

Wasting time in the office

Five types of unnecessary practices that are making you lose big bucks, Mark Zweig writes.

Wasted time is wasted money. It hurts morale, leads to job dissatisfaction, and reduces profitability – all bad things. Yet we continue to do the same time-wasting things year after year.



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

I've always thought there was a lot of time wasted in the typical AEC firm's office, especially for the managers. This was glaringly apparent to me when I started Mark Zweig & Associates back in '88. I suddenly had so much time I didn't know what to do with it. This was after years of working in A/E firms in a variety of management jobs.

Wasted time is wasted money. It hurts morale, leads to job dissatisfaction, and reduces profitability – all bad things. Yet we continue to do the same time-wasting things year after year.

Here are some specific examples of what I am talking about:

1) Timesheet review. No one will convince me this is necessary at all. Key it in. If an employee charges to a job they shouldn't, point it out after the fact. It doesn't happen that often and can be seen more easily on a job cost report later and corrected than trying to solve it before entry into the system. Ditto for using vacation or sick leave employees don't have accrued. Most managers don't even know this when they review and sign the timesheet anyway; they don't keep track of those accruals, the payroll people do. Timesheet review is just one of those habits from the olden days that is hard to break.

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

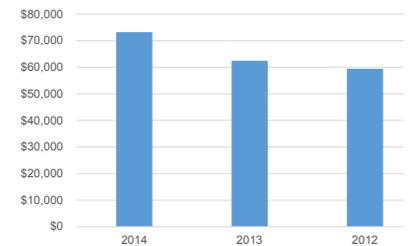
MORE COLUMNS

■ GUEST SPEAKER: Win the scope creep battle. [Page 5](#)

■ BRAND BUILDING: Do you really have a marketing department? [Page 9](#)

TRENDLINES

Values on the rise



Values are going up for A/E firms that performed a valuation in 2014, according to Zweig Group's 2015 Valuation Survey. For example, the TIC value per employee saw the biggest increase, from a median of \$62,480 for firms valued in 2013 to a median of \$73,218 for firms valued in 2014. Valuations performed in 2012 had a median TIC value per employee of just \$59,426.

– Leah Santos, Research Analyst Assistant



The experts share advice

Page 6

FIRM INDEX

Arup.....	12
Barton Associates.....	10
Bracken Engineering, Inc.....	4
Butler, Rosenbury & Partners.....	4
FINLEY.....	11
Hunt, Guillot & Associates, LLC.....	8
Hunton Brady Architects.....	7
Olsson Associates.....	3
TerraTherm.....	7
T.Y. Lin International.....	3
Westwood Professional Services.....	11

WHAT'S WORKING



The power of the message

Page 10-11

Playing up your strengths

Page 3

A/E BUSINESS NEWS

THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS UL, a global safety science leader, recently conducted a study to learn where value and return on investment lie in the area of sustainable buildings. The study and its result are available in a free white paper titled "The Dawn of the Building Performance Era," written by UL Chief Economist Erin Grossi.

In the white paper, Grossi predicts disruption in the building market over the next five to 10 years as owners, operators and investors of buildings increasingly recognize the potential of innovation in building energy consumption, water usage and indoor air quality to positively impact their bottom lines. Grossi describes the transition that is happening in the market from design-driven approaches to achieving sustainability goals to a greater focus on the actual performance of buildings on the operations side of the house.

Grossi also addresses the issue of indoor air quality, which she refers to as a "sleepier issue" in the United States. She finds a major cause of poor indoor air quality is the growing amount of chemicals in buildings, which can emanate from technology hardware, construction materials, furniture and furnishings, and cleaning products. According to UL's air quality scientists there are 80,000 chemicals in international commerce today with only 3 percent fully evaluated for health benefits.

"UL's air quality scientists estimate we are easily within five years of having effective air quality detectors available for commercial use in buildings," Grossi said. "Once air quality issues become more visible to employers and employees, the interest-level will increase and activity will commence to study and mitigate the risks to human health." Building owners and investors are interested in improving indoor air quality as well, given the potential asset protection benefits and productivity benefits for occupants.

The white paper is available for download at UL's online library at <http://library.ul.com/?document=dawn-of-the-building-performance-era>.

MOST SUSTAINABLE BUILDING The most sustainable office building in the world features

a building automation system installed by a member of the InsideIQ Building Automation Alliance, an international alliance of independent building automation contractors. The Edge office building in Amsterdam was awarded an Outstanding rating with the highest recorded BREEAM score of 98.36 percent and is now known as the most sustainable office building in the world. BREEAM is the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method for buildings and is the leading environmental rating system used in Europe.

HC RT, an independent system integrator based in Purmerend, The Netherlands, completed the building automation and systems integration work for The Edge. One of the most important of the many sustainable features of this multi-tenant office building is the Philips Ethernet-powered LED connected lighting system (CLS).

