

Secrets of triumphant A/E/P pros

Six traits that will make you and your team highly successful, Mark Zweig writes.

Of course there will be setbacks. But that doesn't mean you can let them crush you or deter you from your goal.



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

There's no doubt in my mind that most successful people in this business didn't get there by accident. It's because of the way they live. It's the things they do every day that result in them being highly successful compared to their peers at whatever it is they do.

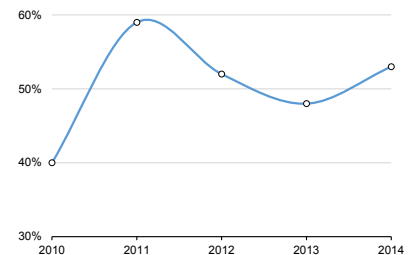
Here are a few of those "secrets" in no particular order of importance:

- 1) They have self-discipline.** That self-discipline is manifested in a variety of different ways. They do their timesheets and expense reports on time. They respond to texts, emails, and phone calls promptly. They address problems with their subordinates immediately. They don't let their bills sit there and instead get them out. In short, they do what they are supposed to when they are supposed to do it – every time, every day.
- 2) They know how to treat other people.** Kindness and courtesy are the lubricants that make everything go better. People want to help you – want to see you succeed – if they think you are nice. And if they don't – well, then they could be working against you when you aren't even aware of it. That will come back to bite you when you don't get a project you thought you'd get or have a particularly difficult time getting something through the local planning or engineering dept.

3) They keep learning. That means they
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TRENDLINES

Less flexible



A/E firms continue to treat vacation, sick leave, and personal time as separate categories – as opposed to lumping them together in one category as flexible time off (FTO), according to ZweigWhite's 2014 Policies, Procedures & Benefits Survey. While the percentage of firms that treat vacation, sick leave, and personal time as separate categories has been on a decline in recent years, that number increased this year. At a high of 59 percent in 2011, the percentage of firms that treat vacation, sick leave, and personal time as separate categories declined to 52 percent in 2012 and 48 percent in 2013. This year, that number rose to a median of 53 percent.

– Margot Suydam, Survey Manager

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A/E BUSINESS NEWS

JANUARY CONSTRUCTION DOWN: The value of new construction starts fell 13 percent in January to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$485 billion, according to McGraw Hill Construction. The downturn followed a healthy performance in December, which was the third highest month for total construction starts during 2013.

January's retreat encompassed all three main construction sectors, with moderate declines reported for nonresidential building and housing, as well as a more substantial loss of momentum for nonbuilding construction (public works and electric utilities) after a particularly robust December.

On an unadjusted basis, total construction starts in January came in at \$34.1 billion, down 5 percent from the same month a year ago. The January statistics lowered the Dodge Index to 103 (2000=100), compared to a revised 118 for December and below the average Index reading of 110 for all of 2013.

"The year 2014 began slowly, due to behavior specific to each of the three main construction sectors," said Robert Murray, chief economist for McGraw Hill Construction.

"Nonresidential building in 2013 advanced 7 percent, but the progress was occasionally hesitant, including sluggish activity at the end of last year that carried over into January. At the same time, the prospects for continued growth for nonresidential building during 2014 are generally positive, helped by receding vacancies for commercial properties and some improvement in the fiscal health of state governments. Residential building in 2013 climbed 24 percent, but towards the end of last year growth began to decelerate as mortgage lending to first-time homebuyers remained stringent."

Murray said the January slowdown for housing was due in part to tough winter weather conditions; yet the deceleration in recent months bears watching going forward. Nonbuilding construction in 2013 dropped 12 percent, as the steep pullback by electric utilities outweighed surprising growth for public works.

"Last year's nonbuilding performance was also quite volatile on a month-to-month basis, including strong activity in December that's now been followed by a sharp reduction in January," Murray said.

"With 2014 not likely to see the same volume of very large public works projects reach the construction start stage, nonbuilding construction is expected to register another decline this year, and January's downturn is part of that broader trend."

RIBA HONORS AMERICAN ARCHITECTS: The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has presented the American architects Tod Williams and Billie Tsien with International Fellowships at a special event in central London.

RIBA International Fellowships reward the particular contributions non-UK architects have made to architecture.

Speaking at the celebrations at the event at RIBA's headquarters, RIBA President Stephen Hodder said: "The RIBA is delighted to honor our new International Fellows Tod Williams and Billie Tsien for their significant impact on the world of architecture. The inspiration and influence of their work, extends far beyond American borders. They join an illustrious list of architects honored by the RIBA as International Fellows."

The lifetime honor allows individual recipients to use the initials Int FRIBA after their name.

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are curious. They are open to new ideas. They read. They stay informed on what is going on in the world around them. They don't think they know everything and are capable of learning new technologies and new/better ways of doing things.

4) They are builders. They aren't satisfied with the status quo. They know that growth is critical to their own development and also necessary if they want to keep good people working for them.

5) They have a positive outlook and are persistent. Of course there will be setbacks. But that doesn't mean you can let them crush you or deter you from your goal. It's also critical to keeping other people working on your team. They have to feel there's always hope that things will get better. The successful person is a beacon of hope in a fog of negative information.

6) They love what they do and do what they love. I am convinced no one can ultimately achieve greatness doing something they don't just love and think about most hours of the day. The passion for what you do impacts how hard you work and how much you'll be willing to do to keep doing it. And it's contagious. Passionate people draw inspiration from other passionate people in their field.

