

EDITORIAL

Unsung heroes: Frustrations felt by A/E marketers

They bear it all, from 'need right now' proposals to managers with no experience in marketing telling them what to do, Mark Zweig writes.

I am writing this from seat 15D on American Airlines Flight 1731 from Sacramento to DFW. I'm on my way back from the SMPS Pacific Regional Conference (they've dubbed it "The Wave").

The first thing I have to say is that I really like A/E marketers. Just can't help it. They are nice. They are fun to hang out with. And they have a good energy level. Most of their employers are lucky to have 'em.

Now, don't get me wrong. These aren't just all low-level, inside marketing folks. Some of the people at this event were firm founders or other principals.



Mark Zweig

Some are heads of marketing. And some are marketing coordinators. How SMPS has managed to grow and consistently put out great programs with such a diverse base is pretty amazing. But they seem to keep on doing it.

While I wasn't with a bunch of complainers at "The Wave," I do find that a consistent theme with marketing folks in this business is a certain level of frustration with the people they work with and for in their firms. One typical problem for them includes having more than one boss. It's not unusual to hear about how anyone with a principal's title or who is a line manager feels they can tell the marketing people what to do and how to do it. I don't understand that! Can you imagine if the marketing director at Ford was told what to do by the various plant managers? It's downright weird!

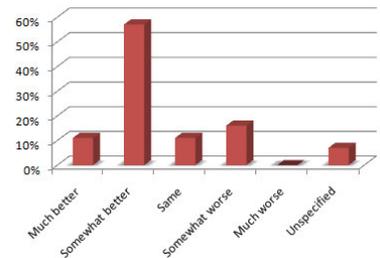
Along with having multiple bosses, marketing folks are usually supposed to serve anyone who needs their help, any time. An unscheduled proposal that has been bouncing around the firm for weeks unbeknownst to marketing, but now HAS to go out in the next two-and-a-half hours is the kind of expectation that many times makes A/E marketers pull their hair out. Again, these last minute projects could almost always be avoided if firms had some discipline and systems to follow, but so many seem to accept this as a normal "way of life" in our industry.

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

One problem for them includes having more than one boss.

TRENDLINES

BETTER BUSINESS



A majority of A/E principals are optimistic that business will pick up this year, according to the 2011 *Principals, Partners, & Owners Survey*. While 11% say that the business environment will be much better in 2011, 57% believe that it will be somewhat better. Another 11% of principals say 2011 will be the same as 2010, while only 16% believe business will be somewhat worse. Not one (0%) respondent to the survey says that things will be much worse this year, while 7% express no opinion. — Margot Suydam, Survey Manager

FIRM INDEX

Beardsley Design Associates.....	6
C2AE.....	11
Cherry Huffman Architects.....	5
Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering.....	6
EDP Consultants.....	5
Engineering/Remediation Resources Group, Inc.	6
Epstein.....	9
exp.....	9
Hanson Professional Services Inc.....	11
HKS.....	6
HSA Engineers & Scientists.....	3, 6
KEPHART Community : Planning : Architecture...	4
Larson Design Group.....	11
Rani Engineering, Inc.....	6
RATIO Architects, Inc.....	5
RLF.....	6
Schnabel Engineering.....	11
Soil and Materials Engineers, Inc.....	5
The LA Group.....	11

INSIDE

- TOP PLAYER: Quality, service, and leadership firm's hallmark. [Page 3](#)
- TRENDS: Debate moving away from urban vs. suburban. [Page 4](#)

Many looking at making a deal

Page 5

'Outsiders' bring fresh perspectives

Page 11

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

Another frustration that marketing people face is that the problems they are ostensibly supposed to solve are in fact not within their ability to solve. Here's a good example: Let's say the Dallas office of ABC & Associates is seeing a steadily dwindling backlog. Marketing is brought in to help resolve the situation. But the real problem lies with the Dallas office manager. She has no people skills and alienates every client she works with. On top of it, no good employees stick around, either. What really needs to happen to solve the "marketing problem" is that the office manager needs to be replaced. Yet, marketing has no voice in the matter. They need to be brought into the operations and even BOD meetings.

Last but not least, creative marketing types get tired of having their ideas shot down by the "super-smart," analytical people who often own and manage professional design or environmental firms. When the subject of social media marketing comes up, the principals will say, "It's a waste of time." They (the non-marketing principals) will be quick to tell you why direct mail doesn't work, why e-marketing is obnoxious, and that no client will fill out a client satisfaction survey. None of this is true, of course, and it doesn't matter what the resident marketing discipline leaders know— someone with no education or experience in marketing beyond personal selling can veto their ideas. Not to mention the fact that marketers get the idea that not everything they do marketing-wise is going to work and that instead of only making perfect decisions what REALLY needs to happen is lots of speedy experimenting.

The net result of these frustrations (and the frustrations of the principals they work with) is that marketing people in this business have the real life expectancy on the job comparable to that of a typical smartphone— that's about two years. It's too bad and we need to change, or we're going to run many good marketing folks from our industry. And we need them! ■▲

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

A/E BUSINESS NEWS

HONG KONG IS BACK: According to a *Wall Street Journal* article, the Golden Age of the skyscraper began in 1930s Chicago and New York, and is entering a new era with the increasing development of super-tall structures. Case in point is the new International Commerce Centre in Hong Kong, which includes a Ritz-Carlton hotel in the upper reaches of its 108-story frame. The building is the fourth tallest in the world at 1,588 feet.

According to the article, the sleek ICC marks the return of the record-beating skyscraper to a city that helped spawn a global skyscraper race. Hong Kong was not only the first city outside the U.S. with a skyscraper topping 1,000 feet— 1989's Bank of China Tower— but it spurred a quest for the heavens that spread to cities across Asia and eventually to the Persian Gulf. Experts believe the 108-story ICC is a significant step toward the supercity of the future, which will soar into the skies amid increasing population pressures, according to the *WSJ* article.

Key to such towers is the integration of services and infrastructure, particularly transportation. Developers are moving to higher towers to integrate offices, commercial spaces, and residential units. While 80 stories used to be the point beyond which more made little sense, technologies— such as the ability to pump high-strength concrete up more than 1,640 feet— has changed that. Engineers also have a better understanding of ways to help diminish building sway, according to the article.

HOOVER PROJECT RECOGNIZED: The Hoover Dam Bypass has received the American Council of Engineering Companies' 2011 Grand Conceptor Award— the prestigious industry honor signifying the year's top engineering triumph. The project was chosen best among 161 engineering achievements from throughout the world entered in this year's ACEC Engineering Excellence Awards competition.

