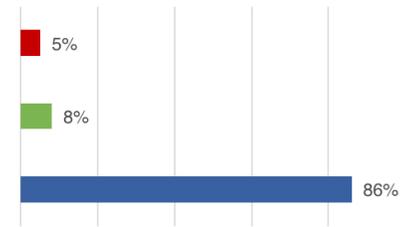


TRENDLINES

Handling out-of-scope requests



In Zweig Group's 2015 Project Management Survey, 48 percent of respondents said they had a formal process for handling out-of-scope requests from clients. Of those, 86 percent said they used a **formal change order for each additional service/change**, 8 percent used an **adjustment in fee at the end of each project phase**, and 5 percent categorized their process as **"other."** Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding. — Vivian Cummings, research analyst assistant

Good times in the industry

The A/E/P industry is doing well right now, but you shouldn't get too comfortable.

"The seeds of your future problems are being sown right now. You need to be careful instead of careless."



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

Right now, we're having some really good times. A/E/P firms are doing well – some of them are doing incredibly well. We've never seen higher growth rates and profit.

Our own firm had a fantastic year. Zweig Group grew by 31 percent in 2015. Our growth projections are 48 percent for 2016. While this is what everyone wants, my experience is the seeds of your future problems are being sown right now. You need to be careful instead of careless. Here's some of what I'm talking about:

- 1) Watch out for indiscriminate hiring.** When everyone is busy and overloaded, it's hard to find people who are really qualified for individual roles. So what happens is unqualified people get added because someone is better than no one, and you never know, they "might work out." This can be disastrous for the firm and the individuals hired for roles they shouldn't be in, and cause all kinds of problems down the road.
- 2) Keep salaries under control.** When everyone is working like mad, and the dollars are rolling in, the tendency for many A/E firms is to start throwing money at people. This can be terrible when things slow down! Rather than letting salaries get so high that you have to be knocking the cover off the ball every single month without fail, let your bonus plan do the work of rewarding people for their high performance. Sure, higher salaries are a measure of protection to keep good people from defecting to competitors, but you have to keep an eye on

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MORE COLUMNS

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BUSINESS NEWS

AEGION'S INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTIONS PLATFORM ADDS TO ITS CAPABILITIES

Aegion has executed a definitive agreement to acquire Underground Solutions Inc. for \$85 million and expects to close the transaction during the first quarter of 2016. Several key members of Underground Solutions' senior management, who average more than 20 years of industry experience, will join Aegion to form an expanded team dedicated to trenchless rehabilitation of existing pressure pipelines.

"We are pleased to have Underground Solutions join Aegion," Gordon commented. "Our market research suggests assembling a portfolio of technologies is the right strategy to establish a leading position in the North American pressure pipe rehabilitation market. We believe the combination of Underground Solutions' patented PVC technologies with our Insituform and Tyfo/Fibrwrap technologies will allow us to strengthen our position in this attractive market by offering our customers a broader portfolio of solutions."

In a separate action to continue the recent momentum in the Fyfe business, Aegion signed a definitive agreement with Fyfe Group LLC to acquire the legal rights to products, contract installa-

tion, intellectual property, and licensing agreements in key international markets not previously purchased by Aegion for approximately \$3 million. The transaction is expected to close during the first quarter of 2016 and will allow Aegion to expand third party product sales across 72 countries in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

ECOLAB EARNS LEED GOLD RECERTIFICATION FOR ITS NALCO WATER AND PROCESS SERVICES HEADQUARTERS IN NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS

Ecolab Inc., the global leader in water, hygiene, and energy technologies and services, has received Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold recertification from the U.S. Green Building Council for the buildings at its 76-acre campus in Naperville, Illinois, the headquarters of its Nalco Water and Process Services business.

"We help our customers operate sustainably, and we share their commitment to environmental stewardship," said Christophe Beck, Ecolab executive vice president and president, Nalco Water and Process Services. "We are proud of our LEED Gold recertification and will continue to further enhance our operations in the future."

Ecolab's Naperville campus

was first certified LEED Gold in 2010. Constructed in 1985, the campus includes 417,500 square feet of space for more than 1,000 employees, primarily in business and research, development and engineering roles. An on-site district energy building produces the steam, chilled water and electricity used throughout the campus.

"Ecolab's LEED Gold recertification demonstrates tremendous green building leadership," said Rick Fedrizzi, CEO and founding chair, USGBC. "The green building movement offers an unprecedented opportunity for companies to respond to the most-important challenges of our time and become a driving force in the green building movement. By incorporating innovative sustainable practices, Ecolab will positively impact their employees, the environment and their bottom line."

