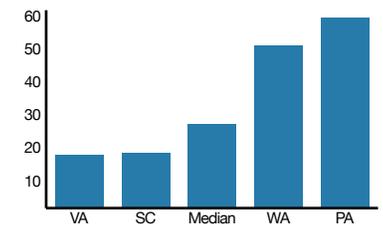
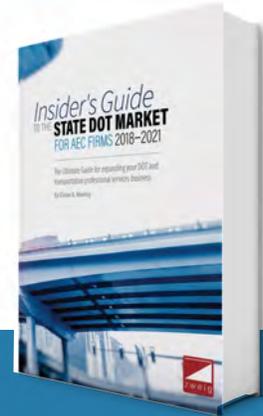


## TRENDLINES

### Gas Taxes



The national median state gas tax is 25.4 cents per gallon. State gas taxes are used for bridge and road construction and supplement the falling federal gas tax of 18.4 cents per gallon. At 57.6 cents and 49.4 cents per gallon, respectively, Pennsylvania and Washington have the highest taxes in the nation. In the continental US, South Carolina, at 16.75, and Virginia, at 16.2, have the lowest taxes. Zweig Group's *Insider's Guide to the State DOT Market* contains road and bridge construction data for all 50 states and Washington, D.C.



## STATE OF THE DOT

<http://bit.ly/state-of-the-dot>

## Trust your partners

“Being owners in a closely-held company is not too different from being married. Just like in a marriage, the relationship suffers if you don’t spend time with one another.”



Mark Zweig

### EDITORIAL

After being a part of the AEC industry for more than 38 years now, I have witnessed a problem too many times – one that hurts both the company and the people working in it. That is a lack of trust between business partners.

I don’t know exactly why it develops. I’m sure there are many possible causes. But one thing I do know for sure – it’s a terrible cancer.

Sometimes the lack of trust results in an all-out major war between two or more partners in the firm. That can lead to partner separations or a break up. No one wants to witness this or work in a firm going through it. It is like being a child in the household of warring, fighting, divorcing parents. Lots of stress and uncertainty and no fun at all!

But more often, this lack of trust isn’t always that apparent. It’s just simmering under the surface. It manifests itself in not letting the other guy do the job that’s assigned – whether that is a project-related assignment or a role in the firm’s organizational structure that they are supposed to be filling. And this results in lots of problems.

■ **Anger and frustration.** The person who is being second-guessed isn’t going to be happy about it. And he or she may throw up their hands in frustration at some point.

■ **Quality issues.** When it isn’t clear who is doing what, odds are someone will make an assumption that something is being handled that may, in fact, not be. This creates potential quality problems!

■ **Time wasted.** When someone is waiting for

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

## MORE COLUMNS

■ **BEST PRACTICES:** What millennials get right [Page 3](#)

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# Conference call: Don Benvie

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## ON THE MOVE

**PM ENVIRONMENTAL APPOINTS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER; EXPANDS ROLE OF NATIONAL MANAGER OF SITE INVESTIGATION SERVICES** PM Environmental, Inc. announces the promotions of leadership staff to new and expanded roles within the company. PM has promoted Beth Sexton to chief operating officer and Patricia Perry to chief financial officer; Adam Patton, national manager of site investigation services, will take on additional duties in his current role.

PM Environmental, founded in 1992 by Peter Bosanic and Mike Kulka, has seen rapid development in the last five years, with a current year-to-date growth of 22 percent. Additionally, PM ranks as one of the top 20 environmental due diligence providers in the nation. Sexton and Perry are the first to fill the new executive roles at PM.

"This is truly an exciting time for PM Environmental, and we have chartered a continued path for hiring from within, creating an ability for all of our staff to grow their careers," said Mikel Kulka, founder and CEO of PM Environmental.

Sexton, who has been with PM Environmental for more than 15 years, previously managed all aspects of PM Environmental's 3,000 to 4,000 annual transactional due diligence projects as the national manager for due diligence services. She has served a variety of clients including financial institutions and borrowers, retail chains, industrial conglomerates, and real estate developers. In her new role as COO, Sexton will focus on operations, best management practices across all departments within PM Environmental, and strategic planning initiatives.

"I am excited to take on this new role and help PM to continue to grow in its target marketplace for years to come," said Sexton.

Perry has been with PM for the last five years, having previously spent 20 years as a financial executive for a large, national consulting firm, working out of PM Environmental's Mid-South region. In her prior role as controller, she oversaw all aspects of cost accounting, including analyzing cost records, and monitored

and maintained PM Environmental's general ledger accounts. As CFO, Perry will oversee PM Environmental's long-term and short-term strategic planning, as well as manage and report on company financials and risk.

"I look forward to working closely with Beth Sexton in our new roles, and on matters that relate to budget management, cost benefits and steering the firm into the future," said Perry.

Patton has been serving clients nationally since 2001. Since filling the role of national manager of site investigation services in 2012, he has managed hundreds of Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and multiple United States Environmental Protection Agency Site Assessments for municipal clients, commercial and industrial clients, developers, governmental agencies, retailers, and corporations. His expanded responsibilities will include the continuous improvement of technical processes and operations across PM Environmental, and the identification of the next generation of leadership in the departments he oversees.

"From assessing emerging contaminants, to staying ahead of evolving standards and implementing more efficient sampling or remediation techniques, it's about focusing our team forward to ensure that PM is always able to service the client's specific needs," said Patton.

