

## Get back into PR

No one knows who you are, so here are five tips from Mark Zweig that will change that.

Appoint an individual in your firm with the responsibility for putting together and getting out press releases.



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

There's always a lot of talk in A/E/P and environmental firms about marketing and business development efforts. Whether it is the latest calling campaign, hiring a new BD person, or figuring out how to do electronic (email marketing), we seem preoccupied with coming up with more and more marketing outreach methods to identify project leads.

There's nothing wrong with that. Most firms in this business need to do a lot more in that regard.

But what we REALLY need is to figure out how to get more clients and potential clients looking for us. If they seek us out and contact us we are in the driver's seat. We'll get better fees, be choosier about who we work with and, ultimately, be more successful. Besides that, it's easier!

Public relations is one way to do that. Using the media – print, broadcast, social, etc. – to show how smart, insightful and valuable we are is a great but under-used strategy by firms in this business.

I say "underused" because only half of the A/E and environmental firms out there even do press releases. Then the average firm has a press list of only

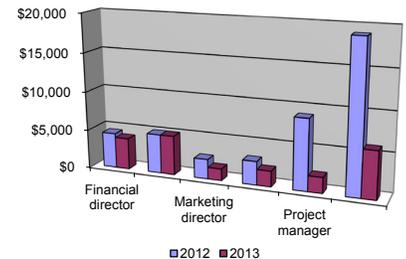
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## TRENDLINES

### Minus bonus



ZweigWhite's 2013-2014 Management Compensation Survey finds that almost all firm management positions saw a decrease in median bonus payout from 2012 to 2013. Principals saw the biggest decrease, from \$19,000 last year to \$6,000 this year. Also project managers' median bonus dropped from \$9,000 in 2012 to \$2,000 this year. In addition, financial directors saw a bonus decrease from \$4,500 to \$4,000; HR directors from \$3,000 to \$2,000, and marketing directors from \$2,500 to \$1,500. Meanwhile, IT directors' median bonus remained steady at \$5,000.

– Margot Suydam, Survey Manager

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20 names (ridiculous!) and sends out one press release a quarter. NO WONDER NO ONE KNOWS WHO YOU ARE! That's crazy.

If you want to harness the power of the media you should:

**1) Appoint an individual in your firm with the responsibility for putting together and getting out press releases.**

No committees. A preliminary schedule of releases should be developed prior to the year starting though that shouldn't be cast in concrete as current events may dictate a change in direction.

**2) Build a good press list of 500 to 1,000 names.**

Get people from all types of media, professional and industry/trade associations, etc. Have multiple contacts in the same media outlet. For example, it would seem entirely appropriate to have 20 names of editors in a publication such as The Wall Street Journal, or 10 names of editors at Engineering News Record.

**3) Use the press list often.**

Sending out one to three press releases per week does not seem like too many to me, even for a small firm. You need to have sufficient numbers to let the laws of probability and what will likely be about a half to quarter of one percent hit rate to work in your favor. That means 400 releases sent out may get one article.

**4) Be controversial.**

Stop being so boring and only talking about who passed their P.E. exam or what project you are working on. You have got to be a lot more creative. What unique information do you have that no one else has? What predictions can you make that are relevant to your area of expertise? What do you completely disagree with that is considered good practice by conventional wisdom? These are the kinds of things that you need to have in your press releases.

**5) Don't rely on outside PR firms.**

Sorry to offend, but I have witnessed and heard some outrageous stories of monthly retainers with absolutely no minimum performance goals or deliverables. It's crazy. Don't waste your money. ▲▲

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

## A/E BUSINESS NEWS

**LEED IN MOTION:** The U.S. Green Building Council has released its inaugural "LEED in Motion" report, a holistic statistical snapshot of the green building movement aimed at equipping its members with the insight to make a strong case for sustainable building activity.

The first of three reports in the LEED in Motion series, available exclusively to USGBC member companies, "LEED in Motion: People and Progress" examines the individuals and organizations that are driving and benefitting from green building, utilizing graphics, charts and other tools to demonstrate the breadth of the community intent on creating buildings that are better for the environment and the people who utilize them every day.

"LEED is a transformative force that works at the intersection of a variety of societal and economic interests, including the construction, real estate and environmental communities," said Rick Fedrizzi, president, CEO and founding chair, USGBC.

"The new LEED in Motion report reflects that incredible cross-section of people – diverse in background, geography and vocation – who are working together to fulfill USGBC's mission of a sustainably built environment within a generation."

The first section of the report, Occupants and Industry, examines the broad community that engages with green buildings as residents and tenants – as much a part of the movement as industry practitioners.

Currently, USGBC estimates that more than 4.3 million people live and work in LEED-certified buildings, while more than 6.2 million people experience a LEED-certified project every day.

The "LEED Professionals" section of the report considers the community of more than 186,000 LEED credential holders who are actively applying their specialized knowledge of LEED to advance the green building rating system while adding value to the firms that employ them.

In particular, the report notes the top 10 U.S. states for LEED professionals, as well as the top 10 industries in which they are employed.

The report also examines the nearly 13,000 USGBC member organizations, ranging from Fortune 100 corporations to small neighborhood businesses, representing 13 million employees and \$1.8 trillion in combined revenue.

"People and Progress" reports on the location and market sectors of these

geographically and professionally diverse organizations, which are advancing green building with activities such as portfolio-wide LEED certifications and participation on LEED development committees.

