THE ZWEIG LETTER

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A few marketing pointers...

Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

Get with the game in 2012 and increase the efficiency of your efforts, Mark Zweig writes.

It's been a lot of fun teaching my "Marketing in Today's World" seminar around the country. Talking with the attendees is also a good way to stay abreast of the typical issues faced by marketing people working in A/E firms of all types and sizes.

Here are a few pointers based on past and recent experience:

1) **The first place clients look to learn more about you is the web.** They may find you from a Google search and then drill into your website to see if you do stuff related to what they need. That means that they should be able to find you using certain keywords AND your website should be well-designed and maintained.

2) **Marketers have to sell what they are doing internally if they want to be effective.** A big issue in A/E firms is the majority of design and technical staff assume marketers are lazy and aren't getting anything done. The way to combat that is by having statistics that show you are accomplishing something. Web traffic stats are a good example. If you know that's where clients and potential clients are going to learn more about you, then drive up site visits and you should (all other factors being equal) be able to secure and close on more client leads.

3) **Technical people CAN sell.** Selling is problem solving. Clients don't hire architects or engineers for the fun of it. They do so because they need help. Helping is a natural activity. So let your people help. Give them plenty of "leads" (i.e., clients calling or emailing in with a problem) to close. Don't make them make cold calls, though, because that is NOT a natural activity and they probably won't like it or be any good at it.

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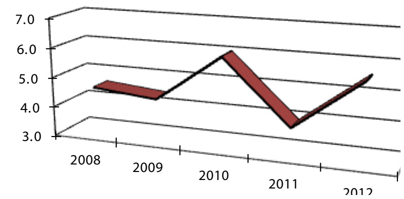
The first place clients look to learn more about you is the web. They may find you from a Google search and then drill into your website to see if you do stuff related to what they need. That means that they should be able to find you using certain keywords AND your website should be well-designed and maintained.

TRENDLINES

Rising ratio



The ratio of professional or technical staff to administrative staff at leading environmental firms has fluctuated over the past five years, according to the 2012 "Financial Performance Survey of Environmental Consulting Firms." This ratio is useful in measuring the amount of direct versus indirect labor in a firm. In 2010, the median ratio reached a high of 6, but dropped to five-year low of 3.9 in 2011. This year, the ratio of professional or technical staff to administrative staff climbed back up to 5.9:1.
– *Margot Suydam, Survey Manager*

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A/E BUSINESS NEWS

PROGRESS CHECK: Mani Golparvar-Fard, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at Virginia Tech, has developed an augmented reality modeling system that automatically analyzes physical progress on large-scale construction projects. The system allows a contractor to determine whether a project is on, ahead, or behind schedule, leading to cost savings and reduction in project delivery time.

Without the need for GPS or any other location tracking technology, the modeling system, named the 4 Dimensional Augmented Reality or D4AR, is able to geo-spatially store digital pictures of a building in 4D (3D plus time) and integrates the photos with BIM models during any and all phases of construction.

With the widespread popularity of digital photography, on-site pictorial recordings of construction projects have become a daily part of the building process. Field engineers might take around 250 pictures per day providing a wealth of visual information.

However, the challenge remained as to how to automatically determine the three dimensional geometry of the construction site from the unordered and uncalibrated collection of images, Golparvar-Fard said. Furthermore the images needed to be accurately registered with BIM in a common three dimensional environment, allowing performance of the project in forms of physical progress, cost, and delivery time to be systematically analyzed.

Golparvar-Fard achieved this caching in his method by reconstructing as-built 4D point cloud models from the unordered daily site photographs, and comparing the reconstructed models with BIM using a new computer vision and machine learning based method.

The augmented reality system developed by Golparvar-Fard also gives the construction industry the ability to automate and remotely monitor the safety, quality, and site layout. His modeling environment allows the "integrated visualization of as-built and as-planned models," he explained.

With the D4AR models, any user is able to load their digital photo logs for a specific building, reconstruct a 3D scene, and navigate through the pictures by location and time. The D4AR models also provide users with the unique ability to organize and integrate their daily construction images with BIM and project schedule and interactively browse through the geospatial configuration, saving time and delivery time.

Golparvar-Fard is commercializing the D4AR tool through a spinoff company he started with Feniosky Peña-Mora and Silvio Savarese of the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.

The D4AR modeling system is currently being tested by Turner Construction with the World Trade Center and several other high profile construction projects. Turner and the National Science Foundation helped fund the research.

Golparvar-Fard is also expanding this modeling method to other areas of research, from rapid energy performance modeling of existing buildings to structural stability analysis.

ABI ON THE MEND: On the heels of a nearly three-point increase, the Architecture Billings Index climbed into positive terrain for the first time in five months.

The American Institute of Architects reported the August ABI score was 50.2, up from the mark of 48.7 in July. 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 57.2, up from mark of 56.3 the previous month.

"Until the economy is on firmer ground, there aren't likely to be strong increases in demand for design services," said Kermit Baker, AIA Chief Economist. "In the meantime, we can expect to see design activity alternate between modest growth and modest decline."

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

Key August ABI highlights:

- Regional averages: South (52.2), West (51.2), Northeast (45.5), Midwest (45.3)
- Sector index breakdown: multi-family residential (53), institutional (50.2) commercial/industrial (47.9), mixed practice (46.8)
- Project inquiries index: 57.2

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4) **It's hard to believe it but there are still firms in this business that don't let their younger professionals ever meet with clients.** That's bizarre. Equally strange is the number of firms that don't have their top marketing people as active participants in the business planning process. It's 2012. Your young people need to meet clients if they are ever going to understand their needs and learn how to sell. And your marketing people (even those who aren't also principals!) may be the most critical participants in your business planning retreat.

