

TRENDLINES

Thoughts on mentoring

“Mentors and those whom they are mentoring have to select each other. It’s a mutual thing based on chemistry.”



Mark Zweig

Mentoring frequently comes up when AEC firms work on their strategic planning. As we can all agree, good people in our industry are in short supply, and firms are desperate to do anything they can to retain and develop their best people. So, mentoring programs are frequently seen as a potential solution.

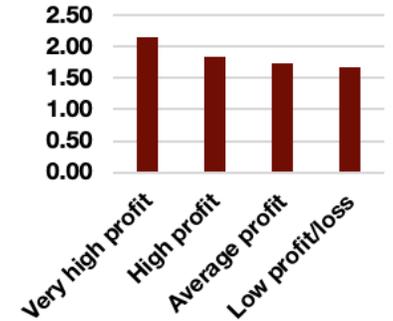
I always get a kick out of it when I learn about a company that is instituting a formal mentoring program. That “program” usually starts with some arbitrary assignment of mentors to mentees by management. That rarely works. Mentors and those whom they are mentoring have to select each other. It’s a mutual thing based on chemistry and many other intangibles.

Here are some of my other thoughts on what I have learned about mentoring over the years that will hopefully benefit those of you who are currently mentoring someone or considering doing so:

- 1) **Mentoring takes time.** Mentors are usually more senior people (principals) whose time is valuable. These people have many demands pressing them for their time. And in project-driven AEC firms, that time usually goes to clients as a first priority. With that being said, if mentoring is going to be real, mentors will have to treat it as a priority. Who you spend time with is an indication of who and what is important to you. For example, you, as a mentor, can’t schedule meetings with your mentee(s) that never happen. It will have to be a commitment you make time for and treat seriously.
- 2) **Mentors have to be responsive.** At times, mentees will have critical, urgent problems that they need your help with. You can’t put them off. It may mean you have to talk or meet with them on weekends and evenings. That can be stressful or annoying. But don’t forget that you can also use text and email as a means of communication. If you have someone you are mentoring who always expects a face-to-face meeting and a company-paid meal, you may have to educate them on other communication options that could allow you to provide more timely responses to them.
- 3) **Mentoring is a tremendous responsibility.** When someone seeks you out for advice that may impact their careers and the rest of their lives, you, as the mentor, have to be very careful of the advice you give. It’s serious stuff and you have to be sure you give it your best thinking. You should also always qualify your advice as just that – advice. It should be worthy of consideration but always respect the individual mentee’s right to pick and choose what advice from you that they actually follow.
- 4) **Mentees who rarely listen and act on the advice of their mentors run the risk of turning off their mentors.** The flip side of point No. 3 above is that mentees who don’t ever follow the advice they are getting from their mentors should be prepared for their mentors to

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

Revenue factor



Revenue factor was calculated and analyzed among participants in Zweig Group’s *2019 Financial Performance Survey of AEC Firms*. This dual-threat statistic is a labor-related barometer of a firm’s overall performance by analyzing both net multiplier and chargeability. The overall median revenue factor of the survey sample was 1.86, a three-year high for the AEC industry. Very high profit firms greatly outpaced the field with a median revenue factor of 2.14.

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

FIRM INDEX

ARM Group	6
Freese and Nichols, Inc.	8
Leon Williams Contractors.....	2
Mead & Hunt	10
Robins & Morton	12
Studio Four Design.....	2
SVA Architects.....	4
Ware Malcomb	8
WSP USA.....	10

MORE ARTICLES

- JULIE BENEZET: Your baby is ugly Page 3
- Stewardship: Bryan Wehler Page 6
- GREG MARCONNET & JEFF JANIS: Shifting paradigms Page 9
- PETER ATHERTON: Reaching our personal peak (Part 4) Page 11

BUSINESS NEWS

SOLOMON AWARDS NAME LEON WILLIAMS CONTRACTORS AND STUDIO FOUR DESIGN'S FOOTHILLS CHURCH PROJECT ONE OF THE BEST OF 2019 Maryville-based commercial construction firm **Leon Williams Contractors** and Knoxville architecture and design firm **Studio Four Design** have been recognized by the leading awards program for the church design, building and operations industry for their work on the fast-growing Foothills Church.

Foothills Church earned a 2019 Solomon Award for Church Design – Gathering and Community spaces for the 32,000-square-foot open, contemporary design and construction of its new building in Maryville, which opened in 2018.

Prestigious church design and construction awards recognize East Tennessee contractor and architect for work on community space at new Maryville church building.

“The mission of Foothills Church is to develop mature disciples of Christ in relational environments, and as the design-build leader, it was our mission to provide a building to facilitate such an environment,” said Jimmy Hawkins, president of Leon Williams Contractors. “We worked extensively with Studio Four and Foothills Church to provide exactly what it was looking for and were active partners in bringing that vision to life. The natural light and open spaces provide a modern feel that’s comfortable for the congregation and welcoming for visitors.”

