

EDITORIAL

Revitalization of the firm

Do something new, hire smart people and do some cleaning. These are some of the ideas Mark Zweig presents to get things rolling.

So many people today in this business are just getting tired of the grind. The last three years haven't been fun— with more competition, reduced profitability, delayed or cancelled projects, stalled ownership transition plans, and layoffs of good people being the norm.

We went through the same thing here recently at ZweigWhite. It's time for revitalization. Here are some ideas for you:

1) Come out with something new.

I cannot over-emphasize to all of you how critical this is. What services are you subcontracting out? Can you bring them in house? Maybe you should buy the firm or firms you are already



Mark Zweig

working with. Save money on consolidated overhead and joint marketing efforts. But even if you don't buy, maybe you can repackage something you already do in a new and innovative way that allows clients to get a taste of your service and expertise at a low cost. This "taste" could lead to a much bigger project later.

2) Hire some new, experienced people.

There is nothing like getting some new people in who are known in the fields and markets you serve— people at the top of their game, with a solid reputation. It can shore up your ability to get work in a soft market real fast. Experienced people are more willing than ever to make a move. Don't get cast offs— get those who are still working but dissatisfied by directly recruiting from your competitors. If someone does decide to join your firm, they will be doing so for the right reasons— not because they HAVE to— and will last longer on the job.

3) Hire some smart, inexperienced people.

New people, fresh out of school, who are smart and motivated, will put the pressure on you to give them meaningful opportunities. That's good! It means they will expect you to grow your business. Young people bring energy and enthusiasm, and represent your future

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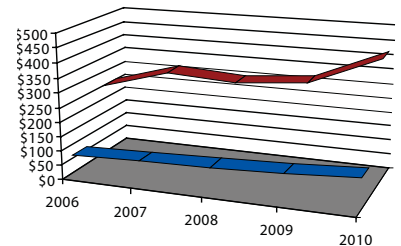
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TRENDLINES

Health issues



It's come to be expected (and is actually required in many states) that firms provide at least some health insurance coverage for their employees. However, with the skyrocketing cost of health insurance premiums in the last decade, some firms have chosen to pass along more of the cost to their employees. Consequently, according to the 2010 *Policies, Procedures, & Benefits Survey*, employee-only and employee/family health insurance contributions reached a 10-year high last year. The median employee-only health insurance contribution climbed to \$102 from \$86 the previous year. Meanwhile, the median employee/family contribution climbed to \$424 from \$324.— *Margot Suydam, Survey Manager*

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stars. Plus they have no bad habits that you will have to undo, unlike some experienced staffers. Get them young and mold them in your hands.

4) Move. New surroundings can be motivational to all. Get into a space that has more stuff close by. Everyone will appreciate it. Find a space with more windows and better gathering areas. I never understood design firms— they should know better— not providing space with natural light to their employees. Gathering areas are also critical. Is there a space other than the conference room where employees can meet for lunch or coffee? There should be.

5) Discard archaic systems and processes. Whether it is the non user-friendly accounting system, the marketing database that only one person in the firm knows how to use, or the ridiculous expense report submission process. Dump it. Ditto for meetings you have always had but no one wants to participate in because they have outlived their usefulness. Dump 'em. Bureaucracy is a huge demotivator to busy people who have deadlines set by external clients. Eliminate it everywhere you can.

6) Share successes and celebrate all victories. Whether it is a bell you ring when you get a new project or a thanks that comes in from a client that you send on to all employees, don't underestimate the importance of reinforcing successes. Share company performance numbers also. People need to know every day that what they are doing makes a difference AND that they are part of a successful organization that bolsters them. ▲▲

MARK ZWEIG is the founder and CEO of ZweigWhite. Contact him with questions or comments at mzweig@zweigwhite.com.

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A/E BUSINESS NEWS

ABI FALLS: After showing positive momentum during the fourth quarter of 2010, the Architecture Billings Index slipped almost four points in January.

The American Institute of Architects reported the January ABI score was 50, down from a reading of 53.9 the previous month.

This score reflects stable demand for design services (any score above 50 indicates an increase in billings). The new projects inquiry index was 56.5, down sharply from a mark of 61.6 in December.

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

"This slowdown is indicative of what is likely to be a very gradual improvement in business conditions at architecture firms for the better part of this year," AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker said in a release.

"We've been taking a cautiously optimistic approach for the last several months and there is no reason at this point to change that outlook. There are still too many firms that continue to see weak market conditions to expect a dramatic increase in the demand for services in the design and construction industry," he said.

