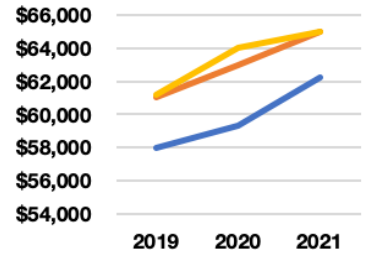


TRENDLINES

Entry level engineering salaries



Zweig Group's *2021 Salary Report of Central Engineering Firms* provides salary intel for engineers of all levels from centrally located states. Looking specifically at entry level engineers in this region, there is an upward trend in median salaries for **civil**, **electrical**, and **mechanical** engineers. Between the three positions, this increase in salary surpassed 4 percent over the last three years.

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Keeping your firm 'ready to sell'

Approachable steps to prepare for a potential acquisition down the road, and why it's never a bad idea to take them.



John Bray

We have all heard at least one story from a friend or former colleague about a negative experience with an acquisition. Sometimes these are even referred to as a "hostile takeover," where culture was overlooked and employees were seen as an afterthought. In this instance, it is easy to understand why some people would be adverse to the idea of being "acquired." This unfortunate situation can occur and tends to be more common in acquisitions by much larger AEC firms, but it is certainly not the norm for M&A in architecture and engineering firms. There are lots of employee-focused and high-integrity buyers in this industry, and an acquisition can provide many different benefits for a seller and their staff.

As the labor market has tightened over the course of the last 15-20 years in the AEC industry, firms that want to grow have found it progressively more difficult to do so organically at a consistently high level. This is one of the primary reasons why more and more AEC firm leaders have begun to open their eyes to the advantages of growth through acquisition. Although 2020 provided plenty of curveballs for all of us, many AEC firms emerged rather unscathed and ready for growth in 2021. We could also see this trend emerging prior to the pandemic. According to Zweig Group's *2019 Principals, Partners, & Owners Report of AEC Firms*, 37 percent of respondents indicated that their growth strategy included pursuing a merger or acquisition. This figure, compared to 22 percent in 2018, demonstrates this increased interest. Other significant factors contributing to increased M&A activity include increased interest from investment banks and private equity in the built environment over the past decade, a growing percentage of AEC firm owners that are reaching retirement age, and simply a highly fragmented industry with many small to midsize firms.

These components and others lead 2019 to be one of the biggest years ever for M&A activity in the AEC industry. COVID-19 and 2020 complications aside, early indications are that 2021 is set to be another busy year, and we expect Q2 through Q4 to be especially active. This industry is changing the way that it views growth and that is creating opportunities, either strategic or opportunistic, for both buyers and sellers.

What are you doing to make sure that your firm is in a position to take advantage of these opportunities as they arise? As an advisor with Zweig Group's Mergers and Acquisitions team, I am often asked a similar question by firm owners: "What can I do to maximize the value of my business?" The truth is that the qualities that make your firm an attractive (and valuable) acquisition can also put you in an advantageous position as a buyer and, more

See JOHN BRAY, page 2

ON THE MOVE

KWAME BUILDING GROUP HIRES VAMA GARRIMELLA AS PROJECT ENGINEER Vama Garrimella has joined Kwame Building Group, Inc. as a project engineer. Garrimella's responsibilities include developing design documents, creating 3D renderings, responding to RFPs and submittals, managing project scopes and reviewing change orders for various KWAME projects, including the St. Louis Major League Soccer Stadium. She previously was an intern at KWAME.

Garrimella has a master's degree in architecture from A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of

Michigan. She has three years of experience working on various architecture and interior design projects.

Kwame Building Group, Inc. is one of the nation's top pure construction management firms, dedicating 100 percent of its resources to project management services. An employee-owned company, KWAME provides estimating, scheduling, project planning, value engineering and other project management services as an independent advocate for owners and developers. KWAME is headquartered in St. Louis with division offices in Atlanta, Dallas, and Seattle.

JOHN BRAY, from page 1

generally, a healthy organization overall. So it is never a bad idea to get your firm "transaction ready."

