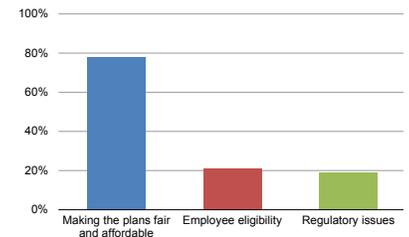


Managing BD efforts

Mark Zweig expresses frustration about the mishandling of the sales process at design firms.

TRENDLINES

Fair & affordable



ZweigWhite's 2014 Incentive Compensation Survey finds that the most common challenge firms face when creating equity-based incentive plans is making the plans fair and affordable. More than three-quarters (78 percent) of firms responding to the survey said that they found it difficult to make their plans fair and affordable, while 21 percent found that deciding which employees are eligible was the next biggest challenge. Meanwhile, 19 percent each of firms reported that dealing with regulatory issues and the high cost of legal fees were challenging. Find the survey at www.zweigwhite.com/p-2207-incentive-compensation-survey-2014 – Margot Suydam, Director, Research

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We are as a group afraid to recognize people for selling. The problem with attaboys or other public accolades for anyone who sells something is determining who was involved in the sale and how critical they were to it.



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

It is a hard to manage the business development (BD) effort in the A/E and environmental consulting industry.

To start with, we don't have many good BD (i.e., sales) people in this business. Good ones are very valuable and hard to find, especially if they can actually do something that helps clients (seller doers). It seems so many full-time BD people in this business are really best at selling one thing – themselves – into a job. They tend to have short lifespans.

Seller-doers always have something else to do (i.e., doing billable work!). There are many challenges and demands placed on these people's time. Project work will always rule. Clients come first, as they probably should. That means that selling will take a back seat. That makes it hard to get people to sell!

Seller-doers don't usually report to the person who is responsible for managing the BD effort. Their primary home is in the line organization. They report to another line manager – probably a principal or officer in the company. Compared to a marketing director or BD manager, they have a lot more power and clout in the organization. Whose demands therefore are listened to? Line management wins every time.

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A/E BUSINESS NEWS

ECONOMIC OPTIMISM Economists who work with the AEC industry all agree: 2014 should be a good year for many in the A/E/P and environmental business.

“A combination of low interest rates; wealth effects stemming from a booming stock market and rising home prices; surging energy production; and expanding industrial output has helped position the U.S. economy for more rapid growth during the next several quarters,” said Anirban Basu, Associated Builders and Contractors chief economist, during a joint webcast on Aug. 4. “This will lead to more robust recovery in the U.S. nonresidential construction industry, which has also been aided by stable materials prices and improving commercial real estate fundamentals. ABC predicts 7 percent nominal nonresidential construction growth in 2014, despite ongoing challenges in the public construction segment.”

American Institute of Architects Chief Economist Kermit Baker and National Association of Home Builders Chief Economist David Crowe also participated pitched in on the economic forecast, providing expert economic analysis on leading, present and lagging economic indicators.

“We continue to have an optimistic outlook for the commercial and industrial sectors for the rest of this year and into 2015. However, until we see state and local governments ramp up spending for new education, health care and public safety structures there likely won’t be a widespread acceleration in spending for the entire industry,” Baker said.

“Economic pick-up in the second quarter was coupled with a return in housing construction,” Crowe said. “We expect continued modest growth in housing construction as employment rises and more household formations take place. However, continued tight supplies of labor and land will put upward pressure on new home prices.”

An archived version of the web conference is available at <http://eventcenter.commpartners.com/se/Meetings/Playback.aspx?meeting.id=970553>.

SMART CITIES The U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology and several partners are kicking off the year-long Global City Teams Challenge to help communities around the world work together to address issues ranging from air quality to traffic management to emergency services coordination. NIST is inviting communities and innovators to create teams that will foster the spread of “smart cities” that take advantage of networked technologies to better manage resources and improve quality of life.

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker announced the Global City Teams Challenge

during the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit Business Forum, which is part of the Obama administration’s efforts to increase trade and investment with Africa. The Department of Commerce’s International Trade Administration (ITA) will support the challenge by assisting U.S. companies that want to export their products or services overseas for the first time or expand their international client base, and by connecting participants with government officials around the world.

This new challenge will leverage the success of the SmartAmerica Challenge, which from December 2013 through June 2014 brought together more than 100 companies, universities and other organizations to form teams that developed and applied networked technologies. That challenge demonstrated that these technologies have the potential to create jobs and business opportunities and provide socioeconomic benefits.

The challenge will kick off Sep. 29-30, 2014, with a two-day workshop at NIST’s Gaithersburg, Md., campus that will bring together city planners and representatives from technology companies, academic institutions and nonprofits. The challenge is open to participants around the world, and international representatives will be able to participate in the kick-off meeting via webcast.

Register for the September 2014 workshop at www.nist.gov/cps/global-city-teams-challenge-workshop.cfm. Learn more about

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

We have serious accounting problems. The majority of firms don’t track the number and value of incoming project leads. Many firms don’t even track what they are selling or who is selling it. Backlog is a mystery unless an all-day meeting is held to review it. Then we have the issue of time recording. BD is always a good place to dump your unbillable time on a timesheet because it sounds better than “unbillable.” On top of it, many companies in this business charge time to BD numbers that as soon as a project is won they convert into billable charges. This distorts the entire BD cost accounting; time on jobs won is deducted from marketing, yet still a very real part of marketing costs (I don’t understand WHY some firms do this).