The Worship Facilities Network Solomon Awards recognize churches and their partners for excellence in building design, building expansion or remodeling, operational excellence, innovative use and technical production. Leon Williams Contractors completed the project with Knoxville-based Studio Four Design.

“Moving into a new building is exciting for any church, but it presents challenges, too,” said Stacy Cox, president of Studio Four Design. “The leadership at Foothills Church truly invested their hearts into this project, and their fearlessness and commitment allowed us to develop a design that really fits the community here.”

The new Foothills Church campus includes a

1,200-seat auditorium and numerous intentional ministry spaces that can accommodate both large and small gatherings and host its regular Sunday morning worship experience. Meanwhile, the open-concept atrium also allows partners and guests to enjoy a relaxed and intimate space specifically designed to develop relational environments.

A central feature of the new Foothills Church atrium is its elevated baptistry, located in the heart of the atrium, and visible to the public through its oversized glass windows. The intentional and thoughtful location allows friends and family to share the act of baptism while the congregation celebrates along within the auditorium via live video connection.

“We are grateful for the thoughtful work of Jimmy and the Leon Williams team. It’s a powerful reflection of our ongoing mission to develop mature disciples of Christ in relational environments,” said lead pastor Trent Stewart.

An experienced commercial design-build firm, Leon Williams Contractors simplifies the building process by effectively managing costs, adhering to deadlines and reducing complications to provide a seamless building experience. As a value-engineering expert, Leon Williams Contractors offers a complete range of services including pre-construction consultation, site assessment, design-build expertise and construction management in the greater Knoxville, Tennessee area.

Since 2002, Studio Four Design has served as a premier architectural and interior design firm to the Greater Knoxville Area. Their guiding principal is Design Matters, and their goal is to go beyond expectations to provide design solutions that positively impact their clients’ lives and organizations. Their team has worked on a variety of projects over the last decade that includes: churches, educational facilities, restaurants, retail buildings, athletic venues and much more. Studio Four Design takes pride in and is dedicated to all of the clients they serve.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

bow out at some point. Time is valuable. Mentors – who probably don’t expect total compliance with their directions – do want to be heard and respected. That “respect” is demonstrated by the mentee acting on the mentor’s advice rather than ignoring it.

One more thought. Mentoring is hard to sustain. People change. Their life situations change. They do move on to new jobs and new cities. That typically results in mentor-mentee relationships changing over time. Some of these relationships can last 20 to 50 years, but most don’t. That’s OK. If the relationship dies, it does so for a reason. It’s probably best to not force it. ▀

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



zweig group

The Principals Academy

ZWEIG GROUP'S FLAGSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM FOR FIRM LEADERS

Elevate your ability to lead and grow your firm at this impactful two-day program designed to inspire and inform existing and emerging firm leaders in key areas such as: leadership, financial management, recruiting, marketing/business development, and project management.

REGISTER TODAY

<http://bit.ly/PrincipalsAcademy>

THE **ZWEIG** LETTER

1200 North College Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703

Chad Clinehens | Publisher
cclinehens@zweiggroup.com

Richard Massey | Managing Editor
rmassey@zweiggroup.com

Christina Zweig | Contributing Editor
christinaz@zweiggroup.com

Sara Parkman | Senior Editor & Designer
sparkman@zweiggroup.com

Liisa Andreassen | Correspondent
landreassen@zweiggroup.com

Tel: 800-466-6275

Fax: 800-842-1560

Email: info@zweiggroup.com

Online: thezweigletter.com

Twitter: twitter.com/zweigletter

Facebook: facebook.com/thezweigletter

Published continuously since 1992 by Zweig Group, Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA. ISSN 1068-1310.

Issued weekly (48 issues/year) \$250 for one-year print subscription; free electronic subscription at thezweigletter.com/subscribe

© Copyright 2019, Zweig Group. All rights reserved.

OPINION



Your baby is ugly

Successful leaders have to be able to deliver tough messages. Use these six strategies to navigate difficult conversations.



**Julie
Benezet**

Before entering executive life, I worked several years as a finance lawyer. In that life, I had to capture the dreams of my clients and convert them into investment worthy business plans.

Part of that job included delivering tough messages few people wanted to hear. For example, I had to tell two company founders that their cherished project had been rejected by regulators because of their past poor handling of the agency relationship. I informed another client that despite his loathing of a customer, he had a contractual obligation to deliver a prototype or face being sued. Then there was conveying the accountant's opinion that despite millions of dollars of private investment, the company didn't qualify as a "going concern," making it ineligible for a planned public offering.

I enjoyed lawyer work, even with the frank messaging part. It prepared me for executive life where you frequently have to deliver unwelcome messages. While they might not have an immediate impact on the life or death of a company, they nevertheless matter to business

"Candor and smart choreography of difficult conversations, hard as they might be, will lead to more productive results and justify the pain of getting there."

health. The issues arise from such situations as receiving feedback from an unhappy client about a team's performance, a company executive's industry group presentation that landed poorly, or a manager's obnoxious behavior that is causing low morale and retention problems.