To achieve LEED recertification, Ecolab implemented several building enhancements, including a new building management system, converted more than three acres of land from manicured lawn to meadowland and increased compost participation to decrease landfill waste.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

them during the good times and not let them get out of control.

3) Beware of increasing benefits too quickly and too much. Benefits are "sticky downward" as my old boss, Irving Weiss of The Pickering Firm in Memphis, Tennessee, used to say. That means they go up easily but don't go down easily. So you have to be careful not to be too generous in the good times and create a cost structure you cannot support during the less prosperous times.

4) Client service is crucial – don't take any of them for granted! It is during these good times – when it's easy to replace any client – that A/E firms start taking clients for granted. This is terrible, horrible, and cancerous in every way. Don't use your best old clients as a training ground for new people. Don't ignore client complaints, even when they don't seem serious. There are always warning signals and when you're busy it is easy to ignore them or rationalize why they can be ignored.

Yep – good times are always followed by tough times. Enjoy the good times but don't get carried away! ▀

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

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The value of irrelevance

Owners interested in selling shouldn't be the only ones leading their companies; making yourself irrelevant makes your firm more valuable.



Jamie
Claire
Kiser

M&A INSIGHTS

Firms that command high market premiums are ones in which the owners are, in many ways, always seeking to become less and less relevant. If you're the owner of a firm and you're reading this, you've got to be wondering what I mean. What I mean is that valuable firms are those with a wide base of individuals who can step up and lead.

Ask yourself if you could leave your business for 30 or 60 days and have it run the same way that it would if you were there. The less valuable firms are the ones in which the owner is, or a small group of owners are, "the business" – meaning that if you aren't there, you know that clients won't receive the same attention, invoices will be paid late, receivables will trickle in, and employees won't put forth the same effort.

"When buyers know that your business is able to run without you managing every detail of the company, you've just made yourself a much more attractive prospect."

If you have to be there to make sure that the business runs properly, you've reduced your market value. If your second in command is paralyzed at the thought of making any decision without scheduling a meeting and obtaining your

"Valuable firms are those with a wide base of individuals who can step up and lead."

advance approval, you've reduced your market value. If the owner is the business, the next question is: What, exactly, does the owner think he or she can offer to a prospective buyer? What do you have to sell?

This is not a theoretical discourse on organizational management. There are multiples and dollar signs attached to the answers to this question. Every buyer that we work with is more interested in the folks behind the top leadership than they are in the guy who wants to cash out and retire.

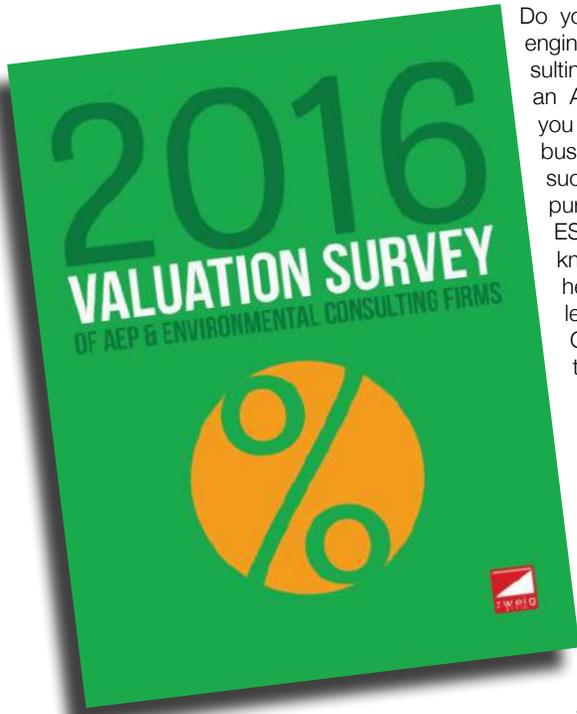
The firms in which owners delegate operational tasks and client relationships to a motivated next generation of leadership always will be more valuable. When buyers know that your business

See IRRELEVANCE, page 4



FEBRUARY RELEASE

NEW SURVEY HELPS YOU VALUE YOUR FIRM



Do you know how much your architectural, engineering, planning or environmental consulting firm is worth? If you're the leader of an A/E/P or environmental consulting firm, you can't risk not knowing the value of your business. Whether for external purposes, such as a firm sale or merger, or internal purposes, such as ownership transition or ESOP implementation, all firm owners must know the value of their investments. To help A/E/P and environmental consulting leaders manage this daunting task, Zweig Group – the go-to resource for architectural, engineering, planning, and environmental consulting leaders – will release its *2016 Valuation Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms* on February 1.

