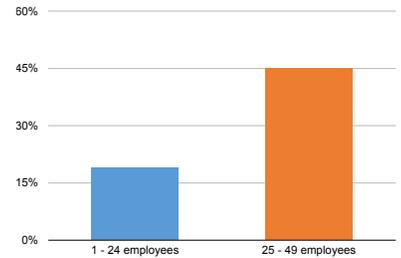


## The relentless pursuit of...?

Find out what you should be really pursuing and go for it. Mark Zweig predicts success.

## TRENDLINES

### Marketing power



Spending money on marketing is certainly recognized as an important part of getting new business.

However, it seems that smaller firms are less apt to have a marketing budget than their larger brethren.

According to Zweig Group's 2014-2015 Small Firm Survey, 45 percent of firms with 25- to 49 employees report that they have marketing budget, while only 19 percent of firms with 1- to 24 employees say they budget for marketing.

— Margot Suydam, Director, Research

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So what is your firm's relentless pursuit? Is it something meaningful that you can use to motivate your employees and clients to do better/buy more/pay more for what you're selling? If not, why not?



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

Some years ago, Toyota's Lexus brand promoted itself through the slogan, "Lexus: The relentless pursuit of perfection." That decision catapulted the already upmarket brand to the stratosphere with its association to quality, luxury, and performance. Anyone who has owned a Lexus can tell you that they truly are almost perfect vehicles (some real car geeks may say that they are so perfect that their lack of flaws makes them devoid of personality!).

This singular focus for the brand – and for the "company" – can be used to create an image and influence behavior of both employees and clients/customers, is a pretty cool idea. And it is one that has many potential benefits for you, if you embrace it.

So what is your firm's relentless pursuit? Is it something meaningful that you can use to motivate your employees and clients to do better/buy more/pay more for what you're selling? If not, why not? Every so often I see AEC firms make various public proclamations about what their defining characteristics as a company are. What's most typical is usually some sort of a focus on quality. After all, "quality" sounds good. Who wouldn't want to be a high quality service provider? The problem is that

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

## MORE COLUMNS

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CFO PROFILE



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## A/E BUSINESS NEWS

**COURAGE IN LEADERSHIP AWARD GIVEN POSTHUMOUSLY** William Brock Johnson (1949-2012) was named the recipient of the 2014 Jerry Allen Courage in Leadership Award, which recognizes outstanding leaders in the AEC industry.

Johnson was the president and CEO of **Garver** in North Little Rock, Ark. and led the company through a period of transformational growth, despite the recent recession. He lost a battle with cancer in 2012.

"Brock Johnson exemplified all the qualities that this award stands for," said Chad Clinehens, Zweig Group executive vice president. "He was a renegade in many ways. He empowered young people like myself, and he was willing to do the really hard things in the organization that were required to get people to stretch themselves and strive for bigger and better things."

This is the fifth time the award has been conferred. The award was inspired by Jerry Allen, mentor to Mark Zweig and the innovative and inspirational leader who led the Fort Worth-based Carter & Burgess through a period of extraordinary growth. Under Allen's direction, the company grew from 200 employees and \$17 million in revenue in 1988, to 2,300 employees and \$381 million in revenue by 2002.

Allen, who was an incredible athlete and in fantastic physical condition most of his life, was struck down by colon cancer at age 62. In his honor, the Zweig Group awards The Jerry Allen Courage in Leadership Award each year to someone working in an AEC firm who has demonstrated in a unique way, personal courage in their actions that have impacted their firm.

"This year we had a unique opportunity to award this to an individual whose story is incredibly similar to Jerry's but more importantly had an tremendous impact on one our own, Chad Clinehens," said Mark Zweig, Zweig Group founder and CEO. "Chad worked with Brock for 14 years and was at his side in the c-suite as they changed the way their people thought about growth at Garver. I am truly honored to confer this award to Brock."

**GREEN CITIES INVESTOR** Cheng Kin Ming, whose recent investments in solar companies are estimated to be worth nearly \$20 billion – making him the world's biggest private investor in clean technologies – spoke publicly for the first time about his strategy to accelerate the world's transition to green cities. His approach is to identify the world's best, complementary clean technology companies to create entire supply chains, across multiple verticals, to produce integrated solutions on an enormous scale.

Cheng, founder and chairman of Hong Kong-based Asia Pacific Resources Development Investment, recently unveiled his vision for the Age of Green Cities at The Next Generation Solar PV Finance event in New York.

"Clean energy brings a much brighter future for mankind and mother earth. Investors and entrepreneurs should be focused on this sector," Cheng said. "By investing in companies that together bring total solutions, we enable cities to transform the ways they grow and consume resources and we can ensure a high quality of life for us and for future generations."

Cheng, also known as Zheng Jianming, and APRD are focusing on long-term investments to provide solutions to low-carbon cities. In November 2012, he acquired a 30 percent stake in Shunfeng Photovoltaic International Ltd. With his backing, Shunfeng has quickly evolved from a solar developer and operator into the world's largest integrated clean energy company with capabilities in design, engineering, manufacturing, construction, finance, insurance, operation and maintenance, energy storage, solar products and applications.

Today, Cheng is investing in entire supply chains, across multiple verticals, to produce integrated solutions that create efficiencies, control costs and advance technologies to market. Cheng is currently investing in companies in three complementary business segments including: clean power generation, such as solar panels and inverters; energy storage and management, such as battery or heat pumps; and green consumer solutions, including electric vehicles and LED products.

### MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

the term has become so commonplace that it doesn't usually mean a lot or significantly differentiate the firm from the thousands of others just like it claiming to provide "high quality services." A similar empty claim may revolve around the word innovation. Yet, the bulk of what most firms do isn't really even innovative, so these become little more than empty words.