PM Environmental, Inc. was incorporated in 1992, and is a full service environmental consulting firm with offices throughout the United States. PM Environmental's services include risk reviews, transaction screens, Phase I & II Environmental Site Assessments, property condition assessments, brownfield redevelopment, site remediation, environmental compliance audits, industrial hygiene, underground storage tank management, and more.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

someone else to review something before it can be implemented or be considered done, time is wasted.

**So how can you build trust? The best way to do this is to renew your friendships with each other. Being owners in a closely-held company is not too different from being married. Just like in a marriage, the relationship suffers if you don't spend time with one another. Get to know one another personally. If you only see each other at work, and you work in a project-related business, then you may have let these relationships lapse. Then some little thing can happen and mistrust ensues. And then you have a downward spiral that is hard to get out of! ▀**

MARK ZWEIG is Zweig Group's chairman and founder. Contact him at [mzweig@zweiggroup.com](mailto:mzweig@zweiggroup.com).



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**THE ZWEIG LETTER**

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Published continuously since 1992 by Zweig Group, Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA. ISSN 1068-1310.

Issued weekly (48 issues/year) \$250 for one-year print subscription; free electronic subscription at [thezweigletter.com/subscribe](http://thezweigletter.com/subscribe)

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## What millennials get right

The new generation brings a lot to the table, much of it good, so lighten up, be honest, and enjoy yourself as you roll up your sleeves and work.



Stephen  
Lucy

### BEST PRACTICES

**B**y 2020, nearly half (46 percent) of all U.S. workers will be millennials. They outnumber baby boomers by 7.7 million according to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimate. As a baby boomer, I sometimes find that rather frightening in light of all the press discussions regarding the many things that millennials do poorly.

However, given that almost half of our firm's staff are millennials and that we are still successful, they obviously have more redeeming qualities than are sometimes reported. Granted their attributes may be different than mine, but then again, were we not different than the generation before us? I am convinced that millennials get more things right than we have given them credit for. Here are my top 10 millennial takeaways:

**1) In work/life/play, there must be balance.** I actually think that millennials reorder this as play/life/work balance. We boomers talk about balance, but to be successful we focused on career above all else, many times with a personal cost in other areas of our life. Rarely do I say that I should have worked more versus taking more time for myself and my family, so why should I criticize millennials for doing what I wanted to do myself?

**2) Having a voice in the conversation is critical.**

"Their attributes may be different than mine, but then again, were we not different than the generation before us? I am convinced that millennials get more things right than we have given them credit for."

Millennials are not intimidated by their elders. They talk openly and candidly. Some see that style as intrusive or that millennials expect to have greater standing than they actually have. In truth, I have come to recognize that millennials simply want a voice – their voice – to be included in company discussions. Their careers are as dependent on our decisions as older staff, so obtaining their input only has positive implications.

See STEPHEN LUCY, page 4



## BUSINESS NEWS

### OZ ARCHITECTURE DESIGNS SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY IN GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

**OZ Architecture**, an award-winning, national architecture and design firm, has announced that construction has begun on The Lodge at Grand Junction, a Rocky Mountain Senior Housing and WellAge senior living community in Grand Junction, Colorado.

The building site is located across the street from St. Mary's Medical Center, with frontage along Patterson Road less than two miles from I-70. The location provides easy access to doctors' offices, shopping, and unobstructed mesa views.

Led by OZ Architecture's senior living team and principal architect Jami Mohlenkamp, the Lodge at Grand Junction is a 38,700-square-foot, 48-unit senior living community. Of those units, 36 units will be assisted living studios and one-bedrooms, and 12 units will be memory care studios.

The Lodge at Grand Junction will feature amenities including a two-story entry lobby and dining facilities – complete with private dining room – served by a full on-site commercial kitchen. Communal living spaces will have televisions, comfortable lounge seating, and fireplaces. OZ Architecture also designed a multipurpose room with a kitchen for resident use, and a theater room, computer room, and library to support social programs and community.

Wellness amenities include a gym, salon and spa, and on-site wellness clinic with an on-staff nurse to assist with developing personal care plans. For off-site medical visits, complimentary transportation is provided.

Assisted living residents will have use of a greenhouse, which offers residents the opportunity to grow vegetables and flowers all year. Memory care residents will have access to an interior sun room and an enclosed, landscaped garden outside. These

amenities promote a stronger connection to the outdoors, which is an important part of the WellAge senior living model.

"It has been really exciting for OZ Architecture and our team to continue our work for older adults on Colorado's Western Slope," said Mohlenkamp, head of the senior living practice area at OZ Architecture. "We appreciate the support we've received for the project from the City of Grand Junction and its community, and we look forward to this project adding additional care and services for aging adults."

The Lodge at Grand Junction is slated to open in the summer of 2019.

OZ Architecture has been at the forefront of design since 1964. The OZ team includes more than 165 architects, designers, strategists, and artists whose broad range of expertise and passions create a variety of project types on every continent.

STEPHEN LUCY, from page 3

**3) Feeling younger is a benefit to us.** You are not their age anymore, so you cannot and probably should not act like them. At the same time, they do not feel that you are being intrusive if you can lighten up and just relate. Take advantage of their energy and enthusiasm as it will make you feel younger and less burdened.