Designed by **HDR, T.Y. Lin International**, and **Jacobs Engineering**, the Hoover Dam Bypass eliminates severe traffic congestion while enhancing security at the Dam— a vital source of electricity and water to the Southwest. The project is highlighted by a 1,900-foot-long arched concrete bridge rising some 900 feet over the Colorado River— the highest and largest bridge of its type in the Western Hemisphere with the world's tallest pre-cast concrete columns.

CALENDAR

OWNERSHIP TRANSITION SEMINAR: ZweigWhite's Management Education series is coming to Dallas on April 28 with a seminar on ownership transition.

The A/E/P and environmental consulting industry has never faced a more challenging time when it comes to ownership transition. Too many firms rely on programs developed by previous generations of owners and leaders without regard to the current challenges facing the next generation. With a huge wave of aging baby-boomers approaching retirement, a much smaller demographic of successors, and a tough economic climate, firms must understand all the options available if they want to transition ownership and leadership successfully. This workshop will cover the various tools and models available for successful ownership transition and how to identify which ones will work best for your company. To register or for more information, call 1-800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/calendar.asp.

AIA NATIONAL CONVENTION: The profession is undergoing a design revolution, and so is your AIA convention. This year, when you attend the AIA 2011 National Convention and Design Exposition, you will experience an event that has been reinvented and reenergized. For more information, log on to www.aia.org/conferences.

THE ZWEIG LETTER

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TOP PLAYER

Quality, service, and leadership firm's hallmark

Nicholas Albergo is a plain-spoken leader who isn't turned off by the prospect of failure.

Nicholas Albergo can be blunt. He also a true businessman with a wise-guy sense of humor. Albergo, the president and CEO of **HSA Engineers and Scientists** (Tampa, FL), a 270-person consulting, engineering, construction, and forensic investigative services firm, doesn't shy away from admitting that making money is important—through a positive impact in the world. In this interview, the leader of the No. 67 firm in *The Zweig Letter* 2010 Hot Firm List shares his more than just his views.

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

Nicholas Albergo: It means that we are fortunate through a combination of hard work and situational luck to have persevered through some very challenging years. It's also a reflection of our consistency as it pertains to increasing share value. Being successful (i.e., "Hot") also affords our middle managers to continue the type of decision-making authority that is often reeled in at the first sign of financial distress. It's more about their success now.

TZL: How did you get where you are today?

NA: We successfully initiated a transition plan early in the firm's development, and have prevented our middle managers, who seek greater responsibility, from killing each other to get the opportunity to lead. I suppose our service and quality of deliverables are factors as well.

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

NA: My first job was as a paper boy. I learned the importance of collections.

TZL: What is it in your DNA that drives you to success? Is it audac-

ity and risk-taking; a can-do attitude and a relentless pursuit of perfection; something else more abstract?



Nicholas Albergo,
President and
CEO, HSA
Engineers and
Scientists.

NA: What is in my DNA? I guess fertility for starters. I've fathered eight kids in 10 years. Also I, like my partners, share the common gene of an overzealous desire to make as much money as possible, while making as positive an impact as possible within our profession. At least the kids are healthy.

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

NA: To not only be able to do simple math, but handle money, budget, spend and save wisely. Next, to recognize the symptoms, trace them to the root of the problem (usually a short list of valuable team members, but who consistently seem to be the same pains in the ass), and then identify and evaluate possible solutions that move the firm forward. It's also important to learn from the chain of consequences that flow from both small and large actions and to take responsibility for both your actions and all their penalties. Lastly, succumb to the reality that the success is not because of you anymore, nor is it defined by self-serving awards from self-serving professional associations. I fail every day. No big deal.

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

NA: I see a more international demand for environmental stewardship borne of corporate governance, where in the nature and extent of a successful company's efforts in Third World operations come under greater political scrutiny. This will drive funding and opportunity. I also see a definite emphasis on water resources. At the mid-point of this century, the world's population will have doubled to 10 billion people,

sharing the same quantity of water that was available in 1990. Unlike oil, there is no replacement for water. Currently, two-out-of-five people worldwide lack the five gallons of water necessary for basic sanitation and hygiene (U.S. citizens use 150 gallons/day). History has confirmed that a lack of clean water can not only cause health problems, but also leads to mass migrations and failed governments. Whiskey's for drinking, and water's for wars. We are going to be a water-focused industry in the near future. We plan on being a part of it.

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

NA: My partner, Dave Scott. He is two years older than me and mostly spent, but he is the person who has tirelessly worked with me to improve my abilities to listen, to understand, to respect, and to use power wisely.

He has also been largely responsible for quickly understanding our challenges, opportunities, and obstacles in each stage of our firm's development, and has been able to maximize the benefits each has brought to the firm (P.S. He answered this question on my behalf. I just know him as the guy who signs the checks).

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

NA: Patience. I have none.

TZL: Describe the most challenging thing you have ever done/the biggest challenge you have taken on outside of work?

NA: Letting my wife be right sometimes.

TZL: What lesson learned would you pass along to a recent college graduate embarking on a career in the A/E/P and environmental consulting fields?

NA: Go back to graduate school. Not only do you get a year off your Professional Engineering Licensure requirements (equates to \$\$), but you become more marketable when navigating the highly competitive employment market. ▲▲

TRENDS

Debate moving away from urban vs. suburban

Planning for future communities now centering around the idea of livable communities.

By DAN NAUMOVICH
Correspondent

High-density housing vs. personal space and freedom. Diversity and culture vs. long, costly commutes. For years the debate between urban and suburban community models has been waged based on sharp distinctions, with the benefits and disadvantages of each poised in direct contrast. Community planners are finding that that is no longer a useful, or even a valid way to frame the discussion.

"We've moved a bit beyond that because the settlement patterns today are more diverse than they were 30 years ago. The city/suburban dichotomy is not really as valid as it used to be," says Jeff Soule, director of outreach and international programs for the American Planning Association in Washington, D.C.

"What we're seeing at the American Planning Association as an overall trend is what I characterize as place-making, which is looking more comprehensively than we used to. What people are looking for is a package of convenience, not just at housing, but the cost of the commute, proximity to jobs, transportation options, and overall urban amenities," he says.

He likens the trend today to the residential neighborhoods that arose in urban areas back in the beginning of the last century.