People who embody these six characteristics are the ones we are looking for in both of our businesses. The fact is you can look past a number of annoyances or problems with someone when they show they have these six traits because the odds are they'll be a smashing success sooner than later! ▀▀

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THE ZWEIG LETTER

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GETTING WORK

Building the best-seller list

Developing new business is an investment and takes commitment from the top. It's easy to get distracted, give up too soon or cut your investment.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Now that the market is opening up again, how do you go about ensuring that your best sellers are selling again?

First, a definition.



Todd Williams,
Executive VP,
Development and
Strategy, Cardno
Americas Region.

Todd Williams, executive vice president, development and strategy, **Cardno Americas Region** (Portland, OR), the North American arm of Australian-based professional infrastructure and environmental services company Cardno, a firm of more than 8,000 employees, says that "selling" is those

client development activities that are expected to result in year-over-year organic growth of individual client, market and firm-wide revenues.

THREE BEST SELLERS DEFINED. Within Cardno, there are three core types of selling to align with clients' needs, while also meeting growth needs. They are:

- 1) Seller-doer.** This is just as it sounds—professionals do the work that they sell. These professionals are often winning work with existing clients by providing exceptional services; thus enabling Cardno to have a high percentage of repeat clients.
- 2) Seller-distributor.** Although similar to seller-doer, this involves professionals reaching out across the organization and connecting clients to other professionals in Cardno to provide services.
- 3) Business development.** These professionals are experienced in what

Cardno calls solutions selling. They may or may not have one area of technical strength, but they focus on understanding the clients' needs and challenges and deliver a holistic solution through firm-wide resources and sophisticated positioning strategies.

Additionally, Cardno's client development activities also rely on all Cardno staff (billable and non-billable) to establish reputations with clients for exceptional project safety, project management, quality service and timely communication.

"The reputation of our staff, and their daily professionalism with clients, is one of the best and most efficient 'selling' tools firm-wide."

"The reputation of our staff, and their daily professionalism with clients, is one of the best and most efficient 'selling' tools firm-wide," Williams says.

So, how do you motivate these sellers to sell? Focus, focus, focus, Williams says.

"Our Americas Region (North and South America) are focused on specific industrial, commercial and government markets," Williams says. "We see substantial demand for the professional services we provide in a number of specific markets and sub-markets. We have a national business development team (select senior staff from all divisions) that helps guide our practices, determines the key markets we pursue, sets the regional strategy, and frames the tactical plans."

As described above, these three groups of primary selling professionals are passionate about the markets they pursue, clients they serve and staff they lead. When this passion is combined with the focus and guidance outlined in Cardno's regional strategic plan, its best sellers expand client relationships and facilitate organic growth across the

Americas Region.

A SELLING MACHINE. At **RETTEW** (Lancaster, PA), a 350-plus-person engineering, environmental, surveying, planning, and related consulting services firm, Geoff Fix, vice president of business development, says that selling is a team effort and RETTEW is very fortunate to have a group of energized employees who understand that everyone plays a role in developing new business.



Geoff Fix,
VP of BD,
RETTEW.

"Our entire staff brings new opportunities and connections to our attention every day that lead to new clients as well as growing existing ones," Fix says. "Our team of business development leaders focus on developing and managing all of its potential opportunities."

This selling machine consists of:

- 1) Regional leaders who have overall responsibility for their specific geographic region;
- 2) Market leaders who have overall responsibility for the vertical markets RETTEW is focused on and heavily investing in; and
- 3) Client account managers who interact with RETTEW's top 20 clients to ensure these very important relationships are getting the attention and resources they need to be successful.

All of these leaders coordinate their efforts and work together to strategize, plan and qualify opportunities with the goal of using RETTEW's resources for the highest value.

"We all know that this market has been challenging for the last few years, although there have been pockets of growth, such as energy," Fix says. "The best in the business are the ones who sell through the ups and the downs because there are always opportunities."

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NEWS

Construction spending up in 2014

REED Construction Data forecast calls for 8.8 percent growth in activity.

This winter dealt a nasty blow to the nation and to the economy. Bad weather disrupted transportation of goods and people, kept workers home, and delayed many construction projects. It also made interpreting the economic data more difficult.

In spite of the weather challenges, the economy does seem to be gaining traction, with REED Construction Data calling for 8.8 percent increase in construction activity. Much of the interrupted economic and construction activity will be recouped in subsequent months as the weather improves.

The outlook for the economy is encouraging. There has been a significant reduction in the political infighting in Washington, a major source of economic uncertainty and of unnecessary hurdles for the economy. The Reed forecast assumes the above risks

are avoided or are minimized, and that overall economic growth advances at a moderate pace this year and next.

Once the weather improves, much of the lost economic activity will be regained. Construction in particular will pick up as builders move to bring delayed projects back on schedule. Non-residential building construction will slowly improve throughout this year and beyond as the economy strengthens.

Heavy engineering (non-building) construction will rebound with the better weather and then improve this year and beyond. Although REED expects more federal funding for infrastructure projects to be forthcoming this year, funding levels will not be back to normal or anywhere near the true needs of the nation.

Total construction spending is forecast to increase 8.8 percent in 2014 and 11.1 percent in 2015 as nonresidential and heavy engineering construction improve and residential construction continues to expand.

BEST SELLER, from page 3

There are businesses that have grown in spite of this downturn, so you have to ask yourself: "What are they doing differently?" The most important way you can support your top performers is to help them develop a vision, and then keep them focused.

Developing new business is an investment and takes commitment from the top. It's easy to get distracted, give up too soon or cut your investment.

