

## Can you delay gratification?

Results of long-running study show that those who wait for reward do better in the end, Mark Zweig writes.

Firms run by principals who can delay gratification seem to be much more likely to have growing, profitable companies than those whose personal 'needs' require them to strip the company bare every chance they get.



Mark Zweig

### EDITORIAL

Back in the '60s a Psych professor at Stanford, Walter Mischel, gave a famous test to a group of 4-year-olds. He put a marshmallow in front of them and told them if they could wait 15 minutes to eat it, they'd be rewarded with a second marshmallow. Only about a third of them could wait.

Fast-forward 50 years and there are some very interesting findings. Not only did the group of those who could wait the 15 minutes do a whole lot better on their SATs, they were more successful in their careers with higher salaries, bigger 401(k)s, and shorter criminal histories. Pretty interesting research, all covered in Mischel's new book, "The Marshmallow Test."

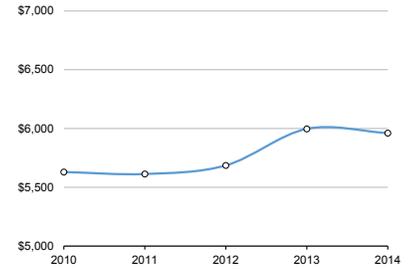
We see much the same thing in the AEC firms we work with. Those run by principals who can delay gratification seem to be much more likely to have growing, profitable companies than those whose personal "needs" require them to strip the company bare every chance they get.

It's really common sense. If you want to grow your company you'll have to reinvest your profits into acquisitions of other companies, starting new offices, adding new services, making new hires, trying new marketing initiatives, and

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## TRENDLINES

### Slight relief



Group insurance costs per employee decreased slightly this year to \$5,961 from a five-year high of \$5,997 last year, according to Zweig Group's 2014-15 Operating Expenses Survey. With the continuing rise in healthcare costs, this number has been on a gradual but steady climb from a low of \$5,630 in 2010. This ratio dropped slightly to \$5,613 in 2011, only to increase again in 2012 to \$5,686.

— Margot Suydam, Director, Research

### SURVEY & SAVE

#### 2015 Valuation Survey

www.research.net/s/2015ValSurvey  
Deadline: Dec. 5, 2014

#### 2014 Merger and Acquisition Survey

www.research.net/s/2015MASurvey  
Deadline: Jan. 9, 2015

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## A/E BUSINESS NEWS

**BIM ADOPTION RISING** While building owners may not always directly use building information modeling, they are increasingly recognizing its value on their projects. McGraw Hill Construction recently released a new SmartMarket Report, *The Business Value of BIM for Owners*, that demonstrates that owners expect to grow their involvement with BIM rapidly:

- 40 percent of U.S. owners and 38 percent of U.K. owners expect that more than 75 percent of their projects will involve BIM in just two years, with a particularly high level of growth in the U.S.
- Growth in the U.K. is being driven by the approaching implementation of a central government mandate requiring use of BIM on all national public projects by 2016, with over two thirds (67 percent) of U.K. owners reporting that the mandate has a high impact on their use of BIM.

"The McGraw Hill Construction report clearly shows the most important driver of BIM use in Singapore and the U.K. has been their national BIM mandates," said Phillip Bernstein, vice president of Strategic Industry Relations at Autodesk.

The influence of the mandate in the U.K. is driving a much higher general level of involvement with BIM by owners than in the U.S. The study suggests the impact of the mandate in several key areas.

Because the findings demonstrate the powerful influence that governments can have on the implementation of BIM, the report also contains research on BIM policies in over 20 major construction markets globally, as well as qualitative research with owners on the use of BIM in Singapore and Scandinavia, two regions with strong, effective support of BIM by their national governments.

Despite the vigorous involvement with BIM by owners in the U.S. and especially in the U.K., the study also reveals that they would expand their engagement with BIM if there were more industry professionals with BIM skills at design and construction firms, if their operations and maintenance staff had a better ability to utilize the model and if there were standards of model development and exchange to better enable use of the model across the entire project team.

Find more about the report here: <http://analyticsstore.construction.com/index.php/smartmarket-reports/BIMforOwnersSMR.html?sourcekey=presrel>.

**ARCHITECT MAKES CASE FOR WOOD** Emerging wood technologies will revolutionize the way our cities are built, says Vancouver, B.C., architect Michael Green in a new video series. Wood is part of the solution to many of today's challenges, from greenhouse gas emissions to an increasing need for urban housing and tall commercial structures.

Green is featured in an interview series explaining why wood is "being reinvented in modern architecture" with new engineered products. Green says wood is far more sustainable as a building material than concrete and steel because it requires less energy to produce and embodies more carbon than any other building material.

