

How do you come across?

Habits that will make people not like you – yes, it includes always checking your phone.

One of my pet peeves is when I call and ask for someone and whomever answers the phone automatically connects me with that person's secretary without asking me if that is OK. It's rude.



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

It's been said before that for people to want to do business with you, they have to know you, like you, and trust you. That's really important to keep in mind when you are a professional architect, engineer, planner, environmental consultant, or someone who markets those services.

There are certain things people do that may contribute to others not liking or not trusting them. Some people in this business do these things every day by, often inadvertently. See if you are doing any of the things below and try to work on NOT doing them so you can be more successful:

- Overusing your credentials or using unrecognized credentials.** An example of that is putting "MBA" with your name every time you sign a letter or email, such as "Joe Blow, MBA," or "Susan Smith, MBA." Ditto for other pseudo certifications or qualifications bestowed by certain professional organizations (and no, I will NOT name any specifically!) used by some people working in an industry where "P.E." and "AIA" command a certain degree of respect and denote that some significant hurdles have been overcome to achieve them. Doing this stuff drives some people – not everybody – crazy. It will make it look like you are very insecure about your own

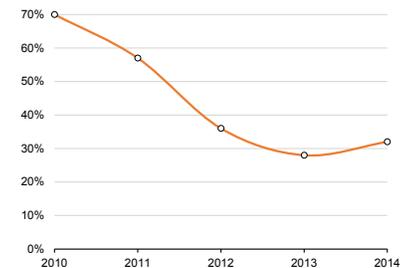
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TRENDLINES

Layoff blip



While fewer A/E/P and environment consulting firms report cutting staff in recent years, the percentage of firms reporting layoffs in the past year has increased slightly.

ZweigWhite's 2014 Financial Performance Survey finds that the percentage of firms saying they had layoffs has increased to 32 percent from 28 percent in 2013.

However, this percentage has been on a steep decline since the days of the economic downturn, as indicated in data from the past four years.

At a high of 70 percent in 2010, the percentage of firms that reported layoffs dropped to 57 percent in 2011, to 36 percent in 2012, and then 28 percent last year.

– Margot Suydam, Director, Research

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A/E BUSINESS NEWS

TRANSPORTATION BILL ADVANCES: U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx unveiled a long-term transportation bill he is sending to Congress for consideration as the House and Senate face looming deadlines to avoid the economic uncertainty and job loss that would ensue if the Highway Trust Fund runs out of money this summer.

The GROW AMERICA Act reflects President Obama's vision for a four-year surface transportation reauthorization bill.

"I visited eight states and 13 cities as part of my Invest in America, Commit to the Future bus tour this month, and everywhere I went, I heard the same thing – people want more transportation options and better roads and bridges to get them where they need to go," said Secretary Foxx.

"Failing to act before the Highway Trust Fund runs out is unacceptable – and unaffordable. This proposal offers the kind of job creation and certainty that the American people want and deserve. I have been pleased to see that members of both parties are already working together to solve these challenges, and I look forward to continuing our discussion and to supporting and building on the good work that's already been done."

On Feb. 26, Secretary Foxx joined President Obama to announce a plan to address the nation's infrastructure deficit with a \$302 billion, four-year surface transportation reauthorization proposal. The GROW AMERICA Act is based on this plan, and represents a number of proposals that have historically attracted bipartisan support including:

- Addressing the shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund and providing an additional \$87 billion to address the nation's backlog of deficient bridges and aging transit systems;
- Creating millions of new jobs to ensure America's future competitiveness;
- Increasing safety across all modes of surface transportation, including increasing the civil penalties the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration can levy against automakers who fail to act quickly on vehicle recalls;

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capabilities – not a good way to build trust.

- **Having annoying glasses habits,** such as snorting like a pig every so often to push your nose up to push your glasses back. Another one is constantly looking down over your glasses like a disapproving librarian. Some people will not like that. They make take it as a sign of disapproval or condescension. If they feel judged, they won't like you. There are other nervous tics and habits you may develop that can grow if not confronted and that may cause people to not like you. Be cognizant of these things and work to correct them.
- **Constantly checking your phone when with someone else.** Others may feel you aren't paying attention to them properly and won't like you as a result. I know that this is a case of the pot calling the kettle black and that I am a big offender here. I can give every excuse in the world for it but it won't change the fact that some people will not like you if you do this!
- **Being too difficult to get a hold of on the phone or using your secretary to place all of your outbound calls.** People will not like you if they think that you think you are someone special. Too much pre-

screening can lead to that feeling. One of my pet peeves is when I call and ask for someone and whomever answers the phone automatically connects me with that person's secretary without asking me if that is OK. It's rude. I am automatically prejudiced against the boss when I think I have been treated rudely by anyone in his/her organization. And having someone else place your outbound calls is the epitome of rudeness. That says, "My time is more valuable than yours, Chump."

- **Being too aggressive behind the wheel/evidencing road rage.** Just think of how a client could judge you if riding with you in a vehicle and you get into an altercation with another driver. Or if you are someone who tailgates or who doesn't stop for pedestrians. They won't like you, won't trust you, and won't do business with you.

There are obviously many other behaviors. Drop me a line with anything you think professionals should be careful about if they want to be known, liked, and trusted, at mzweig@zweigwhite.com, and we'll publish it in a future issue of TZL. ▀▀

MARK ZWEIG is the chairman and CEO of ZweigWhite. Contact him with questions or comments at mzweig@zweigwhite.com.