Successful leadership requires effective communication to motivate people to do their best work. That means providing candid feedback,

See JULIE BENEZET, page 4



BUSINESS NEWS

SVA ARCHITECTS' DESIGN CELEBRATED BY RESIDENTS OF THE RESERVE AT SEABRIDGE As the residents settle into their homes at The Reserve at Seabridge, a new luxury apartment community in Oxnard, California, the stunning design by **SVA Architects** has received outstanding feedback.

Located at 3851 Harbour Island Lane, The Reserve at Seabridge is 60 miles from Los Angeles, and offers the privacy and small-town feel of an independent beach community.

SVA Architects, well known for its award-winning projects in the education, affordable, multifamily, civic, and institutional sectors, has demonstrated its excellence in the luxury genre of design in The Reserve at Seabridge.

The Reserve at Seabridge, which harnesses the natural beauty of The Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard, is part of the master-planned Seabridge community. Seabridge is a scenic waterfront community organized around

a network of waterways and public open spaces. Canals, marinas, and recreational bays carve into the land, forming two island neighborhoods connected by bridges to the integrated commercial and residential waterfront district.

The Reserve at Seabridge, located on a 5.62-acre marina-facing site, features 75 live-work units, 179 parking spaces, as well as a 6,300-square-foot recreation center with a fitness facility, large swimming pool, spa, and sundeck. Apartment homes feature spa-like baths, gourmet kitchens with stainless steel Frigidaire appliances, custom lighting, oversized balconies/patios, and in-home washers/dryers.

Ernesto Vasquez, FAIA, CEO of SVA Architects, states, "The Reserve at Seabridge draws on Oxnard's picturesque beauty, and maximizes residents' interaction with the outdoors. From the walkable design to the oversize windows overlooking the marina, our goal when

planning this project was to allow the natural beauty of the area to take centerstage. We are thrilled that residents have provided such positive feedback!"

Founded in 2003, SVA Architects has become one of the country's most innovative and respected design and planning organizations. The award-winning firm specializes in urban planning, architecture, and interior design of public, private, and mixed-use projects. Among the firm's portfolio are civic, educational, residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments.

SVA Architects values institutional and public environments as the foundation of a community and the backdrop against which we live, learn, work, worship, and play. The company is headquartered in Santa Ana, California with offices in Oakland, San Diego, and Honolulu.

JULIE BENEZET, from page 3

positive and negative. While it's easier to deliver praise, the cost of not giving negative feedback can be high. If people don't know what they are expected to do and how they are doing, they will disengage, perform at a substandard level, or leave.

"Successful leadership requires effective communication to motivate people to do their best work. That means providing candid feedback, positive and negative. While it's easier to deliver praise, the cost of not giving negative feedback can be high."

The outcome of a difficult conversation will depend on how you choreograph it. Here are six strategies:

- 1) Know why you are in the room.** Before entering into a potentially difficult conversation, know what you want to accomplish. Too often, the need to be liked takes precedence over solving the problem. While it's nice to be liked and to alleviate momentary hostility, it won't solve the business problem. If hurt feelings are involved, they can be addressed during the conversation.
- 2) Use your indoor voice.** Giving difficult messages is not the time to pull punches. Nevertheless, they must be delivered with the utmost care. It's hard enough to say things others don't want to hear. Coming across as judgmental or censorious will be counterproductive and make things worse.

Open with a statement that establishes an even, objective tone. "I have received feedback from your team that I find concerning and would like to discuss it with you."

- 3) Validate up front.** Acknowledging a difficult situation establishes credibility. "I know this has been a tough project

and you've been working hard ..." opens a door that might otherwise be closed by defensiveness. Your compassion allows them to see you as a human being rather than a jerk or the reincarnation of a hated relative. It also says you are paying attention.

4) Couch your feedback and goals in behavioral terms.

Your job is to ask for a change in behavior, not personality. The latter would only impugn someone's worthiness and be a futile undertaking. Frame your remarks in terms of the behavior you do and don't want to see.

"Your team members say they experience your communication style as angry and sarcastic. They find it demotivating. I'd like to hear your view of the situation and figure out how we can improve team motivation."

- 5) Don your detective hat.** Successful conversations allow each person to tell their side of the story. It sets the baseline information and lets them clarify their perception of a problem. Listen to understand. That means remaining quiet to absorb information, however uncomfortable. Your goal is to integrate new information into how you can solve the problem, rather than fighting over it. Key to understanding is asking follow-on questions and confirming what you heard.
- 6) Agree on a solution.** With the benefit of new and clarified information, create a plan to address the problem. Be prepared to make compromises where new information supports them. It not only honors the conversation, it creates buy-in.

Candor and smart choreography of difficult conversations, hard as they might be, will lead to more productive results and justify the pain of getting there. ▀

JULIE BENEZET spent 25 years in law and business, and for the past 18 years has coached and consulted with executives from virtually every industry. She earned her stripes for leading in the scariness of the new as Amazon's first global real estate executive. She is author of the award-winning *The Journey of Not Knowing: How 21st Century Leaders Can Chart a Course Where There Is None*. Her workbook, *The Journal of Not Knowing*, provides a self-guided discovery mission to navigate the adventure of pursuing one's dreams based on the Journey principles. She can be reached at juliebenezet.com.



