

Developing the next generation of leaders

Mark Zweig offers six suggestions on how to pick the right people and nurture them. But act with care.

There is no substitute for ongoing feedback from others in your firm about how the new/future leaders are performing. Again, to get honest feedback from them they will have to trust you.



Mark
Zweig

EDITORIAL

“Leadership development” – is there anything to it? Is it just more political correctness and B.S. management speak? Is it a fad? I think not. Anyone who makes it to their fifties or sixties in this business can tell you that developing successor leaders has to be a real priority. No successors means you, as the owner(s), are trapped!

So the question becomes one of “how” versus whether or not it is a good idea. Here are my thoughts:

1) Pick the right people to start with.

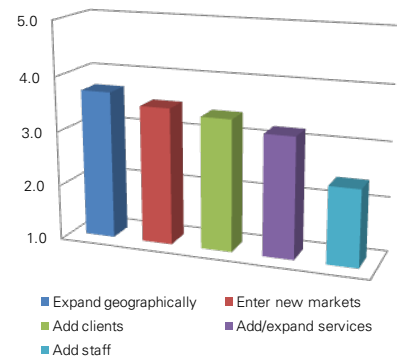
Some people want to work with others, have the ability to empathize, be humble, and be confident when they need to be. But not everyone gets this idea. There are those who let a taste of power go to their heads. They cannot assume a leadership role without alienating. They can't be the ones you pick as successors.

2) Tell them that they are earmarked for a leadership post.

This is so they aren't anxious and don't feel compelled to try too hard to prove themselves,

See MARK ZWIG, page 2

TRENDLINES New frontiers



The 2013 “Merger & Acquisition Survey” finds that expanding geographically and entering new markets are the most important objectives that firm leaders hope to achieve through a firm acquisition. On a scale of 1 to 5, expanding geographically and entering new markets ranked averages of 3.7 and 3.5, respectively. Meanwhile, other objectives, such as adding new clients and adding/expanding services, follow close behind, ranking a mean of 3.4 and 3.2, respectively.

– Margot Suydam, Survey Manager

FIRM INDEX

Advantage Engineers LLC	3
Becker Morgan Group, Inc	11
Community Design Studio	8
EYP, Inc	12
GW Jones & Sons Consulting Engineers, Inc	12
Haskell	3
H.R. Gray	4
Littlejohn Engineering Associates	12
Mackey Mitchell Architects	9
SEPI Engineering & Construction, Inc	3

ALSO INSIDE

■ THE FAST LANE: GSA schedules – the case for client visits. Page 6

■ BEST FIRM: This firm leads by example. Page 9

PROFILE



**CFO says
variety is key**

Page 11

Finance expansion with your cash

Page 3

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

and secondly, so they can start readying themselves through self-study. The sooner the better, but be sure that you keep the time schedule realistic and tell the future leader what that schedule is.

3) Spend lots and lots of time with them. How much time? I don't know – but a lot. Take these people to lunch. Take them on client visits. Work with them on projects. Have them over for dinner. Spend a lot of time getting to know the individual(s) who will succeed you and let them get to know you as well. If you have a deeper relationship with them it will be easier for you to influence them to do what they need to do to ultimately be successful.

4) Employ outside resources selectively. I will admit I am skeptical about much of the so-called leadership development training that's out there. But that said, I also think there are some good resources – some smart people who were very successful in their careers in this business who are now helping others to become better leaders. I have personally benefited from like mentors who were outside my company. Don't be afraid to enlist some help!

5) Gauge acceptance and effectiveness continuously. There is no substitute for ongoing feedback from others in your firm about how the new/future leaders are performing. Again, to get honest feedback from them they will have to trust you. You also have to be sure that if all feedback isn't positive you don't get defensive nor allow the leader in question to act punitively against an employee. But bottom-up feedback and peer feedback about your future leader(s) are both valuable to you if you are serious about seeing this budding leader succeed.

6) Own your selection mistake, if you made one, and make a correction! No one bats 1,000. As my new head of construction for Mark Zweig, Inc., likes to say, "I will consistently get 89 percent of it right." So the other 11 percent of the time you may make a mistake and name someone to a leadership or management post who shouldn't be there. That's O.K. – it happens. But correct. Don't let a bad situation go on any longer.



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

A/E BUSINESS NEWS

AIA PROMOTES TAX INCENTIVE:

The American Institute of Architects announced it has launched an education initiative that shows how the design and construction industry can use a provision in the tax code to help win business and save energy in the process.

The program, which was developed with Houston-based alliantgroup, takes industry professionals through the vagaries of Section 179D of the tax code, which was created by the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to address and improve the substantial portion of U.S. energy consumption attributable to commercial buildings. You can learn more here: www.aia.org/advocacy/federal/179D/index.htm.

"AIA's goal in partnering with alliantgroup is to ensure that all AIA member firms are made aware of the powerful 179D incentive – a deduction which can provide powerful cash infusing funds to help firms hire additional employees, competitively price jobs, and expand their practice," said Mickey Jacob, AIA president.

"We look forward to working with the AIA to assist their members in expanding their practices and realizing significant cost savings by taking advantage of the 179D deduction," said Dhaval Jadav, alliantgroup CEO. "Along with the R&D tax credit, the 179D deduction is one of the strongest, but most underutilized tax incentives for industry professionals. I am excited about the opportunity to serve the AIA membership and provide value to its members."