Additionally, the report features USGBC's network of 77 chapters and nearly 30,000 chapter members, explaining how the network's educational, advocacy-related and community-based activities are proving pivotal to the expansion of green building in local communities around the nation.

The report also features several project spotlights, highlighting sustainable features and achievements at projects in the medical, education and commercial real estate sectors, in addition to interviews with green building leaders.

USGBC will release the next two LEED in Motion reports, "Places and Policies" and "Impacts and Innovation," later this year.

## THE ZWEIG LETTER

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## PROFESSION

# So you want to be an architect...

Practitioners dish out advice to aspirants.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

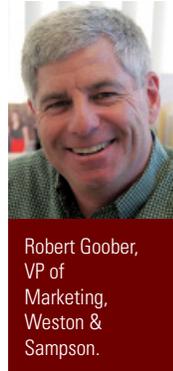
Engineering and architecture have become increasingly popular professions over the years. For parents and students alike, the profession has been identified as one of the top-desired careers for children receiving collegiate education.

“Practicing architecture for 99.9 percent of the architects out there means something other than designing.”

Business management writer Lawrence Reaves speculates that “one third of incoming college freshmen these days intend to study science and engineering,” at the time that they enter college. Even further, of these freshman students, “Nine percent plan to focus specifically on engineering” as a discipline.

For those aspiring to the industry, to be successful one must realize that the A/E industry is more than the traditionally defined aspects of its disciplines. For architecture specifically, much of the typical work done rests outside the realm of design. Those interested in entering the profession must embrace this and develop a multifunctional arsenal of skills.

“Practicing architecture for 99.9 percent of the architects out there means something other than designing – at least what you might typically think design really means,” says Bob Borson, a principal at **Michael Malone Architects** (Dallas, TX), a 9-person firm. “The practice of architecture is more than sketching on trace paper, parti diagrams, deciding what pens to draw with, groupies, and last-minute trips to Vegas with the client. It means solving problems – sometimes incredibly mundane and uninspired – yet very important problems to the people who retain your services.”



Robert Goober,  
VP of  
Marketing,  
Weston &  
Sampson.

**THE ROAD AHEAD.** Architecture and engineering are not for the lighthearted. These professions demand a remarkable skill set that lends itself to flexibility, hard work and the ability to take risks.

Architectural writer Roger Lewis puts it best when he says, “Architecture demands taking risks. It demands a great investment of time, effort and emotional and physical energy to achieve anything worthwhile.” Indeed, Lewis asserts

that along the road to success, individuals must have resources and the personal freedom necessary to “be able to seize opportunities when they arise.”

**PEER EVALUATION.** When referencing his children entering the field of architecture/engineering, Robert Goober, vice president of marketing for **Weston & Sampson** (Peabody, MA), a 350-person full-service environmental and infrastructure engineering consulting firm, notes that he would encourage such an interest, “Because the industry has traditionally provided steady job opportunities with good salaries.”

Building upon this, Goober adds, “Engineers and architects don’t make killer salaries or earn huge bonuses like some in the financial or investment industry, but they earn steady income that supports a family and a nice quality of life.”

In addition to financial practicality, Goober says that the profession offers an ever-present opportunity to engage in a diverse array of projects, and the constant ability to grow and expand the necessary skill set. Indeed, Goober notes that this profession gives people the opportunity to “work on interesting and diverse projects which are seldom boring and always changing.” To those aspiring to this profession, Goober says that the opportunity to pursue diverse projects also affords people the

opportunity to “achieve satisfaction from helping a project progress from vision and planning through design and construction.” When combined, all of these benefits speak to the characteristics that make this profession challenging and rewarding.



Shawn Lueth, VP  
and Cedar Rapids  
Office Director,  
Shive-Hattery.

Shawn Lueth, vice president and Cedar Rapids office director of **Shive-Hattery** (Cedar Rapids, IA), a 350-person architecture and engineering firm, gives advice to youth who are interested in pursuing a career in this industry. He says, “Your (aspiring student’s) career

will be based on your experiences. Look for the experiences that will broaden your marketability as a person and a professional. Take part in community organizations and civic opportunities, stretch for those leadership opportunities through organizations, and seek internship possibilities.”

He adds that grades, while important, really aren’t everything in achieving success within the profession.

“In hiring young professionals, experiences and character are more important than a 4.0 grade point average,” he says. “Professionals need to be flexible, aware of their surroundings and to be able to address the challenges of projects and the workplace.”

## LET CREATIVITY BE YOUR GUIDE.

Architects and engineers are no strangers to creativity. They embrace creativity and ingenuity in all aspects of their professional careers. As they inspire their children and the youth around them to embark into their future careers, industry professionals must promote individuality and creativity as they choose their own paths. One thing is for certain, if they choose to enter this career path, it is essential for A/E professionals to work as industry leaders, creating the space for aspiring engineers and architects to become the future leaders. ▀▲

NEWS

# ABI stays on positive ground

All regions and building sectors see increasing demand for design services.

The Architecture Billings Index saw a jump of more than a full point last month, indicating acceleration in the growth of design activity nationally.

The American Institute of Architects reported the July ABI score was 52.7, up from a mark of 51.6 in June. This score reflects an increase in demand for design services (any score above 50 indicates an increase in billings). The new projects inquiry index was 66.7, up dramatically from the reading of 62.6 the previous month.