**4) They expect honesty.** Millennials do not accept imposters, nor do they tolerate people who are fake in how they interact with them. That is a refreshing quality. Regardless of whether the news is good or bad, they just want to know what the news is. I think we would have all benefited from that if our predecessors had been more open and honest early in our careers.

"Highly successful firms revolve around building teams from individuals of character – candidates with natural instincts to be responsive and communicative, to act and speak with respect, to serve our communities, and to seek the same attributes in their work family."

**5) They want to give back.** Community giveback is very important to millennials and can be just as important to the firm as it connects the firm with its client base. Facilitating opportunities for them to be engaged promotes them and the firm.

**6) Respect the golden rule.** If anything, millennials expect us to treat them the way we want to be treated – with respect. They know the golden rule of being treated with tolerance, consideration, and compassion. Anything less is disheartening, discouraging, and duplicitous.

**7) They expect diversity and equality.** Millennials understand that they do not live in a homogeneous world and thus they expect the workforce within your firm to reflect that diversity.

Similarly, they expect to be judged based on their contributions and not on gender, ethnicity, or social standing. If you focus on contribution, the true performers within the firm will rise to the top.

**8) They want continuous feedback.** Millennials crave feedback and want to know what they have done right or wrong as it happens, not during some remote formal review. We might view this immediate desire for input as needy, but correcting bad behavior as it happens tends to stop bad acts just as reinforcing good behavior will lead toward more positive results. All that is good for you and the firm.

**9) They want to know about their opportunities.** They want to know how to be promoted, how to get raises and bonuses, how to get on more complex projects, and how they can improve firm operations. In our business, ambition and entrepreneurship are good traits so why would we think that their request for opportunities is a threat to the firm? Just because we were scared early in our careers to ask these same questions does not mean these are bad questions for someone to ask.

**10) The status quo is to be challenged.** Millennials never want to hear that we are doing something just because that is what we have always done. They see rapid changes in everything around them, yet our industry tends to move at a slower pace to develop and adopt new approaches to our work. Let the millennials ask the "what if" questions as they are probably in the best position to think outside the box. It is then incumbent upon us to evaluate their input and not simply dismiss their challenges to the status quo out of hand.

Highly successful firms revolve around building teams from individuals of character – candidates with natural instincts to be responsive and communicative, to act and speak with respect, to serve our communities, and to seek the same attributes in their work family. Millennials have these traits and it is incumbent on us to recognize and welcome them as the future leaders of our industry. ▀

STEPHEN LUCY is CEO of JQ with offices in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Lubbock, and San Antonio. Contact him at [slucy@jqeng.com](mailto:slucy@jqeng.com).

# CEO ROUNDTABLE BOURBON EXPERIENCE

November 7-9 Louisville, KY

This is an exclusive event for top leaders to discuss the highest level issues facing CEOs and the C-suite of today's AEC firm. This two-day event includes educational and networking sessions in an upscale setting, and is part of Zweig Group's new Experience Education series.

The November 7-9 event will explore the roots of Kentucky bourbon and how these family owned distilleries have grown to serve a worldwide boom while maintaining the culture and character of their businesses. Bourbon lovers or just lovers of the outdoors will enjoy the trip as we travel the Kentucky countryside to some of the most well known distilleries. During our tour of these historic and architectural sites, we will learn the roots of businesses, how these organizations have scaled operations to meet worldwide demand, and how their marketing, sales, and management strategies have built strong brands and rich cultures. We will couple this experience and knowledge with the most pressing issues and ideas in AEC firms today. With attendees in control of the subject matter, we will conduct roundtable discussions on a variety of topics that will hit right at the heart of what is needed to effect change in your organization.