- Providing certainty to state and local governments that must engage in long-term planning;
- Reducing project approval and permitting timelines while delivering better outcomes for communities and the environment;
- Bolstering efficient and reliable freight networks to support trade and economic growth; and
- Creating incentives to better align planning and investment decisions to comprehensively address regional economic needs while strengthening local decision-making.

In the face of current uncertainty of federal transportation investment, many states have postponed or canceled needed transportation projects altogether.

And without additional investment, deficiencies in our nation's infrastructure will cost businesses more than \$1 trillion every year in lost sales.

Despite this growing need, the Highway Trust Fund, which provides most of the federal support for state transportation projects, is on track to start bouncing checks as early as August.

In January, the Department of Transportation began posting a ticker online at www.dot.gov/highway-trust-fund-ticker to track the remaining funds.

THE ZWEIG LETTER

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TOOLS

Making processes worth the pain

Discuss and evaluate their impact before implementing. Also, look outside your firm.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

It's often a plight of growth. As a firm grows, it may become process heavy, but light on efficiency. How do visionary leaders tackle this problem?

CONTINUAL EVOLUTION. Mark Lauriello, president at **RETTEW** (Lancaster, PA), a 350-plus-person engineering, environmental, surveying, planning, and related consulting services firm, says that as the company has grown, it has introduced processes thought to be a good idea at the time. However, some proved to be too bureaucratic and cumbersome for staff. As a result, RETTEW continually tries to review processes, hold discussions with end-users, and make sure that both big-picture and detail procedural needs are met.

"As a leader, it's important to remain flexible and listen to employees to understand the impact of process decisions, and adjust accordingly for the benefit of both employees and the company as a whole," Lauriello says. "We have not hired a consultant. Instead, we have formed small committees for each area of improvement identified by employees, and in some cases worked with software developers or (standing) advising consultants on individual procedures."

Several highly efficient systems have stemmed from the effort.

In recent months, RETTEW has created a new and very specific go/no-go procedure that vets almost every opportunity it follows.

"This enables us to be sure that we are investing our resources exactly where they should be and not wasting money on poor pursuits," Lauriello says. "We also revised the process to pare it down and streamline it about a year after initial implementation to support employees while keeping its overall purpose intact."

RETTEW also has improved its backlog and look-ahead reports to keep its business development focused on the strategic plan. This has allowed staff to plan and prioritize their time well. In some cases, it has streamlined daily details, such as creating a standard job-site health and safety plan that can be used on any client job site.

"Standard procedures are always a work in progress, but that's what makes procedures effective – a will-

ingness to be transparent with staff and work toward improvement for the good of everyone," Lauriello says.

NEW BLOOD BRINGS NEW PROCESSES. At **Luckett & Farley** (Louisville, KY), an 80-person multidisciplinary architectural, engineering, and interior design firm, Nick Eckhart, vice president of innovation and design technology, explains that the 2008 downturn and ensuing slow-growth economy created a fruitful talent marketplace for financially solid firms that could adapt to the "new normal." That new talent brought in new energy and, sometimes, new ideas for doing things better.



Mark
Lauriello,
President,
RETTEW.

"As a leader, it's important to remain flexible and listen to employees to understand the impact of process decisions, and adjust accordingly for the benefit of both employees and the company as a whole."

That's important because Ed Jerdonek, the firm's president and CEO, half-jokingly refers to the "new normal" as clients who demand the absolute highest quality, bordering on perfection, delivered immediately, and as close to free as possible. But, in the same breath, he'll counter that without a strong value proposition that compels clients to seek out the firm's services, this is nothing more than a race to the bottom – that's where the *vision*

See PROCESSES, page 4



Nick Eckhart, VP
of Innovation
and Design
Technology,
Luckett & Farley.

PROCESS ROADMAP

MindTools.com, a career training and development site, reports that when processes work well, they can significantly improve efficiency, productivity and customer satisfaction. However, processes that don't work can cause frustration, delays and financial loss. To improve a business process, follow these steps.

- Map the process
- Analyze the process
- Redesign the process
- Acquire resources
- Implement and communicate change
- Review the process

Keep in mind that you'll need to improve most processes at some point. New goals, new technology and changes in the business environment can all cause established processes to become inefficient or outdated.

NEWS

USGBC shares data online

Dynamic market briefs for each state created to supply on-the-ground info.

The U.S. Green Building Council launched a new online data visualization resource that highlights real-time green building data for each state in the U.S. and Washington, D.C. The enhanced state market briefs – highlighting LEED projects, LEED-credentialed professionals and USGBC membership in each state – provide green building advocates and the general public a look into LEED’s impact within any U.S. state.

“Our state-level market briefs demonstrate USGBC’s commitment to data and information transparency at an important level of granularity. You can’t find this data anywhere else in the market,” said Mahesh Ramanujam, chief operating officer, USGBC. “The choice to build green buildings is simple. These state-level data visualizations make it even simpler.”

The dynamic market briefs for each state were created to supply green building advocates with on-the-ground information to tell robust stories about the multifaceted benefits of LEED green buildings. Each market brief acts as a state-level barometer of economic activity taking place in an industry that McGraw-Hill projects could be worth up to \$248 billion and represent more than half of all commercial and institutional construction in the U.S. by 2016.