“There continues to be encouraging signs that the design and construction industry continues to improve,” said Kermit Baker, AIA chief economist. “But we also hear a wide mix of business conditions all over the country, ranging from outstanding and booming to slowly improving to flat. In fact,

plenty of architecture firms are reporting very weak business conditions as well, so it is premature to declare the entire sector has entered an expansion phase.”

As a leading economic indicator of construction activity, the ABI reflects the approximate nine to 12-month lead time between architecture billings and construction spending.

Key July ABI highlights:

- Regional averages: Northeast (54.3), South (54.2), West (51.1), Midwest (50.8)
- Sector index breakdown: mixed practice (56.9), commercial / industrial (54.2), multi-family residential (53.3), institutional (50.6)
- Project inquiries index: 66.4

The regional and sector categories are calculated as a three-month moving average, whereas the index and inquiries are monthly numbers. ▲▲

## ON-SITE BUSINESS TRAINING...

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### BEST PRACTICES IN A/E/P PROJECT MANAGEMENT

This seminar provides a review of fundamentals like: roles and



responsibilities; accounting; communication, and planning, executing, and closing out a project. Attendees will also learn how to manage things that derail even the best of us at times like: what to do when the PM quits; what to do when there is a bad PR event; how not to lose your shirt; how not to tick off clients; how not to create liabilities, and how to make more money.

For more details about the project management program, click [www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/pmo/](http://www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/pmo/).

To schedule a seminar at your firm, or for more information, please contact ZweigWhite at [events@zweigwhite.com](mailto:events@zweigwhite.com) or call 508-318-5513

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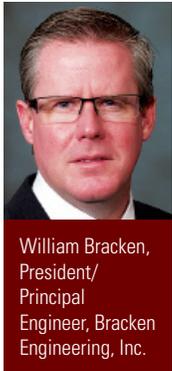
## VISION

# The dynamic strategic plan

Firms are no longer tied to three- and five-year plans. It's important, however, to develop a plan.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

**Y**ou have a three or maybe a five-year strategic plan. What happens if that plan is going astray? How do you regroup? What's your next move?



William Bracken,  
President/  
Principal  
Engineer, Bracken  
Engineering, Inc.

**BOUNCING BACK.** William Bracken, president/principal engineer, **Bracken Engineering, Inc.** (Tampa, FL), a 34-person multi-discipline engineering firm, says that its five-year strategic plan was derailed back in 2007.

“Given the economy and the generally depressed nature of the

A/E industry, we saw no value in trying to reestablish a five-year strategic plan,” Bracken says. “Instead, we began developing and working from dynamic three-year plans.”

The other change involved a reexamination of Bracken's accounts chart, markets and many of the business processes.

“With dynamic three-year plans, when things change, the plans are easily adapted and forward progress is maintained,” Bracken says.

**EXPECT DETOURS AND CURVE BALLS.** Brent Collins, marketing manager at **Luckett & Farley** (Louisville, KY), a 76-person multidisciplinary architectural, engineering, interior design firm, has been in business for 160 years, so it has a strong foundation from which it can springboard into strategic growth areas.

However, when Collins addresses strategic plans, he says that, “A five-year strategic plan is often an exercise in shaping a smoke cloud. Market condi-

tions change and internal firm conditions change, such as key leaders leaving. Things just happen despite all the best planning, but the resourceful firm can adapt and thrive.”

Collins adds that, “Who we want to become as a firm doesn't change, but we may just have to find a different route to get there if we're presented a detour. At Luckett & Farley, the strategic plan isn't a 'set it and forget it' process. Throughout the year, as we're being thrown curve balls, we're also keeping options open to new talent who bring strategic advantages that fit the plan.”

**5 WAYS TO IMPROVE STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETINGS... RIGHT AWAY.** Research shows that having a formal, strategic-planning process in place is key to a firm's health and wealth. So, whether you have a secure strategic plan in place or one that is a moving target, the most important thing is to, in fact, have a plan. If you are in the process of creating one or maintaining one, McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm, offers five ways to have better strategic planning meetings. While it cannot guarantee that the right strategic decisions will be made or that strategy will be better executed, enhancing the planning process will improve the odds for success.

**1) Start with the issues.** Ask CEOs what they think strategic planning should involve and they will talk about anticipating big challenges and spotting important trends. The first liberating change managers can make to improve the quality of the planning process is to begin it by deliberately and thoughtfully identifying and discussing the strategic issues that will have the greatest impact on future business performance. As a first step, identifying the key issues will ensure that management does not waste time and energy on less important topics.

**2) Bring together the right people.** Include the most knowledgeable and influential participants, stimulating and challenging the participants' thinking, and having honest, open discussions about difficult issues. Do not focus

“Given the economy and the generally depressed nature of the A/E industry, we saw no value in trying to reestablish a five-year strategic plan. Instead, we began developing and working from dynamic three-year plans.”

too much on the data-gathering and packaging elements of strategic planning and neglect the crucial interactive components. The key strategy conversation should take place among corporate decision-makers, business unit leaders, and people with expertise essential to the discussion.

**3) Adapt planning cycles to the needs of each business.** Resources and time required to implement an issues-based strategic-planning approach can be dense. One easy – yet rarely adopted – solution is to free business units from the need to conduct this rigorous process every single year. Why? Because managers need to focus on executing the last plan's major initiatives, many of which can take 18 to 36 months to implement fully. Some companies alternate the business units that undergo the complete strategic-planning process (as opposed to abbreviated annual updates of the existing plan).