"If you go back to the streetcar subdivisions of the '20s, you'll find a lot of single-family housing, but it's arrayed in a way that is fairly high density and punctuated with commercial mixed-use nodes," Soule says.

He offers as an example Reston, Virginia. In the 1960s this planned community was intended to balance nature and lifestyle, but its vision has changed over the years.

The plan in Reston today is to maintain the walkable environment, while adding transportation and living choic-

es. Three new Metrorail stations will connect the community to surrounding areas and grade-separated bike paths will connect to a regional network of open space. A wide variety of new housing options include condos in a 30-story high-rise, along with quarter-acre, single-family residences.

"It's not that the suburbs are bad and the cities are good. There's a trend nationwide toward making all the different places along that urban/suburban spectrum into more complete places," Soule says. Soule cites the work of Dorell Myers, a professor from the University of Southern California's School of Policy, Planning, and Development, when he explains how shifting demographics are also playing a role in evolving community models.

"The isolated, single-use subdivision is already overbuilt in the United States. The combination of aging baby boomers and new immigrants coming from other cultures are demanding a more compact, integrated residential typology, rather than McMansions out in a cornfield," Soule says

HIGH DENSITY LIVING. Paul Campbell, principal at **KEPHART Community : Planning : Architecture** (Denver, CO), believes that the future of single-family residences is one of the most important questions that those involved with community planning need to ask themselves.

At KEPHART, Campbell is involved with production housing and so admits his views on the topic are myopic. A good deal of the firm's work is being completed in suburban infill areas with populations between 250,000 and 300,000. Approximately 85% are rentals.

"Is that a national trend? It is from our point of view," he says.

The developers who approach KEPHART for single-family residences are usually looking to fill out an existing development, rather than starting from

scratch. Campbell has also noticed a trend away from the McMansions and toward something that's livable, but on a much smaller and sustainable scale.

While Soule pointed to the baby boomers, Campbell sees Generation Y as leading the trend toward higher-density living. These tech-savvy individuals, born between the mid-1970s and early 2000s, are showing a preference for living closer to where they work and where they play, rather than returning home to a "pastoral community" each evening.

The housing crisis has also forced a segment of the population to rethink their housing options. While renting might not be their preferred choice, it could be the more sensible one.

"They're probably more inclined to accept that urban or infill location, rather than seek it out. It's more about price point," Campbell says.

Local governments are also driving change. Soule says that where once municipalities would cater to developers and absorb the costs for such things as extending road networks and utility infrastructure, they are less willing today to foot the bill without considering the alternatives. Fiduciary responsibility and return on investment are being weighed along with the increased property tax base.

"There's a more sophisticated set of questions being asked on who actually bears the cost of these different settlement patterns," he says.

All of this isn't to say that all Americans have been weaned from their desire for the privacy and wide-open spaces that are found in suburban locations. Single-driver cars will still be commuting along well-traveled roadways back home to single-family homes for some time to come. Sustainability and cost efficiency are becoming increasingly important, but people won't allow their freedom to choose where to live and how to live to be taken away. But these preferences could change. ▀▀

"It's not that the suburbs are bad and the cities are good. There's a trend nationwide toward making all the different places along that urban/suburban spectrum into more complete places."

M & A

Many looking at making a deal

2011 Merger & Acquisition Survey data shows more sellers coming to market.

By JULIE KYLE
Editor

New Merger & Acquisition Survey data suggests the number of firms reporting plans to sell rose to 55% from 29% in 2010.

All the activity doesn't surprise Jeff Clark, managing director and principal of the M&A team for ZweigWhite. Clark says the rise in the number of sellers "bodes well for a dynamic and flush M&A environment for the next 18 months.

"Sellers coming to market indicates that supply is rising to meet pent up demand among buyers, he says. "Overall, economic indicators are improving along with a firming up of valuations.

"Sellers have more confidence now, and some positive numbers in 2010 to show, with backlogs for 2011 looking much better than in 2008 and 2009," Clark says.

Hobson Hogan, a principal at ZweigWhite, attributes the jump in the number of firms looking to sell to the following factors:

- Owners getting a bit older and more risk averse,
- an ambivalence to ownership by younger generations,
- an improvement in financial performance, and
- continued hyper-competitive markets— which can make being smaller more risky than in previous parts of the cycle

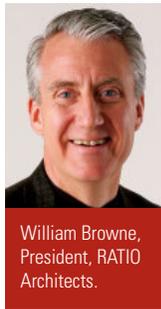
"I think that actual activity will increase in 2012 because it is easier to consummate transactions when there are multiple years of steady earnings upon which to base a value discussion. Large swings tend to lead to mismatches between buyer's and seller's expectations," Hogan says.

MAKING THE MOVE. Signs of increased activity are already surfacing. For example, **Soil and Materials En-**

gineers, Inc. (Plymouth, MI), a 188-person geotechnical engineering firm, acquired the assets of **EDP Consultants** (Kirtland, OH), a 12-person geotechnical firm, this year.

"Although EDP had a very strong technical presence, they did not have a strong business development or marketing program," says Daniel Roeser, vice president of SME.

RATIO Architects, Inc. (Indianapolis, IN), a 90-person architecture, historic preservation, interior design, landscape architecture, urban design and planning, and graphic design firm, finalized its merger with **Cherry Huffman Architects** (Raleigh, NC), a 17-person architectural and interior design firm, in March. William Browne, the president and founding principal of RATIO, feels growth will be fueled by geographic expansion from outside the Midwest, and merging with CHA provided a vehicle for that.



William Browne,
President, RATIO
Architects.

"We've been doing work out west and in the Southeast, and we were ready to make more of a commitment to a specific market, and the Southeast, in particular, is a growing market. In fact, the state of North Carolina is one of the top growing states in the U.S. We had a relationship in that market that we thought we ought to consider.

"We evaluated a number of firms in the area and ultimately gravitated toward Louis Cherry and his firm, Cherry Huffman Architects. Our merger certainly has expanded their capabilities, and it has given us a local platform to expand in the local marketplace," Browne says.

Browne says he has witnessed an increase of interest in firms looking to be merged with or acquired.

He thinks consolidation in the industry will continue for at least the next two years.

"We are continuing to look for merger and acquisition opportunities. We believe that will continue to fuel our growth," he says.

GROWTH STRATEGY IN LEAN TIMES. Browne says that a reduction in market demand for architectural design services left some firms struggling on a financial or business level.

