

Help your workers get along

Mark Zweig offers five things you can do to keep valued employees who just don't see eye-to-eye.

Good people are hard to find, especially ones who know your organization and your clients and subconsultants. They are worth investing in and preserving in the organization.



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

After working as an owner, consultant, and employee in A/E firms for more than 34 years, it's interesting to see that getting along with one's fellow co-workers is typically one of the biggest problems people working in A/E firms face.

That's terrible! We should be focused on getting more work, or improving the quality of our work, or getting paid for our work. Yet those things may take a back seat to the relationship crisis de jour. It's very stressful for your people. And let's be honest – it's very stressful for YOU.

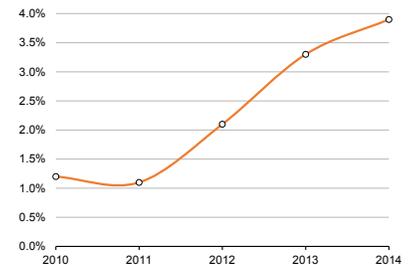
It's your job as the leader to help your people get through these things so they can focus on their REAL jobs. Here are my suggestions:

- 1) Two people who don't get along don't trust each other.** If they are both good people, the reason they don't trust each other is because they don't really know each other. Get them together. Make them spend time together – with you and without you. Lunches. Projects. Maybe even move their offices closer together.
- 2) Two people who don't get along don't have anything in common.** Look for common ground, common interests. Find what they both like.

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

TRENDLINES

Profit bound



It looks like A/E firms are on the rebound from the economic challenges of previous years if profit sharing as a percentage of payroll is any indication. According to ZweigWhite's 2014 Incentive Compensation Survey, this multiple continues to rise, increasing to a five-year high of 3.9 percent this year. This follows an increase from 3.3 percent in 2013, and from 2.1 percent in 2012. In 2011 and 2010, profit sharing as a percentage of payroll hit five-year lows of 1.1 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively. Find the survey at www.zweigwhite.com/p-2207-incentive-compensation-survey-2014.
– Margot Suydam, Survey Manager

MORE COLUMNS

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TO OUR READERS

In observation of Labor Day, THE ZWEIG LETTER will not be published Sept. 1. We will return on Sept. 8. Happy Labor Day!



2014 Marketing Excellence Awards winners revealed

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MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

Try to get them doing it together. Maybe they will learn to like each other.

3) Two people who don't get along may really need to know how you feel about the situation. Talk with each of them. Counsel them. Get them to see the big picture. Get them to understand they are both good, valuable, and critical to the company. They also need to know that you need and want them both there. They may need to know they are both loved to overcome their insecurities. The bottom line is they need to know that you feel they both need to get along.

4) Two people who don't get along working together may need new roles. Perhaps these two people are blaming on another for problems such as the way the incentive comp plan works or the way projects get delivered. Consider moving or reassigning one or both of these people to new roles that minimize their interaction and conflict. Maybe this means a new department, division, or even location for one or both of them. If both are good employees, this could be well worth it to preserve them and their contributions.

5) Two people who don't get along working together may need counseling – individually. They probably wouldn't be interested in doing it together. So maybe you need to suggest it or even arrange it. Perhaps you have an EAP (employee assistance program) that could be used to help out. Maybe you have an organizational psychologist you can call in. Maybe this person could make some specific suggestions to you as well. Look for resources.

Here's the bottom line: Good people are hard to find, especially ones who know your organization and your clients and subconsultants. They are worth investing in and preserving in the organization. Give it your all. Even if you fail the characters involved will likely appreciate your efforts and concerns, and attempts to make their lives better – and maybe you'll learn something from the experience that will help you be more effective the next time you encounter a similar problem. ■▲

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

A/E BUSINESS NEWS

POSITIVE LANDSCAPE The outlook remains positive for landscape architecture firms, according to the American Society of Landscape Architects' second quarter 2014 Business Quarterly survey.

The survey revealed a marked rise in billable hours and inquiries for new work. Hiring plans rose slightly from the last quarter.

Fully 84.7 percent reported stable to significantly higher inquiries for new work, an increase from 80.2 percent last quarter. In addition, 82.42 percent indicated stable to significantly higher billable hours, compared to 72.2 percent last quarter.

Year-to-year, 85.17 percent noted stable to significantly higher second-quarter inquiries for new work, higher than the second quarter of 2013 (83.4 percent). Additionally, 81.32 percent indicated second-quarter billable hours remained about the same or were higher, a jump from the second quarter of 2013 (76 percent).

Of all firms with two or more employees, more than half (51.75 percent) said they planned to hire in the third quarter of 2014, slightly more than the previous quarter (49.4 percent). Some 62.5 percent of firms with 50-99 employees will be hiring an experienced landscape architect in the third quarter of 2014.

"The survey indicates widespread strengthening of the landscape architecture industry," said Nancy Somerville, executive vice president and CEO of ASLA. "We are very much encouraged by the growth shown during the second quarter and rise in hiring plans, particularly among mid-sized firms. Hopefully, these signs point to continued growth for the rest of this year."