GREEN CITIES: The U.S. Green Building Council has released its 2010 list of top 10 states for LEED-certified commercial and institutional green buildings per capita, based on 2010 Census information.

The District of Columbia leads the nation, with 25 square feet of LEED-certified space per person in 2010, with Nevada being the leading state, with 10.92 square feet per person in 2010.

Other top states include New Mexico, New Hampshire, and Oregon, with more than 6 and 4 square feet of LEED-certified space per person, respectively.

"Using per capita, versus the more traditional numbers of projects, or pure square footage, is a reminder to all of us that the people who live and work, learn and play in buildings should be what we care about most," said Scot Horst, USGBC SVP of LEED. "2010 was a difficult year for most of the building industry, but in many areas, the hunger for sustainable development kept the markets moving."

For the full list of LEED-certified projects log go on www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=8784.

CALENDAR

BEST PRACTICES SEMINAR: Your firm lives and dies by projects. Strategically and intelligently executing projects from proposal to solution fuels growth, creates opportunities, and sustains a strong commitment to your team and your clients.

Effective project management is a business necessity— the alternative is an expensive way to wreak havoc on your firm's relationships and profitability.

Project managers are the caretakers of your professional service. Through training based on best practices, they can lead their team to superior outcomes.

That's why you need to attend the Best Practices in A/E/P Project Management seminar April 7 in Orlando, Florida.

The seminar will present strategies to facilitate excellence at all levels using practical, real-world examples and best practices used by the top firms in the industry. From principals and seasoned project managers to assistant PMs and technical staff— every participant will know the role they play within a project, within the firm, and toward the vision.

Can't make it to Orlando? Future dates include May 19 in Dallas, Sept. 8 in New York and Nov. 8 in San Diego.

For more information or to register, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/pmo/index.asp.



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

Issued weekly (48 issues/yr.). \$475 for one-year membership, \$775 for two-year membership.

Article reprints: For high-quality reprints, including Eprints and NXTprints, please contact The YGS Group at 717-399-1900, ext. 139, or e-mail TheZweigLetter@TheYGSGroup.com.

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TOP PLAYER

Lifetime dedication to one firm's success

Stacy Bartoletti started his career at Degenkolb Engineers and has helped make it a Hot Firm.

A five-year itch may explain Stacy Bartoletti's rise within **Degenkolb Engineers** (San Francisco, CA), a 170-person earthquake engineering and structural engineering firm.

He never rests quietly. Bartoletti started as a designer right out of college, and is now the president and CEO of the No. 58 firm on *The Zweig Letter* 2010 Hot Firm List.

In this interview, Bartoletti talks about his rise, the defining characteristics of success and the challenges of raising children.

The Zweig Letter: What does it mean to be a Hot Firm?

Stacy Bartoletti: Being a Hot Firm provides recognition of the great success that Degenkolb has experienced in the past several years and is a tribute to all of our employees.

TZL: How did you get where you are today?

SB: I have basically been with Degenkolb Engineers for my entire career in progressive roles of growing leadership, and in various locations. I started as an entry-level designer in our San Francisco office right out of undergraduate school at Purdue University and graduate school at the University of Texas. At the time, the company employed about 50 people and only had one office. After about three-and-a-half years I moved to Portland, when we opened our second branch office (LA was the first). I grew as an engineer and project manager while in Portland and saw an opportunity to run my own office in 2001, after the Nisqually Earthquake in Seattle. Chris Poland, the CEO at the time, and I talked about a Seattle office and decided that I should move there and start a new office. For a period of time I ran both our Portland and Seattle offices and in late 2007 moved into a corporate role as COO and president. In 2011 I stepped into the president and CEO role.

TZL: Do you remember your first paid job? What did you learn then that still influences the way you work today?



Stacy Bartoletti,
President and
CEO, Degenkolb
Engineers.

"I have always looked for new challenges in my career. My wife and I joke about my five-year itch."

SB: My first job as a young kid was doing lawn care at a local dentist office near my home. It actually instilled a real sense of responsibility. My brother Darin and I shared the job and we had to decide when lawn care was needed and had to go and ask the dentist for payment after work was completed. I think working at a young age gives people a sense of the real value of money and an appreciation for working hard and feeling good about hard work and the rewards that come with it.

TZL: What is it in your DNA that drives you to success? Is it audacity and risk-taking; a can-do attitude and a relentless pursuit of perfection; something else more abstract?

