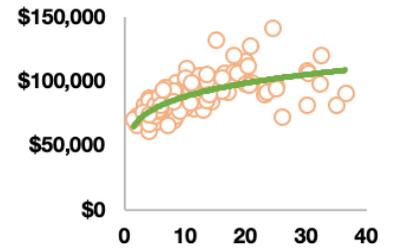


TRENDLINES

Mechanical engineers - project level



Zweig Group's 2020 Total Compensation Benchmarking Tool gives employee profiles for more than 120 job titles in AEC firms across the country. This scatter plot comes directly from the tool, showing total compensation for Project Level Mechanical Engineers by years of experience. Almost half of the engineers in this data set (49 percent) were between the age of 26 and 35. Seventy-eight percent of these workers received a bonus and 45 percent collected overtime pay.

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

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Dealing with poor performance

“There’s no magic in these six steps. But there will be ‘magic’ in your results if you can consistently apply them!”



Mark Zweig

Any of us who are leaders of companies – or leaders of other line organizational units – are likely to have to deal with poor performance of our firms or units at some point. Rarely is any path straight up – there are often setbacks and plateaus along the way. When it happens – and how you respond to these situations – define you as a leader. Do you find a way out and up? Or do you throw up your hands, give up, and drown in despair?

Here are my thoughts on how to deal with poor performance in your organization:

- 1) Acknowledge it.** Don’t try to BS yourself or anyone else about the situation. If your performance is bad, face up to it. Don’t make excuses or assign blame to anyone other than yourself. Don’t try to justify it in any way. Just face the facts head-on, honestly. Your firm or team is not meeting its goals, period. It doesn’t mean that you can’t share or talk about what is going well. That’s important, too. But you have to be careful that you don’t take that too far such that sounding the alarm is ignored.
- 2) Define the problem.** Figuring out **WHY** you aren’t performing is a step in recovery that is too often skipped. Many leaders have a bias for action, something that can result in steps being taken, and time and money resources wasted, trying to solve the wrong problem. Diagnosis – and definition – of the real problem is crucial to your ability to solve it.
- 3) Once you have defined the problem, solicit the input of the rest of the team.** Do they agree with your assessments? If not, why not? You have to get everyone on board to, at a minimum, agree on what the problem is that you are trying to solve.
- 4) Once your problem definition is finalized, solicit ideas from all members of your team in how to address the problem.** This is so important, because when the problem is actually solved, you want your people to achieve some satisfaction from solving it. This is an opportunity to win some love from your people **AND** go in some new directions you might not have come up with on your own. And by the way, this doesn’t have to be done formally nor does it have to take a long time. Those who have ideas for the solution can offer them up and those who don’t do not have to.
- 5) Once your solution ideas are agreed upon, it’s time to act.** Again, this is where I see too many leaders and managers stop the process. Instead of taking decisive action, they want to loop back around to step No. 2 and start all over. “What if the problem definition is wrong? Isn’t there more information that can be gathered? Aren’t there more options? All the planning in the world won’t do you any good if you don’t act. And you have to act fast. Following all these steps doesn’t necessarily have to stretch out over days or weeks.

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

ON THE MOVE

MASER CONSULTING ANNOUNCES NEW LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE Richard Maser, founder of **Maser Consulting P.A.**, is pleased to announce the firm has made a strategic change in its leadership.

While maintaining his role as executive chairman of the firm, Maser is passing the CEO responsibilities to company president Kevin Haney, P.E. Leonardo Ponzio will retain his position as executive vice president and CAO while continuing to administer the firm's operational services.

The newest member added to the leadership team is Joseph Dopico, P.E., long-time division director of civil and site development services for Maser Consulting, who will assume responsibilities as chief operations officer.

"This is a planned transition to our leadership team," stated Maser. "I'm not reducing my commitment to the company and will continue seeking opportunities that will strengthen and provide long term stability while driving the Company toward success."

Known for its diversification of services, Maser Consulting has been expanding nationally with a focus on strategically hiring industry leaders to reinforce existing services and grow them into new territories.

Offering a comprehensive suite of design disciplines and an expert staff of licensed engineers, planners, surveyors, landscape architects, and environmental scientists, Maser Consulting currently employs almost 1,000 professionals through its 34 offices in 12 states nationwide.

