one-day seminar that was developed to help firm principals, managers, HR people, and design and technical professionals in architecture, engineering, planning and environmental firms become better recruiters. We will help you and your team be more comfortable approaching great talent and learn how to promote your firm.

cost: First attendee \$975, additional attendees: \$825

location: Dallas

more info: zweiggroup.com/seminars/better_recruiter/index.php

2.14-17 GEOTECHNICAL & STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING CONGRESS

An expanded conference featuring 15 tracks and six plenary sessions focusing on interdisciplinary and discipline-specific areas. In addition, more than 100 exhibitors are expected.

Cost: \$550-\$1,195

location: Phoenix

more info: geo-structures.org



2.16-19 ENVIRONMENTAL CONNECTION

Environmental Connection provides peer-reviewed education, products, and technology that address four educational tracks: Erosion and Sediment Control; Stormwater Management; Surface Water Restoration; and MS4 Management.

cost: Members \$795, non-members \$995

location: San Antonio

more info: geo-structures.org/



2.18 BETTER FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

location: Atlanta

more info: zweiggroup.com/seminars/better_fm/index.php

2.23 COMMON MISTAKES WITH LEAN SYSTEM AND HOW TO CORRECT THEM

Are you struggling to implement Lean on your projects? Have you had planning sessions that were not as productive as they could be? Do your teams just not "get it"? Join this webinar to learn from the experience of a Lean Construction coach who has not only delivered numerous projects using Lean, but also has coached Owners, GCs, CMs, designers, and subcontractors to successfully implement Lean thinking and Lean tools.

cost: Members \$79, non-members \$99

more info: agc.org/learn/education-training/events/webinar-common-mistakes-lean-and-last-planner-system-and-how-correct



2.24-25 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER MANAGEMENT MODELING

Emphasis on state-of-the-art computer modeling for resolving water quantity and quality problems in stormwater, wastewater, and water distribution systems.

cost: \$167 for 1 day, \$375 for 2 days

location: Toronto

more info: chiwater.com/Training/Conferences/conferencetoronto.asp



2.25-26 CAPITAL DISTRICT CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL ENGINEERS WEEK

The purpose of this event is to raise public awareness of engineers' positive contributions to quality of life, promote the importance of a technical education including a high level of math, science and technology literacy among parents, teachers and students, and motivate youth to pursue engineering and related careers to provide a diverse and vigorous engineering workforce.

location: Albany, NY

more info: capitaldistrictce-week.org/



2.26 FEDERAL ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

The Federal Engineer of the Year Award, sponsored by the Professional Engineers in Government, honors engineers employed by a federal agency that employs at least 50 engineers worldwide.

location: Washington, D.C.

more info: nspe.org/resources/interest-groups/government/federal-engineer-year