We are as a group afraid to recognize people for selling. The problem with attaboys or other public accolades

for anyone who sells something is determining who was involved in the sale and how critical they were to it. Many fear they have forgotten someone else who was involved in the sale. So they do the worst thing possible – say nothing.

Some firms are afraid to develop people who can sell. Their fear (which has actually been expressed to me) is that if their employees can sell they will steal their clients away from them and start their own companies. The employee who can sell no longer “needs” the company. Seems pretty silly to me. How else will you be able to grow the company and create something that can survive when you are gone if you don’t teach other people how to sell? It won’t happen.



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2014 HOT FIRM

Hot Firm winners speak out

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Newcomers and firms that have climbed up the rankings feel honored and excited about the recognition.

The **ZweigWhite Hot Firm List** recognizes the 100 fastest-growing architecture, engineering, planning and environmental consulting firms in the United States and Canada. These are firms that have outperformed the economy and competitors to become leaders in their chosen fields. We asked just a few to share their thoughts about being named in the top 100. Read what they said below.

#9: Steve Cummings, owner and CEO, **Nova Consulting Group, Inc.**, Minneapolis, Minn.



“I was very excited and honored. All of us at Nova have worked very hard to continue to grow and improve our company and it’s very gratifying when you see this type of recognition. We found the application experience to be straightforward and not at all difficult.”

#17: Calvin Ladner, president, **LJA Engineering, Inc.**, Houston, Texas



“We are happy about our 83-point jump up the list and the fact that this was our eighth time on the ZweigWhite Hot Firm List. In the past, we’ve completed this application with the process being ‘expect final notification and request for additional information.’ This time we were notified that additional information was needed with a short turnaround, which could have proved problematic as it was an upcoming holiday, but we made it work.”

More answers on page 4

WHAT MAKES THESE FIRMS SIZZLE?

The participants in this article were also asked about the secret sauce, or in other words what makes their firm sizzle as a Hot Firm. Here are their responses:

Lott: “We really enjoy designing quality spaces in a highly efficient timeframe for our clients and their customers to experience.”

Cummings: “I think Nova is very good place to work. There is a great atmosphere at Nova and it’s contagious. It is this atmosphere that has resulted in continued success and growth.”

Ladner: “Growth is the thing that separates ZweigWhite’s Hot Firm List from other surveys that rank firms. It doesn’t matter if you are a \$1 million firm or a \$1 billion firm. If you have substantial growth,

you can make the list. Our firm is employee-owned and we believe in a ‘grow or die philosophy.’ These two items are the primary reason we continue to grow and were successful in making both the Hot Firm List and the Best Firms to Work List for 2014.”

Bowman: “Bowman has experienced a significant amount of growth over the last few years. Like most companies, we are guided by a strategic plan, but what sets us apart is our ability to remain nimble and adapt our course as warranted to ensure we remain true to our goals and business objectives. Above all, we have a wonderful team of people whose teamwork and dedication have helped us get to where we are today and will continue to advance the firm in years to come.”

See SIZZLE, page 4

2014 HOT FIRM

Continued from page 3

#42: Larry Lott, president and COO, **Harrison French & Associates,** Bentonville, Ark.

"We were very excited and proud to achieve the ZweigWhite Hot Firm List for the sixth consecutive year. We recall our first year, when we were announced on the 'Honorable Mention' list, wondering if we would ever be able to achieve a Hot Firm List.

"There is an aura of anticipation and excitement that builds up each year as we wait to hear if we achieved the Hot Firm List," he says.



"There is an aura of anticipation and excitement that builds up each year as we wait to hear if we achieved the Hot Firm List."

#38: John McLain, president, **Baseline Engineering,** Golden, Col.

"It's an honor to again be on this prestigious list with so many great companies. It tells me that we must be doing something right."

McLain: "Because of our excellent staff and great clients, Baseline has created an incredible working environment. We have retained some of the best consultants, planners and engineers in the industry. Our culture is reflected in the way we treat our clients. We are more responsive, flexible, attentive to budget limits, and we live up to our commitments. The economy is heating up and the many clients we have served over the years are very active now. We have been referred to many new clients as well in the past three years."

Greenhagen: "We are all focused on the same vision. We have identified and diversified into strong new markets. At the same time, we have narrowed our focus on what we do best. We align

#7: Gary Bowman, president, **Bowman Consulting,** Chantilly, Va.



"We were thrilled to receive the news that Bowman ranked seventh on the ZweigWhite Hot Firm list. As a company that has been in business for almost 20 years, it's an honor to be recognized for our continued growth and prosperity."

"It's an honor to be recognized for our continued growth and prosperity."

#6: Paul Greenhagen, president, **Westwood Professional Services,** Eden Prairie, Minn.

"We were extremely excited and anxious to share this great news with our employees. Being number six of the top 100 firms in the U.S. and Canada is still sinking in and we are all deeply honored and excited to receive this award. Our challenge now is to stay on the top! Additionally, the application experience was easy and painless. The online entry form requested a manageable level of information that didn't require too much effort to obtain. The Hot Firm award team and others at ZweigWhite were always responsive to our questions and needs."