"This provision of the Internal Revenue Code allows up to a \$1.80/square foot deduction for qualifying properties. We have helped several hundred firms throughout the United States claim this powerful deduction and look forward to serving the AIA membership," said Valerie Ward, alliantgroup national director.

Many architects, engineers, and design-build contractors are overlooking the 179D deduction because they may not know it exists or that they could potentially qualify. In many cases, they might be claiming small amounts and not everything they are eligible for. This provision of the tax code allows up to a \$1.80/square foot deduction for qualifying properties.

CALL FOR INFRASTRUCTURE: Terry O'Sullivan, General President of LIUNA – the Laborers' International Union of North America – testified recently on the need for strong federal leadership to address our nation's basic needs for good roads, safe bridges, clean drinking water and safe and efficient airports before

the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

LIUNA is one of the nation's largest unions of construction workers and members build highways, bridges, pipelines, sewer systems, and transit systems. LIUNA has long been a vocal voice for infrastructure investment including long-standing partnerships with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Americans for Transportation Mobility, Building America's Future and other allies.

America's infrastructure – our roads, bridges and highways and water systems – are in a state of crisis. Across the U.S., 26 percent of all bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. A third of major roads are in mediocre or poor condition and 36 percent of major urban highways are stretched beyond capacity. Each day, 7 billion gallons of clean drinking water is lost to leaking pipes. The scope of the nation's needs is beyond the capacity of cities, counties, even states or private investment to address and the economic impacts could be devastating. The American Society of Civil Engineers predicts we will lose \$1 trillion in business sales, \$324 billion in exports and one million jobs annually by 2020 if we don't act.

Investing in America's basic infrastructure would not only help rescue our economy but also working people. The construction industry is weathering the most sustained downturn in 40 years with two million fewer jobs in the industry than at the peak in April of 2006 and the unemployment rate at 16.1 percent.

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EXPANSION

Finance expansion with your cash

Three firms that are either buying other firms or opening new offices stick by this strategy steadfastly.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

It's time to expand, but how? Are you thinking of entering into a new acquisition, or perhaps you need a new office location to improve your market share? Whatever the reason, it's important to first decide how you will pay.

"We do not like debt. All of our profits stay in house and we accumulate cash, rather than distributing it out."

LEAVE NO DEBT BEHIND. Sepi Asefnia, president, **SEPI Engineering & Construction, Inc.** (Raleigh, NC), a firm that provides civil engineering and planning services to private and public sector clients across the southeast, recently announced the opening of a new office in Wilmington, N.C.

"It was financed with our own money; we did not have to borrow," Asefnia says.

This new 3,400-square-foot office will allow the firm to expand services to clients along the North Carolina coast, including federal clients at military bases and other facilities located in the Wilmington area.

"We are proud to announce the opening of our new office in Wilmington," Asefnia says. "As our team continues to grow, we feel that we can best surpass client expectations with conveniently located offices throughout the state."

There are five employees in the Wilmington office and it offers surveying, site design and utility design to the area. Asefnia is not anticipating opening another office in 2013.

GROW CAPITAL; EXAMINE DISTRIBUTIONS. **Advantage Engineers**

LLC (Columbia, MD), a 103-person firm with five offices, provides comprehensive services in specialized fields of engineering. Cynthia Stuber, the company's marketing manager, reports that they are 100 percent debt-free, despite a recent expansion.

"We expand only when we have the available capital and the work warrants it," she says. "So, it's all about timing, and consistent and systematic-controlled growth."

Its most recent growth spurt includes an expansion of the West Chester, Pa. office to serve clients better and accommodate recent growth in the Philadelphia market.

The new office has expanded to a 5,000-square-foot facility. It has the capacity for 26, full-time staff members. Currently, the team is comprised of 15 engineers, project managers, geologists, construction inspectors, and environmental specialists.

"The office expansion will also allow for technology upgrades and a more efficient use of our resources," says Edward Balsavage, managing principal. "As the Philadelphia market remains strong, we expect to see continued growth across all of our service lines and look forward to the West Chester office continuing to meet the needs of our clients."

Advantage Engineers hopes to expand its presence even more in the mid-Atlantic region as the demand for its services continues to grow.

EXPANSION THROUGH ACQUISITION. Brad Slappey, executive vice president and CFO of **Haskell** (Jacksonville, FL), a large engineering, design and building solutions firm, says the most recent acquisition of a Wisconsin-specialty engineering firm, **Seiberling**, could mean a big jump in the firm's revenue.

Seiberling is an engineering and technical consulting company that specializes

✓ GOOD TO KNOW

Firms participating in ZweigWhite's 2012 "Financial Performance Survey" had a median of three offices, though the number of offices per firm ranged from one to 106.

in the food, dairy, pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. The acquisition adds more than 50 specialty engineers to Haskell's workforce, which already has a strong presence in the food and beverage market.



Brad Slappey,
Executive VP and
CFO, Haskell.

"This acquisition is a continuation of a growth strategy launched in 2010 with the acquisition of **E2M Inc.** – an Atlanta engineering firm that specializes in packaging systems," Slappey says. "Seiberling is a process engineering operation so the two complement each other very well."

Companies want to work with us because we are 'one-stop-shopping' if you will. Many of our clients have an emphasis on interiors of their facilities when it comes to equipment placement and layout and we can now offer all of these services."

Like Advantage and SEPI, Haskell also uses cash.

"We do not like debt," Slappey says. "All of our profits stay in house and we accumulate cash, rather than distributing it out."

Slappey advises firms seeking to expand – whether through acquisition or additional locations – that they must first examine its financial makeup. If they are distributing profits at the end of the year via bonuses, for example, such firms should reexamine their practices.