Every second lighting fixture is equipped with a multi-sensor measuring movement, light, temperature and infrared and is integrated into the building's IT network. As a result, the system can switch the lighting on and off and set ventilation based on occupancy. The CLS enables employees to individually regulate the climate and lighting in their workspaces through a smartphone application. In addition, the CLS provides comprehensive data and analytics to the facility manager on a dashboard.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

2) Pointless meetings. Meetings that you don't need to be at. Meetings without agendas. Meetings that could have been replaced by a simple email or phone call. Engineers and architects claim to loathe bureaucracy yet your response to nearly every management problem or challenge is to hold a meeting. In many cases, problems or issues that need dealing with NOW are delayed until a meeting can be held, which is really crazy! Break yourself off this bad habit.

3) Annual performance appraisals. I learned 25 years ago that these are just a dumb waste of time. Give people feedback when they need it – good or bad – and don't store it up. And if someone wants to talk about their career or goals, talk to them when they or you want to talk about it. Filling out a silly form at a certain time of the year does nothing for you or the employee. And by the way, to the HR folks' claim that we need this information for times of termination due to non- or poor performance, I always point out that nine times out of 10 these performance appraisals actually support a wrongful termination claim by the employee because managers are typically not honest and don't confront people until the end.

4) Too many emails. Whomever

invented the "reply to all" button should be drawn and quartered. We have wasted billions of dollars of time in A/E firms from people who simply reply to all every time with simple "thanks," or "happy b-days," or whatever. This habit has to be broken! All the time people then waste reading/deleting/filing this stuff is never accounted for. Teach your people to reply to the person they need to reply to and only that person(s).

5) Too many interruptions. This takes many forms – calls from salespeople, emails you didn't need, others inside the firm who just want to plop down and gossip, etc. The main thing here is you have to take control of your time. Insist people come back. Take a message for the salespeople or have your switchboard operator screen them entirely. Don't let constant interruptions keep you from accomplishing what you must because you have too many starts, stops, and restarts.

Yep, no doubt about it. Lots of time is wasted. I think almost every company could make more money and have happier people if they honestly worked to change the situation instead of accepting it as "normal." Don't you? ▀

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THE ZWEIG LETTER

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Playing up your strengths

How firms, big and small, are enhancing their abilities and capabilities in 2015.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent



Alvaro Piedrahita,
President and
CEO, T.Y. Lin
International.

With a fresh start to a new year, we asked a few firm leaders what they are doing this year to enhance their strengths. Here's what they had to say.

FEEDING INFRASTRUCTURE POWER – EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY. Alvaro Piedrahita, president and CEO, **T.Y. Lin International** (San Francisco, CA), a 2,500-plus-person full-service infrastructure consulting firm, says that TYLI will continue to provide services for transportation projects in all of their established market sectors, which comprise signature bridges, rail and transit, high-speed rail, aviation, and highways/surface transportation. TYLI will also take steps to expand its presence in port and marine infrastructure, as well as non-transportation markets, including buildings and facilities, water and waste water, and power and energy sectors, through both strategic hires and acquisitions.



John Olsson,
Senior VP,
Olsson
Associates.

“Our strategy for 2015 will be to selectively invest the firm’s resources on large infrastructure projects in major metropolitan areas across all market sectors, focusing on projects where the firm’s expertise provides our clients with the greatest value.”



Geoffrey Butler,
President, Butler,
Rosenbury &
Partners.

Piedrahita says that 2015 is going to be an ambitious year and shares some thoughts on the days ahead.

“We foresee continued economic recovery in 2015, which should translate into significant infrastructure opportunities across the firm’s established and growing market sectors,” he says. “Given these conditions, rather than divest, our strategy for 2015 will be to selectively invest the firm’s resources on large infrastructure projects in major metropolitan areas across all market sectors, focusing on projects where the firm’s expertise provides our clients with the greatest value.”

TYLI will also continue to enhance its strengths by

doing what it does best: ensuring project success by strategically leveraging the collective power and diverse expertise of a global organization. “To that end, TYLI will maintain our ongoing process of hiring and retaining the best and brightest engineering talent for all market sectors served by the firm. This approach is founded on the firm’s strategic drivers: our clients, our employees and our shareholders,” Piedrahita says.

“We will elevate our attention to having even more robust internal infrastructure and project management acumen to deliver the increasingly complex projects in the year ahead.”

New and current TYLI projects can be found throughout the U.S., the Caribbean and Latin America, and Asia. TYLI regions are experiencing business growth, with additional operations centers opened in California and the Northeast in 2014. Central and South America represent notable areas of market growth and opportunity.

Business goal for 2015: Bring TYLI’s deep expertise with U.S. and international aviation projects to China/Asia and Central and South American markets.

John Olsson, senior vice president, **Olsson Associates** (Lincoln, NE), a 900-person engineering and design firm, says that 2014 was an exceptional year for Olsson Associates. Many exciting projects were delivered and even more were brought in the door and will carry for several years. They are clearly ready for what 2015 has to bring.

“We have developed a formidable sales staff, so much so that we will elevate our attention to having even more robust internal infrastructure and project management acumen to deliver the increasingly complex projects in the year ahead,” he says. “We can expect to have a greater emphasis on employee learning and development to demonstrate a commitment to employee retention, and also a deeper recruitment process to help attract the necessary talent to manage the growing workload.”

