THE ZWEIG LETTER

www.thezweigletter.com

MARKETING SUPPLEMENT

Pages 9 - 12

February 24, 2014, Issue 1044

The team

Building a team for the new economy is not easy and may involve difficult decisions, Mark Zweig writes.

We tend to focus on pay and benefits and titles, when what really matters to GOOD people is the mission of the organization, the character of its leaders, and the opportunities for growth and meaningful roles on good projects.

Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

Finding, keeping, and assigning people to appropriate roles on your team is a critical function of the firm's CEO. So is the ongoing effort to tweak the team so it remains viable over time.

Surprisingly, many CEOs of A/E/P and environmental firms seem to avoid getting involved in the hiring process. They delegate recruiting, selection and other critical HR functions to their HR people and other managers. This is crazy. The seeds of your HR problems are planted when you hire the wrong people in the first place. For the most part, I believe in hiring for character and training for skills. Most people in our business do the opposite. We hire for degrees, registrations, and project experience. We end up with the wrong people as a result.

Keeping people is another area where we have some problems. We tend to focus on pay and benefits and titles, when what really matters to GOOD people is the mission of the organization, the character of its leaders, and the opportunities for growth and meaningful roles on good projects. We get mad at people who complain about things or who turn in their notice instead of really listening to them and trying to solve their problems, so they don't leave.

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

ALSO INSIDE

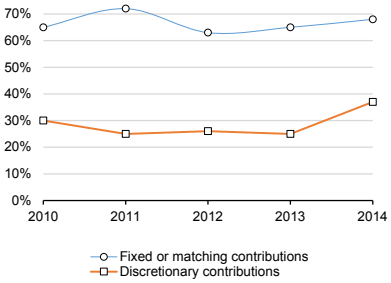
SALES: Optimizing the seller-doer model. Page 5

BRAND BUILDING: Don't derail marketing investments. Page 7

RIGHT NOW: Amping up technology. Page 9

TRENDLINES

Piggy bank grows

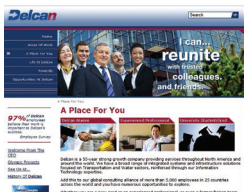


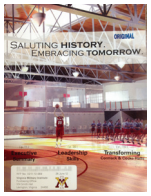
After reaching a low of 63 percent in 2012, the percentage of A/E/P and environmental consulting firms that make fixed or matching contributions to 401(k) plans increased again this year, according to the 2014 Policies, Procedures & Benefits Survey. Rising to 65 percent in 2013, this number increased again this year to 68 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of firms that make discretionary contributions, which has also been on a decline in recent years, increased to 37 percent from 25 percent in 2013.
– Margot Suydam, Survey Manager

FIRM INDEX

Advantage Engineers, Inc. 5
AKT Peerless Environmental & Energy Services .. 4
Baskervill 10
Blackstone Consulting LLC 3
CobbFendley 3
Delcan Corporation 11
EHS Support, LLC 9
Gateway Engineers, Inc. 12
Hart Crowser 12
KlohnCrippen Berger 5
Maser Consulting 3
MVE Institutional 12
Pond & Company 3
Sam Schwartz Engineering 12
Shea, Inc. 5
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. 9

WHAT'S WORKING





RFPs that can tell stories and total overhauls

Pages 10 & 11

Handling risk at A/E firms

Page 3

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

Getting people in the right roles is yet another problematic area for A/E and environmental firms. Once someone gets into an office or department, or doing a particular task, they often get stuck there if they do it well. Their managers don't want to let them go because it creates a problem for them. But what about the employee? Is it right to hold them back?

Managing the composition of the team is something any CEO has to be actively involved in. Sometimes that requires letting people go. Letting people go is never easy. Sometimes they are your friends. Sometimes they are loyal servants who have always done their part in your time of need. And then sometimes they are just bad workers who need to go.

When you have a bad worker – someone who is lazy or unethical, or dishonest – it's easy to fire them. No problem there. The other cases – friends and people who have been loyal to the company – are much harder. Avoid vilifying anyone you let go of. It's just not worth the damage you may cause to your remaining staff's morale. Not to mention that you don't want former employees speaking poorly of you. Be compassionate to all you fire. These people are people – don't forget it. And I have seen cases where someone cannot cut the mustard in the role they're in today but may be perfectly suited for a different role in the future. You may want them back some day.

In 2014, building and managing your team is more critical than ever. The market is really heating up. People will have more options than they've had in the last decade or so. You're probably going to have to work harder than ever on team composition than you've had to in the recent past IF you want to remain viable as a company for the long haul.

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

A/E BUSINESS NEWS

WIND MAPS: Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Anne Castle joined the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to release the first publicly available interactive map and geo-dataset showing more than 47,000 onshore wind turbine locations and related information across the entire United States. The new tool is consistent with the goals of Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell's Order (No. 3330) that was released in October to incorporate a landscape-level approach to development on public lands.

"In making this critical information available to the public, the USGS has provided public agencies and private companies with a new tool to help guide smart landscape-level planning decisions that support domestic energy production while minimizing conflicts," Jewell said. "The data will help improve the siting of future wind energy projects as well as aid land managers in devising more up-to-date land-use and multiple-use plans."

The wind turbine map, which includes turbines installed as of July 2013, was created by combining publicly available data sets from the Federal Aviation Administration, the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, as well as other federal, state and local sources. USGS researchers also identified additional turbines not in those pre-existing databases and added them to the dataset and map. The locations of all turbines were visually verified using high-resolution imagery. The location of each turbine was verified to within plus or minus 10 meters, and its technical specifications were assigned based on the make and model.

Before the release of the interactive map, some individual state maps with turbine information and national maps of facility information existed, but there were no national maps with turbine-specific information and verified locations.