"Wood is the only material grown by the sun, the only material that uses the incredible power of photosynthesis... we don't have to build a photovoltaic panel to harness the sun, nature has already done it for us," Green said.

"Michael Green is showing us a new way to envision our cities using the most renewable building material on earth – wood," said Cindy Mitchell, director of Public Affairs with the Washington Forest Protection Association. "With its high level of sustainable forest practices and stewardship, Washington is positioned well to play an important role in this future of green building."

The video interview is available at [www.themostnaturalresource.com](http://www.themostnaturalresource.com).

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investing in technology spending. Your other options are to extract the money, buy a bigger house, acquire more vehicles, go on more vacations, etc. People fit in either one of these two camps.

Of course, if you delay gratification long enough and really get things going you'll be able to have your cake and eat it, too, because at some point the machine becomes so profitable and so valuable you really can afford to make some major extractions from it. The key is knowing when the time is right for that to occur.

But one thing is for sure, if you don't take care of the machine that feeds you, you'll never have the opportunity to make that choice. There really are two ways to run one of these businesses – or any type of business. It all goes back to the question of: "Do you run a small business that allows

you to make a living, or do you run an entrepreneurial venture that has value at the end?"

One of my clients, Paul Greenhagen, CEO of **Westwood Professional Services** (No. 6 on the Zweig Group 2014 Hot Firm List) likens the "small business choice" to being a housepainter. "They may make a living for 40 or more years painting houses. But at the end, all they have to show for it is some old ladders and rollers they can sell at a yard sale," he says.

So what are you – a marshmallow eater or someone who knows that if you let them sit there for a little while with the bag open they'll improve with age? If you want to end up with more than some old desks and office equipment to sell cheap, I hope you're one of the latter... ▀

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**THE ZWEIG LETTER**

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# Leading the way also means delivering

These leaders are inspiring their staffs by being hard workers themselves and leading by example.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent



Geoffrey Butler,  
President, Butler,  
Rosenbury &  
Partners.

**L**eaders demand performance from their teams, but how do they hold themselves to task? All agree, you can only ask for as much as you are willing to give.

**GIVE AND TAKE.** Geoffrey Butler, president, **Butler, Rosenbury & Partners** (Springfield, MO), a 20-person architecture, structural engineering, planning and development firm, says that he has always felt that he should not ask anyone to do more than he is willing to do. This means the small stuff too.

"I'll change a lamp out to help with the office lighting if it needs to be done," he says. "Leading by example seems to be the best."

Can you measure this type of behavior? Butler says that while it's difficult, they do track every man hour.

"The staff utilization ratio is the best way to verify effort. Everyone has a billable percent to meet. For me, I assign a reasonably high billable percent."

"The staff utilization ratio is the best way to verify effort," he says. "Everyone has a billable percent to meet. For me, I assign a reasonably high billable percent and make sure I exceed that while still staying on top of the non-billable management effort required to run the office. At the end of the year I usually have an average total of about 50 hours per week."

Butler says he just works hard and employees never think he's slacking.

William Bracken, president/principal engineer, **Bracken Engineering, Inc.** (Tampa, FL), a 30-person firm, wholeheartedly agrees with Butler in that he never asks more of his staff than he does of himself.

"Everyone in our organization has production goals that they are required to meet (including myself). Those goals are tracked and reviewed. My progress is measured the same as those whom I manage,"

Bracken says. "In addition, my calendar is viewable to all and I author a weekly email through which I regularly report my activities."

"Everyone in our organization has production goals that they are required to meet (including myself). Those goals are tracked and reviewed. My progress is measured the same as those whom I manage."

**A DAY IN THE LIFE...** Paul Jewel, COO, **Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates** (San Francisco, CA), a 125-person transportation planning firm, says that the past three years have been a time of growth and rebuilding... and stress. So, what has he done to make sure he stayed on top of his game during this crazy time? Being extra diligent about creating space between work and personal time has been paramount.

"It's so easy to fall into the trap of working around the clock when there's so much that needs to be done," he says. "I try to create a balanced schedule and stick to it, whether I'm working from the office, working from home or working on the road."

So, what does this schedule look like for Jewel? On a typical day it means rise and shine at 5:30 a.m. and then hitting the gym. The work day starts at 7:30 a.m. and he always allocates the first 30 to 60 minutes for reviewing and organizing personal work items.

"The organizational activities are critical because it allows me the space to focus on what's super important and to tune out or tone down those items that are just... noise," he says. "I try not to take any calls during this time and I try not to respond to emails."

By 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. he is "open for business."

"Like many people, I try to schedule the important meetings, brainstorming sessions and critical items for the morning. In the afternoon, I deal with what I would call busy work – things that aren't quite as important (i.e., deferred emails and items of sec-

See LEADING, page 4



## 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/).

## LEADING, from page 3



Greg Shipley,  
President,  
Morrison-Shipley  
Engineers.