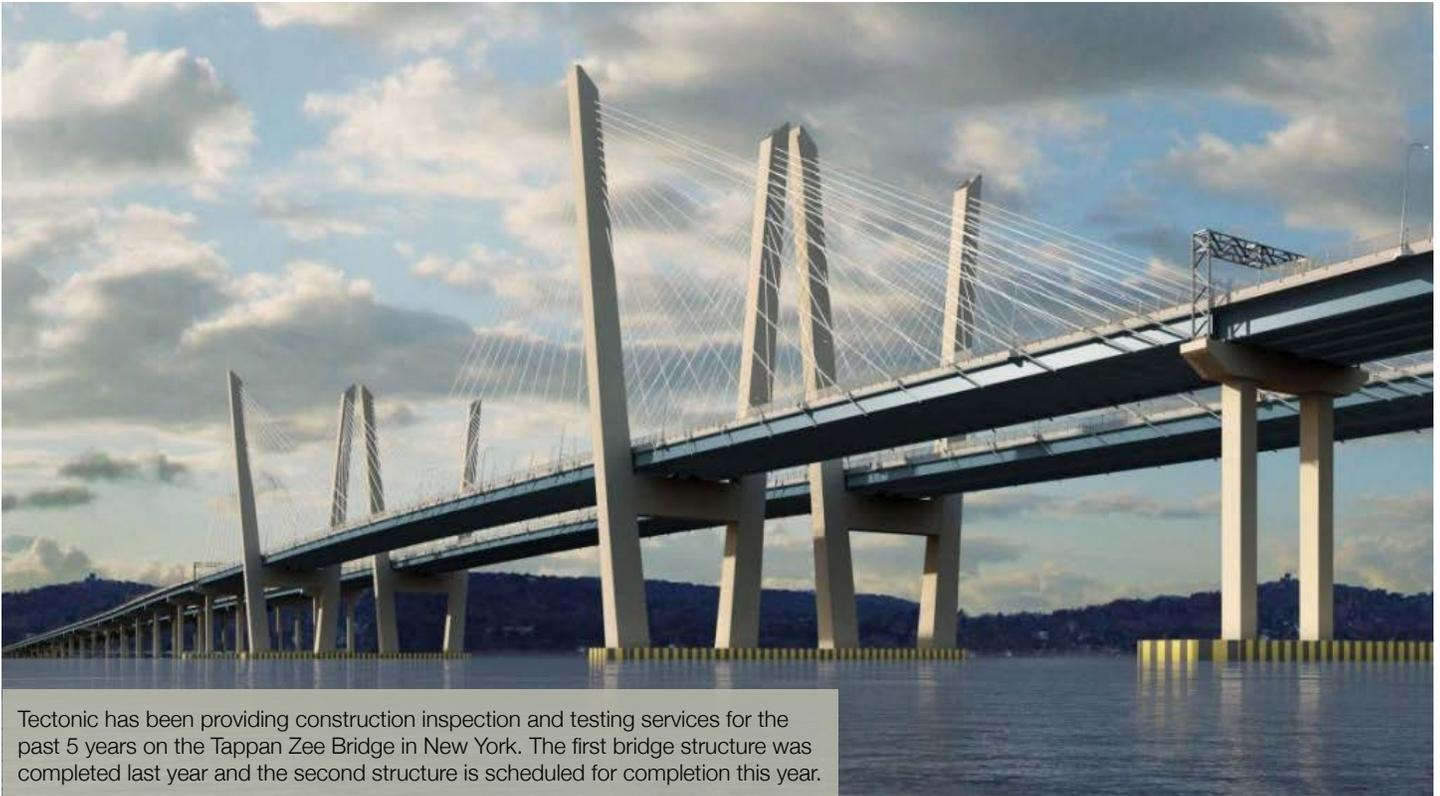
The program is led by industry experts with extensive experience working with and leading AEC firms. The two-day agenda covers areas of discussion determined by those in attendance. It's presented in a guided discussion format to encourage discussion among all attendees.

Follow the link for more details, the agenda, information on the presenters, and venue.

[zweiggroup.com/seminars/ceo-roundtable/](http://zweiggroup.com/seminars/ceo-roundtable/)



## PROFILE



Tectonic has been providing construction inspection and testing services for the past 5 years on the Tappan Zee Bridge in New York. The first bridge structure was completed last year and the second structure is scheduled for completion this year.

## Conference call: Don Benvie

President and CEO of Tectonic Engineering & Surveying Consultants P.C. (Hot Firm #89 for 2018), a 500-person multifaceted engineering firm based in Mountainville, NY.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN  
Correspondent



Don Benvie,  
President &  
CEO, Tectonic  
Engineering  
& Surveying  
Consultants  
P.C.

“Years ago we tried the sales force approach,” Benvie says, referring to business development. “It didn’t work. Engineers want to deal with engineers. We operate on a seller/doer model and then have business development staff who support those efforts.”

### A CONVERSATION WITH DON BENVIE.

**The Zweig Letter: There are A/E leaders who say profit centers create corrosive internal competition for firm resources. What’s your opinion on profit centers?**

**Don Benvie:** We operate with profit centers. We find value in them in that they allow you to pinpoint where your strengths and weaknesses are and where resources need to be allocated. Tracking performance is important because you can make improvements as needed.

**TZL: What’s your policy on sharing the firm’s financials with your staff? Weekly, monthly,**

**quarterly, annually? And how far down into the org chart is financial information shared?**

**DB:** We publish financials monthly and distribute information to cost center managers, shareholders, and executive administration. In turn, they can share that information as they see fit. And, if anyone wants to see information at any time, of course, we will share. We run pretty much on an open-book policy.

**TZL: The design-build delivery model appears to be trending upward. What are the keys to a successful design-build project? What are the risks?**

**DB:** Success lies in the relationships you build with the contracting firms. It’s also key to have a clear grasp of the scope of the work. The risks happen when there is lack of experience with these types of projects. You need to have a good handle on things like what level of staffing will be needed on the construction side and accurate accounting of cost.



**TZL: The talent war in the A/E industry is here. What steps do you take to create the leadership pipeline needed to retain your top people and not lose them to other firms?**

**DB:** You need to provide challenging and interesting work along with growth opportunities. It's important to encourage and mentor those with potential and to send them to executive level training sessions that not only teach project management skills, but also people management skills.

“You need to provide challenging and interesting work along with growth opportunities.”

**TZL: As you look for talent, what position do you most need to fill in the coming year and why?**

**DB:** Like most other firms – we're always seeking mid- to senior-level project managers. They are the lifeblood of the firm. We're also looking for design engineers and construction inspectors for transportation, infrastructure, and general building projects. The main problem with finding inspectors is that people coming out of college are focused more on the design end rather than the inspection end. They see these jobs as less prestigious somehow. However, there are great opportunities for people who start on the inspection side. They can often open up a career path in a contracting firm, too.

