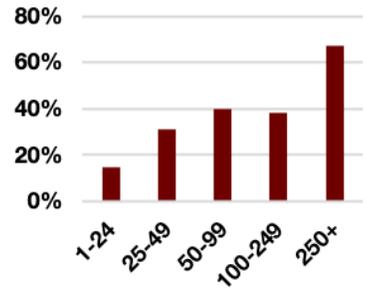


TRENDLINES

Tracking sales



In Zweig Group's *2019 Project Management Report of AEC Firms*, survey participants were asked about their firm's marketing and business development strategies within their project management sector. Of the overall dataset, 36 percent of firms track sales numbers by each project manager in the firm. Looking deeper, there is an increase in the number of firms that track sales by PM as the staff size increases. Larger firms are recognizing the critical role that their PM team plays in their increasing project volume and want to set goals for them using sales analytics.

Participate in a survey and save \$320 on any Zweig Group research publication. Visit bit.ly/TZLsp to learn more.

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Untimely events

Untimely events, like the unexpected death of a firm leader, can and do happen. Is your firm ready?



Tracey Eaves

I received an email this week from one of my long-time annual valuation clients and it wasn't good news. The company's CAO passed away suddenly at the age of 43. It was certainly a shock and a very tragic event.

The news brought to reality how our daily personal and professional lives can change in an instant and how our companies can be impacted and transformed whether we are ready or not.

In my world of valuation, I am constantly assessing the risk levels that exist within AEC firms. The more risks that exist result in higher discount rates and, thus, a downward impact on share values.

As a firm owner, you may not be thinking about elements of risk on a daily basis, but it is creeping around every corner. Some risk events you may see coming, but some you can't. The question is, can your firm successfully deal with an unforeseen event that could impact your operations?

Two drivers come to mind that could create an immediate issue for any firm:

1) The death of a firm leader/executive. In certain instances, such as a prolonged illness, shareholders and firms may have some time to prepare for the loss of a person in a leadership or executive role. In other cases, there is no warning, such as the email notification I received this week.

As a firm owner, have you ever given thought as to how the company would be impacted by a sudden passing and have you put any plans in place to help mitigate some of that impact? It could be simple things such as letting someone know how to access your computer. In single owner firms, do you have an additional signatory on your bank account to be able to access funds to make payroll? In larger firms, the impact might not be felt as hard, depending upon a person's role, but what would happen if the company president was suddenly no longer around? We recently had an M&A client that was in the middle of selling their firm when one of the owners suddenly passed and it has certainly been challenging for the remaining partner to pick up the pieces.

I still run across firms (mostly on the smaller side) that operate without life insurance on the shareholders. In my view, this is one of the easiest things you can do to help mitigate some risk and avoid putting financial pressure on the firm when buying shares from the deceased's estate.

2) Cyber security. This is an interesting topic from the perspective of

See TRACEY EAVES, page 2

ON THE MOVE

OHM ADVISORS NAMES WINGATE VICE PRESIDENT OF ENGINEERING OHM Advisors, an architectural, engineering, and planning firm, announced the appointment of Pat Wingate, P.E., as vice president of engineering. The announcement was made by John Hiltz, president, OHM Advisors, as part of a strategic restructuring of leadership roles – with all vice presidents now reporting directly to newly named COO Jon Kramer. In his new role as vice president, Wingate will oversee the transportation engineering and field services disciplines at OHM Advisors.

“Pat’s contributions to the success of OHM Advisors over the past 22 years are extensive, providing inspiring leadership and expertly guiding our teams through countless complex transportation projects we have completed for our clients,” said Hiltz. “It is an honor to announce Pat’s promotion and thank him for his commitment to advancing communities.”

Wingate has nearly 30 years of experience as a civil engineer, spending seven years with the Illinois Department of Transportation before joining OHM Advisors. Prior to being named vice president of engineering, Wingate was director of transportation, working with regional leadership to drive client relations and business development strategy, provide oversight for all transportation projects, and manage overall business metrics performance.

An expert in infrastructure design, Wingate’s award-winning team helped bring Michigan’s first Diverging Diamond Interchange at I-75 and University Drive to Auburn Hills. Under Wingate’s guidance and skillful leadership, the firm’s transportation team is regularly awarded by local, regional, and state industry organizations for their impactful, pivotal projects.

Wingate is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and is active with the American Council of Engineering Companies. He regularly joins fellow Michigan industry leadership in the nation’s capital each year to participate in the ACEC Legislative Convention. Wingate earned a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from the University of Michigan and an MBA from Davenport University. Wingate is a resident of Canton, Michigan, where he and wife, Amy, raised four children.