Here are a few things you can be doing right now to make sure you are ready to take advantage of an opportunity when it presents itself:

- **Continue growing.** In addition to the development opportunities it provides for your staff, growth provides a slew of other benefits for a seller. Culture fit is a critical aspect of any acquisition, and buyers often want to see a like-minded approach to growth in the strategy of the seller. Growth also provides the buyer with the ability to make projections for continuing growth. That growth will also lead to a higher EBITDA (earnings before interest taxes depreciation and amortization) projection, which is a common valuation metric in mergers and acquisitions.
- **Focus on profitability.** This is easier said than done, and could involve making some difficult decisions depending on your situation. There are many different valuation metrics used during an acquisition, but multiples of EBITDA are considered nearly 100 percent of the time at one point or another. Generally speaking, the more profitable you are, the higher your valuation will be. Not only will this give a buyer confidence that your system works, but operating profitably will give your firm more leverage and bargaining power during negotiations.
- **Clean up your finances.** Good record keeping is not something you can easily go back and fix once an opportunity presents itself. If it is not done properly on an ongoing basis, it is very difficult to reconstruct missing pieces or incomplete information. This includes having diligent accounting procedures, good balance sheets and P&L statements, and removing your personal expenses from the books. Having clean records also allows the due diligence process to move quicker.
- **Keep administrative policies current.** Some examples would include human resources, software licensing, labor, and overtime policies. These can be a minefield of potential deal-killers if they are not updated regularly.
- **Start to understand what your ideal transaction partner would look like.** If you were to sell your company, what type of buyer would you ideally want to sell your firm to? What markets and services would they focus on? How big would they be? What type of culture and values would you want them to have? Understanding what you are looking for will not only prevent you from wasting time on "dead-end" conversations, but give you confidence to proceed when you get introduced to the right suitor as well.
- **Build a strong successor and second tier of management.** As a firm owner, there is no greater leverage in an acquisition than having an internal transition plan in place. If you are not in a position where you need to sell, it forces the buyer to focus more on the benefits the transaction would have for you and your staff. Not to mention that anyone interested in purchasing your firm would be equally as interested in your staff and their abilities when evaluating your firm. This means selling more stock to associates, junior principals, or other valuable employees. It is also a good idea to update your stockholder agreement at least once per year. ▀

JOHN BRAY is an advisor with Zweig Group's M&A and executive search teams. Contact him at jbray@zweiggroup.com.



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Extrinsic motivation

Leveraging reinforcement theory will connect the action to the reward and bolster your firm's morale and cultural identity.



Mitchell
Shope

A 2013 Gallup survey found that only 13 percent of surveyed employees worldwide identify as “engaged” at work while 63 percent listed “not engaged” and a startling 24 percent listed “actively disengaged.” Motivating yourself and others is the most fundamental and important role of leadership and is even more critical in our increasingly fast-paced and attention-demanding world. If leadership is defined as influencing others to facilitate change and serves as the compass and vision, motivation is the catalyst toward achieving that vision and is the force actively propelling that movement forward.

Motivation is also a resource allocation process used to direct people toward expending time and energy on desired behaviors. Metadata on work performance indicates that performance is equal to effort multiplied by ability and divided by situational constraints. This evidence-based equation depicts effort as equally important to ability; while ability is largely up to the individual, a leader can leverage motivation to drastically increase effort and performance. Both intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) motivators are important in guiding and empowering employees to feel more fulfilled and boost performance, but

this article focuses exclusively on extrinsically motivating factors.

REINFORCEMENT THEORY. In terms of motivation, reactionary behavior is a direct function of consequences, so efforts and behaviors can be influenced by controlling those consequences. In other words, what is endorsed and emphasized extrinsically is what unconsciously guides and informs future behaviors. This often happens at an inadvertent level to both managers and employees who unknowingly solidify these behaviors .