Use the Interactive Map at http://eerscmap.usgs.gov/windfarm.

GLOBAL GREEN MARKET REPORT: The green building materials market report by Transparency Market Research provides an in-depth analysis of the global green building materials industry. The report segments the market on the basis of applications, end-users and regions and also provides forecasts and estimates for each segment. The report also analyses the demand and supply characteristics of the market by providing a detailed forecast and analysis of volume and revenue for the period 2013 to 2019.

Materials such as cellulose, cotton, fiberglass and mineral wool are capturing the market for insulations due to their excellent properties. Insulation application segment is thus the largest segment in green building materials and accounted for the largest part of the market share in 2012. Development of green roofs with eco-friendly materials from various manufacturers has also driven the growth of the roofing application segment. Interior finishing materials including eco-friendly carpets, recycled tiles and VOC free glues and paints are being consumed rapidly due to regulations regarding indoor environment quality and health hazards. Wooden structures, steel with recycle content, autoclaved aerated concrete, engineered lumber and structural insulated panels for framing applications are expected to replace conventional materials. Hence, interior finishing and framing applications are expected to grow with healthy growth numbers over the forecast period.

Based on end-user, the market can be segmented into public facilities, education, commercial and industrial, healthcare, R&D centers, residential, others. Due to a large number of urban development's public facilities were the largest segment and are expected to maintain the highest share of volume in 2019. Due to extensive industrial development, expansion projects and growing population in the regions such as Asia Pacific and Row, R & D centers and residential are expected to be the fastest growing segment in the next few years.

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LIABILITY

Handling risk at A/E firms

Firms have hesitated to take on more debt during the recession, but that hasn't stopped some from finding new markets and innovating.

By CHRISTINA ZWEIG
Contributing editor

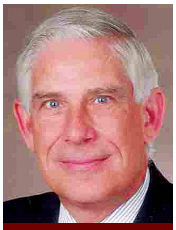
In the design industry, firms handle the risks inherent to the profession their own way – risks brought on by the economic climate, and those specific to their particular size, structure, and market. **THE ZWEIG LETTER** spoke with a broad spectrum of firm leaders to get their input on what risks have been most pertinent to their business and how these were managed.

Al Pond, CEO, **Pond & Company** (Norcross, GA), a full-service architecture and engineering consulting firm says, "Its human nature to be more cautious after you've experienced down times."

Pond, whose firm was No. 14 on **THE ZWEIG LETTER** 2013 Hot Firm List, credits his firm's success to a combination of factors involving careful positioning, sound financial policies, and good marketing.

"We have consistently grown our firm through this recession, so financial issues haven't affected our firm to the extent it has others. Some firms have struggled and been severely impacted due to the specific markets they are in," Pond says.

RISK AVERSE. Richard Maser, president, **Maser Consulting** (Red Bank, NJ), a multidiscipline firm with over 400 people, also feels that firms in the industry, including his own, are more risk averse post-recession. The effects have touched many areas of business and ultimately led to sounder policies.



Richard Maser, President, Maser Consulting.

"For Maser Consulting, this has been more evident in the type of contracts and contract language that we entertain, as opposed to assuming additional debt. We are more conscious than ever of liability issues, especially under public contracts. We have also become more selective with clients who have a history of poor payment terms," he says.

> "We are more conscious than ever of liability issues, especially under public contracts. We have also become more selective with clients who have a history of poor payment terms."

Maser Consulting continued to grow during the recession and was No. 40 on last year's Hot Firm List. When it comes to making new investments, Maser says, "We do not hesitate to invest in new technology or improvements in productivity, even if it does require taking on additional debt. Reinvesting in the firm is crucial in order to grow and thrive in today's economy and therefore calculated risks must be taken," Maser says.

Sean Dundon, principal, **Blackstone Consulting LLC** (Portland, ME) a 30-plus-person environmental consulting firm, says his firm has handled risk in a positive way, bringing about new options and beneficial internal HR practices. "It has created the opportunity for a more thoughtful hiring process and in-house training program. By that I mean we are now looking for technical staff who can perform more than one of the services we provide and do them well, or have the potential, based upon their background and initiative, to be trained in a related service area. By doing this, we feel we minimize the risk of overstaffing and having idle professionals in-house."

NEW PROSPECTS AND INNOVATION. Firms need to be ready to pounce on new prospects. Dudon says, "This is a time to keep a strong relationship with your lender so you may make an opportunistic series of hires or an acquisition. We have intentionally kept a health line of credit open, but do not utilize it for operations. It is simply there so that we may quickly take advantage of opportunities to expand our services as they arise."

Blackstone Consulting is poised for success in the upcoming year. "Our plan is to stick to our model and operate the business on a cash-basis, keep accounts receivable current, and use our borrowing capacity only to pursue growth opportunities. In short, the goal is to have no debt that funds the day-to-day business operations directly and we have been successful in achieving that objective," Dudon says.

Dale Conger, president of the 243-person multidiscipline firm **CobbFendley** (Houston, TX) says, "The recession has not made firms more risk averse. The engineering industry, by its nature, is risk averse."

The recession pushed CobbFendley toward innovation. "The recession made it essential that CobbFendley find new clients and new markets. The company emphasized marketing plans and implementation, strengthened its marketing staff and improved its branding," Conger says.

See RISK, page 4

GOOD TO KNOW

As a percentage of gross revenue, firms' professional liability insurance coverage is a median of 25.9 percent per year and 19.9 percent per claim.

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

AWARDS

Entries open for ZweigWhite's Hot Firm List

Placement on the list is based on both percentage revenue growth and dollar revenue growth over a three-year period.

ZweigWhite has opened entries for the Hot Firm List – a prestigious list honoring the fastest growing firms in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry.