The survey included questions related to ASLA's 2014 public awareness campaign, themed the "Value of Landscape Architecture." Some 12.57 percent of respondents noted that their firms collected statistical evidence that landscape architecture can add economic value to communities.

These respondents added that their firms had been able to quantify the following items based on their landscape architecture work: increase in property values (26.09 percent), increase in the number of businesses near multi-use active open spaces (23.19 percent), and reduction in water consumption and costs (20.29 percent).

DODGE LOSES GROUND The Dodge Momentum Index erased the gains made over the last two months, falling

4.4 percent in July to 121.4 (2000=100). This marks the Index's first decline in four months, according to McGraw Hill Construction.

The Momentum Index is a monthly measure of the first (or initial) report for nonresidential building projects in planning, which have been shown to lead construction spending for nonresidential buildings by a full year. While the Dodge Momentum Index stumbled in July, on a year-over-year basis it remains 16.5 percent higher than a year earlier.

The July decline therefore may simply be a return to a more sustainable pace following a spring bump.

July's decline in the Momentum Index was the result of a 6.8 percent drop in commercial building plans, while the institutional sector fell a milder 0.6 percent. Despite the drop, six sizeable commercial projects valued at \$100 million or more entered planning in July.

These include the \$400 million 50 Hudson Yards Office Tower in New York City, the \$350 million University Town Center (Phase II) in Sarasota, Fla., the \$319 million Consolidated Rental Car Facility at Tampa's international airport, the \$130 million Irvine Center Office Tower in Irvine, Calif., a \$100 million hotel in Brooklyn, N.Y., and the \$100 million Akard Place Office Tower in Dallas.

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OFFERINGS

New services for evolving markets

Projects in areas such as healthcare and education are quickly changing in nature. How are firms adapting?

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

As the market changes, so must service offerings. The greatest changes appear to be coming from the healthcare and higher education sectors. So, just what are firms doing to keep up with trends and what are they doing to meet evolving needs? A flexible mindset, collaboration, Lean Design and Six Sigma are at the heart of success.

PRACTICING ‘CROSS-POLLINATION’. Gary Vance, director of national healthcare, **BSA LifeStructures** (Indianapolis, IN), a 230-person architectural and engineering firm, says that he is noticing that healthcare projects are becoming smaller and in many cases are now renovations. However, these projects are still incredibly important to organizations because the goals involve operation improvements and efficiencies. This can include the joining together of similar hospital functions, teams of staff, or patient services by relocating or repositioning spaces. In some cases, technology enhancements may also allow for functions or services to be grouped as a way to increase efficiency.

“We believe that design can be a significant influence in helping make healthcare more affordable. One way is by designing to contain costs, especially those related to inefficiencies in how a building facilitates the work of its users as well as how it functions from an operations standpoint.”

Another trend Vance is seeing is the development of projects off-site – away from the main campus.

“Many healthcare clients are responding to the Affordable Care Act by moving services to be closer and more convenient to patients,” he says. “One of the primary changes that has affected our AEC industry is the collaboration among healthcare clients in order to partner with related companies. The impact on architectural and engineering firms is that there is no longer only one client to communicate

to. This requires a more flexible mindset and versatile skills from the project team.”

As a result, BSA is focusing on operational efficiency and collaboration inside the firm. The company has responded with a defined program for training key team members in Lean Design and Six Sigma to a final step of Yellow Belt Certification through a major university curriculum. A basic introductory course on Lean Design and Six Sigma is also offered to all employees.

In addition to a changing healthcare industry, Vance says that as planning and design professionals, they continue to research and investigate additional markets and building types.



Gary Vance,
Director of
National
Healthcare, BSA
LifeStructures.



Hank Adams,
Director of
Healthcare,
HDR
Architecture, Inc.

NEW TO LEAN SIX SIGMA?

Lean Six Sigma is a process improvement program that combines two ideas – lean: a collection of techniques for reducing the time needed to provide products or services; and six sigma: a collection of techniques for improving the quality of products and services, substantially by contributing to increased customer satisfaction. When you combine the two, Lean Six Sigma is a proven business management strategy.

For more information, visit this website which offers some top resources on the subject:
www.isixsigma.com.

“There are lessons to be learned from these other areas, and it provides a tremendous opportunity for the architecture and engineering industry,” he says. “We call this ‘cross pollination,’ and we are only just beginning to leverage it.”

For example, Vance explains there are new services and projects in the higher education market due to required changes in learning environments (classrooms). These new environments are required to respond to a multitude of scenarios. Spaces must be flexible as well as support collaborative, interactive, technology-driven and team-based learning.

DRIVING OUT WASTE. Hank Adams, director of healthcare for **HDR Architecture, Inc.** (Omaha, NE), a 1,650-person firm, says that as technology is used to create new robust tools and delivery models, more care is being pushed into ambulatory, community and home settings. And these models have different space implications: collocation of clinics, clinical research, education programs, diagnostics and ancillaries change the nature of required spaces as integrated practices come online.

See SERVICES, page 4

RESOURCES

FEE & BILLING SURVEY How do you set fee and billing rates that maximize profitability without scaring your potential customers away? Since 1998, thousands of design and environmental firm leaders have turned to ZweigWhite’s Fee & Billing Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms for standards on design fees, employee hourly billing rates, subconsultant procedures, and reimbursement policies.