Established in 1984 by Richard Maser, Chairman and founder, Maser Consulting P.A. is a privately owned, multi-discipline engineering firm with a unique balance of public and private sector experience. Headquartered in Red Bank, New Jersey, the firm has 34 offices nationwide.

Maser Consulting has gained national recognition by Engineering News Record as one of its Top 500 Design Firms, has consistently ranked on The Zweig Group Hot Firm List of fastest growing companies, and is a Best Firm To Work For.

MILOS MAKARIC PROMOTED TO DIRECTOR OF DESIGN AT SCA ARCHITECTURE SCA Architecture, a San Diego-based architectural firm formerly known

as Smith Consulting Architects, has promoted Milos Makaric to the position of director of design. The promotion was announced by SCA Architecture Owner and Founder Cheryl Smith.

Makaric joined SCA Architecture in 2013 as a project architect and has contributed considerably to the firm's reputation for designing clean, functional, aesthetically pleasing commercial spaces.

Among other accomplishments, Makaric served as the lead designer and project architect for the recent 23-acre campus expansion for Viasat, adjacent to Bressi Ranch in Carlsbad; as project architect/manager and lead designer for Viasat's buildings 10 and 11, also in Carlsbad; and Petco San Diego National Support Center in Rancho Bernardo, which received the 2016 San Diego AIA Award for Design, Energy Efficiency and Integration, sponsored by San Diego Gas & Electric.

Prior to joining SCA Architecture, Makaric was a senior associate and project architect at Richard Yen + Associates in San Diego, where he was employed for five years. For the previous four years, he was a job captain at Brian Paul & Associates, also in San Diego.

Makaric earned his engineer of architect degree from the University of Belgrade Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, Serbia. He is a licensed architect in California and a LEED Accredited Professional.

Founded in 1988 by Cheryl Smith, SCA Architecture is a full-service planning, architecture, and interior design firm.

In addition to corporate headquarters and office facilities, SCA Architecture has specialized expertise in retail, R&D, life science, medical, manufacturing, and industrial facilities.

SCA Architecture is a member of the U.S. Green Building Council, with extensive expertise in energy efficiency and sustainable design. The firm is comprised of 25 design and support professionals, and located at 13280 Evening Creek Dr. South, Suite 125, San Diego, CA 92128.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

6) Remeasure and report back. After you have taken actions to solve the problem, you have to quickly determine whether or not your actions are working. If not, take new actions. It is only through acting – and acting on the right problem – that you can get out of your "poor performance" mode and get back to meeting or better yet, exceeding your goals.

There's no magic in these six steps. But there will be "magic" in your results if you can consistently apply them! ▀

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



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Framing the message

Implement these tips to decrease tension and drastically increase the utility of your feedback.



Mitchell Shope

How many times have you planned out a script to provide constructive feedback to a co-worker or team member, only to have it fly out of the door the second you walk into a room to begin the dialogue? In the famous words of Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, “No plan survives contact with the enemy ... but no one survives contact with the enemy without a plan.”

Acknowledging that it is crucial to have these difficult discussions is the first step, but then the age-old question arises: “How do I tell someone about something that they don’t want to hear?” To investigate this tricky dialogue, implement the following tips to not only decrease the tension in the conversation but also drastically increase the utility of the feedback provided:

1) It starts before you enter the room. The effectiveness of feedback is chiefly dependent on the relationship and established trust between the party giving the criticism and the party receiving it. Your potential for delivering pertinent and valuable feedback is hugely limited by the benevolence-based trust developed with your employees – if they know you have their best interest at heart, they’ll listen to anything you have to say. This rapport takes time,

dedication, and upkeep but plays a pivotal role in your influence with your employees.

2) Know whom you’re talking to and change how you talk. Receiving negative feedback is a vulnerable situation on both sides of the table. Knowledge of your employees’ personalities and tendencies is crucial to delivering appropriate feedback – some individuals will respond well to a direct, strong approach while others will appreciate more forewarning and time to absorb information. Tailor your discussion to your individual employees to maximize the effectiveness of your feedback.