Engineers usually have little use for this type of discussion. "Not substantive," many of them think. But let me give you an example of how meaningful it can be. One of our clients belongs to a CEO group where various CEOs of unrelated businesses get together and talk. He was telling me the other day that he got to know the founder of Jimmy John's (the sub shop company) through his group. The guy is apparently quite

an entrepreneur. After he started his company – ostensibly to serve "gourmet subs" and met with success – they decided to do some research on what their customers thought they did best. The founder was sure they'd overwhelmingly state it was JJ's food quality. But what came back instead was praise for their speedy delivery. He didn't believe it and did more studies. They came back the same. So they adopted a new motto of "freaky fast" and shrunk the delivery areas around each of their stores to make sure that was a reality. The business grew.

The moral: Know what your "relentless pursuit" is. And then, like Lexus and Jimmy John's, make it a reality. I predict success for those who do. ▀

MARK ZWEIG is the chairman and CEO of Zweig Group. Contact him with questions or comments at [mzweig@zweiggroup.com](mailto:mzweig@zweiggroup.com).

## THE ZWEIG LETTER

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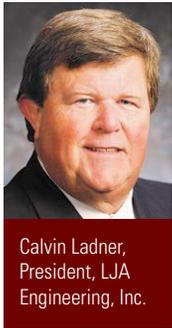
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## SURVEY

# What are successful firms doing differently?

Survey identifies four distinguishing characteristics of fast-growth and very high profit firms.

By CHRISTINA ZWEIG  
Contributing editor



Calvin Ladner,  
President, LJA  
Engineering, Inc.

**B**y definition, successful firms in the AEC industry grow faster and make more money than their counterparts, but how exactly do they accomplish this? Looking at the recently released 2014-2015 Successful Firms Survey we found a few areas where fast-growth and very high profit firms stood out from the rest (Zweig Group surveys define a fast-growth firm as one that has had an average annual revenue and staff growth of 20 percent or more for the past three years and a very high profit firm as one that has had an average annual profitability of 15 percent or more for the past three years).

“Diversifying our services with strategic acquisitions and key hires in 2010-2013 placed LJA in position to expand our market share. Having key seller/doers in place was a major factor in taking advantage of the opportunities available in a broad range of disciplines.”

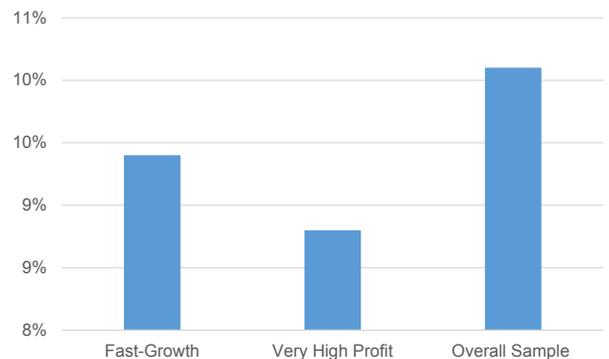
Overall, Zweig Group’s 2014-2015 Successful Firms Survey highlighted four major areas where successful firms differed from their competitors. We take a closer look at each below.

**SUCCESSFUL FIRMS FOCUS ON PEOPLE.** Looking at the numbers, successful firms spend more on their employees. According to the survey, last year very high profit (\$9,477) and fast-growth (\$5,667) firms spent much more on incentive compensation per employee than firms in the overall sample (\$3,077). Successful firms also spend more on bonuses. Bonus costs per employee were highest at very high profit firms, which paid a median of \$9,227 per employee. Fast-growth firms paid a median of \$5,153, and the general sample paid a median of \$3,661. As a percentage of net service revenue, median bonuses were 3.6 percent at all firms, 4.3 percent at fast-growth, and 5.4 percent at very high profit firms.

Other non-monetary benefits were also more prevalent at successful firms. The survey found that

fast-growth and very high profit firms were more likely to provide employees with a cellular phone. Fast-growth firms (55 percent) and very high profit firms (52 percent), in comparison with the overall sample (31 percent), were more likely to pay for the preparation of an employee’s personal tax returns. Employees at successful firms were also nearly 10 percent more likely to be allowed to regularly work from home.

### TURNOVER RATES



Source: 2014-2015 Successful Firms Survey, Zweig Group: <https://zweiggroup.com/p-2210-successful-firm-survey-2014-2015>

A combination of factors ultimately leads people working at successful firms to be happier. The overall turnover rate for fast-growth (9.4 percent) and very high-profit firms (8.8 percent) was lower than the median for firms in the overall sample (10.1 percent). Additionally, when asked “Do any of the principals in your firm abuse their position by failing to pull their weight?” 30 percent of principals in the overall sample said “yes,” more than double the 14 percent who replied the same at fast-growth firms.

At successful firm **LJA Engineering, Inc.** (Houston, TX), No. 17 on the 2014 Hot Firm List, having the right people was one of the key contributors to success.

“Diversifying our services with strategic acquisitions and key hires in 2010-2013 placed LJA in position to expand our market share. Having key seller/doers in place was a major factor in taking advantage of the opportunities available in a broad

See SUCCESSFUL FIRMS, page 4

### SURVEY & SAVE

Participate in Zweig Group surveys and receive a significant discount! Help your own firm and others like it by contributing your knowledge and experiences to the data that leaders of architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting firms are using to build their annual firm plans. To see open surveys, log on to <https://zweiggroup.com/survey-participation.php>



## CALENDAR

**PRINCIPALS ACADEMY 2.0** The Principals Academy 2.0 is an updated version of the Zweig Group's crash course in all aspects of managing a professional services firm.

The program is presented by a team of speakers – including Zweig Group Founder and CEO Mark Zweig – with extensive experience working with and for A/E firms. They have a clear understanding of what it takes to survive, and even thrive, in any economy.