"Valuing your firm can be important for many reasons," said Andrea Bennett, Zweig Group's research and publications manager. "Last year, half of respondents said they performed a valuation prior to an internal ownership transfer, while a little more than a third said it was a buy/sell requirement.

However, we also had respondents who said it was necessary to obtain financing, for an outside sale or merger, or an ERISA, ESOP, or IRS requirement. Determining the right way to conduct a valuation for your firm is essential."

Zweig Group surveyed A/E/P and environmental consulting firms that had performed valuations in the past three years. The survey includes questions about who executed the valuation, why it was conducted, and key financial statistics, including net revenue, book value, backlog, EBITDA, and more. It also covers valuation methods and firm profiles, so readers can compare their companies to similar businesses in the same industry.

The *2016 Valuation Survey* will be released February 1, and preordering is available for a discounted rate. For more information, visit zweiggroup.com, email info@zweiggroup.com or call 800.466.6275.

**SHOP SMARTER!**

If you're considering purchasing a survey from Zweig Group, why not share your data, too? The more firms that submit information, the more comprehensive each survey document is, and the more useful it is to other firms. Plus, survey participants receive a coupon code for 65 percent off the survey of their choosing or 50 percent off a mini-survey (that's a savings of \$321.75 and \$125, respectively). So, shop smarter: Participate in a survey before you purchase; save money and help your industry be the best it can be!

All 2016 surveys are now open for participation, so there are several topics to choose from. These surveys are closing soon:

- **Merger & Acquisition Survey** – open until February 9
- **Company Car Survey** – open until February 17
- **Work Travel & Reimbursement Survey** – open until February 24
- **Cell Phone & Mobile Devices Survey** – open until March 2

The more you participate, the more opportunities you have to save! Visit info.zweiggroup.com/survey-participation today or email research@zweiggroup.com for more information.

IRRELEVANCE, from page 3

is able to run without you managing every detail of the company, you've just made yourself a much more attractive prospect.

Granted, this is much easier said than done. Entrepreneurs who start their own businesses especially have a hard time delegating. Plus, it's counterintuitive. How could anyone be as invested in the business as the person who founded the business, devoted decades of time and resources to its development, and whose name is synonymous with the firm's reputation?

"Every buyer that we work with is more interested in the folks behind the top leadership than they are in the guy who wants to cash out and retire."

Creating a highly valuable firm requires a great deal of balance. An entrepreneurial leader will foster an entrepreneurial culture. The leader's passion and drive can become tangible assets if these characteristics are cultivated in leaders across the company. Finding the individuals within the firm who embrace constant evolution and innovative thinking is the first step. The next step is to develop these highly desirable traits within employees and provide opportunities for them to step up and make decisions. Every leader of every firm – from CEOs down to junior managers – should identify their successor and should nurture that individual's development while at the same time finding ways to hand off more and more responsibilities to their successor. The return on the investment in your own irrelevance will be realized in a more valuable enterprise that is readily marketable. ▀

JAMIE CLAIRE KISER is director of M&A at Zweig Group. Contact her at jkiser@zweiggroup.com

PROFILE

Construction cameras enhance PM

This eye-in-the-sky construction camera provides an excellent view for stakeholders in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

Would you like to connect everyone on a project to the job site to improve project management and communication and ultimately get a more efficient build? Your answer is likely, “yes.” Well, construction webcam service provider, OxBlue, might be the solution you are looking for. High-resolution jobsite images, high-definition time-lapse videos, and intuitive technologies it provides can connect all the dots.

“Interested parties in places like Dubai and Paris were pulling up the camera to monitor project progress on a regular basis.”

Dan Maxwell, former project director with **AD-AMS Management Services** (Atlanta, GA), an independent project management firm, reports that OxBlue provided to the company with the ability to communicate with multiple parties all over the world.

“Interested parties in places like Dubai and Paris were pulling up the camera to monitor project progress on a regular basis,” he says.

To further help project managers, investors, and other stakeholders monitor building, track progress, and coordinate logistics, OxBlue now offers a 24-MP time-lapse construction camera that produces images measuring 6,000 by 4,000 pixels to provide clients with high-resolution, detailed images.