3) Avoid the crap sandwich. Compassionate reflex will push you to mitigate the impact of negative feedback by sandwiching your comments with

See MITCHELL SHOPE, page 4



ON THE MOVE

WARE MALCOMB ANNOUNCES WENDY CRENSHAW HAS JOINED IRVINE OFFICE AS DIRECTOR, INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN Ware Malcomb, an award-winning international design firm, announced Wendy Crenshaw has joined the firm as director, interior architecture and design in the Irvine, California-based headquarters office.

Crenshaw brings more than 30 years of industry experience in interior architecture and design to the Ware Malcomb team, including designing more than 1 million square feet of commercial office space in her career.

Crenshaw has worked on a wide variety of project types, including corporate headquarters, education, commercial office, retail/hospitality, public and science and technology projects. She is also well versed

in all major product specifications including material finishes, lighting design, and furniture.

“Wendy is a dynamic leader with a wealth of knowledge, a highly collaborative approach and strong communication skills – all of which will be a tremendous asset to our team,” said Mary Cheval, director of interior architecture and design at Ware Malcomb’s Irvine office. “Her excellent client management skills and proactive project management acumen have already earned her the respect of clients and peers alike. We look forward to her continued contributions in mentoring staff, overseeing projects, and expanding business development opportunities at Ware Malcomb.”

Crenshaw holds a bachelor’s degree in interior design from Auburn University and completed

graduate course work at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. She is also certified with LEED BD+C, WELL AP, California Council for Interior Design, and National Council for Interior Design Qualification.

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

MITCHELL SHOPE, from page 3

praise. If you’re here to provide negative feedback, then provide negative feedback. Recent metadata from Leadership IQ shows that undermining your message with positivity miscues the recipient into hearing only the compliments. In the words of Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

4) But no “brutal honesty” either. Despite the trendy uptake in the “take your medicine and get over it” approach from companies such as Netflix, research unequivocally shows that these heavy-handed approaches to feedback have resulted in long-term diminished employee performance, reduced trust and accountability, and increased conflict in the workplace. While effective in the short-term, the shockingly high turnover rate and low employee satisfaction levels at Netflix demonstrate the drawbacks of this system. Bluntness and directness are enabled only by a lengthy establishment of trust and symbiotic benevolence on both sides of the table.

“Embracing these methods will not only improve your ability to provide feedback to your peers but also strengthen and establish ongoing trust. Every individual strives to develop themselves and be an asset to their employer, so build a baseline of openness and respect to capitalize on the most your staff has to offer!”

5) Focus on behaviors, not personality traits. Defensiveness is ignited by perceived attacks on personality, so be explicit with the behavior rather than making inferences about personality. For example, if giving feedback to a project manager, phrase your feedback as “I noticed in the meeting this morning that you were hesitant to hold your direct reports accountable for their work” instead of “I think you are being too shy and reserved; you should be more confident.”

6) No in-game feedback. While tempting, refrain from giving

criticism while in the moment of a meeting or presentation. Nothing is more draining or flustering than having a superior critique your management abilities in front of your reports – it will negate any chance of respectful dialogue or high-utility feedback. Make notes, wait, and approach the individual well after their adrenaline levels have subsided.

7) Request and develop perspective. Ask ample questions about your observations of the situation. Asking simple things like “how did you feel that meeting went?” or “what would you have handled differently if you could revisit your approach?” can help build your knowledge and perspective of the situation. Particularly important when providing feedback to superiors, allow the individual to self-evaluate before providing your feedback. Finish this dialogue by “feeding forward” as opposed to “feeding back” by focusing on what the individual can do differently from this point moving forward instead of lambasting what happened in the past.

8) Take blame, but do not victimize yourself. While leaders should acknowledge and claim responsibility for their followers’ actions, do not over-emphasize your failure to the point that it shifts the tone and purpose of the feedback onto you. Providing examples of how the situation could have been handled more appropriately, then subsequently providing a framework for achieving the desired change is an effective practice that keeps the emphasis on the development of the employee while also contributing the necessary framework and support as a leader.

9) Ensure future steps are clear. Likely the most important point of all, outlining the positive steps to be taken forward is the most crucial part of any feedback delivery. If criticism is not consistently backed by forward-focusing support and development, it stunts the effectiveness and likelihood of long-term improvement.