The Principals Academy 2.0 is updated with the latest approaches to leading a successful firm in this new economy, including an expanded focus on business development, strategic planning, and financial management. The Principals Academy 2.0 is like a two day MBA for technical professionals and is the most impactful two days you can spend learning to build your career and your firm.

The two-day agenda covers six critical areas of business management from the unique perspectives of architecture, engineering and environmental consulting firms, and is presented in tutorial and case study workshop sessions.

The Principals Academy 2.0 program includes an extended Q&A session with industry leader Mark Zweig and the panel of speakers. This provides the attendees an opportunity to discuss in-depth the issues facing them at their firms with advice offered from industry leading experts.

Upcoming events include Oct. 16 and 17 in Los Angeles and Nov. 13 and 14 in Miami.

For more information or to register, call 800-466-6275 or log on to <https://zweiggroup.com/seminars/tpa/>.

**BECOMING A BEST SELLER** Could every person in your firm describe your services in a succinct and persuasive way that demonstrates what sets you apart from the competition? It's not enough to have the technical expertise to complete projects, you need seller-doers who can convey excitement and tailor the message for the audience.

That's why Zweig Group developed a one-day program that will help anyone who could possibly be involved in selling and who wants to be more successful and increase their value to their employers – design and technical professionals as well as marketing and business development professionals, principals, managers, architects, engineers, planners, scientists, surveyors, designers; anyone who wants to know more about selling. Becoming a Better Seller was specifically developed to help design and technical professionals become more comfortable dealing with clients and promoting the firm and your services.

Seminars will be led by Mark Zweig, Zweig Group CEO and founder, or Chad Clinehens, executive vice president, Zweig Group.

Seminar dates scheduled for 2014 include Dec. 4 in Kansas City, Mo. Group discounts are available for teams of four or more attendees from the same firm.

Please call 800-466-6275 or log on to [https://zweiggroup.com/seminars/better\\_seller/](https://zweiggroup.com/seminars/better_seller/).

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## SUCCESSFUL FIRMS, from page 3

range of disciplines,” says Calvin Ladner, president.

**SUCCESSFUL FIRMS ARE MARKETING SMART.** Successful firms know that marketing is much more than simply finding ways to package and promote a firm's services. While only 53 percent of all firms have a marketing director participate in their business planning process, 65 percent of very high profit firms and 63 percent of fast-growth firms do this.

Successful firms are also more likely to send out press releases. Sixty five percent of very high profit firms send out press releases regularly, while 63 percent of fast-growth firms do – compared to only 50 percent of all firms.

Marketing intelligence is also another area where successful firms stand out, with 63 percent of fast-growth firms tracking unique visits to their website, a figure that is more than 20 percent higher than reported by the overall sample.

Jill Hulst, human resources manager at **Michaels Energy** (La Crosse, WI), No. 74 on the 2014 Hot Firm list, says, “In the past three years, Michaels has grown customer share with major clients and added a large multi-year project with expanded services to be leveraged with new clients. In late 2012 we rebranded with great success. We are frequent speakers at regional and national conferences. We publish email newsletters biweekly and blog weekly, without fail, with over 2,000 touches a month.”

**SUCCESSFUL FIRMS CARE ABOUT COMMUNICATION WITH THEIR CLIENTS.** The 2014-2015 Successful Firms Survey found that successful firms were more likely to send periodic management updates to clients, and also sent these updates more frequently. In the overall sample, 62 percent

“In late 2012 we rebranded with great success. We are frequent speakers at regional and national conferences. We publish email newsletters biweekly and blog weekly, without fail, with over 2,000 touches a month.”

of firms reported they sent periodic project management updates, in comparison to 69 percent of fast-growth firms and 67 percent of very high profit firms. Thirty nine percent of all firms sent updates monthly, while 44 percent of fast-growth and 50 percent of very high profit firms followed this practice.

Successful firms also invested in other ways to communicate with clients and other offices. More than 20 percent of fast-growth and very high profit firms reported having in-house videoconferencing capabilities than the overall sample.

**SUCCESSFUL FIRMS CARE ABOUT QUALITY CONTROL.** Successful firms really bring it home by ensuring that profits are not sacrificed for quality.

The Successful Firms Survey found that 100 percent of fast-growth and very high profit firms conduct regular performance appraisals or reviews of employees. In the larger sample, 86 percent of firms reported having this same practice. In 55 percent of all firms project managers are always responsible for quality assurance/control. Sixty two and 67 percent of project managers at fast-growth firms and very high profit firms, respectively, handle QA/QC, in comparison to 55 percent of the overall sample. ▀

# TZL machine

**10**  
years  
ago

The vast majority of presidents, CEOs, and managing partners (87 percent) and most vice presidents or principals (78 percent) had the authority to negotiate their firm's fees.

**Source:** 2004 Fee & Billing Survey.

**HEADLINES: Editorial: Make up your mind! | Project Management Perspectives: Teach your subconsultants well | Raising rates without losing clients | Funding woes squeeze transportation firms | NSPE, IEEE push for more outsourcing restrictions | Focus on Ownership Transition: Maintaining equity control in an ownership transition; ESOPs on the rise in A/E business**

Here's a trick question: How does your firm raise rates without losing clients? Clarity comes in an article titled "Raising rates without losing clients" published in the Oct. 11, 2004 issue of THE ZWEIG LETTER (#582).

Several firm leaders interviewed for the article called for frequent billing rate increases. John Magliano, then CEO of **Syska Hennessy**, said that company raised rates as needed. "We try to charge a value appropriate to our level of service," he said.

ZweigWhite's (now Zweig Group) 2004 Fee & Billing Survey found that 76 percent of firms updated their billing rates annually.