Headquartered in Livonia, Michigan, and with 15 offices throughout Michigan, Ohio, and

Tennessee, OHM Advisors provides award-winning architectural, engineering, and planning services. Founded in 1962, OHM Advisors serves clients in both the public and private sector including infrastructure, stormwater, and municipal water systems.

BROWN JOINS BEARDSLEY ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS Beardsley Architects + Engineers announced that James (Jace) Brown, R.A., AIA, NCARB, joined the firm as architect and capital region principal. With his experience balanced between construction and design, he brings a comprehensive approach to architecture.

Beardsley’s entry into the Capital Region represents both a commitment to existing clients in the area, and a growing commitment to the region.

Brown is a national award-winning architect with nearly two decades of experience in the allied disciplines of architecture, construction, real property development, and interior design. Brown joins Beardsley from **Phinney Design Group** where he served as VP/creative director. While at Phinney, he was the lead designer, architectural project manager, and owner’s representative for the William Boyd Center in Hague, New York, a 45,000-square-foot mixed use hotel, conference, dining, and retail facility at the core of the historic Silver Bay campus on Lake George, New York.

Brown’s experience also includes work in commercial projects, including master plans for churches, hotels, golf courses, ski resorts, and the Saratoga Racecourse, which involve both new construction and historic preservation. He has designed numerous custom residential properties throughout the Saratoga Springs, Adirondack, and Lake George regions, as well as urban commercial and residential developments throughout the Capital District.

“We’re privileged and excited to have Jace join our team at Beardsley. We look forward to using his experience and talents in both architecture and the construction community to help Beardsley grow in the Capital Region,” said Joseph Kime, P.E., president of Beardsley.

Founded in 1898, Beardsley Architects + Engineers is a full service firm providing professional design services to public and private sector clients across central and northern New York.

TRACEY EAVES, from page 1

risk. I think we all acknowledge and take precautions with our security, but have you ever given thought to how you would deal with a hacking event that resulted in your data being held ransom? If you think it can’t happen to you, think again. I attended a seminar on this issue a few months back. The threat is real and it can have a devastating impact if it happens. Talking with your IT people about how to best mitigate this risk is worth the investment of time. ■

TRACEY EAVES, MBA, CBA, CVA, BCA, CMEA, is a member of the valuation advisory services team at Zweig Group. She has been valuing privately held company interests for more than 19 years. Contact Tracey at teaves@zweiggroup.com or directly at 505.258.8821



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Giving feedback

“If you approach feedback from the standpoint that you are trying to help your people – even if it is negative – most will appreciate you.”



Mark
Zweig

Giving feedback to your employees is a major part of your job as a leader of an AEC firm. It is not a pleasant job and may have a negative connotation, but it is necessary nevertheless if you want your people to do better and your company to prosper. It is something that, in my experience, architects and engineers – and probably most other people – don’t like to do or don’t do well.

Here are my thoughts:

- The purpose of your feedback is not to make people feel good. There was a recent *Harvard Business Review* article on this topic that dispelled this common misperception. The real purpose is to help people improve. You have to keep this in mind. Too many people want to beat around the bush and don’t honestly confront what needs to be discussed. This isn’t helping you or the employee. You don’t want to insult people but you do have to be straight with them.
- Continuous feedback is necessary. You cannot wait until the annual or semi-annual review time to deliver feedback. It should be provided continuously throughout the year. Again, this isn’t the tendency for most of us. We hesitate and procrastinate, and, in the process, delay (or possibly miss) the

“[Feedback] is something that, in my experience, architects and engineers – and probably most other people – don’t like to do or don’t do well.”

opportunity for our people to improve. It cannot all be delivered personally, either. You may need to talk on the phone or send a text or email at times. Everyone is busy and – in many firms – traveling, and it is unrealistic to think you can always do this face-to-face.

- Your HR people will still insist you do your written annual or semi-annual reviews. So that means you have to do these. But they should not yield any

See MARK ZWEIF, page 4



BUSINESS NEWS

EIGHT FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT BUILDINGS INSCRIBED ON UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

The World Heritage Committee, meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan, has officially inscribed The 20th-Century Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, which includes eight major works spanning 50 years of Wright's career, on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Wright is widely considered to be the greatest American architect of the 20th century, and the sites in the group inscription span his influential career. They include Unity Temple (Oak Park, Illinois), the Frederick C. Robie House (Chicago), Taliesin (Spring Green, Wisconsin), Hollyhock House (Los Angeles), Fallingwater (Mill Run, Pennsylvania), the Herbert and Katherine Jacobs House (Madison, Wisconsin), Taliesin West (Scottsdale, Arizona), and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York).