"Your top performers need to see that commitment and to know that everyone is rowing in the same direction," Fix says. "You'll be successful if you have the right people on your team and have done your homework to ensure you are working on the right things. Today's down market is tomorrow's windfall."

STRATEGIC PLANNING. KARN CHARUHAS CHAPMAN & TWOHEY



Enrique Bellini, Principal, KARN CHARUHAS CHAPMAN & TWOHEY.

(Washington, DC), a 48-person, full-service architectural, planning, and interior design firm, also takes a team approach when it comes to selling.

"All principals participate in this effort," says Enrique Bellini, principal. "However, John Chapman is most active in promoting our work overseas,

and I have the responsibility for the Washington D.C. region and our general marketing and business development initiatives that support the other principals."

Developing sales objectives along with the necessary marketing and business development support are addressed and examined quarterly, and then incorporated into the year-long strategic plan. ▲▲

RESOURCES

M&A SURVEY: With all the changes the A/E industry has faced in recent years, more firms than ever are including a merger or acquisition in their strategic plan. If you think a merger or acquisition may be in your future – and even if it's not currently in your firm's plan – you'll want to see the results in the 2014 Merger & Acquisition Survey of Architecture, Engineering, Planning & Environmental Consulting Firms. It's the most comprehensive report available on the real buying, selling, and merging activity in the architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting industry today.

Now in its 24th edition, this all-inclusive report breaks data down by firm type, discipline, market sector, revenue size, region of the firm's headquarters office, staff size, firm growth rate, and firm profit. You'll be able to make comparisons between your firm – or one you're looking to buy – and the rest of the industry. If you're interested in a merger or a sale, you'll be able to use this data to find out if there's a market for your firm. Find out what types and sizes of firms buyers are looking for, and see what price you can expect to receive for your firm. See if buyers are still buying, or if the economy has cooled the market. If you're interested in an acquisition, you'll find out how successful other firms' acquisitions have been and what you can expect to see in a purchase price. Other acquisition data included are the length of time it takes to buy a firm and whether firms are using asset or stock purchase deal structures to make acquisitions.

If you've recently completed a merger or acquisition deal, you'll see how the price you paid or the amount you received compares with other similar deals and you'll be able to compare other important details such as the degree of success or failure of the deal.

The 2014 Merger & Acquisition Survey goes beyond benchmarking statistics to provide invaluable advice from our experts. It also provides descriptions of more than 300 transactions of AEC firms that have bought, merged, or been sold since 2009 – these descriptions include firm names, locations, staff size, revenues, firm services, and other important details to help you gain valuable insight into recent M&A activity in the industry.

For more information or to buy a copy, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/p2189-Merger_Acquisition_Survey_2014.

BEST PRACTICES

The changing face of project management

List reveals that as projects increase in complexity, so do PM requirements.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Firm leaders and professionals are facing increasing complexities in project management.

These concerns are important when it comes to getting greater competitive advantages and experiencing successful business outcomes, ESI International reveals in its latest yearly list of top trends in project management.

J. LeRoy Ward, executive vice president with the global, project-focused training company that helps people with the way they manage their projects, contracts, requirements and vendors through innovative training programs, says PM practices are changing.

“This year’s trends highlight the growing unease with the status quo of current project management practices,” he says. “Past failures to improve project efficiencies force the need to ‘pull out all of the stops’ to deal with project complexity, implement new project management approaches, and adopt alternative leadership styles to improve project success for greater competitive advantage. In-demand project managers and leaders seem ready to face the challenge.”

Some of the new trends:

“Past failures to improve project efficiencies force the need to ‘pull out all of the stops’ to deal with project complexity, implement new project management approaches, and adopt alternative leadership styles to improve project success for greater competitive advantage.”

■ **Agile management or agile project management.** This is an iterative and incremental method of managing the design and build activities for engineering, information technology, and new product or service development projects in a highly flexible and interactive manner. Many practicing project managers and PMO heads are straying away from Agile implementation because they think it’s another management fad. Others clearly understand the benefits it can bring to an organization.

■ **Portfolio management.** This continues to take center stage with PMI’s new credential. It’s likely that you will hear more and more about this area in enterprise project management.

■ **Virtual learning.** Project management training is rapidly shifting to the Internet, accessed by desktops, laptops, tablets and mobile devices. Information is often dispersed in “chunks” of video components, webinars and online modules. Is it as effective as being in a “real” classroom? The vote is still out.

■ **Outside assistance.** Engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) companies are experiencing their share of project management-related problems. Why? The nature of the industry has changed. The projects are the same (expensive megaprojects lasting for years) but the “owners” of such projects no longer seem to have the key technical staff to watch over their contractors. Vendors are managing vendors and projects are suffering. For years, EPC firms looked inside for their professional development needs, but that is changing. More are now seeking the services of outside vendors to ensure

that their project managers receive the latest and most up-to-date project management training and advisory services.

■ **Not one, but two.** Think implementing one PPM tool was hard? Companies now need two. Many organizations struggle to select and implement a PPM tool that will satisfy the needs of everyone from the project manager to the C level, and everyone in between. The problem is: for organizations that are now also using Agile, the standard PPM tool won’t cut it. Why? Because the tools that have been available for years are based on the Waterfall method (a sequential design process) of project management.

■ **Servant leadership.** The term coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 is making a comeback. Both a philosophy and a set of leadership practices, servant leaders place the needs of their teams above their own by sharing power and serving others.