There has been a lot of shrinkage, and firms that are financially unbalanced or that don't have a hierarchical arrangement are struggling to reorganize themselves, he says.

When the economy is slow, organic growth is slow, Browne says.

"Certainly the economy has exasperated the need for firms to pursue growth on a buying or selling basis. Had the economy stayed more robust, this activity would not have increased at the level it has."

One way to grow rapidly and gain a larger platform is through mergers or acquisitions.

"The markets where we see opportunity, besides the local market, will be the higher education market, which is a very ripe market for expansion. We also see life sciences and health care markets being strong. They both represent well in the North Carolina market, that includes the Research Triangle Park, and all the medical centers," Browne says.

Browne pointed to professions like legal and accounting, where there has been significant consolidation over the years, as a number of firms are realizing "that a larger bench of services brings greater stability, as well as provides for growth."

First and foremost, there has to be interest and desire to want to change what you're doing, Browne says.

Beyond that, "The key is, if firms have interest in going beyond where they are, they need to find a partner that is culturally aligned, with solid business practices, robust marketing capabilities, and is a strong service provider in the markets they're pursuing." ▀▀

"Certainly the economy has exasperated the need for firms to pursue growth on a buying or selling basis."

ON THE RECORD

Time management tips from the pros

They're all busy, and they have all found ways to stay sane.

It's no secret that A/E/P and environmental consulting firm leaders and managers are busy bees. So, for this installation of "On The Record," we asked them how they manage their time. Do they multitask, or block time? Below are some of their time management tips.

Deborah Gill, controller, **Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering** (Norfolk, VA), a 500-person architecture, engineering, planning, and interior design firm:



Deborah Gill, Controller, Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering.

I don't answer e-mail every other second. I block it out and answer it every couple of hours. I schedule my day so my staff leaves before me, so I have a good hour-and-a-half to two hours each evening for work time. That lets me "finish" the day and feel organized for the next morning.

Pat Pohl, CFO, **Beardsley Design Associates** (Auburn, NY), a 78-person architecture, engineering and landscape architecture firm:



Pat Pohl, CFO, Beardsley Design Associates.

I do block time on my calendar to prepare a presentation or complete other time-sensitive work. Some multitasking is inevitable in order to keep many tasks moving forward while waiting for feedback or input from others, but my preference is to carve out enough time to stay focused on

the task at hand, as much as possible. If I know I will need to gather information from others in order to make progress, I request it early, give myself a tickler in case I don't receive it, and schedule time to work on it later. I rely on my *Outlook* calendar as my main organi-

zational tool, and set meeting reminders far enough in advance to allow for some prep time. Monitoring my calendar a week or so in advance helps me to keep ahead of deadlines and avoid pinch points.

The last thing I do each day is check tomorrow's calendar to be sure my ducks are in a row, and add reminders about anything I need to accomplish.

Now if I could just clean off my desk :)

Ralph Hawkins, chairman and CEO of **HKS** (Dallas, TX), 850-person architecture firm:



Ralph Hawkins, Chairman and CEO, HKS.

I block out Wednesdays on my calendar as "busy" so no meetings will be scheduled. I can then focus on critical thinking, strategy and answering important strategic e-mails without the usual interruptions. I will also work sometimes away from the office because we have such an open-door policy, if I'm in my office (even when the door is closed) I'm available. I also utilize the "drafts" box of my *Outlook* to keep track of e-mail that might take longer to compose (and have additional analysis needs), but these important issues are not lost in the hustle of the day to day e-mail responses.

Dorit Stone, controller, **HSA Engineers & Scientists** (Tampa, FL), a 250-person environmental engineering firm:

I certainly multitask all the time. I prioritize my time, which seems to be the best way. I stay late and work from home, as well. I find that these are the best times to get a lot of work done, as I am less disturbed. It is a constant battle—the fight against time and meeting deadlines.

David Yates, controller for **RLF** (Winter Park, FL), a 130-person firm that provides architectural, interior design, and MEP design services to the health care community:

The nature of my role here requires some level of multitasking, but there is

no way I can meet expectations without blocking at least some time each week to complete the strategic tasks.

James Hudson, CFO, **Engineering/Remediation Resources Group, Inc.** (Martinez, CA), a 275-person engineering and construction management firm:



James Hudson, CFO, Engineering/Remediation Resources Group, Inc.

Always multitasking since there are multiple tasks occurring simultaneously, all with different priorities. Effective time management starts with identifying the known tasks, establishing priorities, and determining how best to accomplish them. Some lend themselves to blocks of time, since it is more efficient to complete

in one sitting, while others lend themselves to starting and stopping over time until completion. In my opinion, the key to making every second count is in identifying which type task you are working with so you are not wasting time reviewing where you left off on more complex tasks that lend themselves to finishing in one sitting.

Susan Rani, president and CEO, **Rani Engineering, Inc.** (Minneapolis, MN), an eight-person consulting engineering firm:

I use both multitask and block strategies. Depending on the nature of task at hand, I use one or the other. I multitask when there are several essential small tasks that need to get done. If a situation is novel or new twist from problems I have seen before, it calls for reflection and reframing questions to gain understanding. There may be a dozen items at any one time but I set with definite deadlines one to two hours aside for reflecting on priorities and urgencies. During this incubation time of problem solving or issues consideration, I may actively seek advice or advice maybe thrust upon me from unlikely sources (museum going, attending concerts, talking to moms at volleyball tournaments etc.). ▀▀

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Finding your stride as a leader

Passionate pursuits always attract like-minded people who want to follow.

I'm often asked two questions about leadership:

- 1) Are leaders born or made?
- 2) How did you become a leader?

I believe everyone has the potential become a leader. Despite endless debate on the subject of nature *vs.* nurture, let's look at a few pieces of evidence. Terry Sejnowski's excellent book, *Liars, Lovers and Heroes* makes a strong case for "nurture," our early childhood experiences, as the stronger of the influences on who we become. Marcus Buckingham's book, *Now Discover Your Strengths*, includes a profiling device that allows the reader to receive an assessment of their five key strengths among 34 described in the book. But no mention is made that any possible combination precludes a person from growing into a leadership role. We've all known leaders with very different styles who have become quite successful. So, I weigh in heavily on the side of made, not born, when it comes to who is eligible for a leadership role.

Sure, even on the playground, some children seem to have a natural ability to assume leadership roles— others just seem to naturally follow them. But does that mean they were born that way or is their head start simply the result of early childhood experiences? I have yet to see any correlative evidence connecting these young standouts to a future role as President of the United States, let alone heads of companies or other leadership positions.