2020 Seminar Calendar

Learning is your competitive advantage. Zweig Group is your life-long learning provider of choice.



FEBRUARY

- 26 Elevate Your Recruiting & Retention Strategy
Seattle, Washington
- 27 Elevate Learning Series: The Basics of Business Development
Seattle, Washington

MARCH

- 12-13 The Principals Academy
Dallas, Texas
- 26 Elevate Learning Series: The Basics of Business Development
Washington, DC

APRIL

- 2-3 CEO Roundtable Retreat
Atlanta, Georgia
- 8-9 Elevating Doer-Sellers: Intensive 2 Day Workshop
San Francisco, California
- 23 Elevate Your Recruiting & Retention Strategy
Toronto, Canada
- 30 Elevate Learning Series: Communicating With Confidence
Phoenix, Arizona

MAY

- 19 Project Management for AEC Professionals
Tampa, Florida
- 21 Elevate Learning Series: Communicating With Confidence
Detroit, Michigan
- 27 Learn The Language of Business: Financial Management
Dallas, Texas

JUNE

- 11-12 The Principals Academy
Detroit, Michigan
- 17-18 Leadership Skills for AEC Professionals
Seattle, Washington
- 24 Elevate Your Recruiting & Retention Strategy
Denver, CO
- 25 Elevate Learning Series: The Power of Positioning
Denver, CO

JULY

- 14 Learn The Language of Business: Financial Management
Chicago, Illinois
- 23-24 The Principals Academy
Portland, Oregon
- 30 The Power of Positioning
Washington, DC

AUGUST

- 5-6 Elevating Doer-Sellers: Intensive 2 Day Workshop
Chicago, Illinois
- 12 Project Management for AEC Professionals
Dallas, Texas
- 20 Elevate Your Recruiting & Retention Strategy
Orlando, Florida
- 27 Elevate Learning Series: Building a Persuasive, Powerful, Pursuit Strategy
Vancouver, Canada

SEPTEMBER

- 24 Elevate Learning Series: Building a Persuasive, Powerful, Pursuit Strategy
Raleigh, North Carolina
- 30-2 2020 ELEVATE AEC Conference & Awards Gala
Denver, Colorado

OCTOBER

- 14 Project Management for AEC Professionals
Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 21 Elevate Learning Series: Creating a Championship Interview Team
Los Angeles, California
- 22 Elevate Your Recruiting & Retention Strategy
Los Angeles, California

NOVEMBER

- 5-6 The Principals Academy
Phoenix, Arizona
- 12-13 CEO Roundtable Retreat
Napa, California
- 19 Elevate Learning Series: Creating a Championship Interview Team
Nashville, Tennessee

Have questions?

Want more information?

Interested in In-House Training?

Contact:
events@zweiggroup.com

ELEVATE THE INDUSTRY
800.466.6275
zweiggroup.com

Go to shop.zweiggroup.com/collections/seminars to register.

Zweig Group is an approved provider by the American Institute of Architects, SMPS, and ACEC.

PROFILE



Stewardship: Bryan Wehler

President and CEO of ARM Group (Hershey, PA), a science and engineering consulting firm where the entrepreneurial spirit thrives.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

Wehler has been with ARM Group for more than 15 years. Outside of project work, Wehler focuses on talent acquisition, business strategy and execution, sales and marketing, and continuous improvement and educational initiatives. ARM Group is best known for using collaborative multi-disciplinary project teams to devise and implement work plans that are founded on creative and intelligent strategies while producing a favorable ROI.

“We focus on actively promoting and nurturing a healthy organizational culture that leads to ARM being a great place to work for the long term,” Wehler says. “Additionally, the primary reason we are growth-oriented is because we want our people to be challenged and to continue to have career advancement opportunities that are independent of attrition, so they can grow professionally and realize their full potential.”

A CONVERSATION WITH BRYAN WEHLER.

The Zweig Letter: How far into the future are you able to reliably predict your workload and cashflow?

Bryan Wehler: Approximately six to nine months.

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

BW: This is a topic that’s often on my mind as I regularly get consumed by the day-to-day “firefighting.” However, to be most effective in leading, growing, and improving the business, I believe I should be spending at least 50 percent of my time working “on the business.” Currently, I spend about 90 percent of my time working “in the business” and this is an area I am actively working to change.

TZL: What, if anything, are you doing to protect your firm from a potential economic slowdown in the future?

BW: We’re looking closely at our backlog and using this information as a guide for making hiring decisions so that we do not create an over-staffed situation should the economy move into recession. Additionally, we’re actively working to reduce debt and shorten our collection period to improve cashflow while continuing to be aggressive with

marketing and business development. Lastly, we have intentionally developed highly-diversified services and clients, and this has served us well in past economic slowdowns.

TZL: Are you using the R&D tax credit? If so, how is it working for your firm? If not, why not?

BW: Yes. We've pursued this credit the last two years and it appears to be working well so far.