The 2014 edition includes the latest available data on fee structures for every major market type, billing rates and chargeability statistics for 27 levels of employee (from clerks up through principals), ways firms usually charge for subconsultant fees and reimbursable expenses, how firms collect payment, and much more.

In addition to helping you set fees, billing rates, and other contract details internally, this book is also a great tool to show clients or potential clients. Fee negotiations aren’t always as easy as you’d like them to be, so use the data in this report to tell your client exactly why they should pay what your firm is charging. If your firm works in any of the following markets, you’ll want to see these survey results:

- Commercial development
- Corporate facilities
- Education (K-12)
- Education (Higher education)
- Healthcare
- Transportation
- Federal/state/municipal
- Industrial facilities
- Multi-family residential
- Single-family residential
- Environmental – public
- Environmental – private

In addition to statistics on contract types for each of the above markets, industry norms for fees as a percentage of construction costs are given for the following services/disciplines (as applicable for each market):

- Architecture
- Land planning
- Landscape architecture
- Interior design
- Civil engineering
- Structural engineering
- Mechanical engineering
- Electrical engineering
- Construction management

For more information or to buy a copy, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/p-2202-fee-billing-survey-2014.

PARTICIPATE & SAVE IN ZWEIGWHITE’S 2015 SALARY SURVEYS

Take the **Salary Survey of Architecture, Interior Design, and Landscape Architecture Firms** at www.research.net/s/2015_Arch_Salary

Deadline: Oct. 10, 2014

Take the **Salary Survey of Engineering Firms** at www.research.net/s/2015_Eng_Salary

Deadline: Oct. 24, 2014

SERVICES, from page 3

“The expansion of medical homes will also require different collaboration and teaming spaces to accommodate the myriad disciplines infused into such models,” Adams says. “And, as these shifts occur, non-face-to-face encounters will become more prevalent and alternative venues of care will also emerge. As virtual platforms become more widespread, the design of the physician clinic will change as the need for office visits diminish. Patients will also seek care in sites embedded in drug stores, convenience marts, shopping malls, retailers and the workplace.”

Adams says that HDR expects the integration of outpatient healthcare, lifestyle retail (e.g. exercise centers, health food stores, etc.) and community-focused services to become the norm. And, as this occurs, the acuity and complexity of cases in outpatient venues will continue to rise, following the trend witnessed in inpatient facilities over the last decade as cases migrated to comprehensive ambulatory centers, then physician clinics.

“We believe that design can be a significant influence in helping make healthcare more affordable,” Adams says. “One way is by designing to contain costs, especially those related to inefficiencies in how a building facilitates the work of its users as well as how it functions from an operations standpoint.”

Like BSA, HDR is incorporating Lean Six Sigma into its design approach. The company is investigating and redesigning processes to drive out waste so that all work adds value and serves the customers’ needs. Identifying value-added and non-value-added steps in every process is the beginning of the journey toward a Lean Six Sigma culture.

“The essence of Lean Six Sigma thinking as applied to healthcare is to: eliminate waste through understanding the value to the patient and how to deliver that value; create an efficient and waste-free continuous flow system; and continuously pursue a perfect system,” Adams says. ▀▲

AWARDS

2014 Marketing Excellence Awards

ZweigWhite's Marketing Excellence Awards recognize outstanding and effective marketing in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry.

By CHRISTINA ZWEIG
Contributing editor



In 2014, awards were given in the categories of online marketing, internal marketing, integrated marketing, external newsletter, and special event. Entries were judged by a panel of ZweigWhite marketing team members and ranking was based on an evaluation of measurable positive results, creativity, quality, and implementation.

HOT FIRM AND A/E INDUSTRY AWARDS CONFERENCE

Come celebrate your success with others in the industry at the 2014 ZweigWhite Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference, Sept. 25 and 26 at the legendary Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. Winners of ZweigWhite's Hot Firm List, Best Firms To Work For and Marketing Excellence Awards will be in attendance. For more information and to register, log on to www.zweigwhite.com/conference.

For the first time ever, winners will receive awards at the 2014 ZweigWhite Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference, Sept. 25-26 at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. The top three winners in each category will have their marketing campaign on display during the conference and conference attendees will choose a People's Choice Award winner among this group.

A/E/P and environmental consulting firms have continued to come up with new ways to inspire staff, reach out to new clients and new markets, and renew connections with existing and past clients. The winning Marketing Excellence Awards campaigns used fascinating, exciting and innovative methods to accomplish their desired goals. **THE ZWEIG LETTER** will continue to feature many of these remarkable campaigns in future issues.

Read about SmithGroupJJR's winning entry on page 7.

The 2014 Marketing Excellence Awards winners

Online Marketing

1. **SmithGroupJJR**
2. Clark Patterson Lee
3. P.W. Grosser Consulting, Inc.

Internal Marketing

1. **ECS Carolinas, LLP**
2. Cardno
3. ICA Engineering
4. O'Brien & Gere
5. Infrastructure Corporation of America (ICA)

Integrated Marketing

1. **Hickok Cole Architects**
2. Crafton Tull
3. EYP Architecture & Engineering
4. Barton Associates, Inc.
5. Finley Engineering Group, Inc.

