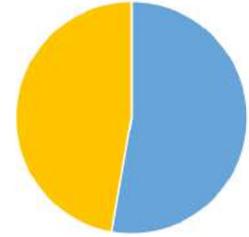


TRENDLINES

Business travel reimbursement



The majority (83 percent) of respondents to Zweig Group's *Work Travel & Reimbursement Spotlight Survey of A/E/P & Environmental Firms* said that their firm provides employees with a policy regarding business-travel reimbursement. Of those firms with a policy, about half (53 percent) said that the **policy covers the pricing of travel expenses** (for example, the policy specifies that employees should seek the lowest price possible when conducting business-related travel).

— *Andrea Bennett, research and publications manager*

FIRM INDEX

Balfour Beatty Construction.....	10
BNIM.....	11
CMTA Inc.	12
ECONorthwest	6
Fluor Corporation	10
Hart Crowser.....	6
Jay Raskin Architect	6
Rexnord Corporation	2
Salus Resilience.....	6
TMR Engineering	12
WRK Engineers	6
WSB & Associates.....	3

The entitled ones

The latest generation of employees is seriously flawed. Senior leaders beware!

“I have seen and heard some examples of entitlement from Millennials that blew my mind recently.”



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

For most of my career, I have defended the “new generation,” i.e., those just getting out of school and starting their careers. The older people have always complained about the group coming in behind them, saying they don’t work as hard or have the commitment level that they had. After all, they walked six miles uphill in snowstorms both ways to school when they were kids. And they all started in the mailroom for \$1 an hour and worked their way up. The cycle of bashing your successors continues from generation to generation.

My defense has frequently revolved around the idea that every generation **DOES** do this, and, young people, if given the right environment **AND** inspiration, will do whatever it takes and work their tails off to do a good job. And for the most part, I think I was right. I think I still **AM** right – just not **AS** right as I used to be.

The newest generation does include some unbelievably diligent and intelligent workers who are willing to dig in and get the job done. We feel extremely fortunate to have a number of them working for us at Zweig Group and I would put them up against anyone for work ethic and willingness to do whatever has to be done to meet a deadline or fix a problem.

That said – I have seen and heard some examples of entitlement from Millennials that blew my mind recently. As many of our

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

MORE COLUMNS

■ THE FAST LANE: The power of the relationship Page 5

■ CONTINUING ED: Filling in the gap Page 9

Fight the urge to be like everyone else

Page 3

Betting on a seismic shift

Pages 6, 7

ON THE MOVE

REXNORD CORPORATION NAMES DAVID LONGREN TO ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS Rexnord Corporation announced that David Longren joined the company's board of directors in February.

"Dave has an outstanding track record of leading innovation and organic growth initiatives that have produced impressive results. His background and experience align well with our

strategic priorities of driving profitable organic growth," said Rexnord's President and CEO, Todd Adams.

Paul Jones, Rexnord's non-executive chairman, stated: "Dave is a well-respected, proven leader whose experience and background will augment the talented board we have assembled at Rexnord."

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

readers know, I teach entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level at the University of Arkansas. During one class in the last year or so I asked my students what their plans were after college. One young woman who keeps a rather low profile in terms of class participation said she wanted to be a Fortune 500 CEO. I thought, "Great – she's very ambitious." Then I followed up with, "Awesome! What do you want to start out your career doing?" Her response: "I'm willing to start out as a COO." I was so shocked I was nearly speechless! And she wasn't joking.

Another example came to me from a local design/build firm. A young, degreed but not registered architect in their employ did some work on a set of plans for a former fellow employee – a project manager – who was fired a few months earlier for working on his own projects on company time. Not only that, the plans were prepared **BY** the firm a few months earlier but the former PM stole the project away from the firm before he was fired, and the employee knew all about this. In spite of the guy's complete lack of ethics, the young architect refined the plans for the PM while on the company payroll. The only reason the company learned about it was a contractor called them to warn them about potential litigation surrounding the project! When confronted, the young architect said he felt justified in his behavior because his "rent was due" and he "hadn't had a raise" in too many months. He was "owed the money" he made working for a guy who stole from the company. Mind boggling!!

Yet another example was brought to me from a large engineering firm in the southeast. When interviewing a young engineering graduate for a potential position in their firm, the cocky fellow stopped the discussion and told them he would "not work one minute more than 40 hours per week and possibly four hours on Saturday," or he "would not work there." Hey, his time was his time, period! Guess what? He was right – he didn't work there!

I could go on and on. There's just too little respect for the senior people, too much of an attitude that the company owes someone a living because of their degree or just because, and too little willingness to do the crappy jobs that lead to better jobs. Again – not to put **EVERY** Millennial in this pot – but there are too damned many of them who act like this.