There are more than 1,000 World Heritage sites around the world, and the group of Wright sites is now among only 24 sites in the U.S. The collection represents the first modern architecture designation in the country on the prestigious list.

"This recognition by UNESCO is a significant way for us to reconfirm how important Frank Lloyd Wright was to the development of modern architecture around the world," says Barbara Gordon, executive director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, an international organization dedicated to the preservation of all of Wright's remaining built works. "There are nearly 400 remaining structures designed by Wright. Our hope is that the inscription of these eight major works also brings awareness to the importance of preserving all of his buildings as a vital part of our artistic, cultural and architectural heritage. All communities where a Wright building stands should appreciate what they have and share in the responsibility to protect their local – and world – heritage."

"It is an immense honor to have Frank Lloyd

Wright's work recognized on the world stage among the most vital and important cultural sites on Earth like Taj Mahal in India, the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt and the Statue of Liberty in New York," said Stuart Graff, president and CEO of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. "To have this unique American legacy placed alongside these precious few sites around the globe is meaningful because it recognizes the profound influence of this American architect and his impact on the whole world. This designation is a great source of national pride, and while eight buildings are included in the inscription, it recognizes the importance of Wright's work, embodied in every one of his buildings and designs. These sites are not simply World Heritage monuments because they are beautiful. It's so much more than that. These are places of profound influence, inspiration and connection."

The eight inscribed sites have played a prominent role in the development and evolution of modern architecture during the first half of the 20th century and continuing to the present. UNESCO considers the international importance of a potential World Heritage Site based on its "Outstanding Universal Value," which in the Wright series is manifested in three attributes. First, it is an architecture responsive to functional and emotional needs, achieved through geometric abstraction and spatial manipulation. Second, the design of the buildings in this series is fundamentally rooted in nature's forms and principles. Third, the series represents an architecture conceived to be responsive to the evolving American experience, but which is universal in its appeal.

The Wright nomination has been in development for more than 15 years, a coordinated effort between the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, each of the nominated sites and independent scholars, with a substantial financial commitment realized through subsidies and donations, countless

hours donated by staff and volunteers, and the guidance and assistance of the National Park Service. The nomination effort was spearheaded by Fallingwater Director Emerita and founding Conservancy board member Lynda Waggoner, with Fallingwater contributing support and expertise in the nomination's preparation. The Conservancy will now coordinate the activities of the Frank Lloyd Wright World Heritage Council, chaired by Waggoner, which was established to support the responsible conservation and promotion of the eight World Heritage sites.

In 2015, the U.S. nominated a series of 10 Wright-designed sites to the World Heritage List. At its meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, in July 2016, the World Heritage Committee decided to "refer" the nomination for revisions. Over the past two years, the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy worked with the council of sites and leading scholars to revise the nomination and rework the justification for inscription.

The National Park Service submitted the Wright nomination to the World Heritage Centre in Paris on November 20, 2018, and it was reviewed and inscribed at the 2019 session of the World Heritage Committee in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, established by Wright in 1940, is dedicated to preserving Taliesin and Taliesin West for future generations, and inspiring society through an understanding and experience of Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas, architecture and design. Wright's legacy, reflected in contemporary work around sustainable and affordable architecture and excellence in design, is of even greater importance today than in his own time. The Foundation is forward-looking, but rooted in the history of the Taliesin communities. Please visit FrankLloydWright.org for more information on tour schedules, cultural and educational experiences and events.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 3

surprises for the employees. If they do, you aren't providing enough regular feedback to them every day. And no, I am not one of those people who believes these are necessary in order to protect ourselves from employee lawsuits. I think you will find more often than not that the employees we need to move out for poor performance have a long history of positive reviews which will only give them ammunition for a wrongful termination lawsuit.

- People will dodge your feedback. Just like your teenagers at home probably do, your people know when they have messed up and will work hard to avoid hearing the lecture (being corrected). But nevertheless, just as is the case when you are a parent, it is your responsibility to deliver necessary feedback so your employees can learn and the company can do better.

No one likes working for a jerk. That said, IF you approach feedback from the standpoint that you are trying to help

"Giving feedback to your employees is a major part of your job as a leader of an AEC firm. It is not a pleasant job and may have a negative connotation, but it is necessary nevertheless if you want your people to do better and your company to prosper."

your people – even if it is negative – most will appreciate you. It can be rewarding when you see your people and company flourish. In any case, giving feedback is your job as a leader and you need to do it. ▀

MARK ZWEIG is Zweig Group's chairman and founder. Contact him at mzweig@zweiggroup.com.