Market briefs for countries outside the U.S. are available upon request, and LEED for Homes and LEED for Neighborhood Development data and projects will be added later this year. The market briefs highlight data on cumulative LEED-regis-

tered and -certified projects, gross square footage of LEED-registered and -certified space, project totals broken out by owner type and space type, USGBC member organizations by type, LEED professional credential holders, links to chapter(s) serving that state, as well as a project profile scorecard.

“The ability to tune in to what the green building marketplace looks like in real time is remarkably impactful, no matter what your connection to the industry is,” said Ari Kobb, director of sustainability and green building solutions, Siemens Industry, Inc. “The state market briefs are clean and simple snapshots for each state. As someone who loves to dig into data, especially LEED data, I find this a useful tool for analysis.”

USGBC chapters and Platinum-level members were given an exclusive first look at the tool before it came online. “Working at the state level, I see story after story of LEED success in North Carolina,” said Emily Scofield, executive director, USGBC North Carolina Chapter. “The state market briefs are really useful to us in the way that they aggregate individual successes into crisp numbers that have a real impact on our conversations with businesses and policymakers.”

USGBC prioritizes data transparency and access through its data access policy campaign, its Green Building Information Gateway and as a joint organizer of the Data Access and Transparency Alliance. No other green building organization provides access to this level of data and information.

The state market briefs can be downloaded either as a visualization or as a raw data file and are accessible at USGBC.org/advocacy/market-brief. ▀▀

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component helps to clarify its firm’s strategy.

ENTER THE NEW BLOOD. “We’ve jumped at the opportunity to recruit new rock star talent who bring high energy, enthusiasm and sometimes even new best practices for creative technological solutions and project delivery,” Eckhart says. “By closely analyzing – even reverse engineering – how other organizations (sometimes not even in the A/E industry) operate, Luckett & Farley can adapt their nimble and flexible methodologies and make them our own.”

The overall result is greater efficiency and competitiveness. The real trick is striking a healthy balance between processes that allow employee-owners autonomy and heavy procedures that minimize risk and optimize business performance.

Eckhart says that Luckett & Farley’s Media + Entertainment group has benefited considerably from this process.

“First off, these projects and clients are high energy, exciting and high profile. It’s the type of work that is a natural

‘pull’ for talented Gen Y’ers and Millennials who flock to this market sector at Luckett & Farley,” Eckhart says. “The Media + Entertainment group recruited an extremely talented designer from a local firm that was just too top heavy, given the current economic conditions. This new recruit has brought, and helped us incorporate, several best practices and other creative methods that, in the past, proved to be very profitable for his previous employer. As a result, he’s helped us ‘plus-up’ some of our internal practices throughout the firm.”

What’s nice about this newly recruited group of supercharged employee-owners is that they didn’t join Luckett & Farley burdened with the institutional luggage of “We’ve always done it this way,” that occasionally weighs down even the best of their most experienced and tenured employee-owners.

So, what’s the payoff? Not only did the performance of the Media + Entertainment group explode, but the energy was contagious and the entire firm enjoyed a big performance bounce that has become its new benchmark. ▀▀

STUDY

Firms can increase revenue, partner diversity

Study finds that women will more likely succeed through rainmaking than through inheritance strategies.

By VICTORIA FRYER
Penn State media relations

Female and minority junior partners in professional service firms may benefit from using different clientele-building strategies than their white male counterparts, according to recent research co-authored by Forrest Briscoe of the Penn State Smeal College of Business. By encouraging and supporting these varying strategies, firms could increase both revenue and diversity among senior partners.

Briscoe, associate professor of management and sociology, and his co-author Andrew von Nordenflycht of Simon Fraser University identified two primary methods for building clientele – the inheritance strategy and the rainmaking strategy – and found that, while inheritance is effective for white male partners, rainmaking tends to be more lucrative for females and minorities.

According to the researcher's paper, although both inheritance and rainmaking strategies may be viable in general, they may differ in their effectiveness for women and minorities.

Because the professional-client relationship is based largely on an ongoing social relationship, building clientele in professional service firms is dependent upon building social networks. The inheritance strategy relies on building networks within a firm – often by developing a relationship with a senior partner and inheriting his or her clients upon their retirement.

The researchers explain that, because people tend to build stronger interpersonal relationships with others like them in terms of race and gender, females and minorities find themselves at a disadvantage in building strong relationships with senior partners – still predominantly white males.

The rainmaking strategy, on the other hand, focuses on building networks and acquiring new clientele from outside the firm.

Rainmaking may be a more effective strategy for females and minorities because, in drawing upon social networks external to the firm and having the freedom to choose which clients to pursue, the tendency to build relationships with like genders/ethnicities can work to their advantage.

The researchers posed that, in recognizing the vary-

ing results of each strategy, professional service firms can better support junior female and minority partners, leading not only to increased revenue overall but an eventual more diverse group of senior partners.

The research shows that as firms increasingly fund and empower rainmaking efforts, they may recognize the particular benefit of those activities for the career development of female and minority partners. Supporting diverse junior partners by enhancing their rainmaking abilities may yield a double payoff in terms of the firm's overall revenue as well as diversity goals.



iStock photo

Because people tend to build stronger interpersonal relationships with others like them in terms of race and gender, females and minorities find themselves at a disadvantage in building strong relationships with senior partners – still predominantly white males.