The distinction of making it on ZweigWhite's Hot Firm List is a great accomplishment for firms that have achieved success in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry. In an industry comprised of over 100,000 firms, those who have made the list have demonstrated their ability to thrive and now be recognized among the elite 100 fastest-growing firms.

Placement on the list is based on both percentage revenue growth and dollar revenue growth over a three-year period compared to the other entrants.

The success of growing firms will be celebrated along with other ZweigWhite award winners at the all new Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference, an event Mark Zweig, ZweigWhite founder & CEO calls, "The single most fun, inspirational, and exciting event for our industry."

Known for being held in beautiful venues that change from year to year, this year's conference on Sep. 24-26, 2014, will take place in Los Angeles. Hot Firm winners along with CEOs, managers, marketing professionals, H.R. directors, and firm principals, will gather for education, participation, networking and celebration – including a black tie dinner and reception where winners will receive awards and be acknowledged in a special ceremony. The success stories of Hot Firms will be shared at the event, along with a variety of speakers from a range of industries, guaranteed to challenge and inspire other firms to achieve even greater success.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- ZweigWhite will announce the results in a press release to national media outlets. Firms can also send press releases to their own local media outlets
- Top-ranked firms will be profiled throughout the year in the pages of THE ZWEIG LETTER as well as in a special issue dedicated to the Hot Firm List
- Hot Firm winner logos will be made available for placement on your firm's website

For more information on ZweigWhite's Hot Firm awards program, please visit www.zweigwhite.com/awards/the-zweig-letter-hot-firm-list or contact Michelle Sudan at 800-466-6275 or msudan@zweigwhite.com.

RISK, from page 3

We have intentionally kept a health line of credit open, but do not utilize it for operations. It is simply there so that we may quickly take advantage of opportunities to expand our services as they arise."

When asked about debt, Conger said, "Debt kills companies without repeat clients, good cash flow and unwavering financial strategy and leadership. We watched a medium sized local firm in Houston bury itself in debt to ex partners and a poorly planned firm acquisition. It filed for bankruptcy."

Like some other successful firms, CobbFendley borrows money to manage long-term capital purchases such as software, hardware, telephone systems and cash producing field equipment. Conger offers some advice on the subject. "Without some debt, cash flow could prove difficult, or said differently, don't outspend expected cash flow. Secure a line of credit with your bank when times are good. Few financial institutions will loan a firm money when times get tough or your business is struggling."

Brian Eggers, Co-founder and Principal, AKT Peerless Environmental & Energy Services.

SOME UNCERTAINTY. Brian Eggers, co-founder and principal, **AKT Peerless Environmental & Energy Services** (Saginaw, MI), says that a lack of certainty from a federal perspective has held up growth and investment.

"As a result, we have been very reluctant to take on debt since the recession; it does hinder the growth of our economy as well as employment opportunities. Not only within our industry but the clients we serve, many have been in a holding pattern when it comes to investing in the future. When the time does come that we as a nation develop a rational energy policy, and begin to clear the way with other long term policy decisions that can give our industrial and manufacturing business some confidence, I believe there is an incredible pent-up desire for new growth and innovation. Until our political challenges are dealt with I am afraid that we will continue to sit in a holding pattern."

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zweigwhite

SALES

Optimizing the seller-doer model

Several firms have systems in place to ensure that the best doers are also the best sellers.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

How do you ensure that your best technical staff members are also your best sellers? Are you optimizing the seller-doer model? If not, you might want to think about making it happen.

W. Marshall Knight, II, Director, Telecommunications, Advantage Engineers, Inc.

Selling and doing go hand in hand. W. Marshall Knight, II, director, telecommunications, **Advantage Engineers, Inc.** (Columbia, MD), a 150-person engineering consulting firm, explains that Advantage Engineers has long recognized that those who work on projects are most in touch with the needs of current and potential clients.

"We require that our engineers and scientists prepare as diligently to sell our services, as they do to prepare to complete their technical responsibilities for the company," Knight says. "Our technical staff actively participates in our corporate board meetings. And, each of them has new and existing customer sales goals, which are tied to bonuses and compensation increases."

Additionally, through a third-party, Advantage also offers employees seminars and workshops. These classes tend to focus on sales and leadership training to ensure that employees are equipped to identify and maximize all sales opportunities.

Knight says that once staffers understand their selling role – collaboration follows. Advantage has transitioned to a collaborative approach that involves all employees in the company's business development goals.

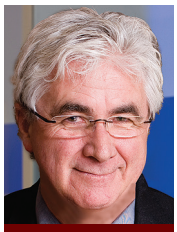
> "We ask that every employee use their network of resources to maximize opportunities with new and existing clients."

"We ask that every employee use their network of resources to maximize opportunities with new and existing clients," he says. "We have found that this approach provides employees at all levels of the company to feel connected to the growth and success of the organization."

Ingrain best practices. Harvey McLeod, principal and vice president, strategic marketing at **KlohnCrippen Berger** (Vancouver, BC), a 500-person engineering services firm, says that it is standard practice to put younger engineers and scientists in front of the client.

"They start by phoning clients, setting up meetings and attending presentations put on by the senior staff," he says.

So, are they prepared when the time comes to face the client? The answer is yes. KCB has an established mentoring program that allows junior staff to pick up best practices from senior managers and industry professionals. This applies to technical, business and client management.



Harvey McLeod, Principal and VP, Strategic Marketing, Klohn Crippen Berger.

KCB's associates are chosen among professional staff for their demonstrated excellence in project management, technical ability, client relations, commitment and their potential to grow the company.

"Our associates are trained on the business side of consulting and can have the opportunity to work with the principals to hone their skills and become future leaders," McLeod says.