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

BW: Because this is such an important topic, we've always emphasized soft skills with our managers, and we are now developing a formal in-house people management/development training program for all of our personnel managers.

"There are times when we ask people to stretch when we have reason to believe that it's a relatively short-term spike in work. Asking people to stretch for a prolonged period is inconsistent with our values and can lead to the departure of a good person."

TZL: Does your firm work closely with any higher education institutions to gain access to the latest technology, experience, and innovation and/or recruiting to find qualified resources?

BW: Yes. We partner with several regional, higher education institutions – mostly in the form of providing technical presentations to students at different times throughout the year. This provides us with an opportunity to engage with students pursuing degrees in the fields where we practice, as well as an opportunity for the students to learn more about our company and our people.

TZL: How often do you value your firm and what key metrics do you use in the process? Do you value using in-house staff or is it outsourced?

BW: We conduct an annual valuation and it's performed by a third-party accounting

firm. The valuation includes several different factors and multiple methods, but is weighted most heavily upon three-year trailing earnings.

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

BW: We examine employee engagement survey results, utilization, overhead rate, census, gross profit percentage, revenue, effective multiplier, and average billing rate. In terms of planning and projections, we look most closely at weekly sales, proposal activity and backlog trends.

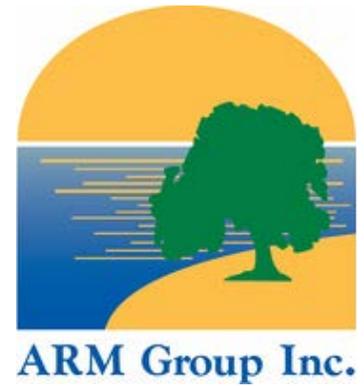
TZL: Ownership transition can be tricky, to say the least. What's the key to ensuring a smooth passing of the baton? What's the biggest pitfall to avoid?

BW: We are amid a formal 10-year succession plan to enable the divestiture of some of ARM's original principals. In my view, some of the keys to success are planning for the transition far in advance, developing a detailed plan that garners a firm commitment from company leadership, sticking to the plan, and making sure you are actively developing the next generation of leaders to facilitate project, client, and knowledge transition and succession. The succession and development plan for replacing key senior principals is critically important and must begin many years before planned retirements.

TZL: You want high utilization for profitability, but that means employees are fully loaded with assignments. How do you balance growth, utilization, new clients, and new hires?

BW: This is one of the most challenging balancing acts in consulting. In simple terms, we look at individual and practice area utilization and backlog relative to staffing to make decisions about whether to hire. We're very sensitive to avoiding burnout and, consequently, we work hard to balance and/or rebalance workloads on a regular basis. We generally hire when backlog is strong and when practice area utilization or position utilization is elevated for an extended period. However, we will also hire what we consider to be outstanding candidates even if backlog and utilization don't justify it, as we've found that these exceptional candidates end up staying busy.

See STEWARDSHIP, page 8



HEADQUARTERS: Hershey, PA

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 210

YEAR FOUNDED: 1998

OFFICE LOCATIONS:

- Hershey, PA
- Columbia, MD
- State College, PA
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Lehigh Valley, PA
- Boston, MA
- Mechanicsburg, PA
- Johnstown, PA
- Jamesburg, NJ
- Jessup, PA

SERVICES:

- Environmental investigation, design, remediation, and compliance
- Solid waste disposal and processing facility permitting, design, compliance support, and construction-phase engineering
- Civil and geotechnical engineering services
- Water resources planning and management
- Natural resource studies, permitting, and mitigation
- Geophysical surveys
- Oil and gas exploration and production support
- Renewable energy

SAFETY COME FIRST: Safety is ARM's number one corporate priority. Over its 20 year history, ARM has earned a superior safety record despite the magnitude of field operations conducted by its professionals. Exemplary safety records are the product of a safety culture in which the stakeholders have "bought in."

BUSINESS NEWS

FREESE AND NICHOLS NAMES JIM HEYDORN TREATMENT DISCIPLINE LEADER FOR SOUTHEAST U.S. MARKETS Freese and Nichols, Inc., has added Jim Heydorn, P.E., an accomplished water/wastewater treatment engineer, as discipline leader to help expand services available for clients across the Southeastern U.S.

With more than 20 years of treatment and program management experience, Heydorn will lead projects in Georgia and Florida and will share his expertise with teams across the markets that Freese and Nichols serves in the Southeast region.

His experience covers the study and design of a wide range of wastewater and water treatment facilities in addition to treatment plant construction projects. His leadership roles have included program manager, project manager, and client service manager.

Heydorn recently served as program manager for the DeKalb County Consent Decree Program Management Services contract for the assessment and rehabilitation of the county's sewer system. His duties included technical tasks along with working regularly with local officials and regulatory agencies.

With his treatment and program management background, he will help Freese and Nichols expand those services in multiple markets.

"Jim brings a wealth of knowledge and a diversity of skill sets that will broaden what we will offer to our clients in the Georgia and Florida markets," said Trooper Smith, Freese

and Nichols' Georgia/Florida division manager. "We are excited to have him on our team."