External Newsletter

1. **EDSA, Inc.**
2. Hunt, Guillot & Associates (HGA)
3. Infrastructure Corporation of America (ICA)

Special Event

1. **Hickok Cole Architects**
2. Crafton Tull
3. SmithGroupJJR
4. Finley Engineering Group, Inc.
5. O'Brien & Gere

RIGHT NOW

Marketing design services

Are architects adverse to marketing and selling or is that a myth?

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

As creative minds, architects often believe that their work sells itself. So, how do marketers communicate that it takes a deliberate marketing effort to position those talents effectively? We asked three A/E marketing professionals about their experiences. The news is good.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS. Karen Moorefield, associate and director of corporate development at **HuntonBrady Architects** (Orlando, FL), a 70-person design-oriented architecture firm, says that they have the best of both worlds at their firm.

They have principals as architects who also understand the value of a dedicated marketing strategy, in addition to a marketing group comprised of market leaders (healthcare, commercial, education, interiors, etc.) who work closely with principals and other team members. They round it all out with a graphics marketing manager and a communications/PR manager.

"I believe with a marketing mindset, we can be more objective about the details and work that goes into selling the firm as well as a package," she says. "It's not just the project design that the client is looking for, it's the entire team that is behind the design. That is what the client is buying."

HuntonBrady also believes in staying ahead of the curve (and the competition) by being proactive. So, how do they accomplish that?

Moorefield explains that marketing likes to not only market existing projects, but to also set the stage and foundation for new opportunities.

"When you think about it, there are parallels between an architectural project that is produced by a talented team of industry professionals in addition to each marketing pursuit attached to it. It all works together to create a strong team and marketing machine," she says. "Just as we always seek design talent in our architects and designers, we also rely on the industry experience and talent from our marketing staff. We recognize this as a very important function within our company."

HuntonBrady relies on its market leaders' core group for many marketing efforts as well as for brainstorming effective firm-specific strategies.



Karen Moorefield, Director of Corporate Development, HuntonBrady Architects.

"It's not just the project design that the client is looking for, it's the entire team that is behind the design. That is what the client is buying."



Amanda Silverman Kosior, Marketing Director, JLG Architects.

"We have to use every opportunity to stay in front of our clients since about 85 percent of our business comes from repeat clients," Moorefield says.

Amanda Silverman Kosior, marketing director, **JLG Architects** (Grand Forks, ND), a 100-person firm, says that she has been fortunate throughout her career to work with architects who understand the value of marketing.

"I do, however, find that it requires a bit of finesse and education to get them to understand how to differentiate what they do from the work done by other architects. This is usually best communicated in clear, simple terminology in a way that relates to each specific client and their needs," she says.

MAKE IT A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS. Chuck Hack, principal, **Lionakis** (Sacramento, CA), a 200-person architecture and engineering firm, says that they too have been fortunate.

"We have a seasoned leadership team that has been through a few ups and downs in the economy. They have seen the benefit of being proactive, so we don't run into too much pushback anymore," he says. "Years ago, as a firm, when we first started putting a proactive marketing strategy into place, it took some education, discussion, and research to really not only convince the group that we needed to be more proactive, but more importantly to outline how we were going to be proactive."

Hack says that some of the things that really helped were to organize themselves around core markets while putting key leadership in place for each market (education, healthcare, commercial and civic).

"Once that was done, we dug in and did some client and market research and developed a vision and strategy for each market that was tied to the firm's vision. We then brainstormed on the proactive tactics we wanted to use," he says. "This was a collaborative process and that really helped us to get buy in. Also, since then we constantly refresh these tactics as market conditions change."

Lionakis also has ways to measure each tactic, so they can understand what is working and what is not.

"That feedback loop has been essential in showing the payback of our efforts," Hack says. ▀▀

PORTFOLIO

A move and five videos

How firm successfully used the medium to explain why it was moving twice in two years.

By CHRISTINA ZWEIG
Contributing editor



DETAILS

Firm: SmithGroupJJR, Detroit.

Marketing tactic: Using the power of video to explain repeated office move.

Results: First place, Online Marketing category of ZweigWhite's 2014 Marketing Excellence Awards.

Screenshot showing detail of SmithGroupJJR's award-winning video series.

Moving to a new location usually entails sending out a press release and that's about it. Not for **SmithGroupJJR** (Detroit, MI), first place winner in the Online Marketing category of ZweigWhite's 2014 Marketing Excellence Awards.



The 800-person architecture/engineering/planning firm created a video campaign to explain why it was moving its Washington, D.C. office for the second in the space of two years. Firm leaders felt it was evident that an explanation was owed to clients and peers. With that, SmithGroupJJR decided on a series of five 60-second episodes under a "(re)locate" theme, to connect with the audience. The campaign was spread over a nine-month period pre-, during-, and post-move.

Besides explaining for the move, other goals of the campaign included positioning SmithGroupJJR as an expert in workplace design and a leader in change management. The target audience included contacts of the nation's capital office and of the firm's Corporate Workplace Practice.