Why do they act like this? There are many theories. Here's mine: In a nutshell, life has been too easy on them. They're living in \$3,000 a month apartments as university sophomores instead of \$100 a month mobile homes. Mom and Dad are going in debt to pay for their degrees instead of them going in debt with student loans. They drive new Denalis and Tahoes and GT500 Mustangs, not \$200, worn-out, six-cylinder Biscaynes. They don't work in school but if they do, it's only in a (relatively) highly-paid internship instead of the local service station or burger joint for \$2 an hour. And don't worry about living on Banquet pot pies and three-for-a-buck Swanson "Swiss Steak" dinners, or Kraft Mac N Cheese – go out for sushi on Mom and Dad's credit card, or better yet, get the surf 'N turf at a fine dining establishment. We created these monsters, folks, as the coddling parents and oft-spoiling grandparents of this new generation. And as their employers, we will undoubtedly pay the price for it.

But fellow baby-boomers out there – don't despair. And please don't work too hard this week. Life is short. ▀

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



THE ZWEIG LETTER

1200 North College Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703

Mark Zweig | Publisher
mzweig@zweiggroup.com

Richard Massey | Managing Editor
rmassey@zweiggroup.com

Christina Zweig | Contributing Editor
christinaz@zweiggroup.com

Sara Parkman | Editor and Designer
sparkman@zweiggroup.com

Megan Halbert | Design Assistant
mhalbert@zweiggroup.com

Liisa Andreassen | Correspondent
landreassen@zweiggroup.com

Tel: 800-466-6275
Fax: 800-842-1560
Email: info@zweiggroup.com
Online: www.thezweigletter.com
Twitter: twitter.com/zweigletter
Blog: blog.zweiggroup.com

Published continuously since 1992 by Zweig Group, Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA. ISSN 1068-1310.

Issued weekly (48 issues/yr.). \$475 for one-year subscription, \$775 for two-year subscription.

Article reprints: For high-quality reprints, including Eprints and NXTprints, please contact The YGS Group at 717-399-1900, ext. 139, or email TheZweigLetter@TheYGSGroup.com.

© Copyright 2016, Zweig Group. All rights reserved.

PROFILE



Fight the urge to be like everyone else

Rising CEO still finds inspiration from the teachings of his college football coach, the legendary Lou Holtz.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent



Brett Weiss,
CEO,
WSB &
Associates

As CEO of **WSB & Associates** (Minneapolis, MN), a 335-person consulting and design firm and No. 16 on Zweig Group's 2015 Hot Firm List, Brett Weiss values the importance of creating a culture of collaboration.

Before he and five colleagues launched WSB in 1995, Weiss worked for a small, private development firm for one year, then moved to a multidiscipline firm for seven years where he served in the role of municipal engineer.

The Zweig Letter recently caught up with Weiss for a Q&A.

The Zweig Letter: What are your key strengths? What do you feel the key strengths are for an effective leader?

Brett Weiss: I asked my management team this question and the resounding answer was 'motivation.' I would probably agree with that, but add that I am a big optimist and have a lot of resiliency. Starting a company from the ground up and competing against firms that have many more years of experience requires all of these traits.

"I am very collaborative. I like to be involved with what we are doing, but prefer to motivate our team to find the solutions. I tend to be an idea and vision guy and then rely on others to execute that vision."

TZL: How would you describe your leadership style?

BW: I am very collaborative. I like to be involved with what we are doing, but prefer to motivate our team to find the solutions. I tend to be an idea and vision guy and then rely on others to execute that vision.

TZL: What is the greatest professional challenge to date and how did you deal with it?

BW: The recession. It was a scary time for everyone. We trimmed our staff very slightly and then invested in business development and education. Our revenue dropped, but we remained profitable and

See Q&A, page 4



Q&A, from page 3

came out of the recession stronger than we went in. Our resulting growth is proof of that strategy.

TZL: What is your vision for the future of WSB?

BW: To remain a privately-held business. I don't know if that means by a group of shareholders or as an ESOP, but I believe that there is value in the culture that we have developed. We intend to continue to push the innovation envelope and not follow the traditional path. We are entering the geotechnical and materials market and have some other new service areas that we believe will be beneficial to our clients and provide efficient and progressive service to them. We are going to further develop WSBU, an in-house education program, so that it is the premier education program in the industry. We also plan to continue to grow our benefits so that we are the preferred consulting firm for staff.

TZL: How have you helped your firm to outperform some competitors?

BW: I don't know if we are outperforming our competitors, but we are focused on our success. I learned a long time ago to focus on how I can improve who I am and don't try to be someone else. We have a saying around the office: 'Fight the urge to be like everyone else.'

