

## The charlatan business developer

They sell themselves into the job but do little else, Mark Zweig writes.

What they AREN'T so good at is selling work. They've got a thousand excuses. They don't have enough time to sell. They need a better brochure. They don't have the right people. It's all B.S.



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

**W**e have a big problem in the A/E/P industry. As good as most of our people are, after 34 years of working in this business I continue to see a small group of charlatans working out there.

These charlatans are working as business developers, market sector leaders, and in some cases other supposed "seller-doer" roles. They get hired into the firms they work for because they are good at selling one thing: Selling themselves into a job.

What they AREN'T so good at is selling work. They've got a thousand excuses. They don't have enough time to sell. They need a better brochure. They don't have the right people. It's all B.S., of course, and it's a big problem because they were hired to do one thing: sell.

These people are also easily distracted. They like to spend too much time in professional societies, or working on standards, or developing plans, but the bottom line is that this all keeps them from selling.

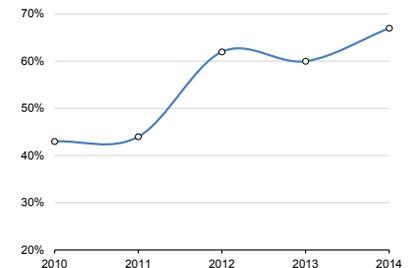
So what else – besides the ability to sell themselves into a job and the inability to sell projects – typically characterizes these charlatans?

**1) They've often been job hoppers.**

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## TRENDLINES

### Remote control



A/E/P and environmental consulting firms are increasingly enabling their employees to work from home or while traveling with some form of remote access, according to ZweigWhite's 2014 Information Technology Survey.

The study finds that the median percentage of firms that provide remote access to all employees increased to a high of 67 percent this year. Before dropping slightly to 60 percent in 2013 from 62 percent in 2012, this number climbed sharply from 44 percent in 2011 and 43 percent in 2010.

– Margot Suydam, Director, Research

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ZW15

Out like a lion.  
In like lamb.

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## A/E BUSINESS NEWS

**DESIGN REVOLUTION:** Flux, a provider of collaborative design software for the building construction industry, announced that it has raised \$8 million in Series A financing. DFJ led this investment round with participation from Borealis Ventures. Flux's mission is to spread design knowledge and improve the accessibility of design tools in order to help meet the world's demand for durable, sustainable buildings.

Flux was born out of Google's moonshot factory, Google[x]. The founding team sought a radical solution to reduce the environmental footprint of buildings, while simultaneously addressing rising demand for buildings driven by rapid urbanization.

"The power required to heat, cool, light, and power devices in the places we live and work is responsible for 40 percent of our carbon emissions. Much of this power is wasted due to inadequate design, antiquated technology, and poor construction quality," said Michelle Kaufmann, co-founder and architect.

Over the next 30 years, the building industry needs to supply housing and workplaces for over three billion people, nearly doubling the current urban building stock.

"We simply cannot continue building the way we have. We need to leverage new technologies, massive data sets, and new processes to increase productivity, scale the scope of design, and improve the places where we live and work. At DFJ, we look for great visionaries with unique ideas that can change the world. The Flux team is a perfect example, with a powerful mission unlike any that I have ever seen," said Steve Jurvetson, DFJ partner who has joined Flux's board of directors.

For the past year, together with a dedicated group of industry partners, the Flux team has been developing a methodology capable of managing the full complexity of designing site-adapted, high-performance, and healthy buildings. The process starts by constructing a relationship graph between the key building systems driven by owners' business objectives. By powering the graph with data and algorithms, the system allows building owners to trade-off upfront construction cost with marketability, life-cycle operating cost, occupant experience, and environmental impact.

"Our vision is to seamlessly join together and optimize an array of tools that allows architects and engineers to work at the speed of thought," said Jen Carlile, co-founder and software engineer. Flux will continue developing and testing its software on a few select projects this year; public availability will be in early 2015.

"Flux represents a paradigm shift for the AEC industry that uniquely leverages customer investments in existing BIM and analysis tools. It is also an example of the type of team, R&D investment, and next generation of design and engineering solutions that the industry deserves and Borealis takes pride in supporting," said Jesse Devitte, managing director of Borealis Ventures and a 30-year veteran of the AEC software industry.

**INFRASTRUCTURE EMPLOYS:** The workforce responsible for supporting the nation's infrastructure, including transportation, water and energy systems, is far larger than currently thought, according to a report released by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. One in every 10 Americans, or 11 percent of the national workforce, holds an infrastructure job, and these jobs stretch across 95 occupations and 42 industries.

The Extent and Impact of U.S. Infrastructure Jobs is the first study of its kind to measure

the full breadth of infrastructure employment in the United States. Based on 2012 employment data, the report brings to light the fact that infrastructure jobs play a distinct role not only in the construction of the nation's infrastructure assets but also in their design, operation and governance.

"We have learned through this report that infrastructure is a much more significant factor in a healthy job market than we thought, with more than 14 million workers employed in a large assortment of industries, including utilities, construction and government," said Joseph Kane, Policy/Research assistant at the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program and co-author of the report. "By gaining a full understanding of the actual size and scope of this segment of our economy, policymakers will be in a stronger position to develop targeted solutions to better manage the country's infrastructure as well as address our jobs deficit."

The foundation of a functioning economy, infrastructure provides the physical structures needed for such services as water, electricity and waste removal and make it possible for communities to meet the needs of their citizens and compete in the global economy. Only 15 percent of infrastructure workers actually build infrastructure, while 77 percent operate infrastructure systems. Material movers, truck drivers and electricians hold the largest portion, or 30 percent, of infrastructure jobs.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

Because they are good at selling themselves but not so good at selling anything else, they usually last no more than one, two, or three years in ANY job. Since we are slow to address non-performers in this industry, sometimes they last longer.