**4) Implement a strategic-performance-management system.** In the end, many companies fail to execute the chosen strategy. Putting a system in place to measure and monitor progress can greatly enhance the impact of the planning process. Most companies believe that their existing control systems and performance-management processes (including budgets and operating reviews) are the sole way to monitor progress on strategy. As a result, managers attempt to translate the decisions made during the planning process into

See STRATEGIC PLAN, page 8

# PMP Exam tips

Lessons learned from those who have been there.

**A**re you considering studying for and obtaining your Project Management Professional certification? Are you wondering what study tools and methods others have used successfully? Are you interested in reading about the exam experiences of those who have recently passed the PMP Exam? Then there is a forum you should check out on The PMPrepCast website. All of the posts are lessons learned and tips from those who have recently become project management professionals and who probably started with the same questions and concerns that you have.

Let's take a look at one example from this forum. It was written by Amar Roy shortly after he obtained his PMP certification and contains the following insights into how the exam went for him.

**Lessons learned and tips related to registering for the PMP Exam:**

- Decide on a timeline for when you want to sit for the exam, and based on that, plan your preparation.
- As soon as you have your 35 contact hours, register to take the PMP Exam. This will help you to accelerate your planning process.
- Become a PMI member before registering for the PMP Exam; this will save you some money on study materials.
- The PMP Exam application process is a timely affair. You will need to provide a description of the project(s) you were involved with and your role across each of the process groups. Make sure you have a detailed project-experience history before you start; this will save you a lot of time!

**Lessons learned and tips related to PMP Exam study materials:**

- Read the most current version of The PMBOK Guide from cover to cover twice; once early in the study process and again a couple of weeks before your exam date. The first reading will help to determine areas that need more focus, and the reading before the exam will reinforce concepts.
- Additional suggested readings are the "The PMP Exam: How to Pass on Your First Try, Fourth Edition" by Andy Crowe, and the "PMP Exam Prep, Sixth Edition: Rita's Course in a Book for Passing the PMP Exam" by Rita Mulcahy. Both of these texts have chapter tests included that you can use to gauge your PMP knowledge.

**Lessons learned and tips related to PMP Exam practice tests:**



Cornelius Fichtner

## GUEST SPEAKER

- Take at least four or five full length practice exams and have a goal in mind, such as obtaining at least a 75 percent on each exam. Don't get discouraged if you don't reach your goal for the first exam. It will give you a good understanding of what you still need to learn, and you should get better with each exam.
- Sitting for a four-hour exam can be rough. Build in breaks such as 5 minutes after the first 75 questions, 5 more minutes after the next 75 questions, and 10 minutes after the last 50 questions; then go back and review and revise your answers for the remainder of the time. If you practice this method, it will feel natural during the exam.
- Make note of new concepts you come across in the practice exams; not all questions on the PMP Exam come from the PMBOK Guide.
- Analyze the results of your practice exams to identify where you need to focus your study efforts.

See CORNELIUS FICHTNER, page 8

All of the posts are lessons learned and tips from those who have recently become project management professionals and who probably started with the same questions and concerns that you have.

# Marketing and ‘the great recession’

Some firms have engaged on a mad dash to procure work, but is that the best approach?

By 2008, there was no doubt that the country was in a recession. Nobody knew exactly when it began (but many of us had strong opinions about where to lay the blame) or how deep it would become, or when it would be over.

Forward to mid-2013. For most of us, the recession is over, although many of us are still waiting for things to get back to where they were in early 2008. Meanwhile, both economists and politicians are pointing fingers, trying hard to assign blame, as if that will help all of us feel a bit steadier on our collective feet.

From conversations with clients, colleagues and competitors, it is obvious to me that the deprecations of the last few years have forced a change in the way AEC/environmental firms do business, and particularly in the way these firms market.

What I find most interesting is the range and kinds of changes in overall business philosophy and specific activities I see around me.

Many firms have adopted a “shoot at anything that moves” attitude. They mine their local newspapers and business journals, online lead services and other sources for any project that intersects with any of their technical capabilities, or where they think they have at least the bare minimum of what would be considered a sufficient project portfolio and experienced staff to squeak out a win.

In the AEC/environmental industry, we often retile this attitude “ready, fire, aim!”

The truth is that many of these firms are gone because they squandered a finite resource (i.e. staff time) to chase projects they had no hope of winning. Unfortunately, because a few of these firms won a few of these projects, they and others believe that this is a viable strategy for surviving a rough time, but I doubt any of these firms are really thriving.

Other firms have relied on looking for and implementing “best practices” across their marketing tasks, as if they were “one-size-fits-all” and what works for a 50,000-person firm would also work for a 50-person firm. These firms didn’t pay to the fact that markets are different, marketplaces are different, clients are different and technical staff are different.

In other words, marketing activities that might work for



Bernie Siben

## THE FAST LANE

a large firm providing marine engineering in the Great Lakes region probably won’t work for a firm performing desert habitat environmental studies in the Mohave Desert area of California; activities that work for a large branch office of a national full-service A/E firm in Portland, Ore., may not be effective for a small civil/structural engineering firm in Portland, Me.

Many firms are trying to do more with less, more work with fewer people. This may be a successful strategy until the firm’s staff hits the point of burn-out – which is also the point of diminishing returns – and people leave.