**McTish, Kunkel & Associates** learned that it was a mistake to not do so after not raising fees during an economic downturn.

"In the early '90s, our economy was somewhat in the same condition it is in now, and we deferred raising our rates for the following year," Matt McTish, then president, told THE ZWEIG LETTER. However, we found that strategy was a mistake because we were still raising employee pay rates and still had the same overhead. What suffered was our profit margin. And, in the years to follow, we were

trying to raise our rates up to the level they should have been had we not deferred one annual increase."

Other firms, such as **GEI Consultants, Inc.**, stipulated a 5 percent annual increase on all contracts extending beyond 12 months.

"We're committed to remaining an internally run company. We need enough money to support us and finance our growth and development," said Frank Leathers, then president.

In his editorial, Mark Zweig wrote about how many people in the A/E/P and environmental business can't make a decision to save their lives. He offered several examples of firms that have challenged that stereotype:

- They pick the right leader.
- They make plans and stick to them.
- They have very clear management responsibilities and lines of authority and then don't second-guess it.
- They work on building trust among the managers.
- Their culture says it's OK to fail (but not spectacularly!) as long as you don't keep repeating mistakes.

**20**  
years  
ago

**HEADLINES: Editorial: Are your expectations realistic? | Co-op success | Market watch: Puerto Rico**

The article "Co-op success" in the Oct. 10, 1994, issue of THE ZWEIG LETTER (#80), makes a good case in favor of instituting a college co-op. The article offered the example of a program run by **Baskerville-Donovan Engineers, Inc.** in Pensacola, Fla., which at the time hired one-tenth of its employees through a co-op program.

The article offered the following advice to firms interested in starting a co-op program:

- Make sure the work is challenging.
- Educate managers and other staffers why you're establishing a co-op program.
- Develop a pay scale and provide the information to potential co-op students and to the school.
- Keep the co-op position staffed continuously.

In his editorial, Mark Zweig wrote about the four things every firm in the industry must do to survive: *sell* work, *do* work, *bill* for work, and get *paid* for work. He then offered a list of considerations, namely:

- How can you expect to sell work if you haven't even identified who can buy your services?
- How can you expect to sell work if your salespeople don't even know your capabilities?
- How can you expect to do good work if you have no control over the people who are supposed to turn it out for you?
- How can you expect to do good work if you never find out what your clients think about it?
- How can you expect to bill for work if you don't have complete and up-to-date information on the time spent on the job by each individual working on it?
- How can you expect to bill for work if you don't have all the supplier's bills related to the job?
- How can you expect to get paid for work if your bill doesn't get to the client?
- How can you expect to get paid for work if your bill doesn't make sense?



# Imbed entrepreneurship in firm culture

Visionaries and doers can coexist in the same firm.  
Here are some suggestions to get the ideas flowing.



STEPHEN  
LUCY

## BEST PRACTICES

Those who have started their own firms, saved and sacrificed to have sufficient financing, and dedicated countless hours to expand its operations, know the meaning of entrepreneurship. Tenacity and confidence are character traits of all successful firm founders. How else can you be willing to assume the risks involved? But as a firm matures and subsequent leaders assume control, is that same entrepreneurial spirit nurtured and rewarded or does the quest for the status quo take over?

Your future leaders understand the importance of entrepreneurship. You only have to look to the nation's universities to see that some of the fastest growing business education programs are those focused on entrepreneurship. Similarly, more and more technical degrees in the A/E/P industries are offering coursework or certificates linked to business and entrepreneurial studies. Many of those entering our professions want to be your future firm leaders and want to be prepared to lead your firms in new directions. Are you prepared to receive them and take advantage of their talents?

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEFINED.** Entrepreneurship is seen by many as just the act of starting a business. However, that implies that it is only valuable at the inception of a company and not throughout the life of the firm. Entrepreneurship is a process that includes identification of opportunities in the marketplace, development of a plan to capitalize on those opportunities, allocation of existing or new firm resources, and implementation of the plan. The desired result is the creation of value.

Successful entrepreneurs convert weaknesses and problems into strengths and opportunities. They change complacency into vibrancy. They can shift the thinking and confidence of an entire firm and give clear direction for change and improvement.

**CAN ENTREPRENEURS COEXIST IN THE SAME FIRM?** If you track the leadership styles and personality types of a firm's generational leadership, you typically find an entrepreneurial leader as the founding level, doers in the second generation of leadership and then a combination of doers and entrepreneurs in the following generations.

Focusing multiple entrepreneurial talents on accomplishing mutually beneficial goals can result in exponential growth in your firm. It will also assist in retaining the high quality forward thinking staff you need to successfully transition leadership.

Conventional thinking is that the founder's personality is typically so strong that entrepreneurs in the second generation will be driven off as their input will be discounted or ignored.

The old adage of two minds are better than one is right on when it comes to entrepreneurial thought. This does require an openness to change and acknowledgement that you do not know everything. This can be difficult for many of us as we think that our way is the best way. However, focusing multiple entrepreneurial talents on accomplishing mutually beneficial goals can result in exponential growth in your firm. It will also assist in retaining the high quality forward thinking staff you need to successfully transition leadership.

**CREATIVITY.** An essential element of a successful entrepreneur is creative thought. Being smart is

See STEPHEN LUCY, page 8

# How to recruit better

Look for an efficient and simple process to find, evaluate, and hire the available people you need now.



Pat  
McGee

## SEARCH SAVVY

**A**re you making recruiting too difficult? Sometimes the devil is in the details. An organized process should start with the end in mind – hire the best available. Notice the word “available.” You may want Bill Gates, but Bill is likely not available.