**2) They look like losers.** Whether it's the polyester jacket that's one size too small, the dental work that's been deferred too long, the car that's a little too worn out, or the shoes with worn soles and rounded-over heels ("round-heeleders," as one of my early bosses used to call them), these are signals sent out

that say, "I'm a loser."

**If you have one or more charlatans working in your firm, you'd best be thinking about getting them out. As expensive people (salaries of \$100K, \$150K, \$200K or more – along with their benefits and BD-related expenses) they can burn up \$500- to \$750K pretty quick. That's the profit you'd make on \$5- to \$7.5 million in revenue – not chump change by any means. ▲▲**

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## THE ZWEIG LETTER

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## RESILIENCY

# The formula to survive hard times

Surviving and thriving during a recession requires being ready, being proactive, being creative, and not giving up.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

**M**any companies report that they are making a slow, but steady climb out of this past recession. So, how did they hang on during the lean years and what lessons learned will enable them to survive – and even thrive – when the next slowdown occurs?

**CONTRACT MINING AND DIVERSITY.** Michael Wiercinski, president, **A. Morton Thomas and Associates, Inc.** (Rockville, MD), a 420-person civil engineering, landscape architecture, surveying, planning, construction inspection, and subsurface utility engineering firm, says that his firm was fortunate enough to have a number of long-term, on-call contracts in place.

While some of those contracts were quiet with actual work, others were busier than ever. Having the contracts in place allowed the firm to mine those opportunities and realize significant revenue from them.

“We also maintained a strong diversity of clients – our eggs were not in one or few baskets,” Wiercinski says. “We understood the recessionary environment, but did not get into a slow-down operation mode. We worked more efficiently than ever and continued a strong business development program. Our leadership established and maintained a positive working environment during the recession by promoting a can-do attitude.”

Overall, A. Morton Thomas and Associates focused on strong markets and maintained a high standard of care with respect to its clients and employees.

“Long-term and diverse contracts enabled much of our growth,” Wiercinski says. “We also leveraged existing services to new markets and clients with good success. Several strong markets in our mid-Atlantic service area were of great benefit to the firm.”

**CULTURE HELPS.** Wiercinski says the company was able to accomplish its growth goals and objectives through hard work and loyal clients and employees.

“We treat each client as if they are the only client, and we treat our employees the way we want to be treated,” he says. “Our employees are stakehold-

ers in the success on their projects and our culture of enabling our employees helps us to weather the good times and bad.”

Additionally, the firm’s positive work culture has served as an ideal recruitment and retention tool.

“It helps us to recruit from other firms because we are the kind of company people want to work for,” Wiercinski says.

“We understood the recessionary environment, but did not get into a slow-down operation mode. We worked more efficiently than ever and continued a strong business development program.”

**TAKE THE BLOWS AND GIVE BACK EVEN MORE.** **Sam Schwartz Engineering** (New York, NY), a 125-person interdisciplinary transportation engineering and planning firm, celebrates its 19th birthday this year. Located in lower Manhattan, it’s ridden out some dark times, including the horrific events of September 11, where colleagues were lost.

“We were immediately called in to restore transportation to lower Manhattan, but our office was closed because we were in the impact zone,” says Samuel Schwartz, CEO. “For our company, it meant lots of work, but no one paying their bills for a long time. As a result, a very conservative financial approach was set into motion. We wanted to grow, but needed to be flexible to survive earth-rattling events and economic upheavals.”

So, when the recession hit, Sam Schwartz Engineering was already in a mindset that “anything can happen at any time.”

“It was also precisely the time we were about to embark on a geographic expansion,” Schwartz says. “In the first six months of the recession, November 2008 to April 2009, we opened three new offices: Chicago, Washington D.C. and Tampa – a huge undertaking for a then \$5 million firm.”

Schwartz says that SSE was able to forge ahead because they had positioned themselves to weather the worst. They had solid banking relationships, a staff used to taking blows and giving back even more, and an ethos of survival against long odds.

See FORMULA, page 4



Michael Wiercinski, President, A. Morton Thomas and Associates, Inc.



Samuel Schwartz, CEO, Sam Schwartz Engineering.



Calvin Ladner, president, LJA Engineering, Inc.

NEWS

# Climate report paints dire picture

Ecosystems, water quality and infrastructure at risk.

Climate change is affecting every region of the country and key sectors of the U.S. economy and society, underscoring the need to combat the threats climate change presents and increase the preparedness and resilience of American communities.

The assessment comes via the Third National Climate Assessment released May 6 by the U.S. Global Change Research Program. The report is called “the most comprehensive, authoritative, transparent scientific report on U.S. climate change impacts ever generated.”

Among the report’s findings are the following:

- Some extreme weather and climate events have increased in recent decades, and new and stronger evidence confirms that some of these increases are related to human activities.
- Impacts related to climate change are already evident in many sectors and are expected to become increasingly disruptive across the nation throughout this century and beyond.
- Infrastructure is being damaged by sea level rise, heavy downpours, and extreme heat; damages are projected to increase with continued climate change.
- Water quality and water supply reliability are jeopardized by

climate change in a variety of ways that affect ecosystems and livelihoods.

- Ecosystems and the benefits they provide to society are being affected by climate change. The capacity of ecosystems to buffer the impacts of extreme events like fires, floods, and severe storms is being overwhelmed.

The Third National Climate Assessment is available to download at <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/downloads> and can be explored interactively through a newly redeployed website at [www.globalchange.gov](http://www.globalchange.gov). In this mobile-compatible site, every piece of the report is shareable, including graphics, key messages, regional highlights, full chapters, and more. More broadly, the new site features accessible and dynamic information, topical call-outs, resources, and news about global change and related federal research and engagement efforts.