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PROFILE



In the trenches: Margaret Robertson

President and CEO of Falcon Engineering, a woman-owned engineering firm in Cary, North Carolina.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

Robertson is a registered licensed engineering geologist by trade and has more than 30 years of experience in the materials testing and geotechnical engineering industry. She oversees the entire operation of Falcon from its AASHTO accredited laboratory, to its engineering services and marketing and business development initiatives.

“We strongly adhere to an open-door policy – from executive leadership down to our project managers,” Robertson says. “We feel a listening ear without harsh pushback is the key to a trusting relationship and understanding the needs of our staff.”

A CONVERSATION WITH MARGARET ROBERTSON.

The Zweig Letter: What are three or four key business performance indicators that you watch most carefully? Do you share that information with your staff?

Margaret Robertson: Backlog, gross margin, and AR status. These key performance indicators are shared with senior leadership, project managers, and department managers on a weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly basis.

TZL: How far into the future are you able to reliably predict your workload and cash flow?

MR: It’s a strong market now and that’s allowed us to look even further into the future with high reliability. Currently, with 90 percent reliability, we can predict our workload and cash flow out for the next eight to 10 months. Beyond that, with 60 percent reliability, we can predict workload 15 to 18 months away, and, with 30 percent reliability, predict 24 months away. In the past, during tougher markets and economic downturns, it’s been difficult to reliably predict our workload and cash flow just four to six months out.

TZL: How much time do you spend working “in the business” rather than “on the business?”

MR: When I hear the phrase working “in” the business rather than “on” the business, one word comes to mind: Synonymous. There is no divvying up the percentage of time spent working “in or on” the business. Running a successful small business requires looking “in” the business before working “on” the business. Seeing inside the business involves an understanding of your service lines and technical expertise. It also requires a

commitment to mentoring and a “getting in the trenches” mentality if needed. Taking a hands-on approach has enabled me to better understand how to address the working “on” part of the business.

TZL: What role does your family play in your career? Are work and family separate, or is there overlap?

MR: We like to refer to ourselves as the “Falcon Family,” and often use the hashtag #FalconFamily in our social media posts. We also speak to it on the culture page of our website. This is not just a tagline we use for recruiting purposes. We really are a close-knit family of staff who genuinely care about one another. We want to see each other succeed inside and outside the confines of our job. Being a small company, we not only know our staff members’ spouse and children’s names, but we often see them at our events or during an office visit. When the babysitter doesn’t work out or family schedules are derailed, we welcome our staffs’ children to come to the office. Just a few weeks ago, one of our staff members said over a lunch conversation that coming to work everyday is like getting paid to come hang out with their friends. To solidify our whole familial approach, we also put out a quarterly internal newsletter that is very much employee-focused, which we mail home to staff’s families. Any way you look at it, family is important to us.

TZL: It’s often said that people leave managers, not companies. What are you doing to ensure that your line leadership are great people managers?

MR: This statement could not be truer, as we have experienced it first-hand. Falcon came to a bump in the road a few years back that warranted some redirection and leadership change. Prior to the transition, morale was low and employee turnover was high. Something needed to change – leadership structure. It’s been more than five years now, and it’s safe to say we have come out on the other side with a fresh perspective and a bright future. Since the change, we’ve had four former Falcon employees return to us and our retention rate is at an all-time high. The redirection has also allowed us to implement some new tools to ensure staff is happy and our management team is well-trained – not only in their technical work, but also in team management. We encourage and pay for our staff to gain the training they need to serve their teams well, one of which was Zweig Group’s [Excellence in Project Management](#) seminar. Also, as part of the onboarding process, we gift each employee with Tom Rath’s *StrengthsFinder*

book and require them to take the associated StrengthsFinder test. Their results are put into a master spreadsheet, alongside the rest of our employees’, and is shared with leadership and project managers. We have found this to be a great tool to better understand our staff, their individual strengths, and their unique working styles.

TZL: What novel approaches are you bringing to recruitment, and how are your brand and differentiators performing in the talent wars?

MR: Because anyone who comes to Falcon can affirm that we are in fact a family-oriented culture, it has gained us a handful of employees through referrals. Our staff acts as cheerleaders and they often are the ones bringing in new talent. We’ve also partnered with NC Works – a partner of the NC Department of Commerce that provides an online resource for job seekers and employers in North Carolina. They have 94 career centers in the state with more than 4,000 resumes uploaded weekly. So far, we have used their services to hire three employees. We feel that NC Works is an untapped resource for employers of North Carolina. Like other firms, we also attend career fairs. While this may not be a novel approach, it’s a great way to interact with the incoming work-force talent and get a feel for what young jobseekers are looking for in their career.