SIZZLE, from page 3

our leaders, energize our teams, and make sure that we have people who love what they do and are empowered to contribute to our collective success. We also know that, though we have seen a lot of success over the last three years, we cannot stop pushing. The effort never lets up inside Westwood. By fostering a culture which supports the success of both our clients and our people, we know we can build a prosperous business. The right people leading our teams, and the right teams supporting our clients, will keep clients happy and coming back. Knowing this, Westwood heavily focuses on the inside; attracting and retaining the best people in the industry, and then aligning and investing in their success."

TZL time machine

10 years ago

HEADLINES Editorial: Ra, ra, sis boom bah! | **Leading by example** | **Keeping longtime lieutenants happy** | **Differences in first- and second-generation leaders** | **Leadership transition: preparing for the unexpected** | **Boards of directors increasing their roles in firms** | **Expanding the ownership base**

Some people just have the qualities it takes to be a leader of an A/E firm. And others do not. But not all employees realize that. So how do you deal with employees who are valuable to the firm, but have reached their peak and are watching younger, less-experienced people surpass them?

The above paragraph is the introduction to an article titled "Keeping longtime lieutenants happy," published in the August 16, 2004 issue of **THE ZWEIG LETTER** (#574). Perhaps the obvious reaction to the above query is, "Wish I knew the answer..."

The article draws on the experiences of several leaders in the industry to provide possible solutions. Here are some of their thoughts:

"I'm not going to lie to you. It's not easy," said a firm leader about a young VP with older folks under his command. "Promoting people for the wrong reasons, like age or seniority, can be disastrous."

"We have a major growth plan, and I met with all our employees and explained that there will be new opportunities, but seniority will only buy them a hearing, not the job," said Augustine Fragala, then VP at Powell, Fragala & Associates in Lakeland, Fla.

The article offers several recommendations, including:

- Convey employees' value to the team
- Let people do what they do best

"The worst thing you can do is take a great engineer and try to make a vice president out of him," Fragala said. "You have to recognize people's strengths."

In his editorial, Mark Zweig wrote about succession planning.

"What is succession planning? It's simply answering who is going to take over when you die, retire, are sick, or quit—and answering that question for every position in the firm," he wrote.

20 years ago

HEADLINES Editorial: Work vs. family life | **Leadership** | **Central filing**

Strong leaders needed! That's one of the main findings from ZweigWhite's Principal's Survey of A/E/P and Environmental Consulting Firms – all the way in 1994. The survey, no longer published by ZweigWhite, was dissected in an article published in the August 22, 1994, issue of **THE ZWEIG LETTER** (#73).

What did the article uncover?

First, that an increasing number of principals (44.2 percent) think a single, strong leader is more likely to lead to success than more democratic forms of management. That's opposed to 23 percent for partnerships and 20.6 percent for committee-based management.

The main reasons for a strong leader, as pointed out in the article:

- Time and money; quicker decisions.
- Helps eliminate finger-pointing; the buck stops here.
- Smart people appreciate decisiveness;

it's respected.

However: Being a strong leader doesn't mean ignoring the opinions of other principals and staff.

In his editorial, Mark Zweig analyzed the connection between work and family life. He recommended several strategies to make family life, which often ends up on the short end of the stick as a consequence of all-involving professional lives, easier:

- Talk about your work to your spouse.
- Get your spouse and other family members out to see the work of your firm.
- Sell the benefits of your long hours.
- Use your free time wisely.
- Use your work time wisely.
- Use all of your vacation time each year.
- Don't work at home.
- Move closer to work.

TRENDLINES

42 Percentage of principals who think a single, strong leader is better.

23 Percentage of principals who favor partnerships to lead to firm.

20 Percentage of principals who favor committee-based management.

Source: 1994 Principal's Survey of A/E/P and Environmental Consulting Firms, Zweig White.

Staffing challenges

Are we winning or losing the battle to maintain quality staff?

As the economy improves, many in the AEC industry are back in a hiring mode and employees know that they now have options that may not have been present just a few short months ago. Much of your staff is being contacted by competitors; or worse yet, recruiters who are all selling the image of greener pastures and greater opportunities. You know that's true since you are out doing the same to your competitor's employees.

However, while you concentrate on acquiring new staff, you cannot lose sight of retaining your best staff. After all, the cost of maintaining staff is much less than the cost of identifying, recruiting and training new employees. In the case of your highest performing staff, the cost may be even greater as you may lose clients or other staff who want to continue to work with your corporate rock star.

In order to keep your best, you should focus your efforts on some specific areas.

■ **Create the right culture.** The first and most critical step is creating and maintaining the right culture for your firm. Corporate culture varies, but successful firms tend to have cultures that focus on staff. These corporate traits include openness, fairness, recognition of life/work balance and placing value on the individual. If your culture can help establish you as a preferred employer in the market, you have already won most of the battle.

■ **Be informed and informative.** You can only respond to what you know, so you need to establish robust programs to allow two-way communication with your staff. Formal processes such as performance reviews and mentor-protégé programs are a must. However, you also need to encourage your managers to establish personal connections with their direct staff as many times less formal conversations can be a better source of information regarding individual's goals and aspirations.