See STRENGTHS, page 4



RESOURCES

MERGER & ACQUISITION SURVEY Is your firm considering a merger, an acquisition, or a sale? Or have you recently completed a merger or acquisition transaction? If so, then you'll want to see the survey results in Zweig Group's 2015 Merger & Acquisition Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms. The 25th edition of this comprehensive report includes all the latest data on the state of merger and acquisition activity in the design and environmental consulting industry. If you're considering selling your firm, use the Merger & Acquisition Survey to:

- Find out what today's buyers are looking for – who, where, and what
- See what kind of price you can expect for your firm
- Learn what's motivating other sellers like yourself, and what buyers are hoping to achieve through an acquisition

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

- Learn how long it takes to buy or sell a firm, from start to finish
- Find out how many firms are satisfied with the acquisitions they've made

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

- Learn how the price you paid or the amount you received compares with other similar deals
- Find out if your peers or competitors also recently completed any transactions
- Compare the success of your firm's transactions with other firms' successful (or not successful) transactions

For more information or to pre-order, call 800-466-6275 or log on to https://zweiggroup.com/p-2220-Merger_Acquisition_Survey_2015.

VALUATION SURVEY Do you know how much your A/E/P or environmental consulting firm is worth? If you're an owner of an A/E/P or environmental consulting firm, you can't risk not knowing the value of your business. Whether it's for external purposes, such as a firm sale or merger, or internal purposes, such as ownership transition or ESOP purposes, all firm owners should know what their investments are worth.

The 2015 Valuation Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms is the definitive resource for helping you find out! With the survey data included in this report and Zweig Group's exclusive Z-Formulas, you'll be able to quickly and easily learn what your firm is worth.

The 2015 Valuation Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms will help you:

- Use Zweig Group's exclusive Z-Formulas to quickly find out how much your firm is worth
- Use over 225 case studies to make reliable comparisons of value between your firm and others in the industry
- Find out what makes one firm more valuable than another
- See how growth rate, staff size, firm age, and other factors affect firm value
- Settle internal ownership transition disputes armed with the latest data about firm values

A case study for every valuation is included so you can compare your firm's statistics to other firms just like your own. You'll also find a chapter on valuation practices and ways to enhance value for design and environmental consulting firms!

For more information or to pre-order, call 800-466-6275 or log on to <https://zweiggroup.com/p-2218-valuation-survey-2015>.

STRENGTHS, from page 3

As a company, Olsson has long believed that they can remain successful by keeping a flat organizational structure that allows them to remain nimble and adaptable to change. With that comes a high level of autonomy within their teams, practice divisions and sales force. And this is where their growth opportunities are commonly discovered.

"As we move into the new year, we will need to become even more disciplined in how we evaluate the various new things that will come in the door," Olsson says. "It takes energy to review and cultivate each new opportunity, so having an ability to prioritize and select near-term initiatives will become paramount."

AN EXERCISE IN FUTURE PLANNING. **Butler, Rosenbury & Partners** (Springfield, MO), a 20-person architecture, structural engineering, planning and development firm, is practicing a new exercise, says Geoffrey Butler, president. They are looking down the road four years from now, when several of their senior principals might be retiring.

"We are trying to figure out what we will look like then – or perhaps what do we want to look like then," he says.

Part of this process includes a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Typically, the

strengths and the opportunities match up, or should match up. The same is true for weaknesses and threats.

"Our plan is to work on the strengths and opportunities and to commit more resources to those areas or markets in which we are strong," Butler says. "Of course, this also requires a realistic appraisal of the depth of that particular market. For example, it does you no good to be the best architect in the world for underwater resorts if there is only one in the world (that you did) and no one wants to stay in one."

As a result, Butler, Rosenbury & Partners is researching sustainable markets where they have strengths and are committing marketing resources to getting that work. They are also adding design and production resources to set them apart from the competition.

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC BEHAVIOR. William Bracken, president/principal engineer, **Bracken Engineering, Inc.** (Tampa, FL), a 35-person firm, says that 2015 will be a year for smart growth and a more narrow focus.

"This year we are focused on becoming even more customer-centric by working with our clients to provide them high quality, timely performed deliverables at competitive pricing that meets 'their' definition of done," he says.

Feeling stronger? Go get 'em! ▀

Win the scope creep battle

Five steps to recover extra services in your AEC firm.