The paper, "Which path to power? Workplace networks and the relative effectiveness of inheritance and rainmaking strategies for professional partners," appeared in the March issue of the *Journal of Professions and Organization*. Smeal's Briscoe holds a doctoral degree in management from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School of Management and a bachelor's degree in environmental sciences from Harvard University. ▀▲

Proposals and new technology

Should the process be overhauled due to the latest device or software? A person will have to decide that.

The planet rotates. Time moves forward. Markets change. Marketing adapts. Technology improves. Our desire – for the best, the newest, the easiest, or the fastest – draws us toward the future.

With all this technological progress, do we control our technology or does our technology control us? Are we buying, installing and learning new technology because it fills real a gap in our process? Or do we just want the new thing because it is new?

Some of us are what they call “early adaptors.” We have to have whatever is new because it is new, and we can be the first to say, “I have that.” But when I see a new marketing-related capability (whether a go/no-go website, updated graphic design software, a desktop publisher that can make a technical proposal look like an issue of Vanity Fair, or something else) I wonder what it does that is new and valuable.

Every time Corel announces a new version of Corel Draw, I look to see what’s new. More often than not, what’s new are things important to a full-time graphic designer, but not to me. So I generally wind up getting the upgrade every third or fourth new version. I find the same result with most other new products or upgrades.

The go/no-go process is one of my “soapboxes,” so I was very interested when I first saw announcements for software and websites to facilitate the process. The sites I looked at enabled multiple people to evaluate opportunities simultaneously, but I didn’t think they asked enough of the right questions to convince me of their value.

We now have a number of CRM products available, with great variety in price of admittance, cost of technical assistance, ability to customize, how well they reflect the needs of the AEC industry, and other factors. Ultimately, I think there is a need to change the name of the category. I don’t think these programs or services provide customer relationship management. They all do CRMT. The “T” stands for “tracking,” an important distinction.

None of these products will get into the car, drive across town, visit your client, and discuss how you can solve their challenge. A person has to do that. The product just enables you to track such activities and share them with others, but only if you open the software when you get back to the office and make an entry about your visit, what you discussed, and what follow-up is required.



Bernie Siben

THE FAST LANE

These CRM products will also store your boilerplate materials, including résumés, firm introductions, project descriptions, award lists and any other information you use over and over again. But these packages do not distinguish between multiple versions of the same information. If someone has one résumé for water, one for wastewater, one for streets and one for public transit, you will have to select the right version for a given use. I have yet to see a program where you can input a brief description of the project being pursued and the program will assemble a first draft with no further input.

So the automation we talk about is really more about storage and retrieval of information, as opposed to selection and assembly. And remember that once you pull information out of storage, a person will still have to read, edit and rearrange that information so that it responds to the RFQ/RFP.

See BERNIE SIBEN, page 8

When I see a new marketing-related capability (whether a go/no-go website, updated graphic design software, a desktop publisher that can make a technical proposal look like an issue of Vanity Fair, or something else) I wonder what it does that is new and valuable.

Strategic M&A search

It's like dating; it's intense; it's complicated.
So, get some help.

While firms should be ready to decide quickly on potential merger and acquisition opportunities, the other side of the opportunistic M&A inquiry is strategic search. There are several steps to preparing for and executing a strategic search for a new merger or acquisition target.

The work begins with a clear, defined growth strategy. Is your firm interested in growing its local footprint? Improving design strength in a pre-existing sector or discipline? Or is your firm looking to strike out and diversify through a new geographic area, market sector, or discipline? There is a lot that could be written about how to go through each and every little step along the way but I am going to break it down into simple-to-understand steps.

1) Pre-dating. This is where your basic research begins; you have to start compiling a list of all the companies you think would be a good match to the criteria you created. Do they excel in the market sector, discipline, or geography you are interested in growing? Are they a size that you can afford to purchase or are you going to have to give up some power and go with more of a merger style transaction? After you have a list of possible targets, use as many of the available resources as possible to find out everything you can. This will allow you to eliminate some prospects right away and save you time later down the road.

2) The first date. This begins the stages of contact and preliminary conversations. We usually begin with a contact letter sent to all possible targets asking them to contact us if they are interested in learning more. We follow that up with a phone call. From there, the list is developed further and preliminary calls are scheduled. After a preliminary phone call with all your targets, cut the ones you don't like or the ones that are not interested in pursuing further, and then rank them. Ask them about their basic characteristics and maybe a little backstory. Make sure to think beyond just the clear numbers. Culture compatibility is a topic discussed often here in **THE ZWEIG LETTER**. It is important! Are you a firm with employees that are available until 7 p.m., even on Fridays? You may want to seriously consider cutting firms that close up shop and are out of reach right at 5 p.m. – or like to close at noon on Fridays. From your rankings, choose the top echelon among those targets. Depending on how much interest you have had, this may be a top two or three or could be a top 10.

3) The second date. Here is where you get into some serious conversations. Your calls will get a little longer. You also exchange a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), and then financial statements, followed by meetings at the offices of



Ryan
Renard

INSIDE VIEW

your prospects. With the NDA comes access to proprietary information. You can make a real decision on the hard facts discovered during the due diligence process to see if this a company worth taking a step further.