Just as important is providing corporate information to your staff. Staff should know financial information about the projects they are working on and about the firm's financial health overall. They should understand the business goals and direction of the firm and the steps you are taking to attain those goals. Absent this information, your staff cannot fully understand where they fit into the firm's plans and how they can contribute to its success.

■ **Compensation.** We say these words and immediately everyone thinks of salary and bonuses. However, for many and especially for the younger staff, increasing monetary compensation may not be what they want – or the best motivator. Think about all those forms of “compensation” that you have



STEPHEN LUCY

BEST PRACTICES

available, such as additional paid time off, flexible work hours, or even working on that high profile but very stressful project. If you are engaged with your staff, you will know which path will be most beneficial to retain and motivate each member of your team.

■ **Diversity.** The composition of the workforce I joined 30-plus years ago is gone and is never coming back. Thank goodness! Today's workforce is becoming more and more gender and ethnically diverse and if we have any hope of attracting and retaining the numbers of staff we need in the future, it will become even more diverse in the very near future. In response, we have to be open to adjusting our workplace environment and benefits in response to the new normal. Staff members want a diverse environment, and all studies show that the greater the diversity, the higher probability of innovation and success. So get over the good old days and welcome your future staff.

See STEPHEN LUCY, page 8

The cost of maintaining staff is much less than the cost of identifying, recruiting and training new employees. In the case of your highest performing staff, the cost may be even greater as you may lose clients or other staff.

Defining culture

Is personality a window to culture when interviewing candidates?

It's amazing how often the word "culture" is used in the recruiting process. More often than not, a candidate's fit with, or should I say into, the culture of the hiring organization is ranked right up there with desired experience when discussing the optimal person for the job.

But, how do you determine a potential employee's culture? It's certainly not described on their résumé. For a candidate, such definition should be found in the position description.

The closest mention of culture in most position descriptions is all the various ways we describe a team player. Webster defines the noun "culture" as it applies to business as, "A way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization." In the broader sense, Webster defines culture as, "The beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time."

Some organizations try to quantify a candidate's culture through testing. You may have been a participant in these cultural identification quizzes. Lots of questions in the form of "what if" or "are you most likely". I'm not a fan of this process because most of us, as candidates, are not quite truthful in our answers. I don't mean we lie outright. Rather, we are biased into thinking about what the hiring company wants to hear when giving our answer, which of course paints a somewhat different picture of our actual culture.

In recruiting and/or hiring, I believe a synonym for "culture" could be "personality". This is not what Webster says, but here's my reasoning: Hiring managers don't usually ask the candidate to describe their personal culture. It would be very challenging to put into words your way of thinking, behaving, or working. Certainly, it would also be difficult for the hiring manager to describe the company's culture. Culture is not something you can feel, see, or smell.

So why can personality become a substitute for culture during the recruiting process? Well, your personality is on exhibit at all times. It's the attractive qualities (such as energy, friendliness, and humor) that make a person interesting or pleasant to be with – and that includes interviews. It's in the level of confidence you display, the tone of your voice, or the way you dress. Do you appear nervous, was your handshake sweaty, how easily do you warm up to the interviewer or the candidate, and can you carry on a conversation? Hate to say it, but it's defining the



Pat
McGee

SEARCH
SAVVY

book by its cover. These are all outward traits of personality, not the inside cultural traits of beliefs, behavior, or thinking.

Ultimately, it all boils down to the candidate's likeability. It goes both ways too! How much did the candidate like or dislike the interview process and the people representing the company. Did everyone in the office greet him/her as they passed by; how many people were smiling; what did the office environment look like? Or did most of the employees appear to be just waiting for the 5 p.m. bell?

Let's face it, culture is important. A cultural fit between the employee and the company leads to a cohesive and well-oiled organization; a group of principles and beliefs that are harmonious. It's the desire to be a "team player" and an attitude of what's good for the company and not just for me. Culture is a way of behavior that permeates the organization; a belief that we are all in it together, and a method of working that promotes success.

See PAT McGEE, page 8

Hiring managers don't usually ask the candidate to describe their personal culture. It would be very challenging to put into words your way of thinking, behaving, or working.

CALENDAR

HOT FIRM AND A/E INDUSTRY AWARDS CONFERENCE The 2014 ZweigWhite Hot Firm List is out, identifying the 100 fastest growing firms in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry.

The Hot Firm List represents a look at the firms in the architecture, engineering, planning and environmental industries that posted the highest percentage revenue growth and dollar revenue growth over a three-year period compared to the other entrants.

“Getting on The ZweigWhite Hot Firm list is a tremendous achievement,” says Mark Zweig, firm founder and CEO. “That’s especially true now the economy is doing better. The goal post is getting higher!”

Likewise, the Best Firms Work For in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industries have been identified.

Since the Best Firms To Work For Ranking began in 2001, hundreds of outstanding architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting firms have been recognized for their ability to inspire their teams to perform at the highest levels. These firms create an environment where their people feel valued, can make a difference, and can clearly see their contribution to the overall mission and success of the firm.

Awards were given in the categories of architecture, civil engineering, environmental, multidiscipline, and structural engineering.

Winners of both awards will be celebrated during the all new Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference, held at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Sep. 25-26.