The images, which are transmitted over cellular networks via cellular technology built into the cameras, are viewed using OxBlue’s construction camera interface. Among the features the interface provides is the ability to zoom in on images to see

“It gave us the ability to confirm schedule delays due to things like weather and it also allowed me to monitor project site work from the road.”



details up close. With the 24-MP construction webcam, users can now see fine details while retaining image quality and clarity.

OxBlue static and pan-tilt-zoom construction cameras take pictures of a jobsite continuously, capturing virtually every moment of construction. That extent of documentation provides a complete photographic record of a project, enabling stakeholders to understand such things as how to coordinate crews or deliveries to meet a certain deadline or how and when a problem occurred on the jobsite.

“We were able to go back and determine things like weather conditions and were clearly able to view date stamps. This feature alone saved us \$2 million.”

Maxwell says that he particularly liked the time-lapse function.

“It gave us the ability to confirm schedule delays due to things like weather, and it also allowed me to monitor project site work from the road,” Maxwell says.

John Morgan, a former vice president of development with **Prologis** (San Francisco, CA), an industrial real estate firm, agrees that the time-lapse function is invaluable. In fact, it provided the company with the ability to trace back to a roof failure and analyze the conditions surrounding the failure.

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SP@TLIGHT ON: Tech

PROFILE



Advancements in automation

Aerial cameras, 3-D integration, and virtual reality are sharpening design and impressing clients in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent



Gary Sheets,
Director of
Geospatial
Services,
Larson Design
Group

Today's firms embrace an array of technological advances in imaging – laser scanning, high-definition aeriels, and virtual reality – that drive office and worksite efficiency, marketing, and project deliverables.

IDENTIFYING REPEATABLE PROCESSES. Gary T. Sheets, Jr., director of geospatial services for **Larson Design Group** (Williamsport, PA) – a more than 300-person engineering, architecture, and surveying firm – says his firm is focused on improving its methods and project deliverables by identifying “repeatable” processes.

“The information is available for use in both 2-D and 3-D, and permits team members to virtually visit a location and gain the detailed information they as individuals need to do their jobs.”

DATA ACQUISITION. Over the last few years, Larson has made significant investments in advanced data acquisition technologies that not only streamline the company's efforts, but provide a much clearer understanding of a project site's existing conditions and environment.

“Our use of laser scanning, Mobile LiDAR and low altitude/high definition aerial imaging from UAVs provide our planning and design personnel with the highly accurate, incredibly detailed view of the project site in a fraction of the time it would take with more traditional methods,” Sheets says. “The information is available for use in both 2-D and 3-D and permits team members to virtually visit a location and gain the detailed information they as individuals need to do their jobs.”

PROCESS AUTOMATION. Many of the tasks associated with developing deliverables – plan sets and construction inspection forms, among others – are repetitive in nature and can result in basic human error. In an attempt to allow its professionals to focus their talents and to improve the overall quality of the product, Larson has made and continues



Technology:

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to make investments in the area of process standardization and automation. Specific examples include the use of internally developed and commercially available tools for sheet layout and version controls.

“We are also implementing software that focuses on managing, processing, and distributing the large datasets resulting from the Advanced Data Acquisition Technologies,” Sheets says.

“This ‘map-centric’ approach allows our project managers to visualize where resources, with the appropriate skills, are located and reduce the time and costs associated with execution logistics.”

PROJECT AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT. As much of its workload is distributed across a large geographic area, making sure the appropriate resources are allocated to a project is critical. At Larson, project managers have traditionally used workflows that manually compared detailed project schedules, human resources information, and equipment inventories to develop project management plans. While this method has proven to be effective, it can be very time consuming and challenging, especially when applied to long-lasting, large projects where variables can change often.

“Today, Larson is developing a geographic information system, or GIS, that integrates project schedules, worksites, and information about our personnel to streamline and automate the process,” Sheets says. “This ‘map-centric’ approach allows our project managers to visualize where resources, with the appropriate skills, are located and reduce the time and costs associated with execution logistics.”

GEODESIGN. In the early stages of the project’s life cycle, Larson’s planning and design teams take into account numerous constraints, while studying multiple design concepts or routes. The application of commercially available software, such as ESRI CityEngine and Autodesk Infracore, are “game changers” for how Larson approaches its work.

“Through virtual reality technology, a variety of industries are experiencing a new way to conceptualize, view, and plan their facilities of the future.”