**TZL: While plenty of firms have an ownership transition plan in place, many do not. What's your advice for firms that have not taken steps to identify and empower the next generation of owners?**

**DB:** It's a long-term process. You need to identify key players and have a strong management structure. Some hurdles involved include being able to provide the right amount of financial capitalization so flow of income can finance ownership transition. Firms have to consider factors such as size of firm, profitability, and markets.

**TZL: Zweig Group research shows there has been a shift in business development strategies. More and more, technical staff, not marketing**

**staff, are responsible for BD. What's the BD formula in your firm?**

**DB:** Years ago we tried the sales force approach. It didn't work. Engineers want to deal with engineers. We operate on a seller/doer model and then have business development staff who support those efforts. These people are technically marketing, but they are part of the business development team. They work on marketing collateral, etc.

**TZL: Diversifying the portfolio is never a bad thing. What are the most recent steps you've taken to broaden your revenue streams?**

**DB:** After Hurricane Sandy hit a few years ago, we got involved in disaster clean up. We've been finding more and more opportunities in the disaster/recovery market. It's an evolving process. We work on the side that focuses on things like rebuilding, evaluation of structure damage, overseeing repair programs, and environmental permitting. Our geographic reach has expanded to Texas and Puerto Rico.

**TZL: The list of responsibilities for project managers is seemingly endless. How do you keep your PMs from burning out? And if they crash, how do you get them back out on the road, so to speak?**

**DB:** We insist they take their vacation time. In fact, we have a policy in place that limits the amount of vacation time they can defer. They basically have to 'use it or lose it' and not many people want to lose it. Also, if we need to add temporary staff or support staff to get a project manager through a specific crunch, we will.

“If anyone wants to see information at any time, of course, we will share. We run pretty much on an open-book policy.”

**TZL: What is the role of entrepreneurship in your firm?**

**DB:** We have a flat management structure. There's minimal micromanagement. People run their profit centers like micro businesses. We step

See CONFERENCE CALL, page 8



**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1986

**HEADQUARTERS:** Mountainville, NY

**OFFICES:** 13 offices in 8 states

**NO. OF EMPLOYEES:** 500+

**SERVICES OFFERED:**

- Civil
- Geotechnical
- Structural
- Environmental
- Survey
- Program and construction management
- Construction inspection
- Materials testing
- Site acquisition
- Homeland security

**THEIR WORK:** Tectonic has worked on many innovative solutions that have made some of the country's mega projects constructible, such as the rebuilding at the World Trade Center site, the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement, and the MTA's East Side Access.

Tectonic has also assisted *Fortune* 500 companies with turnkey solutions for nationwide telecommunications deployments and scaled up its project management expertise to provide program management services along with engineering and environmental services to achieve large-scale disaster recovery success.

## BUSINESS NEWS

**RUSSELL AND DAWSON COMPLETES HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS HOTEL PROJECT FOR JAMSAN HOTEL MANAGEMENT** Russell and Dawson – one of the longest-serving architecture, engineering, and construction firm in the history of Connecticut – announced completion of remodeling and rebranding of a five story 63,358-square-foot with 132 rooms Holiday Inn Express hotel at Chelmsford, Massachusetts which officially opened in July.

The hotel is owned by Lexington, Massachusetts, based Jamsan Hotel Management who owns and operates more than 60 hotels in the New England region. Russell and Dawson was selected to provide architecture and engineering services and Boston Trade International for the interior design and procurement of FF&E.

“We are thankful to Jamsan Hotel Management for continuing to put their trust in our expertise. This hotel project was a unique transformation project for us where we not only repurposed the exterior but made significant changes such as addition of indoor swimming pool, new heating and mechanical systems, décor, porte cochere, and life safety upgrades,” said Chirag Thaker, president of Russell and Dawson.

“Russell and Dawson has been our A/E firm for the many hotel projects of ours. This was a bit challenging project where we wanted to remodel and rebrand this hotel from an existing Radisson hotel building by splitting the connected buildings into two different hotel brands. We are pleased with the work Russell and Dawson has done to capture our vision for the hotel and they completed as per the

schedule, budget, and brand specifications,” said Ashok Patel, VP of development of Jamsan Hotel Management.

Russell and Dawson has three other ongoing hospitality projects for Jamsan Hotel Management, including a remodel and rebrand for the 19-year-old Element Hotel in Chelmsford, Massachusetts; a redesign and rebrand of the Aloft hotel built in 1969 in Worcester, Massachusetts; and converting a 1912 shoe factory into the upscale Boston Hotel in East Boston, Massachusetts.

Russell and Dawson is a client-first AEC services firm based out of Hartford, Connecticut. Since 1965, Russell and Dawson has completed more than 10,000 projects across various sectors in the northeast states.

CONFERENCE CALL, from page 7

in if there's a problem. As a result, entrepreneurship is valued.

**TZL: In the next couple of years, what A/E segments will heat up, and which ones will cool down?**

**DB:** Transportation and infrastructure will continue to be strong. With or without federal support, states are recognizing they need to focus on these areas and will figure out a way to pay for it. Healthcare and renewable energy markets are also high-growth areas. Retail is cooling and oil and gas seem somewhat flat, but perhaps making a comeback.