"I believe that there is value in the culture that we have developed. We intend to continue to push the innovation envelope and not follow the traditional path."

TZL: To what do you mostly attribute your firm's speedy growth?

BW: Certainly the economy has improved greatly which has a strong impact on increasing our workload. In addition to that, we have added service areas and key staff that have increased our opportunities and revenue.

TZL: Are you married? Do you have children? Pets?

BW: I have been married to a wonderful lady, Dawn, for 29 years. She has been instrumental in my success due to her support and advice. I also have a fantastic son who recently graduated from Columbia Law School and is an IP litigation attorney for a firm in New York City. We lost our dog, Gopher, a year ago.

TZL: What's one thing most people at the firm don't know about you?



REGISTER NOW! Come network, gain knowledge, and celebrate with the top firms in the industry. Zweig Group's **Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards** conference is the industry's largest and most comprehensive business conference for leaders and aspiring leaders of AEC firms in the U.S. The conference agenda includes topics on technology,

leadership challenges, business planning, marketing methods, recruiting and retention, and growth strategies. The success stories of Zweig Group award winners will be shared at the event, along with a variety of speakers from a range of industries. The conference will be held at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix on September 22-23.

Awards presented:

- Hot Firm
- Best Firms to Work For
- Marketing Excellence
- And more!

For more information visit zweiggroup.com/conference.

"I want people to know we care. When I die, I don't want my tombstone to say: 'He was good in business.' You're not remembered for that. I want people to know I cared and maybe made a little difference in their lives so they could make a difference in others. It's the butterfly effect."

BW: My life is mostly an open book, but I would say that I am a big musical theater fan!

TZL: What is the last book you read (digital or print)?

BW: *Good Profit* by Charles Koch. I'm a print guy.

TZL: What is the last movie you saw?

BW: *Star Wars* (although I really want to see *Creed*).

TZL: What is the best piece of work-related advice you've ever gotten?

BW: Lou Holtz (my football coach at the University of Minnesota) said two things that I quote all the time:

- 1) WIN – What's important now? This helps me to focus on the many tasks and prioritize.
- 2) People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. This one is very true.

TZL: Who is a leader you admire? Why?

BW: Lou Holtz. His leadership style was tough, yet compassionate. He had high expectations, but cared about all of his players. I loved his fire, energy, can-do attitude, faith, and courage.

TZL: When you're not working, what types of activities do you enjoy?

BW: I'm a passionate golfer. And, being a former football player, I'm a big fan of Gopher football. I also enjoy working out with my wife and traveling to New York City to visit my son and daughter-in-law.

TZL: What do you really want others to know about you and your firm?

BW: I want people to know we care. When I die, I don't want my tombstone to say: 'He was good in business.' You're not remembered for that. I want people to know I cared and maybe made a little difference in their lives so they could make a difference in others'. It's the butterfly effect. ▀

OPINION



The power of the relationship

People want to do business with people they like, so make as many meaningful connections as possible if you want to grow your business.



**Bernie
Siben**

THE FAST LANE

There are two instances where a powerful relationship with a client can lead to marketing success with little or no cost – Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contracts and discretionary assignments.

ID/IQs allow you to visit a client and convince them to assign their current need to your contract rather than going through the effort of a full-blown solicitation process. The agency doesn't add to staff workloads with selection committee assignments, and you don't have the expense of proposing and presenting before adding the assignment to your firm's backlog.

It's a win-win situation for both the agency and your firm.

In 1996, while working on my first proposal for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ID/IQ contract, I learned what I believe is the most important thing about them.

An ID/IQ contract is not work; it is not a project. It is more like a license to hunt.

There is a guaranteed minimum fee if there are no assignments, but that fee is a tiny portion of the contract's potential value. If you wait for the

"It's all about the value you bring to the person who makes that decision – whether the value is professional or personal – especially if it's a value he or she can't get elsewhere."

contracting officer to assign a project, you won't realize more than a small fraction of the contract's potential revenues. If you're not marketing the ID/IQ contract, agency staff with projects and funding won't know you are there, capable, and ready to work.

When an agency's project manager or contracting officer mentions a possible project, you can tell them the work can be done under your ID/IQ. In most cases, they will be happy to give you the work and avoid the time and hassle of a full-blown

See BERNIE SIBEN, page 8



SPOTLIGHT ON: Resilience

PROFILE



From left to right, Allison Pyrch, Ed MacMullan, Jay Raskin, and Brian Knight, of Salus Resilience. / Courtesy, Salus Resilience

Betting on a seismic shift

New earthquake building codes and rating system, crumbling US infrastructure combine to create enticing market in resiliency.