Heydorn earned a master's degree in environmental engineering from Stanford University and a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Duke University.

Freese and Nichols, Inc. is a professional consulting firm serving clients across the Southeast and Southwest U.S. With sustainability in mind, Freese and Nichols plans, designs and manages infrastructure projects. It is the first engineering/architecture firm to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

WARE MALCOMB RECOGNIZED ON INC. 5000 LIST OF FASTEST-GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES IN AMERICA Ware Malcomb, an award-winning international design firm, announced it has once again been recognized on the 2019 Inc. 5000, *Inc. Magazine's* annual list of the fastest-growing private companies in America.

Ware Malcomb made its debut on the Inc. 5000 list in 2018 and is one of only five architecture and civil engineering firms to be included this year. Companies on the Inc. 5000 are ranked according to percentage revenue growth from 2015 to 2018, with Ware Malcomb achieving 67 percent growth in that time period.

In 2019, Ware Malcomb opened two new offices in Washington, D.C., and Dallas, Texas, bringing the total number of offices in North America to 24. The firm also added building measurement services to its core service offerings, expanding the range of capabilities

provided to commercial real estate and corporate clients across its markets.

"Ware Malcomb has been on a path of continuous growth that would not be possible without the talent and dedication of our incredible team members," said Lawrence Armstrong, CEO of Ware Malcomb. "We have expanded our scope of services, our workforce, and our geographic reach to provide our clients with the highest level of design services in the industry."

"It is an honor to once again be named among the fastest-growing private companies in America," added Kenneth Wink, executive vice president of Ware Malcomb. "Ware Malcomb's well-deserved reputation for quality and innovation has been achieved through the hard work of every team member, and we congratulate each of them for their ongoing contributions to the firm's growth and success."

Established in 1972, Ware Malcomb provides planning, architecture, interior design, branding, civil engineering, and building measurement services to commercial real estate and corporate clients. With 24 office locations throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Panama, the firm specializes in the design of commercial office, corporate, industrial, science and technology, healthcare, retail, auto, public/educational facilities, and renovation projects. Ware Malcomb is recognized as a Hot Firm and Best Firm To Work For by Zweig Group.

STEWARDSHIP, from page 7

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?

BW: As mentioned, we're very sensitive to avoiding burnout, but there are times when we ask people to stretch when we have reason to believe that it's a relatively short-term spike in work. Asking people to stretch for a prolonged period is inconsistent with our values and can lead to the departure of a good person. In terms of PM training, we annually conduct a comprehensive internal PM training program that is focused on PM best practices and the behaviors of successful PMs. All of ARM's PMs have participated in our internal PM training.

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

BW: Stewardship.

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

BW: We focus on actively promoting and nurturing a healthy organizational culture that leads to ARM being a great place to work for the long term. Additionally, the



ARM Group celebrates its win as a Best Places to Work in PA.

primary reason we are growth-oriented is because we want our people to be challenged and to continue to have career advancement opportunities that are independent of attrition, so they can grow professionally and realize their full potential. ▀



Shifting paradigms

If you want to be a great consultant, you have to step into the client's shoes and see the world as they do.



Greg
Marconnet



Jeff
Janis

Have you ever wondered what was running through a client's head? Client/consultant interactions in the AEC industry can be confusing and fraught with misunderstandings. A combined 67 years working on the client side of the food and beverage industry before joining Mead & Hunt has given us a unique understanding and perspective into the minds of clients. Now on the other side, learning to “walk in the AEC consultants' shoes” has been a challenge that has forced us to let go of some previously held paradigms and shift our perspective.

This experience of working on both sides has given us some useful insights that have allowed us to pursue and complete work more effectively as consultants:

- Listen, don't tell – you don't want to be right too soon.** Often, because of our experiences, we believe we know the answer to a problem facing a client as they start to describe it. They have hired us to be an expert, so let's just blurt out the answer, right? Probably not! Coaching and advising from the other side of the table requires patience, listening for understanding, and then asking clarifying questions. Helping the client determine the best answer for their unique problem is the win here, not showing how “smart” you are.

For this reason, it is best to offer multiple options for potential solutions rather than just telling the client what you think should happen. This approach allows the client to have ownership of the direction the project will take. Recently we had a client with floor problems. We knew from our discussion that he was considering exiting the location in the next two years. We provided what we thought was the “right fix,” which would last more than two years, but also an option for a temporary repair to just get him through the next two years. He chose the temporary repair. The “right fix” isn't always right for every client.

- Invest in relationships.** No one looks in the yellow

See GREG MARCONNET & JEFF JANIS, page 10



ON THE MOVE

MILLER JOINS WSP USA AS NATIONAL TOLL PRACTICE CONSULTANT Philip Miller, a toll industry leader with more than three decades of experience in highway transportation, has joined **WSP USA**, a leading engineering and professional services consultancy, as a national toll practice consultant.