SB: I have always looked for new challenges in my career. My wife and I joke about my five-year itch. It seems like every five or so years I need a big change to keep me challenged and motivated. I believe what has made me successful is my personal drive and my competitive need to succeed.

TZL: In today's difficult business climate, what does it take to succeed? Is the spectrum of failure a motivator?

SB: More than anything I believe it takes teamwork to succeed in today's economy and in the engineering services business in general. We have really come to learn at Degenkolb that teams succeed where individuals fail. We recognize that as our business has gotten

larger and more complex it takes much more than an individual make it successful.

TZL: Where do you see this industry in 10 or 20 years? What trends are influencing it? What about your company?

SB: I cannot say that I can predict where the industry will be in 10 to 20 years, but it is certain that it will be different.

At Degenkolb we are very proactive with our strategic planning and this year we are focusing our attention on a discussion about what trends are going to influence our business in the next 10 years and what do we need to do to adapt. One area of study that I believe will be very important to our business is demographics. Demographics will drive a vast majority of the infrastructure that gets built, and in the next 10 to 20 years we are going to see some substantial changes in the demographic makeup of the U.S. and world populations.

TZL: Do hold someone as a special mentor? How did this person influence who you are?

SB: I would say that my professional career has been influenced by two significant mentors at Degenkolb. My earlier career was very influenced by David Bonneville, who is one of our senior principals. David hired me and helped guide me through my career all the way to a firm-wide leadership position. Chris Poland, our past CEO and current chairman of the board, has also been a significant mentor and I expect he will continue to be one as I grow in the role of CEO.

TZL: What's the one trait you most admire in people and why?

SB: In my mind integrity has to be the most important trait for a person and certainly one that is very important to me. When I am dealing with another person in our firm or elsewhere, I need to know that they have high integrity, and from that follows honesty and trust. ▲▲

Read complete interview in *The Zweig Letter* online at www.thezweigletter.com

EFFICIENCY

Paper disappearing in the office...

Emergence of project information management and electronic permitting means less waste.

By JULIE KYLE
Editor

The paperless office seems a little closer than it did 10 years ago, as web-based project sites and online file storage are becoming normal practices in real-world A/E/P and environmental consulting settings. The ability and means to transfer, communicate, and collaborate on ideas more efficiently and in a timely manner is ever increasing, and options abound.

For **England, Thims & Miller** (Jacksonville, FL), a 190-person engineering firm, Autodesk's *Buzzsaw* has been their most favorable application for going paperless, says Tom Fallin, vice president.

"We use it to facilitate electronic design reviews by regulatory agencies, and once the conceptual design is approved by the regulatory agencies, it's provided to design/build firms for continuation with design and the as-built record process," Fallin says.

The online collaboration tool is considered software as a service (SaaS) that allows project teams to better centralize and more securely exchange project information, enhance team collaboration, and support building information modeling (BIM) workflows, according to the *Buzzsaw* web site.

"It has greatly facilitated our ability to ensure current design availability and effective record keeping. All the clients, design/build firms, and regulatory agencies need is an Internet connection—no CADD licenses, etc.," Fallin says.

ELECTRONIC PERMITTING TAKES HOLD. Very few major cities have a clear development process that makes information available online or have online applications, but some have begun utilizing information technology that allows for processes such as downloading forms, submitting applications,

checking plans, issuing permits, scheduling inspections and tracking applications online.

Washington D.C. issued its first electronic permit—fittingly—for a building to be occupied by a software company.

"It is definitely the solution we need, because of the simultaneous reviews by all of the various permit officials," says Darrel RippetEAU, president and CEO of **RippetEAU Architects** (Washington, D.C.) a six-person firm.

"Project managers love the process," RippetEAU says. "They can see all code officials' comments and annotations on the master design document, hosted by *ProjectDox* (an electronic project submission provider) on their computers, rather than managing separate copies for each the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, structural, fire, and life-safety reviewers.

"If you calculate the weight of a 24-by-36-inch permit sheet and multiply by 30 sheets, times three or four sets, you will see how much paper is saved. A wad!"

"ZERO" PAPER PLANS. Jim McCarthy, president of **McCarthy Engineering** (West Lawn, PA), a 26-person firm, says his office contains "zero" paper plans, as all plans and drawings are stored digitally.

"We use *NomaDesk* as an information exchange portal for our clients and collaborating firms, and all internal reports, schedules, etc., are located on our intranet site," McCarthy says.