“Part of our culture is a ‘circular’ process that continuously cultivates new thoughts and discusses the ‘what-ifs’ while also discerning what works and doesn’t.”

ondary importance). I try to get out of the office by 5:00 p.m. most days,” he says.

Jewel devotes the last 30 minutes of his day to activities like putting together the preliminary list of action items and tasks for the next day and cleaning off and organizing his desk. He also plays in a band and tries to spend an hour or so each evening practicing.

“This is not only a way to relax, but it’s also a great way to problem solve,” he says. “Some of my best ideas have come to me while I’ve been noodling on my guitar. As long as I stick to this basic plan of attack I can usually stay on top of my game, no matter what crazy things come my way.”



Joseph Kulp,  
Principal,  
Mulhern and  
Kulp.

**KEEPING IT FRESH.** Greg Shipley, president, **Morrison-Shipley Engineers** (Fort Smith, AR), a 40-person firm, says that while he expects a high level of performance from his staff, he expects even more from himself. To that end, he makes it a priority to stay well informed about new industry technologies to provide staff with the ability to work smarter and more efficiently.

“With that comes a price, but more important than price, the real value to Morrison-Shipley comes from respecting and supporting our staff to try their new ideas,” he says. “Part of our culture is a ‘circular’ process that continuously cultivates new thoughts and discusses the ‘what-ifs’ while also discerning what works and doesn’t. To do so requires that I remain well-versed within all areas of our practice.”

For Joseph Kulp, principal, **Mulhern and Kulp** (Amler, PA), a 40-person structural engineering firm, attending conferences is key.

“My business partner and I are always looking for a few positive changes to make to our business each year,” he says. “Attending the ‘Best Firm’ conference always yields a few good ideas for us to implement into our firm’s culture.” ▀

10  
years  
ago

**HEADLINES** Editorial: Your job as principal | Tracking the fall of an industry leader | Academic project seeks to increase diversity | Tax bill has good news for A/E firms | Preparing your firm for the new rules of electronic discovery | Focus on Leadership: Principal Player - Mike Burrow; On the Record - What's the best leadership book you have read?

That the courts can access most files stored in computers, from project files to emails and the like, and this is now taken as fact of life, back in 2004 the thought of electronic discovery struck fear in the hearts of many in the A/E industry.

The Oct. 25, 2004 issue of THE ZWEIG LETTER (#584), covered the topic following the American Council of Engineering Companies fall conference. Of particular concern among firm leaders were email communications.

According to the article: Misunderstandings can happen in email since it is very casual and usually written very quickly before going on to the next email, and you can have a long string of email communication with one person. "All of that, combined with no face-to-face communication, guarantees there will be misunderstandings and confusion," Julie Taylor, then an attorney with Noble & Wickersham LLP, told THE ZWEIG LETTER. "Fight the tendency to hit reply and go on to the next email."

Examples of sensitive email communication include notices of potential monetary claims, time extensions, or rejections of your submittal, the article said.

In his editorial, Mark Zweig wrote about the job of the principal, offering a laundry list of responsibilities. Here they are:

- You will lead by example.
- You will work hard.
- You will be the first to make sacrifices if they are necessary.
- You will be a good team player.
- You will be a seller.
- You will be a doer.
- You will think about the big picture, and not just your



Issue 584: October 25, 2004 A Zweig/White Publication

### Your job as principal

> Thoughts on the responsibilities of principals in A/E/P and environmental consulting firms.

We know from our readership surveys that the solid majority of readers of *The Zweig Letter* are principals in A/E/P and environmental consulting firms. When you talk about principals in our business, there's always been a lot of interest in who should get to become one, i.e., what should the selection criteria be? Those criteria may vary from firm to firm, but one thing's for certain—you better know the difference between "principal" and "principle," or you shouldn't be one! (I remember my grade school telling us that the principal was our "pal" and that just stuck in my brain.)

That said, I really think it's more productive to look at the principal role in terms of what it means to be a principal. Here is a little credo I cooked up that might help people understand what the title is really all about:

#### Your job as a principal

■ You will lead by example. This means you will turn your time sheet in on-time. You will ask clients to sign extra services agreements when they make out-of-scope requests. You will always go through the proper project initiation procedures. You will act professionally at all times.

You better know the difference between "principal" and "principle," or you shouldn't be one!

■ You will be the first to make sacrifices if they are necessary. If the firm becomes unprofitable, it is the owners who will suffer first and not the employees. You acknowledge that despite the best of intentions a pay reduction or a capital call could be required at some point in the future, and will support that if necessary to protect the firm.