**TZL: Measuring the effectiveness of marketing is difficult to do using hard metrics for ROI. How do you evaluate the success/failure of your firm's marketing efforts when results could take months, or even years, to materialize? Do you track any metrics to guide your marketing plan?**

**DB:** We track hit rates between cost centers. Our main metric is looking at the number of proposals and then tracking their success.

“We have a flat management structure. There's minimal micromanagement. People run their profit centers like micro businesses. We step in if there's a problem. As a result, entrepreneurship is valued.”

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

**DB:** Many years ago, during the dot-com bubble, we had lots of work in the wireless communication sector. When the bubble burst, we didn't have good financial management practices in place. Our shareholders' equity was negative and we were out of compliance with our bank covenants and had our credit revoked. Basically, we overestimated our revenue stream. Lesson learned: Don't over or underesti-

mate your revenue stream. We now employ strong financial practices that allow us to appropriately predict cash flow through the use of weekly dashboard reports that show exactly where we are with accounts receivable, billables, work in process, and more.

“For us, organic growth provides the best opportunities. It's those strategic hires – rainmakers if you will – that make a difference to the bottom line. Acquisitions do play an important role, but a lot depends on access to capital and the internal strategic growth plan.”

**TZL: While M&A is always an option, there's something to be said about organic growth. What are your thoughts on why and how to grow a firm?**

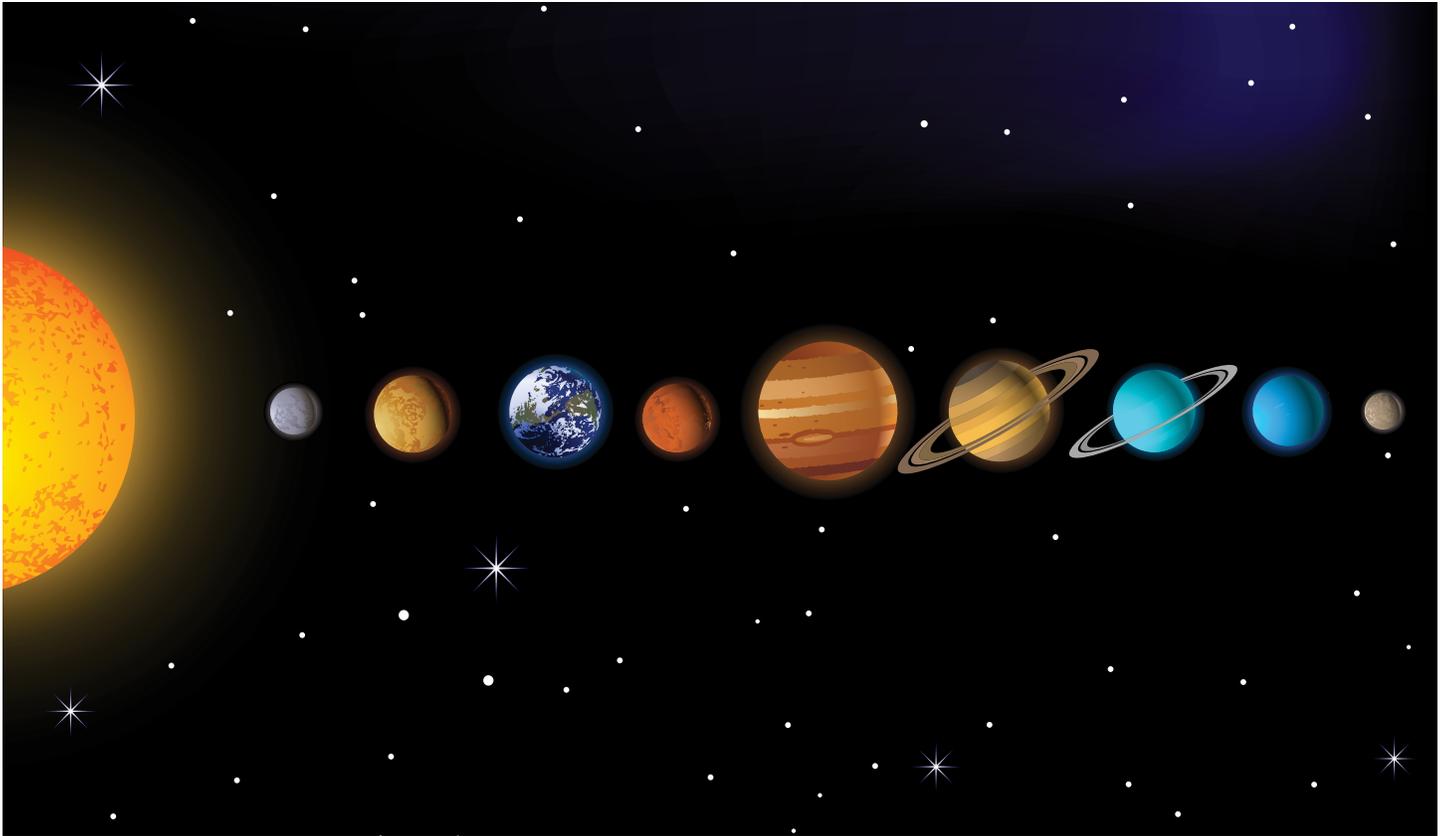
**DB:** We've only done one acquisition. It was a division of a small firm in Connecticut that had architectural engineers who did transportation engineering. For us, organic growth provides the best opportunities. It's those strategic hires – rainmakers if you will – that make a difference to the bottom line. Acquisitions do play an important role, but a lot depends on access to capital and the internal strategic growth plan.