KCB also has business development committees in place. Their members meet on a regular basis to discuss opportunities and develop customer relationship management strategies.

It's about creating layers. For **Shea, Inc.** (Minneapolis, MN), a 45-person marketing and design firm, Kim Anderson, vice president, says that they are not currently optimizing the seller-doer model. They prefer to keep their architects and designers working on what they do best and then layer in the right people who are the best at selling, promoting and enhancing their products.

Kim Anderson, Vice President, Shea, Inc.

That said, while technical staff may not be selling, they are actually part of the selling process because they do have direct interaction with the clients.

"We believe our doers are best suited to do," she says. "They are trained to recognize opportunities and to pass them along to the appropriate sellers."

GOOD TO KNOW

Less than a quarter of firms (23 percent) say they always track PMs' sales.
Of firms that track PMs' sales, 14 percent set annual sales goals that PMs must hit.

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

Getting clients and building business

Most design and construction industry professionals take a lot of what they do for granted, and consequently fail to cover these 10 keys to business success.

Our design and construction industry is replete with talented, knowledgeable, well-educated and certainly creative professionals. So, why do many well-prepared colleagues suffer from lower rates of success and achievement than many of their seemingly less prepared contemporaries? The answer may be more straightforward than you would guess. There are, I have learned, a set of important business and personnel practices that will help you achieve success and can be quickly learned, embraced and implemented. Let's take a look at what I consider to be "10 Simple Essentials" for company achievement and growth.

1) **Begin with thoughtful hiring and orienting.** Staff your company with the best and brightest people and you will be rewarded handsomely. But even great staff will stray if you don't simultaneously forge a strong and visible organizational culture to motivate and inspire behavior. Walk your talk.

2) **Great service and quality starts and ends with training.** Regardless of your business' size, you must commit to being a learning organization. Your focus should be growing leaders, rather than followers, and nothing can inspire staff more than investing in their personal growth and development.

3) **Your job is motivation, inspiration and recognition.** Your employees must link business success to both individual and team performance. Don't wait until a project is finished to give praise, offer constructive criticism and share the wealth. Make yours a great place to work and your clients will reap the rewards.

4) **Practice listening, and more importantly, responding.** Design industry professionals often think that they know what's best for their clients. It is vitally important to really listen before you start solving. Taking on clients' challenges and delivering on your promises is what will lead to long-term partnerships with them.

5) **Have clear systems and processes.** Yes, design is a process! Adequate time for creativity comes from following standard process for the other parts of your work. Strategies for how your frontline people are to behave and serve clients will empower them and foster better results. Everything you and your consultants do forms a delivery system that drives your projects.

6) **What gets measured gets managed.** This often repeated saying applies to the design and construction industry too. Since reliability is essential for both great design and proven performance, it will similarly drive predictable financial returns. How much time do you waste doing rework?

Dennis King

GUEST SPEAKER

7) **Really communicate with your staff.** Letting your people "in on the secrets" is the best way to empower your innovators. Plan for both formal and extemporaneous communications and follow through on the commitments you make. This forms the nucleus of your company culture. So share your news consistently.

8) **Your people are your experts.** Unless you are a sole-practitioner, your staff will be instrumental in creating what you achieve and deliver. Your people are the ones who must catch errors early, and that requires common purpose, teamwork, responsibility, authority and voluntary action. Treat these colleagues with the respect they deserve.

9) **Your brand is not a marketing slogan.** Your clients, colleagues and employees determine your brand. It's your whole business as seen from their point of view. Just remember that top quality and outstanding service are what keep your clients coming back – not marketing slogans.

10) **Last but never least is ethical behavior.** While this should go without saying, it drives all the other keys and your ultimate firm success. Treat it as a critical line in the sand.

See DENNIS KING, page 8

There are, I have learned, a set of important business and personnel practices that will help you achieve success and can be quickly learned, embraced and implemented.

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Don't derail marketing investments

Saying your want to grow while viewing marketing expense as overhead is self-defeating.

Chad Clinehens

BRAND BUILDING

Overfund marketing: It is one of the core strategies we tell our clients who want to grow. Most do not seem surprised by that advice. What is surprising is how hard it is for firms to really outspend their peers on marketing. What is even more surprising is how often I hear people in our industry talking about marketing, wanting to do better marketing, and wanting to do more of it – but not executing. They don't need us to tell them to spend more. They already know that. Then why is it that so few are doing it?

A number of reasons hold firms back from executing a really effective and extensive marketing strategy:

1) **Firms view marketing as an overhead expense.** Despite the effort that goes into looking at marketing as a critical business investment, firms are set up to put technical and billable services on one side of the org chart and all other business functions on the other. So, marketing is often lumped together with accounting, human resources and IT. It is that basic separation that creates a perspective in our subconscious that marketing is simply an overhead expense. Unfortunately, many firms have the simple-minded approach of maximizing billings and minimizing overhead. So, even when firm leaders are saying, "We need more marketing and we need better marketing," it is hard to actually get to the point where we are directing significant resources into true marketing activities. We can't get past marketing being an overhead expense and the deeply ingrained belief that overhead is bad. It really holds many firms back.

2) **Firms do not understand the difference between marketing, sales and business development.** Marketing is all the activities that convince a client that your services meet their needs, whereas sales is the activities that actually convince the client to purchase services from you. So, marketing is not proposals and interviews; it is strategy, targeting, messaging, branding, promotion. Marketing is proactive in that you are laying the foundation for where you want to fit into the marketplace. Sales is typically reactive in that you are responding to specific opportunities/projects and working toward "closing the sale." What many firms define as marketing is really sales. Investment in true marketing is part of a long-term strategy. First of all, it takes time to develop and execute a sound marketing plan that builds a brand in the marketplace. Firms must put a lot of faith in individual(s) and invest a lot of money that would normally go to the bottom line. To leaders in our industry, that equates to risk and expense and we are one of the most risk-averse and cheap of any industry out there. So, while we are saying we want more and better marketing, our subconscious holds us back because of the risk and expense involved in serious marketing investment.