Although some clients still want paper invoices, McCarthy says the firm "is trying to move toward 100% (paperless). We send out 50% of our invoices electronically, via e-mail."

Strada (Pittsburgh, PA), an 18-person multidisciplinary design firm, has embraced reducing the amount of paper used in the design and construction process, as well as in firm operations, says Alan Jesse Cuteri, principal.

"We host our own FTP site that is utilized by bidders, clients, and consultants for electronic transmission of documents. We use (Adobe) PDF files for correction documents. Typically, all bidding documentation, client corre-



Alan Cuteri,
Principal,
Strada.

spondence, submittals, reviews and so forth are done electronically," Cuteri says.

"In terms of technology, we primarily use *PaperPort* (document management software) through our copiers, but we also use portable scanners that use *ScanSnap*," says Karin Hunsicker, vice president and COO of **H.T. Harvey & Associates** (Los Gatos, CA), a 90-person environmental consulting firm.

A *ScanSnap* scanner converts all scanned images into a searchable PDF format. It's fast, small, and powered through a USB cord.

Once scanned, copies of receipts, business cards, or invoices are automatically saved onto a hard drive and accessed through an online site, *EverNote*. All notes are stored in the cloud, and can be accessed by any computer or smart phone.

PAPERLESS MARKETING. **Manhard Consulting** (Vernon Hills, IL), a 150-person full-service civil engineering and surveying firm, has replaced much of its direct-mail marketing campaigns with e-mail blasts that the firm executes internally, says Trish Manhard, marketing director.

"E-mail blasts are less expensive (in terms of postage and printing costs) and are considerably less wasteful. The response is easier to track and it allows us to keep our database more current (based on e-mails that get returned due to bad addresses)."

Replacing holiday greeting cards with e-cards is another "small but important" way in which Manhard Consulting is going paperless, Manhard says. It has saved the firm a chunk of money.

"Our Atlanta office used *Paperless Post* to send holiday greetings. What we particularly liked about *Paperless Post* is that it still feels like you are receiving an actual card because you must open a virtual envelope to view your card. Their designs are beautiful, and they allow the recipient to respond back to you," Manhard says. ▀▀

TRENDS

Design-bid-build meets the opposition

Traditional delivery method is falling out of grace in favor of emerging collaborative alternatives.

By JOÃO FERREIRA
Managing Editor

Design-bid-build has long been the favored delivery method in the construction industry, but oh, boy — is it quickly loosing its luster.

“Astonishingly, there are still owners who choose a design-bid-build model as the best approach to their projects,” says Joshua Carney, president of **Carney Engineering Group** (York, PA), a nine-person structural engineering firm.

Indeed, D-B-B still rules. According to *ZweigWhite’s 2010 Project Management Survey*, 43% of all projects are delivered through D-B-B. But D/B already accounts for 27% of projects, according to the survey. The Design-Build Institute of America also estimates that design/build now accounts for 45% of nonresidential construction— same as D-B-B— in the U.S.

Then there’s Integrated Project Delivery, the much-debated team approach, and other methods and variations of methods, such as construction management at risk and design-build-operate-maintain, etc., all competing for space in the A/E/P and environmental consulting world.

The emerging trends in delivery seem to point to a return to the primordial concept of the masterbuilder, as exemplified by D/B and IPD.

But no method is perfect, as practitioners will quickly point out.

“I still believe in the design-bid-build process for most projects. However, there is no universal solution for delivering projects,” says Ramesh Gunda, president of **Gunda Corporation** (Houston, TX), a 29-person planning, engineering and management services firm.

“IPD, design/build, CM at risk, guaranteed maximum price (GMP), and other models are additional ways of delivering projects based on the needs of the client and the project being deliv-

ered. The challenge is determining the right delivery system for each project.”

WHICH SYSTEM? Good question.

For Geoffrey Butler, president/CEO of **Butler, Rosenbury & Partners** (Springfield, MO), a 90-person architecture, engineering, interior design, planning and development firm, it’s not D-B-B.



Geoffrey Butler,
President/CEO,
Butler, Rosenbury
& Partners.

“Design-bid-build has always been problematic in that the successful low bidder is usually the firm that made the biggest mistake. Then, after they get the job, they spend the rest of the time trying to cover their mistake and to protect their margins. This creates an adversarial relationship with the architect and own-

er,” he says.

Plus, Butler argues, D-B-B is not teamwork-friendly. Although D/B promotes teamwork, Butler is not big on it, either, because there’s still “two opposing parties,” with the builder competing with the architect for work, which can lead to all sorts of problems.