The findings of the Third National Climate Assessment are fully traceable and supported by metadata through the Global Change Information System, a new gateway to Federal global change information that delivers on goals set in US-GCRP’s 2012–2021 Strategic Plan.

The GCIS enables traceability between environmental data streams (such as observations from sensors and outputs from models) and the resulting scientific findings and publications. Going forward, the GCIS is intended to expand to provide this traceability for other key reports. ▀▲

FORMULA, from page 3

“We needed all these attributes,” he says. “We got bigger slices of a shrinking pie, found new pies and even created new disciplines. There were times we skirted at the edge of our line of credit, times we agonizingly laid off a few people, and for a while, went without raises and bonuses. Through this economic storm, we more than doubled in size, but continue to maintain that DNA and edge that will allow us to face anything thrown our way.”

**KEY TAKEAWAYS.** Calvin Ladner, president, **LJA Engineering, Inc.** (Houston, TX), a 350-person multi-discipline, consulting engineering firm, serving both the public and private sector, says that it learned the following lessons from the recession:

- Diversification of disciplines is necessary to take advantage of demand changes.
- Collection risk protection – use the tools available to collect outstanding accounts receivable, such as mechanics liens or stop notices.
- React faster and more aggressively to market changes as far as overhead/payroll costs go.
- Realize the importance of business development and marketing of new clients and new market sectors.

Spending time and money on marketing and business development is a must – even in a recession.

- Realize the importance of client relationship development and marketing these relationships for repeat business.
- It’s great to be an engineering company in Texas!

So, what will be different next time?

LJA Engineering has:

- Added several market sectors over the last several years, which broadens services offered;
- Implemented collection processes and shared the responsibility among project managers and accounting personnel; and
- Improved customer relationship management and pursuit of opportunities across disciplines and market sectors, teaming up internally where appropriate to offer a complementary array of services to clients.

“While all these listed items above will help a company, the most important thing management can do in a recession-type environment is to get the data, vet the data and make decisions on that data,” Ladner says. “Sitting on your hands and wishing for it all to go away is not going to get it done.” ▀▲

## RESILIENCY

# Balance sheets bounce back

Firms have balanced and expanded their offerings and generated new revenue, staying firmly in the black.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

**H**ow are firms' balance sheets looking these days? Are they returning to pre-recession levels? Are they looking better, worse or about the same? You may be surprised by the news.

**MAKING GLOBAL CONNECTIONS.** Sam Porter, financial director, **Miyamoto International, Inc.**, a 200-person global earthquake and structural engineering company based on the West Coast, says that Miyamoto's strength and continued growth during the deep recession can largely be attributed to the leaders' vision, which led the company to make significant investments in international locations such as Haiti, New Zealand, Italy, Turkey and Thailand.

With the diversification of risk to other countries, Miyamoto experienced an upswing in its growth. It continues this global expansion in key international markets, strengthening its position, strategic goals and reputation by partnering with entrepreneurial partners in foreign and domestic markets.

"This diversification – along with adding disaster reconstruction and mitigation and project management to our earthquake and structural engineering core services – was a key investment in the future and has helped us to become even more financially strong," Porter says. "This is not without its challenges, but with solid leadership and the centering in on our core vision, we learned how to manage this expansion. Additionally, as people came to know us and our reputation, new doors opened. We now partner with entities such as foreign governments, the World Bank, USAID and others. This has been great for everyone all around."

**WORK CULTURE AND DIVERSITY PLAYED ROLE.** Jeff Hilla, CFO, **Hatch Mott MacDonald** (Milburn, NJ), a full service consulting engineering firm, is happy to report that the company's ability to grow and invest continues to improve.

The firm has more than doubled in size since 2007 and has also increased its margins, resulting in a very strong balance sheet. A large part of this growth is due to complex infrastructure projects, and expansion to its gas pipelines business. In addition, continued focus on client engagement, project delivery, technical excellence, ethical values, staff development and its "One Firm" culture has the company

well-positioned for future growth.

"I'm pleased to say that our bank account is looking good," Hilla says. "The firm is very profitable and we continually emphasize timely billing and collections."

Another firm that is happy to report steady growth is **Shea Carr Jewell** (Olympia, WA), an engineering and planning services firm. Jean Carr, principal, says that the firm has grown steadily since its founding in 2006.

"Like most other firms, the recession impacted us considerably, but our diverse client base allowed us to maintain staffing levels while continuing to grow – albeit at a much slower pace," she says. "During the recession we made a decision to invest in business development and marketing efforts. This investment helped to strengthen our client relationships and to build new ones."

"During the recession we made a decision to invest in business development and marketing efforts. This investment helped to strengthen our client relationships and to build new ones."

In the last 18 months, Shea Carr Jewell has noticed an increase in both private sector work and public sector projects. This increase has allowed them to add staff and continue to invest in computers, software and other company infrastructure.

"Prior to the recession, the lion's share of our work was private sector and came to us directly; the clients just called and asked us to prepare scopes of work for their next project," Carr says.

Today, Shea's client types are more balanced. About half of its work is public sector and half is private sector. Workloads and marketing efforts are both up considerably since the recession and the firm's capacity to grow and expand is substantially higher than pre-recession days.

"This can be attributed to our staff numbers, which are nearly double what they were pre-recession and our demonstrated staying power, which has made our financial institutions comfortable extending the financial resources needed to expand and grow," Carr says.



Sam Porter,  
Financial  
Director,  
Miyamoto  
International, Inc.