TZL: What financial metrics do you monitor to gauge the health of your firm?

MR: We primarily monitor backlog, billings, gross margin, bottom line profit, and AR/cash flow. These key metrics are directly compared to our previously established annual budget/projections on monthly financial reports as well as other interim reports. They are also directly compared to some industry standard key financial metrics when applicable. Quarterly, our leadership team gets together to discuss our performance year-to-date, and determines if we need to adjust our budget/projections and/or adjust our operations, such that our annual revenue and profit goals are met or exceeded by year end.

TZL: They say failure is a great teacher. What’s the biggest lesson you have had to learn the hard way?

MR: Taking calculated risks in business is inherent for success. Sometimes failure happens regardless of how much research, due diligence, or information gathering is performed. The greatest lesson I’ve learned

See IN THE TRENCHES, page 8



HEADQUARTERS: Cary, NC

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:
40

YEAR FOUNDED: 1993
(originally named Tierra;
rebranded as Falcon in
2008)

NUMBER OF OFFICE

LOCATIONS: 1

SERVICES:

- Geotechnical engineering
- Testing and inspections
- Environmental services
- Laboratory services

DESIGNATIONS:

- Woman Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (WDBE)
- North Carolina Department of Administration, Historically Underutilized Business (HUB)
- North Carolina Department of Transportation, Small Professional Services Firm (SPSF)

ABOUT AASHTO ACCREDITED

LABORATORY: This in-house, state-of-the-art, AASHTO-accredited laboratory provides physical testing of soil, concrete, aggregate, asphalt, and building materials. In addition to the in-house laboratory, Falcon can provide mobile, on-site laboratory services anywhere in the state or region.



Falcon Engineering staff celebrating Easter.

IN THE TRENCHES, from page 7

before pulling the trigger is to stay vigilant, have a clear, concise timeline for success, which includes accountability and expectations. Also, get a second opinion on all legally bound contractual agreements, ensuring a path of recourse protecting owners and the company. Finally, if things are heading south, do not prolong the inevitable. Cut your losses.

TZL: Research shows that PMs are overworked, understaffed, and that many firms do not have formal training programs for PMs. What is your firm doing to support its PMs?

MR: I think this question is best answered through direct feedback recently received from one of Falcon's project managers: "I want to emphasize how well our company is managed and the benefit this brings to our clients. Falcon's project managers are provided with as much information as possible, and as many tools needed for project pursuits, to manage active projects, measure key project metrics, and to communicate with owners along with project team members. Senior leadership are open to communication with project managers and actively seek feedback from us regarding how problems are resolved and welcome suggestions for new procedures. Inventive ways to scoping and pricing projects are also welcome, and sometimes desired, to set ourselves apart from our competitors. Project managers are not overworked, they are well-trained, and they are kept up to date with changes in our industry. Moreover, project managers at Falcon are kept aware of the company's financials, potential and active claims, and corporate structure through semi-regular meetings. This transparency provides unity and a sense of ownership between the company and its staff. We understand that if the company does well it is a direct reflection of the performance of all employees, and thus the success of our projects."

TZL: In one word or phrase what do you describe as your number one job responsibility as CEO?

MR: Keeping my finger on the pulse.

TZL: Diversity and inclusion is lacking. What steps are you taking to address these issues?

MR: Engineering has historically been a male dominated industry, and still is. Falcon is a woman-owned business that recognizes a great deal of our firm's strength comes from our staff diversity. Falcon operates heavily within the public market, including contracts with many local municipalities, as well as state and federal government agencies. Many of those public contracts, at a minimum, have diversity goals, while some have diversity requirements. To meet those goals and requirements, we actively recruit our staff from various gender, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds through active relationships with local colleges and universities, local community and technical colleges, and state and county supported employment programs. Falcon can proudly say that 40 percent of its staff is comprised of women and minorities – and we are stronger because of it.

TZL: A firm's longevity is valuable. What are you doing to encourage your staff to stick around?

MR: We strongly adhere to an open-door policy – from executive leadership down to our project managers. We feel a listening ear without harsh pushback is the key to a trusting relationship and understanding the needs of our staff. We have implemented "Stay Interviews," which are conducted once a month with one of our staff to ensure they are happy and to discuss anything we may need to change or do better. We also strongly encourage and pay for our staff to get the training required to do their job well. Specifically, we have partnered with a program called Catalyst 20/20, a co-partnership with NC Works, which, through an application process, offers up to a \$50,000 lifetime max to eligible businesses in our county. The money can be used for certifications, technical training, leadership development, and other areas deemed important to the employer. This program has been a great asset. We also have a spot bonus program in place for staff as well as an employee minimum guaranteed paid-hours program for our technical and hourly staff. ▀



Lucky, not lucky

Don't put your wins and losses into the magical hands of fortune. It's better to look at your career as a product of your own actions.