If we can look beyond whether we

have been blessed with leadership genes or not, then ask, 'How do certain people rise to leadership positions?' Certain experiences in youth tend to yield a higher proportion of leaders in later life— becoming an Eagle Scout or a sequence of leadership roles through high school and college can all have a reinforcing effect, encouraging growth into ever more responsible positions— but that's not all there is.

For example, I was not an early childhood leader. I was pushed ahead a grade in grammar school, leaving me the youngest and smallest kid on the playground— not an advantageous platform for leadership. I had few leadership roles through high school and college and yet somehow found a calling to lead, and developed an ability to help the people around me to see a direction that they found worthy of embrace. Let's explore how this came about.

First, it's worth asking a couple of classic leadership questions: Is the most important trait of a leader to look behind once in a while to see if people are really following, or is it most important to figure out where people want to go and then get in front of them? While I lean toward the latter strategy, I made the observation early in my career that the leaders I most admired weren't really leading in either of these two ways. By contrast, they all seemed to have found a direction in which they deeply believed. People who also embraced their passionate commitment gathered around them.

I began my career as an architect with the normal, singular purpose espoused in the university at the time: to design great buildings. Very little in my education prepared me for what it took to accomplish this end. In fact, back in the '60s, the era of Ayn Rand's *Howard Roark*, architecture was, indeed, a pretty singular pursuit. But as construction and, more importantly the entitlement process, became increasingly complex, bringing a building to reality became a "team



Ed
Friedrichs

sport."

This was a catalytic realization for me. I couldn't just sit in a corner and do design, I also had to inspire a multi-headed client (the one who hired me; the ones who were going to live in my buildings; the one who was paying the bills— and no one person sat in more than one chair) to say "yes." I had to convince architectural review boards, planning commissions and hoards of banner-waving, protesting neighbors that the building I was presenting was a wonderful enhancement to their community. I had to inspire the team around me, architects and engineers, to work in concert to play the same melody. I had to work with contractors and subcontractors over whom I had no authority, to work in collaboration to assemble the building we had designed without tripping us up along the way. Wow! What an eye opener. I woke up one morning realizing that the design professions may be the finest leadership-training program anywhere.

I had a few more wake up calls along the way (more in the middle of the night than first thing in the morning) that helped me grow. First: I found that I couldn't coax, cajole or otherwise drag, kicking and screaming, the people around me to keep moving in the same direction. I had to inspire them to do so. For me, the magic ingredient was to step back regularly and ask myself what kind of a firm did I want to be part of. What kind of a team atmosphere would make me feel like joining in, proud of what we were accomplishing together? Second, every time things seemed to be going sideways for me, I was forced to ask myself, "What do I truly believe in? What are my core values in design and in what I stood for?" From these introspections emerged my style of leadership: Create an organization and an atmosphere that I would like to be a part of. And sure enough, a lot of like-minded people decided to come work with me. ▀▀

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I couldn't just sit in a corner and do design, I also had to inspire a multi-headed client.

GUEST SPEAKER

Managing conflict

Dispel conflict resolution myths and get results.

Ongoing conflict is rarely about the issue. More often it's about how the conversation is being handled. It's about stylistic differences. If we truly understand other people's styles, we are less likely to take responses personally; to project how we would think or feel if we used that style; and to hang on to difficult interchanges in a way that affects future interaction.

MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH CONFLICT

Myth— Conflict is inherently negative. On the contrary, without conflict we wouldn't be creative or inventive, make necessary changes, or experience progress. Conflict is not negative. How it's handled can be.

Myth— There shouldn't be any conflicts! Although most of us would say "Of course conflict is normal," we are usually shocked or uncomfortable during times of disagreement. We acknowledge that conflict is normal and respond as though it is not.

Myth— We can force people to change their values. Values aren't changed by force. Even behavior may not change as a result of force unless the person cares about the consequences. If we want values to change, we need the patience to listen and educate and the time to help others through the change process. Bosses, parents, educators, and law enforcement would like to think that punishment and reward help create positive values. They do not.

Myth— Resolution styles are



Gerri King

usually compatible.

We tend to assume we are all compatible and that others are feeling the way we would be feeling in the same situation. Thus, we make assumptions without checking out the truth.

Myth— People who are close to each other know what each other is experiencing.

The assumption that people should empathize with our position is presumptive. If we truly want people to know what we're experiencing, we need to tell them in as straightforward a manner as possible.

Myth— We know our own body language intimately. It's said that 65% to 85% of our communication is in the form of body language. And, since we are the least knowledgeable people regarding our own body language (because we can't see it), it's essential that what we're feeling matches what we're saying if we want the truth conveyed.

Myth— Little things are too petty to spend time addressing. If there is conflict about a so-called "little thing," it is probably representative of something much bigger— fairness, status differential, and respect, to mention a few. Small, seemingly insignificant complaints are definitely worth addressing.

Myth— We have far too much to do to spend time dealing with every issue and conflict that arises. Time taken now will save a great deal of time down the road. Putting off a discussion builds resentment and may lead to far more dramatic and complex reactions. Ask yourself if you have the time not to deal with whatever comes up.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION. We've often been taught to deal with conflict in two ways:

■ **Avoid it, at all costs!** This may work in the short run, but not over time. Not working out the problem now will only mean putting out brush fires, or worse, later.

■ **Attack.** Why doesn't this work? The person being attacked has only three alternatives: attack back, flee, or succumb.

None of the alternatives supports respectful, honest, and productive relationships.

A CREATIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

■ **First, everyone has to agree that they want to find a mutually satisfactory resolution and to use a process and setting that's comfortable for all.** Try to minimize status differential by sitting on the same side of the desk, going for a walk, or meeting around a conference table.

■ **Second, conflicts usually inspire both emotional and logical reactions.** Problems arise when trying to solve the emotional aspect logically. To remain connected to others' feelings, we don't have to understand each other's emotions, nor do we have to share them. We merely have to acknowledge that the other person is experiencing them. People would rather be heard than right.

■ **Third, everyone must have a chance to tell his/her story because that is what provides the frame of reference for the conflict.** From where each person sits, his or her point of view makes all the sense in the world. Life is, after all, about perspective.

■ **Fourth, everyone then cooperatively develops and implements solutions.** It isn't unusual for us to try to start with the solution, but it should really happen at the end of a thoughtful process.