5) **Social media is here to stay.** Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube – all these (and more) either are or will be used by all top firms in this business. They are easy to use, can be done on the fly, offer a wide opportunity for many different people in the firm to participate, offer learning opportunities, and much, much more. Stop fighting social media and join in intelligently. Avoid stupid personal information, showing your political stripes, and anything else that could potentially alienate a client. Instead, focus on providing helpful information and learn.

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THE ZWEIG LETTER

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LEADING

Leaders share management tips

A gentle, arms-length approach usually works better than micromanaging, they say.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Colin Powell once said, "Good leaders are made, not born." A lot of training, reading and studying are necessary in order to understand how to be an effective leader – and it doesn't happen overnight. It's an ongoing process.

LEARN FROM OTHERS. Paul Grosser, president at **P.W. Grosser Consulting** (Bohemia, NY), a 60-person environmental engineering consulting firm, says that he's a bit of a "leadership junkie."

Grosser started his firm 22 years ago and never stops learning.

"I read leadership books of all kinds," he says. "In fact, right now you will find on my desk the U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual and some of the 'Good to Great' books."

Grosser also says that it's important to learn from past principals and leaders.

"Observe," Grosser says. "I take from other leaders what I admire most and leave behind what I like the least."

Sam Schwartz, founder, president and CEO of **Sam Schwartz Engineering** (New York, NY), a 100-person interdisciplinary transportation engineering and planning firm, says that he also learned from previous bosses.

"These observations first started with my father in our neighborhood grocery store," Schwartz says. "My father was very demanding, but fair. He never piled on criticism if he could see that I, an employee, was being self-critical. I have tried to follow that credo. And when you work with excellent people, punishment is rarely necessary; they are hard enough on themselves."

Schwartz's second boss at the NYC Traffic Department demanded excellence in engineering and in the written word. Schwartz is continuing that credo.

NEVER STOP PROFESSIONAL GROWTH. Grosser has taken countless leadership courses over the years at both the Harvard Business School and Dale Carnegie.

"One of the most important management tips I learned while taking a course at Dale Carnegie: It was simply – be yourself – be comfortable with what you are doing," Grosser says.

It's also important to be accessible so people feel that they can easily approach you.

Grosser considers his management style to be "hands-off, but engaged." He says that it's important to give the person a goal, but to not tell them how to accomplish it.

"This will allow the person to be more personally invested in the project," Grosser says. "I will, of course, step in if there's a problem, but I will not look for whom to blame if a problem arises. Instead, I look for how to fix it and, together, we learn from mistakes."

BE POSITIVE AND OPEN TO CHANGE. Schwartz of SSE adds that in addition to not pointing fingers, positive reinforcement is key.

"I first learned the term 'positive reinforcement' (PR) from a girl I dated in college," he says. "She was a psychology student and told me that in test after test, PR was proven to be more effective in affecting behavior than anything else. When I first became a supervisor, I used PR and immediately realized its effectiveness. I have continued to use it throughout my 40-plus years of managing."

For Schwartz, the bottom line is: provide leadership and direction, but a bit of pressure too.

"Sometimes it's a good idea to move people out of their comfort zones," Schwartz says. "I also like to use the 'trust me' ap-

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TOP MANAGEMENT TIPS

Paul Grosser

Paul Grosser, President, P.W. Grosser Consulting.

The Golden Rule. Treat everyone like you want to be treated.

Listen. Be the last to speak, not the first.

Understand and ask questions. Asking questions is better than arguing and you can often get to the bottom of a problem easier this way and lead the person to a gentle conclusion.

Sam Schwartz

Sam Schwartz, President and CEO, Sam Schwartz Engineering.

Be genuine. Adopt a management style that fits you and that you feel comfortable with. There is no "one size fits all."

Put personal feelings aside. Treat everyone equally; don't allow personal feeling to get in the way.

Be there for your employees. "It's important to share in good times and bad. I go to funerals/wakes for employees' parents, visit employees in the hospital, and extend and expend company resources when needed (e.g., a critical loan, working from home when ill, etc.)."

Kent Larsen

Kent Larsen, Principal/ Healthcare Market Leader, TSP, Inc.

Give your best to and expect the best from staff.

Be a better boss, not a good buddy.

Say "please" and "thank you."

Forgive and forget.

FEEDBACK

Wrong turn leads to opportunity

Reader walks into wrong real estate office, ends up making presentation.

In his editorial, "There's more to marketing," in **THE ZWEIG LETTER**, Aug. 20, 2012, Mark Zweig writes that selling is about showing what you can do. Rick Koehler, chief strategic officer at **ArchitectsPlus** (Cincinnati, OH), a 12-person planning, design, documentation, and construction phase services firm, wrote:

Mark,

I wanted to tell you a funny story that relates directly to your piece in the August 20 issue of TZL, talking about "the old days."

To set this up properly, I'm now 60 years young and started my firm 33-plus years ago. We have always had a residential studio, which for most of our years was about 50 percent of the business in a 12-person firm.