June Jewell

GUEST SPEAKER

Here are five steps you can take now to help your project managers (PMs) and other employees understand the causes of scope creep, and become aware of ways to minimize it:

- 1) Develop detailed and documented extra services processes.** Without clear guidelines and structure to follow, all of your employees will deal with extra services requests. A good process to manage project scope creep should include details on best practices for estimating, scope development, contractual language, client communication, and approval processes for ensuring that all requests are handled consistently. Once employees know what is expected of them and know they are following the correct processes, they will be more confident in executing according to the company's policies knowing they are supported by upper management.
- 2) Develop a clearly defined estimate and scope of services.** There is a lot riding on the project estimate and scope, which will become the guiding plan and budget for the entire project. It is critical to develop a detailed scope that closely reflects your understanding of client requirements. The scope and estimate should identify the phases and tasks necessary to get the project done with the expected quality, using the resources and meeting the budget and timeline promised to your client. Where many projects go over and experience scope creep is in too many meetings that were not estimated in the original scope. Estimating the number of meetings required for each phase, and adding a percentage for other contingencies that may cause the project to go over budget is a recommended best practice that can reduce costly scope creep later in the project.
- 3) Set client expectations.** As part of your extra services approval process, you should prescribe specific communication protocols for how client expectations are discussed, documented and agreed upon. Before a project has started is the best time to go

When evaluating the major causes of project budget overruns and failure to hit profitability goals in the AEC industry, scope creep tops the list as the biggest factor by far. Scope creep is the erosion of the project plan due to increased requirements, expanded demands, and failure to bill and collect for extra services. Most firms struggle with scope creep for several reasons, often believing it is primarily a human problem. However, employees are doing what they are taught to do, so without the right processes, structure and guidance, your employees will revert to the least confrontational behavior.

Most firms struggle with scope creep for several reasons, often believing it is primarily a human problem. However, employees are doing what they are taught to do, so without the right processes, structure and guidance, your employees will revert to the least confrontational behavior.

over your extra services policies and processes with your client and agree as to how they will request extra services, and how your employees will estimate contract modifications, and request approval. It is a lot easier to deal with these uncomfortable conversations in the beginning, before the stress of the project begins. It also shows your client that you intend to strictly manage project scope and ensure that the project is delivered accordingly.

- 4) Share the project scope and contract terms with the entire team.** In addition to creating processes and training all of your employees to follow them, it is essential to ensure that all team members completely understand what is and is not included in the project scope. A Zweig Group survey found that only about half of all firms consistently share the project scope with the entire team. If your employees do not know what is included in the contract, how are they supposed to identify whether a client request is reasonable, or if it should trigger an extra services contract change? A great way to do this is to define a process for holding and running the project kickoff meeting, including a standard agenda. Ensuring that the entire project team

See JUNE JEWELL, page 12



ADVICE



Being Social

The consultants and experts at Zweig Group dish almost daily advice on Twitter. It's hard to capture everything, so every so often we'll do a recap of some of the most relevant posts in this space. Enjoy!

ZWEIG GROUP TWITTER HANDLES

Zweig Group @ZweigGroup
The Zweig Letter @ZweigLetter
Zweig Group Recruiting @ZGRecruit

CONSULTANT TWITTER HANDLES

Mark Zweig @markzweig
Chad Clinehens @clinehens
Randy Wilburn @randywilburn
Ryan Renard @ryanrenard

TWEETS 7,682 **FOLLOWING** 1,760 **FOLLOWERS** 4,326 **FAVORITES** 47

Zweig Group retweeted
Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 12
Intelligent people don't expect to do the same thing every day & get a different result. Freshen up your marketing! #marketing #advertising

Zweig Group retweeted
Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 12
Intelligent business people don't place big bets against the odds. Let probabilities rule your decision-making to a great extent...

Zweig Group retweeted
Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 12
Teaching is the best way to keep learning. Not to mention also a fertile recruiting ground for your business AND good way to "give back."

Zweig Group retweeted
Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 12
You will NEVER have ALL of the information you probably want to make a decision but that doesn't let you off the hook for making one!

Zweig Group retweeted
Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 12
Lazy people give up before they even start. Driven people don't give up when conventional wisdom says it's time to & instead make breakthroughs

Zweig Group retweeted
Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 12
Show me someone who loves what they do and I'll show you someone who doesn't need a lot of financial incentives to do it. #entrepreneurship

Zweig Group retweeted
Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 12
Getting the best team together—and keeping them working together—is the responsibility of the CEO. #entrepreneurship #leadership.

TWEETS 38 **FOLLOWING** 37 **FOLLOWERS** 17 **FAVORITES** 12

Zweig Group Recruit @ZGRecruiting · Jan 8
When you make a mistake correct it fast. People are more forgiving than you think. #Dwell

Zweig Group Recruit @ZGRecruiting · Jan 7
Now hiring an Experienced Recruiter in the Houston area @ZGRecruiting | ziprecruiter.com/jobs/zweig-gro... #jobs [View summary](#)

Zweig Group Recruit @ZGRecruiting · Jan 7
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Zweig Group Recruit @ZGRecruiting · Jan 6
New beginnings are great and even better when friendly people are involved. Are you projecting a positive vibe with your new employees?!

Zweig Group Recruit @ZGRecruiting · Jan 5
Sometimes the best software and computer in the world is a Pen and Paper. #KeepItSimple

Zweig Group Recruit @ZGRecruiting · Jan 5
Now hiring @ZipRecruited | ziprecruiter.com/jobs/zweig-gro... #jobs [View summary](#)

Zweig Group Recruit @ZGRecruiting · Dec 24
Happy Holidays!