“These geodesign tools allow project teams – our professionals, clients and partner firms – to work collaboratively, regardless of their locations, to quickly compare benefits and costs associated with a concept,” Sheets says.

TAKING A PAGE FROM THE GAMING COMMUNITY. At **BRPH Architects-Engineers Inc.** (Melbourne, FL) – a 320-person

international architecture, engineering design, and construction services firm – Todd Reed, a graphics manager, says there’s a new way to experience a future facility, and it has nothing to do with physically stepping foot inside one.

“Using technology to the fullest isn’t just about improving internal processes,” Reed says. “BRPH is also using it to create better client experiences. Through virtual reality technology, a variety of industries are experiencing a new way to conceptualize, view, and plan their facilities of the future.”

The technology involves the use of an Oculus Rift stereoscopic virtual reality headset which allows clients to navigate through a virtual facility while looking in any direction they choose via the headset’s head tracking ability.

The technology behind the wow factor starts in the 3-D world.

“Since BRPH designs in 3-D, the next logical step was to view designs in 3-D,” Reed says. “Using Oculus Rift, the project geometry is ported, via Autodesk’s Maya, into the Unity game engine. This process creates a realistic real-time visualization that allows the viewer to see all areas of a future factory.”

“Using Oculus Rift, the project geometry is ported, via Autodesk’s Maya, into the Unity game engine. This process creates a realistic real-time visualization that allows the viewer to see all areas of a future factory.”



See AUTOMATION, page 8

OXBLUE, from page 5

“We were able to go back and determine things like weather conditions and were clearly able to view date stamps,” he says. “This feature alone saved us \$2 million.”

Companies also like to use the fluid, high-definition time-lapse construction videos for interacting and communicating with the public, and for public relations and marketing campaigns.

For example, a large project with great public interest was being spearheaded by Jamestown Properties and Green Street Properties. They transformed the Sears building-turned city hall in Atlanta into a mixed use business and residential complex.

AUTOMATION, from page 7

BRPH essentially took a platform that is extremely popular within the gaming community and made it work in a business sense.

Before the use of virtual reality, clients were relegated to 2-D plans. This new integration means clients get to visualize, and feel like they are actually inside their new facility, before the design development phase of a project is complete.

From a marketing perspective, it allows for an added layer of creativity and exposure.

“We market the program externally for companies to ‘step inside their next facility ... before it’s even built,’ because that is essentially what the virtual reality experience provides,” Reed says. “It’s a totally immersive viewing experience combined with the interactive control of perspective that results in a unique and memorable client experience.”

“We market the program externally for companies to ‘step inside their next facility ... before it’s even built,’ because that is essentially what the virtual reality experience provides.”

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD? Technology, and the potential for automation, is ever changing.

At Larson, the Innovation and Technology committee recently discussed what the developing game changers were and from their vantage point, they see two specific areas that they plan on monitoring for development strategies. They are:

1) The Internet of Things. Larson believes that in the very near future the concept of “smart” vehicles and equipment will not only help their clients manage their facilities and asset portfolios, but will also allow Larson to further improve its project and logistics management. As the technology progresses, and industry standards evolve, GIS tools will be able to receive and use key data elements from the field. This will not only allow them to improve their resource allocation and response time by tracking the physical location, but also monitor equip-

Sandi Parker was the senior manager for creative and marketing at the time and says that the technology provided them with two major benefits – the ability to communicate with the outside world and to also serve project development needs.

The addition of the 24-MP camera rounds out OxBlue’s existing lineup of 6-, 8-, 12-, and 16-MP construction cameras. Every OxBlue camera is part of a complete system that includes all hardware, cellular data connection, intuitive user tools, and three kinds of time-lapse movie capabilities.

“If you are keen on managing developments and restricted on resources, OxBlue will save you money and time and allow you to capture each one of your projects on a daily basis,” Morgan says. ▀

ment run times and environmental conditions that may lead to safety issues and/or down time due to equipment failure.

2) Augmented Reality. This is quickly gaining acceptance in the

“It’s a totally immersive viewing experience combined with the interactive control of perspective that results in a unique and memorable client experience.”

construction industry, but has seen a much slower growth with design professionals. However, as the use of geodesign becomes more common place, and the limitations associated with dataset size begin to be resolved, AR will be a valuable tool.

“We envision developing a series of ‘concept designs’ within our offices, then visiting a site with a client, equipped with AR devices,” Sheets says. “While in the field, we will be able to visualize the design, make alterations, and understand the impacts of those adjustments in real time.” ▀





Is it time you got employee input?