"Firms that want to expand in the future need to start planning now and be-

See EXPANSION, page 4

NEWS

NYC can mitigate climate change through buildings

Study shows the role urban buildings can play in mitigating climate change.

The country's largest city can feasibly reduce its carbon emissions 90 percent by 2050, according to a study released by Urban Green Council.

President Obama stressed the importance of building efficiency in his State of the Union, announcing a goal to cut energy waste from homes and businesses in half over the next 20 years. The timely study, "90 By 50," finds that by updating and streamlining the city's buildings and infrastructure, New York City can meet that goal and more, reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to the levels identified by scientists as necessary to contain climate change.

Issued in the wake of Superstorm Sandy and other unprecedented weather events that refocused attention on building preparedness, 90 By 50 shows the dramatic role urban buildings can play in mitigating climate change.

Buildings are New York City's greatest contributor to carbon pollution, producing 75 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions. The transportation sector accounts for another 21 percent. Climate scientists say carbon pollution must be reduced 80 percent worldwide by 2050 to ensure a safe, sustainable environment.

To do the study, a virtual New York City was created using key building

types. The model was then adjusted to improve future buildings using currently available technologies like improved insulation, the use of heat pumps, and transportation electrification. The result: a building sector that is essentially free of carbon pollution.

Environmental and urban leaders agree that our current infrastructure is unsustainable but disagree on the feasibility of finding a solution. 90 By 50 is the first study to tactically demonstrate how an American city can tangibly and affordably meet the challenges of climate change.

"The buildings we live in can play a crucial role in the sustainability of society and the planet. This study shows us that an energy-efficient and innovative New York is possible – and necessary. If New York – the complicated nerve center of the country – can do this without breaking the bank, any city in the world can," said Russell Unger, Urban Green Council executive director.

The study assumes that buildings will remain functionally the same as today, without sacrificing physical comfort. All tactics tested are either currently available or reasonably foreseeable. The cost of the changes is neutral when the economy and other factors are considered.

The study can be found at www.urbangreencouncil.org/90by50. ▀▀

EXPANSION, from page 3

gin retaining more earnings so they can accumulate more cash," Slappey says.

Slappey also advises that if a firm is looking into acquiring another firm, it needs to examine closely exactly what is being purchased. For example, ensure that key players are not about to

retire.

"You have to know what your money is getting you," he says.

In late October, Haskell also announced the acquisition of **H.R. Gray**, a Columbus, Ohio-based construction firm, giving Haskell its first Midwestern presence. ▀▀

RESOURCES

M&A SURVEY: Is your firm considering a merger, an acquisition, or a sale? Or have you recently completed a merger or acquisition transaction? If so, then you'll want to see the survey results in the 2013 "Merger & Acquisition Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms." The 23rd edition of this comprehensive report includes all the latest data on the state of merger and acquisition activity in the design and environmental consulting industry. Whether you want to get a projected value for your own firm or one you're looking to buy or you want to find out how the details of the deal you recently made compare to other similar deals, this report has the answers you need.

If you're considering selling your firm, use the Merger & Acquisition Survey to:

- Find out what today's buyers are looking for – who, where, and what
- See what kind of price you can expect for your firm
- Learn what's motivating other sellers like yourself, and what buyers are hoping to achieve through an acquisition.

If you're considering buying another firm, use the Merger & Acquisition Survey to:

- Learn how long it takes to buy or sell a firm, from start to finish
- Find out how many firms are satisfied with the acquisitions they've made

If you've recently completed a merger or acquisition deal, use the Merger & Acquisition Survey to:

- Learn how the price you paid or the amount you received compares with other similar deals
- Find out if your peers or competitors also recently completed any transactions
- Compare the success of your firm's transactions with other firms' successful (or not successful) transactions

Even if M&A activity isn't currently in your firm's plans, it may be sooner than you think, so you'll still need a copy of this new resource. Don't miss out on the 2013 Merger & Acquisition Survey!

For more information or to order at pre-publication special price, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/p-2146-Merger_Acquisition_Survey_2013.

DEVELOPMENT

Fellowships for sustainable design

Program engages young architects and is helping redefine affordable housing through architecture and design.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Enterprise Community Partners is a well-known provider of the development capital and expertise it takes to create decent, affordable homes and rebuild communities.

But that's not all. It also works to pair fellows with architectural host organizations.



Katie Swesen,
Vice President,
Design
Initiatives.

The prestigious Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellowship is a highly competitive fellowship. And, it's the only national program that partners emerging architects with community developers for three years to unite a community-based approach to development with best practices in design.

"The Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellowship trains the next generation of leaders who will transform the community development field through design excellence, sustainability and community engagement," says Katie Swesen, vice president, Design Initiatives.

For 30 years, Enterprise, based in Columbia, Md., has introduced neighborhood solutions through public/private partnerships with financial institutions, governments and community organizations. It has raised and invested more than \$11.5 billion in equity,

grants and loans to help build or preserve nearly 300,000 affordable rental and for-sale homes to create vital communities and has invested \$2.2 billion toward the creation of more than 37,000 affordable homes for seniors.

FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE. Swesen, a former fellow, is well aware of the organization's impact.

"The heart of my fellowship focused on the Page Street Neighborhood Initiative," she says. "Working house by house and getting to know the building industry were incredibly important. The Rose Fellowship provided the support system that allowed me to grow my skills and ground my work in holistic community-based design."