Embracing these methods will not only improve your ability to provide feedback to your peers but also strengthen and establish ongoing trust. Every individual strives to develop themselves and be an asset to their employer, so build a baseline of openness and respect to capitalize on the most your staff has to offer! ▀

MITCHELL SHOPE is a project engineer with JQ Engineering in Dallas, Texas. He holds a master of engineering degree from MIT in structural engineering. Contact him at mshope@jqeng.com.



2020 Seminar Calendar

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FEBRUARY

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

MARCH

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

APRIL

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

MAY

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

JUNE

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

JULY

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

AUGUST

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

SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

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

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PROFILE



Value and respect: Carlos Penin

President and founder of C.A.P. Government, Inc. (Coral Gables, FL), a privately held, minority-owned consulting firm.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

Penin's professional history includes more than 30 years of direct project experience and managerial functions. Throughout his career, he's played an integral role in the South Florida consulting industry community.

"I started the firm 30 years ago. In that time, I've seen many ups and downs," Penin says. "We try to run the organization as if we're always in lean years so we can take advantage of growth times. We run a tight organization and there are no layers and layers of management. We keep costs down and let revenue fluctuate as it will. We outsource certain services as needed."

A CONVERSATION WITH CARLOS PENIN.

The Zweig Letter: What are the three to four key business performance indicators that you watch most carefully? Do you share that information with your staff?

Carlos Penin: These are the KPIs we watch most carefully:

- 1) Total operating expenses
- 2) Employee utilization
- 3) Miscellaneous expenses such as vehicle and insurance

Growth percentage information is shared with staff, but not in specific monetary amounts.

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

CP: We can predict workload about six months out. As for cashflow, we have no problems with that. We have strong cashflow at all times.

TZL: Artificial intelligence and machine learning are potential disruptors across all industries. Is your firm exploring how to incorporate these technologies into providing improved services for clients?

CP: We believe that technology has to be incorporated in all services or we will fall behind on being competitive, locally and nationally. Technology makes our services more predictable, accurate, efficient, and transparent. We work with government contracts and technology makes it easier for our clients to explain results and limits any issues with reporting data. For example, inspectors have tablets with plans set up to share with clients and they can also enter reviews with photos while on the site. Often, they can have the information entered and completed before they get back to their vehicle. This helps to make the process more efficient and accurate. By incorporating newer technologies, we're also appealing to the younger generation which helps with recruitment, which in turn helps to build a company that provides valuable services.

"You have to value and respect the individual – it breeds value for the company. I believe our staff is convinced that I care for each and every one of them. I preach respect of their identity and expect them to do the same for the people we serve. Respect goes a long way."

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

CP: The industry, overall, has placed requirements on what's considered an acceptable number of years in the way of experience needed for engineers. We're working to overcome that through our internship program and by working with local universities. We bring students in as apprentices and teach them how to do electronic plan reviews and inspections. Since we have several higher educational institutions that are clients, we've reached out to their administration and have asked them to send us qualified STEM students who are interested in learning how to do plan reviews and inspections. They can do summer internships and then after graduation, they're qualified to begin working as an engineer or technician. We also attend university career fairs, professional organization meetings where

there are student chapters, such as the Association of Cuban Engineers, and have developed a solid reputation, so word-of-mouth is key too.

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

CP: We have not performed a formal valuation for about five years. However, we do quarterly reviews that combine in-house and external accounting resources. For 35-40 years, I've had a CPA friend who provides quarterly reports, with the assistance of in-house accounting staff, to generate information that compares our numbers to last quarter this year and last quarter the same time last year. These reports are in-depth and we always know where we stand.

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

CP: I started the firm 30 years ago. In that time, I've seen many ups and downs. We try to run the organization as if we're always in lean years so we can take advantage of growth times. We run a tight organization and there are no layers and layers of management. We keep costs down and let revenue fluctuate as it will. We outsource certain services as needed. For example, we outsource HR and some marketing services – so they have less of an impact on our core services. We have accounting in-house, but if more staff was needed, we'd outsource that addition.

TZL: What unique or innovative pricing strategies have you developed, or are you developing, to combat the commoditization of engineering services?