**Kyle
Cheerangie**

Luck affects your career. But, luck is also an excuse. It gives you no agency or authority over your life. Luck can be used in the most desperate of times to excuse a shortcoming. Many of us are also guilty of giving luck credit for our hard work. The dismissal of achievement, as a stroke of luck, was something I did early in my career. I couldn't see my life moving from one rung of the ladder to the next without some magical hand lifting me up.

My career and my life took a turn when I decided that my shortcomings were my own fault. When I learned I wasn't very good at any one aspect of my job, I chose one thing to focus on and put the time into it to become the best. This focus helped me become recognized as a person who pays attention to detail, which led to further opportunities for growth. Those opportunities could be described as a lucky break, but then I would be giving up my hard work to some mythical department in the clouds.

The way I found an area to focus on was through my weaknesses. My weaknesses indicated to me where to look for career potential. To turn this weakness into an opportunity required an assessment of my ability to achieve. I knew that I

“The opportunities experienced in your career will reflect the way you experience your failures and successes. My change in attitude only came to me because of a healthy conversation I had with one of my managers.”

could do better at the chosen area because I wasn't even focusing on it before.

The opportunities experienced in your career will reflect the way you experience your failures and

See KYLE CHEERANGIE, page 10



BUSINESS NEWS

RAKEN ADDS TO EXECUTIVE TEAM TO BOLSTER GROWTH STRATEGY: THREE NEW EXECUTIVES FROM TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGY JOIN LEADING CONSTRUCTION SOFTWARE STARTUP

Raken, the top-rated mobile field management solution for the construction industry, has named three new top executives to its growing leadership team.

The addition of Mike Bates as vice president of strategy, David Nuffer as vice president of product and Matthew York as vice president of engineering brings significant new experience in software, business strategy, product management, and user experience to the construction tech startup and positions Raken for a period of sustained rapid growth.

“Building a world-class executive team has been one of our top priorities in 2019, and we’re thrilled to welcome Mike, David, and Matthew to the team,” said Kyle Slager, Raken’s founder and CEO. “All are making an immediate impact in furthering our mission to deliver the most powerful solutions to the construction field.”

Bates has more than 25 years of experience delivering solutions for Fortune 100 and high-growth organizations, most recently as senior vice president of strategy and partner solutions at AvidXchange and payment solutions leader at Intuit. Nuffer has worked at GoodData, Liftopia, and most recently Shipt, where he was head of product. York’s previous experience includes Kratos Defense and Security Solutions, Pathway Genomics Corporation, and most recently PayLease, where he served as director of engineering.

Earlier this year, Raken named former MINDBODY executive Amanda Patterson vice president of marketing and announced the appointment of Dave Berman, former president of video-collaboration platform ZOOM, to its board of directors.

“We’re in the midst of major developments at Raken,” Slager said. “All this new talent and energy is feeding a culture of innovation and cultivating growth that we intend to build on.”

Following a \$10 million Series A funding round in 2018, Raken has introduced several recent powerful product enhancements, including Toolbox Talks, an innovative new feature that streamlines the workflow of essential jobsite safety meetings; a Spanish-language option; and offline mode.

Raken serves clients in 92 countries and has been utilized on more than 350,000 projects. The cloud-based SaaS solution boosts productivity and safety by streamlining workflow processes such as daily reporting, time tracking, and safety management.

Raken provides mobile-first technology to streamline field workflows for the construction industry. Raken’s digital toolbox connects the field to the office with daily reports, time cards, toolbox talks, photo management, and more. Swinerton Renewable Energy, Sundt, John W. Danforth, Broadway Mechanical, and thousands of other top general contractor and subcontractor firms use Raken for their field reporting needs.

MEAD & HUNT ACQUIRES “BOUTIQUE” TRANSPORTATION CONSULTING FIRM SABRA & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Mead & Hunt, a large, well-known national architecture-engineering firm, has acquired **Sabra & Associates, Inc.**, a multi-disciplinary consulting firm with a strong emphasis on the transportation sector.

Sabra & Associates, Inc. has a heavy presence in the mid-Atlantic states with five offices spanning the area, including offices in Columbia, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Vienna, Virginia, and two in Baltimore, Maryland. They have 120 team members.