You may have an ‘open door’ policy as a CEO or manager, but you could still be seeing your firm through rose-tinted glasses.



**Christina
Zweig**

**MARKETING
MATTERS**

If you want to grow, are having a hard time recruiting or retaining employees, feel like your employees aren’t quite as productive as they could be, or just want to find a way to make your firm more profitable, the opinions and ideas of the people sitting in your office and interacting with your clients, are by far your most valuable resource.

Even if your firm has open meetings, does exit interviews, or you feel that as a leader you are available for employees to voice their grievances at any time, you still may not be getting an accurate picture. Fear of speaking up, workload, and lack of time may be huge deterrents for people working at your firm to offer suggestions or communicate issues. Giving employees an anonymous, third-party method to voice their opinions, ideas, and concerns across a variety of areas is the only way to get a full picture.

“Fear of speaking up, workload, and lack of time may be huge deterrents for people working at your firm to offer suggestions or communicate issues.”

In my experience working as a marketing consultant conducting employee surveys and with the Best Firms To Work For program, it’s true that

“Giving employees an anonymous, third-party method to voice their opinions, ideas, and concerns across a variety of areas is the only way to get a full picture.”

nearly every set of employee survey responses has at least one person who thinks the only thing that will improve their performance is an all-expense paid retreat to Aruba, a 10,000 square-foot ping-pong room, or something equally ridiculous. But for every person who wants fresh bacon available 24/7, there’s usually two with really good – and often easy to implement – suggestions.

Here are just a few reasons that you should get some employee feedback:

Power in numbers. A single comment, especially if it comes from a known complainer or whistleblower is much more easily discarded than a

See EMPLOYEE INPUT, page 10



BUSINESS NEWS

BALFOUR BEATTY CONSTRUCTION SELECTED TO BUILD FOREGROUND AT ONE ELEVEN CONGRESS IN DOWNTOWN AUSTIN The transformation of downtown Austin continues with the reinvention of public space at One Eleven Congress – an integral part of the Capitol City skyline since 1987. **Balfour Beatty Construction** was chosen by owner Parkway Properties Inc., to deliver the project alongside landscape architecture firm **dwg.** and **Michael Hsu Office of Architecture.**

Fareground at One Eleven Congress is the reimagining of the plaza and lobby space at One Congress Plaza, the iconic blue-lighted stair-step building at the corner of 2nd Street and Congress Avenue. Part park and part marketplace, Fareground will transform the street-level sunken plaza and interior lobby of One Congress Plaza into a modern, inviting and active downtown hub for professionals, residents and visitors. The lively inside-outside, eat-drink, work-play, early-to-rise, late-to-close hub is within walking distance from the heart of downtown.

Following extensive preconstruction planning by Balfour Beatty, the Fareground at One Eleven Congress project is underway with completion expected in spring 2017. During the pre-planning efforts, Balfour Beatty used laser scanning, part of a suite of advanced reality capture technology, to scan the plaza and its five existing heritage oak trees being incorporated into the redesign. Laser scanning the entire plaza allowed the construction

team to identify the precise location of the tree canopies to avoid clashing with the new shade structures being installed at the plaza level.

“Our extensive portfolio of interior construction in Austin’s central business district, especially our experience with complicated, commercial lobby renovations, made this project a great fit for our team’s expertise,” said Kirk D. Benken, vice president of operations for Balfour Beatty Construction in Austin. “We are thrilled to be a part of another one-of-a-kind project in Austin.”

Balfour Beatty previously served as general contractor for the 56-story Austonian condominiums and has been selected as the general contractor for the The Independent, which will be the tallest residential building west of the Mississippi River.

AEGION TO REDUCE ITS EXPOSURE IN THE NORTH AMERICAN UPSTREAM MARKET Following a recent assessment of its energy-related businesses, **Aegion** concluded the persistent low price of oil is expected to create market challenges for the foreseeable future and that the high-cost upstream oil markets it serves in California and Canada will be particularly difficult as customers further reduce expenditures in 2016. In light of this, Aegion will reduce its exposure in the North American upstream market by approximately \$100 million in annual revenues through two specific actions. First, Aegion has entered into a definitive agreement to sell its 51 percent interest in Bayou Perma-Pipe Canada Ltd, a pipe coatings company in

western Canada, to its joint venture partner MFRI, Inc. for approximately \$9 million. Aegion expects the transaction to close during the first quarter of 2016. Second, Aegion will downsize Energy Services’ upstream operations in central California due to reduced customer demand while continuing to support the remaining customers in the region with its high-quality services and industry leading safety programs.