See MITCHELL SHOPE, page 12



BUSINESS NEWS

CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH NAMED RESILIENT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY OF THE YEAR The Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association has named the city of Virginia Beach the Resilient Virginia Community of the Year for its Sea Level Wise planning project. **Dewberry**, a privately held professional services firm, provided project management and primary technical support work on the planning project.

The firm began by assessing the vulnerability and flood risk exposure of city assets and critical infrastructure for existing and potential sea level rise scenarios. Using this impact assessment, the firm developed planning, policy, and engineered flood risk reduction

measures to mitigate short- and long-term risks.

“It is very rewarding to see this critical product for the city’s future honored by this award. This outcome reflects a great partnership, as well as everyone’s passion and commitment over a five-year journey to overcome the challenges of a very complex project,” says Dewberry Senior Coastal Scientist Brian Batten, Ph.D., CFM.

The firm was acknowledged for using ArcGIS Story Maps for its presentation and making information on the project and flooding effects easily accessible by Virginia Beach citizens. The data will be continually assessed, and effects of this project will be seen for years

to come as the city makes decisions on where best to prioritize funds to mitigate floods.

Dewberry is a leading, market-facing firm with a proven history of providing professional services to a wide variety of public- and private-sector clients.

Recognized for combining unsurpassed commitment to client service with deep subject matter expertise, Dewberry is dedicated to solving clients’ most complex challenges and transforming their communities. Established in 1956, Dewberry is headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia, with more than 50 locations and more than 2,000 professionals nationwide.

MITCHELL SHOPE, from page 11

While this reinforcement theory sounds simple, it is very easy to unintentionally recognize the wrong behaviors, particularly if they are more measurable or visible than what you are actually trying to emphasize.

For example, a manager vocally praises an employee for working over the weekend to meet a deadline, all too common in the AEC industry. While the manager’s intentions were simply to show appreciation for the hard work and dedication shown by the employee, the lasting effect is recognition of an undesired behavior (working excessively long hours). This mismatch of desired behavior (efficient work) versus emphasized behavior (working overtime) can be seen in other settings such as the recognition and emphasis placed on grades instead of actual learning or the importance placed on speed and project count versus quality. To effectively motivate and steer behavioral patterns successfully, there must be a direct and intentional link between the consequence and the targeted behavior.

THE ROLE OF PUNISHMENT IN REINFORCEMENT THEORY. Punishment, on the other hand, can also be used as an effective motivational practice to limit undesired behaviors, but it comes with risks. The following criteria must be met for punishment to be productive.

- 1) Corrective action must be immediate or continuous. The transgressor must be able to clearly establish the link between the punishment and the undesired behavior.
- 2) It must be consistent. Not only does this mean that a reliable punishment schedule must be set for your team, but other groups within the firm must all abide by the same standards.
- 3) The repercussions must fit the transgression. No suspension without pay for someone who forgot to refill the coffee pot.
- 4) It must be continually monitored. If people discover that the system is inconsistent or has loopholes, the effectiveness plummets.
- 5) The transgression and punishment must include an alternative behavior path. Clearly answer the question, “What would you have done differently next time?”

Punishment can be risky to implement in motivational

practices, but if these five guidelines are followed, it can be effective in mitigating unwanted behaviors.

PUTTING IT TO USE. The first step toward motivating individuals is to set the behavioral patterns that you desire to change then determine a reinforcement schedule to effectively motivate those behaviors. Always analyze both current and desired patterns first before trying to determine how to motivate as it is impossible to motivate for something that you do not know yourself. This is both the most important and overlooked step of effective motivation.

Always motivate for the intended behavior. While good intentions may lead a manager to praise an employee for taking on additional workload above their capacity, this subconsciously sets the expectation that this behavior is desired, and others will perceive that behavior as beneficial to their career. Through examining what the actual desired behavior is instead of the highly visible behavior, a reinforcement schedule can better endorse and motivate employees to your preferred outcomes.