About two weeks ago I was going into a real estate firm to pick up a key for a home that one of our clients was looking at to purchase. The home can be bought for about $900k and he is willing to put another $400k into it, for which he needs our help. Well, with my mind on other things, I walked into the wrong realty company, which was a block away from the right one. Anyway, I saw the office manager who I've known for the past 25 years and we had a pleasant exchange. After that I got the key from the right firm and was on my way.

Later that same day, I dropped my friend in the first office a note, to say how great it was to catch up with him after all this time. He wrote back and asked if I ever would consider doing a presentation to his agents. Of course I said yes in about a nanosecond. Then I had to figure out what I was going to pitch.

Well, about 20 years ago I did a trek through several real estate agencies presenting to their agents on the "sales meeting day" and it did indeed get us a boost in our marketing activity. So, I brushed off that old album and tweaked it to fit today's business environment and lo and behold it went great. He told me to expect between 10-15 agents for the meeting and I had 22 show up. I showed them our work in the high end residential market, which is the same market they serve, and told them that if they had a client who was lukewarm on a house but it needed (fill in the blank), that I would be happy to go to the house for the second meeting and paint the picture of what the final home would look like. No charge on our part; this is our marketing time. I anticipate some level of results from today's activity, but your article reminded me of what we need to be doing as the principals of the firm.

Rick Koehler, Chief Strategic Officer, ArchitectsPlus.

> " I anticipate some level of results from today's activity, but your article reminded me of what we need to be doing as the principals of the firm."

Thanks for the reminder!

Mark Zweig responds,

Thanks for the note, Rick! Good story indeed. Everything that happens – good or bad – creates new opportunities for us. You were smart to send that note, tho, to the "wrong" real estate office friend!

Take care

Mark

CALENDAR

HOT FIRM CONFERENCE: THE ZWEIG LETTER Hot Firm Conference is the most exciting annual event for A/E firms because it's all about how to achieve success in this industry.

Firms on THE ZWEIG LETTER Hot Firm List receive a special award during a black tie celebration dinner at The Zweig Letter Hot Firm Conference. CEOs, owners, presidents, principals and other leaders from the top design and environmental firms, along with entrepreneurs, authors, and business experts come to this conference every year to share industry news, compare strategies for success, learn from their peers, and leave with renewed inspiration for another successful year.

This year's event will be Oct. 24 and 25 at the St. Regis Resort in Aspen, Col.

For more information visit www.zweigwhite.com/events/hotfirm/index.asp.

To register call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/events/hotfirm/registration-12.asp.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FOR LAYMEN: Understanding about the numbers is not just something for CFOs and accounting staff. Architecture and engineering professionals and managers who don't have a solid foundation in basic finance and accounting handicap your business and their own careers.

In today's competitive business environment every manager needs to accountable for the bottom line. Whether it's to justify a new hire or purchasing new equipment, creating or defending a project budget, presenting realistic revenue projections or expenses, understanding the firm-wide impact will improve the outcome of these decisions. ZweigWhite has developed a new seminar specifically for non-finance managers that will help them get a handle on finance fundamentals that directly impact their own projects and the firm at large. Financial management for non-financial managers is a thorough one-day seminar for A/E/P and environmental consulting professionals.

Dates have been scheduled for Oct. 18, 2012 in Chicago and Nov. 15, 2012 Orlando, Fla.

Group discounts available for teams of three or more attendees from the same firm. Email events@zweigwhite.com for details. Register online and more info including complete agenda and presenter bio here: www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/fm/ or call 800-466-6275.

SURVEY

Antisocial media lives here

A/E/P and environmental firms are behind the times when it comes to social media.

CHRISTINA ZWEIG
Contributing editor

Social media marketing is no longer an obscure concept in the business world; it is significant part of marketing activities – and evolving rapidly. However, survey results show that A/E/P and environmental firms are often not nearly as engaged with social media marketing.

The "Social Media Marketing Industry Report," a cross-industry survey of 3,800 marketers by Michael A. Stelzner released in April, found that 94 percent of markers report using social media to market their business. They list the top three benefits of social media marketing as: 1) generating more business exposure (reported 85 percent of marketers); 2) increasing traffic (69 percent); and 3) providing marketplace insight (65 percent).

Brenda Stoltz, Director of Marketing, Acuity Business Solutions.

While a similar number of design firms are using some form of social media, they may not be as effective as other industries in doing so. ZweigWhite's 2012 "Marketing Survey" reports that the top three reasons behind using social media sites for marketing or business development purposes are low cost/widespread PR (40 percent), a way to keep in touch (39 percent) and a method to attract good candidates (27 percent).

Design firms are still not quite sure of the effectiveness of social media marketing, ZweigWhite's survey says.

"One thing that I ask every CEO who has doubts about social media is 'Do you want to be where your clients are?' The answer is always yes. Given that, every firm needs to know what platforms their clients are using."

When asked if social media sites resulted in any inbound inquiries or opportunities, 17 percent of firms said "Yes," 45 percent of firms said, "No," and 38 percent didn't specify. The survey did find that 15 percent of the 109 participating firms say that the use of social media has reduced their reliance on "traditional" marketing methods, though a significant number, 43 percent, marked "unspecified" or were unsure about this. Surprisingly, 29 percent of design firms say they are unsure if their clients use social media at all.

SCARY THOUGHT. "This is a scary one to me," says Brenda Stoltz, director of marketing at Acuity Business Solutions in Reston, Va., a firm that helps project-based businesses find opportunities, win business, deliver projects, and manage their organizations.