By RICHARD MASSEY
Managing Editor



Evan Reis,
Co-founder,
US Resiliency
Council

With a new business segment opening up in the world of seismic assessments and resiliency planning, four firms in the Pacific Northwest have formed a partnership to capture a piece of what's expected to be an emerging, and even gainful, market in earthquake and disaster preparedness.

Salus Resilience (Portland, OR) is comprised of four people who bring four disciplines to the table – geotechnical engineering, structural engineering, economic planning, and architecture – or enough to do the assessment, planning, and design of a resiliency model for a company, town, city, or county, and set up the finances to make it work.

The four firms are **Hart Crowser**, **Jay Raskin Architect**, **WRK Engineers**, and **ECONorthwest**, and the respective associates are Allison Pyrch, Jay Raskin, Brian Knight, and Ed MacMullan.

"This is an upcoming market," says Pyrch, a geotechnical engineer who has toured Chile and Japan in the wake of monster quakes.

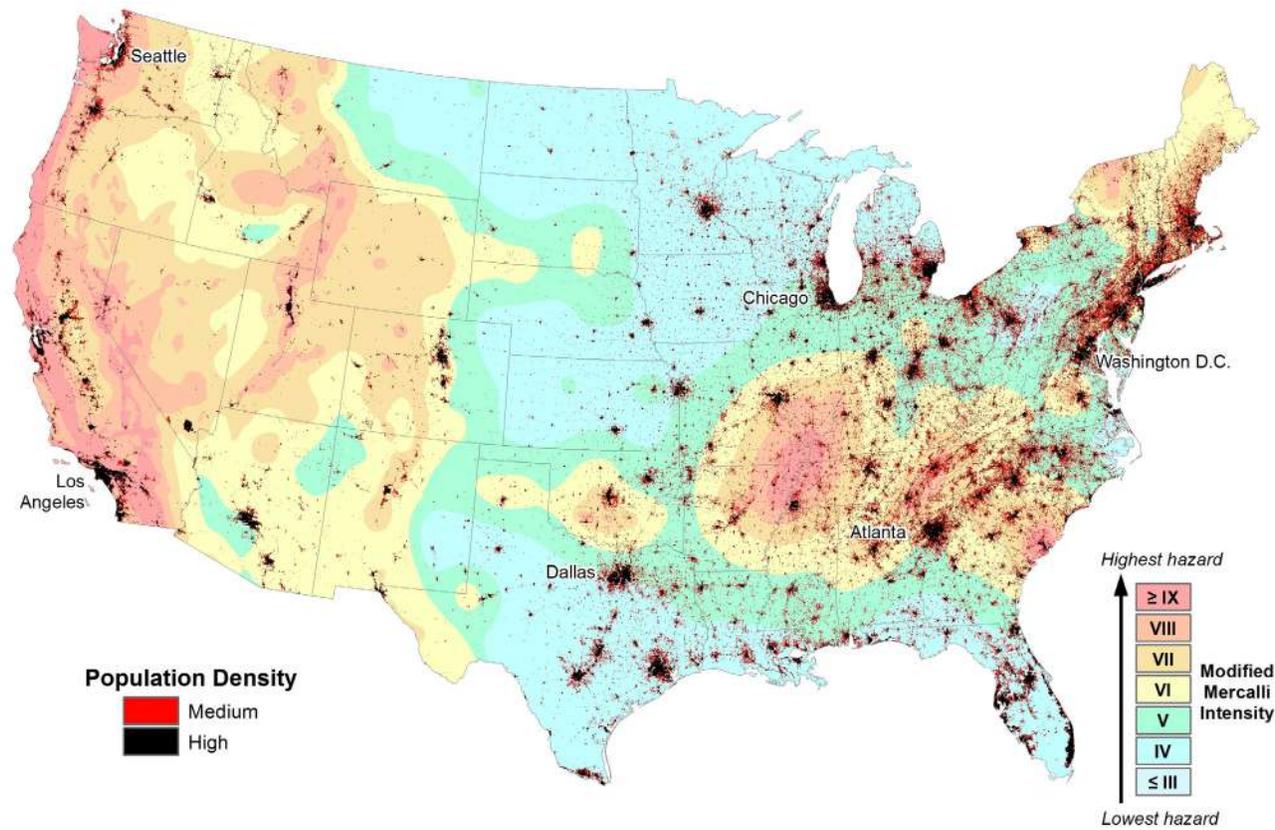
The opportunity in resiliency planning is expected to be aided in part by the U.S. Resiliency Council, which officially launched in November 2015. The organization will essentially function like the U.S. Green Building Council, which certifies buildings for LEED. The USRC will credential engineers who wish to rate buildings for their clients, using a system based on a scale from one to five that measures safety, damage, and recovery.