■ You will be a good team player. You won't hog the credit as you acknowledge that this business is a team effort and many people are required to create a successful →

#### In this issue:

- Mark Zweig shares his thoughts on what it means to be a principal in an A/E/P or environmental consulting firm. **Page 1**
- A new corporate tax bill passed by Congress will mean a \$358 million tax cut for A/E firms. **Page 2**
- A new initiative aims to increase diversity in engineering education programs. **Page 3**
- A/E Business News: Congress passes several funding measures. Plus, the cap on foreign workers' visas is met. **Page 3**
- The behind-the-scenes story that led to the sale of HLM Design to Heery International. **Pages 4-5**
- Focus on Leadership: An interview with ENGlobal Chairman and CEO Michael Burrow. Plus, firm leaders recommend books on leadership. **Pages 6-7**
- Transactions: Heery sells transportation group; Parsons E&C is sold; Hot Firms make acquisitions. **Page 7**
- Legal experts share their advice for protecting your firm from electronic discovery. **Page 8**

### Leadership Books

Amazon.com's top-selling leadership and management books as of October 14:

1. "Good to Great" by Jim Collins
2. "A Carrot a Day" by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton
3. "Now, Discover Your Strengths" by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton
4. "First, Break All the Rules" by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman
5. "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" by Patrick M. Lencioni

Source: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

For more on inspirational leadership and management books, see article on page 7

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#### Next week:

> WorthGroup Architects finds success with focus on gaming facilities.

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The Zweig Letter

own area.

- You will protect the good name of the firm.
- You will not create problems for the firm.

20  
years  
ago

**HEADLINES** Editorial: What it takes to grow | Overhead caps | Office designs

Architects and engineers sure like a challenge, such as turning a warehouse into a usable office. An article in the Oct. 31, 1994 issue of THE ZWEIG LETTER (#83), describes how when it came to office design, all the rage in 1994 was that "anything goes."

The article offers several examples of that philosophy, including two firms that used or turned warehouses into offices, another that created an "un-engineer-like" office in a modern and bright building, and yet another that made a conference room look more like a theater.

What's your approach to office design?

In his editorial, Mark Zweig wrote about what it takes to grow a firm in the engineering and architecture business. He wrote that you need to do all of the following:

1. You have to do good work so you can keep your clients.
2. The owners must want to grow.
3. The employees must want to grow.
4. The owners must invest in the business.
5. The principals have to love working long hours.
6. You need a good business plan.



# Getting to know your target

Getting a foot in the door involves finding what makes a target tick and their needs, and ultimately face-to-face meetings.



Bernie  
Siben

On March 29, 1951, Gertrude Lawrence walked onstage at Broadway's St. James Theatre, joined a group of (supposedly) Siamese children and sang:

*"Getting to know you, getting to know all about you.*

*Getting to like you, getting to hope you like me."*

– Rodgers and Hammerstein, "The King and I"

## THE FAST LANE

I suspect that nobody realized she was explaining the primary activity of business development in the A/E industry.

Indeed, once you identify a likely target to pursue, it's all about getting to know the target, getting to know all about the target, getting to like the target, and hoping the target gets to like you as well.

It's a two-phased process. The first phase is research to confirm that your target is a good choice. There are huge amounts of information available from digital, print and flesh-and-blood sources.

### RESEARCH

**Digital.** If you typically work as a prime consultant targeting owners, there is lots of information online, starting with the target's own website. But remember that an entity's website puts out only what THEY want you to know. The information will be flattering, but it may not be complete or 100 percent accurate.

If you typically work as a subconsultant – targeting primes – you can look at ENR's Top 500 Design Firms, Top 400 Contractors and Top 200 Environmental Firms rankings, as well as Top 25 lists from the business press in a number of cities.

If you Google the target's name, you will find many items, both good and bad, written by the target and by outsiders, that will help you learn about the characteristics and the character of your target.

**Print.** Older books and articles may have never been converted to digital format. You may be able

Indeed, once you identify a likely target to pursue, it's all about getting to know the target, getting to know all about the target, getting to like the target, and hoping the target gets to like you as well.

to purchase the printed item from Amazon, or you may have to visit a bookstore. You may also find the book or magazine your local public library.

Many targets publish annual reports online or make copies available upon request. These reports will tell you about the target's future plans, which will tell you if they have work for you to pursue.

**Flesh and blood.** Your contacts may have information other sources lack, including anecdotal information based on actual experience. Also, contact the local Better Business Bureau and any agency or professional association that oversees or licenses the kinds of activities your target does, to see if there are unresolved complaints about the target.

Finally, cultivate relationships with staff members at the business branch of your public library.

Assuming your target passes the research phase, that there were no red flags or anything that told you to look for another target, you can move on to

See BERNIE SIBEN, page 8

## So you've rebranded, now what?

These comprehensive campaigns are more than a marketing exercise.