Jeff Hilla, CFO,  
Hatch Mott  
MacDonald.



Jean Carr,  
Principal, Shea  
Carr Jewell.

See BALANCE SHEETS, page 8

# Website journey: Successes and lessons learned

Five tips from a firm that just went through a nine-month development process.

So much can happen in nine months. A baby can be born. A student can complete a school year. And, a pineapple plant can become fully grown (how's that for obscurity?). For me, nine months recently marked the completion of the development and redesign of **Little's** new website.

Much like a pregnancy and the last year of college, the new website entailed long months, the loss of multiple brain cells and many nightmares about how it would all turn out. While not a small feat, the development of a new website starts first and foremost with establishing goals and managing expectations.

In addition to including a robust portfolio and search capability, Little's new site needed to perform across all platforms, incorporate multiple languages, optimize search engine capabilities and integrate social media outlets. And then there were all of the secondary goals, such as a content management system, video integration and a section to showcase Little's evolving research initiatives.

As with all significant projects, as we journeyed through the process we took notes on successes and lessons learned. Following are a few pointers to keep in mind if you find yourself in need of a new site:

- 1) Prioritize your needs and manage internal expectations.** Your website is a powerful tool but as the saying goes, when something is all things to all people, it becomes nothing. After prioritizing your website goals (remember to not only think about your goals today but also five years from now), communicate them internally and maintain strict focus on them throughout site development. Many ideas and thoughts will surface throughout the visioning and design of the site that can derail your efforts and/or blow your budget. The question to keep asking yourself: Is how relevant are these ideas to the original goals of the site?
- 2) A sounding board can be extremely helpful.** Unfortunately, a website redesign discussion is as attractive to a large group of architects/designers as an electric bug zapper is to a night sky full of flying critters. Its alluring nature is too tempting and ultimately leads to scattered, unproductive ideas and opinions. However, a small internal group (no more than five to 10 people, depending on the size of your organization) that can weigh-in at key milestones of your website design can be extremely beneficial. Be sure to include young professionals. After all, they will offer fresh insights and will most likely be the ones that fuel the



Kelly  
Thompson

GUEST  
SPEAKER

content after launch.

- 3) Responsive design** (an approach that allows for an optimal viewing experience whether you are on a desktop or mobile device) **is without question a must have.** However, be sure to educate yourself and ask your web consultant questions on all aspects so that any downsides to the approach (there are a few as it relates to the scaling of images) don't catch you off guard.
- 4) Content development is the primary culprit for launch delays.** Whether you're developing it yourself or using an outside consultant, content (or the lack thereof) has the most potential to bring the development of your site to a screeching halt. Often content is sourced from various people within the firm, so gathering it in one place can be difficult. Set a manageable schedule that allows you to prioritize and keep track of when information needs to be gathered, drafted and finalized.

See KELLY THOMPSON, page 8

With just four months since launching the new site, Little has seen a significant increase in interest from current and potential clients, college recruits and industry publications across the globe.

# Job postings facelift

Most careers pages look like a copy and paste mishmash. Improve them with the suggestions below.

Most firms receiving this publication probably have a website housing a page where the firm's job postings can be advertised. Most call it a "careers" page. It's also probably safe to assume that if you bothered to create an actual careers page... and then bothered to post an open position to said page – then you must be hoping to generate interest in the opening from someone qualified to do the job. I think that's a smart use of web space – not to mention that a careers page is a useful instrument toward building your employment brand (the way your organization's prospective candidates perceive you as an employer). It goes without saying that good job postings go a long way toward attracting talent to your organization.

So why do your job postings look so lame?

Let's be honest. A cursory look at most job postings leave one with the impression that the company is very cold or very lazy – or both. Job postings often feel stale and institutional, or they look haphazard – like they were cut and pasted on the page with no concern for formatting and neatness. I don't know that I've ever visited a careers page where I saw a posting and said to myself: "Wow that seems like a compelling opportunity with an equally compelling firm." So, the question I want to pose to you today is: If good talent is needed so badly, why does your job posting look so lousy? With that in mind, I want to offer a few brief (and really easy) suggestions to give your job posting (and your employment brand) a bit of a facelift.

**1) Get rid of the back-end HR stuff.** Do I really need to look at the strange job code thing listed in the upper-left-hand corner of the job description? Do I really need to know that military-looking six-digit alpha-numeric requisition number – whatever that is? Do I really need to know what internal "category" or business unit you associate this position with? Get rid of that stuff! Your candidates don't need it in most cases. It only confuses things and it feels cold and institutional – like getting new tags at the DMV.

**2) Make a compelling case for the opportunity.** Here's how a typical job posting begins: "Summary: The project manager will give oversight to all projects under the direction of the Director of Engineering. He or she will be expected... blah... blah... blah." What is that? Feels as if I'm reading the label from a jar of cough syrup. Just a few simple adjustments will go a long way here. First, make the position more compelling for your candidates by starting with a brief overview that celebrates the success/heritage of your firm.



Jeremy  
Clarke

SEARCH  
SAVVY

Second, try to incorporate descriptors in the position profile that help to create a "climate of challenge" for the candidate as they read the description and at the same time helps them to get a sense of the expected level of achievement in the position. Also, reaffirm that candidates will be part of larger collaborative team. None of this has to sound like an infomercial (please don't make it sound like an infomercial), but it should generate intrigue and excitement. Here's an impromptu, just-made-up, example: "ABC Company has a solid 50-year history of hiring only the best people on the planet and entrusting them with the kind of work in the kind of an environment that fosters a one-of-a-kind career. To that end, we're looking for a seasoned Project Manager who, as a member of our collaborative team, will help create concepts and oversee complex projects... etc., etc." The point is: The same position is being presented in two very different ways – one that reads like cough syrup and one that reads like an actual career.