The opportunity in resiliency planning is expected to be aided in part by the U.S. Resiliency Council, which officially launched in November 2015.

Like LEED, a building with a five-star rating brings value to the market. It's the financial incentives that could bring resilience into the mainstream.

"This is creating an economic driver behind resiliency," Pyrch says.





Nearly half the population is vulnerable to shaking and damage due to earthquakes, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Also playing into the emergence of the resiliency market is the state of U.S. infrastructure, Pyrch says. Much of it needs to be rebuilt, and when it is, new seismic and environmental standards like those advocated by USRC and US-GBC will likely come to the forefront, Pyrch says. According to the 2013 infrastructure report compiled by the American Society of Civil Engineers, the nation’s overall grade is a D-plus across 16 infrastructure segments, and to improve that grade, the ASCE estimates that upwards of \$3.6 trillion needs to be invested by 2020.

A 2015 article that appeared in *The New Yorker* spread fear throughout the Pacific Northwest. Titled “The Really Big One,” the article detailed the potential of the Cascadia Subduction Zone, which runs for 700 miles from mid-Vancouver Island to Northern California, to bring devastation to the region.

Overdue for a quake, the Cascadia is large enough to unleash a tsunami, much like the one that crashed against Japan in 2011, killing about 16,000 people, and touching off the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant.

“We’ve been saying that for years, but once it’s in *The New Yorker*, everyone believes it,” Pyrch says, referencing the heightened interest in earthquake assessment along the West Coast.

New earthquake building codes have been issued through executive order at the federal level, and an early warning system is in advanced testing in California, Oregon, and Washington. But the Pacific Northwest is not the only area at risk. The U.S. Geological Survey issued a report last year saying upwards of 143 million people in the 48 contiguous states could be exposed to damage caused by an earthquake, with the top 10 susceptible states being California, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, Arkansas, Tennessee, South Carolina, Missouri, and Illinois.

“This is finally putting the engineering quality in the forefront. Engineers have felt that LEED has always lacked a vital component – resiliency. It’s not enough to be environmentally friendly. It has to last.”

National awareness of resiliency, or lack thereof, was triggered by storms, not earthquakes. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 killed more than 1,200 people, and Hurricane Sandy in 2012 caused around \$75 billion in damage. Regionally, Oklahoma is dealing with resiliency as the state has been

See SALUS RESILIENCE, page 8

BERNIE SIBEN, from page 5

solicitation process.

So the best way I know to get new tasks under an ID/IQ vehicle is to visit the client's office, and talk with end users and/or project managers. Once you are in the agency's or end user's office, make the most of your time. Meet as many of their project managers and contracting officers as possible, and make sure they all get information on your contract. If you can, get everyone you already know to introduce you to someone else they think you should know.

“Personally, I subscribe to what a friend called the ‘Velcro theory of relationships,’ where many people in your organization have relationships with many people at the client/agency.”

In a previous employment, one of our environmental leaders wanted to increase the revenues from a USACE environmental ID/IQ. He visited a local Air Force Base every week, and always came away with a new contract. His complaint was that every new assignment was \$25,000 or less, and he wanted to increase the “burn” on the contract.

I suggested that, until a larger assignment came along, he should visit the base three times a week and have every agency project manager with whom he worked introduce him to another project manager or contracting officer.

More visits with more project managers creates more relationships, and that equates to more business.

The second instance has to do with a client being able to give out work on a discretionary basis, with no formal selection process. Generally, these contracts must be for less than a specific dollar amount.

If you have a strong enough relationship with the person who gives out those assignments, many of those discretionary projects can come your way. It's all about the value you bring to the person who makes that decision – whether the value is professional or personal – especially if it's a value he or she can't get elsewhere.

Here is a great example. A previous employer of mine did a lot of work for a major airport located near one of our offices. On one regular visit, our project manager commented on a picture on the client's wall, showing a teenager with a tennis racquet and a trophy. The client explained that his 16-year-old son was a nationally-ranked player who had difficulty finding a local opponent good enough to give him a good challenge.

Our project manager, a strong player, offered himself as a partner, and the client accepted. The first game between teenaged son and project manager turned into a once-a-month meeting. The son was happy. So the dad was happy. So we wound up on the receiving end of a lot of smaller projects for the airport without competing. So our project manager was happy, as were his division and office managers.

We know that, all other things being equal, people like to give work to people they like. So you have to develop relationships with multiple agency/client staff, and make them real friendships, not just people you greet when you pass them in the hall.