REASONS FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Source: 2012 Marketing Survey, ZweigWhite.

"One thing that I ask every CEO who has doubts about social media is 'Do you want to be where your clients are?' The answer is always yes. Given that, every firm needs to know what platforms their clients are using," Stoltz says.

If a firm hasn't been involved in social media, Stoltz recommends doing a search for company name, industry, etc. "Even if they are not being talked about, chances are their industry is and it's to their benefit to be involved," she says.

SLOW PROGRESS. Still, the Marketing Survey found that 17 percent of firms report that social media sites have resulted in a median of five inbound inquiries or opportunities and 11 percent report that these inbound inquiries or opportunities have resulted in an actual project.

According to the Social Media Report, 58 percent of all marketers who have been using social media for more than three

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The business value of project data

June Jewell

GUEST SPEAKER

Why is it so important to protect your firm's biggest asset?

Can you imagine losing all of your business data, including your accounts receivable, project data and customer information? What would you do? As business owners with years of expertise in our field, we are proud of the many projects we have completed, the clients that we have long relationships with, and the incredible knowledge and project experience of our key staff.

For firms that have been in business for many years, the information about projects and people is captured in multiple documents, reports, résumés and proposals scattered throughout the business infrastructure. Multiple databases may capture significant information about your company. If you have a project accounting database to capture time and expense on your projects, there is a meaningful amount of detailed data about each of these projects. You may also have other data sources, including a CRM database, HR system, and proposal management system. You may have a photo library on Microsoft SharePoint or email in Microsoft Outlook or Google Apps. All of these data sources house a wealth of information that is needed and used every day to manage your projects and people, maintain client relationships and win new business.

What is the value of all of this important data? Most firms do not recognize or put adequate value on their project data and therefore, do not protect its integrity, security or preservation in an adequate manner. The intention of this article is twofold: to help you put a "price" or value on your project data and to help create a sense of urgency around assessing and improving the disaster recovery methods employed by your firm.

While we inherently know that there is value to the experiences and the projects our firm has completed, we do not show this asset on our balance sheet with a dollar value. For a firm that has been in business a long time or worked on many high profile projects, this value could be significant. These projects help us win new projects and gain notoriety and publicity. We use this information daily when bidding new projects and analyzing our performance and profitability to determine where to cut costs or change the scope of a contract.

For a firm with 10 years' experience, averaging 25 employees over the years, the data could be valued in the ballpark of $250,000! I have personally witnessed clients who have lost their data and the incredible cost of recreating that data. It is a terrifying thought!

Losing data is more common than you might think. During my 26 years of software consulting, I have witnessed dozens of firms that have lost data due to fire, hardware failure, software failure, theft, backup failure, sabotage and viruses.

Although many of our clients recognize the value of their past project data, we are constantly astounded by those clients willing to "start over" and not convert their entire past project history when converting to a new system. For example, a few years ago, we had two of our Deltek FMS clients lose all of their system data. In both cases, the cause was hardware failure with malfunctioning backups. Our consultants saw first-hand the huge amount of work and unbelievable cost of trying to recreate this data from old reports, invoices, bank statements and other manual records.

But losing the data is just a small part of this disastrous experience. Our clients now lacked the ability to bill on time or collect outstanding receivables, as well as track costs on their current projects. These costs added up exponentially. Because of payroll and billing deadlines, these clients had to get up and running as quickly as possible. They faced challenges due to incomplete information. Both the financial and intangible costs of this scenario were enormous. Our goal is to help our clients avoid this type of business disaster.

This data must be protected and knowing its true value to your firm will hopefully help you make better decisions about future data conversions, software upgrades, internal controls, security, disaster recovery, virus protection, possible mergers and acquisitions and hardware purchases. Although this historical business asset cannot be reflected on your balance sheet, you can start to get an understanding

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Losing the data is just a small part of this disastrous experience. Our clients now lacked the ability to bill on time or collect outstanding receivables, as well as track costs on their current projects.

Counter-offers: In a word – foolish

Jeremy Clarke

SEARCH SAVVY

Expecting them reflects poorly on you for many reasons. Here are two.

I'll be very transparent… nothing is more frustrating to a recruiter than to have a candidate accept a counter-offer from their current employer. It takes a lot of work to develop a candidate – to identify, qualify and present a person for an opportunity with another firm. Significant time, money, resources and personal effort go into this painstaking process, which can take six months or more. So, in the spirit of full disclosure… yes… for strictly selfish reasons, it's very frustrating when a candidate is lost to a counter-offer.

I wanted to be forthcoming with this admission so as to earn your trust regarding the objectivity of my next statement: Accepting a counter-offer is foolish and naïve. This is a honest and frank statement. To qualify my remark let's just think the dynamics through. What really are the nuances to be considered when considering a counter-offer? Here are two obvious ones:

1) I think it's important to ask the question: What prompted you to explore an outside opportunity to begin with? Perhaps it had something to do with certain conditions of your present employment. Salary was too low; stress was too high; hours were too long; promotions were too scant; resources were too scarce. Whatever it was, let me ask you: Have those conditions changed now that you've accepted your employer's appeal to stay? At this point someone will say, "Yes, as a matter of fact, my discontent with my previous salary was removed by virtue of my employer's counter-offer. I no longer harbor that concern."