Sometimes we need to pause for a moment. Take a look at how we recruit. Maybe the old adage, “Keep it simple, stupid!” applies. Look for ways to be efficient, eliminate the clutter, and make it simple for candidates to apply. Those high quality passive candidates aren’t motivated by a list of requirements just to get their foot in the door. Here are some things to think about in your recruiting process.

- **First, extend the invitation to apply in a welcoming manner.** You can do all the paperwork (EEO) once you have candidate’s interest and contact has been made. The process should create benefits on both sides of the fence. You and the candidate have the same expectations from the recruiting process in place – an exchange of information that allows both of you to make an informed hiring decision.
- **Be responsive!** If you are serious about finding the best available candidate, put this task at a high priority on your daily “to do” list. Nothing in the recruiting process will more quickly drive away the best candidate than a slow, tardy, or late response. You must show interest if you want the best and the first step is a quick and informative response to your applicant.
- **Shorten the time it takes to schedule the initial interview** – whether it’s a phone conversation or an onsite interview. Remember that you have competition for the best person available. While your busy schedule says set the interview for three weeks from now, the candidate can be contacted, interviewed, offered, and hired by your competition while you try to free up your schedule. Think of a highly qualified candidate as you would think about your best client. You certainly wouldn’t make them wait for three weeks!
- **Limit the number of interviews.** If you are routinely having a candidate return for multiple interviews, maybe you need to bone up on the proper way to conduct an interview. Take time to prepare. Start with a brief description of the company and an outline of the open position you are seeking to fill. Then get to the most important reason for the interview: evaluating the candidate. Ask job-related questions that are open-ended. Let the candidate talk. Your job is to guide the interview so you get the information you need to make an informed decision.

If you are serious about finding the best available candidate, put this task at a high priority on your daily ‘to do’ list. Nothing in the recruiting process will more quickly drive away the best candidate than a slow, tardy, or late response.

- **Be selective in choosing others in your firm to participate in the interview.** They should be decision makers you trust to give you an honest appraisal of the candidate. Likely, that’s someone on the team to whom the candidate will report or those who will work with the candidate on a routine basis. You should require a written evaluation of the candidate from each interviewer based on predetermined qualifications, agreed to prior to the interview.
- **Finally, set a firm date to respond to the candidate after the interview(s).** Again, the best candidate is likely being courted by other suitors.

Having a well-oiled and organized recruiting process can dramatically improve your hire rate and the quality of the candidates you hire. When was the last time you sat down and looked at your recruiting process? Are you really capturing the best available? ▀

PAT MCGEE is the director of Executive Search Consulting with Zweig Group. Contact him at [pmcgee@zweiggroup.com](mailto:pmcgee@zweiggroup.com).



## ON THE MOVE

**WJE HIRES** One of the nation's leading fire protection and life safety experts, **Carl Baldassarra**, has joined **Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates** (Northbrook, IL), an interdisciplinary firm of architects, structural engineers, and materials scientists, as principal and unit manager. Baldassarra, renowned for his work in fire protection engineering, has worked extensively with WJE on past projects, including the 2006 Metropolitan Highway System Stem-to-Stem Safety Review in Boston. In his new capacity with WJE, Baldassarra will build and lead WJE's fire protection practice.

Over his career, Baldassarra has managed operations, led project teams, and has participated in numerous design, consulting, and research projects. Baldassarra is a recognized authority on the model code development process through his long time participation in several national codes- and standards-making technical committees. He is also recognized for his development of innovative alternate methods and application of performance-based design principles to a wide range of facilities. His experience also includes fire protection and life safety program development, code consultation, system design, property and casualty loss prevention surveys, loss investigations, litigation support, and related services.

Prior to joining WJE, Baldassarra was the executive vice president of **Rolf Jensen & Associates, Inc.** in Chicago, where he managed the firm's western region and practice development. His experience also spans more than 35 years at **Schirmer (Aon) Engineering Corporation** in Deerfield, Ill., where he most recently served as president of the firm and was responsible for operations in all regional offices.

**LEO A DALY HIRES** **David Daileida** has joined **LEO A DALY** (Omaha, NE), an 800-person planning, architecture, engineering, and interior design firm, as senior project manager of aviation projects in the Washington, D.C., office. Daileida will work closely with aviation sector leaders across the firm on major airport projects.

Daileida brings extensive experience in the design and implementation of major projects and programs, having directed

the design for facilities with budgets exceeding \$500 million and directed the management and coordination of the design efforts for the \$2 billion redevelopment of Ronald Reagan Washington National and Washington Dulles International Airports and the development of the \$6 billion capital improvement program at Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

As a senior executive he has directed operations for four architecture firms and established branch offices for two firms in new market areas.

Daileida is recognized as a leader in the industry, having held many officer and chair positions in the American Institute of Architects, including a term on its national board of directors. In recognition of his accomplishments, Daileida was elected to the College of Fellows of the AIA.

**T.Y. LIN NAMES T.Y. Lin International** (San Francisco, CA), a full-service infrastructure consulting firm, announced that **Tara Boggio**, associate vice president, has been named senior business development manager for Upstate New York. In her new position, Boggio will lead the expansion of TYLI's staff and services throughout the upstate region.

Boggio's background combines a lifelong working knowledge of Upstate New York, together with national experience with major business development. She previously led the firm's federal facilities business development efforts throughout the United States, securing designations on projects valued up to \$500 million. Notable successes resulting from her efforts include multiple contracts with the US Army Corps of Engineers in the Kwajalein Atoll and the rehabilitation of the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge in Washington, D.C.

Additional highlights of Boggio's career include leading both the Planning and Transportation groups in TYLI's Rochester office. During this time she has led several innovative projects such as the Finger Lakes Regional Sustainability Plan, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by the year 2050, and the public involvement efforts for the Rochester Public Market renovations.