4) The third date. At this point you have to start talking about what the future might look like for each of the firms together. What kind of roles are the leaders of the firm being acquired going to play in the new company? How much ownership is the buying firm giving up, or is the transaction cash for equity? A letter of intent is usually a non-binding outline of what the transaction will look like. This is the stage where, if you have been doing this on your own, you should definitely enlist professional counsel. This can include a transaction attorney, merger/acquisition consultant, or CPA to help you with due diligence.

See RYAN RENARD, page 8

Hiring a merger/acquisition consultant from the beginning can save you time, money, and headaches – not to mention the loss in productivity of the employees you would have to pull off jobs to work on such an intense strategic search.

CALENDAR

THE PRINCIPALS ACADEMY: The Principals Academy, a crash course in all aspects of managing a professional services firm, is coming to several cities.

The program is presented by a team of speakers – including ZweigWhite founder and CEO Mark Zweig – with extensive experience working with and for A/E firms.

They have a clear understanding of what it takes to survive, and even thrive, in any economy.

The two-day agenda covers six critical areas of business management from the unique perspectives of architecture, engineering and

environmental consulting firms, and is presented in tutorial and case study workshop sessions.

The Principals Academy program also includes a case study workshop session that will provide an opportunity to practice implementing these management strategies in a supervised test-case scenario.

Upcoming events include June 12 and 13 in Pittsburgh, Pa., Oct. 16 and 17 in Los Angeles and Nov. 13 and 14 in Miami.

For more information or to register, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/tpa.

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5)Engagement and marriage. A written statement of intent and the execution of the transaction follows the letter of intent. There are countless different ways to structure a deal, depending on what each party is looking to get: cash, equity, employment agreements, or percentage of future revenue.

While most firms *may* be able to complete this work in house, it may not be your best use of assets. Hiring a merger/acquisition consultant from the beginning can save you time, money, and headaches – not to mention the loss in productivity of the employees you would have to pull off jobs to work on such an intense strategic search. By farming it out, you pass on the responsibilities of the search and preliminary conversations before you even have to start devoting some real time to the endeavor.

Consultants have the ability to conduct a speedier search, since they have access to large databases of companies and contacts, and the experience that comes with doing projects like these every month. The advantages also come with the name recognition of the consulting company. I can't tell you how many firm CEOs tell us during our conversations, "I usually get a few of these per year, but I saw it was you guys and held on to it." Name recognition goes a long way in getting firm leaders to provide information in early conversations that might put them higher or lower in your rankings. The target firm may not be so forthcoming if your firm is seeking this kind of information alone. Considering hiring a merger/acquisition consulting company may be the best decision you make to have a successful strategic search! ▀▀

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BERNIE SIBEN, from page 6

This is a very interesting time for social media. A search on April 9 revealed that Wikipedia listed more than 200 social media sites, including many currently used by the AEC industry, such as Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Talkbiznow, Twitter, Yammer and Yelp. A quick Google search turned up dozens of stand-alone blogging platforms.

Social media opportunities are boundless, but the opportunities provided are for building on existing relationships. Regardless of how many times you message someone on Facebook or write on their page; regardless of how many times a day you Tweet to hold a conversation in 140-character increments or send people to your website; and regardless of how many pictures you post on Pinterest, developing a new relationship still requires face-to-face contact. We have all learned how easy it is to misrepresent and lie online. Developing trust and respect still requires in-person contact where words are amplified or modified by body language.

Mobile technology is great for viewing what is already created and available. But do you really want to create a complex Excel spreadsheet for a cost proposal on a five-year ID/IQ-type environmental project on your iPhone or Android?

Tablets can range in size from the 7-inch screen of a Samsung Galaxy to the 10.6-inch screen of the Microsoft

Surface. Creating marketing pieces on one of these devices will not be that different from creating on a laptop or desktop computer. The issue of whether to use a tablet or a laptop is more one of convenience and portability. But I would still feel more secure creating a 100-page technical proposal for engineering work on a laptop or larger tablet than on an iPhone.

Then there is the question of private versus public sector pursuits. In the private sector, you can complete a marketing cycle with a few voice or email conversations and move right to contracting in the form of a relatively brief email that restates the nature of the conversation and the agreed-upon price. In the public sector, however, clients still require extensive documentation in multiple hard copies. Having the newest gadget is not going to do much for your ability to create these documents.

So this is not a one-size-fits-all question. Every firm will need to consider for itself the impacts of new technology on its proposal processes. Some processes may need to be tweaked; others may need to be replaced; still other process may be totally unaffected.

A person will have to make that decision. ▀▀

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GROWTH

Coaching in lieu of reviews

Skills can be enhanced and behaviors changed. But who should carry the effort?

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Beyond the technical aspects of the job, employee coaching can also score some serious points when it comes to developing responsible and accountable team members. Terri Swain of the HR Consultant, LLC in Fort Worth, Texas, says that employee coaching is one of the best ways to develop high-potential employees who may need help with one or more dimensions of the position.

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE? Swain says that employee coaching can be done internally or externally. However, it's usually best accomplished with the help of an outside coach so candid feedback can be given.

No matter which you choose, there are several benefits to employee coaching:

- provides constant structured feedback versus annual performance reviews
- less threatening than performance discussions
- allows a neutral "third party" to make employee assessment
- is perceived as a positive employee investment
- works on identified or perceived barriers to employee success

"If you're developing an internal coaching program, it's imperative that everyone takes the role seriously and the organization gives both coach and employee opportunities to meet," Swain says. "It's sometimes easy to reschedule internal meetings, then forget about them completely if there isn't some kind of accountability and commitment to the coaching. With external coaching, there's a financial component to the organization and it's often taken more seriously."