This move gives both firms the opportunity to provide clients expanded consulting resources and service areas. Sabra & Associates, Inc. brings sophisticated multi-modal transportation planning, travel demand modeling, GIS, traffic engineering, and highway design and construction inspection to Mead & Hunt’s transportation team, which excels at roadway and bridge design and construction inspection.

In addition, Sabra & Associates, Inc. brings

strength in urban transit, freight logistics, signals and intelligent transportation systems planning and design, which is vital to many of Mead & Hunt’s clients across the country. The two firms offer complementary services, making this combination beneficial for Sabra & Associates, Inc. and Mead & Hunt clients alike.

“The convergence of Sabra & Associates, Inc. and Mead & Hunt’s areas of expertise supports clients and communities by creating greater access to vital transportation services nationwide,” said Rick Plymale, vice president for Mead & Hunt’s transportation sector. “I’m confident that together we can do more for our clients than either of us could alone.”

The two firms are an ideal cultural fit, with both fostering people-first values. According to Andy Platz, Mead & Hunt’s CEO, “Keeping all of our clients, employees, and communities at the forefront of our decisions is key to our overall success.”

Similarly, Ziad Sabra, former owner of Sabra & Associates, Inc. and now Mid-Atlantic business unit leader at Mead & Hunt stated, “We remain committed to retaining the close client relationships we’ve fostered over the past several years, and we look forward to maintaining these relationships well into the future. Above all, this allows us to offer expanded resources to our clients and offers our employees additional opportunities to grow.”

Mead & Hunt is an employee-owned consulting firm and remains strong on ENR’s Top 500 design firm list with a national ranking of 119 in 2019. The firm employs nearly 900 employees from more than 35 offices located across the nation. Mead & Hunt was named by Zweig Group as one of the Best Firms To Work For, and by CE News as one of the top 10 engineering companies to work for in the nation.

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successes. My change in attitude only came to me because of a healthy conversation I had with one of my managers. This conversation lead me to ask these three questions:

- 1) What are the current limitations that could make my career vulnerable?
- 2) Where am I not performing in my daily duties?
- 3) What do I see as a weakness and how can I use it as an opportunity?

Action item: Answer these three questions about your

“The dismissal of achievement, as a stroke of luck, was something I did early in my career. I couldn’t see my life moving from one rung of the ladder to the next without some magical hand lifting me up.”

career. Seek feedback from a trusted advisor. Move closer to your best performance. ▀

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Reaching our personal peak (Part 1)

No one wants just a job, and no one wants to live in “quiet desperation.” As leaders, we can help employees sidestep burnout.



**Peter
Atherton**

Are you motivated to give more, grow, and prosper, but instead find yourself dreading Monday? What about your team? Neither of you are alone.

There’s an ever-increasing number of employees and high-achieving professionals who are unfulfilled, and it’s taking a toll on both life and business.

No one wants just a job, and no one wants to live in “quiet desperation.” As leaders, we can change this. We just need to adjust our focus, see what’s new, and aim higher.

DEEPER THAN A HEADLINE. Finding fulfillment at both work and in life is complex. It takes personal initiative, drive, and outside support.

This four-part series is not intended to just inspire us to begin living a more full and focused life with the hope things will also change at work. This is written for leaders who care and want to win at the office, with their employees, and beyond.

My goal here is to connect “work-life” dots so that leaders will be inspired to design systems and processes to transcend the status quo, and in the process become more relevant, effective, and successful.

“Most people want more out of life today. It’s not just about comfort, satisfaction, or happiness.”

NEW ERA. Welcome to the New. The old ways are no longer working. Conventional thinking about work and life is not only ineffective today, it has resulted in damage and loss to both individuals and to organizations.

There is a growing epidemic of burnout, disengagement, and missed opportunity in the workplace. More and more professionals and other high achievers are forced to live with frustration and untapped potential, while others are leaving or preparing to leave successful careers, to pivot away. Maybe it’s because work is consuming just too much time – leaving us with very little energy for other things. Maybe our careers don’t provide us the growth and excitement they once did. Or, maybe we are just at the point in life where we want more – greater meaning and purpose

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and more fulfillment. No matter the reason, something's gotta give. Individuals, organizations, and even industries are struggling, trying to make sense of it. We all need an answer. And it's not just trying to hold steady for one more year.

NEW GOAL. The proceeding two paragraphs represent the reality faced by talent and a dilemma faced by leaders.

The goal for top talent today is to win at both work and life. And success is as much about effectively "integrating" as it is about "balance." The question is: How best can this be done?

The first step is to understand what's missing.