■ **Benchmarking.** As competition heats up, benchmarking is taking on more importance. Every organization wants to know how its PM practice compares with others in the same industry.

■ **Ready for change.** Organizations that are dissatisfied with their project management performance will radically change their approaches to get back on track. For example, reports published by Gartner and Forrester continue to document poor project results. This wake-up call is being heard in every industry, and organizations are going to start taking action to turn things around. That action can range from better leadership programs, to lean methodologies, to making sure each project has a sponsor with smarts and a backbone.

■ **PM jobs remain hard to fill.** Even with high unemployment globally, key project management jobs will remain hard to fill because of a lack of qualified applicants. Project management is a growth industry and for organizations

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● ● ● ● GOOD TO KNOW

Project managers say their biggest challenges are managing clients’ expectations (45 percent) and staying within the budget (41 percent).

Source: 2013 Project Management Survey, ZweigWhite: www.zweigwhite.com/p-2160-project-management-survey-2013.

Strategic planning step one

There's only one step:
Action!

Like clockwork, this is a common email request at the end of each year: "Do you have time to come in and conduct a planning session for us?" Sure.

I enthusiastically explain that we'll need a conference room for the day, a supply of markers that won't bleed through or stink, and walls covered with white butcher paper.

(I'm going to say upfront that it's a really good idea to get an outside professional to walk your company through a strategic planning session.)

The status quo rarely produces objective results. Living under the present circumstances may lead to complacency, fear, or narcissism.

I arrive with a parcel of questions.

Have you a written marketing plan? Did you work on the one we developed a few years ago? How about the written budget? Goals, then? What about written Lessons Learned or How Tos? Nope. No. And... ugh. The silence in the room says it all. Everyone looks at me as if I'm a bank robber. Smiling, I go on, "OK, let's begin."

Do you have any burning issues you'd like to address? Expectations to be achieved from this all-day marathon? The answers span the ordinary: "We want more work," "We want to be KNOWN," and "We want more work."

Occasionally, someone may ask if a succession plan should go into the strategic plan. Or should a new website be included as they haven't redone theirs in 10 years. "I think that would be a good idea," I say. Nothing has gone up on the wall yet.

My questions continue and appear random. Do you currently advertise? How much? Where? What's your yearly marketing budget? Well, what do you think should go into a marketing budget? Yes, you have to have an idea of where you want to go and how much you want to spend at the same time. What's the point of clamoring for a Ferrari campaign if you're planning on a Budweiser budget? Everyone's expectations have to match and have a solid footing in reality. The questions continue. What kind of work do you want? "Oh something different. We're not sure." Focus. Drill down. Understand that a successful strategic plan requires exceedingly specific targets and can take days to complete. What kind of work, exactly? Can you express it in precise revenue demands? A market sector? Or possibly simply a number of additional projects.



Marilynn Mendell

**GUEST
SPEAKER**

How about employee reviews? What's your hiring strategy? Do you conduct black swan scenarios? Employee handbook? How do you handle QC and crisis? I'm writing on the wall now, and at this point there are group headings like vision, budget, conferences, website, differentiators, marketing, budget, market sectors. A bright young designer suggests I add work.live.play to the market sector. "Consider," I say softly, "those words as trends or fad buzz and see them as frosting." Think: sustainable, green, and biomimicry a few years ago. A specific would be: 10 neonatal facilities in India by 2016. Of course, it's assumed your company already has an avenue into that arena; otherwise a year and a half may be a tad unrealistic or overzealous.

See MARILYNN MENDELL, page 8

Strategic plans need strong generals who know how to guide people and who are enthusiastic about a forward visionary direction (And who have the authority and moxie to push and support tough directives).

Building value through culture and brand

Being crystal clear on intent and purpose allows you to build a powerful and consistent value proposition.

Your organization has a culture and brand, whether by intention or happenstance. When asked about their brand, most firms I work with refer me to their marketing materials. Product companies tend to define their brand as the way their products are packaged and marketed.

When it comes to culture, some firms may present a wallet-size card imprinted with “What We Stand For” or “Our Values.” Their website frequently talks about, “What it’s like to work here.” Very few have taken the time to ask their clients/customers or staff what they think even though these stakeholders can provide valuable insights into a company’s perceived culture and image.

I’ve sat in wonder at how surprised firm principals seem to be after they hear what these constituencies have to say. Frequently, they learn they do, indeed, have an image that is quite consistently understood, but not necessarily what they think it should be.

I spent my career with one firm which, from its inception, deeply pondered its culture and brand. When I became president and then CEO, I believed my most important role, the one that delivered the highest value to the firm and our clients, was as an active and engaged steward of the elements of culture and brand. To me, these elements defined the promise and experience that everyone we touched – clients, staff, contractors, vendors, building, planning or city officials – could expect from us.

The inventory of culture and brand elements include:

CULTURE

- **People.** Recruiting style, selection criteria, enrollment and acculturation; expected level of engagement.
- **Process.** How work gets done.
- **Norms of behavior.** How we treat each other; the people we depend on, our customers/clients, our community.
- **Communication.** Style, voice, means and methods.

BRAND

- Our *product or service*.
- **Marketing.** How we reach our customers/clients; what we say to them and how we listen to them.
- **Customer/client.** The script for and style of our interface, during and after product/service delivery.



Ed
Friedrichs

FROM THE
CHAIRMAN

- **Facilities.** Type, location, and appearance.
- **Communication.** What and where we publish, speak and how we interact with our communities.