Her fellowship work included one of Piedmont Housing Alliance's most ambitious projects to date: the design and construction of the 10th and Page Street Neighborhood Revitalization Project, adding 30 new and restored affordable homes to a rapidly changing neighborhood located between the University of Virginia and downtown Charlottesville.

The project achieved a milestone as the first affordable houses in the Earth-Craft Home Program for Virginia.

Other project accolades included an EPA Energy Star Award as one of the top five, green, affordable building developments in the nation and an "Honorable Mention" in the Home Depot Foundation Awards for Excellence for Affordable Housing Built Responsibly program. Swesen continued to make a difference for the Page Street area during her fellowship, most notably initiating a collaborative design process with residents, nonprofits and local schools for the Hope Community Center.

Since 2006, Swesen has been the direc-



Colin Arnold,
Community
Design Studio.

tor of the Rose Fellowship Program, which was created with the support of green urban solutions pioneer, Jonathan Rose, an Enterprise trustee, in honor of his late father, Frederick P. Rose, the urban builder and philanthropist. To date, 40 fellows have collectively produced or rehabilitated more than 7,000 affordable, energy-efficient homes in urban and rural communities across the country, as well as designed more than 46 community buildings, including daycare facilities, health clinics and mixed-use properties.

tated more than 7,000 affordable, energy-efficient homes in urban and rural communities across the country, as well as designed more than 46 community buildings, including daycare facilities, health clinics and mixed-use properties.

HOW DO ARCHITECTS PAIR UP WITH FELLOWS? First, there are two entities involved: the host (501-C3) and the prospective fellows.

- 1) Enterprise posts the host (architectural firm) and work plans online.
- 2) Fellows read work plans and apply for specific ones.

Fellows must have a bachelor's or master's degree from an accredited architecture program and be in a position to be a licensed architect. Many are eligible for IDP credits.

When a fellow shows interest in a particular work plan, Enterprise convenes a selection committee that chooses three to five applicants for the host to interview. All candidates are qualified, but the host makes the final decision.

Once hired, the host organization receives a grant to pay the fellow a salary of approximately \$47,000 per year.

Both fellows and hosts benefit. Fellows learn not only about the project design aspects, but also about the day-to-day happenings.

"For architects to be 'change agents' they need a broader set of skills," Swesen says. "They will learn not only about design, but about development finance, policy, and community engagement."

See FELLOWSHIP, page 8

"The Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellowship trains the next generation of leaders who will transform the community development field through design excellence, sustainability and community engagement."

Keep the project moving

Knowing what is already permitted during project design change reviews and working from there can save time and money for the owner.

At sometime most projects run into issues that may cause delay.

Depending on project stage these delays may include additional costs resulting from delivering the project late and missing project use, additional contractor general conditions, material price increases incurred during delay, potential for material damage delivered on site, additional financing costs, and others.

Who is going to solve the delay issue depends on the stage of the project and who is aware of the entire situation.

Here's an example. A local project had started construction but halted fully after four months. There was no activity, except for the general contractor's staff at the construction trailer waiting for a new building permit.

Two more months passed with no construction activity and general conditions costs piling up for the owner. After a meeting with the owner, project members discovered that the delay resulted from a significant owner change. The project was back into the permitting cycle.

Revised plans were submitted and review comments provided by local building department in a time churning cycle that was costing \$30,000 per month in general conditions alone.

But there was no reason to stop work completely. A valid building permit was still in effect, albeit subject to change. By working with the general contractor and local building inspectors aware of the owner changes, critical path work was able to resume during the permitting revision process.

At this point the owner may have taken a calculated risk but the local building department had reviewed the basic design and there was no reason to keep waiting for the final permit revisions that would take additional months – accounting for the details and back and forth between the designers and building permit reviewers.

The contractor believed erroneously that a new building permit would be required instead of working from the existing permit as a permit revision and moving forward immediately.

In this case, knowing what you already have and working from there saved time and money for the owner. ▀▀



JEFF
NUNNER

JEFF NUNNER is a professional engineer and certified building contractor with 25 years experience specializing as owner representative nationwide. To learn more visit his website at www.nunnerprojects.com or send an email to jnunner@comcast.net.

QUICK TAKES

There was no reason to stop work completely. A valid building permit was still in effect, albeit subject to change. By working with the general contractor and local building inspectors aware of the owner changes, critical path work was able to resume during the permitting revision process.

GSA schedules – the case for client visits

We know that most people like to give work to people they like.
Nothing builds a personal relationship like a series of personal visits.

Over the last few years, there has been a fair amount of activity in SMPS's CPSM Listserve regarding the status of the federal marketplace and how to write proposals for federal agencies, including multiple discussions about General Services Administration schedules. Having developed a winning proposal for a GSA schedule, I can say that this proposal was not that difficult to develop. On the other hand, when selected, getting all of the firm's information uploaded, approved and published was a long, painstaking, confusing, pull-your-hair-out experience.

Your schedule is not a project, although you may be contacted about a project very quickly once your information becomes available to contracting officers with projects. More likely, the schedule is a "license to hunt," much like the Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) contract vehicles used by the US Army Corps of Engineers and other public agencies.

So what does this mean? It means you will have to identify and start visiting prospective clients in order to market your GSA schedule. If you do this well, you could get multiple project assignments – sometimes multiple concurrent assignments – for the next 10 years!

In many cases, you may have to visit a client more than once before you develop a sufficient level of trust for them to give you work. So you should make sure you have selected the right clients to pursue. These would be clients that have multiple projects, clients who treat their consultants as professionals, bringing value to the work; clients who will pay timely and recommend you to other potential clients.