Try and try again. When what we're doing isn't working, we need to persevere. Notice the word "we," rather than the isolating "I" or the attacking "you." Each of us has to assume 100% of the responsibility for making it work.

Is it hard to do? You bet. But what's the alternative? ▲▲▲

GERRI KING, Ph.D., is a social psychologist and organizational consultant who trains and facilitates both staff and leadership in resolving conflicts, strategic planning, and effective decision making and problems solving. She is president of Human Dynamics Associates, Inc.

Values aren't changed by force. Even behavior may not change as a result of force unless the person cares about the consequences. If we want values to change, we need the patience to listen and educate.

RECRUITING

Mixed feelings about hiring outlook

While the economy is improving and optimism is setting in, some still predict a difficult labor environment for years to come.

By SUSANNAH SWEARINGEN
Correspondent

Human resource professionals are feeling a bit of encouragement about the economy and their company's hiring situation. According to the *Jobs Outlook Survey Report*, released April 4 by the Society for Human Resource Management, about one-third of those surveyed say their company plans to hire in the second quarter of 2011.

The survey reinforces the U.S. Department of Labor's April 1 report that 216,000 jobs were added to the economy in March, and that the unemployment rate fell to a two-year low of 8.8%.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, companies added workers at the fastest two-month pace since before the recession began.

According to the SHRM survey, medium-sized companies, or those with 100 to 499 employees, will be the most likely to add jobs in the second quarter of 2011.



Wendy Matyjevich,
HR Director, exp.

Wendy Matyjevich, human resources director in the Maitland, Florida, office of **exp.** (Brampton, ON), a 3,000-person engineering, consulting and project management firm, says her company is actively hiring, with 167 openings globally and 30 openings in the U.S.

"We are actively seeking our college graduates and interns," she says.

FACTORS ADD UP TO INCREASING CONFIDENCE. Fifty-seven percent of respondents to SHRM's survey reported some level of confidence in the U.S. job market for the second quarter of 2011 and said they expect to see job growth.

Fifty-three percent said they are somewhat optimistic about U.S. job growth, while 4% are very optimistic and anticipate job growth during the second quarter of 2011.

Thirty-three percent of companies said they will conduct hiring during the April-June 2011 timeframe.

Among employment sectors, nearly half, or 47%, of publicly owned for-profit companies will add jobs during the second quarter.

Forty percent of privately owned for-profit companies will add jobs, 28% of nonprofits and 14% of government entities will add jobs.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers' *Job Outlook 2011* reports that employers are looking to hire 13.5% more of this year's graduates than the previous class.

The Architecture Billings Index, the leading economic indicator of construction activity, is showing a modest increase in demand for design services.

The American Institute of Architects reported the February ABI score was 50.6, up slightly from the previous month's score of 50. The new projects inquiry index was 56.4, compared to 56.5 in January.

SOME NOT SO OPTIMISTIC. Matyjevich says exp. has more mid-level engineering designer positions and project coordinator positions available than other positions.

"The openings are directly related to

an improvement of the economy and the building industry in general, which is great news," she says.

Christine Paccione-Anderson, senior vice president and director of corporate services for **Epstein** (Chicago, IL), a 140-person architecture firm, is not as hopeful about the employment outlook.

However, while Epstein is not currently hiring, Paccione-Anderson says they will likely be adding staff in the near future based on large project opportunities.

"Our first hope would be to rehire some of the talented staff we have had to let go over the last year due to the tough economic environment," she says.

Paccione-Anderson said her top priority is retention.

"What I am most concerned with is keeping our great staff," she says. "I am worried that as the marketplace starts to improve, our industry will see a lot of job hopping like we saw in 2002-2004."

Paccione-Anderson's concerns are not unfounded.

A Job Seeker Nation 2010 *Jobvite Survey* found that two-thirds of American workers are either actively seeking new jobs or open to new opportunities as the economy improves.

"This type of behavior is so detrimental to companies in regard to turnover costs and morale," she says. "This also causes wage inflation, which is going to be difficult for all of us as we try to continue to control costs.

"Overall, I would say that we are going to see a very difficult employment environment within our industry over the next five years. I for one am not looking forward to it." ▽▲

"What I am most concerned with is keeping our great staff. I am worried that as the marketplace starts to improve, our industry will see a lot of job hopping like we saw in 2002-2004."

SEARCH SAVVY

Develop a world-class recruiting program

Employee referrals yield the best results.

I want to begin this article by making a broad, summary characterization of a “world-class” recruiting program: A world-class recruiting program finds and perfects ways to fill positions quickly and efficiently while focusing on attracting the highest caliber of talent from sources that are statistically proven to offer longer employee retention. That’s the summary. Now, notice the three critical features embedded in that summary: 1) speed and efficiency; 2) high-caliber talent; 3) longer employee retention. In my estimation, any recruiting program that seeks to be a premier influence in the war for talent ought to radically focus its resources and operations on perfecting those three objectives.

Now, there are a number of ways to positively affect each of these elements. You can simplify selection processes, use more relevant interview questions, widen sourcing strategies, etc. All of these have significant merit, but the most effective recruiting resource world-class recruiting programs leverage is— you guessed it— an employee referral program, or “ERP.” (Did I mention it’s also the least expensive?) Quite simply (and for obvious reasons), there is no other recruiting platform that answers the issues of speed/efficiency, candidate quality, and retention more effectively than this invaluable resource.

Now, this should not be earth-shattering news. Companies have known the value of ERPs for years! In fact, more than 35% of hires (nationally) are reported to be



Jeremy Clarke

generated through referrals. And yet so many firms fail to leverage effective referral programs! In fact, a recent nationwide study provided by the Electronic Recruiting Exchange (www.ere.net) revealed

that 41% of employees participating in ERPs were unsure whether they would provide future referrals due to a poor experience with their respective company’s program. So, what are the key issues that keep such a robust recruiting tool from yielding adequate participation? There are three: 1) program awareness; 2) confusing referral processes; 3) lack of feedback. Believe it or not, monetary reward— though important— is not the primary factor in motivating ERP participation. That tells me that employees who provide referrals are primarily interested in advancing their company’s and their referral’s best interests, which is why an effective ERP produces such great candidates.

My advice? Listen, if you’re going to have it, be sure you intentionally manage it. It may be worthwhile to consider entrusting an HR member (if you have more than one) with overall ERP program management as a component of his/her responsibilities. It’s that important. You see, an effective ERP demands that employees be *willing* to participate. Because that’s true, there must be someone in place who is accountable to manage the ERP toward measurable objectives that satisfy user demands, in order to generate participation.