   Fair enough – but let's consider the ramifications of the statement above. For starters, the other unsatisfactory conditions of your employment remain unchanged; they still exist, they've just been rendered a little more tolerable between now and the time when you become discontented with your salary again. Besides, doesn't it intrigue you at all that the increase in your salary was awarded in reaction to your announcement of impending resignation? What does that say about your employer's commitment to more equitable pay (assuming your present salary is beneath equity)? What does it say about your employer's commitment to improving working conditions? Are you prepared to threaten resignation every time you need to see improvement in salary and working conditions? Apparently the threat of resignation is your employer's trigger to enhancing these policies.

2) Just know that by threatening resignation and accepting a counter-offer you've been officially branded. And let me stress, if I may, the word "threaten." Again, let's think this through: The moment you accept a counter-offer you have just conceded to everyone that your intent to resign was really just… what? A threat – it was really just coercion. It was just intimidation to gain compliance. How so? Well, because you rescinded your resignation once certain conditions were met. Once you got what you wanted, right? That's the very definition of coercion! And now you're left with the fallout of that. Now, you're a bit of an unknown at the firm; a bit of a risk. You were once the star engineer or star architect, a man or woman with a great future ahead of you. Now, however, your loyalty is in question and you and I both know that progression opportunities aren't usually entrusted to "loyalty risks." Congratulations. You won their money but lost their hearts and their confidence.

   There are probably a dozen more equally valid and striking reasons for not accepting a counter-offer. As I close this article, I want to speak for a moment to the HR teams, and managers, and principals in our business. The best firms are diligent to examine their compensation and benefits policies for fairness and equity meticulously. Furthermore, they are equally diligent to communicate their compensation philosophies and policies to their employees. The point I'm making is: The most credible firms will not even humor the incredibility of a counter-offer because they know they've done their homework. They know they've set forth the best possible policies and philosophy they can regarding pay and benefits, and they know they've done their best to educate their employees on the matter. Because that's true, they'll accept your resignation with a clear conscience.

A message to the employees reading this article: If you threaten resignation to leverage more salary and your employer doesn't counter, you may know for certain that you have made a very big mistake. Your firm's integrity, reflected in their clear conscience, became the final courtroom in the matter.

Just know that by threatening resignation and accepting a counter-offer you've been officially branded. And let me stress, if I may, the word 'threaten.'

JEREMY CLARKE is the director of executive search consulting with ZweigWhite. Contact him at jclarke@zweigwhite.com.

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"If a trusted employee says, 'trust me, I'll get it done,' I let them run with it. Rarely have the trusted ones let me down."

proach. If a trusted employee says, 'trust me, I'll get it done,' I let them run with it. Rarely have the trusted ones let me down. But, for those who have not yet earned trusted status or who have let me down, I admit, I do some micromanaging."

OTJ TRAINING. Kent Larsen, principal/healthcare market leader at **TSP, Inc.** (Sioux Falls, SD), a 100-person architecture, engineering, interior design, and construction services firm, explains that he has heard it said that leaders decide where the tracks are laid and managers keep the trains running on time.

"In that context my management skills were gained on the job working for and with other people," he says.

One of the most important management tips that he has been given over the years is to put good people in a position to do their job and then get out of the way. Trust, then verify.

"One of the principals in my first firm treated me that way and I flourished," he says. "Helping hands at arm's length is my style."

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years report it has helped them improve sales and 85 percent of marketers who have been using social media for any length of time indicated their social media efforts increased exposure for their business. Nearly all marketers who've been employing social media marketing for a year or longer report it generates exposure for their business.

The report also asked marketers which social media tools they most want to learn more about, with more than 70 percent reporting they want to better understand the possibilities of Google+, a site that didn't make up any measurable percentage on the list of social media sites in use by A/E/P and environmental firms that responded to the Marketing Survey. Google+ is a newcomer to the social media scene. According to the 2011 version of the Social Media Report, the top site of interest was Facebook; this year,interst has decreased.

Increased knowledge and training are the key to marketing success through fast-evolving social media outlets. The Social Media Report showed that 40 percent of marketers in all industries wanted to know more about determining how to measure social media results and how to find customers or prospects, something that is assuredly present in the design industry.

Still, A/E/P and environmental firms are hesitant to invest in marketing training at all. The Marketing Survey found that only 34 percent of firms report that all employees receive marketing training, and 66 percent provide training to marketing staff. Of the firms providing marketing training, efforts most often focused on CRM system use (37 percent), proposal preparation (35 percent), interviewing skills (30 percent) and lead development (22 percent). Social media marketing didn't even make the list, though it could have fallen within "unspecified" training category, at the 22 percent.

The Marketing Survey found that 17 percent of firms report that social media sites have resulted in a median of five inbound inquiries or opportunities and 11 percent report that these inbound inquiries or opportunities have resulted in an actual project.

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of how critical this valuable asset is to your firm's practices and decisions.

My intention is not to scare you. This article is intended to help you recognize the tremendous asset that your firm has because of all of the amazing project experience you have collected. It is also meant to motivate you to determine the value of this data and do everything you can to protect it just like you would any other asset of this amount.

Today, there are more options than ever to protect this valuable asset without your firm having to incur the high cost of adding additional hardware, software or personnel. You may want to consider cloud computing, which will allow your company to leave the expense, hassle and worry of protecting your data to professionals. At a fraction of the cost, your data is secured with redundant backup systems in place to ensure you never have to worry about this again.

JUNE JEWELL is CEO of Acuity Business Solutions, which helps A/E firms and government contractors find opportunities, win business, deliver projects, and manage their organization.
Read more tips for A/E firms at her blog at www.AcuityBusiness.com/blog.