During your multiple visits with prospective clients, you will develop a "feel" for the answers to these and other relevant concerns. If you are interviewing and listening properly, you will learn about the projects they have coming up in the next six- to 12 months, their usual "hot buttons," the concerns that make their various project managers wake up at 3 a.m. in a cold sweat, and what they think constitutes a successful project.

In addition to what you learn in these visits, much information is available on the Internet or through your professional networks.

What you learn will tell you if you bring the right skills, background and attitude to the table to be seen by that



Bernie
Siben

THE FAST LANE

client as a "value-added" resource – one they will want to select and work with.

But what happens after you get your first project from that client? The simple answer is that you keep on visiting, you keep on building and strengthening the relationship, and you keep on being assigned more projects.

In the late 1990s/early 2000s, I worked for a minority/women owned business firm that performed the complete range of engineering and NEPA environmental services. We developed a proposal and won a GSA Schedule for environmental work, and turned the contract over to a senior environmental scientist in our Colorado office to manage.

Our PM quickly developed a relationship with the folks at a large Air Force Base in central New Mexico, and within months, his staff members were working on multiple concurrent projects at that installation. Over the next two years, it seemed that there were always at least two projects going on at the base. The projects involved permitting, environmental impact statements, fatal flaw studies, threatened or endangered species studies, habitat evaluations and other studies for residential, aircraft hangar and other types of facilities.

See BERNIE SIBEN, page 8

Your schedule is not a project, although you may be contacted about a project very quickly once your information becomes available to contracting officers with projects. More likely, the schedule is a 'license to hunt.'

BERNIE SIBEN, from page 7

In addition, there were other assignments being completed at other federal facilities.

One day, when the PM's group had already completed more than a dozen assignments at the base, he and I were discussing the schedule. He said, "Every time I set foot on the base, I come away with a contract. So far, we've had more than a dozen assignments, but every one of them has been around \$25,000 or a little less."

He wanted very much to generate revenue from this schedule at a much faster rate, but the base didn't seem to have current needs that would result in larger contracts – all their needs were in the \$20- to 25,000 range.

When he finished his "rant," he asked me for suggestions. I thought for a moment and then said, "If you can really get a \$25,000 contract 'every time you set foot on the Base,' maybe you should try visiting them three times a week!"

The moral of the story is: If you want to get work with a client – whether it is a new client, a current client or one you worked for in the past but not recently – you have to do something that I call "putting your butt-print in the client's guest chair!"

We know that most people like to give work to people they like. Nothing builds a personal relationship like a series of personal visits, especially if you visit when there is no RFQ/RFP on the street.

Make sure that any visit has some value for the client and that they happen often enough for the client to believe you truly care about his/her and the client organization's success! ▀▀▀

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FELLOWSHIP, from page 5

They need to have soft and hard skills. Those soft skills tend to fall more into the category of how to negotiate and mediate and how to manage people as well as projects. Development and design have been somewhat separated in the past; we are working to forge a career path where designers can be more entrepreneurial. You have to be a multi-taker with deep commitment in this day and age."

So, in addition to fellows getting on-the-ground training, hosts receive the benefit of getting a new design perspective at an early stage in the project development. These fellows also bring with them sustainable industry practices and often offer a unique perspective. In some cases, they may even bring in new projects that the host did not realize it was eligible for.

"Architects can be limited in who they think their clients can be," Swensen says. "Quite often, their eyes will be opened to new opportunities when a fellow comes on board.

"We have a commitment to the next generation of leadership and to innovation. That's why we need to create an en-

PRINCIPALS ACADEMY: The Principals Academy, a crash course in all aspects of managing a professional services firm, is coming to several cities in 2013.

The program is presented by a team of speakers – including ZweigWhite founder and CEO Mark Zweig – with extensive experience working with and for A/E firms. They have a clear understanding of what it takes to survive, and even thrive, in any economy.

The two-day agenda covers six critical areas of business management from the unique perspectives of architecture, engineering and environmental consulting firms, and is presented in tutorial and case study workshop sessions.

- Business planning
- Financial management
- Project management
- Ownership transition planning
- Human resources management
- Marketing/business development

The Principals Academy program also includes a case study workshop session that will provide an opportunity to practice implementing these management strategies in a supervised test-case scenario.

Upcoming events include March 7 and 8 in Denver, June 13 and 14 in Chicago, Sept. 19 and 20 in Boston and Nov. 14 and 15 in San Francisco.

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

vironment to spark that innovation and to find unique solutions for real problems. We are working on creating a new model of practice," Swensen says.

A CASE STUDY. Colin Arnold's host organization was Community Housing Partners in Christiansburg, Va. He started there as a fellow in 2001. In 2002, he established the **Community Design Studio** (a subsidiary of CHP) – a community-based design center – and they just celebrated 10 years. So, in this case, Arnold turned a three-year fellowship into a serious career that focuses on sustainable and affordable design.

As director of CDS and vice president of architecture for CHP, Arnold is a LEED accredited professional with more than 17 years of experience. He is licensed to practice architecture in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.

"I became licensed during my fellowship," Arnold says. "It's been an amazing experience and a period of intense collaboration. We are now redefining affordable housing through architecture and design." ▀▀▀

BEST FIRM

This firm leads by example

Mackey Mitchell Architects seeks great people to do great work and rewards them appropriately.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Mackey Mitchell Architects (St. Louis, MO) has 42 employees and a long history of being recognized as a “best practices” firm that dates back to the early ‘90s. Most recently, in 2012, the company was recognized as a “Best Firm to Work For,” by ZweigWhite for “being a firm that inspires teams to perform at the highest level by creating an environment where employees feel valued, where they feel like they make a difference and where than can clearly see their contribution to the overall mission and success of the firm.”