“We prefer a negotiated cost-plus contract with the general contractor where we select a qualified GC and negotiate his fee up front during the design phase and he works with us through the design process, providing input on systems costs and the best, most cost-effective way to put the building together,” he says. “In that process, he is a member of the project team and his fee is secure and not at risk. We all work together to hit the budget and get our client the project they want.”

Janice Stevenor Dale, president of **JSDA** (Pasadena, CA), an interior design firm, favors more collaborative methods.

“Design-bid-build has never been the way if teams wish to work collaboratively and in a positive work environment where team members have mutual respect for one another,” she says. “Negotiating with the right general contractor to add him/her to the team early in the process is the far better method and represents best practices for all

non-governmental projects.”

Cyrus Izzo, co-president at **SH Group** (New York, NY), a 500-person consulting engineering and commissioning firm, goes farther, arguing for IPD.

“The integrated project delivery system is definitely going to impact the future of our industry, and we will see it utilized in conjunction with the public/private partnership model,” he says. “It is particularly relevant in the government sector, where we expect to see it increase. Our corporate clients and private owners will come more slowly to that table; for them, the design-bid-build model has been working fairly well and we do not see the same challenging drivers for them to change as rapidly. We are being particularly mindful of risks that are associated with some of these new procurement methodologies and are tracking the legal and financial ramifications as they evolve.”

A PLACE FOR D-B-B. Gunda, the D-B-B adept, argues that D-B-B has been around for a long time, is well understood by most of the public and professionals, and is a proven system for most projects.



Ramesh Gunda,
President,
Gunda
Corporation.

“Owners of projects, either public or private entities, have many factors to consider before determining the type of project delivery,” he says. “Some of the key factors to consider include project financing, project revenue stream, life-cycle costs, cost of time delays, and owner’s capabilities of handling alternative delivery methods, etc. If project funding is available in installments and time value of early completion of the project is not significant, traditional design-bid-build becomes the best delivery method.”

Ultimately, Gunda believes that with technological advances, globalization and financial pressures, “we have to change how we deliver projects.”

Not so fast, however. “Just because a new idea of delivery is developed, it doesn’t mean it is the best way for every project,” Gunda says. ▀▀

ON THE RECORD

The debate over growth vs. profit

How can you grow even though your size has decreased? Read on!

A recent editorial by Mark Zweig (see *The Zweig Letter*, Jan. 24, Issue 895) elicited some interesting feedback on the topic of profit vs. growth. So, which is more important? We asked our readers.

Jim Dennell, president, **BCDM** (Omaha, NE), a 41-person full-service architectural firm, provided a comprehensive and eloquent answer, highlighted here. Here are his thoughts:

Personally, I have come to the conclusion that profit is the most important. As architects, profit seems to have an evil connotation. For some, profit means conceding or conforming to something that is contrary to good design. After 30 years of practice, I see that attitude as a cop out or a bush to hide behind. I feel we are avoiding accountability and preserving denial. It wasn't until this "Great Recession" that I was able to prove profit is good. Prior to the recession, we were always in a growth mode and as we were growing, we always saw profits. This is the first problem. As long as the profits were positive we never questioned the amount of profit. This gave us free reign to do anything without being questioned about things such as the amount of fee we got, hours we took, and dollars we spent. The second problem with a positive profit in a growth mode, is that crisis management is acceptable. "Hey, we're making a profit, so things must work."

We were fortunate six years ago to have a financial consultant introduce a concept of accountability. You're probably laughing, but this was a foreign thought. Over the three years that followed we compiled data, learned metrics, developed reports and tried to educate people. Although we were making a 10% profit, and people loved it, I could see that half of the projects were in the 20%-plus and others were losing. Also, half the people were producing the profit. The truth was, if the losing projects just broke even we would have

doubled our profits. Because we were in a growth mode, nobody saw the lost profit. The common denominators with the losing projects were the staff and processes utilized. We attempted to manage change to convert to the best practices and develop people. As we did, we developed several metrics to make sure there was balance in what people did. This meant watching the quality, client satisfaction, HR, professional development, and business development, along with the typical financial metrics. All these were put in place to hide the dirty metric of profit. Fortunately the recession hit and the profits disappeared, exposing all the inefficiencies. Since we couldn't afford them, we had to become efficient. Now profit is a good word and it measures more than dollars. It measures the effects of all the best practices we were trying to develop when we were in a growth mode. I have changed philosophies from growth being the only way to become great to profit makes you great. This is because profit becomes the measuring stick of your design excellence, employee engagement and client satisfaction. This being said, you must focus on the three to achieve profit. Knowing that we were trying to achieve the three in our growth mode, it begs the question: What is growth? Is more profit growth? We feel we've grown, although our size has decreased.