Zweig Group Recruit retweeted
Randy Wilburn @randywilburn · Dec 18
When reestablishing your organization with a former client transparency is key. Clients are more forgiving than you think. #Honesty

TWEETS 9,887 **FOLLOWING** 1,985 **FOLLOWERS** 2,657 **FAVORITES** 285

Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 13
Finding out what you're good at—is not always a simple task. Sometimes you have to try a lot of different things before you know.

Mark C. Zweig @MarkZweig · Jan 13
New Zweig Group HQ building in Fayetteville across from the VA Hospital is starting to take shape!

[View more photos and videos](#)

RIGHT NOW

What's driving marketing campaign strategy

Firms are doing market research online and keeping true to their brand when putting efforts together.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent



Lorie Parker Matejowsky, Communications Manager, Hunton Brady Architects.

Marketing campaigns take time and money so it's important that your strategy is clear and focused from the get-go to make it work. How much time do you dedicate to research and what do you research? Do you research language; timeliness; colors? Or do you make special efforts to make sure everything is consistent with your brand? In essence, how are you working to ensure that your marketing campaign is as effective as it can be?

RESEARCH – INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY.

Lorie Parker Matejowsky, communications manager, **Hunton Brady Architects** (Orlando, FL), a 74-person design-oriented architecture firm, says that research is an integral part of their internal and external marketing and public relations campaign.

"We use inexpensive online surveys to poll our employees and customers," Matejowsky says. "In turn, this sets the stage for our strategies and tactics and helps us to gauge whether or not our programs were successful."

For example, an internal survey revealed that Hunton Brady's employees were proud of the firm's community service. As a result, they are now more focused on finding opportunities where they can volunteer with the firm.

"We know that our readers are most interested in people stories and the human aspect of architecture, rather than project photos with project descriptions."

ANALYTICS PROVIDE AFFORDABLE INSIGHT.

Hunton Brady also does research via online analytics tools such as Google Analytics in order to understand the user behavior of visitors to its website. Analytics provided by Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn help them understand the effective-

ness of those tools in the social marketing mix.

The firm's e-newsletter provider, Constant Contact, also provides analytics that helps them understand user behavior when interacting with different topics in the newsletter.

"For instance, we know that our readers are most interested in people stories and the human aspect of architecture, rather than project photos with project descriptions," Matejowsky says. "The depth and breadth of these online tools, not to mention affordability, is enormously valuable. We know so much more about our clients' preferences than we ever could have known even 10 years ago."

"We do not tend to research the most effective language, but instead try to communicate in a voice that we know our target market tends to speak in and understand."

TRIAL, ERROR AND TWEAK.

Nate Bierschenk, marketing assistant, **TerraTherm** (Gardner, MA), a 70-person firm specializing in the development and implementation of in situ thermal remediation of organic contaminants in subsurface source zones, says that it's difficult to quantify the amount of time they put into the research portion of their marketing campaigns.

"We do not tend to research the most effective language, but instead try to communicate in a voice that we know our target market tends to speak in and understand," he says. "Much of the research we do for our marketing campaigns is through the process of trial and error. For example, if we see that the open rate for our newsletters is better in the morning than in the afternoon, we will of course begin distributing them at that time moving forward. For the colors, we tend to try to keep everything aligned with our branded logo, using varia-

See STRATEGY, page 8



IN BRIEF

COASTAL RESILIENCY EXHIBIT The American Institute of Architects Foundation has opened a new exhibit focusing on resiliency. “Rebuild by Design” highlights 10 innovative solutions to enhance coastal resiliency – ideas created through a government-sponsored design competition in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. In 2014, the Department of Housing and Urban Development allocated \$930 million to begin implementation for seven of the ten Rebuild by Design projects in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

The Rebuild by Design process created coalitions of international, interdisciplinary design teams and key neighborhood stakeholders in order to co-create solutions to the challenges of climate change. The competition was initiated by President Obama’s Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, and supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and other private philanthropy.

“This exhibit provides an excellent look at how design professionals can collaborate with government and local communities to confront

the results of climate change, and how to achieve solutions through a resilient design approach,” said Robert Ivy, AIA CEO. “We look forward to hosting this exhibit.”

Resilience is a hallmark of the AIA Foundation’s efforts to help communities recover from and prepare for disasters and other environmental events. As part of its national resiliency initiative – and as a partner in the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities Initiative – the AIA Foundation is working to provide distressed communities with architect talent and expertise.

“The extraordinary impact of Hurricane Sandy and other recent disasters demonstrated that we shouldn’t keep building things back in harm’s way,” said Marion Mollegen McFadden, deputy assistant secretary for Grant Programs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Rebuild by Design exhibit can be seen at AIA headquarters, 1735 New York Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.

STRATEGY, from page 7

tions of red, green and yellow color palettes. This requires little time and effort, but to increase our overall effectiveness we like to assess the ‘big-picture’ strategies on a yearly basis.”

At the end of each calendar year, TerraTherm allots a substantial amount of time to assess what strategies worked well and which did not. They analyze where they had most success and then tweak their future strategies accordingly.

“What we have discovered is that direct exposure and communication with our target market is the most fruitful in terms of converting leads to potential opportunities,” Bierschenk says. “Our technologies are still relatively new and many industry professionals are still unaware of what our technologies are capable of, or are not up-to-date with our latest successes.”