“We recognize that the firm has strengths in many areas and we seek the distinction of being named a ‘Best Firm to Work For.’ We take that title seriously. We seek great people to do great work and recognize and reward them appropriately. We want every employee to be able to say proudly, ‘I knew this was a great place to work – and here’s proof,’” says Cindy Petzoldt, Mackey Mitchell’s human resources director. “I was completely motivated by the firm’s philosophy of working and playing hard many years ago, and I’m just as enthusiastic 24 years later as I was then. I’m not the only person who feels energized every day I come to work here. The recognition that comes with a ‘Best Firm’ award helps to attract the high-caliber people that make a company successful.”

TAKE THE HIGH ROAD. Dan Mitchell has been with the Mackey Mitchell for 34 years and he says that the firm is not about one or a few individuals, but rather the collective whole. He serves as president.

“When you think about the struggle



“We recognize that the firm has strengths in many areas and we seek the distinction of being named a ‘Best Firm to Work For.’ We take that title seriously. We seek great people to do great work and recognize and reward them appropriately.”

that many architects have had during the past four to five years, it’s not always been pretty,” Mitchell says. “Many of our friends and colleagues have endured incredible hardship with the struggling national economy. We’ve worked hard over this period of time and it’s remarkable to say that our best years have occurred during this time-frame. We’ve made solid business decisions and have always taken the ‘high road.’ We’ve maintained our staff during this difficult time period and have even recently hired additional staff. We are all proud of the work we produce together and we like to believe that we are leading by example and that our culture, our guiding values, and our leadership style can benefit others in this profession. Whether it’s the receptionist, an architectural intern, an administrator, architect, or a senior associate, the principals make sure that each person feels appreciated with our words, actions, and fair compensation.”

BUILDING CAMARADERIE. Part of what distinguishes Mackey Mitchell is a pervasive sense of love that the em-

ployees have for their craft, their way of viewing the firm, not only as a workplace, but as a forum for furthering, enriching and discussing their passion with others who feel the same.

An annual, company-sponsored, out-of-town field trip that shuttles the entire firm (each employee bringing a spouse or friend) to an architecturally interesting destination for a weekend provides an opportunity for education and fellowship. The trip is designed to ensure that the staff “experiences good architecture, shares good meals, and stimulates thought-provoking discussion in a casual setting,” says Kathy Ulkus, communications coordinator. “It also helps coworkers to form good relationships that translate into a happier office.”

BUILD A STAGE FOR SUCCESS; IT WILL COME. The founders and senior partners put a lot of trust in the strengths of Mackey Mitchell Architects’ employees.

See BEST FIRM, page 10

ON THE MOVE

SSE HIRES AND PROMOTES: **Laura Toole**, has joined **Sam Schwartz Engineering, PLLC** (New York, NY), an interdisciplinary transportation engineering and planning firm, as vice president and director of business development. She brings over 30 years of broad-based experience in business development, marketing, public involvement and executive management. She also serves as a board member of the Women's Transportation Seminar Foundation and was formerly president of **Michael Baker Engineering, Inc.** (White Plains, NY).

Additionally, **Jon Gerlach, Anwar Abdullah, Chirag Gandhi, Jessica Nepomiachi** and **Alex Rothberg**, formerly from New York City's Department of Design and Construction, joined SSE. Gerlach joins SSE as a CAD technician in the transportation planning department; Nepomiachi and Rothberg have joined the community outreach team as critical liaisons for communities affected by large construction projects; and Abdullah and Gandhi join other department of construction engineering and inspection as inspectors.

As for promotions, **Kate Sargent** and **Aviva Laurenti** advance to project manager and **Preeti Choudhary** and **Erwin Alonzo** to transportation engineer II.

WILSON & COMPANY GROWS OFFICES: **Wilson & Company, Inc., Engineers & Architects** (Albuquerque, NM), a 450-person multidisciplinary engineering, architecture, surveying, mapping, and planning firm, has added five new hires in its Denver office to support its structures groups: **Kelly Chrisman**, and **Robert Borden**, as senior bridge engineers; and **Evan Anderson, Drew Daumueller**, and **Bobby Orsa** as structural interns.

"Our structures group supports not only transportation projects but also railroads. From accelerated bridge construction to traditional and design-build deliverables, our structures group delivers a full service program to meet the most demanding challenges," said James Brady, senior vice president. "We have undertaken to add to our staff in order to ensure that we maintain our higher relationships standards with our clients through shared ownership, collaboration, intensity, discipline and solutions."

In addition, Wilson & Company has added two new structural engineers in its Salt Lake City office: **George Hansen**, and **Eric Hansen**. With these new hires, the company has expanded its transportation and building structural capabilities in the western United States.

LJA HIRES: **Eric Methvin** has joined **LJA Engineering, Inc.** (Houston, TX), a 250-person full-service consulting engineering firm, as a structural engineer in the firm's Houston transportation division.

Methvin has eight years of experience in structural engineering including the modeling, analysis, and design of concrete and steel structures for various bridges such as direct connectors, overpasses, creek crossings, railroad bridges, and design-build projects. His design experience also consists of various types of water and wastewater structures, including wastewater treatment plants, lift stations, wingwalls for drainage structures, junction boxes, and storm water pump stations. He has worked on a variety of projects for HCTRA, TxDOT, NTTA, DART, CTRMA, Dallas ISD, and various cities, counties, MUDs/LIDs and municipalities.