There are firms that simply said, “Let’s just hold our own until the crisis passes and things ease up.” But standing still when others are moving past you, regardless of their speed, looks just the same as moving backward. When the crisis is over, new

See BERNIE SIBEN, page 8

As with many other things, it’s not about working long or hard – it’s about working smart. Those firms that have learned to market smart have been thriving despite the ‘great recession.’

## CORNELIUS FICHTNER, from page 6

## Lessons learned and tips related to taking the PMP Exam:

- Know where your exam site is. Stop by the site a week before the test. This will reduce your stress on exam day a lot!
- Make sure you know what identification you need, such as passport or driver's license, to take the PMPEXAM.
- Ensure you get a good night's sleep.
- Take a bottle of water and snacks with you.

## Lessons learned and tips related to the PMP Exam questions:

- Make sure you know the difference between Quality Assurance and Quality Control.
- There are a good number of questions pertaining to Procurement, Integration, Risk, and Scope Management.
- Make sure you clearly understand Human Resource, Communication, Quality, Cost, and Time Management.
- Understand the concept of Professional Responsibility.
- Understand the concepts around earned value, if you practice the calculations a few times, you will be ready.
- Make sure you understand other formulas, such as expected monetary value, three-point estimate, PERT, network-related calculations, and communication channels.

These are just a few examples of the PMP Exam related lessons learned and tips offered by those who have recently been in your shoes. You can access these lessons learned tips and many more in The PMPrepCast forum at [www.pm-prepcast.com/ll](http://www.pm-prepcast.com/ll). ▲▲

CORNELIUS FICHTNER, PMP is a noted PMP expert. He has helped over 20,000 students prepare for the PMP Exam with The Project Management PrepCast and The PMP Exam Simulator. AMAR ROY, PMP has more than 12 years of experience in IT project management, consulting and solution definition. Besides project management his primary interests involves Big Data Analytic and Statistical analytic. He is presently working as a senior project manager at Infosys Ltd.

## BERNIE SIBEN, from page 7

projects are appearing again and firms are hiring new staff to execute those projects, a firm that has had a few years of zero growth might find it difficult to convince prospective new hires that they should hitch their wagons to that firm's star.

Finally, there are those other firms that have looked at their procedures to refine their guidelines for how to respond to specific types of events and, importantly, how to make the most intelligent pursuit choices and carefully ration the finite staff time resource in the pursuit of new projects and/or clients. These firms start with a strong "Go/No Go" evaluation process that is designed to take the ego out of decision-making and, instead, rely on facts about the client, its business situation and project, along with their firm, its staff and project experience, to estimate the probability of success for a given pursuit. If that probably is below a certain level, the firm doesn't waste its resources on that

## STRATEGIC PLAN, from page 5

"At Luckett & Farley, the strategic plan isn't a 'set it and forget it' process. Throughout the year, as we're being thrown curve balls, we're also keeping options open to new talent who bring strategic advantages that fit the plan."

budget targets or other financial goals. Although this practice is sensible and necessary, it is not enough. A company undertaking a major strategic initiative to enhance its innovation and product-development capabilities, for example, should measure a variety of input metrics, such as the quality of available talent and the number of ideas and projects at each stage in development, in addition to pure output metrics such as revenues from new product sales. When designed well, strategic-performance-management systems can give an early warning of problems with strategic initiatives, whereas financial targets alone at best provide lagging indicators.

**5) Integrate human resources systems into the strategic plan.** Simply monitoring the execution of strategic initiatives is not sufficient: their successful implementation also depends on how managers are evaluated and compensated. One way to create a more valuable strategic-planning process would be to tie the evaluation and compensation of managers to the progress of new initiatives. Although the development of strategy is a long-term endeavor, companies traditionally emphasize short-term, purely financial targets such as annual revenue growth or improved margins as the sole metrics to gauge the performance of managers and employees. This approach is gradually changing. Deferred-compensation models for boards, CEOs, and some senior managers are now widely used. What's more, several companies have added longer-term performance targets to complement the short-term ones. ▲▲

pursuit.

Next, these firms have extensive libraries (in a variety of formats) of boilerplate materials for SOQ and proposal needs. And they have also learned the important lesson that you never insert boilerplate into an SOQ or proposal without tailoring it to the specific pursuit. So they cut their writing time while keeping materials focused on the current client and its needs.

As with many other things, it's not about working long or hard – it's about working smart. Those firms that have learned to market smart have been thriving despite the "great recession."

I hope YOUR firm is one of these thriving firms. ▲▲

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## RECRUITING

# Hiring tactics in the new normal

When it comes to hiring new talent, processes and challenges vary from firm to firm.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

When it comes to recruiting, some firms have an open door policy and some don't move a finger until the need has been established. For many others, the recruiting and hiring process falls somewhere in between.

*"We always challenge managers to hire the best and the brightest, and not settle for the candidate in front of us if he/she is not ideal."*



Gary Pollard,  
Interim Director  
of HR, Tighe &  
Bond.

**HIRING PROCESSES.** Gary Pollard, interim director of HR for **Tighe & Bond** (Westfield, MA), a 240-person engineering and environmental consulting firm, says that prior to the beginning of any recruiting activity, a hiring authority must obtain approval to add staff via its "Headcount Approval Process."