See JEREMY CLARKE, page 8

At the very least, in an industry of cold, haphazard job postings, it will be refreshing for your candidates to see an intriguing, well-formatted, easy on the eyes posting that compels them to explore further.

## RESOURCES

**2014 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SURVEY:** The 2014 Financial Performance Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms contains more than 30 different major financial performance statistics so you can find out exactly where your firm stands among your peers. Use the data from the overall sample or take advantage of the details in the tables to compare your firm to others by type, size, region of headquarters, growth rate, and client base.

Financial performance statistics are just the beginning of this comprehensive report – go beyond the revenue and profit data to chargeability, revenue factor, overhead rates, average collection period, backlog, staff turnover, and more to see which areas your firm could improve. Use the data on personnel expenses, rent and utilities, and professional liability insurance to see if your firm is spending more than necessary on overhead expenses.

In addition to financial performance and spending statistics, the survey also shows data on top financial managers and finance and accounting staff percentages. Does your firm have the staff resources it needs to stay on top of all financial and administration issues? Find out! This survey will show you the typical breakdown of F&A staff for a firm of your size.

The 2014 Financial Performance Survey also shows you historical revenue and profit data and growth predictions for the next three, five, and ten years. If you're a president, CEO, principal, or financial manager, you won't want to miss out on this data when it comes to developing your firm's strategic business plan. This survey will let you take a hard look at where you've been, and it can help you plan where you're going. You'll have all the information you need to set goals and to know what kind of infrastructure is necessary to achieve those goals.

Topics covered in this comprehensive report include:

- Key financial statistics.
- Personnel costs.
- Growth projections.
- Finance & accounting staff.
- Other financial statistics.

For more information or to buy a copy, call 800-466-6275 or log on to [www.zweigwhite.com/p-2195-financial-performance-survey-2014](http://www.zweigwhite.com/p-2195-financial-performance-survey-2014).

## BALANCE SHEET, from page 5

As a result, Shea's bank accounts are definitely strengthening. They have also been able to pay cash for infrastructure and to quickly pay down purchases made using credit.

"The larger staff and higher payroll result in needing increased lines of credit to manage cash flow, and banks have been accommodating in this regard," Carr says. "We have been able to keep the proportion of our line of credit compared to accounts receivable very low. Our accounts receivable collections are well managed and most accounts are paid in fewer than 40 days, which is another big contributor to the strength of our accounts." ■■■

## JEREMY CLARKE, from page 7

**3) Clean up the formatting.** It's not difficult to spot a job posting that has been cut/pasted "between meetings." My mother-in-law (who loves to cook) always says: "The meal is lost if the presentation is lost" (I'm pretty sure she heard that on a cooking show). I believe there's a lot of merit to that statement. The truth is, it doesn't matter how good the dish is – if the picture on the menu looks like someone had a bad day at the diner, nobody is going to order. So take time to construct a clean, professional, well-thought-out position description. I always suggest a brief, compelling narrative summary of the company (see example above), followed by a brief compelling narrative summary of the position (again, see example above). Then, include a few easy-to-follow position requirements. Finally, drop all of that into an appropriately branded careers page, complete with a company logo, and voilà – You have a pretty tasty looking job posting.

Take time to construct a clean, professional, well-thought-out position description. I always suggest a brief, compelling narrative summary of the company, followed by a brief compelling narrative summary of the position.

At the very least, in an industry of cold, haphazard job postings, it will be refreshing for your candidates to see an intriguing, well-formatted, easy on the eyes posting that compels them to explore further. Small adjustments go a long way in attracting the right talent and strengthening your employment brand. ■■■

JEREMY CLARKE is the director of executive search consulting with ZweigWhite. Contact him at [jclarke@zweigwhite.com](mailto:jclarke@zweigwhite.com).

## KELLY THOMPSON, from page 6

**5) Expect some glitches at launch.** Hopefully nothing of the magnitude the new Obamacare website experienced, but just know they are coming. This is especially true if you are using responsive design as it's nearly impossible to catch all glitches across all platforms prior to going live. Take a deep breath and prioritize glitches based on importance and level of visibility.

Luckily, our happy ending (although there's really no ending to the development of an *effective* website) has demonstrated measurable success. With just four months since launching the new site, Little has seen a significant increase in interest from current and potential clients, college recruits and industry publications across the globe.

Like parenthood and the desire of being a lifelong student, the job doesn't cease after nine months. We are now on to collectively feeding and nurturing the site so that it continues to grow and make us proud. ■■■

KELLY THOMPSON is marketing communications manager at Little (Charlotte, NC). Contact her at [kthompson@littleonline.com](mailto:kthompson@littleonline.com).

## RESILIENCY

# Staffs rebound, shortages loom

Firms that were forced to downsize during the recession are back in growth mode and even having trouble filling positions.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

What's the hiring landscape looking like out there? Are firms' staffing levels similar to what they were pre-recession? Has anything changed as far as experience levels, demographics and specialty areas?

**STRATEGIC TEAM BUILDING.** Marian Young, president, **BrightFields, Inc.** (Wilmington, DE), a 42-person environmental services firm, reports that staffing levels are higher than before the recession; however, had the recession not occurred, the company would be even bigger. Going into 2008, they had 32 employees.

"We held onto all of them in spite of a rough year in 2009 and an even rougher year in 2010," she says. "We made the difficult decision to downsize in February 2011 and had to lay off four people, reduced the hours of 11, and the owners' salaries were cut in half."

Through a strong, all-hands-on-deck marketing effort, BrightFields rebounded quickly in 2011. Rather than immediately hiring full-timers to support the increasing workload, they hired out-of-work candidates for three-month stints. Some integrated very well, and they brought these people on full time. Others left after the three-month assignment was completed.