CP: Our primary focus is on the municipal government. We work with more than 60 municipalities in Florida. The most innovative pricing strategy we've developed – that municipalities love – is one where we are compensated on a percentage of the revenue they collect. So for instance, say a building department collects \$100,000 for the month of August in building permits and other miscellaneous items. We'd collect 80 percent of that. Now, when September comes around, they only collect \$75,000. We still collect 80 percent. Our percentage does not change, and they always get to keep some of their revenue. It's our

See VALUE AND RESPECT, page 8



HEADQUARTERS: Coral Gables, FL

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 205

YEAR FOUNDED: 1989

OFFICE LOCATIONS:

- Coral Gables, FL
- Fort Lauderdale, FL
- West Palm Beach, FL

SERVICES: CAP provides clients with focused, needs-based building department solutions including administration, plans review, inspection, and code compliance services.

PURPOSE AND VALUES: The firm's reputation for the professional management of building department operations has contributed to its consistent growth and ability to provide uninterrupted service to many of its clients. CAP's services have been shown to improve the efficiency of existing departments, increase customer service satisfaction, and streamline operational transitions. The CAP team is dedicated to providing services that not only help manage workflow and enhance the user experience but also safeguard community assets.

BUSINESS NEWS

J.F. KIELY SERVICE CO. AWARDED TITLE OF NO. 10 FASTEST GROWING COMPANY IN NJBIZ 2019 FAST 50 LIST

J.F. Kiely Service Co., part of the Kiely Family of Companies, has been recognized as being the 10th fastest growing company in New Jersey from NJBiz' 2019 Fast 50 list, which ranks companies headquartered in New Jersey based on three years of revenue and dollar growth information.

Applicants for the list were required to supply three years of revenue information, demonstrate revenue of at least \$500,000 in two of the three fiscal years, and show increasing revenue overall, from 2016 through 2018. The company with the largest dollar growth received the highest ranking, with all

others following. Rankings were then assigned for the percentage of growth from year one to year three. These two numbers are totaled, and the final list of the top 50 fastest growing companies is developed.

J.F. Kiely Service Co. provides a unique engineering approach to the natural gas, petroleum, and water resources industries. With services ranging from feasibility studies to project management, J.F. Kiely Service Co. is committed to designing and building successful projects on time, on budget, and on expectation.

John Kiely, CEO of the Kiely Family of Companies, attributes the company's No. 10

spot on the list to a company culture that is built around a blend of advanced customer support, technical innovation, and personal integrity.

"In the U.S., infrastructure projects take longer and costs are higher than any other developed nation, and it's largely due to staggering inefficiency," states Kiely. "J.F. Kiely Service Co. has a unique advantage: Our projects are backed by experts in the industry, and with the combined power of the companies in our enterprise, we fully embrace design-build to solve the infrastructure crisis plaguing America, bringing a new kind of teamwork that demands more, empowers more, and achieves more than ever before."



C.A.P. Government, Inc. staff enjoying time together.

VALUE AND RESPECT, from page 7

responsibility to scale up or down to meet their needs. They will never pay more than what comes in.

TZL: They say failure is a great teacher. What's the biggest lesson you've had to learn the hard way?

CP: We went through a merger about 20 years ago. As a result, the company became process oriented. We quickly learned that the processes choked the delivery of service. From this we learned that the clients and employees have to come first – not processes. You also need to adjust processes to get different results. In order to correct the problem, I had to transition out of this merger and do it successfully. It was vital that I had strong relationships in the community with legal, accounting, and financial institutions.

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

CP: To develop a culture that provides opportunities to staff, develops efficient services for clients, and keeps the company strategically growing and profitable.

TZL: Diversity and inclusion is lacking. What steps are you taking to address the issue?

CP: We have to be aware that we're living in a multi-cultural world now. We cannot let skin color, accents, or gender influence our thoughts one way or the other. Our company is headquartered in south Florida which is a virtual melting pot and our company reflects that community.

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

CP: You have to value and respect the individual – it breeds value for the company. I believe our staff is convinced that I care for each and every one of them. I preach respect of their identity and expect them to do the same for the people we serve. Respect goes a long way. ▀



Follow through

By checking in either monthly or quarterly, you can ensure that those responsible take the time necessary to follow through on your marketing plan.



**Katie
Crawford**

In Zweig Group's *2019 Marketing Survey*, 70 percent of firms answered that they have a formal marketing plan. Marketing plans typically include a firmwide marketing budget, revenue/sales goals, contact goals, and/or goals by market sector or office division.