GROWTH

Professional development = firm expertise

Examples of how three firms are furthering their employees' knowledge.

By BRYAN SULLIVAN
Correspondent

You may have the right people in place now, but will it be always "right?" Not without professional development. A stagnant team is a losing proposition; that's why it's important to support continuing education, trade conference attendance and in-house training. Why? Because education equals growth.

We asked three top firms to tell us how they are keeping their teams educated in their respective niches. Read what they had to say below.

SUPPORT STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN MULTIPLE WAYS. **Tighe & Bond** (Westfield, MA), a 230-person civil and environmental engineering firm, supports training in a big way. It has a strong commitment to professional development that is reflected in a wide variety of training opportunities as well as its tuition-reimbursement program. They strive to bring out the best in their people, create a culture of leadership, and establish a work atmosphere where everyone feels valued and knows that they can make a difference.

Training offered includes:

- **Technical Practice Group (TPG) meetings** – These employee-led events are an opportunity for knowledgeable staff to share information formally on the latest engineering and environmental projects and techniques with others in the firm.
- **Project management training** – The intent of this training is to introduce current and potential project managers to topics and best practices that are essential to the successful set-up and delivery of Tighe & Bond's services.
- **Leadership training** – Leadership Institute program: an outside consultant leads this and facilitates the continued personal and professional development of current and future leaders within the firm. The goal is to create a leadership culture within the firm and recognize that everyone in the firm has the potential to be a leader in their area of responsibility.
- **Employee-led training** – These are offered by internal experts and senior management on such subjects as master specifications and standard details, proposal writing, project management, environmental permitting, QA/QC, construction documents tracking, CADD, drafting standards, IT and GIS.
- **Monthly marketing meetings** – These are presented the first Monday of every month. They include a timely presentation on a topic of general interest, discussion of what works and what doesn't, plus a review of noteworthy Tighe & Bond proposal activity.

Two firms that place special emphasis on staff training, Tighe & Bond, above, and Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture, PC, represented by its leadership, below.

- **Employee-led lunch and learn events** – These lunchtime events cover a broad spectrum, from civil and environmental engineering topics, to safety and regulatory compliance issues.
- **Vendor-led lunch and learn events** – These lunchtime events cover a wide variety of technical products and services that are directly related to Tighe & Bond's services.
- **Safety training** – This is offered to employees to keep their training contact hours up to date, and keep them abreast of OSHA regulations and other safety topics.

To ensure the success of its communications and internal training, Tighe & Bond implemented a state-of-the-art videoconferencing system that each office uses. This guarantees delivery of in-house training and development programs regardless of employee location.

FIRMS PAY UP FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT. Michael Rabe, managing partner, **CRW Engineering Group** (Anchorage, AK), a civil, electrical, land surveying and mapping firm, says

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Michael Rabe, Managing Partner, CRW Engineering Group.

that as a "people first" organization "We endorse, support and pay for all kinds of professional training."

"Whether that's in-house training, continuing education, professional memberships or conference attendance, we want our employees to know we are vested, personally and financially, in their success," he says.

Rabe explains that staff development takes many forms at CRW.

"We sponsor employee attendance at national, state and regional conferences. We cover registration fees, travel, lodging, per-diem and up to 32 hours of the employee's time. We also pay for time spent in in-house training and for other forms of continuing education. Another area that's important to our team is active involvement in professional organizations. We sponsor membership in two professional organizations a year," he says.

Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture, PC (Denver, CO), a full service architectural and interior design firm, reimburses for staff training, but it's based on tenure. Firm leaders find this to be an extremely fair and simple approach to staff development programs.

"We continue to analyze our in-house training and develop our programs to ensure value to the individual and the firm," says Katie Barnes, associate principal. And, increasing reimbursement with the length of an employee's tenure is an excellent way to reinforce further staff development.

"Reimbursement begins at $800 and three paid days/year and increases by $200 and two paid days/year with each title acquired," Barnes says. "In spite of a recent tough economy and a temporary moratorium on some professional development funds, employees were encouraged to request and were often provided reimbursement of professional development expenditures through a request to the management team."

Reimbursement is a win-win, Barnes says. It keeps employee morale high, while benefiting the firm too.

IN-HOUSE TRAINING WORKS TOO... CRW also offers in-house training programs because they are convenient and cost effective.

"We've found that in addition to attending conferences outside of the firm, that employees also benefit from a steady menu of in-house offerings to choose from," Rabe says. "These in-house offerings can't be beat because they are so convenient and such a great way to leverage in-house expertise. We also like them because they encourage an environment of mentoring and growth."

BRS has frequent lunch-and-learns provided by firm partners, staff and outside consultants. Recent subjects included the latest animation tips-and-tricks, construction administration processes, how to problem solve project derailments and how to facilitate project programming and feasibility studies. Training also includes office construction site visits and project design critique sessions led by various firm members.

ON THE MOVE

AECOM APPOINTS: AECOM Technology Corporation (Los Angeles, CA), a 45,000-person provider of professional technical and management support services for government and commercial clients around the world, announced today that it has appointed **Thomas Peck** as senior vice president and chief information officer.

In this role, Peck will lead the company's worldwide information technology organization and be responsible for elevating IT to maximize its effectiveness and make it a competitive advantage for AECOM.