William McGuire, corporate operations officer of U.S. operations for **X-nth** (Maitland, FL), 360-person consulting engineering firm now part of **Trow Global** (Brampton, ON):



William McGuire, Corporate Operations Officer of U.S. Operations, X-nth.

Without profit, a business can't pay bonuses and raises, so you lose talent in the short run.

Without growth, the business can't satisfy career growth, so you lose talent in the long run. The question that needs to be answered is: What do you want your business to be?

If the purpose of the company is making the owner(s) money—the

profit route is important.

X-nth chooses growth—if you're not growing then you're shrinking relative to your competition. Employees will not be loyal to a company that is in clear decline.

Kevin Phillips, CEO of **FPM Group Ltd.** (Ronkonkoma, NY), a 100-person full-service environmental and traditional engineering firm:



Kevin Phillips, CEO, FPM Group Ltd.

Obviously, they are both important. Growth is necessary for the overall validity, stability, and sustainment of the organization. If you are not growing, you are not paying attention to the changing needs of your clients. Growth is also necessary for the needs of your personnel, their future, growth in responsibility, new challenges, pride in success, and new opportunities. All come with growth, and without a motivated staff the firm becomes stagnant, or worse.

Profits are equally important, because profits mean you have paid attention to the mundane business side of the organization. Winning a \$100 million project is one thing, executing it on budget and on time is something quite different. Both are necessary and require equal attention and investment. ▲▲

Profits are equally important, because profits mean you have paid attention to the mundane business side of the organization. Winning a \$100 million project is one thing, executing it on budget and on time is something quite different. Both are necessary and require equal attention and investment. ▲▲

FEDERAL MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR A/E/P FIRMS WEBINAR SERIES

Many firms are rethinking their traditional avoidance of the federal market, and want to develop sound strategies for developing federal customers. At the same time, federal contracting requirements are becoming more complex, rendering this already jargon-filled marketplace even harder to understand. To succeed, you need a custom-tailored strategy to achieve your business development goals in the federal market. In this 12-part series presented by ZweigWhite, you will learn the secrets of entering this market.

For more information or to register, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/zw-1081.aspx.

PM PERSPECTIVES

Communication games with the engineers



Christine Brack

the arrangement and structure of a real project team— and the behaviors displayed are the culprits but also the muscle behind good project communication.

In their own words, here are some of those discoveries:

■ **I gave them a matrix because I thought it would make their job easier.** The “principal” thought he was doing the team a big favor by designing a tool they could use to solve the problem. What he didn’t share was the goal of the task with his project manager. Without the meaning behind the activity, the team found the matrix useless and mysterious and proceeded to work without it. Principals take note: Serving good intentions and half-solutions on a silver platter are almost futile exercises if not paired with a purpose.

■ **I was bored. I was waiting for him to give me more.** Everyone comments on the work ethic of Millennials. On this day, I had a healthy roomful of young engineers who would defy most of the stereotypes. Lower down the communication chain, they had even less direction and were given far less attention. They followed instructions, sat and waited for further word. And they waited, and they waited. And when they asked questions, the project manager was too busy to answer right away. So they sat there and waited some more. Could this be why Millennials want to leave at 4:30? Can we say we know our team’s skill sets, and how we can leverage those? Are we ignoring the potential we have sitting around us? Are we talking about it?

■ **The note with the goal written on it is sitting here but I guess we forgot to pass it around.** Only the “principal” was informed about the objective of the exercise, and for this particular team it made its way onto paper but it didn’t get any

further. What a shame, because had the team shared this knowledge, they admittedly wouldn’t have duplicated efforts— indeed a very expensive drill. If principals and project managers share the mission at the onset of a new project, remarkable differences in efficiency and profitability will certainly take place.

■ **When I stepped out of the way, he was successful. I let him be the PM.** All principals can point to the time they were full-time designers. As a leader, it is tough to shake the temptation to take the reins and call the shots— even though we delegate that responsibility to our PMs. In this scenario, the principal began to gum up the process but when he stepped back, the project began to roll. They found a solution within minutes.