Say, for instance, that better employee efficiency is desired. First, determine what efficiency means to the target role, and then quantify it including expectations like target net service revenue, expended time or cost expectations, or quality expectations. Recognize individuals meeting the indicated constraints within the targeted time frames to actually reinforce the behavior you desire. Do not submit to the managerial pitfall of rewarding for A while hoping for B. By examining target behaviors as well as accountability and motivational expectations, clear and direct reinforcement schedules can be used to effectively influence the efforts and actions of your team.

Motivating yourself as well as your employees is critical to maintaining high performance and personal fulfillment. Leveraging reinforcement theory to recognize the truly desired behaviors from your employees will not only boost individual performance but also connect the action to the reward and bolster your firm’s morale and cultural identity. ▀

MITCHELL SHOPE is a senior project engineer with JQ Engineering in Dallas, Texas. He holds a master of engineering degree from MIT in structural engineering and an MBA from the University of Texas. Contact him at mshope@jqeng.com.



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Zweig Group's leadership team draws from our 30+ year history working with AEC firms to teach the latest approaches to managing and operating successful firms – using our comprehensive data set of industry benchmarks and best practices. The Principals Academy is like a mini-MBA for design and technical professionals and is an impactful way you can spend learning to build your career and your firm.

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- "Great course, each presenter was very knowledgeable and I often shared a summary of key points immediately with management or other employees. Well worth our time, thank you!"
- "It was great hearing the high level perspectives from the Zweig staff and their ability to bring real world experience to the topics was very helpful."
- "Everything about Ownership and being a Principal was well organized into one comprehensive seminar. The topics and presenters were well organized. I recommend this course to new owners/principals coming in, and as refresher course to existing AE business owners for reviewing best practices."

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PROFILE



Forward thinking: Michael Anastasio

President and CEO of Bala Consulting Engineers (King of Prussia, PA), a multi-disciplined design firm with an environment designed for relationships to thrive and careers to flourish.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent

As president and CEO of Bala, Anastasio directs the company's development, diversification, and growth strategies. With almost 40 years of engineering and firm leadership experience, he has developed solutions for engineering and operational challenges alike. He's one of Bala's founders and oversees the entire enterprise with a focus on strategic development and growth.

"Consistent quality certainly helps build trust, but we also see project difficulties as an opportunity to build trust," Anastasio says. "Confronting challenges head-on and giving them priority assures a client that you have their best interests in mind all the time, not just when things are going well."

A CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL ANASTASIO.

The Zweig Letter: The firm was founded in 1982. What are some of the most significant changes you've seen (i.e., new technology, globalization, etc.)?

Michael Anastasio: As someone who has spent all of his career in the engineering industry, I've experienced a tremendous evolution with some significant inflection points. Technology has been the primary disruptor and has led to a globalization of the industry. I hate to date myself, but I did start in this profession before word processing and electronic calculating. Let us skip over those minor steps and look at computational automation in the form of programs like CADD, REVIT, BIM, and a host of other design-based programs such as energy modeling, short circuit analysis, and RAM. Clearly, the key inflection points were CADD and BIM – both highly dependent and transcendent of the internet. I leave out REVIT because it's merely the bridge from CADD to BIM. These two platforms have and will continue to have the greatest impact on the AEC industry.

When you look at the industry pre-CADD it looks totally archaic. To discuss it today with our "next-geners" is like talking about the Roman legions. The post-CADD era

not only changed the way we produced building documents, it opened an era of productivity that vastly reduced project development time and improved collaborative communications between the owner, architect, and contractor.

“Forward thinking management is in our DNA and we believe that is what most distinguishes Bala from our competition.”

Now we are in the genesis of the BIM era. This era will usher in digital transformation and again dramatically transform the AEC industry with productivity developments that will dwarf the post CADD era and challenge all of the AEC industry mores of the past. BIM offers the opportunity to create an intelligent digital building that can be optimized before it's even built. The future benefit to property management is immeasurable. BIM has the potential to be the biggest disruption the AEC industry has ever experienced.

The AEC industry was poised for a major disruption prior to COVID-19 and we believe the health crisis will accelerate the disruption. To best prepare the firm, we're adopting numerous research initiatives focused on digital transformation – specifically areas such as digital twins and regenerative design.