3) **Firms tend to hire business developers and put them in charge of marketing.** As we stated above, there is an important distinction between marketing and sales. Business development is a blend of marketing and sales but far more sales than marketing. Small firms can get away with having business developers run the "marketing" for the firm. Large firms not so much. If you are a firm of 100 or more people, you need separate marketing and business development leadership. The issue here is that firms rationalize investment in a business developer because they can see more directly the link between the day-to-day activities of the business developer and billable work. The average business developer has a lengthy résumé that includes client relationships and technical accomplishment but often lacks any real marketing expertise and understanding of marketing theory. These folks will not lead or build an effective true marketing and branding strategy for your firm, nor should they be asked to. Again, this is all a part of firms subconsciously steering away from investing in anything that appears to be pure overhead. Business developers are an important part of a growing firm, but they don't necessarily provide great marketing leadership.

See CHAD CLINEHENS, page 8

Here is what you need to do today: Decide if you really want to grow and are willing to make long-term sacrifices to build something different.

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.

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. 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.

This is only a sampling of the information covered in this report. Information on potential acquisition targets, reasons for an acquisition, projected firm sale prices, and reasons for a firm sale are also included. With the 2014 Merger & Acquisition Survey, not only will you see where your firm stands in every area of the merger and acquisition process, you'll get the information you need to start planning for your firm's future.

For more information or to buy a copy, call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/p-2189-Merger_Acquisition_Survey_2014.

CALENDAR

BECOMING A BETTER SELLER: Could every person in your firm describe your services in a succinct and persuasive way that demonstrates what sets you apart from the competition? It's not enough to have the technical expertise to complete projects, you need seller-doers who can convey excitement and tailor the message for the audience.

That's why ZweigWhite developed a one-day program that will help anyone who could possibly be involved in selling and who wants to be more successful and increase their value to their employers – design and technical professionals as well as marketing and business development professionals, principals, managers, architects, engineers, planners, scientists, surveyors, designers; anyone who wants to know more about selling.

Becoming a Better Seller was specifically developed to help design and technical professionals become more comfortable dealing with clients and promoting the firm and your services.

Seminars will be led by Mark Zweig, ZweigWhite CEO and chairman, or Chad Clinehens, executive vice president, ZweigWhite.

Seminar dates scheduled for 2014 include March 7 in Dallas, and April 11 in Washington, D.C.

Group discounts are available for teams of four or more attendees from the same firm. Please call 800-466-6275 or log on to www.zweigwhite.com/seminars/better_seller for details.

CHAD CLINEHENS, from page 7

Here is what you need to do today: Decide if you really want to grow and are willing to make long-term sacrifices to build something different. Look at your organizational chart and the people you have in marketing. What do you see? Do you see any true marketing expertise that you believe can help make your firm into what you visualize? If not, find that someone. Good sound marketing strategy is essential to a corporate growth strategy. We have over 25 years of research and case studies that prove it. Review where marketing is on the org chart and consider moving it out by itself to make a statement and to start training the organization to view it differently than just a part of the overhead expense. The subconscious is a powerful force that can only be changed by training yourself (and your people) to think differently over time. Start communicating the difference between marketing and sales to all your staff. Give significance and clarity to the roles of marketing and business development. Outline a structure where marketing and business development staff are working in concert on the proactive and reactive activities required to win more work. It's time for your conscious to take control over the subconscious tendencies that hold you back from really using marketing to make an impact!

CHAD CLINEHENS is ZweigWhite's executive vice president. Contact him at cclinehens@zweigwhite.com.

DENNIS KING, from page 6

Consistently follow these 10 simple essentials and your clients will beat a path to your door. I've learned from more than four decades in practice that business success is ultimately the result of your people's cumulative behaviors and contributions. So, why take chances? They will distinguish you from your competitors – for better or for worse.

DENNIS KING, FAIA, is the principal at DMKING Consulting LLC, www.DMKINGconsulting.com.

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RIGHT NOW

Firms amping up technology

Firms are making their websites mobile friendly and even developing apps to increase efficiency.

By LIISA SULLIVAN
Correspondent

Is your firm jumping into mobile? Are you thinking about developing an app? How about making firm websites more mobile-friendly? More and more people are going mobile. Will you be ready?

Eye on websites. Katie Stern is marketing director of **EHS Support, LLC**, a 60-person environmental, health, and safety solutions specialist that is 100 percent virtual. That's right – no offices, no commutes and no rent to pay.

Stern, who calls home Pittsburgh, Pa., says that since EHS Support is virtual, it's always researching and monitoring the ways people do business and the tools they are using for success.

"Just as we use our phones, tablets and laptops as a means to communicate, we still make it a point to talk with our clients to see what they are doing, how they prefer to communicate and how they prefer to stay in tune with the industry (i.e., video, e-newsletters, publications, etc.)," she says. "When we relaunched our website in December 2012, we made sure to build a website that was easily accessible from any electronic device, including smartphones and tablets, to make it easy for the end-user."

EHS Support has also developed a series of podcasts that are available from its website (www.ehs-support.com) and through iTunes. Podcasts focus on regulatory and industry updates that EHS clients can download and listen to during downtime (e.g., during travel).

Katie Stern, Marketing Director, EHS Support, LLC.

Throughout 2013, EHS continued to modify and update the site – both in functionality and content. This year, given the fact that billions of people now access websites from their mobile devices, it plans to work on design. So, how will EHS adjust their existing site for today's web users?