■ **If I could do it over again, I’d be more efficient— then maybe my coffee wouldn’t have gotten cold.** How often are PMs so caught up in the flurry that they miss out on the finer things in life— or simply feel like they have aged 10 years? Projects aren’t supposed to make us feel awful. Applying good communication practices ensures this isn’t the case.

I would like to again thank Mac Cannon, executive director of ACEC of Metropolitan Washington, Angela Marchetti and Eric Rehwoldt of Schnabel Engineering, and Lou Robbins of Dewberry & Davis LLC for the invitation to speak at their emerging leader forum. I would also like to thank all the attendees for their participation and commentary— which gave me ample material to craft this article— which broadly provides learning insight and valuable perspective for the rest of the industry. ▲▲

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Big ideas and ah-ha moments in 15 minutes or less at ACEC of Metropolitan Washington event.

ACEC of Metropolitan Washington invited me to present a session on Effective Communication in February to their emerging leaders and other distinguished constituents. Good techniques and best practices are essential in every corner of the organization, but one cannot deny the criticality when applied to projects.

Although I had the podium for four hours that snowy and chilly morning, it took only 15 minutes to illustrate the dynamics of communication, expose the frustrations and assumptions prolifically found in teams, and underscore the role each member plays in the success or failure of the project outcome.

A session on effective communication would lack any real usefulness if I did all the talking— so I unleashed a little parlor game upon this large group and watched their lessons learned unfold before their very eyes. I won’t go into vast detail about how the game is facilitated, but the teams are small (five members), the only communication allowed is through written notes, and each member is given an individual sheet of instructions. The task is to be completed within 15 minutes.

When time was called, and the quiet room finally filled with the crescendo of sighs, whistles, and laughter, we discussed the phenomenon of what just took place. We didn’t learn “something new” about the stranger or colleague next to us. We didn’t have to think on our feet about what we were going to “bring to a picnic.” This exercise intentionally mirrors

Although I had the podium for four hours that snowy and chilly morning, it took only 15 minutes to illustrate the dynamics of communication, expose the frustrations and assumptions prolifically found in teams, and underscore the role each member plays in the success or failure of the project outcome.

GUEST SPEAKER

How to create a PMP exam brain dump sheet

While there are general guidelines, you need to include what you need to pass.

There's no better catalyst for self realization than taking the Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] exam. I'm kidding you, of course, but there is some truth in that the PMP exam day will illuminate that "you don't know what you don't know."

The PMP Exam is a 'closed' book exam. That means the only reference material you are allowed to carry into the testing facility has to be contained in your brain. But during your exam, your brain is going to be very busy interpreting questions and trying to apply all of the knowledge, skills, and principles you've accumulated in your studies and work experience.

If you haven't already, you should visit the local testing facility where you'll take your exam and confirm what to expect. Most likely, on your exam day, the exam monitor will check you into the testing facility, hand you six or so sheets of scratch paper and two pencils, then show you to your seat and confirm that your PC is working. Then you'll have about 15 minutes to go through a tutorial that really only takes about five minutes to do. Then you begin your exam.

During the test, recalling what you do know can be daunting. Quite frankly, some of your ability to access that knowledge is going to seem misplaced among your grey cells. So how do you create the best opportunities to pass the PMP Exam that day? You can use the 10 minutes you don't need from the tutorial time to do a brain dump!



Cornelius Fichtner

WHAT IS A BRAIN DUMP? A brain dump is a technique used by many students on closed book exams to create their personal mini reference table. Brain dumps are abbreviations of components and concepts, which you have

committed to memory and are then spilled out on to sheets of paper before the exam for reference.

Brain dumps contain just enough key concepts, theories, formulas and content, which will jog your memory. By having the information on your Brain Dump, your mind can focus on the question at hand, instead of trying to remember the formula needed to answer the question. It helps you to be in the right frame of mind for each question.

WHAT GOES INTO A BRAIN DUMP? Brain dumps are only as good as the quality and quantity of information that you can spill out on the piece(s) of paper just before you begin your PMP Exam. They contain the formulas, theory, concepts and PMP-isms that you might otherwise forget for a moment at the very moment when you need it most.

Here is what you can generally find as part of a PMP exam brain dump:

- Table 3-1 of the PMBOK[®] Guide 4th Edition
- Formulas, such as earned value, PERT, communication channels, procurement, probability, project selection and depreciation
- Values, such as 1, 2 and 3 sigma and estimate ranges
- Acronyms, such as BAC or TCPI
- Powers of a project manager
- Conflict resolution (best to worst)
- Sources of conflict (order of priority)
- Herzberg's motivators
- Project closing check list

And, of course, you must include all the items that you have trouble remembering during your studies and that you feel need to go onto your sheet. The list above or using a brain dump that someone else created can be a good start, but you really need

to customize it to your needs. Don't study what others are having trouble remembering. Instead, include what gives you the hiccups.