Miller will collaborate with Jeff Heilstedt, national director of tolling services at WSP, to enhance and reinforce the firm's growing range of toll industry services to new and existing clients, with new tools and toll history experience.

His arrival will help toll agencies across the nation plan or prepare to convert to all electronic toll technology. Currently in the U.S. there are about 336 toll highways, bridges, and tunnels, of which 114 operate without toll plazas. They were either built using AET technology, or have been converted to AET.

"Phil is a veteran of the North American toll industry's adoption of electronic tolling, non-stop tolling and the gradual conversion to AET technology," Heilstedt said. "With his experience and expertise, he will be at

home collaborating with toll authorities, state departments of transportation, regional toll and mobility authorities, and the concessionaire toll industry."

Throughout much of his 36-year career, Miller has been at the forefront of cutting-edge tolling innovations including the industry conversion to non-stop tolling. He has worked with more than 30 toll clients in the U.S., Canada, and beyond on their toll engineering and system needs, which are often driven by owner considerations of toll operations, finance, and policy.

In the 1990s Miller led the introduction of electronic tolls to the Illinois Tollway and managed the introduction of integrated tolls to the Transportation Corridor Agencies in California.

In the 2000s Miller led the development of the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority open road tolling master plan, as well as the procurement of North Carolina's first toll system – the first AET system for a start-up toll road in the U.S.

Since 2010, Miller has co-authored a concept

plan for conversion of the Massachusetts Turnpike to AET and has directed other major multi-discipline programs in Maryland and Florida.

Miller is a graduate of Duke University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Miller received his master's degree in business administration from the University of Chicago. He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the International Bridge Tunnel and Turnpike Association.

WSP USA is the U.S. operating company of WSP, one of the world's leading engineering and professional services firms.

Dedicated to serving local communities, WSP USA is made up of engineers, planners, technical experts, strategic advisors and construction management professionals.

WSP USA designs lasting solutions in the buildings, transportation, energy, water and environment markets. With more than 9,500 employees in 150 offices across the U.S., WSP USA partners with its clients to help communities prosper.

GREG MARCONNET & JEFF JANIS, from page 9

pages for an engineer – clients work with folks they know, trust, and like. Therefore, investing in relationships is vital. Relationships are built on frequency of contact over time. As a consultant, you don't always get as much time or frequency as you may want to build relationships with clients, so it is very important to make the most of the time you have. Be a friend, have those conversations, and maintain a human connection. It will pay off.

"If you can master the art of placing yourself in the client's shoes, you will be far more successful as a consultant. When it comes to successful, mutually beneficial client interactions, a shift in perspective can really make all the difference."

■ **The devil is in the details.** When moving from the client side to the consultant side, it's necessary to shift your perspective: The client typically has a macro view of the project, but as a consultant, you need to have the micro view. This means understanding all the small details. The client will not be focused on every tiny technical detail – you were hired to be the expert and understand the little things to help the client get the right project outcome.

For instance, we once had a client who had a fork truck door that was damaged. The client's thought was to simply replace the door. However, as the consultant there is a responsibility to provide a higher level of care so that the new door is the right door. This includes conducting an analysis to ascertain what exactly went wrong. The old door may have been installed without proper engineering, hence

why it failed, and corrections may need to be designed to support the door properly. As a consultant, not only do you need to have that more in-depth understanding, but you need to make sure the client understands as well.

■ **Step into the clients' shoes.** Picture this: You just had a great conversation with a client, and they promised to set up a meeting. A week goes by, two weeks go by, and still, no word. What's going on? You've been ghosted! As a consultant, you need to prepare for this very real circumstance.

While on the consultant side it is easy to feel slighted, when you reflect on this from the client's perspective, it becomes more understandable. Of course, not all clients behave this way, but clients often have extremely busy schedules with many shifting priorities. It is not uncommon for the follow-up with the consultant to fall to the back burner. You need to realize following up with a consultant is not a client's first priority. Be patient and don't take it personally. Learning how long to wait and how to reconnect is a skill you will absolutely need.

Our success on the consultant side of the business has been measured by our ability to shift paradigms to adjust to the needs of being a consultant. If you can master the art of placing yourself in the client's shoes, you will be far more successful as a consultant. When it comes to successful, mutually beneficial client interactions, a shift in perspective can really make all the difference. ▀

GREG MARCONNET's 39-year career in the food processing industry includes working in and supporting food processing plants with facility design, maintenance practices, equipment design, sanitation and sanitary design. He leads Mead & Hunt's Food and Beverage Group to deliver valuable engineering solutions to clients. JEFF JANIS is a project management discipline lead with Mead & Hunt's Food and Beverage Group. He has a comprehensive understanding of all client needs. He uses his depth of experience to anticipate project challenges and surpass client needs at every step of the way. They can be reached at greg.marconnet@meadhunt.com and jeff.janis@meadhunt.com.



Reaching our personal peak (Part 4)

Winning today is about serving others and providing value. Both are good. They always were, and always will be.



Peter
Atherton

Greed is not “good.” It never was, and it never will be. For almost 50 years, this false equivalency has eroded trust and loyalty, and seeded much of the disengagement and unfulfillment we see throughout the workplace today.