Laura McIntosh, HR manager, **Populous** (Kansas City, MO), a 350-person global design practice specialized in creating environments that draw people and communities together, says that they've used outside professional coaching consultants when they feel a team member needs more in-depth assistance to improve their performance.

"If an organization is committed to developing high

quality/high performing staff, then the key is to be open-minded and willing to use a different approach in different situations," she says.

KEEP THE BEST; FORGET THE REST. Imagine this. Your highest earning salesperson is a rainmaker for your organization. However, this same person stomps on everyone around him to achieve these sales. Coaching allows you to retain what's best about the employee, but coach him to win the hearts and minds of others.

Additionally, organizations are quick to "reward" stellar individual contributors with promotion into management.

See COACHING, page 12



Laura McIntosh,
HR Manager,
Populous.

GOOD TO KNOW

Nearly all firms (86 percent) conduct regular performance appraisals or reviews of employees.

Source: 2014 Policies, Procedures & Benefits Survey, ZweigWhite: www.zweigwhite.com/p-2191-policies-procedures-benefits-survey-2014.

A COACHING SCENARIO

Andrea Herran, owner and HR consultant, HR Focus, Barrington, Ill. says that the main benefit of employee coaching is that you are focused on the employee, not the team. By narrowing the focus, you'll achieve faster results.

Let's look at the following scenario:

Peter is a principal and he has a project manager named Matt, a great engineer responsible for a team of three people. However, when Peter asks how the team is doing, Matt complains that he has to constantly tell them what to do and that they won't make any decisions. Believe it or not, this is usually a sign of an issue with the leader and not the employees.

- Has the manager given the team and the individuals expectations?
- Is the team permitted to share ideas without feeling foolish?
- Does the team understand the scope of the project?
- Are team members allowed to work on areas that relate to their strengths?
- Is it okay to fail?

These are the questions Peter will use to start his coaching with Matt. For example, in question number one above, Peter will ask this and when Matt responds with a simple "Yes," Peter will need to follow up with, "How do they know?" Peter will keep asking questions until he believes he has the best answer (not the first one) and can guide Matt in the proper direction. Each session will focus on only one aspect and Peter will have to ask Matt, "How do you plan to correct this and in what timeframe?"

"The most difficult part for the Peter will be not to offer suggestions directly, only if he sees that Matt doesn't seem to be getting to a solution. Even then ask, "What do you think about trying..." Herran says.

ON THE MOVE

PENNONI PROMOTES: **Pennoni Associates** (Philadelphia, PA), a 950-person engineering, design, and consulting firm, announced that **John Skorupan** has been named office director of the firm's Pittsburgh location. He previously served as a business development associate for western and central Pennsylvania.

"John is a proven asset to our company. He provides strong leadership and business acumen and is an integral member of the community," said Andrew Bennett, Pennoni regional vice president for Pennsylvania North and West. "We look forward to leveraging his guidance and expertise to advance our growing Western Pennsylvania operation and augment the high level of service, which we provide to our clients in his role as office director."

Skorupan joined the firm in 2012. He is now responsible for client service and business development efforts for the Pittsburgh office and for managing the success and growth of the Pittsburgh staff and projects. He has served for more than 12 years as a Cranberry Township Supervisor and has 30 years of experience selling AEC-related services to the commercial and industrial markets.

LJA HIRES: **LJA Engineering, Inc.** (Houston, TX), a 400-person full-service consulting engineering firm, has announced that **Brian Roybal** has joined LJA as a project manager in the firm's Rail Engineering Group.

Roybal joins LJA with over 16 years of project engineering and management experience. He has a considerable background in rail, site development, and construction management. Most recently, Roybal was the project manager for a storage-in-transit railroad yard and trans loading site where he managed the scope, schedule and estimates, in addition to managing the engineering and construction management contractor.

Roybal will be responsible for leading the management of railroad projects for industry clients throughout Texas and the Gulf Coast.

ARUP PROMOTES: **Arup** (London, UK), a multidisciplinary engineering and consulting firm, announced it has promoted nine people in North America to the position of associate principal. The individuals are located in Arup's New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto offices.

Nikos Chalaris is a civil engineer and project manager in Arup's Toronto office with 16 years of experience in environmental assessments, detailed design, contract preparation and construction administration of transportation infrastructure, rail, roads, highways, bridges and other municipal facilities. He has been successful in managing groups of professionals, and leading multiple teams in delivering design services for transit and municipal agencies in the Greater Toronto Area.

Anthony Chung is financial controller for Arup's Americas region, based in New York. Since joining the firm in 2006, Chung has worked in multiple offices in the Americas and overseen the finances for specific offices, businesses, and practices.

Kyle Fisher is the marketing leader for Arup in the Americas and the BD team leader for the New York office. She guides the group's marketing, business development, and communications strategy, with a focus on positioning and facilitating best practice. Fisher has 18 years of experience in the AEC industry working in marketing, business development, and communications.

Anthony Kirby leads the civil engineering group in Los Angeles and is responsible for the development and leadership of the civil engineering and GIS teams. Since joining Arup, he has gained experience in the design of complex drainage systems, general civil works, flood studies and risk assessments, international masterplanning, and engineering design for existing and new aviation facilities.