SmithGroupJJR maximized the (re)locate theme in each of the five videos: (re)asons, which explained reasons for the moving again; (re)design, which showed the redesign of the office space; (re)use, showing the reuse of furniture and materials; (re)move, showing the actual move into the new building; and lastly, (re)act, showing staff reaction to the new space.

Each video featured a different leader from the Washington, D.C. office, sharing their involvement.

All five episodes were written, filmed and produced in-house. Once completed, the videos were distributed via a promotional email, displayed on the corporate website, and put on social media channels, including Facebook and Twitter. Employees were also encouraged to share the video through their personal social media outlets.

RESULTS. SmithGroupJJR achieved an average of 812 YouTube hits per video and an open rate of 4,583 for each email blast. ▲▲

Marketing Excellence Awards judges were impressed with the firm's ability to adeptly weave a theme throughout the five-video series, the remarkable achievement of coming in 40 percent under budget, positive results and feedback, and the overall quality of production.

SURVEY

Multi-pronged approaches to marketing

Keep an eye toward the future, implement positive changes, and create a plan that reflects and complements the culture of your firm.

By CHRISTINA ZWEIG
Contributing editor

There's no right way to structure a marketing department, marketing expenditures, or marketing processes, so we asked a number of successful firms how they handled big decisions like budgeting, structuring, planning, and implementation of new campaigns.

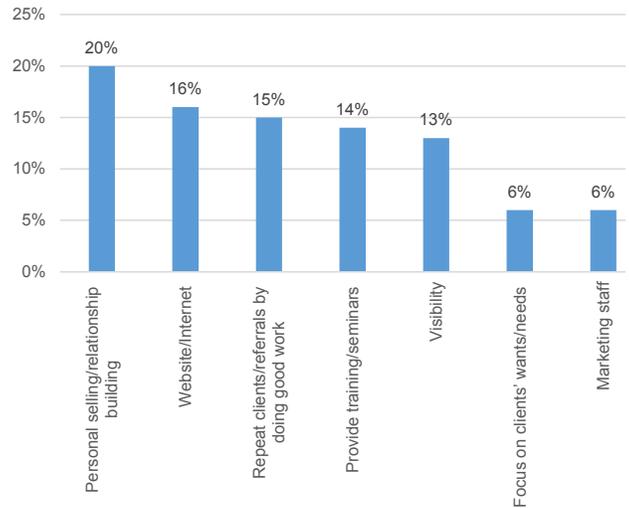
According to ZweigWhite's recently released 2014 Marketing Survey, the majority of A/E/P and environmental consulting firms have a formal marketing plan, the most common element of which is a marketing budget (44 percent of firms report this). The survey also found that 77 percent of all firms report having a marketing department or dedicated full-time staff, and firms dedicate a median of 3 percent of their total staff to marketing.

"Our staff of seven full-time marketing professionals works closely with the principals of the firm to develop proposals and marketing initiatives. The principals are charged with business development in the classic 'doer – seller' model."

Trotter Hunt, vice president of **Hunt, Guillot & Associates, LLC** (Ruston, LA), a project management and engineering firm with 275 full-time employees and recent winner of a 2014 ZweigWhite Marketing Excellence award, says his firm has four separate business units and each business unit develops its own marketing and business development plan and associated budget. Additionally, there is a corporate marketing and communications plan and associated budget.

Marketing efforts at HGA are led by the corporate marketing, communications manager and business development managers in each business unit. Whitney Lanie, marketing communications manager, says that others across the company are involved in some of the marketing efforts from time to time

WHAT'S THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MARKETING STRATEGY YOUR FIRM HAS USED?



Source: 2014 Marketing Survey, ZweigWhite: www.zweigwhite.com/p-2205-marketing-survey-2014



Trotter Hunt,
Vice President,
Hunt, Guillot &
Associates, LLC.



Greg Kanz,
Marketing
Director,
Shive-Hattery.



Katherine
Metcalfe,
Marketing
Director, Clark
Patterson Lee.

too. "Engineering leads may write technical articles that help to position the company as experts in our fields. Or one of our engineering specialists may speak at a trade show or conference," Lanie says.

DIFFERENT STROKES... Shive-Hattery (Bloomington, IL), an architecture engineering, and full-service design firm with 375 employees, was another 2014 Marketing Excellence award-winning firm. Greg Kanz, marketing director, says there is a marketing plan at his firm that focuses on internal growth strategies, why these will create internal revenue growth, required new resources, responsible leaders, key milestones, deadlines, action items to complete next quarter and potential major roadblocks. The marketing team reviews the plan continuously and updates the firm's internal growth strategies. Shive-Hattery does not have a formal marketing budget each year, but does monitor spending year-to-year, and many people outside the marketing department are involved in marketing efforts.

Clark Patterson Lee (Rochester, NY), a 220-person A/E firm that also won a 2014 Marketing Excellence award, has yet a different approach. Marketing director Katherine Metcalfe says, "Clark Patterson Lee has long championed a business model that minimizes bureaucracy. The firm does not have a formal marketing plan but, rather, a set of shared strategic goals. Similarly, we do not have a marketing budget. Times are changing, however, and we are developing a marketing budget for 2015."