As a result, for 2015, TerraTherm to presented at more workshops and conferences in an effort to educate their target market. They became sponsors of RemediationWorkshops.com, committing to host workshops in three cities throughout the United States and to present at other cities throughout the year. These workshops are in addition to the five to 6 conferences that they typically attend each year.

“We have a defined target market, and do what we can to reach them with some sort of communication a handful of times per year,” Bierschenk says.

Other marketing strategies TerraTherm implements include communications through company blog posts and webinar presentations. The company also looks into optimization of these marketing efforts by subscribing to industry newsletters, routinely attending webinars on topics of interest, and most importantly by seeking feedback from their audience.

CONTENT AND RELEVANCE. The marketing group at **Hunt, Guillot & Associates, LLC** (Ruston, LA), a 390-person project management and engineering firm, focuses on content organization and industry relevance for campaigns.

Whitney Lanie, marketing communications group manag-

er, says that their marketing campaigns are targeted to either all their disciplines or are industry specific. Campaigns that target all disciplines include content that the majority of the readers can relate to; research is based off results and responses from previous marketing campaigns. Research and content for industry-specific campaigns derives from internal resources, market research and relevant current events.

“Though marketing campaigns are fairly new to the HGA culture, we have been successful by using the right tools to track and report results: such as the best day, time, etc. to send email campaigns. We then use the outcomes of previous campaigns to determine the best timing for our target audience,” Lanie says.

HGA rebranded about three years ago and they are still trying to establish their brand across all markets and industries served. For now, they are keeping the look (including colors) of their campaigns within the brand guidelines and similar in appearance across the board.

Lanie says that their campaigns have been successful because they are reaching out to clients, current employees, and potential employees – and keeping them in the loop.

“We produce campaigns that are attractive and relevant to the markets we serve,” she says. “Our subscribers increased nearly 15 percent in only nine months.”

SOME WORK AHEAD. A/E firms still face significant challenges when putting together marketing campaigns, whether that comes in the form of lack of investment in research or difficulties developing an overall marketing strategy.

Zweig Group’s 2014 Marketing Survey identifies some of these challenges. For example, survey respondents cite “developing a marketing plan/firm-wide marketing standards” as their third biggest challenge. Likewise, market research spending comes way down at the bottom of the list of marketing expenses, with only a mean of 0.3 percent of firms listing research as an expense. However, proposals garner a mean 15.1 percent portion of marketing expenses, which is likely to include research. ▀

Do you really have a marketing department?

Distinguishing between marketing and sales offers a true perspective of investment.



Chad
Clinehens

BRAND BUILDING

We have a problem in this industry. Many of us have a simple-minded perspective of “marketing.” For many firms, the marketing department is a group of people who spend most of their time responding to proposals and presentations. If that describes you, I have bad news. You do not have a marketing department, you have a sales support team. Part of this stems from how marketing departments tend to evolve in professional service firms. A common story is that as firms grow, they tend to add low-level administrative staff to help with proposals, reports, presentations and other similar needs.

Then they reach a point where some technical or design professional in the firm who expresses even the slightest interest or talent in marketing or sales gets assigned to lead the marketing team. At the end of the day, they have a support team for business development activities. Sound familiar? Regardless of your exact story and the makeup of your current marketing department, it is important to have a correct perspective of what marketing and sales is.

First of all, let’s define marketing and sales independently. Marketing is the process of finding out the needs of the client, then persuading them that your service meets their needs. Sales, or “business development,” is the process of persuading the client to actually buy your services. Marketing tells a broader group of potential buyers who you are and what your value proposition is; sales is a focused effort toward earning a specific sale. Confusion around marketing and sales runs rampant in our industry, causing a big problem. Existing structures perpetuate a reactive approach to building the business. We have so many resources dedicated to sales support that we do not have any bandwidth left for strategic marketing and initiatives. Additionally, “marketing” is already viewed negatively as a necessary evil from its inherent place in the overhead category. It creates a vicious cycle: As more opportunities present themselves to firms, they add more people to churn out proposals. If firms can interrupt that cycle long enough to invest in meaningful marketing, they will see that the rewards of strategic positioning and messaging. Those rewards are usually more wins with fewer proposals and a stronger, more resilient brand.

One of the single most important things a firm can do to set itself apart is to invest in true marketing leadership. If you are a firm of 50 or more people, you need a full-time true marketing leader.