PARTNER ENGINEERING HIRES: **Partner Engineering and Science Inc.** (Torrance, CA), a 200-person environmental and engineering consulting firm, has hired **Michael Arias** as senior project manager in the Torrance office. Arias will bolster Partner's senior technical staff primarily servicing institutional and equity clients in Southern California.

Arias brings over 25 years of experience in the architectural and construction fields to Partner's investment advisory group. Arias has performed property condition assessments, construction cost and document reviews, construction monitoring and owner's representation services for institutional and private clients nationwide. He has developed an expertise in engineering cost analysis, enabling him to evaluate effectively construction related activities such as work item prioritization, assessments and construction remediation projects. Arias is also a specialist on the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Federal Housing Authority.

"Our equity and institutional clients require a high level of detail and expertise when evaluating their assets, and Michael is exactly this caliber of professional," said Kevin Schmitt, technical director of Partner's investment advisory group. "He is a major addition to our Investment Advisory Group."

Prior to joining Partner, Arias was the assistant vice president at **Marx/Okubo Associates, Inc.**, in Pasadena, Calif. In addition, Arias was an associate at **ATC/Diagnostic Environmental, Inc.**, and an architectural project manager in the design/build department of **Berry Construction, Inc.**, a general construction company.

BEST FIRM, from page 9

"Architecture requires years of knowledge," says Gene Mackey, chairman.

"If we share our knowledge and keep people here, we'll be a smarter firm. We never lose sight that a satisfied client is more likely to result when you have an experienced, dedicated, and communicative staff. A company really exists as a stage for people to perform on, and to achieve their full potential. I want people to take ownership for whatever they are doing, but each of us shares our experiences to make sure we come up with the very best solutions. We strive to create that stage on which the performers can excel. I want to know that they are challenged and excited. I don't do anything alone."

And as the photo reads, "You can see it in their faces."



"Many of our friends and colleagues have endured incredible hardship with the struggling national economy. We've worked hard over this period of time and it's remarkable to say that our best years have occurred during this timeframe. We've made solid business decisions and have always taken the 'high road.' We've maintained our staff during this difficult time period and have even recently hired additional staff."

PROFILE

CFO says variety is key

Patti Phillips helped the Becker Morgan Group survive the recession and is now helping stage a comeback.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Patti Phillips is CFO and senior associate at **Becker Morgan Group, Inc.** (Salisbury, MD), a 68-person multidiscipline architectural and engineering firm with two additional offices in Dover, Del. and Wilmington, N.C. (architectural services only).

She joined the firm in 1997 as comptroller. She was then promoted to senior associate and shareholder in 2004 – and to CFO in 2006. In her role as CFO, Phillips is responsible for the firm's fiscal functions and provides strategic leadership on financial affairs of the corporation.

Phillips has more than 35 years of accounting experience and for the past 24 years has worked for firms in the A/E industry.

"The A/E sector was hit hard during the recession," Phillips says. "And like most firms, we saw the negative effects. However, 2013 is looking much better. In fact, 2012 was our first year of substantial improvement since the recession and I would like to work toward 2013 being our second year of improvement and growth."

Phillips is currently responsible for the day-to-day oversight of all aspects of the financial department. She handles preparation of monthly, quarterly and annual financial reports and analysis of data that is key to the industry. Formally, she reports financial progress to the firm's four principals on a monthly basis, but since they are a small firm, she also has more casual encounters during the course of the month as needed. She also provides financial project management training to the firm's project managers and oversees a staff of two – an accounts receivable manager and accounts payable coordinator.

"When you work for a smaller-sized firm, it's a little easier to keep the lines of communication open more frequently," Phillips says. "It's very important that we keep a pulse on financial indicators net multipliers as well." ■■

A CONVERSATION WITH PATTI PHILLIPS



Patti Phillips,
CFO and Senior
Associate,
Becker Morgan
Group, Inc.

THE ZWEIG LETTER: Since you have been with Becker Morgan, what do you consider some of your major accomplishments?

Patti Phillips: I implemented a strong financial management reporting system to provide valuable feedback to the firm's principals. When I first came on board, the system in place was not as informative, accurate or effective. If you don't have solid financial information, you don't know how your firm is doing... it's that simple.

TZL: What are your key strengths? What are key strengths for any CFO?

"When you work for a smaller-sized firm, it's a little easier to keep the lines of communication open more frequently. It's very important that we keep a pulse on financial indicators net multipliers as well."

PP: I am very organized and disciplined with work processes. I strive for the highest level of accuracy. I think CFOs in any business need to have a good working knowledge of the business itself so they can develop the appropriate reporting needs that are specific to that business.

TZL: What is your management style?

PP: I am very hands on. I stay involved in every aspect of all of our financial processes, from the setup of new projects including contract review, to reviewing weekly timesheets for accuracy and preparing monthly billing to our clients.

TZL: What is your favorite part of the job?

PP: The monthly analysis of the firm's financials and the variety of our projects. It is a fascinating business.

TZL: What do you enjoy doing when you are not busy being a CFO?

PP: Spending time with my grandchildren and gardening.

TZL: What are some of your greatest challenges?

PP: Getting through the recession and rebuilding. At our highest number we had 120 employees pre-recession. Today we have 68. However, we have already made four new hires in 2013.