MARKETING, from page 8

The board of directors provides marketing leadership, particularly the firm’s President Todd Liebert, along with Metcalfe, though marketing is considered a firm-wide responsibility and Metcalfe says this starts with great client-centered service provided by every employee.

“Our staff of seven full-time marketing professionals works closely with the principals of the firm to develop proposals and marketing initiatives. The principals are charged with business development in the classic ‘doer – seller’ model,” Metcalfe says.

As many architects have strong artistic abilities, the firm also draws upon their talent to supplement graphic design efforts. “This collaboration is particularly successful in developing design process graphics and renderings for our proposals,” Metcalfe says.

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE. If one thing is common between all firms in the A/E/P and environmental industry, it’s that marketing is something that has to evolve and change if a firm is to stay successful.

Metcalfe says, “In the past year, we made a commitment to ramping-up our inbound marketing efforts. It’s all about creating relevant content and sharing it. As part of this effort, we started a website blog and formed CPLconnect.”

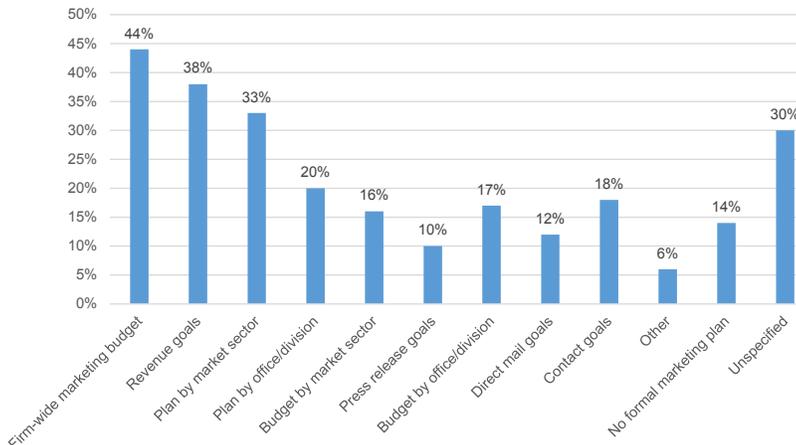
CPLconnect is a group of 12 individuals that collaborate across offices to develop and share relevant content. Content comes in many forms, like blog posts, project videos and PR announcements. It can be shared internally, on the firm’s website blog, via social media, as part of our proposals, and more.

“As an added bonus, we are enhancing our internal communication through CPLconnect,” Metcalfe says. “It’s no accident that CPLconnect is made up of the next generation of leaders at CPL. Representing different offices as well as varying professional disciplines, we’ve tapped into the energy and social network awareness that these individuals bring to the table. Regular meetings and communication with the group ensures that we are engaging all of our office locations. This is an excellent opportunity for personal and professional growth that is as important to CPLconnect as it is to the firm. This marketing campaign has gone on to be among the most effective at Clark Patterson Lee.”

Hunt and Lanie at HGA say the firm revisited the goals and primary focus of their corporate marketing group this past year. “In the past, the group had mainly served as graphic design and administrative support for the business development teams in each business unit. After a number of discussions, the consensus emerged that corporate marketing needed to focus much more of their time and efforts on communication – both external and internal,” they say.

HGA then started putting out internal and exter-

WHAT’S IN YOUR FIRM-WIDE MARKETING PLAN?



Source: 2014 Marketing Survey, ZweigWhite: www.zweigwhite.com/p-2205-marketing-survey-2014

nal newsletters every four to 8 weeks, while providing continual support to the business development group.

When asked what has been most effective, Hunt and Lanie say, “We have tried a number of campaigns and approaches over the years. In general, we do not feel we get good value from advertising either in print or online. We also haven’t had much success with direct mail or similar marketing campaigns. Our clients are busy and it is difficult to get their attention. We have been trying to build our online presence through LinkedIn and Facebook and by improving our website.”

Face-to-face marketing and actions that position HGA as a true expert on a given topic are highly effective. “We feel our marketing and business development dollars continue to be best spent in getting in front of clients either in office visits or trade-shows/conferences. That is still where the bulk of our marketing and BD budgets are spent,” Hunt and Lanie say. They also stated that their new newsletters and the efforts of engineers at the company to get published in technical journals, have been highly effective.

At Shive-Hattery, a more continuous approach has been most effective.

“We avoid strategic planning events. Rather, we regularly evolve the marketing plan to take advantage of emergent opportunities and stay focused on intended strategies,” Kanz says. “Our marketing squad program engages lots of employees in the marketing process. Our squads are always coming up with new methods, pieces or campaigns. This is the ‘year of the video’ for us... exploring short storytelling via video.”

Getting recognized for good work

No one is going to blow your horn for you, so don't be afraid to enter awards programs and take advantage of multiple ways to shout out your successes.

Many years ago, I worked for an engineering firm where the primary owners were troubled by even the thought of advertising. It was just after the Arizona State Supreme Court decision that gave professionals the right to advertise, within industry-established guidelines. The major owner of the firm where I worked felt we should not shout our own praises; rather, that if we did something that was truly noteworthy, others would find out about it on their own.