One of the single most important things a firm can do to set itself apart from the firms listed above is to invest in true marketing leadership. If you are a firm of 50 or more people, you need a full-time true marketing leader. This is a person who has training in marketing and sales and understands the professional services industry. This is almost never a design or technical professional who has a side interest in marketing. This is an individual who has made a career out of marketing and sales, a true marketing professional. Depending on the size of your firm, that leader then needs a cadre of marketing and sales professionals (see my article titled “Building a Competitive Marketing Department” in the Nov. 17, 2014 issue of THE ZWEIG LETTER, #1080, for more info on this). Sales and business development activities are critical for survival, but they should complement a well-orchestrated marketing program that defines your brand and leads you to the most profitable markets, clients, and opportunities. Investment in true marketing as we have defined it above is

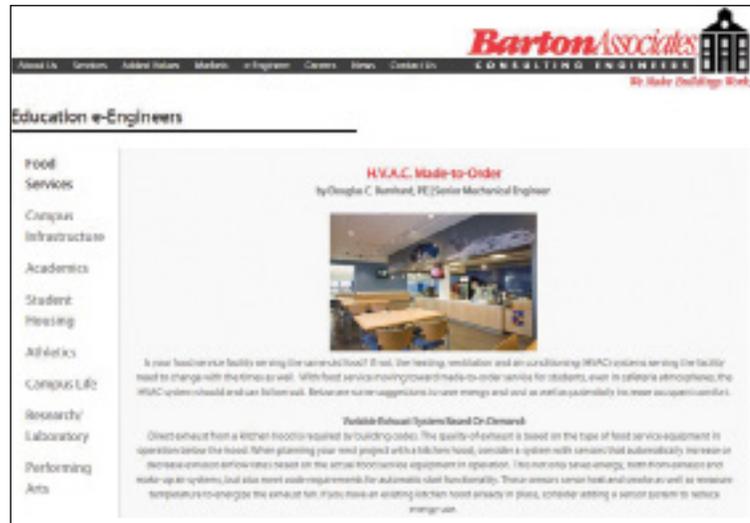
See CHAD CLINEHENS, page 12



WHAT'S WORKING

Barton Associates (York, PA), a 57-person MEP engineering firm, created a marketing campaign to target their two niche markets: education and healthcare. The campaign took home fourth place in Zweig Group's Marketing Excellence Awards in the Integrated Marketing category.

EXPERT MESSAGE



Barton set out to reach high level decision makers in the higher education, healthcare and architectural industry in four-month-long campaign. Each marketing piece was further designed to target specialized submarkets that exist within each of the two niche markets. The comprehensive campaign was comprised of a combination of direct mail, email, website improvements and social media efforts.

The firm began by researching master-plans for higher education facilities as well as future trends in healthcare facilities. Two separate campaigns focused on specific types of education and healthcare facilities that would be most meaningful to a specific client base.

Next, the firm determined what kind of marketing communication would work best for clients by researching B2B content marketing, SMPS resources, and the marketing efforts of competitors. Ultimately, Barton determined that a mix of print and digital methods would extend the reach of the campaign. James Holtzapple, vice president of business development and marketing specialist at Barton Associates, developed the idea and professional engineers at the firm wrote all the marketing content, focusing on providing clients with useful and specific information

WHAT'S WORKING FOR YOU?

Want to show off your outstanding marketing campaign? Contact Christina Zweig, contributing editor, at christinaz@zweiggroup.com and we will consider featuring you in this space.

about each sub-market.

Barton Associates began with sending out a postcard, followed by an e-engineer newsletter just one week later. The newsletter contained website links that also had a downloadable brochure. The newsletter was also posted on the firm's website and LinkedIn company page.

The simple postcards had descriptive text, photos of past projects and the firm's tagline, "We Make Buildings Work."

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WHAT'S WORKING

INTEGRATED MESSAGE



The firm integrated an anniversary message into all printed advertisements, websites, press releases, email signatures and social media sites in order to let the public know about this event.

FINLEY (Tallahassee, FL), celebrated their 10-year anniversary in a campaign that landed them the fourth place in Zweig Group's Marketing Excellence Awards in the Special Event category.

Craig Finley, Jr., president and founder, and Ann Schiola, marketing director of the 20-person engineering firm, worked together to develop the campaign. The firm integrated an anniversary message into all printed advertisements, websites, press releases, email signatures and social media sites in order to let the public know about this event. The firm also designed a T-shirt for staff and spouses/significant others and planned an in-house celebration.

Emails were sent to over 3,600 contacts, an animated card was posted on FINLEY's website, an anniversary banner was created and displayed on marketing materials, and full page advertisements were printed in the American Segmental Bridge Institute Directory, the American Segmental Bridge Institute Annual Convention Program, and the Bridge Design and Engineering IBC Awards Brochure. The firm also sent out e-blasts, a press release, and created an anniversary timeline.

What works

- Bringing it home: FINLEY mailed the anniversary newsletter to employee's residences, bringing families into the celebration as well.
- No stone unturned: FINLEY put their anniversary message on almost everything and got the message out in a multitude of ways.

Results

FINLEY achieved results for every component of their campaign, including a 100 percent increase in Facebook likes, a strong increase in LinkedIn followers, an 18.07 percent click-through rate on a holiday card sent out on Jan. 1 (not a work day), and a 52.27 percent returning user rate on their website.

WESTWOOD LAUNCHES REFRESHED BRAND Westwood Professional Services (Minneapolis, MN) launched a refreshed corporate brand encompassing a simplified version of its existing logo, and a new look to its website (westwoodps.com) and print materials. The firm also introduced a new corporate video and fresh approach to how Westwood communicates its value to the industries through its brand promise of "Better people. Better results."