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## STEPHEN LUCY, from page 6

great, but it will only get you so far if you cannot think of new and innovative ways to do your work and expand your business. Thinking, especially thinking outside the accepted norm, is probably the most difficult yet rewarding endeavor we can undertake. We need to encourage staff at all levels of the firm to contribute ideas on how the firm can improve and change for the better. Not every suggestion will be a winner and some may sound absolutely absurd, but there will be those ideas that can transform the firm and lead to future successes.

**IT IS A PROCESS.** So how do you incorporate that creative entrepreneurial spirit into your firm's culture? Here are some tips to get started:

- **Just begin.** Your first idea is probably not going to be a grand slam, but you have to start somewhere. So take one or two ideas on how you can create increased value with the opportunities presented and begin the process.
- **Research.** Odds are you are not creating a completely new thought; but you are combining existing information in new ways. Through research you can uncover applicable existing information that has been developed by others. You do not have to recreate the wheel, only understand how the wheel is best put together.

- **Collaborate.** Remember that you do not have to do all the heavy lifting yourself and that you can best utilize the collective knowledge within your firm through collaboration with others. This step also helps develop internal support for any new initiatives.
- **Set boundaries.** You can easily get overwhelmed if you try to evaluate and implement too many ideas simultaneously. Start out small and only take on what you can accomplish within a fixed schedule.
- **Feedback.** Evaluate each new concept as it is being developed and implemented. This allows for adjustments on scope and implementation schedule, if needed.
- **Dare to be wrong.** Inevitably some ideas are just not going to work, but don't let the fear of failure be a deterrent to attempting to improve. Some of the most dramatic changes in our industry have come from failure.

**KEEP THE SPIRIT ALIVE!** Your firm was started by entrepreneurs and it is through the cultivation and incorporation of that entrepreneurial spirit that your firm will improve and be more successful. No successful firm has ever stayed successful by embracing the status quo. As Albert Einstein stated, "Creativity is contagious – pass it on." ▀

STEPHEN LUCY is managing principal at **JQ** in Dallas. Contact him at [slucy@jqeng.com](mailto:slucy@jqeng.com).

## CASE STUDY

# Ramp up onboarding and training

Case study details fast-growing firm's approach to the process of getting new employees integrated.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent



Sharon Batchelor,  
Director of HR,  
Klohn Crippen  
Berger Ltd.

**Klohn Crippen Berger Ltd.** (Vancouver, BC), an engineering services firm, made the Zweig Group's 2014 Hot Firm List and has grown from 197 employees to more than 500 in the last 10 years. That's a lot of new employee onboarding and training. So, how did they do it?

Sharon Batchelor, director of human resources, says that onboarding is a component of KCB's overall people management plan that brings together key elements to help integrate new employees into their work environment.

## TALK TO US

Do you have an interesting story to tell? Is your company doing things differently and getting results? Let us know. We'd love to contact you and feature you in an upcoming case study. If interested, please email LSullivan@zweigwhite.com.

**ONBOARDING INITIATIVES.** KCB's onboarding program also encompasses a number of other initiatives, including:

- A positive and effective recruiting experience
- Orientation and welcoming activities
- A "buddy" program
- Induction and training to ensure familiarity with KCB programs and policies
- Assistance with professional and career development
- Mentoring opportunities (KCB has developed an in-house mentoring program to ensure staff interacts with senior leaders to allow for practical guidance and coaching at all levels)

New employees have a lot to become familiar with so KCB has also recently created a new intranet page specifically designed to provide access to the tools and resources needed to get off to a great start.

**TRAINING INITIATIVES.** KCB's objective is to provide a rich and satisfying job environment and to help individuals meet future personal, organizational and project needs. KCB supports professional and personal development for its staff through a variety of learning/educational opportunities. They include:

- A company-specific training policy
- Support for internal or external courses

- Technical discipline and project-specific skills development
- Essential non-technical skills development (to enhance well-rounded development as consulting professionals, KCB encourages employees to learn more – via formal and informal training – about "non-technical" but essential business topics that link to its balanced scorecard initiatives)

"Growing and developing our next generation of future leaders is an initiative KCB takes seriously and forms an important part of our company business strategy."

- In-house information sessions (Project Management, Consulting 101)
- Online training
- On-the-job work experience
- Conference and industry events (staff is encouraged to attend technical conferences, industry events and participate in sessions sponsored by professional associations)
- Business leadership development. This is available for staff who show a serious interest in continuing to expand their skills beyond the technical arena. High-caliber industry-specific sessions on topics such as business strategy, business development, client relations, advanced writing skills, project delivery, financial management, human resources management, ownership transition, and leadership skills are offered.

KCB has also sponsored key staff interested in completing their post-graduate degree.

**CONSULTING 101 FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS.** The consulting business offers unique opportunities for professional and personal growth. To learn more about the consulting business, KCB created a series of information sessions for new consulting staff covering important topics such as the history, leadership and strategy of the company,

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## RAMP UP, from page 9

consulting business fundamentals, and tools and resources available to help with career advancement.

**KLOHN-IN-TRAINING.** Achieving a professional designation or chartered status opens doors and provides employees with valuable qualifications. KCB has developed a pre-professional designation (in-training) program called Klohn-in-training (KIT) to assist and guide “new to the workplace” employees going through the steps required to obtain professional accreditations.

**CUSTOMIZED CAREER DEVELOPMENT.** “Growing and developing our next generation of future leaders is an initiative KCB takes seriously and forms an important part of our company business strategy,” Batchelor says. “About six years ago, KCB developed an ‘Associates Group’ whose mandate was to develop and prepare a number of our up-and-coming leaders for business transition opportunities. As the program evolves, new participants are invited into the group to participate in meetings and activities related to business growth, personal and professional development, business issues and company-wide collaboration.”

