

## OPINION



# The new realities of business

Current world events are changing the way we value everything. This pandemic highlights the need for collaborative and equitable decision-making between leadership and staff.



**Stephen  
Lucy**

**F**rom supply chains to Zoom meetings to work-from-home orders – our world has changed in unprecedented ways. This time is historic and lays bare any lack of preparedness imaginable. For AEC firms that have had to adapt to decades of flux or stability, our industry is probably more adept at dealing with change, although not as rapidly as encountered by the threat of an invisible virus. Still, those firms that planned for crisis, with strategies focused on staff and clients, with teams trained to mobilize, and technologies to support business processes, may prove to be the most resilient.

With all of the challenges that we are continuing to work through, we need to memorialize and continue to implement the “lessons learned” as they will prove invaluable to our firms moving forward.

■ **The team.** If only one positive ever comes from working through our current challenges, it is the value of a collaborative and trusting relationship with our staff. Regardless of position, we are all being impacted economically, socially, and mentally. There is no denying the toll that our current health and social environment can and does exact. However, no matter how cliché it may sound, we are all in this together and we will only come out of this successfully if we stay in step with each other.

Active listening to gain input from across your organization is essential to understand and adequately address the needs of your team. If asked to identify our most valuable asset, the universal answer has to be our staff. However, we must actively display and respond to that value if our answer is to be believed. Uppermost is communicating that message to staff on a regular basis as information is what they crave. Think about the questions you want answered as they are probably the exact same questions your staff wants to ask you.

■ **The process.** To all those who long for the old

See STEPHEN LUCY, page 4



## BUSINESS NEWS

### WARE MALCOMB ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF DSV CANADA HEAD OFFICE AND LOGISTICS FACILITY

**Ware Malcomb**, an award-winning international design firm, announced construction is substantially complete on the new DSV Canada head office and logistics warehouse facility located at 2200 Yukon Court in Milton, Ontario. In collaboration with the design architect **AK83**, a Danish architecture company, Ware Malcomb served as architect of record for the project.

The new 102,264 square meter complex – the largest facility of its kind in the DSV – Global Transport and Logistics worldwide network – includes a multi-client warehouse and distribution centre with state-of-the-art logistics capabilities and temperature-controlled compartments and cooler areas. The attached three-storey corporate office is comprised of 4,415 square meters of office space including a large facility for the company's 800 employees at the mezzanine level.

Overall, the project features a unique, modern

façade and interior design with considerable thought given to materiality, sustainability and innovation.

"We worked closely with DSV to ensure that this new facility would seamlessly integrate DSV's three divisions – Air & Sea, Road and Solutions – under one roof," said Frank Di Roma, principal of Ware Malcomb's Canada offices. "All aspects of the design focused on innovation and collaboration in order to better serve DSV's customers and position the company for a limitless future in Canada."

The project is seeking LEED Silver Certification from the Canada Green Building Council.

The general contractor for the project was **Leeswood Construction**.

DSV provides and manages supply chain solutions for thousands of companies every day – from the small family run business to the large global corporation.

DSV's reach is global, yet its presence is local and close to its customers. The company

has 60,000 employees in more than 80 countries who work passionately to deliver great customer experiences and high-quality services.

Established in 1972, Ware Malcomb is a contemporary and expanding full service design firm providing professional architecture, planning, interior design, civil engineering, branding and building measurement services to corporate, commercial/residential developer and public/institutional clients throughout the world. With office locations throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico, the firm specializes in the design of commercial office, corporate, industrial, science and technology, healthcare, retail, auto, public/institutional facilities and renovation projects. Ware Malcomb is recognized as an Inc. 5000 fastest-growing private company and a Hot Firm by Zweig Group. The firm is also ranked among the top 15 architecture/engineering firms in Engineering News-Record's Top 500 Design Firms and the top 25 interior design firms in Interior Design magazine's Top 100 Giants.

STEPHEN LUCY, from page 3

days of having the vast majority of your staff physically in your offices, say goodbye to that dream as it is not going to happen. Based on the reports of increased utilization rates and work efficiencies coupled with meeting or exceeding other financial metrics, there are no longer reasons to demand a continuous physical office presence for the majority of our staff. What has not been fully vetted is the adverse impact on staff and their performance created by the lack of social interaction.

There will have to be a compromise reached that addresses the needs of everyone and the difficulty is that there is no one answer to the challenge. Those firms which can effectively address this challenge and partner with staff to create a work environment and firm policies which equitably address the needs of the individual and the firm will have a competitive market advantage.

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■ **The technology.** We talk about technology and how it is a key platform on which our industry is transformed, but did we actually embrace that ideal and invest in differentiating technology or just treat it as a catchphrase? I imagine that you know the answer to that question now that you have had to live with your past decisions for the last few months.

The right technology is essential, but we have to continually evaluate and invest in changing technology to stay relevant. It is not as simple as just investing in upgrades to your software platforms as significant investments in hardware and cloud

based systems are needed to provide work flexibility. It also means investment in IT support including potentially creating in-house capacity to address day to day operational needs as you do not want to be entirely at the mercy of outside firms which have multiple clients in front of you.

■ **The space.** Our workspace will be forever changed as a result of the pandemic. Space per individual will increase, but the overall need for space will probably decrease due to remote work. There will also be changes to building systems to provide enhanced air quality.

In an April survey of its 11,000-person membership by CoreNet, 69 percent of companies plan to shrink their office footprint by increasing remote work. This may be good news for reducing operating expenses and result in increased short-term work for the AEC industry. However, it may also mean reductions in commercial ground up work and thus represent a long-term adverse industry impact.

■ **The future.** If we have learned anything from this pandemic, it is to develop a plan, follow the plan, do what is right for your team, and lead with compassion and conviction. This pandemic highlights the need for true collaborative and equitable decision-making between leadership and staff. The goodwill that you earn from every step you take forward may have incalculable beneficial consequences.

In a recent article from FMI entitled "Looking Beyond the Storm: How to Remain Competitive in the New Era of Construction," the case for establishing a New Cycle Leader was made with this premise: "Leaders of the new era must question their previous assumptions when it comes to people, methods, and markets ... Thinking strategically about this new future requires deep thought and focused, consistent scenario planning."

Are you ready and willing to be this type of leader? ■

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