Come network, gain knowledge, and celebrate with the top firms

in the industry. The 2014 ZweigWhite Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference is the industry’s largest and most comprehensive business conference for leaders and aspiring leaders of A/E firms in the U.S.

This year’s line-up of speakers will inspire you with new ways to create growth and excitement at your firm.

Successful leaders, newcomers, marketers, HR managers, and their families, from the fastest growing firms in the architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting industry are expected to attend.

For more information or to register for this exciting industry event, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/conference.

PAT MCGEE, from page 7

Culture, whether it’s the organization’s employees or a candidate as a potential employee, directly impacts personality. Assuming I’m right, then the outward image of personality that can be seen or heard by the candidate and/or the interviewer is a strong indicator of culture. So, the next time you participate in an interview, whether as a candidate or the interviewer, ask all the questions that you want, but also pay strong attention to the outward signs of personality to gain insight into the inner culture. ▲▲

PAT MCGEE is the director of executive search consulting with ZweigWhite. Contact him at pmgee@zweigwhite.com.

STEPHEN LUCY, from page 6

■ **Follow through.** The easiest way to get your staff to leave is to not do what you say you will do. Growing up in East Texas, I was taught that your word was your promise and that same rule is still valid today. If your staff cannot count on the information and direction they receive, they will begin to question everything they are told. If you promise to respond to an employee’s question by tomorrow, then respond by tomorrow. This will build trust and with trust comes loyalty.

■ **Be fair.** This is one of those times when the Golden Rule applies. We all have favorites, but showing favoritism to staff in the absence of differentiating performance will only lead to frustration. However, fairness does not mean equal as you still need to reward based on performance. Your staff all know who are the best performers, and they will expect those people to obtain some greater benefits. *What they will not tolerate is equal rewards to all.* Staff does not want intangible participation trophies, but they do want to receive fair reward for fair work.

■ **Let go of the reins.** Don’t micromanage. Delegate as much as you can. This can be tough for many of us as we tend to think that our way is the best way. Your best staff also wants to become your firm leadership and the only way that can happen is if you give them a chance. However, they also want your guidance and input, but with a soft glove and not an iron fist. Start them with achievable tasks, reward them for their successes, and then give them some more responsibility. This process takes time, so identify your best and start the process now.

■ **Sometimes you need to cut.** We like to project the image that our entire staff is exceptional, but the fact is we all

Don’t micromanage. Delegate as much as you can. This can be tough for many of us as we tend to think that our way is the best way. Your best staff also wants to become your firm leadership and the only way that can happen is if you give them a chance.

have staff who underperform. If that poor performance is not corrected, then you must make the decision to sever the tie regardless of the person’s tenure or position in the firm. Not only is individual poor performance detrimental to firm performance, the failure to address the issue will not go unnoticed by your staff, and complacency will rule. Your best performers will head to your competitor as they will see that you do not differentiate in rewarding good or bad performance.

Retaining your best staff will pay the highest dividends to your firm.

■ **Protect your most valuable assets.** For all AEC firms, our most valuable asset is our staff. It is also our greatest expense. So before you sign up that recruiter for 25 percent of first year’s salary for an as yet unidentified employee, focus on retaining your best and brightest. It will be the wisest investment you can make. ▲▲

STEPHEN LUCY is managing principal at **JO** in Dallas, TX. Contact him at slucy@jqeng.com.

HIRING

Crafting the help wanted ad

Most HR departments come up with the verbiage themselves, posting on a variety of forums.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

‘We’re hiring’ is back in force at many A/E/P and environmental consulting firms. The question is: How do you advertise those jobs? How do you get just the right language in place to ensure that you reach your targeted audience? Do you look to marketing to help out? Most HR departments prefer to handle the job on their own, unless social media is involved.

“Crafting language involves highlighting the important areas of the position and expertise requirements for that position. It’s this specific language that helps candidates who are applying to understand exactly what it is that they are applying for.”

ALL THE USUAL SUSPECTS. **Withers & Ravenel** (Cary, NC), a 144-person full-service civil and environmental consulting engineering firm, advertises positions on its website, says Carla Erickson, director of human resources. The company also posts on Craigslist and in the local newspaper, with 30 days of posting on CareerBuilder.com when needed.

“We’ve been able to find many of the candidates who we’ve hired through employee referrals, referrals of clients and other individuals,” Erickson says. “Word-of-mouth has been a great success here with our recruitment efforts.”

When it comes to crafting the right language, all job descriptions are handled within the HR department.

“Crafting language involves highlighting the important areas of the position and expertise requirements for that position,” Erickson says. “It’s this specific language that helps candidates who are applying to understand exactly what it is that they are applying for. I will consult with the department man-

ager if I am unsure of what we need for that write up to make sure I am capturing the so called ‘meat’ of the job requirements.”

She also includes information on what else the company offers to its employees in the way of benefits packages or when their benefits would help sell that position to interested parties.



Carla Erickson,
Director of HR,
Withers
& Ravenel.



Alex Wilson,
Director of HR,
W.K. Dickson
& Co., Inc.



Pam Fleming,
HR Manager,
Fuscoe
Engineering, Inc.