TZL: How has COVID-19 impacted your firm's policy on telecommuting/working remotely?

MA: Fortunately, we were already set up for remote working before the COVID-19 outbreak as many of our staff travel and work regularly between our regional offices. The basic infrastructure was in place. The initial policy changes were essentially focused on managing an entire workforce remotely. We are a true collaborative culture and the work from home environment changed everything – how we communicated, how often we communicated, establishing new forums for communication, and establishing guidelines for the home office. None of the policy changes were earth shattering – just common sense. For instance, to be fully present in a meeting you need your camera on. Do not attend a Teams or Zoom meeting while driving on the highway. Make sure you are properly illuminated and in a private space when on a Teams call. Dress properly for virtual presentations.

The larger question is how our policies on telecommuting will change post COVID. While we have not made any firm policy decisions yet, we anticipate that occasional work from home will be embraced more commonly than it was in the past. However, we are a collaborative culture and collaboration works best in person. Personal family health and safety issues will drive the conversation for the foreseeable future and will influence future policy on working remotely in the long-term as well.

TZL: Trust is crucial. How do you earn the trust of your clients?

MA: It takes a constant commitment to integrity and effective, timely communications. Consistent quality certainly helps build trust, but we also see project difficulties as an opportunity to build trust. Confronting challenges head-on and giving them priority assures a client that you have their best interests in mind all the time, not just when things are going well.

TZL: Your bio says you're involved with the Engineering Entrepreneurship Program at your alma mater, Villanova University. What is your role there? Tell me a little about your experiences with this program.

MA: Entrepreneurship programs are gaining popularity in many colleges across the country. Villanova started theirs about 10 years ago and it's prospering as a cross curriculum initiative that combines students from engineering, business, and arts and science.

“Confronting challenges head-on and giving them priority assures a client that you have their best interests in mind all the time, not just when things are going well.”

I serve on the Alumnae Advisory Board and speak regularly with classes in the program. Most participants are inspired by Steve Jobs or Mark Zuckerberg, but the university is responding to a call from businesses for graduates with more entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial mindsets.

While I enjoy helping students with their projects and sharing my experiences with

See FORWARD THINKING, page 8

BALA

HEADQUARTERS: King of Prussia, PA

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 186

YEAR FOUNDED: 1982

OFFICE LOCATIONS:

- Philadelphia, PA
- New York, NY
- Boston, MA
- Baltimore, MD
- Washington, D.C.

PRACTICE:

- Mechanical
- Electrical
- Structures
- Technology
- Commissioning

MARKETS:

- Corporate
- Hospitality
- Mission critical
- High-rise
- Science and innovation
- Mixed-use
- Healthcare
- Lifecare
- Transportation
- Multi-family
- Private school
- K-12 schools
- College/university
- Building infrastructure

them, I most enjoy the valuable time with this emerging generation of engineers to help me understand how they think and feel as members of our society.

TZL: Your bio also states that you've participated in International Service projects in Panama. Can you give me an example or two of projects you've worked on and the end result?

MA: Bala is not directly involved in this program, but the firm does support my passion for Villanova's In-Service program. Villanova invited me to accompany a student/faculty "In-Service" team on a spring break mission to Wacucu, Panama. Once there, we worked with Father Wally Kasuboski, spending a week working on several projects for his Capuchin Mission.

Father Wally, as he is affectionately known, has been there for more than 23 years working on several projects to promote health and safety for the residents of the region. His most noteworthy project is the construction, maintenance, and management of a 7,500-square-mile water system which he and his small mission personally envisioned and constructed with the help of his partnership with Villanova and Aqua America. He has also built schools, dams, bridges, and other infrastructure to foster social development of the region.

"Most firms we have acquired did not address succession early enough and consequently the owners needed an exit strategy. Start early and share your ideas, your vision, and your finances by bringing in young partners that strongly align with your culture."