Having said that, once an intentional program manager is in place, the question your firm must ask is “Which ERP objectives are critical?” Based upon the above findings, I would suggest the following three: 1) awareness; 2) employee training; 3) communication.

■ **Awareness:** It’s difficult to incite participation in a culture of ignorance, so be sure your ERP has an intentional, calendar-driven awareness campaign in place. It doesn’t have to be ornate— just a quick monthly e-mail or short blurbs on your firm’s intranet site are simple ways to create awareness— fast. The key is consistency. Make the

communication brief, instructional, and one that encourages participation.

■ **Employee training:** According to a recent survey, more than 85% of participating employees stated that they are not adequately trained in their company’s referral process, or the process is not user-friendly. That kind of feedback will kill an ERP quickly. My advice? First, make a comprehensive review of your referral process, and then radically simplify it— I mean radically. The goal here is to make participation as EASY as possible. Secondly, incorporate brief, “how-to” refreshers in tandem with your ERP awareness campaign. This too can be done via e-mail blasts or via your firm’s intranet. Again, simple. Another GREAT and consistent opportunity for ERP training (and not a bad venue for creating awareness either) are your new-hire orientations. ERP awareness and training should be a key feature of these sessions.

■ **Communication/feedback:** ERP participation is markedly highest among those companies where the process is perceived as collaborative. In that regard, be sure your program manager has a simple process in place that equips HR to inform employees when the firm hires a referral (particularly if you offer a referral bonus). One easy way to inform employees is to ensure that the referring employee’s name is documented somewhere within the referral’s new-hire paperwork. To accommodate this, many companies use a “New-Hire Checklist” that incorporates ERP-hired feedback as part of their new hire process.

To summarize: Awareness, training, and feedback— three powerful remedies to a struggling ERP. There is simply no other recruiting platform that answers the issues of speed, candidate quality, and retention more effectively than a robust employee referral program. Get a resource in place to intentionally manage this critical program, and then maintain productivity by establishing and measuring these three key objectives. This is the kind of thing that distinguishes a world-class recruiting team. ■■■

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

LEADERSHIP

'Outsiders' bring fresh perspectives

Industry strives to import leaders from other backgrounds.

By JULIE KYLE
Editor

Mark Zweig calls it like he sees it. In his April 4 *The Zweig Letter* editorial, he wrote that the A/E industry is "too inbred," and more movement into the industry from outsiders "is sorely needed."

Keith Kuzio, president and CEO of **Larson Design Group** (Williamsport, PA), a 215-person architecture and engineering firm, agrees with the assertion. In fact, he believes LDG's strong performance over the past decade "has been greatly aided by the addition of key people with diverse, non-engineering backgrounds," including Brenda Nichols, the firm's CFO, who has been with the firm for 18 years.



Keith Kuzio,
President and
CEO, Larson
Design Group.

"She was not hired from within the A/E industry," Kuzio says. "When she came to us, she had a background in public accounting as well as finance and accounting with a fast-growth, start-up manufacturing company. We believed at the time that both these experiences would help LDG,

due to our significant work for the public sector, which involved meeting annual reporting and audit standards, and because we were a young, fast-growing firm that needed to keep a close eye on cash flow and financing.

Kuzio says Nichols brought LDG good outside perspective.

"The remainder of the management team came from engineering and planning backgrounds, so her prior experiences played significantly in how we planned for and executed growth in our early years as a firm," he says.

Hanson Professional Services Inc.

(Springfield, IL), a full-service engineering, architecture, and planning consulting firm, also hired a CFO from outside the industry, says Dan Rayhill, controller and assistant vice president. Whether such a choice is advantageous depends on the company and the timing, he says.

"For Hanson (when their CFO was hired 15 years ago), it was necessary to reinvigorate adherence to many of the accounting policies that had slid. The prior accounting manager was unable to handle the colossal growth in the company and in his role during his time in that position. It is also easier for an outside personality to ask hard questions of the management team," Rayhill says.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES.

An A/E "outsider" may not initially understand the business nuances as well as an "insider," says Gordon Matheson, president and CEO of **Schnabel Engineering** (Glen Allen, VA), a 363-person geotechnical engineering firm. "However, I don't know many insiders (even though they may have an MBA) who really understand audit, finance, banking, insurance, etc. as someone trained and experienced in these specific areas by one of the big 10 accounting firms and with years of experience in several industries. Our CFO is a CPA with audit, finance, and industrial experience in several industries."

There are advantages and disadvantages to having individuals in leadership positions who are A/E insiders, says Bill Kimble, president and CEO of **C2AE** (Lansing, MI), a 110-person full-service architecture, engineering and planning firm with a CFO who is also a licensed electrical engineer.

"Leaders from within the industry un-

derstand what it takes to run the practice," Kimble says.

Outside leadership would tend be more focused on the business and can therefore make decisions that are potentially very damaging long-term in exchange for a short-term gain.

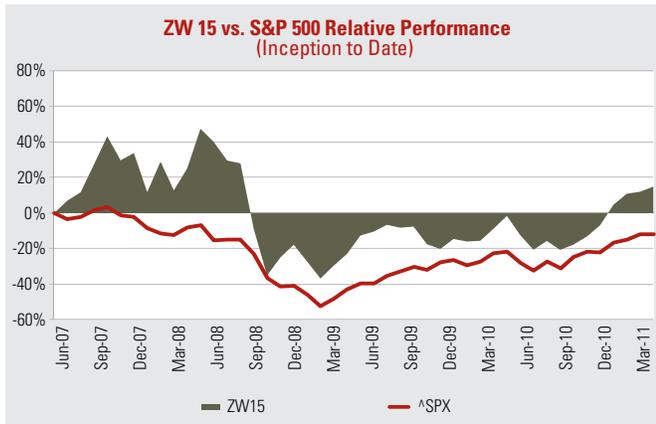
"On the other hand, having only A/E leaders has led to the industry's mediocre average or below average profit margins compared to other industries," Kimble says. "Also, having all inside industry leaders increases the number of hats (board member, executive position, director of market sector team, etc.) that leaders are wearing and in most cases makes it more difficult to be effective.

"I view the A/E industry as the bond market, where we may not make the same returns as stocks, but our variance (swing in loss/profit) is much less than other industries. My recommendation for our firm is to look for outside expertise to get engaged at the board of directors level as advisors, to infuse the different perspectives and ask the tough questions," Kimble says.