Prior to joining AECOM, Peck served as chief information officer at Levi Strauss & Company. His 20-plus-year career also includes serving as chief information officer at MGM Mirage as well as an accomplished career at General Electric, culminating in the chief information officer role for NBC Universal's entertainment business unit.

"Tom's extensive experience advancing new strategies, systems and applications will greatly contribute to our ongoing efforts to deliver creative and innovative solutions to our clients around the globe," said John Dionisio, AECOM chairman and chief executive officer. "We remain committed to optimizing our use of technology as we help our clients address the complex infrastructure challenges of today and tomorrow."

Peck will be based at AECOM's headquarters in Los Angeles.

PERKINS+WILL HIRES: Global architecture and design firm **Perkins+Will** (Chicago, IL), announced that **Richard Marshall** has joined the company in a firm-wide role as international strategy director, based out of the San Francisco office.

"One of the many reasons I joined Perkins+Will is because the firm is made up of such a diverse team of professionals," Marshall said. "They bring global expertise and a culturally sensitive and holistic design approach to each and every project, regardless of location and scale. I look forward to helping the firm intensify the already tremendous impact its work has made on communities around the globe."

Marshall is an internationally recognized leader in large-scale development and urban design and has been working as a practice architect for 19 years. Prior to joining Perkins+Will, he served as the Joint CEO and chair of the North American executive at Woods Bagot, where he provided design leadership and management to its multidisciplinary teams. He's also worked on architectural and urban design projects all over the world, including Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and throughout Asia, that focus on the rejuvenation of downtowns, waterfronts, neighborhoods, and campuses.

In addition to architect and urban designer, Marshall can add teacher and writer to his impressive résumé. He has served as associate professor and director of Urban Design Degree Programs at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, adjunct professor in Urban Design at Tongji University in Shanghai, and more recently, as adjunct professor in Architecture at the University of Technology, Sydney in Australia. He has also written numerous articles on urban development, planning and design, and authored four books.

At Perkins+Will, Marshall will work closely with the firm's leaders to cultivate and execute the strategy for growing its international practice, particularly in Asia. His role will be critical in expanding Perkins+Will's reach by directing business development, growing current offices, opening new locations, and further advancing global collaboration inside the firm and with clients.

PROFILE

Controller grasps the big picture

Georgene Beiriger straightened out accounting at Wessler Engineering and is now an essential part of the team.

By BRYAN SULLIVAN
Correspondent

TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2012

- Growing a viable backlog of work and maintaining a healthy staff utilization rate.
- Carefully managing cash flow to anticipate present and future capital needs in consideration of the current business climate.
- Streamlining billing procedures to handle the increasing number of client invoices each month.
- Renovating the firm's second building facilities in a fiscally responsible way.

Georgene Beiriger, Controller and Administrative Group Head, Wessler Engineering.

"I depend on others to do their jobs accurately and timely, and I always try to make sure that the assignment fits the skill set of the employee."

Besides being detail-oriented, finance professionals must also be able to grasp the "big picture" to help guide a firm's financial future. Knowing how and why a company is making money and giving accurate information to management in a timely fashion is a must.

LIFE EXPERIENCES CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS. Georgene Beiriger, controller and administrative group head at **Wessler Engineering** (Indianapolis, IN), strives to do just that at the employee-owned, professional consulting firm dedicated to providing high-quality civil and environmental engineering services to the private and public sectors in the midwestern U.S.

She has been with the 60-person firm for 13 years. A solid background in business led her to this role. After graduating from Purdue University in 1979, Beiriger went to work for the fifth largest Indiana school system as director of food services. This laid the foundation for her managerial and business experience. She managed 35 service sites and more than 200 employees with a multi-million dollar budget.

Several years later, she and her husband purchased and ran a business in Florida. And, even though the enterprise was quite successful, the couple sold it and moved back home to Indiana in 1992.

After training and working with H&R Block part-time for four years while raising a daughter, Beiriger returned to work full-time as controller for a large Indianapolis-area boat dealership. In 1999, Wessler recruited her.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL. What defines a critical employee of a firm may also define how the firm is run. Beiriger defines herself as detail-oriented and highly organized and says these traits have served her well.

"I wear a few hats in this company, so I have become a list-maker to prioritize the tasks at hand," she says. "This also assists me in staying on track when other important things come up that need my immediate attention. In addition, there is often an immediate need for information and I have to know exactly where it is and how to access it."

A CONVERSATION WITH GEORGENE BEIRIGER

THE ZWEIG LETTER: How would you describe your work style?

Georgene Beiriger: Although I do my best work independently, I do appreciate and value the input of others and working as a team to get the best possible job done. I depend on others to do their jobs accurately and timely, and I always try to make sure that the assignment fits the skill set of the employee. It is also imperative that I get my work done accurately and on time, especially since others depend on my work product.

TZL: Name one of your biggest challenge as controller? What was the solution that you used to overcome this challenge?

GB: When I first came to Wessler, the cash flow was greatly lagging due to an excessively high work-in-process. Billings to clients were many months behind. To complicate matters, neither financial nor project-cost reports were up-to-date or accurate. Therefore, it was difficult to determine what was legitimate, what needed to be written off and, basically, where the company stood financially. It was my task to bring the entire accounting system up to date and invoice what was billable, pay what was owed to vendors and produce accurate and reliable financial reports for management. There was no magic bullet to get this done, just determination and long hours for many months. Plus, hiring the right accounting assistant who, thankfully, is still with us nearly 13 years later, was key to getting and keeping the department on track.