Putting together a marketing plan is only half the strategy. You can't just put your plan on the shelf and revisit it again at the end of the year to update. As marketers, we have a lot on our plates, but it's important to allocate the time to review our plans throughout the year. By scheduling follow-ups either monthly or quarterly, you can help ensure that those responsible take the time necessary to revisit your plan.

To be productive in your review, here are a few questions you should ask yourself:

- Which goals, if any, did you not meet? Why? Should they be a priority in Q2 and beyond, or should you eliminate them from your plan? It's important to understand the "why" behind not meeting all your goals. This will help set you up for a successful remainder of the year. Perhaps you changed your

"Putting together a marketing plan is only half the strategy. You can't just put your plan on the shelf and revisit it again at the end of the year to update."

approach based on trends you were seeing within the industry, how does this affect other aspects of your plan?

- Is there anything you need to add to your plan based on requests from colleagues? While you want to use your marketing plan to drive strategy, there may be something unforeseen, such as an emerging

See KATIE CRAWFORD, page 10



BUSINESS NEWS

JONES|CARTER WINS APWA ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OF THE YEAR FOR THE DALLAS SALMON WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT IN LEAGUE CITY

Last year, the Water Team at Jones|Carter accepted the 2019 Environmental Project of the Year award from the Texas Chapter of the American Public Works Association. The award acknowledged the rerouting of the Dallas Salmon Wastewater Treatment Plant effluent line and reconstruction of North Kansas Avenue to meet requirements mandated by the Texas Commission on Environment Quality for copper and zinc discharge limits.

TCEQ required the city of League City to move the WWTP's effluent line and outfall location further down Clear Creek. However, 60 percent of the way through design, Jones|Carter realized the effluent line for the WWTP interfered with North Kansas Avenue. Reconstructing the roadway was on League City's list of capital improvement projects, but was not slated for design and construction for several years. The city determined that combining the road reconstruction with the Dallas Salmon project was both time and cost-effective.

Jones|Carter installed 1,500 linear feet of reinforced concrete boxes from the existing discharge location at the WWTP to the new outfall location at the northern end of North Kansas Avenue at Clear Creek. The new outfall line required existing utilities to be relocated as well as the diversion of the existing overland drainage paths.

Construction of the new effluent line was completed and certified one month ahead of the three-year deadline mandated by TCEQ.

The reconstruction of North Kansas Avenue required the installation of a large culvert sewer system and repaving of the existing roadway. The project was located within a League City

neighborhood, requiring ample traffic safety measures. Jones|Carter and their partners minimized the impact of the reconstruction by implementing a one lane, two-way traffic control plan with flaggers.

The reconstruction was completed five months ahead of schedule.

"Everyone on our team did their piece of the job," said Kyle Kaspar, manager of the conveyance and transmission team at Jones|Carter. "But it's the fact everyone came together to do a great job for the city of League City that made it an award-winning project for both the client and Jones|Carter."

Jones|Carter proudly teamed with Ardurra Group, LLC, Terracon Consultants, Inc., EcoLogic, Inc., C.N. Koehl Urban Forestry, and SER Construction Partners, LLC. The team's commitment to the timeline from planning to project completion was instrumental to the project's success.

For the past 40 years, Jones|Carter has provided engineering and surveying services to the public and private sectors. The Texas-based civil engineering firm was established in Houston in 1976. Since then, Jones|Carter has grown to nine locations throughout Texas. Jones|Carter is an *Engineering New-Record* Top 500 National Firm and has consistently been voted a Best Place to Work.

NEW LEVEL 10 CONSTRUCTION SAN JOSE PROJECT TO SPEED DELIVERY WITH NEW HYBRID CORE SYSTEM Sunnyvale-based **Level 10 Construction** announced that erection of its new downtown San Jose project, 200 Park Ave., may take significantly less time using a new hybrid core system.

Level 10 Vice President Casey Wend, who is overseeing 200 Park Avenue, says the project will be the first in California to use SpeedCore, a new hybrid core system.

As described by the American Institute of Steel Construction, "SpeedCore is a revolutionary concrete-filled composite steel plate shear wall core. With this remarkable system, erection will take an estimated 40 percent less time to complete than it would with a traditional cast-in-place reinforced concrete core.