Aegion will also implement a restructuring plan approved by Aegion’s board of directors to reduce consolidated annual expenses by approximately \$15 million, most of which will be realized in 2016. The restructuring will reposition Energy Services’ upstream operations in California, right-size the Corrosion Protection platform to compete more effectively and reduce corporate and other operating expenses. Management intends to complete the cost reductions and record a majority of an estimated \$7 to \$9 million in pre-tax charges, most of which are cash charges, during the first quarter of 2016. The pre-tax charges primarily consist of employee severance, extension of benefits, employment assistance programs, early lease termination and other non-cash costs associated with the restructuring. In the coming weeks, Aegion expects to complete a detailed review of approximately \$150 million in intangible assets, including goodwill, for certain of Aegion’s energy-related businesses impacted by the adverse change in market conditions, a portion of which could be impaired.

EMPLOYEE INPUT, from page 9

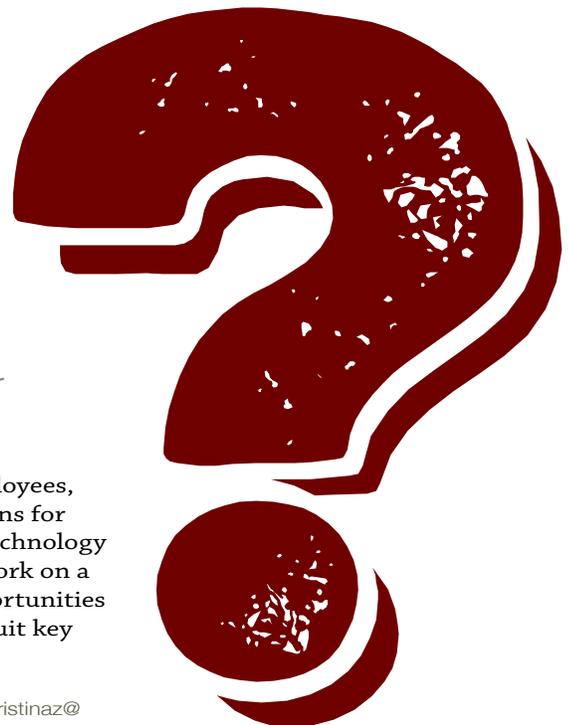
written collection of 10-plus comments all presenting similar views on the same subject. Likewise, when small comments get made at different times to different people, they are much more easily discarded.

Metrics. Open responses are invaluable, but having numerical rankings across certain areas allows firms to easily see areas where they need to improve, and also chart improvement over time.

“You can have a great organization with a lot of happy employees, but unless specifically prompted, people will not often volunteer suggestions for improvement or expansion.”

It’s not all bad! You can have a great organization with a lot of happy employees, but unless specifically prompted, people will not often volunteer suggestions for improvement or expansion. Just one person’s idea for a new program or technology that could improve his or her efficiency or a person’s expressed desire to work on a specific kind of project may be all it takes to give a firm awesome new opportunities (and revenues). Positive feedback from employees can be used to help recruit key hires and will even help you win more work! ▀

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PMs share communication tips

Focusing on your words, explaining, and actively listening are priorities for effective communication with teams and clients.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

How do project managers foster and ensure effective communication among their team and clients? Are there some strategies that are better than others?

GET VERBAL. At **Maser Consulting P.A.**, (Red Bank, NJ), a 600-person multidiscipline firm, Daniel Busch, project manager, has found that verbal communication is the most critical, and he prefers to do it in-person.

“Verbal communication is key to establishing relationships whether with your staff, peers, or clients. You can’t read body language or voice inflection in an email. In fact, sometimes, you can even misinterpret language in an email which could be detrimental,” he says.

And, Busch explains that when you have a discussion, it’s important to summarize the key points and ask for confirmation that they are in agreement with your understanding of the information/conversation.

“This leaves the door open for conversation about agreement or conflict,” he says.

Busch provides an example. He says about a year ago, they were trying to sell a new consulting service to an existing client.

“I had not yet met this new team leader. Because it was a service relevant to my client, I made it a point to meet the new group leader in-person and made an initial introduction to the client via telephone. This initial conversation with the client did not go particularly well. However, after having met the new service leader through a face-to-face discussion, I learned more about his expertise and was convinced the client was missing out on a great opportunity to enhance their financial return on the project.”