10 TIPS FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTION

Career Attraction, an HR blog, provides the following tips for writing an effective job description:

- **Choose a clear and concise job title.** If you’re not sure what it means, neither will the applicant.
- **Paint a picture.** Mention the types of projects that the person will be working on and discuss who he or she will be working with most.
- **Describe the work environment.** Is it noisy? Are there collaborative work spaces?
- **Spell out skills that matter most.** Make sure to include at least the top three or four that are most important to you.
- **Include educational requirements.** This means any certifications needed as well.
- **Outline the day-to-day duties.** Is there a lot of client interaction? Will the person be spending a lot of time in the field?
- **Watch your words.** Try to keep the language professional, not personal. For example, don’t use words like “hardworking.” Also, keep the language gender neutral.
- **Use descriptive adverbs.** Using descriptive verbiage will attract applicants and get them excited.
- **Clearly describe what you would consider “success” in this role.** Is success bringing new clients on board? Is it “thinking outside the box?”
- **Include compensation information.** “Salary commensurate with experience” will not generate the same level of interest as a specific range or number.

W.K. Dickson & Co., Inc. (Charlotte, NC), a 120-person community infrastructure firm, prefers to advertise within professional organizations, but also uses websites such as Indeed.com and Craigslist, in addition to its own company website and social media channels such as LinkedIn and Facebook. It also puts out an internal memo to employees.

Like Withers and Ravenel, marketing is not involved

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ON THE MOVE

BECHTEL MAKES LEADERSHIP CHANGES Bechtel (Reston, VA), a 53,000-person engineering, construction, and project management firm, announced that **Brendan Bechtel** became president and chief operating officer and a member of the board of directors of Bechtel Group, Inc. He will report to Bill Dudley, the company's chief executive officer. Bechtel, son of Chairman of the Board Riley Bechtel, is the fifth generation of the Bechtel family to become president of the 116-year-old firm.

"Brendan has proven himself as an extraordinary leader, earning the respect of colleagues and customers while working in many diverse sectors of the company," Dudley said. "His talent and knowledge of the industry make him the right person to help lead the company and ensure it remains the contractor, partner, and employer of choice for years to come."

Bechtel most recently served as president of the company's largest and most successful business unit, Oil, Gas & Chemicals. Under his leadership, the business continued to win new work, including the recent award of the Tilbury LNG Facility Expansion Project in British Columbia. Bechtel first began working for the company during summer breaks in high school. After joining the company full-time, he took on roles of increasing responsibility, including assignments around the world in field construction and project management. In addition, he is credited with being the principal architect of the Bechtel Leadership Model, which helps guide the company's leadership behavior.

"Bechtel has been at the forefront of the industry for generations and I look forward to building on that success by applying the values upon which my great-great-grandfather founded this company: do honest, quality work and treat people right," Brendan Bechtel said. "The company's goal has always been to be the best – in the eyes of our customers, colleagues, and the communities where we work. I am honored to continue this tradition."

Bechtel Executive Vice President **Jack Futcher** succeeds Bechtel as president of the Oil, Gas, & Chemicals business, a position he held previously. A 34-year veteran of the company, Futcher has also served as president of the organization's power business and is a member of Bechtel's board of directors.

The leadership changes became effective Aug. 1.

THE CHAZEN COMPANIES HIRES The Chazen Companies (Poughkeepsie, NY), a 100-person professional services firm offering engineering, land surveying, environmental and safety consulting, planning, and landscape architecture services, announced the hiring of **George Turner** as landscape architect/project manager in the Capital District office. Turner will lead project design teams and manage projects from schematic designs through construction administration.

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in the process, says Alex Wilson, director of human resources.

Past success, cost of the ad to place, and specific project needs serve as the guiding principles for designing the job description details.

Fusco Engineering, Inc. (Irvine, CA), a 97-person firm that provides civil engineering for land development and public infrastructure, relies heavily on LinkedIn and Twitter to communicate job openings and then directs interested applicants to its website for more information. It also advertises online through the usual job boards, such as CareerBuild-

Turner worked for **M.J. Engineering** in Clifton Park and **Fuss and O'Neill** of New York in Albany. Turner has worked on multiple projects throughout the Capital District, including Liberty Terrace, student housing for SUNY University at Albany; rehabilitation of the North Swan Street Park in Albany; reconstruction of the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar; Golub Corporations Main headquarters in Schenectady; and Capital Living Rehabilitation Center in Schenectady.

LJA HIRES LJA (Houston, TX), a 425-person employee-owned, full-service consulting engineering firm, announced that **Janice Shafer** has joined the firm as a project manager in the firm's Houston Land Development Division

Shafer has over 20 years of varied civil engineering experience including project management, public speaking and project presentation, as well as facilitation of meetings with team members and clients.

Shafer's project focus has been in civil design for land development and site design, transportation, and public works for roads and utilities. She is also experienced in design for large scale watershed, hydrology and hydraulics, permitting, preparation of contract documents, technical writing, surveying, and field inspection.

Shafer is currently involved with Lakes of Savannah in Pearland, Imperial Johnson in Sugar Land, and Woodtrace in Montgomery County projects. In her new role, Shafer will manage and provide oversight for major projects in addition to involvement in the firm's marketing and business development activities.