Personally, I subscribe to what a friend called the “Velcro theory of relationships,” where many people in your organization have relationships with many people at the client/agency. I think this approach helps people make relationships that are real, strong, stand the test of time, and bring value to all the people on both sides of the equation. ▀

BERNIE SIBEN is owner and principal consultant with the Siben Consult, LLC in Austin. Contact him at 559-901-9596 or at bernie@sibenconsult.com.

SALUS RESILIENCE, from page 7

rocked with a recent spate of earthquakes, including a 5.1 magnitude on February 13. Responding to dire warnings about fracking, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission implemented a curb on the volume of wastewater injected into disposal wells over a 5,281-square mile area in the western part of the state.

The resiliency council was in the works since 2011. Nearly 70 founding members raised about \$570,000 in startup funding to get the nonprofit off the ground. Now that the

National awareness of resiliency, or lack thereof, was triggered by storms, not earthquakes. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 killed more than 1,200 people, and Hurricane Sandy in 2012 caused around \$75 billion in damage.

“The sky is the limit, depending on how it takes off. This is the next big push in the A/E industry.”

agency is operational at its headquarters in San Francisco, engineers are starting to take notice, says USRC co-founder and structural engineer Evan Reis.

“It's been very popular,” says Reis. “This is finally putting the engineering quality in the forefront. Engineers have felt that LEED has always lacked a vital component – resiliency. It's not enough to be environmentally friendly. It has to last.”

Reis' organization already has 70 engineers certified for assessments, and is looking to certify several hundred more. In the future, Reis and his colleagues want to include rating systems for tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods.

“The sky is the limit, depending on how it takes off,” Reis says. “This is the next big push in the A/E industry.” ▀

OPINION



Filling in the gap

Firm leaders often think they know what the company needs, but in reality, are looking for answers in the wrong places.



**Bill
Murphey**

**CONTINUING
ED**

I receive a lot of phone calls from firms inquiring about many of Zweig Group's educational offerings. Oftentimes, I'm asked about a specific program, such as our project management or recruiting seminars, and after a short discussion, it becomes apparent there is a gap.

You know the gap. You realize your firm needs something, but you're not quite sure what you need. It's that standing-in-front-of-the-refrigerator-with-a-blank-stare gap. You want something or think you want something, but you can't quite put your finger on what it is you want.

"A performance gap may not be caused by a lack of training, but by something less visible."

Some companies try to cover their performance gaps with assumptions, such as: "What we need is more training." I hear that one quite often. A performance gap may not be caused by a lack of training, but by something less visible. What they're really looking for is process standardization.

Our survey data indicates only 26 percent of firms have a project management manual, so how would a new project manager know what a firm expects of them? In that same survey, 76 percent of the respondents stated their firm relies on on-the-job training and mentorship for the necessary training. It's difficult to accelerate a firm's project management capabilities when a project manager's training is left to the discretion of a mentor, or worse, as one firm told me, "our project managers are left to fend for themselves."

Those are internal policy gaps that must be closed before a training program can truly be effective. Finding and closing gaps is not as difficult as it may seem, but it takes a little effort.

■ **Define success for your firm.** What results do you wish to achieve? Let's say you decide you want your

See BILL MURPHEY, page 10



BUSINESS NEWS

BALFOUR BEATTY CONSTRUCTION AND BARC JOINT VENTURE TEAM HONORED WITH 2015 ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD NATIONAL BEST OF THE BEST PROJECTS AWARD Balfour Beatty Construction has been honored with a prestigious national award for the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport Terminal A Phase II Renovation and Improvement Program.

Engineering News-Record recognized the project with its national Best of the Best Projects award in the Airport/Transit category.

“We are honored to be nationally recognized for our team’s work on the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport Terminal A Phase II,” said Karl Joeris, vice president at Balfour Beatty Construction.

Additional awards for which the project has

been recognized include a TEXO Distinguished Building Award, a Construction Management Association of America Project Achievement Award, and an ENR Texas and Louisiana Regional Best Project Award.

FLUOR AWARDED FRONT-END CONTRACT FOR WORLD’S LARGEST PROPYLENE OXIDE/TERTIARY BUTYL ALCOHOL PLANT Fluor Corporation announced that LyondellBasell, one of the world’s largest plastics, chemical and refining companies, has selected Fluor to perform front-end engineering and design work for its proposed propylene oxide and tertiary butyl alcohol plant. Fluor booked the undisclosed contract value in the fourth quarter of 2015.

The plant will be the world’s largest of its type and will be located at LyondellBasell’s

existing Channelview and Bayport Choate complexes in Texas. The scope includes a 1 billion pound-per-year propylene oxide and a 2 billion pound-per-year tertiary butyl alcohol plant at the Channelview site, an ethers plant at the Bayport Choate site, as well as associated infrastructure.