"Once approval is obtained, we begin sourcing via networks and postings as well as communicating the need to our employee population via our website," Pollard says. "As candidates are identified, HR and the recruiting team then conduct phone interviews, face-to-face interviews, reference checks, etc. to



Megan Soltura,  
HR Manager,  
GATE, LLC.

identify a finalist. Once we have settled on a finalist, we communicate an offer verbally and follow up with a formal, written-offer letter."

At **GATE, LLC** (Houston, TX), an 80-person oil and gas engineering consulting company, HR manager Megan Soltura explains how the HR hiring process works at their firm.

"A résumé could come to us in several ways – via our corporate recruiter, referral, through our company website, or even trade shows," Soltura says. "All of the acquired résumés are reviewed multiple times

and filed as reference material. This is the technical inbound recruiting process."

The following steps are taken during the hiring process:

- 1) Managers and corporate recruiter collaborate to address needs and priority level of those needs.
- 2) Online campaign begins. The firm then posts to its applicant tracking systems and advertises the open role internally within the company's "Hot Jobs" article.
- 3) Online platforms are used to locate and screen candidates.
- 4) Once specific candidates who meet the requirements are identified, management receives applicable information for review.
- 5) Managers conduct review and select candidates to interview.

- 6) Corporate recruiter coordinates interview arrangements, travel accommodations, etc.

"If selected for hire, management takes the lead to negotiate hiring parameters with HR," Soltura says.

Sean Knowles, vice president, business development, **McLean Engineering** (Moultrie, GA), an 18-person power engineering firm, says the company is always willing to talk to anyone who may be interested in working with them. This way, when they have a hiring need, they often have the position filled before they even have to post a job listing.

"This technique also helps to keep referrals coming our way because people know we are always willing to take their recommendations seriously," Knowles says. "We also rely on a consistent summer internship program. If possible, we like to have students with local roots intern with us for multiple summers. This gives both the student and our firm a long time to decide if we're the right fit for a full-time position.

**HANDLING CHALLENGES.** Pollard says that sometimes location is a challenge for openings in western Massachusetts or New Hampshire.

"We always challenge managers to hire the best and the brightest, and not settle for the candidate in front of us if he/she is not ideal," he says.

Soltura says that one of the most pressing challenges in GATE's hiring is trying to find that "right" candidate.

"Because of the naturally diverse culture of our company, it ultimately all comes down to chemistry," she says.

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### ●●●● GOOD TO KNOW

The biggest staffing needs among A/E/P and environmental consulting firms are technical professionals with three to 7 and seven to 10 years experience.

Source: 2013 A/E/P and Environmental Consulting Industry Outlook, ZweigWhite: [www.zweigwhite.com/p-2152-2013-aep-and-environmental-consulting-industry-outlook](http://www.zweigwhite.com/p-2152-2013-aep-and-environmental-consulting-industry-outlook).

## ON THE MOVE

**MULVANNY G2 HIRES:** **MulvannyG2 Architecture** (Bellevue, WA), a 350-person design firm, has hired **Walt Geiger** as director of design. He will be based out of the firm's Washington, D.C., office and will work with MulvannyG2 clients firm wide.

Geiger brings more than 30 years of experience and a sterling reputation to the firm. He has led design, master planning, and program management for large scale mixed-use, commercial office, retail, hospitality, and entertainment destinations nationally and internationally. He exemplifies aesthetic, technical, and operational excellence at the highest level.

This new hire is the latest in a string of high-profile additions to MulvannyG2's leadership in 2013. The move also reunites Geiger with his colleague Alan Feltoon, managing principal of MulvannyG2's Washington, D.C., office. The two worked closely together previously at **LEO A DALY** (Omaha, NE) to build a design driven practice, collaborating on numerous large-scale, award winning projects both domestically and internationally.

"Walt is a tremendous addition to our firm," Feltoon said. "His experience, wide expertise, and stature in the industry will help elevate our design work with regional and international clients alike. Walt is also dedicated to mentoring our junior designers, so his impact will be felt at all levels of the firm. Together we look forward to creating some of the best work of our careers."

"Walt's vast experience and high design acumen gives us added depth in our core markets," said Mitchell Smith, CEO of MulvannyG2. "His skills and management style complement our existing expertise while elevating the level of service we can provide across multiple markets and regions, particularly international mixed-use."

**FINLEY HIRES:** **Finley Engineering Group** (Tallahassee, FL), a bridge design and construction engineering firm, has hired **Whitney Mitchell** as CADD detailer.

Whitney will be assigned to work on the precast approaches for the Bayonne Bridge project in New York. The Bayonne Bridge is the fourth longest steel arch bridge in the world. This \$743.3 million project was awarded to Skanska Koch, Inc. / Kiewit Infrastructure Co. (JV) and will raise the roadway of the Bayonne Bridge 64 feet to overcome the navigation restriction on the larger container ships.

"I first learned about engineering from my father who would show me plans and I was very curious about the entire process. At college, I learned about FINLEY from my drafting instructor who knew about FINLEY's reputation for working on some of the most challenging bridge design projects. FINLEY was my number one choice and I am very excited to have an opportunity to work at a firm that works on bridge projects all over the world." Mitchell said.

"We are very excited to have Whitney on the FINLEY team. Whitney was one of the top graduates in her class. Her skills include attention to detail, multi-tasking and problem solving. She is an excellent

communicator and is very goal-driven," said Jason Hatcher, project manager, FINLEY.