On my last visit just before the COVID outbreak, we worked with a team of students, professors, and alumni, trekking through the jungle, and installing air valves on the main pipeline from the Canasus Water Dam. These valves relieved the air in the system and increased the waterflow considerably to help meet the current demand. We also assisted in building foundations for a school expansion project. This was an opportunity to roll up our sleeves and work in the field without any OSHA requirements – a true gut-wrenching experience.

TZL: Are you using the R&D tax credit? If so, how is it working for your firm? If not, why not?

MA: Yes. We started our IDEATION initiative over a year ago which engages our entire staff in thought leadership and research that we openly share with the community on our website. Initially, our efforts were laser-focused on sustainability, but COVID offered an opportunity to engage our staff in primary research on the virus and its effect on the built environment. This led us to publish numerous whitepapers, addressing all types of building environments from offices and life care to laboratories, research facilities, and educational facilities. By engaging

members of our staff across the enterprise, we offered them a chance to overcome the helplessness we all experienced during the shutdown and, instead, feel like a part of the solution. Research has now become part of our DNA and we openly share it on our website as a conscious decision to help our society.

TZL: How are you balancing investment in the next generation – which is at an all-time high – with rewards for tenured staff? This has always been a challenge but seems heightened as investments in development have increased.

MA: The future of our industry is in the hands of our emerging leaders and some of them have not graduated college yet. We have a robust internship program that has produced many young professionals who we develop and support beyond technical skill training. The company offers numerous career training opportunities and invests heavily in internal and external programs.

Our tenured staff provide experience and mentorship that is essential to developing our young talent and future leaders. These experienced tenured staff are key elements of our internal development programs.

TZL: Is change management a topic regularly addressed by the leadership at your firm? If so, elaborate.

MA: I often say that nothing is as constant as change and nothing is accelerating faster than the rate of change. The landscape is changing so fast that it is incumbent on us to constantly reimagine who we need to be in the future as the future is constantly upon us. Forward thinking management is in our DNA and we believe that is what most distinguishes Bala from our competition.

TZL: Ownership transition can be tricky, to say the least. What's the key to ensuring a smooth passing of the baton? What's the biggest pitfall to avoid?

MA: When you figure it out, please tell me. We started working on this five years ago in anticipation of my own retirement along with a few others right behind me. There are so many moving parts besides the financial aspects. My advice is to start earlier than you think is necessary by identifying your future leaders before they even know they are future leaders and cultivate from within. Most firms we have acquired did not address succession early enough and consequently the owners needed an exit strategy. Start early and share your ideas, your vision, and your finances by bringing in young partners that strongly align with your culture.

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

MA: I firmly believe that you learn more from your failures than your successes. My best lessons came the hard way and I would say the biggest lesson learned was failing to address issues that make you feel most uncomfortable. Seek out those areas and spend most of your time in discomfort and eventually you will be comfortable there. You may not enjoy it, but you will become more comfortable facing difficulties and addressing them. This is a part of your job that you cannot delegate. ▀



Keep a cool head and carry on!

Things are real messy right now, but we can all get safely to our destinations if we keep our cool.



**Mark
Zweig**

Sure – things are real messy right now. As I write this, the new president has yet to be inaugurated. There is disarray and polarization throughout the government and citizenry.

COVID-19 is wreaking havoc, and our hospitals are full, while the disease is killing as many as 4,000+ people a day. Meanwhile, we have a new, more contagious strain of the stuff starting to make its way across the land. Certain sectors of the economy are battered, while others are exploding. We can't visit with many of our old folks. Food bank lines are long. Everyone's life has been affected in some way. 2021 is not starting out great.

Because of all of this, and for many other reasons, owners and managers of A/E firms may be feeling a lot of stress. I get it. While I have owned a business of some sort for most of my life, I can't say I'm sorry not to be in that position now. And don't think your employees are less stressed. Most know less about the financial condition of your firms than you do. They are bound to feel vulnerable and uncertain about their futures.