Matt Sterling, the director of finance and CFO for **The LA Group** (Saratoga Springs, NY), a 50-person landscape, architecture, and engineering firm, was not hired from within the A/E industry. His background ranged from professional sports management to government consulting.

"Would it have been beneficial having A/E experience? Sure. Was it necessary? No, I do not think so. If you are a good finance person you can adapt," Sterling says. "An outsider to the A/E field can benefit the field by bringing it a fresh perspective. Accounting and finance is all the same when you boil it down. I understood what ownership was looking for in a CFO—a person to run their finances for their business from top to bottom and give them reports they could understand. Establishing a company budget, managing cash flow—these are things all CFOs should be able to do, regardless of the industry." ▲▲

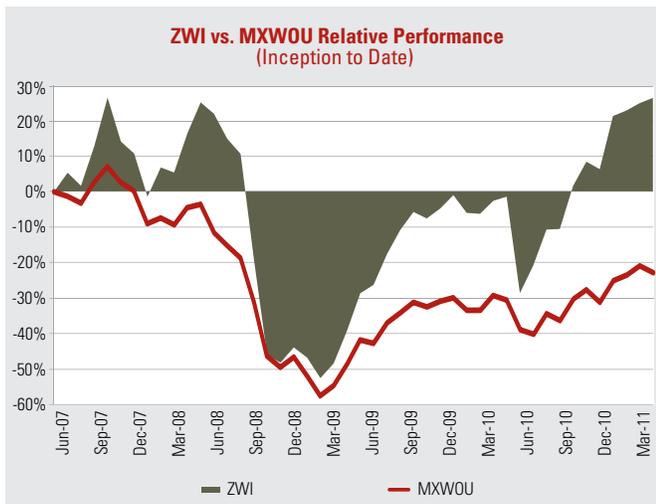
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2011 VALUATION SURVEY: Do you know how much your A/E/P or environmental consulting firm is worth? If you're an owner of an A/E/P or environmental consulting firm, you can't risk not knowing the value of your business. Whether it's for external purposes, such as a firm sale or merger, or internal purposes, such as ownership transition or ESOP purposes, all firm owners should know what their investments are worth.

For more information or to buy a copy, call 1-800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/zw-1048.aspx.

CORRECTION: A report in the April 18 issue of *The Zweig Letter* titled "Performance appraisals still in favor," incorrectly identified **CDA + Pirscher Architects, Inc.**, located in Columbia, South Carolina.



TRAILING TWELVE MONTH INDEX VALUES				
	ZW15	ZWI	S&P 500	MSCI World Index (ex-USA)
Apr-10	985.18	985.73	1,186.69	1,580.34
May-10	880.23	724.30	1,089.41	1,397.83
Jun-10	799.77	798.88	1,030.71	1,375.32
Jul-10	848.15	896.51	1,101.60	1,501.21
Aug-10	799.33	898.06	1,049.33	1,453.05
Sep-10	828.28	1,014.95	1,141.20	1,588.12
Oct-10	872.07	1,080.48	1,183.26	1,643.52
Nov-10	933.66	1,060.30	1,180.55	1,570.53
Dec-10	1,045.76	1,204.28	1,257.64	1,695.58
Jan-11	1,106.48	1,219.08	1,286.12	1,730.91
Feb-11	1,117.86	1,239.07	1,327.22	1,791.90
Mar-11	1,145.54	1,253.40	1,325.83	1,749.02

ZW15 & ZWI Index = 1000 as of June 30, 2007

All data by Capital IQ

PUBLIC MARKET DATA											
Company Name	Share Pricing					Market Multiples			Performance Metrics		
	Closing Price	% of 52 Wk High	52 Wk High	52 Wk Low	Market Cap	TEV / Revenue	TEV / EBITDA	TEV / EBIT	EBITDA Margin	Return on Equity	Return on Assets
AECOM Technology Corporation	27.73	89.7%	30.91	21.70	3,292.3	0.6x	9.1x	11.0x	6.1%	12.6%	4.6%
Ecology & Environment, Inc.	19.20	91.9%	20.90	11.35	81.3	0.5x	4.9x	5.5x	9.4%	16.3%	10.1%
EMCOR Group Inc.	30.97	94.6%	32.75	22.29	2,065.2	0.3x	5.7x	6.8x	5.1%	-6.9%	4.8%
Fluor Corporation	73.66	97.2%	75.76	41.20	13,025.3	0.5x	14.7x	19.8x	3.5%	12.9%	4.6%
Hill International, Inc.	5.29	76.0%	6.96	3.59	202.4	0.6x	8.6x	13.2x	7.1%	9.2%	3.2%
Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.	51.43	92.3%	55.73	34.39	6,499.9	0.6x	10.4x	12.3x	5.5%	8.5%	5.9%
KBR, Inc.	37.77	98.7%	38.28	19.31	5,713.0	0.5x	7.4x	8.1x	5.4%	17.6%	5.5%
Michael Baker Corporation	29.07	70.3%	41.33	27.02	268.1	0.4x	4.9x	6.7x	6.8%	8.3%	5.1%
Shaw Group Inc.	35.41	85.1%	41.62	27.61	3,012.0	0.4x	7.0x	8.5x	5.0%	7.3%	3.0%
Stantec Inc.	29.88	96.7%	30.89	23.46	1,367.9	1.3x	8.8x	11.5x	14.5%	16.0%	6.9%
Tetra Tech Inc.	24.69	90.9%	27.16	18.00	1,538.1	1.1x	9.7x	12.7x	11.0%	11.0%	6.2%
TRC Companies Inc.	4.83	94.0%	5.14	2.20	131.1	0.5x	24.1x	NM	2.1%	-31.9%	0.0%
URS Corporation	46.05	86.5%	53.25	35.09	3,713.0	0.4x	5.6x	6.9x	6.9%	8.8%	4.4%
Versar Inc.	3.28	69.2%	4.74	1.98	30.5	0.3x	21.6x	NM	1.2%	-2.7%	-0.2%
Willdan Group, Inc.	4.03	82.4%	4.89	2.12	29.2	0.3x	6.2x	8.4x	5.2%	8.9%	4.2%
					Mean	0.5x	9.9x	10.1x	6.3%	6.4%	4.6%
					Median	0.5x	8.6x	8.5x	5.5%	8.9%	4.6%