Westwood's fresh brand message reflects its dedication to client satisfaction by cultivating an environment where its employees are provided professional and personal growth opportunities. This commitment is founded on the firm's belief that its people are its greatest asset.

President/CEO Paul Greenhagen said, "The reason our clients come back to Westwood is because we have the people they trust to get their projects done on schedule and according to plan. Our people are without a doubt the secret to our success."

Greenhagen says the brand refresh clearly articulates the firm's value to the markets it serves. "Our clients need a firm that is looking out for their best interests and helping them realize their vision. At Westwood, we focus on building a better team because having the expertise and tools to complete tough projects is how our clients, our employees, and our company achieve better results."

Westwood

Multi-Disciplined Surveying & Engineering

Westwood's fresh message hits the mark in regard to how we provide value."

The firm strives to be a national leader in delivering professional surveying and engineering services in the markets they serve. As a multi-disciplined surveying and engineering firm, Westwood provides services to support the development of commercial, residential, wind, solar, power delivery, and oil, gas, and pipeline projects nationwide.



ON THE MOVE

COUSINS ELECTED TO USGBC Arup (London, UK), a multidisciplinary engineering and consulting firm that employs 1,200 in the U.S., announced that **Fiona Cousins** has been named chair-elect by the U.S. Green Building Council board of directors.

"I have spent years working with, learning about, and understanding USGBC and feel that I am now able to help lead the organization as it adapts to changes in the marketplace, scales up its activities around the world, and maintains longer-term engagement with buildings," says Cousins, a principal in Arup's New York office. "My career so far has been based on the twin pillars of resource-efficient design and an understanding that collaborative, interdisciplinary processes are the best way to achieve this."

The responsibilities of the chair are to facilitate discussion among board members, guide the board in its legal, strategic, and fiduciary duties, chair meetings and maintain appropriate communication between the CEO and the board.

"USGBC's board of directors provides invaluable direction and perspective, collectively bringing decades of experience to the table and using their individual expertise to shape the

future of the organization, the community and the green building movement as a whole. Delivering on the promise of developing buildings that sustain and enhance the vitality of life is no small undertaking. Our board of directors is comprised of representatives from many different segments of the building industry and will undoubtedly make great strides in the coming year," said Rick Fedrizzi, CEO and founding chair, USGBC. "Fiona is a natural choice for chair-elect as her skills and experience align with her passion for a better built environment and USGBC's mission to transform the building market to one where green and sustainable choices are made as a matter of course."

Cousins's volunteer leadership experience is wide and varied, including roles in the following organizations:

- Executive Committee of Urban Green Council, past secretary, vice-chair and chair
- Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation, board of trustees and advisory board chair, an organization dedicated to changing the culture of the building industry for women
- Architectural League of New York, board of directors.
- Member of the Arup Americas board of directors, which has responsibility for the strategy, operations and management of a 1,200-person business

JUNE JEWELL, from page 5

is included in the kickoff meeting, and the entire scope is shared and discussed, will go a long way toward setting the project up for success.

5) Define systems and processes for capturing extra services on timesheets. Most extra services work that is not accounted for gets lost in general project codes on the employee's timesheet. By defining extra services phases or tasks for each project, and limiting choices on the employee's timesheet you can better start to capture extra services and make sure it gets billed every month. In addition, strict protocols should be put in place to prevent projects from being setup and charged to before a signed contract is received from the client. Project managers should be reviewing and approving employee timesheets weekly to ensure that potential extra services are caught and dealt with before it gets too difficult to bill and collect them.

By putting in place appropriate processes and system controls, and ensuring that your employees are following them consistently, you can measurably increase your

By putting in place appropriate processes and system controls, and ensuring that your employees are following them consistently, you can measurably increase your recovery of extra services, and reduce scope creep.

recovery of extra services, and reduce scope creep. A laser focus on eliminating this dangerous enemy will pay off through increased project profit margins and better management of client expectations. ▀

JUNE JEWELL is the author of the book "Find the Lost Dollars: 6 Steps to Increase Profits in Architecture, Engineering and Environmental Firms." She is the president of AEC Business Solutions, focused on developing business assessment tools and online training for project managers to help AEC firms make more money on their projects. Connect with her on LinkedIn and learn more about how to improve your project management performance at www.AECBusiness.com.

CHAD CLINEHENS, from page 9

critical for any firm that has a strategic plan and a vision for the future. If you simply want to evolve, a support team of proposal writers will probably suffice. Marketing should play a key role in the execution of the strategic initiatives in your plan. Take a look at your marketing department and especially the leadership. Do you trust that your highest order initiatives are in good hands? If not, make changes and hire marketing professionals to help your organization grow and outperform your peers. Understanding the differences in marketing and sales and having a deliberate strategy and focused investment

Do you trust that your highest order initiatives are in good hands? If not, make changes and hire marketing professionals to help your organization grow and outperform your peers.

in each of those critical areas will go a long way toward making you a Hot Firm in 2015! ▀

CHAD CLINEHENS is Zweig Group's executive vice president. Contact him at cclinehens@zweiggroup.com.