Chad  
Clinehens

**D**o you roll your eyes when you hear of a firm going through a rebranding? Be honest. Certainly the concept of branding has been slow to be embraced by the design and construction industry, but it is gaining acceptance. Many firm leaders are realizing that to better compete in this crowded market, having a strong brand goes a long way toward providing a competitive advantage. In a market where the margin between winner and loser is often very small, every little advantage is critical.

### BRAND BUILDING

Whether you have rebranded or not, or are even still in the process of understanding branding, read on. Last month's article discussed rebranding and brand refreshes from a conceptual standpoint. Let's now go a step further and work to dispel some of the misconceptions of rebranding and delve into some of the details of branding. First of all, most firms make the mistake of viewing branding, and rebrandings, purely as a marketing activity. As such, most firms do not truly rebrand. They simply change their marketing messaging and marketing materials and then go on a promotional blitz. Unfortunately, often everyone in the organization is doing pretty much the same things they did before the launch.

If you are considering a rebranding or have recently rebranded or are likely to rebrand, consider these tips to get the most out of this significant investment.

- **Rebrandings demand that your actions match your message.** Do not rebrand and tell your market that you are going to be a new and improved version of yourself, and then just go on being yourself. Most of the time, rebrandings are an effort to be somebody or something else. Look carefully at everything you are communicating and make sure every department, system, and procedure in the company is congruent with that. I had this saying when I was leading marketing at my A/E firm: "Say what we do, and do what we say."
- **Rebrandings or refreshes offer an opportunity to open a dialogue with your clients.** These activities are not just about pushing a ton of information and "look at the new us" messages to your clients. They are about getting real about the things you need to work on and your clients are your best source of that info. Include your best (and not

Most firms make the mistake of viewing branding, and rebrandings, purely as a marketing activity. As such, most firms do not truly rebrand. They simply change their marketing messaging and marketing materials and then go on a promotional blitz.

best) clients in a two-way conversation about who you should be. Then make meaningful and noticeable changes in the organization to reflect that input. The most effective marketing today is one that is inspired by a two-way exchange of information and ideas.

- **Push your branding messages through every layer of your organization.** Rebrandings are about every single employee getting on board with what the "new you" really means. A meaningful rebrand demands that you examine every aspect of your organization and being willing to make changes to improve. That means every employee must be on board with the necessary changes in order to effect true change. Additionally, rebrandings benefit your culture as much or even more than they benefit your clients and customers. Rebrandings and refreshes are a shot in the arm for your culture and you need to leverage that to its fullest.

See CHAD CLINEHENS, page 8



## 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>.

CHAD CLINEHENS, from page 7

We launched our new brand Sept. 26 at our 2014 Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference in Beverly Hills. ZweigWhite officially became the Zweig Group. A lot of work went into making sure all of our visual branded elements were transitioned at that moment. It took a lot of forethought to anticipate all of the things that people would see after 4:30 p.m., when we launched the brand. If you have gone through a rebranding, you likely know what I am talking about. So now what? Well, we still have a lot to do. In fact, we have a tremendous amount of work ahead of us. We are going to survey our clients (you), we are going to survey people in our market. This company has gone through much change and we are ready to find out

Push your branding messages through every layer of your organization. Rebrandings are about every single employee getting on board with what the 'new you' really means.

what you really think and what you really need and we are willing to make the changes to get there! ▀

CHAD CLINEHENS is Zweig Group's executive vice president. Contact him at [cclinehens@zweiggroup.com](mailto:cclinehens@zweiggroup.com).

BERNIE SIBEN, from page 6

phase two, face-to-face meetings.

**FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS.** The first meeting can take place almost anywhere you find the target's contact person.

- It can be five minutes of chat at a professional association lunch with others at the table.
- It can be standing in the coffee line during the afternoon break at a conference.
- It can be a chance meeting at a training session about a new storm water ordinance.
- It can be a 30-second chance meeting on an elevator at a government agency.

Regardless of the circumstances, the primary purpose of the first meeting is to get a second meeting, to have a sit-down conversation with nobody else present, and with at least 20 to 30 minutes set aside for the appointment.

This first conversation could be limited to your name and firm, what you do, what your firm does, and why you think you can bring value to the target. The goal is to get him/her to say, "I'd like to know more. When can we get together?"

When you get this second meeting, do your best to have it at the target's office. His/her office will tell you a lot that

you couldn't get if you met at your office, a restaurant or anywhere else. There will be visual clues on every vertical and horizontal surface to help you learn who this person is and what is important to them.

Don't waste too much precious meeting time talking about you and your firm. Summarize your firm in two minutes or less, and stress that you want most to figure out how you can best help the target.