"When we relaunched our website in December 2012, we made sure to build a website that was easily accessible from any electronic device, including smartphones and tablets, to make it easy for the end-user."

Some of the simpler things that they will examine in 2014 are modifying page designs, so the main message is above the fold, as well as looking at how to make it a responsive site, so no matter the screen size, the design looks good and is easy to read. Another goal is to have users interact with technical experts via the website.

"We are still developing the updates, but are hoping to reach our audience and receive feedback or questions by way of our client alerts, newsletter and social media platforms, ultimately directing them back to our website," Stern says.

Also on deck for 2014, EHS is looking into developing its first app. At first, it will be used internally, and then it will be rolled out to clients in late 2014/early 2015.

"We feel that this is something that could really enhance the way we communicate with our staff and our clients," Stern says. "Right now, our priority is to stay ahead of the curve and to make our website friendly on all devices."

App happy! Greg Bosworth, director of information technologies at **Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.** (Watertown, Mass.), a-950 person multidisciplinary planning, design, engineering, and consulting firm, says the company has developed several mobile applications, including one for tracking hours worked on projects, another for expense and timesheet review and approvals, and another for mapping project locations and providing other project information.

Mobile devices, including about 550 smartphones, are tied into the firm's Microsoft Exchange environment, so users can access applications such as email and contact listings. These devices can also access corporate resources from remote work sites at any time.

Bosworth says that the marketing team at VHB is leveraging mobile technology for its digital marketing efforts. For example, the team has developed interactive PDF documents that can be uploaded on tablets for use at industry events for prospective client demon-

See RIGHT NOW page 12

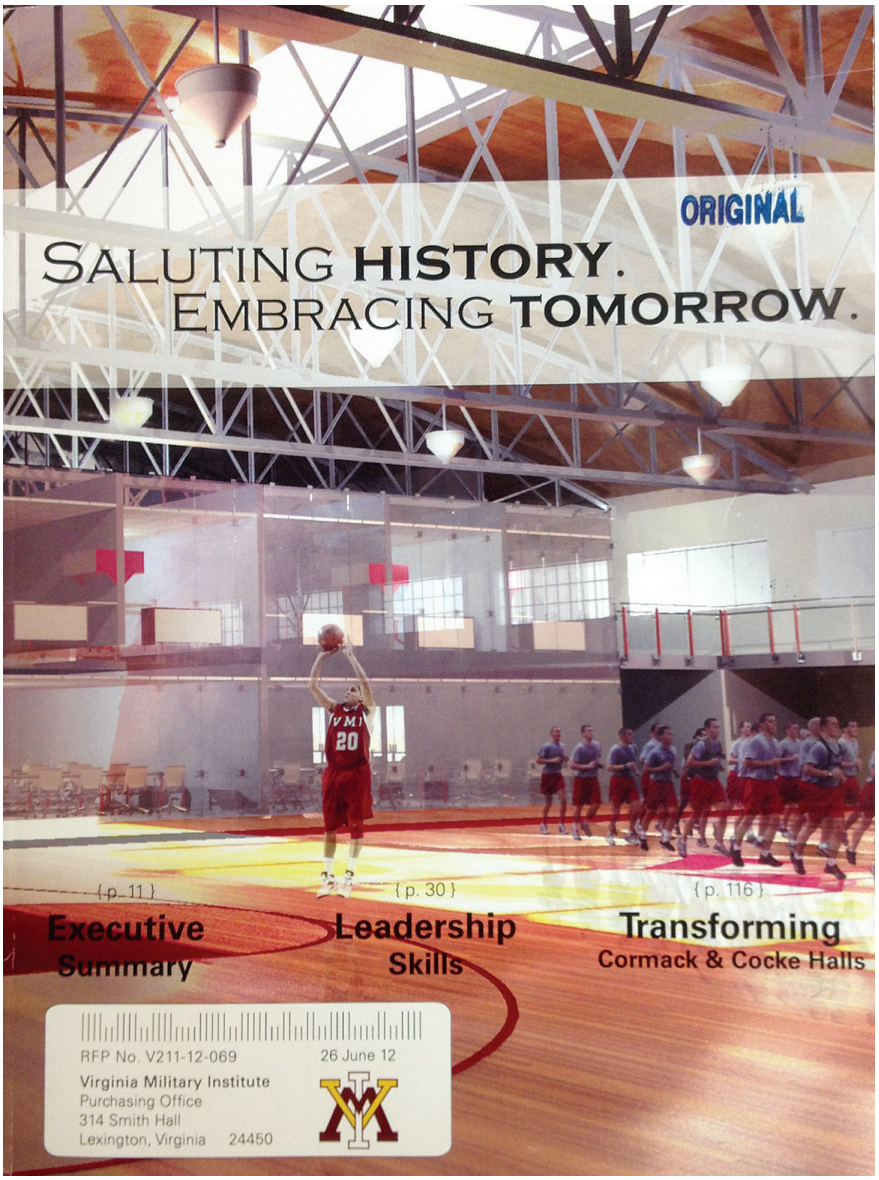
GOOD TO KNOW

Less than a quarter of firms (21 percent) report they redesigned their website in 2013. The majority redesigned their website in 2012 (31 percent).

Source: 2013 Marketing Survey, ZweigWhite, www.zweigwhite.com/p-2166-marketing-survey-2013.

WHAT'S WORKING

Goals for the piece included eliciting an emotional response from decision-makers and a piece that would distinguish Baskervill from other submissions. Adapting the allowed 'appendix' portion of the state forms, the team created a feature story-like spread in the back of the magazine devoted to the specific challenges and opportunities of the project.



RFPs CAN TELL STORIES

Baskervill (Richmond, VA), an architecture, engineering and interior design firm, took on the challenge of meeting the strict requirements of a state-issued RFP in a creative and high-impact way. For that, the campaign won first place in the Target Marketing Category of the 2013 Marketing Communications Excellence Awards.