HOW DO I STUDY A BRAIN DUMP? Brain dumps are pure memorization. As part of your exam preparation, exercises and studying, go ahead and practice committing the content of your brain dump to memory and then writing it out onto a blank sheet of paper on a daily basis.

Every morning, practice your brain dump until you're satisfied with your progress. By the end of the first week, you should be able to write out your brain dump in its entirety on the first go.

Then, continue dumping it on a regular basis, going back to the daily routine in the two weeks leading up to your exam.

SO WHAT *IS* THE SECRET OF CREATING MY PMP EXAM BRAIN DUMP SHEET? Creating and studying your very own, personalized PMP exam brain dump sheet is a means to an end in itself.

It all begins with creating the content that goes into it by getting to know your weak areas as you prepare for the exam. Then you memorize, you dump and you repeat. Pretty soon what seemed too complex to remember is at the forefront of your knowledge.

So, the secret is that you will accelerate your studies and knowledge simply by going through the motions of creating, studying and knowing what's on your personalized brain dump.

Last but not least, your PMP exam brain dump is a great tool not only to help you bring your reference material into the testing facility, but also providing stress relief knowing it's there as you encounter questions that require it.

You'll help yourself to learn the material as you study for your PMP Exam and give yourself an important edge in passing. ▲▲

CORNELIUS FICHTNER is a noted PMP expert. He has helped over 12,000 students prepare for the PMP Exam with *The Project Management PrepCast* at www.pm-prepcast.com and *The PMP Exam Simulator* at www.pm-exam-simulator.com.

TRENDS

Employer branding helps attract the best

Making prospective employees feel valuable is key to future growth.

By SUSANNAH SWEARINGEN
Correspondent

More and more firms are relying on recruiting technology to get through stacks of résumés, such as automated résumé screening and search tools and computer-assisted interviewing. Candidates can sometimes end up feeling more like a number than a person.

According to a survey by human resource consulting firm Development Dimensions International and web-based recruiting resource Electronic Recruiting Exchange (ERE), nearly half of the organizations surveyed will increase their use of screening and search tools in the next year and 12% will increase their use of computer-assisted interviewing.

As recruiting begins to pick up at architecture and engineering firms, human resource professionals are looking at ways to best align hiring practices so they attract and retain the best talent—and avoid making potential employees feel that they are nothing but just a skill set.

EMPLOYMENT BRANDING. Donna Szarwark, senior vice president of human resources at **FRCH Design Worldwide** (Cincinnati, OH), a 150-person architecture and design firm, says it's important to use your firm's brand in your hiring strategy.

A company's employment brand is what makes the difference in whether or not a firm is able to attract top talent, Szarwark says.

"Our employees are our brand so it's the association they make when they think of us," she says. "It's the face, voice and personality of our firm. It's our reputation and the loyalty and emotional attachment people have to our firm. It's our promise we make to them based on our offerings and expe-

rience and we believe that it is a differentiator."

In today's world, when the talent pools are larger than they've ever been, Szarwark says the employment brand is more critical than ever.



Donna Szarwark,
SVP of HR,
FRCH Design
Worldwide.

"Branding defines the employment experience. It connects the candidates to you and influences the choices that are made at each touch point, because a brand creates an emotional connection."

An employment brand is defined as the way prospective applicants, candidates and employees perceive

the employer.

A study of more than 2,000 companies conducted by ERE found that having a clearly defined strategy is the most important factor in achieving employer branding objectives.

The study found that 37% of companies have begun work on developing

their employer brand strategy, while 13% do not have a strategy.

Many companies are worried about the impact of the downturn on their brand.

According to a recent *CareerBuilder.com* survey, 10% of employers polled said they are concerned about the difficulty of strengthening their company's employment brand after layoffs or cutbacks.

"The bottom line is your behavior builds your brand so all leaders need to be mindful of their actions and the impact on the brand to ensure that no one ever feels like a number," she says. "If you take interest in your own personal brand you also impact the employment brand. When it comes to recruiting it can be as easy as showing up in time for an interview, returning calls in a timely fashion, taking interest in them, being an empathic listener, being optimistic, honest, and helpful.

"To bring your brand to life you must give candidates a reason to choose to work and stay working with your firm."



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