Developing career paths for KCB’s staff plays an important role at the growing company. The majority of professionals at KCB and other consulting engineering/science firms develop careers with combined technical and project management components. But KCB does it a little differently.

“We designed a job classification system to complement our performance management system to provide guidance to staff on the next steps in their careers,” Batchelor says. “Our job classification system has its roots in systems established by Canadian professional engineering associations. Our program is customized to match industry skills with company benchmarks and is connected to our balance scorecard of technical, people, client and business requirements.”

**PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.** KCB’s broad framework of projects allows staff to see, first-hand, how things work and how to apply their education training and coursework in the real world.

At KCB, professional staff have opportunities to develop their skills through a variety of unique on-the-job activities, including:

- **Interesting work at client sites.** KCB works on some of the largest civil infrastructure projects in the world, allowing staff to participate in special project field assignments and visits to interesting client sites.
- **Type of assignments.** Trainees are exposed to all aspects of KCB’s business through a variety of assignments, some of which may include rotations across various business units and geographic locations.
- **Professional development framework.** Staff uses a variety of techniques that include on-the-job experiences, learning from others and formal training.
- **Geographic assignments and transfers.** For those interested in broadening their experience outside of their home regions, short- and long-term project assignments are often available in other locations.

**RECEIVING FEEDBACK AND SETTING GOALS.** “Based

on employee input from our annual employee engagement surveys and several company-wide peer reviews, we know that KCB’s employees value opportunities to get feedback on the work that they have done as well as being able to provide input on personal goals and objectives,” Batchelor says.

KCB’s performance management program has moved away from the traditional assessment/evaluation format to one where the employee and manager have a chance to talk, understand and reach an agreement on the expectations, goals and objectives of both parties.

“We expect a minimum of one performance review meeting to take place per year, but also encourage more frequent informal meetings throughout the year,” Batchelor says.

**PROGRAMS RELATED TO MANAGING PROJECTS, PEOPLE AND RESOURCES.** Finally, for those who want to expand their skills beyond the technical arena into people and resource management, KCB has developed an in-house program targeted at improving effectiveness in relation to business and people management. This course involves a number of sessions, including: team development and team building, management, leadership, mentoring and coaching principles, staff performance and effective communications.

“We have also developed a number of in-house project management training modules (Klohn PM) for staff interested in learning about or enhancing their project management skills,” Batchelor says.

Now, these are some serious reasons for people to stay. ▀

## RESOURCES

**2014 POLICIES, PROCEDURES & BENEFITS SURVEY** The key to growing your firm and reaching your strategic goals often rests with the quality of your employees, and the quality of your firm’s policies, procedures, and benefits is critical to hiring and retaining a top-notch workforce.

But with benefits costs spiraling out of control, you also need to keep a close eye on the bottom line. How do you draw the line between offering benefits to attract the right staff to your firm and costly expenses that will break the bank?

The 2014 Policies, Procedures & Benefits Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms will help you benchmark your firm against industry standards so you can find out if you’re overspending on benefits and compensation.

The survey will also provide you with industry norms on policies and procedures so you can support your policy decisions with hard data. Get all the benchmarks you need on compensation policies, benefits, HR staff, and other major HR issues.

The results are broken down by firm type, size, region, and other factors so you can make comparisons between your firm and others just like it.

All information is the most current available, so decisions about your firm’s policies and procedures can be made with confidence.

For more information or to order a copy, call 800-466-6275 or long on to <https://zweiggroup.com/p-2191-policies-procedures-benefits-survey-2014>.

## PROFILE

# Taking the long view

Integrity and leading by example is what matters to NAC Architecture's CFO.



By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

### TALK TO US

Do you have an interesting story to tell? Is your company doing things differently and getting results? Let us know. We'd love to contact you and feature you in an upcoming case study. If interested, please email LSullivan@zweigwhite.com.

**T**homas (Tom) Stroehler describes himself as a strategic thinker. As CFO at **NAC Architecture** (Denver, CO), a 130-person firm, he has found fertile ground to think, strategize and help develop a firm that prides itself for its "passionate concern for the individual."

Born in Billings, Mont., Stroehler is a graduate of Montana State University and holds a BS in business-accounting. He has more than 31 years of experience in accounting and finance.

Fresh out of college, he took a job with Deloitte, Haskins & Sells.

"At the time it was considered one of the 'Big Eight' – eight largest accounting firms," Stroehler says.

While there, he worked as a senior auditor for about three years. After that, he moved onto a position as a financial planning manager with Western Sugar Company and then after six years, took a job with MDC Holdings as director of corporate accounting. For the past nine years, Stroehler has been with NAC.

As a principal and CFO, Stroehler directs financial strategy, planning and forecasting for the firm's four offices to accommodate future growth. He also provides support and input for corporate strategic direction and initiatives, and oversees company accounting practices and financial reporting.

### A CONVERSATION WITH TOM STROEHER

**THE ZWEIG LETTER: What are your key strengths? What do you feel the key strengths are for an effective CFO?**

**Tom Stroehler:** I am a strategic thinker. I am hard working and pride myself on integrity in both my professional and personal life. I believe the key strengths for an effective CFO are to approach all situations with a high level of integrity, to provide strategic input to the organization while never losing sight of the importance of the details and to place the interest of the company, its employees and shareholders over personal interest.

"I believe the key strengths for an effective CFO are to approach all situations with a high level of integrity, to provide strategic input to the organization while never losing sight of the importance of the details and to place the interest of the company, its employees and shareholders over personal interest."

**TZL: How would you describe your work style?**

**TS:** I lead by example by being a very hard worker. I allow flexibility in my day-to-day schedule by being open to re-prioritizing my responsibilities and work efforts to accommodate unexpected demands on time.