When these elements are thoughtfully and purposely aligned, they demonstrate and support your intent and purpose. Being crystal clear on intent and purpose allows you to build a powerful and consistent value proposition for your entire community of stakeholders. Your mission and vision statements comprise who you are, why you exist, what value you offer and why you and your product or service are appealing to your intended audience.

These statements are not platitudes: “We are the best in the world.” They contain explicit, unique-to-your market sector and product/service offered statements of intent. These statements are clear enough for you to define your culture and brand elements with great specificity.

Only with this work in hand, can you and your leadership team inspire everyone in your organization to truly become your “intent.”



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MORE READING ON ED FRIEDRICH'S BLOG <http://edfriedrichs.com>

Emotional intelligence – On slowing down and answering people’s questions as a leadership style:
<http://edfriedrichs.com/2014/01/07/emotional-intelligence/>

Deep engagement, context & clarity – Targeted advice for A/E/P firms: <http://edfriedrichs.com/2013/10/31/deep-engagement-context-clarity/>

Recruiting – On determining the strengths and talents you’re really looking for and how to find them:
<http://edfriedrichs.com/2013/07/02/recruiting/>

MARILYNN MENDELL, from page 6

The probing continues and fidgeting becomes noticeable. What organizations do you belong to? What committee? Who's on a board? Do your employees hold positions? How often do you all attend and speak at conferences? Do you believe in the impact of branding? Who goes to business school? Talk to me about your technology – professional and admin CRM. Is everything fully integrated?

The first aggressive doubter interrupts and exclaims, “How are any of these questions helping us get more work?” (I'm not kidding.) I smile and push on. Do you read the HBR or the Rotman? How many books did you read last year? “Come on,” another says, “Really?” The room's getting hot.

Initial results look chaotic.

With Socratic questions flying at participants, their answers appear across the white paper as vague diagrams, with arrows connecting disparate concepts that begin to look more like abstract scribbles than a linear progression of hypothetical formulas of if this, then that, and therefore. It's more like a vast jumble of ideas. A disrupting experience. Strategic plans are not wishes filled with peaceful, happy moments and warm fuzzy feelings. Roughly translated from old Greek, strategy meant a plan for war. A change in tactics implies transformation and that can occasionally be seen as unpleasant.

Strategic planning sets down goals under conditions of uncertainty utilizing a limited amount of resources to achieve future results.

“The Little Red Hen” story immediately comes to mind when I ask, “Who's going to speak, write, network, or create the collateral for ads and direct mail campaigns?” Why? Because the answers from most professionals range from, “That's marketing's job,” to “Not I.” At some point a strategic plan must result in a path that provides access to the expertise and labor to go beyond the beer budget and wishful thinking. It's rare for a company already providing Apple-like service packaged in a Cartier box to require a new direction, unless they want to innovate to stay ahead of their competitors (and that's step two in the plan).

If Peter Drucker was correct in saying that to stay above the best, a business must always be doing two things: innovating and marketing, then in both instances intense action must occur.

PM, from page 5

searching for that key professional, it will be difficult, but not impossible to find the right candidate. For those with a strong set of technical, business, and leadership skills; a proven track record; and a willingness to relocate – the future looks bright.

■ **Lead versus manage.** Project and program managers will be asked to spend more time “leading” rather than “managing” their teams. In fact, a growing number of organizations are now calling their project professionals “leaders” not “manag-

ers.” The emphasis is on making sure that the professionals accountable for major projects not only have the technical and management savvy to get the job done, but also have the leadership skills to pull a team together and get them aligned in the pursuit of a common objective.

Brand recognition should take place during process of reinvention; which should further illustrate the necessity for long range planning.

After the first reaction of anger, denial follows, “We have never advertised before... or, “We never send out direct mail pieces – That's old fashioned.” I bring up the Super Bowl ads and discuss the length of time it took for fax machines and buggy whips to disappear. The discussion at this point begins to steer toward acceptance. The dissenters have left the room. That can be good or bad. If the CEO has left, then there's a serious problem.

Strategic planning sets down goals under conditions of uncertainty utilizing a limited amount of resources to achieve future results.

Strategic plans need strong generals who know how to guide people and who are enthusiastic about a forward visionary direction (And who have the authority and moxie to push and support tough directives).

Movement soon picks up speed. The group coalesces and begins to think seriously about what they can afford. Who could join which organization and make a meaningful difference along with a true time commitment to do the job right. As reality sinks in and clear paths begin to emerge, the progress moves even faster. Real milestones (such as which projects to feature each month for the upcoming year's press releases) get legs, as does the plan to go visit editors and the budgetary needs to achieve that goal.

Details are as specific to each firm as their desires differ. With a group that honestly wants to move in new directions and get results, the rest is easy – if they all agree to follow the plan. ▲▲

MARILYNN DEANE MENDELL, president of WinSpin CIC, Inc., provides branding, change management, and public relations for clients in the Mid-Atlantic region. She's a nationally recognized speaker and adjunct professor at Georgetown and George Mason Universities. Her forthcoming book, “Elbow Grease + Chicken Fat” is due for release this May. www.winspincic.com or Twitter @winspincic.

TRAINING

Dealing with deficiencies

Nobody is perfect; even good hires can benefit from comprehensive training opportunities.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Some new staff members have just been added to your team, but a few are coming up short. How do you handle new staff members who are having trouble adjusting, working as part of a team, lack solid communication skills, or perhaps display some technical deficiencies?



Susan Kemp,
Marketing
Manager,
Hart Crowser.