“Fluor is bringing its proven integrated engineering, procurement, fabrication and construction solutions approach to support this world-scale project’s advancement,” said Jim Brittain, president of Fluor’s Energy and Chemicals Americas business line. “We will leverage our extensive U.S. Gulf Coast chemicals experience and innovative global procurement and design approaches to develop a capital efficient solution for LyondellBasell.”

BILL MURPHEY, from page 9

firm to be more entrepreneurial. If so, you need to define what the term “entrepreneurial” means to your firm. Does it mean you want to expand your client base, or does it mean you intend to transform your firm into a high-energy, high-growth titan in the industry? Those are two very different definitions on different ends of the spectrum.

“Spending time to uncover the underlying issues is vital to your firm’s long-term health. An unbiased assessment of your entire firm may be necessary to find that root cause. Only after you’ve uncovered it can you begin to discuss solutions.”

Close the gap by clearly stating the direction in which your firm is heading and the resources required to get there. Ensure everyone on your team understands both. That will drive their decisions and close the gap between what they’re doing and what they think they should be doing.

■ **Communicate with and empower your staff.** Ensure everyone is aware of your goals. I speak with a lot of human resources directors who tell me what they believe their firm needs. After talking through their challenges and discussing possible solutions, they usually end the conversation by telling me they need to talk with “the principals” before they can make any decisions. There’s another gap. Some HR directors are treated as simple information hunter-gatherers. They’re instructed to find a solution to a vague problem and then report their findings to someone higher up in the organizational structure.

Arming these professionals with a clear understanding of the firm’s long term goals, as well as the authority to make decisions regarding training programs (which they are usually expected to manage), will expedite the process and ensure the training is completed in a timely manner. Instead, companies waste precious time endlessly debating whether or not a program is right for the firm.

■ **Identify the underlying issues, not the symptoms.** When a firm says they’re having a problem retaining talented people, one assumption is that they’re simply hiring the wrong people. They lament that their internal recruiting staff had failed to find the “right” people. In an attempt to close the gap, some leaders believe that better recruiters will solve their talent-bleeding problem. The gap here is the chasm between the perception about why talented people leave and the actual cause of the brain drain.

Perhaps the firm has a much deeper problem. Perhaps the problem is rooted in the firm’s culture or pay and reward systems. An expert recruiter, no matter how talented she is, cannot overcome a weak firm. Who would want to stay with a firm that’s infected with passive-aggressive types or rewards longevity over performance? Of course, your best and brightest will leave; they’re miserable!

Spending time to uncover the underlying issues is vital to your firm’s long-term health. An unbiased assessment of your entire firm may be necessary to find that root cause. Only after you’ve uncovered it can you begin to discuss solutions. Rubbing ointment on a rash will do nothing for you if the real reason for the rash is an allergic reaction to a medication you’re taking.

“We all have gaps we don’t recognize. We think we have the skills needed to perform at a higher level, but the reality is that we often have some limitations.”

We all have gaps we don’t recognize. We think we have the skills needed to perform at a higher level, but the reality is that we often have some limitations. Those gaps can be overcome by ensuring your team clearly understands your vision, by empowering them to make decisions based on your vision, and by spending time uncovering the root causes of your gaps. Like getting a new pair of eyeglasses, you’ll be amazed at what you’ve been missing when you can see more clearly. ▀

BILL MURPHEY is Zweig Group’s director of education. Contact him at bmurphey@zweiggroup.com.

PROFILE



Rendering of the BNIM renovation that was abandoned due to a controversy over tax incentives. / BNIM

Homeless in Kansas City?

Thanks to the demise of a proposed deal to renovate and occupy a downtown landmark, architecture firm BNIM is looking for new headquarters before current lease expires.

By RICHARD MASSEY
Managing Editor

A major architecture firm in Kansas City is scrambling to find a home after its plan to renovate and occupy a historic building in the Crossroads Arts District was abandoned after the tax break for the deal was vociferously opposed by a group within the Kansas City Public Schools.

On the strength of a reported \$5.2 million in Tax Increment Financing, BNIM (Kansas City, MO), had plans to renovate the warehouse at 1640 Baltimore Ave., and lease the top two floors for 15 years from the building's owner, KC philanthropist and developer Shirley Helzberg. But patrons of the school district threatened to take the proposed tax breaks to a public vote, where they hoped to defeat

“It is really disappointing to see the Helzberg Development Project for BNIM’s new headquarters go away, but the abandonment of the project is perfectly understandable from the point of view of the developer and BNIM.”