Development

Before the RFP, Baskervill had submitted a proposal to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) on a different project and was shortlisted but ultimately not selected to do the work. This experience prompted the team to figure out a way to better position the company for success with this next proposal for a complex renovation of historic buildings on Virginia Military Institute's campus. The project was an ideal fit for Baskervill's skill set, and VMI alumni, and Baskervill president, Bob Clark.

Tracey Gould, director of marketing, had been percolating the idea of a magazine-style submission for a proposal and felt this was a project worthy of the idea.

Goals for the piece included eliciting an emotional response from decision-makers and a piece that would distinguish Baskervill from other submissions. Adapting the allowed "appendix" portion of the state forms, the team created a feature story-like spread in the back of the magazine devoted to the specific challenges and opportunities of the project. Compelling renderings and project assessment information brought depth to the piece.

What Works

- Required documents are interspersed with highly impactful photos of VMI athletic events, Baskervill staff, and other project-related images.
- The overall design of the piece and the content were completed simultaneously to ensure continuity.
- The look and feel of the piece is identical to a high quality magazine.

Results

Baskervill was ultimately awarded the project and the firm heard anecdotally that the VMI was blown away by the proposal's style.

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WHAT'S WORKING

TOTAL OVERHAUL

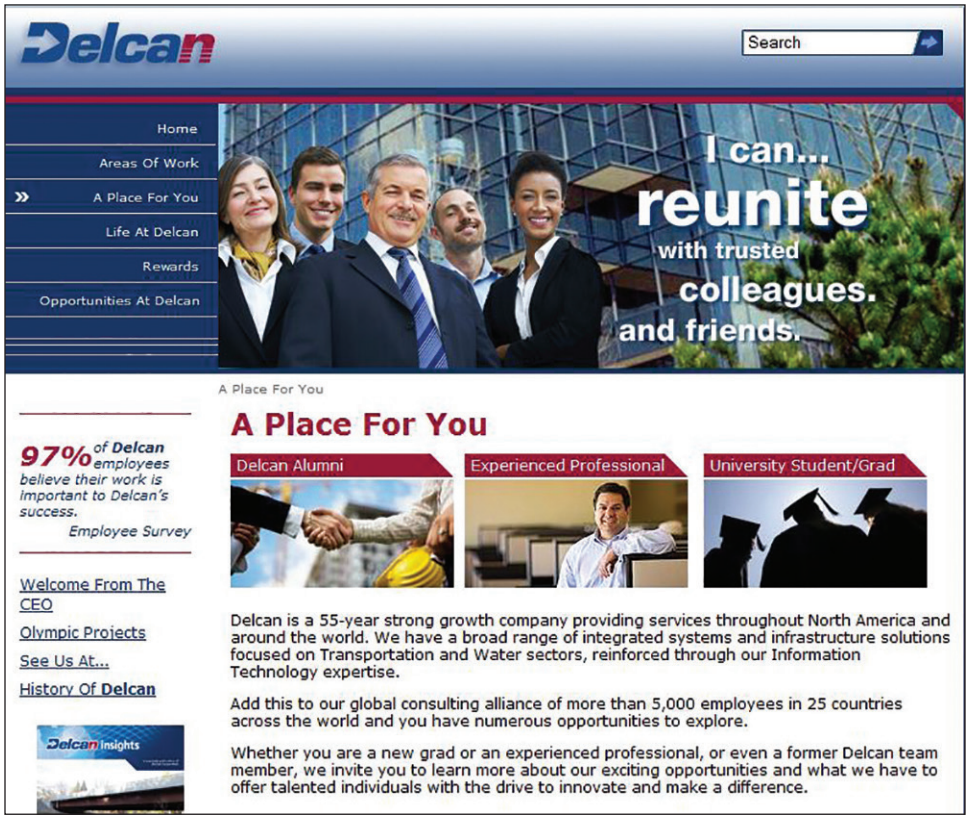
Human capital is critical to a company's growth and success. The marketing department at **Delcan Corporation** (La Palma, CA) understands that and set out on a grand campaign that overhauled the entire process of hiring, motivating, and educating employees.

The a 30-plus office multi-discipline engineering firm's employee communication program tied for first place in the Integrated Marketing Campaign category of the 2013 Marketing Communications Excellence Awards.

Delcan started their efforts with an analysis of the current workforce and potential employees. While qualified technical staff shortages remain a challenge, the analysis revealed two additional areas of major concern regarding existing employees: 1) valuable employees were leaving the company and; 2) the greatest staff attrition occurred in the first five years of employment. To understand turnover trends better, the development team (the Principles' Leadership Council (PLC) and the Marketing and Human Resources team), collected employee-specific data using employee surveys, exit interviews, performance reviews, and Q&A sessions. The team also conducted a comprehensive analysis of employee use of the internal portal, the external website, employee newsletters, Delcan's 2011-2015 Strategic Business Plan, industry best practices, and internal human resources metrics.

The company came up with some strategic and tactical goals, and then set out with an extensive new program of employee engagement.

Overall, the company stated they wanted to improve internal communications with the aim of decreasing voluntary turnover by 3 percent annually and initiate internal employee branding communications to foster a 10 percent increase in new hires. Tactically, Delcan's goals were to improve the frequency of employee collaboration, increase information sharing companywide, and provide consistent opportunities for professional development. To achieve these overarching goals, Delcan launched a plethora of new programs and re-dos of existing processes, including an employee referral program, new hire announcement, new win announcement, professional development program, new website, strategic business plan presentations, an improved newsletter, restructuring of the internal portal, employee appreciation events, orientation and onboarding, and an emeritus program.