Vincent Lee is a civil engineer in Arup's New York office with a wide range of experience in sustainable site development, green infrastructure, and water management. Lee offers his clients a comprehensive

understanding of delivering sustainable infrastructure while overcoming a diversity of complex and context-sensitive challenges. He has been able to leverage his experience to develop resilient engineering solutions in a Post-Sandy New York metropolitan region.

Amie Nulman is a structural engineer in Los Angeles. Her 10 year portfolio at Arup includes a wide range of projects from museums and academic buildings to libraries and residences, spanning from the competition stage to construction completion. Nulman is currently leading multi-disciplinary building design teams on an Air and Space Museum and an Office Tower building, both located in Los Angeles.

Simon Rule is a civil engineer in Arup's New York Office with more than 25 years of experience. Rule's area of expertise is in delivering multi-disciplinary scope across many types of infrastructure projects including: rail, highway, bridge and site development projects, as well as airport and station terminal approaches. Since joining Arup in 1987, he has worked on projects globally.

Tabitha Tavoraro is a structural engineer in Arup's New York office. Since joining the firm in 2001, Tavoraro's experience has been concentrated on museums, performing arts centers and university projects, with a growing focus on high-rise structures in high seismicity regions around the world including Torre Reforma, Mexico's tallest building, Pedregal 24 and Torre Manacar, all three in Mexico City.

Cameron Thomson manages Arup's New York Sustainability team focusing on high performance buildings, sustainable planning, and carbon management of projects. He has guided multiple projects through LEED accreditation and developed sustainability guidelines for the planning, construction and operations of projects. He is currently working on several district energy projects and mixed used developments aiming to achieve net zero emissions through the Clinton Climate Initiative's Climate+ program.

AWARD WINNERS

WARE MALCOMB WINS AWARD: **Ware Malcomb** (Irvine, CA), an international design firm, announced it has been awarded a 2014 Real Estate and Development (RED) Award for Best Industrial Project from AZRE: Commercial Real Estate Magazine for its work in designing the new Marshalls Distribution Center located in Phoenix. The 2014 winners were recently announced at an awards ceremony at the Arizona Biltmore Hotel and will be featured in a special section of AZRE Magazine. Marshalls is one of the nation's leading off-price family retailers with more than 900 stores spanning 43 states and Puerto Rico.

"It was an exciting challenge to create a facility that would meet Marshalls' corporate and distribution needs," said Larry Armstrong, Ware Malcomb CEO. "We are proud that the Marshalls Distribution Center in Phoenix has been recognized locally as one of the most notable commercial real estate projects of the past year."

Ware Malcomb provided architectural design services and Layton Construction Company served as the general contractor for the project, managed out of Ware Malcomb's Phoenix office, led by Regional Manager Kevin Evernham.

EXPANSION

How to plan for growth

Decision should always be data-supported and driven by goals and strategic initiatives.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Making the case for or against expansion or growth can be tricky. What's realistic and what's a flight of fancy that could destabilize a firm? We turned to three CFOs to see what they had to say.

DIG INTO DATA. Kevin Nisson, CFO at **KARN CHARUHAS CHAPMAN & TWOHEY** (Washington, DC), a 48-person, full-service architectural, planning, and interior design firm, says that for a closely held firm such as KCCT, which has reached a milestone where some of its younger executives have risen to ownership positions, the issue of growth and expansion has already been widely discussed.

"Hours of tactical boardroom conversation have been spent to come to a decision after plowing through scenarios, analyzing pros and cons, and discussing the different means of growth and expansion," Nisson says. "We discussed the ways to grow, if we desired to grow organically, or if we wanted to pursue an external option to meet our needs. In all cases, it was necessary to analyze data such as forecasts, pro-forma financials, and cash flow analyses as well as other analytical market data so that an informed decision could be made."

When the time comes to make a decision, data is presented to decision-makers.

"It's important for time to be set aside for each stakeholder to be heard and, when the decision is made, it will have been through an informational decision-making process," Nisson says.

FOCUS ON STAFF AND CLIENTS FIRST. Deby Forry, CFO and corporate counsel, **Trihydro Corporation** (Laramie, WY), a 390-person engineering and environmental consulting firm with 19 office locations, says that its approach is strategic and controlled.

"There are many factors that go into a decision to expand or grow. However, we first focus on our client needs and supporting our employees in their quest to grow within the company," she says.



Kevin Nisson, CFO, KARN CHARUHAS CHAPMAN & TWOHEY.



Deby Forry, CFO and Corporate Counsel, Trihydro Corporation.

Trihydro's growth is typically planned and organic, driven by goals and strategic initiatives set out on a three- to five-year plan. The company pursues growth as a long-term investment that allows employees to continue to evolve in their careers and allows the company to be profitable.

Forry says that firms get into trouble because of poor planning, poor morale, poor work quality and uncontrolled growth where employees don't have a voice or feel valued. Additionally, Trihydro is committed to quality, safety, and long-term client relationships as first-tier priorities, with limited/controlled growth necessary to ensure that operations are sustainable.