Get the target to talk about what he/she needs, what the firm needs, what they like or don't like, what their near and long-term facility plans are, who their current A/E consultants are, what they expect from their consultants, whether they're satisfied with the service they're getting, etc. You want to know anything that will help you tailor the SOQ you're going to send them to address their specific challenges and preferences.

When the target invites you back for a second face-to-face meeting, perhaps with other target staff, you are well on your way to "getting to know" them and building a long-term relationship. ▀

BERNIE SIBEN, CPSM, is owner/principal consultant of The Siben Consult, LLC, in Austin, Texas, providing strategic and marketing services to AEC and environmental firms nationwide. Contact him at 559-901-9596 or [bernie@sibenconsult.com](mailto:bernie@sibenconsult.com).

## RIGHT NOW

# Make sure you are not a cliché

Claims regarding innovation and leadership are often thrown around without much thought. These firms explain why they walk the talk.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent



Marian Young,  
President,  
BrightFields, Inc.

When firms say they are a “leader” or “innovative,” what does that mean exactly? How do firms differentiate themselves when others are making the same or similar claims? Are firms falling into the commoditization train by using these clichés when that’s something they actually abhor?

**WALK THE TALK.** It seems that if you are going to make claims for being the best and the brightest you need to put your money where your mouth is (to use a cliché).

“We practice what we preach. Our office headquarters is built on a brownfield, a former City of Wilmington landfill. We constantly work to increase our energy efficiency and lower our carbon footprint.”



Randall Essex,  
Executive Vice  
President, Hatch  
Mott MacDonald.

Marian Young, president, **BrightFields, Inc.** (Wilmington, DE), a 42-person environmental services firm, says that it has grown to be an environmental leader in Delaware and it has also expanded into the surrounding states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maryland and Virginia. It has won a number of awards and recognitions, including: the Small Business Administration’s Delaware Small Business Persons of the Year in 2008 and in 2014; Best Places to Work from ZweigWhite (now Zweig Group), Delaware Today, and TheNews-Journal; Delaware State Chamber of Commerce’s 2006 Award of Excellence and 2014 Superstars in Business Award (this last award has not been announced yet, and will be presented in November). It has also been named to the industry ranking lists several times by Zweig Group and Inc. magazine.

So, what really sets them apart? Young outlines the following:

■ **We listen.** “We ask lots of questions and we

listen hard when other people are talking. We also volunteer a lot of information to help others with decision-making. Our goal is to gain a thorough understanding of the situation and of our clients’ and other stakeholders’ goals, plans and needs.”

“We are smart, honest, open, enthusiastic, and passionate about our work. We care and it shows.”

- **We are focused.** “Our mission statement is: ‘Improve the environment, build community.’ I have a personal mission statement: ‘Build soil, build Community.’ BrightFields also has a list of corporate values that we strive to live by.”
- **We teach and nurture our employees.** “We teach and inspire our employees to be the best people they can be, and the best environmental professionals they can be,” Young says. “We teach them to know their strengths and weaknesses and to value the contributions of all team members. We teach them by example how to take really good care of our clients. We also teach them to build community through engagement with technical project teams, civic organizations, non-profits and business trade associations. We give them stretch goals to build their confidence. We encourage them to teach and help each other. We celebrate our successes.”
- **We are nice to work with.** “We are smart, honest, open, enthusiastic, and passionate about our work. We care and it shows.”
- **We solve problems.** “Some problems are easy to solve. Some are impossible. We teach our team to reach and stretch and struggle to find and implement the best solutions. We don’t rest until we find the ‘elegant’ solutions, to solve our clients’ most difficult environmental and political challenges. We gain more confidence every time we solve a very difficult problem.”
- **We are small, but mighty.** “We use the best and most cost-effective technologies to remediate our clients’ sites. We do not have a large budget to attend conferences and cross-country trade shows,” Young says. “To keep abreast of emerging technologies, we develop relationships with technical experts

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## RESOURCES

**MARKETING SURVEY** Times are tight, and your firm may not have a lot of money to spend on marketing. How can you get more out of your marketing dollars? See what's working – and what's not – for your competitors and other firms just like yours with Zweig Group's 2014 Marketing Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms. You could find out what's working by trial and error, but why not save time, money, and headaches by getting the most comprehensive report on marketing for design and environmental firms?

With this book, you'll be able to see which marketing activities can provide the biggest bang for your buck; set realistic budgets for 2014-2015, including staffing levels, compensation, and investments in marketing systems and infrastructure; and determine reasonable goals for your own

proposal activity, hit rates, and more.