NEW PEAK. Even if not fully understood or able to be articulated, most people want more out of life today. It's not just about comfort, satisfaction, or happiness. It's about joy, contentment, living our best lives to the best of our capabilities, and being meaningful contributors to something greater than ourselves.

The problem today, however, is two-fold. First, our time, our energy, and our headspace is often consumed by work. This leaves us physically, emotionally, and mentally drained and unable to live a full life. Second, we have lost sight of our needs and what ultimately motivates us as people.

When reminded, most of us readily recall and agree with Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs.

The full hierarchy is illustrated in the image below:

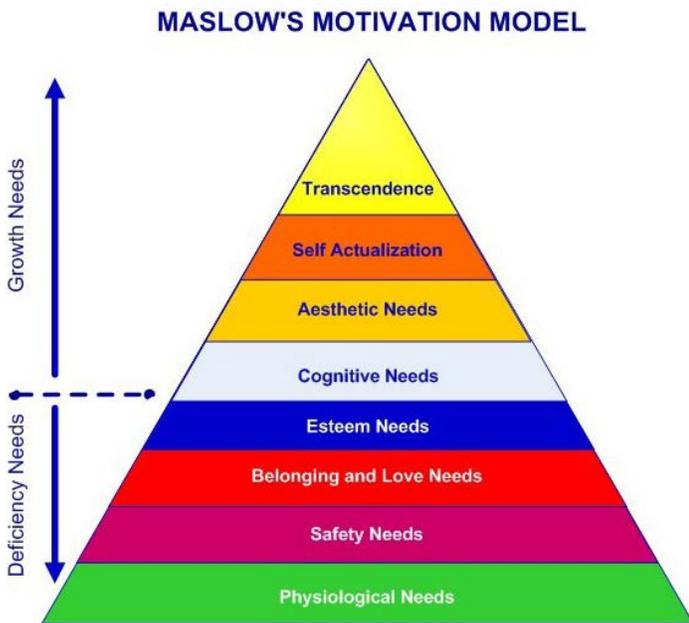


Image source: McLeod, S.A. (2018, May 21). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Retrieved from: simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

A summary of each need is presented below:

- Physiological needs: Basic biological needs for our survival and proper functioning, including water, food, clothing, shelter, warmth, and sleep.

- Safety needs: Security, protection, stability, freedom from fear.
- Belonging and love needs: Social needs for connection, friendship, trust, acceptance, and intimacy.
- Esteem needs: Self-esteem and respect, status, and recognition from others.
- Cognitive needs: Need for knowledge and understanding, meaning, and predictability.
- Aesthetic needs: Appreciation for beauty, order, balance, form, and function.
- Self-actualization needs: Realizing our full potential, becoming our best self, and seeking personal growth and peak experiences (i.e., experiencing life and the world with feelings of euphoria, joy, wonder, and praise).
- Transcendence needs: Being motivated by values and visions beyond our personal self and self-interests, living in an enlightened state, and taking action to love, support, and advance others with compassion, sympathy, empathy, and purpose.

As a reminder, the first four stages are defined as deficiency needs in that being "deficient" in one or more of them will motivate our behavior in order to satisfy them, even if our method of doing so can harm us over time. Gratification in fulfilling these deficiency needs is often only short-term.

The second four stages, on the other hand, are attributed to our – and our employees' – desire to grow and realize long-term happiness. We feel unfulfilled when one or more of these growth needs is unmet.

Although we can be motivated by different needs simultaneously, can move back and forth between different needs depending on our circumstances, and some needs can take precedence over others at any given time, we generally need to sufficiently satisfy a lower-stage need before moving on to the next level.

SO, WHAT'S MISSING? For many of us, it's transcendence and being a meaningful contributor to something greater than ourselves.

Individually, we can begin today to seek a new peak and achieve greater levels of growth and enjoyment along the way.

As leaders and organizations, we have a bigger decision to make. This is the subject of [Part 2](#) of this series.

The life, career, and organization you thought was too good to be true is not. Welcome to the new. ▀

PETER ATHERTON, P.E. is an AEC industry insider who has spent more than 24 years as a successful professional civil engineer, principal, major owner, and member of the board of directors for a high-achieving firm. Pete is now the president and founder of [ActionsProve, LLC](#), author of [Reversing Burnout. How to Immediately Engage Top Talent and Grow! A Blueprint for Professionals and Business Owners](#), and the creator of the I.M.P.A.C.T. process. Pete is also host of [The AEC Leadership Today Podcast](#). Pete works with AEC firms to grow and advance their success through strategic planning implementation, executive coaching, performance-based employee engagement, and corporate impact design. Connect with him at pete@actionsprove.com.