"We are now hiring both three-month temporary staff and full-timers," Young says. "And, we have seen steady, company-wide growth over the past two and a half years."

BrightFields has focused on building a new, entry-level environmental scientist/engineer team, supported by two mid-level hires and three strategic senior-level hires. They have cultivated more federal work and expanded their remediation services in surrounding states.

"We continue to actively seek strategic teaming arrangements with both larger and smaller companies," Young says.

**THE POOL IS DRYING UP.** At **HOEFER WYSOCKI**



Marian Young,  
President,  
BrightFields, Inc.



### GOOD TO KNOW

The overall median staff growth rate (professional/technical and administrative) was 5 percent over the past year.

Source: 2014 Financial Performance Survey, ZweigWhite: [www.zweigwhite.com/p-2195-financial-performance-survey-2014](http://www.zweigwhite.com/p-2195-financial-performance-survey-2014)

**ARCHITECTURE** (Leawood, KS), an 87-person firm, Tanya Wilson, HR director, says the company has managed to maintain a positive staff growth pattern – even through the recent economic recession.

"We were able to accomplish this through our project-type diversification," she says. "Although most sectors were hit hard, we had enough eggs in multiple baskets that we were able to not only weather, but grow, during the difficult times."

"During the recession, because we were growing when other firms were receding, we were able to find some very talented people to bolster our staff. That talent pool is becoming more limited."

Now, with recent signs of an economy upturn, HWA is having much more difficulty finding the level of talent it needs when it's advertising for open positions.

"We've always had a solid nucleus of young employees. We try to hire the best and the brightest each year from our local colleges and we have been able to grow these people from within to mid- and high-level experienced professionals," Wilson says. "We then hire in younger staff to support them. And, during the recession, because we were growing when other firms were receding, we were able to find some very talented people to bolster our staff. That talent pool is becoming more limited."

**WHAT ARE ANALYSTS SAYING?** DiCicco, Gulman & Company LLP, an independent public accounting and business consulting firm, recently released a 2013 Architectural and Engineering Study. The report found that firms are turning up the heat when it comes to staffing. Why? As firms are growing, they want to ensure that they have the right people with the right skill sets in the right positions.

The report goes on to say that employees, too, are beginning to look for new opportunities as the job market eases. Turnover has been relatively low over the past two years, but that is expected to change. Firms need to be prepared for this shift and have plans in place to attract and retain good people.

See STAFFS REBOUND, page 10

## ON THE MOVE

**SEBEST REHIRS:** **Sebesta** (St. Paul, MN), a 10-office building engineering and construction services firm, announced the return of **Paul Ham**, who most recently built a career with Target Corporation.

Ham began his career with a four-year stint with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, then joined Sebesta for seven years. Target then invited him on board, where he rose from a group manager position to the firm's director of engineering. He returns to Sebesta to continue his passion for client management.

"Paul will be a key member of our executive team and will contribute to the strategic decision-making and operational execution of company initiatives across all areas of the business," said Robert Costello, Sebesta president and CEO. Working with the company's market sector leaders, Ham will be responsible for the development, management, and oversight of market and client-oriented business development and project delivery strategies.

His accomplishments are many. As director of engineering with Target, Ham was responsible for facilities engineering associated with a 250-million-square-foot real estate portfolio. He led a global team of 110 engineering professionals in addition to 300-plus external consulting engineering business partners. "Such dynamic expertise will provide a great asset for our clients," Costello said.

**ARCADIS APPOINTS:** **ARCADIS** (Amsterdam, Netherlands), a natural and built asset design and consultancy firm, announced that it has appointed **Jody Debs** to the position of chief legal officer for its North American Region, based in Highlands Ranch, Colo. Debs' main focus is to work with the North American management team and the ARCADIS general counsel at the firm's global headquarters to implement and drive global initiatives and be the leading force in oversight of legal matters for the North American Region.

Debs has previously held several positions of increasing authority, most recently as interim chief legal officer, North America commercial contracts and global procurement director, and director of risk for **CH2M HILL**, where she provided legal oversight for the company's North American operations and led a team of contracts and procurement professionals to provide global procurement support. As director of risk, she was responsible for developing and implementing the Enterprise Risk Management Program, including enterprise, portfolio and project risk management programs, policies and tools. Previously, Debs served as senior counsel for **Bechtel Infrastructure Corporation** and was an associate with **Mayer Brown Platt** (now **Mayer Browne Rowe & Maw**).

"I am pleased that Jody Debs has chosen to join ARCADIS. She brings extensive industry experience, in-depth expertise in risk management and contract negotiations and strong leadership skills," said Gary Coates, CEO of ARCADIS U.S.

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## STAFFS REBOUND, from page 9

Industry consolidation and succession planning will continue to be among the leading challenges for the industry. And, the past recession has put pressure on the demographic shift in firm ownership as the baby boomer generation heads toward retirement.

As a result, firm owners need to plan early to execute a successful succession plan and achieve their longer-term ownership goals for the firm.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics backs up this data. It projects that:

- Employment of architects is expected to grow 17 percent from

**PENNONI HIRES:** **Pennoni Associates** (Philadelphia, PA), an engineering, design, and consulting firm, announced that **Carter Hyde** has joined the firm as a regional water resources manager in the Baltimore office. He previously worked as an engineering manager for **ATCS, P.L.C.**

"Carter is a proven leader and the natural choice to manage our water resources operations in the Maryland, D.C., and Virginia markets," said Bruce Jones, Pennoni vice president. "His credentials and technical expertise will enhance our overall water resources capabilities, and his presence in the Maryland, D.C., and Virginia area will provide a valuable service to our local clients."