The 2014 Marketing Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms will help you:

- See which marketing activities can provide the biggest bang for your buck
- Set a realistic budgets for 2014-2015, including staffing levels, compensation, and investments in marketing systems and infrastructure
- Determine reasonable goals for your own proposal activity, hit rates, and more

For more information or to buy a copy, call 800-466-6275 or log on to <http://zweiggroup.com/p-2205-marketing-survey-2014>.

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at large companies and universities so we can learn about the latest scientific and engineering research and we can provide expertise on practical field implementation.”

- **We practice what we preach.** “Our office headquarters is built on a brownfield, a former City of Wilmington landfill. We constantly work to increase our energy efficiency and lower our carbon footprint. We are currently retro-commissioning our building. We just installed a 176-panel, 49 kilowatt solar photovoltaic installation on our rooftop. We planted raised bed vegetable gardens to teach our staff how to grow food. We compost our coffee grounds and are planning a program to compost our food waste and shredded paper.”

“HMM’s emphasis on innovation and quality service helps ensure that we continue to be a leader in developing innovative solutions. It also makes for a more stimulating and professionally satisfying place to work.”

**BUILD IT; THEY WILL COME.** At **Hatch Mott MacDonald** (Milburn, NJ), a 2,700 person, full service consulting engineering firm, Randall Essex, executive vice president and director of professional excellence, says that the company creates an environment that motivates innovation.

Practice-specific “knowledge centers” facilitate the sharing of successful work products, technical papers, presentations, and other information that will benefit future projects.

“At our technical symposia, we share lessons learned and industry trends with our clients,” Essex says. “Our annual ‘Professional Excellence Awards’ celebrates outstanding project management, technical innovations and technical excellence.”

Through innovation and effective project management, Hatch Mott MacDonald has developed a reputation for delivering award-winning projects. Examples across its practice areas include the Channel Tunnel, baffle drop structure research for sewer conveyance systems, bridge design inno-

“For us, innovation can be summed up in our tag line ‘teaming our talents for your success.’ Our staff can count on each other to help them apply the best cross-disciplinary answers to any challenge that they encounter.”

ventions that have helped deliver important P3 projects, the Tampa Bay Desalination Project, the SMART Tunnel in Kuala Lumpur, and ASCE’s Charles Pankow Award for box jacking innovations for Boston’s Big Dig. In areas such as asset management, emergency egress modeling, and risk management, the company has developed software and published papers that set standards in the industry.

“HMM’s emphasis on innovation and quality service helps ensure that we continue to be a leader in developing innovative solutions. It also makes for a more stimulating and professionally satisfying place to work,” Essex says.

**DEFINING LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION.** Michael Wiercinski, principal, **A. Morton Thomas & Associates, Inc.** (Rockville, MD), a 430-person civil engineering, landscape architecture, surveying, planning, construction inspection, and subsurface utility engineering firm, defines what being an industry leader means.

He says that an industry “leader” is a firm that is respected, trusted, and regularly counted upon by clients to perform and produce superior products and services. Repeat business, unmatched client satisfaction, low employee turnover/high satisfaction and state-of-the-art use of technology to enhance projects makes a firm an industry leader, he says.

Wiercinski further sums up innovation.

“For us, innovation can be summed up in our tag line ‘teaming our talents for your success.’ Our staff can count on each other to help them apply the best cross-disciplinary answers to any challenge that they encounter. They keep abreast on the latest research, but being practitioners, can apply that new knowledge to create solutions that work in real-world environments,” he says. ■

PORTFOLIO

# Design Matters at EDSA

Design at the forefront of EDSA's multi-faceted magazine, serving a multitude of purposes.

**DETAILS**

**Firm:** EDSA, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

**Marketing**

**tactic:** An annual magazine that intends to deliver the message that EDSA's work is creative, sophisticated and timeless.

**Results:**

First place, the external newsletter category, 2014 Zweig Group Marketing Excellence Awards. Increase in new prospect engagement and inquiries, referrals, and repeat business. Leads in the months of distribution were nearly 50 percent higher than the average month.



By CHRISTINA ZWEIG  
Contributing editor

**E**DSA (Ft. Lauderdale, FL), a planning, landscape architecture, and urban design firm, created an impactful yearly publication titled "Design Matters," a visual guide into the life of EDSA, now in the design stages of its fourth edition. The marketing piece won first place in the external newsletter category, 2014 Zweig Group Marketing Excellence Awards.

The 68-page publication is filled with large artistic images and has content ranging from business philosophy to studio structure, from hand graphic to case studies, design trends and the company's vision for the future. Human interest stories add value and extend the "shelf-life" of the magazine. Recently, a full version of the magazine was also printed and distributed in Mandarin.

The latest printed edition of Design Matters features the history, passion and creativity of EDSA as well as best practices, industry advancements and interesting trends through a pictorial of projects, places and people. With innovation at its forefront, the third printing highlights a collection of successful cutting-edge projects as well as subject-matter expertise on luxury hospitality evolution, education campus expansions, newer, stronger modes of development in China, community connectivity through healthy living design, as well as opinions and thoughts on other relevant topics.