TRAINING EQUALS ROI. Susan Kemp, marketing manager at **Hart Crowser** (Seattle, WA), a 110-person geotechnical, environmental and natural resources consulting firm, says that folks arrive at Hart Crowser with different levels of writing skills – thus the need for betterment.

“Our clients need usable documents and reports that can be understood by lay people as well as engineers and scientists,” she says. “As a result, we recently contracted with an award-winning writing instructor to offer staff a comprehensive technical writing workshop. Our in-house editors also give ongoing instruction and advice to make sure our staff continues to learn and improve, so they produce the best possible work products.”

Hart recognizes that to be successful as consultants, employees need to benefit from ongoing technical development opportunities as well as training in the “business of business.”

This past year, the company introduced a new project management program. The curriculum addresses a number

of areas, including project planning, scope control, scheduling, quality control, budgeting and project financial management, communications, ethics and project leadership. Hands-on training with their accounting software, and contract and risk management sessions are also provided.

The small group, interactive sessions – with homework and follow-up refresher sessions later in the year – were well received by Hart’s junior to mid-level staff.

“These training programs for our future leaders have quickly shown a return on investment for everyone,” Kemp says.

Mentoring is also important to work on skills that must be developed over time. For example, many of Hart’s projects are technically complex environmental projects or high-profile development projects that require strong problem-solving skills. Working closely with senior staff helps junior staff to understand how to think creatively.

LEARNING CAFÉ. SWCA (Phoenix, AZ), a 689-person environmental consulting firm, is in the process of rolling out an internal training curriculum that focuses on hard and soft skills using Learning Management Systems, a software for delivering monitoring and reporting online learning courses.

“We send staff to external training programs, but quite often we find that while they picked up valuable tips and information, they want to know how certain skills can be directly applied to how we do things at our company,” says Becky Montgomery, vice president human resources. “As a result, we are launching an in-house training program called, ‘The Learning Café.’”

The company is testing the program on project managers first. They will take a core program of seven courses that will contain different modules. For example, courses may address how to navigate relationships with others in the



Becky
Montgomery,
VP of HR, SWCA.

firm, dealing with overruns, or how to best scope a project.

“We chose to start with project managers because poor project management can make or break a firm,” Montgomery says.

Courses are designed to be digested in small chunks of time. Many of them range from eight to 20 minutes and are recorded online so project managers can take them anytime, anywhere – waiting in the airport, or with their morning coffee.

“Making it ‘on demand’ and self-study was key for us,” Montgomery says. “We are so geographically dispersed that getting all project managers together at one time in one place is virtually impossible. By leveraging technology, we are able to make this training effective.”



Tim Anderson,
HR Manager,
KJWW
Engineering
Consultants.

More in-depth webinars will be available for topics that need more discussion and Q&A. These will incorporate role playing as well.

The first Learning Café launches this month and project managers will have until November to complete the core program. Future courses will be designed for non-project managers and new hires and once all is sorted out, there will be a 60-day turnaround for course completion.

MENTOR, TRAIN AND OBSERVE. Tim Anderson, HR manager at **KJWW Engineering Consultants** (Rock Island, IL), a 473-person global engineering design consulting firm, says that part of the recruiting process for tech-

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ON THE MOVE

DOWL HKM HIRES: **DOWL HKM** (Anchorage, AK), a planning, surveying, civil/transportation and environmental services firm, has made three high-level, key hires that represents an exciting addition of talent and geographic expansion.

Michael Henderson and **Troy Meyer** have joined DOWL HKM and will be heading up new offices in Montrose and Golden, Col. starting immediately. **Lynn Bruno** will be in charge of leading the direction of DOWL HKM's Redmond, Wash. and new Bend, Ore. office.

Henderson has 34 years of senior engineering management experience and has been directly involved in providing civil, water resources and geotechnical engineering for projects since 1980. He will be based in Golden.

Meyer has more than 20 years of experience in project management, field investigations, design, and construction oversight. He will be based in Montrose, Col.

Bruno has 29 years of project and management experience. He will be based in Bend, but will spend much of his time in Redmond.

DOWL HKM now has 23 offices throughout Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.

JQ PROMOTES: **JQ** (Dallas, TX), a multi-discipline engineering firm that provides structural, civil, environmental and surveying services, announced that **Louis Hund, III** has been promoted to associate.

"Louis has 35 years of design and project management experience. The value that he brings to all of our projects stems from his wealth of knowledge in the areas of heavy civil and public works design,"

said C. Raajan Mehta, JQ Infrastructure principal. "This promotion recognizes Louis' contributions to our growth and success."

As a senior project manager for JQ Infrastructure's largest and most complex projects related to water supply in North Central Texas, Hund has completed the management and design of civil improvements at the Bachman and East Side Water Treatment Plants in Dallas; the Integrated Pipeline Water Supply project for Dallas and Tarrant Counties; and the Southwest Pipeline project in southern Dallas County.

He has also overseen numerous surface roadway reconstruction and utility improvement projects in the region. His combined projects are valued at more than \$500 million.

BECKER MORGAN PROMOTES: **Becker Morgan Group** (Salisbury, MD), an architecture and engineering services firm, announced the following promotions:

Jason Pearce, an architect in the Salisbury office, was named Senior Associate. Pearce started as an intern in 1995 and has been with the firm for the past 19 years.

Brenden Frederick, an architect in the Salisbury office, was named senior associate. Frederick joined Becker Morgan Group 10 years ago.

Garth Jones, a civil engineer in the Dover, Del. Office, was named associate. He has been with the firm for 10 years and has over 20 years of engineering experience.