**GZA HIRES:** **GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc.** (Norwood, MA), an environmental and geotechnical consulting firm, has announced that **Steven Roland** has joined the firm's Northern New Jersey office in Fairfield as a senior consultant.

Roland has had a 34-year career with extensive environmental engineering and remediation experience. He has proven technical, operational, and executive leadership skills. Most recently, he led the environmental practice group at a national engineering firm, responsible for large remediation projects in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, including one of the largest Superfund sites in New Jersey.

"Steve's experience and knowledge will be a valuable resource for GZA's clients on projects throughout the region," said William Hadge, president and CEO of GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. "We are delighted to welcome an executive of Steve's caliber to our senior team."

**SNC-LAVALIN HIRES:** **SNC-Lavalin Inc.** (Montréal, QC), a engineering and construction firm, announced the appointment of a new executive and member of the office of the president. After an extensive worldwide search, **Hisham Mahmoud** will assume the newly created role of group president, Infrastructure, effective in early 2014. Mahmoud's role will be to oversee all global infrastructure and related businesses, including transportation and operations and maintenance.

Since 2010, Mahmoud has been at **AMEC**, where he was group president, Growth Regions, and prior to that, president, Environment & Infrastructure. In his previous roles, he was responsible for significant value creation, and developed and implemented plans to expand the global footprint of the business while creating significant synergies with the company's other business units. Mahmoud joined AMEC from **URS** where he played a key leadership role in their infrastructure business.

Mahmoud has over 23 years of experience with multinational engineering and construction companies, particularly in the transportation, water, buildings, facilities, industrial and commercial, environmental and government sectors. He has an extensive background in all aspects of infrastructure services and products globally, as well strategic growth planning and execution, including business acquisition and integration. After obtaining his BSc in Civil Engineering from Qatar University, Mahmoud went on to obtain a master's degree and Ph.D. in Civil Engineering, both from Arizona State University. He is a registered professional engineer in several U.S. states.

"We are especially pleased to be able to announce the addition to the team of someone of Hisham's calibre with a remarkable depth of talent and experience to lead this new group," said Robert Card, president and CEO.

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## HIRING, from page 9

"Also, some of the skill sets are hard to come by as we pursue specialized engineering, rather than commodity-type work. This makes it difficult, in certain situations, to identify and hire people. Tapping into social media has been a new route we have taken to locate individuals. We focus on devoting time and resources to establish a social media presence."

Knowles explains that McLean Engineering's greatest and most recent challenge has been to turn away good people with good skills because they did not believe there was a

good long-term fit.

"I think this is more a factor of the current job market than anything else and it can be frustrating," he says. "At the end of the day, we believe it ensures that we only end up with people whose values align with our own and who will be happy working for us for a long time."

The end analysis is that a thorough hiring and selection process that is designed to match the best candidates with the right positions equals long-term success. ▀▀

## PROFILE

# Running a top firm finance department

Christine Koski safeguards engineering company assets and is a strategic advisor to management.

By LIISA SULLIVAN  
Correspondent

**KCI Technologies Inc.** (Sparks, MD), is the largest employee-owned, multi-disciplined engineering firm headquartered in Maryland. It employs more than 1,000 people operating out of 26 offices in 13 states – Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia – and the District of Columbia. With revenues of approximately \$146 million in 2012, Engineering News-Record Magazine has placed KCI 81 among the top engineering firms in the country.

And a top firm needs a top CFO; Christine Koski, VP and CFO, is just the person for the job. In 2011, she replaced Donald McConnell, who was retiring from his distinguished career of more than 35 years – 12 of those with KCI.

Terry Neimeyer, CEO and chairman of the board, says that he is proud to have Koski as their CFO not only because she's a respected member of their corporate family, but also because it demonstrates their commitment to workforce diversity.

"She has been a great asset and her expertise and familiarity with our financial system and organization gives her the unparalleled ability to guide the company in safeguarding and managing our assets," he says.

Koski received a bachelor's degree in computer accounting from Stevenson University, then Villa Julie College, in 1994. She is a member of the Maryland Association of CPAs and Financial Executives International.

She started on the road to finance while in high school. She interned for a local public CPA firm and was also a bookkeeper for a country club during college years. Out of college, for the next five years or so, she worked as a controller for a few small companies before becoming a financial analyst for a pharmaceutical benefit management company for four years.

In 2004, Koski joined KCI as a senior accountant and was promoted to accounting manager in 2005. In 2006 she became controller and in 2011 she was named CFO.

Koski's responsibilities primarily involve her leadership of the finance department. She is responsible for the overall financial wellbeing and reporting of the firm, as well as treasury functions, budgeting, and forecasting. Her department includes payroll, accounts receivable and accounts payable.

### A CONVERSATION WITH CHRISTINE KOSKI



Christine Koski,  
VP and CFO, KCI  
Technologies Inc.

**THE ZWEIG LETTER: What major accomplishment are you most proud of since you have been CFO?**

**Christine Koski:** I'm most proud of the work we've done developing relationships and partnering with our operating divisions to ultimately obtain the firm's goals. Previously, it was a lot of "them" and "us" – now it is "we." Also, we have automated and streamlined processes so we can report more relevant information faster and more accurately with less resources.