With over 21 years of experience providing water resources and environmental related consultant services for public agencies throughout Maryland and Delaware, Hyde will be responsible for assisting in the strategic development of Water Resources Division at Pennoni. He will focus his efforts on engineering and construction related consultation services for public and private entities. Hyde will specifically be targeting the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (NPDES MS4) permit holders across the Mid-Atlantic region.

**STANLEY HIRES:** **Mark Gillette** has joined **Stanley Consultants** (Muscatine, IA), a program management, planning, engineering, environmental and construction services firm, as a senior drainage engineer in the company's Tampa office.

Gillette is well known in the Florida transportation market, with nearly 25 years of roadway, drainage, and traffic design experience on Florida Department of Transportation projects, as well as local government, private development, and water district projects. He also brings significant experience in signing, marking, and signalization design. In his new role he will support Stanley Consultants' growth initiatives in the transportation and municipal markets.

The addition of Gillette's skills and experience will complement the existing staff of experienced professionals serving clients in the Tampa Bay area. Senior Project Manager Bob Szatynski has a strong transportation background, with 29 years of experience planning and designing highways, bridges, and utility projects throughout Florida. Senior Project Manager Jeffrey Siewert has over 30 years of civil engineering, transportation design, and project management experience with projects ranging from Florida Department of Transportation interstate/expressway designs to local municipal urban and rural highways, sidewalks, and trails.

Projects currently under way or recently completed by Stanley Consultants' Tampa Office include design of the Jackson Road in Sarasota County, the Honore Avenue and Richardson Road Roundabout, and intersection improvements at U.S. 41 at River Road.

2012 to 2022. The rise in multifamily dwellings plays an important role here.

- Employment of civil engineers is projected to grow 20 percent from 2012 to 2022 because as infrastructure continues to age, civil engineers will be needed to manage projects to rebuild bridges, repair roads and upgrade levees and dams.
- Employment of environmental engineers is projected to grow 15 percent from 2012 to 2022 due to state and local government concerns and efforts regarding how to increase the efficiency of water use.

All of this data points to the fact that competition for jobs will be strong as the number of applicants continues to outnumber available positions. ▀▀

ZW 15

## Out like a lion. In like lamb.

Euphoria of first quarter gave way to a rash of not-so-good news in April.

By RYAN RENARD  
Consultant

March saw a bonanza of sorts for firms on the ZW15 Index, closing the quarter on a high. The party ended in April.

Over half of the firms on the index netted a loss in price per share for the month and are hitting below their 50-day moving average.

**TRC Companies** (Lowell, MA) and **Jacobs Engineering Group** (Pasadena, CA), had double-digit percent losses on the month.

TRC Companies is a 3,000-person national engineering services, consulting and construction management firm.

Despite a recent award for a substation project in New Mexico and a patent for a new environmental remediation process at a former manufactured gas plant, the company has been steadily declining in stock value since last July.

A week after Jacobs announced an agreement to purchase Federal Network Systems, a Verizon subsidiary, the company's stock fell apart in the last week of April, following a weak quarterly earnings report released the night of April 28, with a reduction in projections for the rest of FY'14.

More concerning is the amount of stock being sold by people inside **AECOM Technology** (Los Angeles, CA) and **Chicago Bridge & Iron** (The Hague, Netherlands). Six AECOM top executives sold over 184,000 shares over the last month to investors outside the firm. The COO, Jane Chmielinski, and senior vice president, Ronald Osborne, both decreased their holding by 42 and 23 percent, respectively.

Eight CB&I executive-level employees sold 182,000 shares in the last month – again to outside investors. Five of the sellers released more than 20 percent of their holdings. The sellers didn't justify their moves.

While April was tough for many of the firms on the ZW 15, some thrived. **Fluor Corporation** (Irving, TX) and **Foster Wheeler AG** (Baar, Switzerland) received several contracts each despite monthly losses, and **Stantec** (Edmonton, AB) is growing its en-

vironmental services division with a signed letter of intent to acquire **JBR Environmental Consultants, Inc.** (Salt Lake City, UT).

The closing of the first quarter went a little better. March saw numerous large scale acquisitions and a surge of contracts. The growing backlogs, and new partnerships, led to optimistic trading and dividend declarations for many of the firms on the index.

Good news followed by bad news may not be an indication that the A/E/P and environmental consulting market is slowing, but merely a stumble for a couple of the larger firms as they compete to each establish their market share.



See how the ZW15 Index member firms have fared in April. Chart on page 12.

CB&I announced a dividend of \$0.07 per share of common stock. **EMCOR Group** (Norwalk, CT), a 29,000-person mechanical and electrical construction, energy infrastructure, and facility services firm, issued \$0.08 per share, while **Exponent** (Menlo Park, CA), 960-person engineering and scientific consulting firm, topped that with a \$0.25 per share.

**ENGlobal Corporation** (Houston, TX), a 1,700-person energy-related engineering and automation services firm, had the highest growth in April, with a 28 percent increase in stock price.

This came after the company was granted a patent for a state-of-the-art underwater equipment controller and a more rugged, industrial HVAC system.

**Hill International** (Marlton, NJ), a 4,000-person construction consulting firm, came in at second with an increase of 18 percent for the month. However, the overvaluation resulted in a 9 percent drop in the last days of the month – but still maintained a total gain for April.