"Erection of the hybrid core begins with pre-fabricated panels consisting of two structural steel plates held in place with cross-connecting tie rods. After erection, these panels are filled with concrete, creating a unique sandwich-style structure that provides strength and stability along with the benefits of rapid erection. Additionally, SpeedCore is a non-proprietary system, meaning many American steel fabricators can produce the panels."

200 Park Ave. is the first new speculative office project in downtown San Jose in 10 years. The new 19-story office building will have 16 levels of Class A flexible work space, with three levels of above-ground parking and four levels of below-ground parking. Total rentable square footage is 875,000.

Gensler is the architect for 200 Park Ave. **Magnusson Klemencic Associates** is the structural engineer.

Level 10 Construction is a full-service general contractor with offices throughout California, including Sunnyvale, San Francisco, and San Diego.

Gensler is an integrated architecture, design, planning, and consulting firm with more than 6,000 professionals networked across 48 offices providing global reach with local touch.

Magnusson Klemencic Associates is an international, award-winning structural and civil engineering firm headquartered in Seattle.

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technology that you might want to introduce during the remainder of the year.

- Has your target market changed? And if so, what adjustments to your strategy do you need to make based on these changes? Even a small change to your audience can alter how you approach your marketing goals.
- If you made any changes to your brand/messaging, review your image across your web presence. Do you project the same image and message across all platforms? Your firm voice should be consistent whether you're on your website or on social media channels.
- Which activities were successful? Have you tracked revenue or other ROI metrics to determine which activities should be prioritized for the remainder of the year and which should be revised or even dropped?

Your review shouldn't stop at just reading through your

"Your review shouldn't stop at just reading through your plan, be sure to make any necessary edits and updates whether to the plan itself, marketing collateral, or your overall strategy to take advantage of understanding what is working for you so far and what is not."

plan, be sure to make any necessary edits and updates whether to the plan itself, marketing collateral, or your overall strategy to take advantage of understanding what is working for you so far and what is not. This will ensure you continue to have success implementing your plan each quarter throughout the year. ■

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Win on value instead of price

Believing in your value is the first step to success in winning on value. The next step is to walk away when clients don't fit your new standards.



June
Jewell

We've all been there, sitting in front of that client we know we don't want to work with. But the fear takes over, the fear of not having enough work. So we don't walk away. We succumb to the pressure and lower our fee.

Or maybe it is our best client, and he is threatening to go to one of our competitors, telling us we are too expensive. What do we say? Do we just agree and go ahead and give him a break on his estimate – knowing we will lose money on the job?

Situations like this are happening every day and slowly killing the AEC industry. The problem is, we really do start to believe we can't get the kind of fees we need to be successful and profitable, but we still don't know how to turn down work. It is just against our nature.

As our employees navigate these difficult situations every day, small amounts of money are being given away. Rather than believe we are adding additional value to our clients' projects, we assume we are not any better than all of the other firms out there and compete on fees. Even if we

do believe we are better, many of our staff do not have the tools to articulate why we are better and fail to have the right conversations with clients.

While it might not be quick and easy to transform your firm culture and practices away from accepting unprofitable work, it can be done. The highest performing and most profitable firms are the ones that are proud of who they are, understand where they are different and better, and willing to walk away from clients who do not have a win-win approach.

The following are six steps that can lead your firm closer to better and more profitable projects:

1) Understand your culture. First you must understand those cultural attributes that are directing your staff's behavior. Most of this culture

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BUSINESS NEWS

YMCA OF FREDERICK COUNTY HOLDS GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY SOUTH COUNTY FAMILY YMCA IN URBANA, MARYLAND The YMCA of Frederick County held a groundbreaking ceremony to commemorate construction start on the new South County Family YMCA in Urbana, Maryland.

The site is located between Urbana Middle and Urbana High schools on Md. 80 (Fingerboard Road).

Plans for the new YMCA have been in motion since 2016. The facility will serve the rapidly

growing population of southern Frederick County.

Along with an aquatics complex, the new 62,000-square-foot center will include a grand lobby, wellness center, large gymnasium, indoor walking/running track, intergenerational space for active older adults, family adventure center for kids, group exercise studios, locker rooms, and multipurpose athletic fields.