Almost four decades later, today's owners and leaders don't suffer the same internal resistance or prohibition. Firms now shout their own praises in many ways: in print, digital and audio formats; indirectly through third-person testimonials; through taglines on our company stationery; in footers on our report paper, etc.

We have websites that inform about new capabilities, new projects, new hires, new awards and other things. We send out emails, press releases and postcards about these same items. And we spend a lot of time assembling applications and supporting evidence for a variety of awards and industry rankings for both technical prowess and great working conditions.

A lot of recognition comes for items having nothing to do with the technical quality of a firm's work – ENR's Top 200, 400 and 500 rankings; city business journal Top 25 rankings; and various "best firms to work for" listings. In addition, A/E firms are deluged with magazines purporting to showcase the best firms and projects while actually trying to generate revenues by pressuring subconsultants on that firm's project to advertise.

To top that off, individuals are pursued by a variety of "Who's Who" books that promise national and/or international recognition, but which will include almost anyone willing to pay for the expensive leather-bound book. And those who pay will often be the only people who ever see the book.

So when an A/E firm gets the chance to blow its own horn over an issue of technical quality, we want to leap at that opportunity, to make the most of it, and to share it with everyone on the firm's multiple mailing lists.

Toward that end, we submit information in pursuit of awards that indicate, or at least imply, technical quality, whether directly or indirectly. These awards come from local and state chapters, and national headquarters of



Bernie Siben

THE FAST LANE

professional associations, and other industry groups in the architectural, engineering, environmental and related industries.

One of the most important rankings is the ZweigWhite Hot Firm List, which appears every autumn. The Hot Firm List "...recognizes the 100 fastest-growing architecture, engineering, planning and environmental consulting firms in the United States and Canada. These are the firms that have outperformed the economy and competitors to become leaders in their chosen fields," according to ZweigWhite.

According to award's website, firms are ranked according to their three-year growth rate in gross revenue, with 50 percent of the ranking based on percentage growth and 50 percent based on dollar growth. This guarantees that a \$10 million firm with triple digit percentage growth can achieve a high position on the list as well as the billion-dollar firm with single-digit growth.

See BERNIE SIBEN, page 12

With the number of firms competing for projects and the weight given to award-winning projects in proposals and presentations, every A/E and related firm should pursue any recognition for which it truly qualifies.

Are you ‘innovative’?

This over-used word can be working against you.

In one of our seminars, we ask the attendees to spend 5 minutes developing a short pitch to convince a potential client why they should hire the attendees’ firm. We then go around the room and each attendee delivers their pitch to the class. While these are being presented, Mark Zweig and I jot down notes on each pitch. We also find ourselves counting the number of times we hear the word “innovative.” That buzzword is often paired with “cost-effective” and “solutions.” It is astounding how many people will use these words to describe their firm. More than half will say they offer “cost-effective and innovate solutions.” In an industry that obsesses over the threat of commoditization, are we our own biggest enemy? When we are all saying we offer the same thing, what is the client world to think?

“Innovative” has been a corporate buzzword for decades and our industry uses it exhaustively in just about every marketing and business development scenario. My belief is that not only has this word lost its original meaning and impact, but it can actually work against us now. Regular readers of this column will know the importance that I place on differentiation. Using words like “innovative” severely erode your ability to capture and hold your audience’s attention. Every one else is saying the same thing and the instant you look like everyone else, you have lost all differentiation. In this day and age, we must provide very powerful and compelling marketing messages in short bursts in order to compete with the incredible volume of messages constantly being piped over every medium available. Here are some ways to improve your differentiation and better capture your audience’s attention:

- **Get rid of over-used clichés and buzzwords from your marketing materials.** Task someone with scanning your marketing materials and identifying where you are describing your processes with these over-used buzzwords. This will include marketing brochures, website text, boilerplate proposal text, presentations, interviews and the list goes on and on. Replace this generic text with some simple statements of what sets your firm apart using straightforward language. Talk to your audience in every medium as though they are standing right in front of you and you are engaging them in a conversation.
- **Start citing actual examples of client and project heroics.** Innovative and cost-effective solutions do have an appeal if you can actually cite what they are and how you can do it for others. As opposed to using vague, nondescript language to describe your firm, start telling your audience



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how much you save, how much better your designs perform, and just about anything you can think of that you can quantify and cite as actual successes. Create a perspective in the mind of the audience where they can truly get a reference for your performance and the unique value propositions you offer.

- **Use primary research to become the experts.** If you really want to be innovative, develop research campaigns where you can really go deep on a client or subject. There are so many untapped opportunities for you to help your clients or their industry by just doing some simple research on the client or their customers. Taking that research and then publishing it is easier and cheaper than ever with all the online resources. You can get credit for being an authority on a subject by just publishing a simple survey and then adding your own expert analysis.