The good news is that an “official” shift has already occurred. This shift, however, is not incremental – it’s transformational. It changes the way business is thought of and executed. And only those leaders and organizations that transform along with it will win.

THE NEW CHAPTER. The Business Roundtable, a group of 181 CEOs from top companies nationwide, recently released a statement that redefined the purpose of the corporation.

In the statement, leaders committed to serving all of their stakeholders in terms of delivering value to customers, investing in employees, dealing fairly and ethically with suppliers, supporting communities, protecting the environment, and generating long-term shareholder value.

This, of course, is a major departure from the

group that, in 1997, long after the now outdated “profit-centric” shift, professed that “the paramount duty of management and of boards of directors is to the corporation’s stockholders.”

“Most of us have been ‘raised’ to believe in projects and profits, but do we also believe in people and purpose?”

Whether considered forward thinking or a self-preserving realignment in response to the new era that has already taken hold, this new official statement marks a great opportunity. From this point forward, this new commitment by top leaders to serve more than just short-term

See PETER ATHERTON, page 12



BUSINESS NEWS

FISHERMEN'S COMMUNITY HOSPITAL, PART OF BAPTIST HEALTH SOUTH FLORIDA, CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING

Baptist Health South Florida and Robins & Morton celebrated the groundbreaking of the new Fishermen's Community Hospital in Marathon, Florida, in September.

"Robins & Morton is proud to continue the partnership with Baptist Health and the opportunity to give the community of Marathon a healthcare facility that meets the high standards they have set forth," Johnny Sturkie, division manager for Robins & Morton, said.

The project's scope includes a complete 38,000-square-foot replacement hospital with a rooftop mechanical room.

Because of the powerful hurricanes the Middle Keys face, the project will be designed with an impact-resistant glazing system, a strong core of durable tilt-wall concrete and removable flood barriers to keep storm surge out of the building. Additionally, the facility will be built at a higher elevation to further combat damage in the event of flooding.

Marathon's former hospital was severely damaged during Hurricane Irma and was shut down. In its place, a modular facility is currently

in use and will remain operational throughout construction.

Construction is slated for completion in 2021.

Robins & Morton is a privately-held, innovation-driven construction firm committed to Building with Purpose. Since 1946, the firm has built a reputation as a trusted advisor to clients nationwide by cultivating a high-performing team that values integrity, safety, and innovative thinking. Robins & Morton is based in Birmingham, Alabama, with additional offices in Charlotte, North Carolina; Dallas, Texas; Huntsville, Alabama; Miami and Orlando, Florida; Nashville, Tennessee.

PETER ATHERTON, from page 11

shareholder interests is known. It also sets the benchmark for how others will perceive us moving forward – including the talent and clients we seek to attract, engage, and retain.

In this context:

- How do you and your organization compare?
- Have you stated a similar commitment?
- Do all your actions align?

“Done well, focusing more of our attention on people and purpose makes it much easier for us to win projects and achieve higher levels of profitability – especially during transitions and downturns.”

BEGINNING WITH BELIEF. Our first step as leaders is to know what we believe.

Our values, actions, and outcomes will always be tied to our beliefs. If we as leaders and members of leadership teams truly believe in our stated “mission, vision, and values,” there is congruence. If not, there’s a further erosion of trust and a high likelihood of strategic plan stagnation.

Most of us have been “raised” to believe in projects and profits, but do we also believe in people and purpose?

For most of our careers, it was engrained that talent is a “resource,” people skills are “soft,” and employee engagement is just a “thing.” As leaders, we need to take the time to investigate and draw our own conclusions about what we truly believe and how to leverage that to win in the new era.

We also need to learn to look more long-term. We need to realize that, as essential as projects and profits are to our success, they have a limited “shelf-life.” No matter how big or important a project is for our career or for our organization, it eventually ends. Similarly, profits in any given year are eventually distributed and spent.

In contrast, building our business based on people and purpose is a strategy for continuous growth. Done well, focusing more of our attention on people and purpose makes it much easier for us to win projects and achieve higher levels of profitability – especially during transitions and downturns.

Check out [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of this series to learn more about what it means to believe in and invest in people and purpose.

WALKING THE TALK. Leading transformation to win in the new era is ultimately about action – doing new things to realize greater outcomes.

Leaders and organizations that invest the time and resources to think about, design, and execute a strategy with the right focus on projects, profits, people, and purpose are best positioned to succeed – to generate greater growth and profits through greater employee engagement and work with greater meaning and purpose (See [Part 3](#) of the series for more specific steps on this).

Winning today is about serving others and providing value. Both are good. They always were and always will be.

For many of us, our walk will need to include developing a serve-first mindset. We also need to develop the skills and the systems to deliver the right kind of value at the right time. Doing so is transforming and also produces the highest level of economic value – greater than our differentiated products and well-designed employee and client experiences.

Following these steps establishes a culture of engagement and trust and positions us to realize both our personal peak and collective impact at the office and beyond. ▀

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.