SYSKA HENNESSY HIRES Syska Hennessy Group, Inc. (New York, NY), a global consulting, engineering and commissioning firm, announced that prominent industry thought leader **Daniel Nall**, has joined the company's New York office as a vice president and regional director of High Performance Buildings.

Nall will collaborate closely with Robert Bolin, focusing on oversight of high performance building design initiatives on projects around the globe. He represents another key component of the continued growth of the organization.

A widely recognized high performance design and sustainability professional, Nall is both a registered architect and registered professional engineer with close to four decades of industry experience. He served in a variety of roles throughout his career, including building science researcher, building energy engineering consultant, design mechanical engineer, educator, and sustainability consultant.

Nall brings a genuine understanding of high performance design to Syska Hennessy Group and is a recognized expert at several emerging technologies for high performance green buildings.

er, Monster and Craigslist.

"I've tried industry-relevant job boards without much success," says Pam Fleming, HR manager. "When we do post a job, we do our best to communicate the culture of our firm, which is key, as well as outline clear job duties/requirements needed for the job. I find sharing benefits information is helpful in drawing in the candidate as well."

Fusco does call on marketing for some assistance when it comes to social media.

"Our marketing department handles the social media communications and maintains a list of current job openings on our website," she says. ▀▲

LIQUIDITY

How to manage cash flow

Borrowing makes sense, but companies should adhere to strict discipline in doing so.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

How's your cash flow looking and what are you doing to keep things liquid? Is borrowing part of the equation or not? What's the scoop on operating capital? Here, three A/E firm CFOs weigh in on what their philosophies are when it comes to managing cash flow and more.

STICKING TO TEXTBOOK THEORY. Thomas Hinczynski, CFO, **Maser Consulting P.A.** (Red Bank, NJ), a 450-person multidiscipline firm, believes that borrowing is a necessary function of managing a successful and growing business.

"I do, however, feel strongly that it's extremely important to know your safety zone for borrowing and to not exceed that threshold," he says. "I have traditionally endorsed the textbook theory of maintaining a 2:1 operating capital ratio based on the relationship of current assets to current liabilities. I also believe that it makes good business sense to use the maximum amount of time provided to make vendor payments and am never anxious to borrow money on a short-term basis to fund accounts payable."

Hinczynski finds that maintaining consistent payments and an open communication relationship with vendors is effective in helping to manage short-term borrowings for operating capital.

THE BORROWING BRIDGE. Trey Munday, CFO/COO, **Great Ecology** (New York, NY), a 34-person integrated science and design firm, says that if you have the ability to borrow from a bank, where the cost of funds is typically the cheapest, then it's a good thing, and a sign you're doing something right. The bank is demonstrating its faith in you and your business and that in itself is a good thing.

"I don't view borrowing as a negative as long as it's properly recognized on the P&L or balance sheet," Munday says. "In other words, if the funding is truly for working capital, and can be repaid in short order, that's appropriate. Firms run into trouble when they use a line of credit for what turns out to be permanent working capital or structural, long-term debt (we've suffered from this in the past ourselves). The only way we were able to dig our way out was through a 'chipping away' process using our net in-

come. In some respects, it's a natural process for a micro-business as it grows rapidly."

As CFO, Munday adheres to the philosophy that if a cash shortage means you have to borrow to meet operating expenses it should be planned in a way so that the borrowing remains short-term, and does not become permanent (long-term) debt.

Like Hinczynski, Munday says it's important to rely on your vendors to finance your operations as best you can and to keep your customers on a tight payment schedule.

"If the funding is truly for working capital, and can be repaid in short order, that's appropriate. Firms run into trouble when they use a line of credit for what turns out to be permanent working capital or structural, long-term debt."

"The shorter that bridge between vendors' and customers' payments, the better. That is something that can always be tweaked to your advantage," he says.

FOCUS ON CONTRACTS AND PROCEDURES. Kevin Nisson, CFO at **KARN CHARUHAS CHAPMAN & TWOHEY** (Washington, DC), a 49-person, full-service architectural, planning, and interior design firm, says that for A/E businesses, positive cash flow is very important for continued growth and sustainability. Like Munday and Hinczynski, he believes that borrowing as needed makes sense.

"Lines of credit are often good ways to keep operations moving along if for example cash receipts reach a point where they are irregular or straggling and cash is tight," he says. "I believe that from the beginning of a new contract or an award, a billing schedule or cash flow schedule should be implemented and agreed upon with clients. Having an adequately written contract with favorable mutual terms and conditions will go a long way to ensuring prompt payments and cash flow generation."

Establishing good practices and procedures on the A/P side of the ledger is another way to ensure posi-

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Thomas Hinczynski, CFO, Maser Consulting P.A.



Trey Munday, CFO/COO, Great Ecology.



Kevin Nisson, CFO, KARN CHARUHAS CHAPMAN & TWOHEY.

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A month for many changes

AECOM (Los Angeles, CA) is on a buying spree! The engineering giant has entered into agreements to purchase **Hunt Construction Group** (Scottsdale, AZ), **URS Corporation** (San Francisco, CA), and **ACE International Consultants S.L.** (Madrid, Spain).

Hunt is a major player in the construction of Major League sports' team venues. URS has numerous synergies in the engineering and construction industry and ACE International specializes in privately funded economic and social developments throughout Europe, South & Central America and North Africa.