"The intent was to develop a quality branded annual publication that is representative of the firm's talents and skill sets – delivering messages that are creative, sophisticated and timeless."

The publication not only contributes to the advancement of education within the industry, but offers the opportunity for developers, investors and individuals to witness successful sustainable practices that are influencing the way people live, work, learn and play around the globe.

EDSA created Design Matters in order to strengthen its brand, bring awareness to its full scope of services and expertise to prospective clients, and improve client loyalty with relevant, targeted information, advice and opinions on land development. Design Matters contains content that fosters excitement and positive perceptions about the firm's services and expertise.

"The intent was to develop a quality branded annual publication that is representative of the firm's talents and skill sets – delivering messages that are creative, sophisticated and timeless," says Sandra Arguello, marketing manager.

The magazine is also distributed to students in landscape architecture programs throughout the country to assist with recruitment efforts.

"In 2013, we saw a need to provide this publication in the Mandarin language to complement our outreach and expansion in the Asia Pacific market, and as a result, the magazine is now printed in both languages," Arguello says.

The publication also serves as an up-to-date pro-

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## AWARD WINNERS

**DESIGN WORKSHOP WINS TWO** The American Society of Landscape Architects announced the winners of the 2014 Professional Awards. The awards honor top public, commercial, residential, institutional, planning, communications and research projects from across the U.S. and around the world.

**Design Workshop** (Denver, CO), an international landscape architecture, planning, and urban design firm, was honored to receive two professional awards in the following categories:

**Analysis & Planning Category: Honor Award**

Devastation to Resilience: The Houston Arboretum & Nature Center

Design Workshop and Reed Hilderbrand  
Houston

**Research Category: Award of Excellence**

Finding Connections in the Outdoors to Youth and Families  
Design Workshop

Great Outdoors Colorado and Larimer County, Colo.

Since 2010, Design Workshop has been honored with 10 ASLA National Awards. Previous awards include the Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence, four National Honor awards in Residential Design, three National Honor awards of Excellence in Analysis and Planning and the National Award of Excellence in Analysis and Planning.

"We are honored to be recognized by ASLA for Design Workshop's work again this year. Knowing the caliber of competition present every year at ASLA, we are always delighted to be recognized by the organization," said Rebecca Leonard, Design Workshop president.

The October issue of Landscape Architecture Magazine features the winning projects and is available online for free viewing. The awards will be presented at the ASLA Annual Meeting and EXPO in Denver on Nov. 24, at the Colorado Convention Center. ASLA will present the 34 professional awards that were selected from more than 600 entries.

A complete list of the awards, their criteria, project information and images can be viewed at [www.asla.org/2014awards/index.html](http://www.asla.org/2014awards/index.html)

**FOX ARCHITECTS BESTOWED FOX Architects, LLC**

(Washington, DC), an architecture, interior design, and graphic design firm, won multiple awards on Oct. 2 at the NAIOP Maryland/DC Chapter's 2014 Awards of Excellence. FOX Architects was recognized for their Nuclear Energy Institute, American Forest & Paper Association, Barbaricum, Marriott, and 440 First Street projects.

"The NAIOP Maryland/DC Awards of Excellence incorporate so many great achievements in our industry," said Bob Fox, founding partner. "It is always a tremendous honor to be recognized by our fellow designers and industry peers. I'm very proud of our FOX team and the recognition is well-deserved."

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spectus, a primary collateral piece, and an initial introduction to EDSA, and therefore can be distributed at conferences, trade shows and prospect meetings.

Other recipients include the firm's client database composed of about 8,500 developers, operators, land owners, investors and other industry consultants. Although the mailing list is large, EDSA keeps things personal by sending preview copies to key clients prior to the general mailing, with hand-written notes from selected principals at EDSA.

A digital copy of both language versions can be downloaded from the firm's website at [www.edsaplan.com/en/Publications](http://www.edsaplan.com/en/Publications).

EDSA believes that since Design Matters is a long-term content marketing initiative, quantifying its success is not based solely on return on investment. However, the firm was able to demonstrate impressive returns. New prospect engagement and inquiries, referrals, and repeat business saw an increase; leads in the months of distribution were nearly 50 percent higher than the average month.

Client feedback, brand reputation, and social media metrics were all favorable; visits to the publications section of the firm's web page were tracked with Google Analytics and the campaign received three awards in addition to the Marketing Excellence Award, including the 2014 & 2013 Addy Award – gold, The Gold Award of Excellence from the 2014 Communicator Awards, and 2013 & 2014 Hermes Creative Awards – platinum. ▀