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Busch knew that he had the right team to make it happen. Through a subsequent conversation between him and the client, he was able better communicate the financial opportunity they had and convince him that they could get him there.

As a result, this has led to a significant amount of work for the firm and put the client well on their way to achieving an enhanced financial return.

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EXPLAIN AND LISTEN. Shana Beiger, project manager, health and safety program manager, **Advantage Engineers** (Mechanicsburg, PA), a 200-person firm, says that putting information into a context or perspective works best. She finds ways to discuss background information on tasks that she is asking the person to complete and it is always well received.

“For example, if I ask a team member to write a specific report section, I let them know the reason the work was completed, why we are writing a report and the ultimate project goal. I believe this helps with engagement at work,” she says.

In addition, when she assigns tasks, much like Busch, she likes to wrap up the conversation with a summary of the assignment.

“I have experienced projects with tricky communication because individuals were not on the same page on a project and were resistant to listening to others’ ideas.”

“I find this helps to ensure both individuals are on the same page regarding expectations,” she says.

She also prefers to ask open-ended questions during discussions which gives people the opportunity to talk about the assignment.

“Individuals need to feel like their ideas are being heard and considered”

“Asking yes or no questions often will not provide all of the information sometimes needed,” she says.

In addition, Beiger says that working at Advantage Engineers provides her with the opportunity to collaborate with several individuals at once from multiple offices. As a result, since they are separated by geography, she finds that setting up weekly conference calls with the team during critical moments of a project helps to facilitate continued communication and a successful outcome.

“I have experienced projects with tricky communication because individuals were not on the same page on a project and were resistant to listening to others’ ideas. The best way to tackle this is head on by acknowledging everyone’s ideas, discussing them, and having a constructive conversation about the best way to continue a project. I find most projects can be improved with good communication. Individuals need to feel like their ideas are being heard and considered,” she says. ▀



Becoming a Better Project Manager

FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE MOVING BEYOND TECHNICAL WORK TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Many architects, engineers, planners, and environmental consultants get little or no training in project management and are drafted into PM roles totally unequipped. In fact, a Zweig Group survey found that almost half of the firms surveyed did not provide training to their PMs and 76% of the firms rely on on-the-job training for their PMs.

Becoming a Better Project Manager 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 learn:

- The primary roles and responsibilities of a project manager
- The fundamentals of project management
- The value of maintaining project management notebooks
- How to create project manuals
- How to manage project change orders
- How to control scope creep
- Project management tools and forms

Who should attend:

The Becoming a Better Project Manager seminar is primarily designed for current or soon-to-be project managers and senior technical staff of architecture, engineering, planning, environmental consulting, and construction businesses including:

- Emerging project management leaders looking to take their performance to the next level
- Professionals wanting to enhance their knowledge of project management
- Design and technical professionals as well as managers, architects, engineers, planners, scientists, surveyors, and designers
- Anyone who aspires to become a principal in an AEC firm
- Teams of current and future AEC firm leaders

Continuing education:

Attendees of Becoming A Better Project Manager can earn six CEUs/PDHs. Zweig Group is registered with the AIA for continuing professional education credits. All attendees receive a certificate of attendance indicating the number of credit hours approved by the AIA.

TIPS FROM A COMMUNICATION PRO

Shut Up and Say Something: Business Communication Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Influence Listeners, a book by Karen Friedman, details how to best get your point across, drawn from her 40 years of experience as a professional communicator. Here are some top tips:

- **Be concise, clear, and crisp.** Edit yourself. Include specifics and keep your speech short.
- **Hit the headline first.** Make the most important point at the beginning.
- **Make it about them.** Pay attention to your listener’s concerns. If your colleague cares most about return on investment, speak to that point.
- **Attitude is important.** Stand up straight, look the other person in the eye, and put away all gadgets.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Draw the other person out with questions such as, “Could you clarify your point?”
- **If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything.** Don’t trash talk colleagues behind their backs. It identifies you as a gossip and someone who cannot be trusted.
- **No bull.** If you have a negative point to share, don’t beat around the bush. Just say it.
- **Deliver bad news in person.** It’s tempting to share bad news electronically, but it’s always better done face-to-face.
- **Don’t be a naysayer.** If you disagree with a colleague or boss’s message, don’t say so. Try to frame your disagreement as a question instead.