The optimism behind the spree of purchases led to a 5 percent increase in stock price for the month of July. As a result of the announced purchase price for URS stock, AECOM had a 25 percent stock price increase in the last month as well.

The only company on the index to see a month over month increase was **Stantec** (Edmonton, AB). Stantec saw a 2 percent increase throughout July following the purchases of **USKH Inc.** and **SHW Group** and the accusations of scandal and bribery within their main Canadian competitor **SNC-Lavalin Group** (Montréal, QC) in the media.

Seven companies had double-digit losses on the month. For example, **TRC Companies** (Windsor, CT) and **Hill International** (Marlton, NJ) had a 19 percent and 23 percent loss, respectively. TRC Companies has named two new vice presidents in the last month and announced an acquisition of **Covino Environmental Associates, Inc.** (Woburn, MA).

Hill has had a hard time lately despite being ranked in this year's ZweigWhite Hot Firm List (the firm has been on the list for 12 of the last 13 years). Hill is an excellent example where one must look at patterns across the last several months, as opposed to just a month-by-month analysis. Hill had two big peaks in their price earlier this year, which makes this lull to look worse than it is following a severe drop due to share dilution after the company refinanced its debt the last week of the month. – *Ryan Renard, consultant*

Ticker	Name	Market	Share Pricing							Valuation				
			Market Cap	Close June 30, 2014	Close July 31, 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	3.47B	32.20	33.95	1.75	5%	1.04	3.10%	2.48	0.50	9.02	0.42	1.56
CBI	Chicago Bridge and Iron Co.	NYSE	7.44B	68.20	59.32	(8.88)	-13%	(8.28)	-12.23%	4.69	0.68	7.95	0.52	2.48
EEI	Ecology and Environment	Nasdaq	44.13M	10.41	10.37	(0.04)	0%	(0.45)	-4.31%	(1.10)	0.31	(15.06)	0.36	1.15
EME	EMCOR Group Inc	NYSE	3.01B	44.53	40.93	(3.60)	-8%	(3.14)	-7.12%	1.99	0.41	7.81	0.42	1.78
ENG	ENGlobal	Nasdaq	87.47M	3.12	2.79	(0.33)	-11%	(0.23)	-7.28%	(0.12)	0.48	18.55	0.51	3.14
EXPO	Exponent Inc.	Nasdaq	969.68M	74.11	71.08	(3.03)	-4%	(2.11)	-2.87%	2.86	2.85	12.88	3.36	3.88
FLR	Fluor Corp	NYSE	12.38B	76.90	72.87	(4.03)	-5%	(3.97)	-5.16%	9.96	0.41	7.28	0.49	3.17
FWLT	Foster Wheeler AG	Nasdaq	3.4B	34.07	32.96	(1.11)	-3%	(1.15)	-3.37%	1.02	0.88	12.08	1.00	4.20
HIL	Hill International Inc	NYSE	244.14M	6.23	4.81	(1.42)	-23%	(1.66)	-28.07%	0.05	0.53	7.30	0.32	1.26
JEC	Jacobs Engineering Group Inc	NYSE	7.17B	53.28	50.81	(2.47)	-5%	(3.29)	-6.12%	3.01	0.55	9.84	0.53	1.50
KBR	KBR Inc.	NYSE	3.39B	23.85	20.66	(3.19)	-13%	(2.74)	-11.64%	0.50	0.31	262.43	0.44	1.27
STN	Stantec Inc	NYSE	2.88B	62.00	63.43	1.43	2%	0.50	0.79%	2.96	1.79	13.27	1.70	3.40
TRR	TRC Companies	NYSE	172.38M	6.22	5.03	(1.19)	-19%	(0.39)	-7.27%	1.06	0.38	5.22	0.40	1.24
TTEK	Tetra Tech Inc.	Nasdaq	1.76B	27.50	24.28	(3.22)	-12%	(1.90)	-7.01%	0.09	0.85	8.24	0.84	1.52
URS	URS Corp	NYSE	4.03B	45.85	57.27	11.42	25%	5.56	10.69%	2.73	0.55	8.44	0.37	1.04
VSR	Versar Inc.	NYSE MKT	31.82M	3.25	3.18	(0.07)	-2%	(0.17)	-5.27%	0.01	0.24	22.41	0.29	0.83
WLDN	Willdan Group Inc	Nasdaq	66.76M	8.67	7.72	(0.95)	-11%	(0.84)	-10.11%	0.47	0.49	10.55	0.63	2.51
DJIA	DOW Jones Industrial Avg.	NYSE		16826.60	16563.30	(263.30)	-2%							
*Information at close of day Aug. 4, 2014									Average	0.72x	24.01x			
									Median	0.50x	9.02x			

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tive cash flow.

“Businesses like ours should make improving their billing and payment practices an important task to ensure that they achieve positive cash flows and do not have the need to borrow,” he says.

When it comes to operating capital, Nissan says that his goal

is to make certain that the company maintains sufficient cash flow to satisfy its short- and long-term obligations as well as operating expenses as they come due.

“My focus and objective is to maintain proper levels of assets and liabilities and to oversee that our financial position nets positive working capital (assets exceed liabilities) and that the ratio of current assets to current liabilities are at least 1:1,” he says. ▲▲