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What works

- No stone was left unturned: Delcan did a thoughtful assessment of almost all areas of business.
- Research focus: The comprehensive initial study gave Delcan actionable goals.

Results

When compared to 2010 HR metrics, 2013 metrics showed that voluntary turnover decreased by 8 percent. Delcan also saw a 13 percent increase in employees agreeing that Delcan utilizes effective communication. Delcan also saw an 11 percent increase in new hires over the time period.

AWARD WINNERS

SEE RECEIVES AWARDS: **Sam Schwartz Engineering** (New York, NY), a 130-person interdisciplinary transportation engineering and planning firm, announced two winners of Engineering News Record's Top 20 Under 40 Award, which recognizes promising young leaders in the AEC industry. The firm congratulates **Jeff Smithline**, vice president and director of Traffic Engineering, and **Mark de la Vergne**, principal, director of Transportation Planning, and co-general manager of the Chicago office.

Smithline and de la Vergne join ENR Top 20 Under 40 alumnus Erich Arcement, senior vice president, who won the award in 2013.

SSE's work for the Liberty State Park Circulator has won the New Jersey Alliance for Action's 2014 Distinguished Engineering Award. SSE analyzed attractions within the park, identified those with highest demand, and developed routes where frequent service could be provided to reduce auto usage and better serve the non-auto owning population.

Richard Retting, director of Safety + Research, was named a member of the Transportation Research Board's Traffic Law Enforcement Committee. Retting is a widely recognized North American expert on traffic safety, and has managed numerous traffic safety research projects as a principal investigator.

VASQUEZ RECOGNIZED: **MVE Institutional** (Santa Ana, CA), a planning, architecture, and interior design firm, announced that **Ernesto Vasquez**, chairman & CEO of MVEI has been elevated to the prestigious College of Fellows by the American Institute of Architects.

The AIA Fellowship program recognizes architects with significant achievements and contributions to the profession. Vasquez was selected by the 2014 Jury of Fellows as one of 139 AIA members to the College of Fellows. Of the 80,000 AIA members, only 3,000 members have been recognized with this distinguished honor, less than 4 percent.

Vasquez has been president of MVEI since it was founded in 2003. In 2013, he became chairman and CEO. Known for creating environments that are socially and environmentally responsible, as well as economically viable, Vasquez is widely renowned as a community advocate and leader. His award-winning design aesthetic incorporates smart-growth principles and promotes public transit and improved educational environments. Vasquez currently serves on the board of directors of Bridge Housing, with leadership roles with nonprofit agencies such as ABODE Communities, The Wooden Floor, and The National Park Foundation.

HART CROWSER RECOGNIZED: The American Council of Engineering Companies of Washington honored **Hart Crowser** (Seattle, WA), a geotechnical, environmental, and natural resources consulting firm, with three awards – two gold and one bronze – at its 2014 Engineering Excellence Awards program.

Federal Center South won a National Finalist Gold Award for Structural Systems. The ACEC award recognized Hart Crowser and its client Sellen Construction for revolutionary contributions toward this high efficiency, 21st century building, which is the new home for the Seattle District, US Army Corps of Engineers. Other team members include ZGF Architects, KPFF Consulting Engineers, and WSP Flack & Kurtz.

The Husky Stadium Redevelopment won a Best in State Gold Award for complexity. Hart Crowser and client Wright Runstad & Company overcame technical challenges for this stadium on the University of Washington campus. Other team members included Turner Construction, MKA, and 360 Architects.

Hart Crowser and the Willapa-Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association (WGHOGA), won a Best in State Bronze Award for Saving Shellfish from Burrowing Shrimp. Hart Crowser's in-house permitting and regulatory compliance group worked in cooperation with WGHOGA, their science and legal teams, and the Washington State Department of Ecology to develop an experimental design and data analysis approach to quantify how the use of imidacloprid on oyster beds could affect water quality, sediment, eelgrass, and invertebrates.

RIGHT NOW, from page 9

strations, saving on printed materials as well.

In one of the firm's more unique and productive uses of mobile technology, VHB has customized an open-source application to track bicycle traffic in Providence, R.I., as part of an ongoing effort to help the city plan new bike and pedestrian trails.

The company uses the mobile application to capture information about where people are riding bikes in the city so it can recommend places to build bike paths. A user installs the app on his device, starts the app while biking and then uploads the route when he arrives at his destination. The GPS information recorded on the route is then uploaded and analyzed using GIS tools. Pretty cool stuff!

TAKE MOBILE INITIATIVE. **Gateway Engineers, Inc.** (Pittsburgh, PA), a 150-person full-service civil engineering firm, has also developed some in-house apps. The firm's aim is to execute projects the most efficiently; the use of mobile devices and applications helps to achieve that goal.

Gateway's "Mobile Initiative" supports the efficient execution of projects by equipping its project team with mobile devices such as iPhones and iPads to increase the efficiency, mobility, and workforce functionality.

"We are continuously researching, testing, and distributing new apps to our employees to keep them ahead of the curve," says Jason Jesso, CEO. "The use of mobile devices at Gateway has proven to be instrumental in streamlining our ability to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with internal and external stakeholders, essentially eliminating the effects of being 'out of the office'."

Gateway has developed multiple apps in-house for a variety of reasons and sees this trend continuing into the future.

"Currently, our focus is on developing a 'single source sign-in' where an iDevice user can access all their applications without having to sign in to each application individually," Jesso says.

Gateway is also planning some website work.

Scheduled for a March launch, the new corporate website will be compatible on all mobile devices and will integrate social media platforms to reach its target market more efficiently.

"We have taken a great interest in providing our clients with valuable information and think mobile-friendly content provides an excellent opportunity to do so," Jesso says.

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