Jonathan Falkowski, a civil designer in the Dover office, was named associate. He has been with the firm for nine years.

DEFICIENCIES, from page 9

nical and non-technical staff is to hire people with good communication skills who are self-starters and team players.

"We find that deficiencies tend to lean toward new staff having difficulty with a particular software (often Revit), or practical experience designing specific building systems," he says. "For example, a mechanical engineer may have experience with HVAC-systems design, but has not been exposed to plumbing or fire protection."

To overcome these challenges, KJWW has developed strong, in-house training programs and all new engineers and designers are assigned a mentor. New graduates spend two years with the mentor, while experienced staff work with the mentor for one year. All new

technical staff members work through a development plan with their supervisor, so they are aware of the necessary skills and experience. They can also draw from KJWW's extensive library of technical training videos, regular lunch hour training sessions, in-house experts and company-taught classes.



Danelle Prezioso, VP of Communications and Marketing, McDonough Bolyard Peck, Inc.

Danelle Prezioso, vice president of communications and marketing, **McDonough Bolyard Peck, Inc.** (Fairfax, VA), a 233-person multi-disciplined construction management firm, explains that many firms have an expectation that technical team members are ready "off the shelf."

"It's an unfair assumption to think new team members will know our processes and procedures," she says. "As a firm, we work diligently to identify, mentor and coach team members on any weaknesses or challenges. We have a robust training program that caters to our team members' needs and helps us to work not only smarter, but more efficiently."



Chris Ladner, Principal, VIRIDIAN.

VIRIDIAN (Little, AR), a 24-person sustainable building energy consulting firm, finds that most deficiencies relate to staff member's inability to apply their education or experience to new "real world" opportunities, says Chris Ladner, principal. This includes effective communication of benefits and aligning those benefits with client's needs.

"We also address these problems with training, mentoring, field observation and in-house training," he says. ▀▀

"It's an unfair assumption to think new team members will know our processes and procedures. As a firm, we work diligently to identify, mentor and coach team members on any weaknesses or challenges."

PRACTICE

Market diversification = financial success

Firms say they survived the recession and are thriving by adopting this approach.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

It's never a good idea to depend on just a few clients. So, how do you make sure your firm is not putting all of its eggs in one (or just a few) baskets?

RECESSION LESSONS LEARNED.

Lisa Schauer, vice president, business development, **Mackay Sposito** (Vancouver, WA), a 114-person civil engineering firm, says that market diversification has been a strategic focus of theirs for many years.



Lisa Schauer,
VP of BD,
Mackay Sposito.

Before the recession of 2006/2007, the firm worked for a few select public agencies, but served primarily the residential land development market. This market took a significant hit in early 2007, which led to a first series of layoffs. At the height of the recession, staff had been reduced

by half. It was at that moment that those on the leadership team agreed they never wanted to experience that level of pain again.

“We committed to remaining diligent about diversifying our clients and markets,” Schauer says. “This commitment has manifested itself in the creation of annual business plans. While we prepared business plans in the past, they were not nearly as detailed as the ones we currently create. We research economic trends geographically and by

market, we analyze our backlog and work mass and prepare contingency plans. We follow the money that will use our professional expertise to service well-funded markets.”

Today, MacKay Sposito mainly serves the following markets: energy (power generation and delivery); public works (transportation); and land development (residential master plans). The company remains focused on what it does well.

“We remain diligent about not becoming complacent with our current markets, but always question the stability of the market and aggressively seek other areas where we can be successful,” Schauer says.

MacKay Sposito balances new business development with nurturing existing client relationships. The company knows that building up follow-on work with existing clients is an important investment. However, MacKay Sposito also knows it cannot spend all of its time on that.

“We constantly need to be ‘whale hunting,’ as we call it, to find new, large clients we can introduce to the MacKay Sposito experience,” Schauer says. “Investment in research, lead generation, trade show exhibits and cold calling are essential tools in our sales toolbox.”

Stephanie Hanson, principal scientist and project manager at **Comprehensive Environmental Inc.** (Marlborough, MA), a 25-person civil engineering and environmental consulting firm, agrees with Schauer that diversity is the key to success in a downturn – diversity of clients, regions and work types.

CEI has always provided a wide array



Stephanie Hanson,
Principal Scientist and PM,
Comprehensive Environmental Inc.

of services to a number of different market sectors in different states. Since the company started in 1987, it has been able to withstand several market downturns.

CEI attributes its success during these challenging times to a varied client base (municipal, state, and federal) and the breadth of services

(water, wastewater, stormwater, hazardous waste, and civil engineering) and in many locations through all six New England states and down the mid-Atlantic area.

“As a group, our employees are also diverse and include engineers and scientists from many different universities,” Hanson says. “Our team receives diverse assignments and become expert in more than one type of work (i.e., no one gets pigeonholed – instead we make the investment in cross-training).”

Hanson says that CEI is always very aware that projects for largest revenue clients will conclude and they may not need their services for some time, often due to the client’s financial constraints. Because of this, CEI regularly reviews the backlog and examines where the work is coming from, so that it can assess the diversification of not only its clients, but the types of services.

“With these insights, we can gear our marketing and business development efforts toward market outlook while ensuring client and project diversification,” Hanson says. “In addition, much

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GOOD TO KNOW

The majority of firms (56 percent) are organized by discipline. Twenty-seven percent are organized by market sector and 17 percent by geography.