Good news followed by bad news may not be an indication that the A/E/P and environmental consulting market is slowing, but merely a stumble for a couple of the larger firms as they compete to each establish their market share. ▀▄

## ZW 15

Ticker	Name	Market	Share Pricing							Valuation				
			Market Cap	Close Mar 31, 2014	Close Apr 30, 2014	Beginning of Month Change	% Month Change	Change from 50-day MA	% Change from 50-day MA	EPS	EV/Revenue	EV/EBITDA	Price/Sales	Price/Book Value
ACM	AECOM Technology Corp	NYSE	3.23B	32.17	32.42	0.25	1%	0.17	0.51%	2.58	0.46	8.26	0.40	1.52
CBI	Chicago Bridge and Iron Co.	NYSE	8.74B	87.15	80.07	(7.08)	-9%	(3.83)	-4.53%	4.69	0.87	10.54	0.74	3.54
EEL	Ecology and Environment	Nasdaq	41.3M	9.58	9.58	0.00	0%	(0.40)	-4.04%	(1.10)	0.27	(13.70)	0.33	1.04
EME	EMCOR Group Inc	NYSE	3.07B	46.79	45.99	(0.80)	-2%	(0.15)	-0.32%	1.82	0.46	10.40	0.48	2.10
ENG	ENGlobal	Nasdaq	60.85M	1.56	2.16	0.60	28%	0.51	30.18%	(0.11)	0.33	43.78	0.35	2.61
EXPO	Exponent Inc.	Nasdaq	903.44M	75.06	70.42	(4.64)	-7%	(3.71)	-5.08%	2.76	2.85	13.10	3.28	3.91
FLR	Fluor Corp	NYSE	12.22B	77.73	75.70	(2.03)	-3%	(0.41)	-0.53%	4.06	0.37	7.20	0.44	3.25
FWLT	Foster Wheeler AG	Nasdaq	3.39B	32.42	34.28	1.86	5%	1.43	4.36%	0.96	0.88	11.91	1.03	4.53
HIL	Hill International Inc	NYSE	274.75M	5.50	6.72	1.22	18%	0.88	15.01%	0.04	0.74	9.52	0.53	2.06
JEC	Jacobs Engineering Group Inc	NYSE	7.69B	63.50	57.70	(5.80)	-10%	(4.91)	-7.80%	3.18	0.70	11.11	0.63	1.76
KBR	KBR Inc.	NYSE	3.83B	26.68	25.37	(1.31)	-5%	(0.99)	-3.71%	1.54	0.40	7.20	0.52	1.44
STN	Stantec Inc	NYSE	2.74B	61.08	59.31	(1.77)	-3%	(1.28)	-2.14%	3.20	1.51	11.16	1.48	3.04
TRR	TRC Companies	NYSE	173.65M	6.65	5.93	(0.72)	-12%	(0.43)	-6.86%	1.13	0.46	5.97	0.49	1.51
TTEK	Tetra Tech Inc.	Nasdaq	1.75B	29.59	28.67	(0.92)	-3%	(2.12)	-7.27%	(0.02)	0.94	13.71	0.93	1.82
URS	URS Corp	NYSE	3.45B	47.06	47.12	0.06	0%	0.42	0.89%	3.31	0.44	6.39	0.31	0.87
VSR	Versar Inc.	NYSE MKT	38.05M	4.00	3.94	(0.06)	-2%	(0.01)	-0.23%	0.14	0.31	6.16	0.34	0.99
WLDN	Willdan Group Inc	Nasdaq	34.56M	4.53	4.67	0.14	3%	0.10	2.19%	0.35	0.37	9.89	0.40	1.70
DJIA	DOW Jones Industrial Avg.	NYSE		16457.66	16580.84	123.18	1%							
*information at close of day May 1, 2014										Average	.73x	10.15x		
										Median	.46x	9.89x		

## TRANSACTIONS

**CDI MERGES WITH MAZZETTI:** Seattle-based **CDi Engineers** merged with **Mazzetti** (San Francisco, CA) to form a strengthened firm delivering innovative engineering in healthcare, higher education, mission critical, science and technology, aviation, and other sectors.

Mazzetti and CDi Engineers are both seasoned firms known for their industry leadership in research and policy, planning, finance, and project delivery. Both firms have worked to drive the future of the built environment in their work with the Facilities Guidelines Institute, American Society for Healthcare Engineering, and American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers, among other organizations.

"We are incredibly excited to be joining forces with such a like-minded firm. Together we can provide more value to our clients through increased services, expertise, and geographic reach," said Dick Moeller, president of CDi Engineers. "At the same time, given our closely aligned operations and culture, our current clients can continue to enjoy the same high-quality service with the same great staff."

CDi was founded in 1988 and has served clients, such as the University of Washington, the Port of Seattle, the Washington Trade and Convention Center, as well as a significant number of healthcare providers, including Swedish and Providence, Legacy Health, and

Catholic Health Services. The 35-person firm has become an industry expert and leader in LEAN and sustainability engineering, and is known for their award-winning work in healthcare, higher education, aviation, performing arts, and institutional design.

"I have worked for many years with Dick Moeller from CDI on the FGI Guidelines, ASHRAE committees, and with ASHE. Through this, I developed a strong admiration for Dick and, indirectly, for his firm and its work," said Walt Vernon, president and CEO of Mazzetti. "Now that I have gotten to know the people at CDI, I am even more impressed by who they are, and with what Dick and his partners have created. I am so happy to put together our two firms because we share the vision of making the world a better place by creating better environments, and because I know that we can do it better together than either of us could do it apart."

The combined firm will have \$32 million in gross revenues, with 170 employees, which will place it among the largest MEPT engineering firms in the country.

Mazzetti's new Seattle office will expand from mechanical only to a complete MEPT firm, offering services in mechanical, electrical, plumbing, technology, equipment planning, sustainability, and commissioning. The office will take on the brand CDi + Mazzetti until May 1, 2015, when it will be branded Mazzetti.