Create a picture of what you want your clients and potential clients to believe about your firm and start painting that picture for them without over-used and meaningless buzzwords. Start talking to your audience with conversational and easy to read straightforward language. You must leverage every opportunity to engage your clients in the most meaningful and impactful way you can. ▲▲

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AWARDS

SMPS ANNOUNCES 2014 NATIONAL MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

The Society for Marketing Professional Services announced the recipients of its 2014 National Marketing Communications Awards. This annual competition recognizes excellence in marketing and communications by professional services firms in the design and building industry. The SMPS Marketing Communications Awards recognize the individuals and teams who create outstanding communication vehicles for architectural, engineering, design, and construction firms. The award winners were announced and honored on July 31 in San Antonio as a part of Build Business, the SMPS Conference, held July 30-Aug. 1.

The Best of Show Award, bestowed by a jury of national trade magazine editors and publishers, was awarded to **MulvannyG2** (Bellevue, WA), for its Specific Project Marketing entry, "Alaska Airlines North Satellite Traveler Experience." Industry editors selected this entry as Best of Show because it had quantifiable results, was unique, innovative, and won the project. The People's Choice Award, voted on by the attendees of the SMPS conference, was awarded to **WB Engineers+Consultants** (New York, NY), for its Holiday Piece entry, "Thanksgiving Card."

The first-place winning firms are presented by category below.

Advertising: **Burns & McDonnell**, Kansas City, MO

Annual Report: **O'Brien & Gere**, Syracuse, NY

Book/Monograph: **Ennead Architects**, New York, NY

Brochure: **EDI Landscape, LLC**, Hartford, CT

Corporate Identity: **Bury**, Austin, TX

Direct-Mail Campaign: **The Brand Constructors**, New Orleans, LA

Feature Writing: **FINLEY Engineering Group, Inc.**, Tallahassee, FL

Holiday Piece: **orcutt | winslow**, Phoenix, AZ

Holiday Piece-Digital: **Margulies Perruzzi Architects**, Boston, MA

Internal Communications: **Burns & McDonnell**, Kansas City, MO

Magazine: **Syska Hennessy Group, Inc.**, Fairfax, VA

Magazine-Digital: **Urban Engineers, Inc.**, Philadelphia, PA

Media Relations Campaign: **BRPH**, Melbourne, FL

Newsletter-External: **SWCA Environmental Consultants**, Phoenix, AZ

Newsletter-Internal: **JE Dunn Construction**, Kansas City, MO

Promotional Campaign: **Bury**, Austin, TX

Recruitment & Retention Communications: **Colab: The Lory Student Center Marketing Shop**, Fort Collins, CO

Social Media Campaign: **Perkins+Will**, New York, NY

Special Event: **LS3P**, Charleston, SC

Specific Project Marketing: **MulvannyG2**, Bellevue, WA

Tradeshow Marketing: **Barton Malow Company**, Orlando, FL

Video: **Perkins+Will**, New York, NY

Web Site: **Primera Engineerings Ltd.**, Chicago, IL

CELEBRATIONS

LEGAT CELEBRATES 50th While **Legat Architects** (Waukegan, IL) is known for creative design and client service, it is not associated with a specific design style or building type. However, the firm's portfolio reveals that it has quietly transformed the Chicago region: 500 educational projects, train stations and civic buildings in 50 communities, 500 healthcare projects, 100 corporate facilities, and 20 mixed-use developments.

This month, Legat Architects ushered its 50th anniversary (<http://bit.ly/1nNDRyQ>) in July by honoring its past and celebrating its "Next 50."

In 1964, Joseph Legat launched Legat Architects from his Waukegan home. Since then, the firm opened Illinois studios in Chicago, Oak Brook, Crystal Lake, and Moline.

Legat Architects will host five pro bono community planning workshops in celebration of the firm's half century mark. Legat Architects will also continue to support educational and social outreach. In the past five years, the firm donated over \$300,000 toward foundations and scholarships.

BERNIE SIBEN, from page 10

Now I hear you asking, "Technical quality? Really? Isn't the 'Hot Firm' listing just about growth?"

Well, think about it. As important as client care and employee happiness have become, firms just don't achieve the kind of growth that lets them "outperform the economy and competitors to become leaders" without doing superior technical work on their projects.

Massive projects – the Burj Khalifa tower (2,717 feet tall), the Qingdao Haiwan Bridge (26.7 kilometers long), the Gotthard Base Tunnel (57 kilometers long) and the Three Gorges dam (185 meters high) – will garner recognition without doing anything other than being completed and existing. The biggest, longest, widest, fastest, deepest anything will always be of interest to people and the press.

But with the huge number of A/E and related firms completing an amazing number of projects every year, many will not achieve much coverage in the local or national press because they're not large or significant enough. So, in addition to sending out press releases and

postcards, it behooves a firm to submit its great project(s) to a number of local, state, regional and national awards programs sponsored by professional organizations and others, with the object of obtaining great press for the winning project, its owner, designer and builder.

Award programs now give winners special logos to add to their stationery, their websites and their printed materials. These logos call attention to awards won and help separate the award winners from the rest of the pack, to help these winning firms get the recognition their superior technical work has earned for them.

With the number of firms competing for projects and the weight given to award-winning projects in proposals and presentations, every A/E and related firm should pursue any recognition for which it truly qualifies.

After all, if YOU won't blow your horn, who will? ▀▀

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