LOOK BOTH WAYS BEFORE YOU CROSS. Roy Mitchell, CFO, **McDonough Bolyard Peck, Inc.** (Fairfax, VA), a 280-person multi-disciplined construction management firm experienced in assisting

"There are many factors that go into a decision to expand or grow. However, we first focus on our client needs and supporting our employees in their quest to grow within the company."

clients in managing the construction process from initial budget, through design and construction, to successful project closeout, says the company is always looking for measured and realistic growth year over year and it has strived to do this organically.

"When looking to grow, a firm must keep in check the expenses that come with growth. Firms must be especially careful if they are looking to grow through mergers and acquisitions. Not only are the financial considerations paramount, but other factors such as company values and company culture become equally important as well," Mitchell says.

Additionally, Mitchell says that when a firm is focused on growth, it needs to ramp up its team at the appropriate time and consider values and culture before taking action on growth.

"If a firm ramps up too early or enters into a relationship that is not a good fit, the firm may be in for troubled times," he says.

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FIRMS ON THE MOVE

NEW NAME, TAGLINE AND WEBSITE: Sebesta Blomberg & Associates, Inc. (St. Paul, MN), a full-service consulting and engineering services firm, has filed a legal name change to Sebesta, Inc. This change was initiated in order to make the company name more succinct and easier to recall.

"Most clients already refer to our firm as 'Sebesta', so the name change is simply responding to the needs of a changing corporate environment," said Robert Costello, president and CEO.

To honor the memory of Paul Blomberg, an original company founder, a scholarship has been established and funded in his name for the benefit of the families of Sebesta employees.

■ **A new tagline: Delivering Solutions - Improving Lives.** Sebesta's management team conducted a strategic workshop during the 4th quarter of 2013, during which they evaluated and developed the firm's underlying core purpose. "We needed a statement that reflected our fresh direction," Costello said. "Through our people's expertise in building engineering and construction, we create smart, sustainable facility solutions for all types of clients. From master planning to design and implementation of energy efficiency

and optimization strategies, we improve the effectiveness of facility functions and budgets. In the process of delivering these solutions, we improve lives... and that's really what we're all about."

■ **A new website (www.sebesta.com).** To further underscore the name change and tagline, Sebesta developed a new website. The unique content engages the employees in telling the company story. Through staff photos and quotes, the site's viewers gain the opportunity to explore the company's work through the eyes of the people who create the facility solutions. In addition, the site includes a clear pathway to the company's markets and services, along with a robust reference library for each project, leading readers to sources such as project webcams, videos, articles, and more.

The changes reflect a priority for the company to better represent the high quality of its work and its people.

"We envision significant growth in the near future and the identity changes allowed us to think carefully about how we want to be perceived as we grow," says Costello. "They represent the hope we have for the future."

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"Often times, an employee may have great technical skills, but may have difficulty moving into a leadership role, particularly if they're supervising former coworkers," Swain says. "A coach can help them to make the transition and effectively develop skills to lead."

A coach can also identify a behavior that is never going to change; the organization needs to make a decision.

YEAR-ROUND EFFORTS. Danelle Prezioso, director of communications and marketing at **MBP** (Fairfax, VA), a 273-person multi-disciplined construction consulting firm, says that supervisors at MBP communicate early and often, so that team members are aware of strengths and weaknesses.

"We have a robust training program designed to educate and build on those weaknesses, a mentor-mentee program which places a mentor with a team member, and peer groups," she says. "Our mentor program helps to guide a team member's career and is also there to coach and offer advice and assistance when needed. Our peer groups pair groups of less ex-

perienced team members with those with more experience to discuss items of interest and to advance their skill set. Programs are designed for continuous coaching throughout the year."

At Populous, a dedicated mentor is assigned to new staff. These mentors are available on a day-to-day basis to answer questions and offer advice, and they are also asked to give input in performance reviews.

"For the staff as a whole, we find that clearly defining each person's role within a project or department is the first step in developing responsibility and accountability," McIntosh says. "The more clarity an individual has about their role, the better chance he or she will embrace the responsibility that accompanies it. Immediate feedback, both positive and corrective, is also crucial to keeping team members motivated and on track."

Populous works to create an atmosphere that fosters personal success, because it believes that the more an individual tastes success, the more he or she will push to grow and improve to attain repeated successes. ▀▀

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WAYS TO EXPAND. Nisson says that when the time comes for expansion or growth, there are several realistic ways a firm can effectively do so. Firms can:

■ **Open offices in other areas and locations.** "Opening up new locations or targeting new markets can be really rewarding for a firm provided the research was done well and tested extensively," Nisson says.

■ **Form alliances with similar businesses.** Teaming or aligning with other firms can be a strong way to grow quickly and put a firm in a dominant position, especially if the firm has a specialty or niche, which was the reason it was selected for the team. The chances of success in teaming arrangements grow substantially if the enterprise is highly organized, and capable of winning a sufficient and representative share of the market.

■ **Diversify.** Breaking out into new areas with a viable service can be profitable, and requires careful monitoring to identify unforeseen costs that could weaken the firm.

■ **Target other markets or acquire or merge with other firms.** "Provided due diligence is performed up front, acquisitions and mergers can be a viable option, but even with the best due diligence performed, the decision to merge involves substantial risks," Nisson says.

Nisson advises that whatever method a firm decides to adopt for growth and expansion, it should be a well-thought-out process, supported by plenty of data analysis.

"Expansion may be a good thing if handled thoughtfully and timely. Otherwise, it can backfire and a firm can find itself in a deep hole," Nisson says. ▀▀