**TZL: What are your top priorities for 2014/2015?**

**TS:** To focus on firm growth and to improve the focus on the firm's project financial management.

**TZL: To date, what has been your greatest on-the-job challenge? How did you deal with it?**

**TS:** Assisting in navigating NAC through the impact of the most recent recession has been my greatest challenge. NAC's conservative financial management philosophy provided a strong financial base entering the recession. Wise decision making by the entire NAC management team helped to balance the need to preserve NAC's financial base and the firm's passionate concern for

See TOM STROEHER, page 12



# TRANSACTIONS

## **EYP AND WHR MERGE** EYP (Albany, NY) and **WHR Architects**

(Houston, TX), two internationally recognized design firms, have merged to better serve today's most pressing public and private building infrastructure needs: education, healthcare and energy. The strategic alliance provides unparalleled access to integrated thought leadership and high-performance design capabilities, regardless of client location.

The merger continues the expansive growth that both EYP and WHR have experienced in an increasingly competitive architecture and engineering market. In 2013, EYP grew by 20 percent and opened six new offices and WHR grew by 70 percent. The EYP and WHR merger unites 530 professionals.

EYP, a sustainability practice with projects in over 100 countries, delivers expertise-driven designs to higher education, government, energy, and corporate clients. Prior to joining forces with WHR, EYP expanded its family of practices in 2013 with the addition of **The Weidt Group**, an energy consulting and software firm with offices throughout the Midwest. Renowned in the higher education and government sectors, EYP is ranked No. 1 for sustainable design by Architect magazine, and No. 4 in higher education and No. 5 in federal government in Building Design + Construction's nationwide Giants 300 list.

WHR, with additional offices in Dallas and Copenhagen, currently employs approximately 170 staff. The healthcare design firm is responsible for several of the largest current healthcare projects in the country. WHR is ranked No. 1 in healthcare renovation in Health Facilities Management magazine, September 2014.

"Our merger positions us to better help our clients negotiate this challenging landscape, and our increased national visibility will allow us to further expand our reach and continue to provide valued insight for clients in the healthcare, higher education and energy industries, among others," said Tom Birdsey, president and CEO of EYP.

**MOTT MACDONALD ACQUIRES Mott MacDonald** (Croydon, Surrey, UK) a 16,000-person global management, engineering and development

consultancy, has acquired its UK water industry design and build joint venture partner **Bentley Holdings Ltd** (including its subsidiary company **JN Bentley Ltd**). The move is a natural progression in the highly successful 15-year partnership between the companies through the joint venture Mott MacDonald Bentley.

JN Bentley employs over 700 people with a turnover of £120 million (or about \$196 million). Over 80 percent of its business is derived through Mott MacDonald Bentley, set up in 1999 to operate as a wholly integrated, co-located joint venture by combining all facets of design, program management, site investigation and construction in one organization. The partnership was formed specifically to deliver long-term, high-volume programs of projects for the UK's water companies throughout the industry's rolling five-year Asset Management Plan.

Both MMB and JNB have won multiple industry and client awards for safety, innovation, client satisfaction, training and employee development. This next stage in the longstanding relationship will allow further development to enhance project delivery for clients, at the same time maintaining the shared ethos and culture that have been a hallmark of the partnership's success since 1999.

Mott MacDonald Chairman Keith Howells said: "We are immensely pleased to welcome Bentley into the Group as a natural next step for our partnership. The delivery model we have forged with our water industry clients continues to help them maximize value for their operations and their stakeholders - now we're looking forward to using our collective ingenuity to achieve ever greater benefits across the triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental value."

Paul Bentley, managing director of JN Bentley said: "Joining Mott MacDonald will benefit our clients and also offers fantastic opportunities for the employees of both companies. The longstanding success of the joint venture is because we share the same culture and principles. Becoming part of the Mott MacDonald Group will allow us to develop further to meet the challenges we face and ensure we continue to deliver a first class service for all our new and existing clients."

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## TOM STROEHER, from page 11

individuals.

### **TZL: What do you enjoy most about your job?**

**TS:** There are several things that spring to mind. They include: participation in strategic planning and working with the NAC Architecture team. What makes NAC Architecture unique, I believe, is our commitment to the individual. The foundation for our "Passionate Concern for the Individual" is provided for in our core values, and it has been integrated into all facets of the organization. Our commitment to the individual provides the framework for the relationships we develop with our clients, consultants and contractors as well as each member of the NAC Architecture team.

### **TZL: What are the company's core values?**

**TS:** We have four. They are:

1. Leadership through collaboration
2. Comprehensive perspective
3. Creative and innovative thinking
4. Sustainable design

### **TZL: What exactly is "comprehensive perspective?"**

**TS:** In design and decision making, we employ evidence-based, multigenerational perspectives and sensitivity that recognize long-term implications on: environmental protection and regeneration; lifetime relationships with our clients and community; and lifecycle outcomes – a whole-life perspective. Organizational learning and the institutionalization of collective knowledge is built on lessons from the past (precedence, successes, failures) recognizing mistakes quickly and then proactively and responsibly addressing them, integrating the knowledge gained into our systems and processes. We manage performance relating to time/schedule, resources/ budgets, and relationships/people in conjunction with the service and design that we deliver, pursuing perfection from the high level of organizing concept to the meticulous attention to detail. We keep the end results in mind, taking the long view!

### **TZL: What activities do you enjoy in your spare time?**

**TS:** I enjoy being a husband and a dad. I've been married for 29 years and have two children. My daughter just graduated from Central Washington University and my son is currently attending Whitworth University. I like reading and am also an avid runner. I run five days a week and average seven miles at a time. I've also been a skier my whole life and am a devoted fan of the Denver Broncos and Colorado Avalanche hockey team. ▀