“We worked diligently with city officials and community leaders to strike a balance that would benefit all. However, we did not anticipate our project becoming a lightning rod in a much larger incentives fight.”

the incentives. Rather than fight the supporters of the school district, who argued that the project did not need a tax break, BNIM pulled the plug on the \$13-million deal.

“It is not beneficial to our company, or its employees, to engage in a contentious fight over the role of development incentives in building and improving our city,” a BNIM representative says in a February 4 press release. “Therefore, it is with a heavy heart that we announce that we will be withdrawing our project proposal effective immediately.”

According to the *Kansas City Business Journal*, BNIM now has to find a temporary office – its current lease expires in December – a move that could cost the firm as much as \$1 million.

See BNIM, page 12



TRANSACTIONS

CMTA INC. MERGES WITH TMR ENGINEERING
CMTA Inc. is increasing its presence in the Washington, D.C. Metro area via a merger with TMR Engineering (Arlington, VA). The transaction was facilitated by Zweig Group and closed on January 1, 2016.

Zweig Group helped identify potential matches in the DC Metro area to find a merger candidate to help establish a physical presence, expand capabilities, add to existing capabilities, and bring in an existing regional client base. Zweig Group facilitated contact between CMTA and TMR leadership leading to the agreement execution.

“CMTA’s practice in the D.C. area has been expanding in the past three years, and we felt that a D.C. presence was necessary to serve

our DC, Virginia, and Maryland clients. CMTA and TMR share similar cultures and we were impressed the quality of their engineering staff. Their CHP expertise aligns well with our Net Zero Energy expertise,” said Kenneth L. Seibert, PE, CMTA president.

“Throughout the years, TMR has been focused on providing great service to our clients. CMTA shares our values and is just as passionate about the built environment as we are. This alignment means we can offer additional services like performance contracting, security/technology design, fire protection engineering and commissioning,” said Thomas Rohrbaugh, PE, CMTA DC principal

With the addition of TMR, CMTA now has six offices in four states: Kentucky, Texas, Indiana,



Ohio and the D.C. Metro area. The firm employs 160 people including 70 licensed professional engineers.

For more information about Zweig Group’s merger and acquisition consulting team, visit zweiggroup.com/consulting.

BNIM, from page 11

“It is with a heavy heart that we announce that we will be withdrawing our project proposal effective immediately.”

Jim Heeter, president and CEO of the Kansas City Chamber, had this to say about the outcome:

“It is really disappointing to see the Helzberg Development Project for BNIM’s new headquarters go away, but the abandonment of the project is perfectly understandable from the point of view of the developer and BNIM. Moreover, because the project went away because of the threat of a petition campaign and possible litigation, it may very likely have a chilling effect on other development projects in Kansas City. That is a great loss for a city that is otherwise on a roll, especially in areas like the still-developing Crossroads District.”

BNIM was founded 45 years ago. In addition to Kansas City, the 150-person firm has offices in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Des Moines, Iowa, and is incubating offices in Washington, D.C., Houston, and Wisconsin.

While the firm has deep roots in Kansas City, it has also had trouble keeping a home in the last few years. In 2014, the firm was forced to relocate from the Power & Light building because it was being converted into an apartment complex. The firm then moved to the TWA Building, where it would stay until this December, when the Helzberg building was supposed to be ready.

But then came the outcry over the tax incentives, leaving BNIM looking for answers.

“Because the project went away because of the threat of a petition campaign and possible litigation, it may very likely have a chilling effect on other development projects in Kansas City.”

“BNIM is committed to Kansas City, our city, today and in the future,” a firm representative says in a press release. “However, with our lease expiring at our current temporary headquarters, we must immediately begin the process of identifying interim and permanent office space within the metro KC area. With our recent growth and planned projects set to increase by 50 percent in the near future, we will also begin the process of shifting some future growth to our offices in other cities until such time as we have an office plan in the KC metro.”

“In spite of a willingness on our part to make multiple revisions to the proposal, including one that would add millions to the KC public school system, petitioners were unwilling to compromise.”

BNIM had high hopes for the proposed location, calling it a “generational” undertaking that would have embodied sustainable design, including elements of the Smart City initiative. The project would shed millions of gallons of wastewater from the sewage system, add green community space, new retail, and serve as a driver of more development in the Crossroads district.

“We believed that a project like this was beneficial to the entire city, and worthy of a fair level of private-public partnership,” says a BNIM representative in a press release. “We worked diligently with city officials and community leaders to strike a balance that would benefit all. However, we did not anticipate our project becoming a lightning rod in a much larger incentives fight. In spite of a willingness on our part to make multiple revisions to the proposal, including one that would add millions to the KC public school system, petitioners were unwilling to compromise.”