TZL: What do you think most kept you afloat during the recession?

PP: We have always been a financially conservative firm; we do not believe in living on credit lines. That said, when we had to make cuts like laying people off, well, that was a choice we had to make. Additionally, we are in many different markets. That variety kept us going through lean times.

Current market sectors include:

See PATTI PHILLIPS, page 12

TRANSACTIONS

LEA BUYS: GW Jones & Sons Consulting Engineers, Inc.

(Huntsville, AL), a 127-year-old engineering and surveying firm, has been acquired by **Littlejohn Engineering Associates** (Nashville, TN). Founded in 1886, GWJ has been a cornerstone in the growth and prosperity of Madison County and Northern Alabama. This acquisition will allow GWJ professionals to maintain their tradition of serving clients particularly in the transportation, aviation, industrial, municipal, and utility sectors.

The firm will continue to operate in its same downtown office under the name GW Jones & Sons Consulting Engineers. Out of respect for the rich legacy of participation in key infrastructure projects, the transition of the name to Littlejohn Engineering Associates will be gradual and not occur for approximately a year. Mark Yokley, president of GW Jones and Sons, will continue his involvement as a special consultant during the transition to new office leadership. The entire GWJ staff will remain and will continue to respond to client's needs while also transitioning leadership and management of the operation. Yokley spoke about his vision of the company moving forward.

"We are extremely excited with this new relationship. While I will transition to other GW Jones family interests, the energy, breadth of markets and leadership of Littlejohn Engineering Associates will provide a sound platform for our clients and the community going forward," he said. "The more I got to know Jim Littlejohn, the more convinced I was that LEA's culture and direction were a perfect fit for our staff and client interests. I really believe this was the right decision. A key factor was their commitment to continue the GWJ tradition of concentrating on our core services while at the same time drawing from LEA's additional talents and resources to expand the services in the region."

Jim Littlejohn, LEA's president, said, "Our firm has earned a solid reputation in each of the markets we serve. It is indeed a pleasure to be able to continue the rich legacy of GW Jones. Each organization has a high level of respect for the other and it is our desire to continue to serve the healthy north Alabama markets more effectively than ever before."

In a simultaneous announcement, LEA hired **Harry Wilson** to serve as principal of the Huntsville office. Wilson is a career civil engineer with over 31 years of leadership and project management experience. For over 10 years he served as manager of the Huntsville office of **Barge, Waggoner, Sumner & Cannon**. Prior to that, he was director of engineering for the Huntsville-Madison County Airport Authority. Wilson is a natural to lead the office. Not only is he an extremely well respected member of the community, he has a deep understanding of local issues on every level of Madison County and Northern Alabama.

"This is a great opportunity both professionally and personally," he said. "LEA is an exciting and forward thinking firm on the move. Together we will provide the focus and resources to this region which has tremendous growth possibilities. The opportunity to bring the talent and skill LEA has to Alabama will greatly benefit our region going forward."

Jim Littlejohn agreed that strengthening its presence in Northern Alabama was a logical step for the firm. "When we first discussed the possibilities with Mark Yokley last fall, it was evident that establishing a Huntsville office further demonstrates our commitment to the vital Northern Alabama region and allows us to expand our engineering relationship with a quality and reputable firm. The LEA Decatur office concentrates on environmental services, health and safety and industrial hygiene services and will remain in Decatur for closer proximity to its clients."

EYP ENERGY MERGES: EYP Energy, a division of **EYP, Inc.** (Albany, NY), announced a strategic merger with **The Weidt Group** (Minnetonka, MN), a building energy consulting firms. The merger will expand upon EYP Energy's 30 years of experience and diversified platform of energy related services. With staff members in four offices in Minnesota, Colorado, Iowa, and Wisconsin, The Weidt Group will further elevate EYP Energy's portfolio, while continuing to offer services to their client networks under their well-respected brand name.

The Weidt Group brings proprietary energy software modeling tools, energy benchmarking, and software development capabilities to complement EYP Energy's analysis, implementation, and commissioning expertise. The Weidt Group partners with design teams, building owners, manufacturers, utility companies, and state and local governments on the design and operation of high-performance buildings. It also provides energy design assistance and measurement and verification services for institutional and commercial clients, as well as energy benchmarks for improving the ongoing performance of existing buildings. Additionally, The Weidt Group is a current market leader in energy efficiency software design, creating sophisticated energy information delivery tools that convert data into knowledge, based on modeled, measured, and tracked building performance. On a yearly basis, The Weidt Group has helped reduce air pollution by nearly 1000 kilotons while saving building owners and operators over \$94 million annually.

"Energy efficiency represents a core growth market for EYP Energy, and The Weidt Group is the nation's top provider of consulting services for that market," Tom Birdsey, EYP president and CEO.

"They bring tremendous expertise to the table, particularly in predicting and monitoring energy performance of complex building design and construction projects."

PATTI PHILLIPS, from page 11

- Commercial/retail
- Educational
- Civil engineering/land development
- Leisure/hospitality
- Healthcare
- Residential
- Government

And we offer the following services:

- Architecture
- Civil engineering

- Surveying
- Interior design
- Graphic design
- Sustainable design

We are 'Big A/Little E' – Big architecture/Little engineering.

TZL: So, how is the future looking for Becker Morgan Group?

PP: We have recently had an influx of new and bigger projects because we are in very varied market sectors. Currently, we are handling more public sector versus private sector projects and that is a first for us. Typically, we have been heavier in the private sector.