Source: 2013 Financial Performance Survey, ZweigWhite: www.zweigwhite.com/p-2155-financial-performance-survey-2013.

FIRMS ON THE MOVE

BRACKEN RELOCATES OFFICE: **Bracken Engineering** (Tampa, FL), a consulting engineering firm, announced that it is relocating its northwest Florida office from Tallahassee to Panama City. Since March 1, all new assignments in northwest Florida will be handled through the Panama City office, with the goal to better serve those clients throughout the entire Florida panhandle and lower Alabama.

“When it comes to performing assessments, we have to physically inspect every property. As we continue to receive assignments from the panhandle region, it just made sense to be closer to our clients,” said William Bracken, firm president. “In addition to our Tampa, Fort Lauderdale and Jacksonville locations, relocating to Panama City gives us the geographical ability to cover the entire state of Florida cost effectively for our clients.”

Bracken Engineering has steadily grown to other cities throughout Florida. They added a Fort Lauderdale location in 2011, a Jacksonville location in 2012 and a Tallahassee location in 2013.

This latest move allows Bracken to effectively cover the entire state of Florida while keeping travel costs down. Now with the state of Florida covered, Bracken is currently evaluating offices in other states throughout the southeastern U.S.

CARNEY RELOCATES HQ: **Carney Engineering Group** (York, PA), a multidiscipline structural engineering firm serving the Mid-Atlantic region, has relocated its office to 320 N George Street, Suite 120, in downtown York.

“Moving our office downtown is our way of supporting the critical redevelopment movement happening in the downtown area,” said Josh Carney, president of Carney Engineering Group. “We wanted to bring our employees and our business to the place we see as the central hub of our community.”

The new office space was renovated by Carney Engineering Group’s long-time partner, **LSC Design**, which also moved to the same office building. Carney Engineering Group handled all of the structural engineering for the building’s \$5 million renovation. The company

currently has 10 employees working from the downtown location.

“Having an office located downtown has many benefits. Our employees are taking advantage of all of the amenities downtown and the new location offers us new opportunities for recruitment, which is critical in our industry,” Carney said.

IA OPENS OFFICE: **IA Interior Architects** (San Francisco, CA), an architectural firm focused exclusively on interior architecture and workplace strategies, announced the opening of its Houston office and introduced the leadership team. The office is located at Two Allen Center, 1200 Smith St., Suite 1600.

Russell Manthy will lead the office as managing director, and Lisa Alfonso, who has recently come to IA, will join the leadership team as project director.

“Expanding IA’s practice in Texas by opening an office in Houston has long been an IA goal, and we’re extremely fortunate to have an outstanding team for the challenge. With Russell and Lisa, we’ve brought together the best of IA and the best of Houston to serve our clients, and we are thrilled,” said Tom Powers, executive director.

Manthy comes to Houston from IA’s Chicago office. His 25 years of project management, commitment to client service, and focus on client relationships span a significant range of project types and industries, including legal services, technology, manufacturing, educational and financial institutions, and not-for-profit organizations.

“We are very excited to be in the Houston market and bring the IA platform to serve existing and new clients here. IA’s integrated workplace design can provide clients with a unique and highly interactive approach to the development of great environments,” Manthy said.

Alfonso has more than 20 years of experience in all aspects of corporate interiors for national and international clients, and an in-depth understanding of the Houston real estate market, where she has long been a significant presence and active in the community.

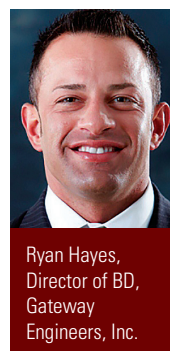
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of our staff are not only ‘doers,’ but partly ‘sellers’ who possess the ability to identify leads and opportunities and can act on them. This allows us to efficiently form new relationships and develop projects with a wide range of clients.”

It’s this proactive perspective and looking ahead mentality that has helped CEI grow steadily through the years, maintain staff utilization and provide a secure client foundation for a sound financial future.

STRATEGIC SEGMENTING. Ryan Hayes, director of business development, **Gateway Engineers, Inc.** (Pittsburgh, PA), a 150-person full-service civil engineering firm, says that adhering to a long-term approach while understanding that all markets are cyclical is key.

“We have adopted a strategic methodology to ensure that our firm avoids the risks associated with becoming too ingrained in any one sector,” he says. “It starts with our five-year rolling strategic plan. Updated and approved by our BOD, this guiding document sets forth revenue provisions to procure diversified and equally weighted targets. We then align our annual operating and business development plans to allow for proper bookings goals for each of our company’s 10 market segments. Additionally, each segment has a unique and multifaceted annual business development plan



Ryan Hayes,
Director of BD,
Gateway
Engineers, Inc.

to ensure the continuity of our efforts within each segment regardless of what market is hot’.”

Another key attribute to helping keep Gateway diverse is its approach to market segment classification. They are divided by market, not service lines, with the primary filter being the clients’ homogenous response to marketing efforts.

“By grouping clients into segments based on their unified reaction to marketing activities, we maintain not only effectiveness, but also amazing efficiencies,” Hayes says.

And, in staying true to its commitment to a flat organizational structure, Gateway decentralizes the entire business development process by assigning different market segment leaders to each segment and empowering them with the key task of overall client satisfaction.

“This approach to our business development efforts reduces the likelihood that we will ever become dependent on only a few clients,” Hayes says. “For example, in 2013 we worked with approximately 425 clients on more than 3,000 projects with none of our 10 market segments accounting for more than 30 percent of the company’s annual net revenue.” ▲▲