TZL: As controller what kind of decision-making latitude do you have?

GB: I work very closely with the president and keep him abreast of all but the smallest of details. However, as controller, I am given the latitude to implement the best solutions for issues arising in any area of my supervision. For example, I am authorized to make day-to-day purchasing decisions for supplies, services and small equipment; classify expenditures and exercise control over the chart of accounts in order to remain in compliance with GAAP, FARS and other government agencies; determine priorities for facility maintenance and engage service contractors; determine priorities for asset maintenance and engage service contractors or make replacement decisions; authority

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TRANSACTIONS

RETTEW LAUNCHES BUSINESS: RETTEW (Lancaster, PA), a design firm providing engineering, transportation, environmental consulting, planning, surveying and safety consulting services, announced its diversification into construction-related services through the creation of a new company, **Energy Construction Services**. ECS provides a full range of construction, supply chain management and design/build services to the oil and gas industry.

"The oil and gas industry operates at a fast pace," said Yves Pollart, vice president, ECS. "ECS not only knows the breakneck speed at which the industry moves, the firm also has the expertise to keep clients' projects on budget and ahead of schedule."

ECS is divided into three divisions: construction, supply chain management and design/build.

Services that fall under the construction division of ECS are site work, utility infrastructure and erosion and sedimentation control.

The supply chain management division of ECS provides services that enable clients to purchase products at competitive prices and, whenever possible, locally. For one client, ECS generated a project cost savings totaling $2.1 million through efficient procurement of materials and equipment. In addition to procurement, ECS provides inventory management and control. Savings ECS realized for another client totaled $45,000.

"It's all about the bottom line," Pollart said, "and ECS has the supply chain management expertise to help clients effectively manage inventory throughout its entire lifecycle."

The firm's design/build division is positioned to drive all aspects of a project, from concept, design and permitting to construction of the client's final product.

In addition to the oil and gas industry, ECS is able to provide services to industrial, utility, engineering and consulting firms. The firm's office locations enable ECS to efficiently manage operations located in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

TERRACON BUYS: Terracon Consultants, Inc. (Olathe, KS), a 2,800-person employee-owned engineering consulting firm providing geotechnical, environmental, construction materials and facilities services from more than 130 offices in 39 states nationwide, announced the acquisition of **IHI Environmental** (Salt Lake City, UT).

Founded in 1980, IHI Environmental provides industrial hygiene, occupational safety, and environmental consulting services to public and private sector clients across the western U.S. IHI Environmental has additional office locations in Emeryville, Calif., Denver, Phoenix and Seattle.

"Joining with IHI Environmental adds depth to our expertise and enhances our current service offerings," said David Gaboury, president and CEO of Terracon. "They are real experts in their field, with particular expertise in industrial hygiene. As an example of our expanded capabilities, we now have a strong combined group of 23 Certified Industrial Hygienists across the country to serve our local and national clients."

Terracon is retaining IHI Environmental's staff of 75 employees. IHI Environmental will continue operating under the same name.

"At IHI Environmental, we are passionate about what we do," said Donald Marano, Environmental president. "For 32 years, we have taken great pride in providing our clients the best service at the highest level of technical expertise. Joining forces with Terracon will help us go even further with these goals."

EMPLOYEES BUY GLMV: GLMV (Wichita, KS) stockholders announced in September the sale of their shares to the GLMV Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP).

"It seems fitting that as one of the nation's oldest architectural firms, we would credit that longevity and growth to the people who made it happen by becoming employee owned, " said GLMV chairman Bill Livingston in a blog post. "I've had many proud moments in my career, but this ranks at the top."

GLMV Architecture provides a wide range of client-focused architectural, interior and landscape design, planning and related services. The firm's nationwide portfolio and legacy of success extend back to 1919.

GLMV was formed in 2010 by the merger of **Gossen Livingston Associates** and **McCluggage Van Sickle & Perry**, two firms with long and storied histories. In addition to market segments each operated in – aviation, corporate, education, food service, government, healthcare, industrial, military – the firms' union created an entity that could be an even stronger force in these and other new markets. An example is GLMV's Zoo Studio, launched in 2011 and headed by Craig Rhodes, a foremost leader in the field.

Following the merger, one of the first orders of business was to create a headquarters worthy of an architectural leader. They found it in Wichita's Douglas Design District – the 1930-era, two-story former Packard dealership. GLMV embarked on an ambitious, yearlong restoration and repurposing of the iconic 30,000-square-foot, terracotta and brick building, now part of the National Register of Historic Places.

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over methods, procedures and configuration of accounting software input and output; determine the best project work breakdown structure for a contract; and implement cost-saving measures that do not involve company-wide procedural changes.

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

GB: There are a few.

- **Grasp the big picture**. This is very important. For instance, how does a company make and lose money? What are the key indicators that help management keep a pulse on the operations at the moment? How does a particular action or inaction affect operations and the health of the company?
- **Communicate.** Communicating this key information within a framework of a collaborative relationship with decision-makers, and in a way that builds trust and confidence, results in decisions that further the company's stated vision.
- **Flexibility.** I bring only one perspective to the table. Experience has shown me that to be a team player in running a business, I have to be open to and respect other perspectives and be willing to learn from them in order to round out my perspective on issues and be of greater value to the company.

"Experience has shown me that to be a team player in running a business, I have to be open to and respect other perspectives and be willing to learn from them in order to round out my perspective on issues and be of greater value to the company."