**TZL: Do you use historical performance data or metrics to establish project billable hours and how does the type of contract play into determining the project budget?**

**DB:** Yes. It provides a good benchmark or baseline for future projects. Based on the job, we can scale up or down.

**TZL: What's your prediction for 2018?**

**DB:** We're planning to end the year on a positive note. 2017 was a break-even year for us due to things like delayed contracts and a slowdown in the wireless communications industry. Last quarter we booked as much work in three months as is typical for us in six to eight months. ▀



## Off the shelf

When creating your strategic plan, don't forget that transformative ideas might be buried deep within your organization, so be inclusive with your staff.



Andy Platz

### GUEST SPEAKER

I recently overheard a CEO of a large AEC firm say, “We just went through another strategic planning exercise that included our entire management team. My COO and I do not think it is the right direction, but we’ll print it anyway and then do what we think is best.” In other words, the obligatory strategic plan is completed and then put on the shelf until the next one replaces it. It is never used as it was intended. Instead, this tool is largely ignored and any benefits it could have given to the company are lost.

This sort of dismissal is not uncommon. However, the importance of a well-done strategic plan cannot be overstated. The right one can help the company set priorities and create a vision for the future. A cohesive plan offers a way to objectively measure progress and makes sure all facets of a company are aligned, working toward one goal. Whether you choose to use internal resources or outside facilitators, whether you include just your management team or expand to a larger group, whether you complete one every two years or every seven – these factors are up to the company to decide what is right for their situation. The most important thing is to create a document that

provides direction for the future of the company. This simple act alone provides tremendous benefits that are so often missed.

**EXPANDING THE PROCESS.** The strategic planning process itself, beyond the final product, can be a great source of alignment for all employees in the firm. When everyone has input in the process, through their respective departments or markets, the outcome delivers a better organizational vision for the future and improves employee motivation.

Input can be solicited in the form of department-

See ANDY PLATZ, page 10



## ON THE MOVE

### **BRAUN INTERTEC EXPANDS BUILDING SCIENCES PRACTICE TO KANSAS CITY WITH NEW ADDITION RICHARD MCGUIRE, PE**

**Braun Intertec**, an engineering, consulting, and testing firm with offices throughout the central United States, is pleased to announce Richard McGuire, PE has joined the firm's Kansas City office.

McGuire joins Braun Intertec as a senior engineer in the building sciences group and brings 40 years of engineering experience in consulting and the construction industry, including structural forensics, restoration engineering, and property condition surveys. McGuire also brings an extensive business background with him to Braun Intertec,

positioning him as a building sciences and business consultant who will support the strategic goals of Braun Intertec's clients.

"We are thrilled to welcome Rich to our employee-owner team at Braun Intertec," says Jon Carlson, CEO of Braun Intertec. "As a senior engineer who will lead the building sciences practice in our Kansas City office, Rich's unique background will well-position our firm to service a variety of our client's needs in the local area."

McGuire has led building sciences projects involving structural forensics investigations as well as testing and condition surveys

of concrete, masonry, and structural steel structures. He also brings specialized practice expertise in structural corrosion evaluations, foundations stabilization and strengthening of historic and modern construction buildings, parking structures, tunnels, stadiums and retaining walls. Additionally, McGuire has extensive civil and environmental engineering, business development and marketing expertise from his diverse career.

Based in Minneapolis, employee-owned Braun Intertec is a premier engineering, environmental consulting and testing firm with nearly 1,000 employees located in Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin.

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level meetings or surveys and consolidated by market or service line. Now you have created an inclusive process that can be used by a smaller or more tightly defined strategic planning group to analyze data and prioritize initiatives. This process can reveal where separate departments are heading and identify trends and new ideas. This drill-down approach helps everyone understand what it will take to align the goals of the entire organization. If the only thing that comes out of a strategic planning process is organizational alignment, it's a success.

**ENGAGING EMPLOYEES.** It may seem difficult or impossible to engage every employee, especially if you are working within a very large or geographically diverse organization. However, employee engagement is critical, regardless of firm size.

There are many ways to achieve employee engagement. For example, employee listening sessions and market research by employees allow voices to be heard. Decentralizing the process also helps groom the next generation of leaders, allowing them to research and determine corporate viability and growth strategies. Large, market dominating, AEC firms have been brought to their knees through a lack of employee input.

"The right one can help the company set priorities and create a vision for the future. A cohesive plan offers a way to objectively measure progress and makes sure all facets of a company are aligned, working toward one goal."

Your employees hold vast value for your organization, offering a direct link to clients and a wealth of new ideas. Let their voices be heard. Some of the best and most innovative ideas might be buried deep within your organization.

A formal rollout of the plan can also bolster buy-in. Publish it. Present it. Let your employees know how they fit into the plan. And, as time progresses, maintain consistent

communication on the status of the plan. Engaged employees are energized employees. People do their best work when they are making a difference in the company's success.

"Instead of viewing your strategic plan as an obligation that sits on the shelf for the next five years, take the time to listen to your employees. Engage them. Motivate them. You have nothing to lose."