The land was donated by Natelli Communities. This will be the YMCA's second fullservice site

in the county, along with one in Downtown Frederick. There is currently a smaller facility in the Green Valley/Monrovia area.

The new YMCA is slated to open in the Spring of 2021.

The project team includes JRL Construction Management, Morgan-Keller Construction, **Zavos Architecture+Design, ADTEK Engineers, CJL Engineering, Specialized Engineering**, Gro Development, and Natural Resources Design, Inc.

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is formed based on the attitudes and beliefs of the firm's leaders. Carefully examine those cultural traps such as "keep the client happy at all costs" and "our client doesn't want us to make a profit" that are driving your fears and willingness to lower fees below acceptable levels. Openly confronting these traps can lead to a stronger resolve that the firm can't continue to thrive with these values.

2) Analyze your strategy. Does your firm have a strategic plan and do you stick with it? The first step is to determine what types of clients and projects are the best fit, and most profitable for your firm, and strategize how to get more of those types of clients. Are you able to add more value for certain types of clients? Is there a particular client mindset that is better to work with? Understanding where your firm can be more successful, and committing to pursue these types of clients, and avoid the others, is key to having a strategic plan that drives higher growth and profits.

"To move away from the commodity trap and elevate your firm to a new level of profitable growth, your entire team must embrace the value you bring to your clients and continue to look for new ways to deliver exceptional value."

3) Determine your true value. The key to selling on value rather than price is to really understand how you are different – and better. It is possible that many years of working with tightwad clients has forced you to overlook areas where you could excel. Or possibly you are intent on maintaining a reputation of high quality, despite the fact that your clients don't appreciate or want to pay for it.

Look at where you save your clients' money as a first step in calculating the additional value you bring to the table. Do your staff go above and beyond? Do you help clients avoid risk or get jobs done faster than other firms? Do you require fewer change orders or corrections to your drawings? Can you save clients' money in the construction process? One way to gather this information is to meet with your project managers and discuss specific areas where your team has added value to projects. Putting a dollar value on these aspects of your work can start to give you the foundation for educating clients about how you will save them money even if your fees are not the lowest.

4) Educate your clients. The next step is to figure out

how to communicate this value to your clients. Look for opportunities to discuss aspects of your proposals with clients. Offer them advice about how to save more money on their projects, and even on your fees! Show them that their success is your highest priority. Most reasonable clients will be willing to pay extra if you are able to show them a return on investment. Look at different ways to calculate this value and show clients that while you aren't the cheapest – you are the best and this will ultimately save them time, money, and frustration.

5) Train your staff to sell on value. After many years of being beaten down on fees, your PMs may be hesitant to increase fees with existing clients. It is important to ensure that they really understand the numbers, and the negative impact of accepting unprofitable work. Developing PMs into business leaders will give them the knowledge and confidence they need to have difficult conversations with clients about fees.

Many PMs are afraid to talk about money with clients and role playing is a great way to prepare them so that they know exactly what to say and feel ready when the topics come up. Being able to review the numbers with a client and feel confident in having the tough conversations is the key to transforming your culture into one where your employees internalize the firm's value and are not afraid to turn away bad clients.

6) Walk away from bad projects. Ultimately you must be willing to walk away from clients who don't want a true partnership with their consultants or don't believe in your firm's value. Wouldn't it be better if your competitors have the cheap clients and your firm has the fair-minded clients? In order for this cultural transformation to be successful your firm's leaders must first embrace the value you bring, and be able to communicate it regularly to your entire staff. Believing in your value is the first step to success in winning on value, and the next step is to walk away when clients don't fit your new standards.

To move away from the commodity trap and elevate your firm to a new level of profitable growth, your entire team must embrace the value you bring to your clients and continue to look for new ways to deliver exceptional value. Being the low cost provider is a path to mediocrity and is not going to ever attract the best employees or high profits necessary to be a top-tier AEC firm. ▀

JUNE JEWELL is the author of the book *Find the Lost Dollars: 6 Steps to Increase Profits in Architecture, Engineering and Environmental Firms*. She is the president of AEC Business Solutions, helping progressive AEC firm leaders increase project profits and employee performance. Connect with her on LinkedIn and learn more about how to improve your project financial performance at aecbusiness.com.