*"I'm an extreme multi-tasker and generally see things from the overall company-wide mindset."*

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

**CK:** I think my key strengths are solid communication skills, relationship management, open-minded problem-solving, as well as strong technical knowledge and knowing our business drivers. An effective CFO should have unyielding ethics and integrity, and realize that their role is to help groups within the company find solutions that help them realize and obtain their objectives rather than pointing out downfalls and why-nots.

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

**CK:** I consider myself to be hard working. I'm an extreme multi-tasker and generally see things from the overall company-wide mindset. Communication and listening skills are also a big part of my work style. I'm approachable and most managers here know they can come to me for support.

**TZL: What are your top priorities for 2013/2014?**

**CK:** Our financial goals focus on continuing to integrate our recent acquisitions, managing cash to support obtaining our strategic plan goals, as well as continuing to create efficiencies.

**TZL: What is your favorite part of the job?**

**CK:** I really enjoy partnering with our operations managers to solve a problem and being able to use my knowledge to issue strategic advice.

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

**CK:** I have three children, and I adore spending time with them.

## TRANSACTIONS

**FIRMS MERGE:** **BDG Architects** and **Urban Studio Architects**, both in Tampa, Fla., have joined forces to establish a new architecture firm to enhance client relationships and broaden their impact on architecture and design across the nation. The combination of these two firms will create a much stronger architectural brand.

Individually, BDG Architects and Urban Studio Architects are two of the most highly respected firms in the Southeast, having worked on thousands of projects including many of the most recognizable structures in the region. Together they have over \$750 million in architecture and interior design projects completed or underway. The firm's combined talent and depth of experience will elevate the firm with personnel, expertise, and experience to work on projects of any type, size and scope.

"Our firms share similar values and philosophies. Combining the talents of our teams affords us the ability to facilitate regional development and create even more impressive results for our clients and their communities," said Chris Kirschner, BDG Architects president.

"I am very excited about the opportunities this unification will bring. Together we will be more versatile and agile and be able to positively heighten our impact on design and sustainability," said Mickey Jacob,

Urban Studio Architects managing principal and now executive VP of BDG Architects.

The new firm has 65 employees, including over 20 licensed architects. The firm's name is now **BDG Architects** and the corporate headquarters office will be in Tampa. Kirschner will be the president of the firm and all Urban Studio Architects staff and existing projects will be folded into BDG Architects.

BDG Architects is an architectural and design firm with over 20 years of experience. Service offerings include program management, architecture, prototype development, consulting, interior design planning, planning, and sustainability. Their portfolio includes major venue, hospitality, multifamily, and retail projects. The firm has been involved with a number of high profile projects including The Palace of Auburn Hills, Office Depot Center, and Tampa Bay Times Forum.

Urban Studio Architects is a full service architecture and interior design firm with 24 years of experience. Their portfolio of over 5,000 completed projects includes multifamily and high rise residential, urban infill, mixed use, resort, hospitality, commercial interiors, office space planning, restaurant and food service, and traditional neighborhood design. Some recent projects of note are The Birchwood, Epicurean Hotel and Metro 510.

## GET IN THE FAST LANE WITH ZWEIGWHITE

Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2013, Miami, Fla.



Join Mark Zweig, founder and CEO and Chad Clinehens, executive VP of ZweigWhite for the Premier Exotic Car Racing Experience in America. Miami Exotic Auto Racing gives you an opportunity that is reserved for the world's elite, the once in a lifetime chance to get behind the wheel of the car of your dreams on a professional racetrack.

Learn to race from the best at speeds topping 135 MPH on the Homestead Miami Speedway! Side-by-side coaching from veteran racing professionals will ensure that you are able to push your dream cars to the REDLINE!

There are NO Restrictions on how fast you are allowed to drive these cars. As a matter of fact, the instructors' main objective is to get you driving around the racetrack as fast as you can while keeping you safe. SAFETY is their number one priority at all times! Keeping that in mind, these instructors will make sure that you get to push each car to its limits.

*REGISTRATION FEE: \$1,095 per person (includes transportation that ZweigWhite will provide to and from the track from the Eden Roc hotel in Miami)*

*EXCLUSIVE: Space is limited to just 10 participants... once those spaces are filled, this unique opportunity will be closed. Reserve your spot today.*

Here's what you'll get:

- Three laps in the following cars: Ferrari F430, Lamborghini Gallardo, and Audi R8.

- 30 minutes of expert classroom driver training

Each participant gets a safety training lesson lap in the passenger seat of a sport sedan demo car. You will learn about the car, get two complimentary laps to get acquainted with the track (in the demo car), and find out the do's and don'ts of driving these exotic cars on a closed professional racetrack.

A Ride Along hot lap experience that can prove to be almost as exhilarating as getting behind the wheel yourself. The main difference is that a professional driver can get around the track MUCH faster as a result of a minimum of 20 years of racing experience.

You will also get an in-car video that documents your experience from start to finish.

Here's what you get:

- HD Video of your Exotic Racing Experience
- 1 HD camera captures the road in front of you
- 1 HD camera captures your driving experience from inside the car
- DVD of your ride
- YouTube link to share on Facebook

To register, follow this link [www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/car-racing/registration.php?spMailingID=6765212&spUserID=NjAxNTE5NTY5S0&spJobID=83997541&spReportId=ODM5OTc1NDEs1](http://www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/car-racing/registration.php?spMailingID=6765212&spUserID=NjAxNTE5NTY5S0&spJobID=83997541&spReportId=ODM5OTc1NDEs1) or call 800-466-6275.