**LOOKING BEYOND THE DOLLARS.** The best strategic plans generate energy and excitement within the organization. This means looking at your company from a holistic perspective. Mead & Hunt's strategic plan goes beyond financial metrics. We look at where we are going culturally as a company, what our ethics currently are and will be moving forward, and what values we want to espouse, now and in the future.

During this time of very tight talent availability, it's even more important for employee retention. Employees want a firm that has a clear purpose and vision for the future. Younger generations want to know where their firm is headed and why. A well-crafted strategic plan grabs attention and gains respect.

A strategic plan provides Mead & Hunt with a company-wide vision for the future, and a chance to benefit from the collective ideas of the entire organization, rather than a handful of vice presidents or company leaders. It offers our employees the opportunity to be a part of something bigger, to contribute to the firm's overall success. The company's success rests on our employees' success, just as theirs rests on ours. By listening to and engaging with our employees, we all win.

So, instead of viewing your strategic plan as an obligation that sits on the shelf for the next five years, take the time to listen to your employees. Engage them. Motivate them. You have nothing to lose. ▀

ANDY PLATZ, PE, recently became CEO at Mead & Hunt. He also serves as president. He can be reached at [andy.platz@meadhunt.com](mailto:andy.platz@meadhunt.com).

## OPINION



### An enticing aroma

If your firm makes a sincere effort to learn, teach, develop, innovate, and improve, old and new hires alike will notice.



**James A. Lee**

**GUEST  
SPEAKER**

**A**s president of a 400-person design firm, one of my favorite activities is one-on-one meetings with new employees. They share their personal story and first impressions of Shive-Hattery's culture. A new hire recently summed things up by saying, "I like the smell of the place."

This was the most succinct way to say she liked our values – what we do, how we do it, why we do what we do, how we treat each other, and what we believe. Those that fit in our culture thrive; those that don't usually move on.

We once employed a super-sharp process engineer. He had a doctorate in chemical engineering. He was brilliant at analyzing a client's product formalization and redoing the chemistry to make it better, but he wouldn't teach others what he knew. He was afraid that if he taught others, we would no longer need him. He was not aligned with our fundamental values of teaching and learning. He moved on.

It is a responsibility of everyone in our company to learn new things, teach others what they

know, and look for opportunities to innovate and continuously improve. Our employees, clients, and company benefit from this.

**CAREER PATHS.** Shive-Hattery has multiple ways to help employees accomplish these goals. One resource we've recently developed for our employees is career paths. In the A/E profession, there are basically four paths most individuals can pursue: design/technical, project management, business development, and managing people (operations). Each individual can choose one, two, or possibly three paths as they grow their career.

Within each path, we've identified attributes that help each individual develop skills, knowledge, and

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# HELP WANTED

Zweig Group is looking for a few good Engineers and Architects with significant **Project Management and Training experience** to join our team as an outside training consultant for our Education and Training division.

If you are a strong communicator and have a desire to help others discover the skills necessary to be a great Project Manager, we want to hear from you.

To learn more, please email: [rwilburn@zweiggroup.com](mailto:rwilburn@zweiggroup.com)

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abilities to advance their career along that path. Our career paths are not a checklist of accomplishments. They are a resource to start a conversation with a supervisor about career development.

**COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.** Our communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting regularly. Many of our COPs are discipline based, such as architecture or structural engineering, and hold virtual meetings on a monthly basis over lunch to trade knowledge, discuss a pertinent topic, share lessons learned, and teach best practices.

Some are market focused, such as our healthcare COP, and some are practice based, such as our project management COP and our sustainability COP. The singular purpose of a COP is to transfer knowledge within a community of people by linking people together.

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.** Twenty-three years ago, our company president recognized the need for future leaders. Many of our peer firms lacked a new generation of leadership to step into the roles of the senior partners looking to retire. For that reason, we started a leadership development program to develop the leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities of an individual quicker than they would learn through on-the-job experiences.

To this day, we have had two classes running concurrently. Each class will meet about five times every three months to discuss a series of reading assignments, articles, leadership-based videos, and case studies to enhance the natural leadership attributes they have already exhibited.

We currently have 110 LDP alumni in our ranks, many of which have already stepped into leadership roles.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UNIVERSITY.** Similarly, since most clients today value the seller-doer model of marketing, we, like many firms, recognized the need to have more individuals in our company taking an active role in business development. These skills certainly can be developed over time in our profession, however, our director of marketing, Greg Kanz, wanted to develop a group of individuals' BD skills quicker than they could hope to learn on-the-job. In 2017, Greg put together a curriculum and assembled a group of seasoned BD veterans to beta-test our newly formed Business Development University. After tweaking a few things, we have the first group of employees underway this year, and will be teaching a second group this fall.

**INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY.** Technology will drive innovation; how to learn it, how to apply it, and how to market it. Whether it's the fourth or fifth dimension of building information modeling, 3D scanning, aerial surveying (drones), 3D printing, artificial intelligence, or what can be dreamed up next, all we know is that technology will improve and change our business. We all need to be nimble and adaptable to learn and develop skills in these changing times or risk being left in the dust trying to catch up. Investing our resources into the next leading-edge technology excites our people, adds value to our clients, and can easily be a differentiator for our future.

Learn, teach, develop, innovate, and improve – it's all part of "the smell of the place." ▀

JAMES A. LEE is president at Shive-Hattery. He can be reached at [jlee@shive-hattery.com](mailto:jlee@shive-hattery.com).