But, hey – you have to take the good with the bad, right? There's been so much good in this

business over the last 10 years! Many A/E firm owners had their best years in this business over the last decade. You grew and prospered. A lot of great work was done by the architects, engineers, planners, designers, scientists, and surveyors under your employ – and the needs aren't going away for most of what your firms do any time soon.

So, as the battle-scarred veteran of this business in the room, I'd like to give you some advice. Here it is:

1) Stay calm. Don't allow yourself to fall into the vortex of negativity and inaction. This is easy to do. Things may not be the way you like them. It may feel like your world is spinning out of control. The glass is half full (or emptier). You could be angry. But guess what? If you allow all that stuff to fill up your brain you will not have the capacity or bandwidth to do your job leading your firm or team. You must remain calm and steady. Not to say you want to be a

See MARK ZWEIG, page 10



ON THE MOVE

JAY MARTIN JOINS TLC ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS

Jay Martin, PE, LEED AP BD+C, CEM has joined **TLC Engineering Solutions** as a shareholder and managing partner of the firm's Dallas office.

With extensive mechanical engineering and project management experience, Martin will be leading projects in multiple markets, further developing the firm's Texas portfolio. His demonstrated leadership and strong communication skills build on the existing office talent and commitment of delivering extreme service for TLC clients.

Gary Krueger, PE, LEED AP BD+C, CM, Vice President/Executive Director of TLC's Melbourne and Dallas operations welcomed

Jay stating, "Jay embodies the strengths of TLC; combining his well-developed technical capabilities with an inherent understanding of our clients' primary needs and priorities. We are extremely excited and confident that Jay will help propel TLC and our clients in the Dallas/Fort Worth market regionally and nationally."

Martin is a graduate of Texas Christian University.

TLC is an award-winning, nationally ranked consulting engineering firm serving healthcare, education, transportation, government and commercial markets across the United States and around the world.

TLC provides exceptional MEP, fire protection, life safety, technology, structural engineering, energy and sustainability consulting and building commissioning, as well as theatre/venue and acoustical consulting services.

Founded in 1955 in Orlando, Florida, the firm has 14 locations and has consistently earned Zweig's Hot Firm recognition for consistent growth, as well as Best Firms to Work For recognition.

Projects engineered by TLC have earned recognition from local, regional, and national industry groups and publications for design, efficiency, and function.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 9

blind optimist – I'm not advocating naivety or ignorance. But if you, as the captain of the ship cannot remain calm and "on duty," how can you expect anyone who works for you to be any other way themselves? You can't.

2) Plan plan plan. Plans A, B, and C are all needed. Contingency plans and "what if" scenarios need to be mapped out for a wide variety of different situations. Remaining calm – having a plan – and "pre-thinking" your responses before various situations present themselves are hallmarks of great leaders. There is always something you can do (to make things better). Figure out how you will deal with whatever comes up when you are not under the gun. You will make better decisions if you do.

"Hang on tight. It's going to be a bumpy ride. But we can all get safely to our destinations if we keep our cool."

3) Project confidence inside and outside of the company. No one wants to work for a leader who isn't calm or who doesn't have a plan. Likewise, people expect their leaders to project confidence that the firm will be able to not just survive, but actually grow and prosper in the future. This may either seem impossible to do, or it may seem too elementary to you. But believe me, I have seen many cases of leaders in this business who lose their confidence as they go into survival mode. When that happens, it is a cancer that can be hard to contain.

4) Be creative in your projects. Let's face it COVID-19 – or some other thing like it – isn't going to go away. The need for heathy environments in the places we live, work, shop, make things, go to school, and recreate are going to be top of mind for a long time to come. Likewise, all manner of security and anti-terrorism measures will be looming issues for the foreseeable future for all types of infrastructure and facilities. Even if your clients aren't asking you to think about these things, you should be thinking about them and addressing them in every single thing you do. Show you are looking out for your clients' real needs even if they don't know what those are. Be the people they can count on to protect them and their employees, clients, customers, and physical assets. You may win over some of these clients for life if you can succeed in doing so.

5) Be careful with any real estate your company or your principals own. This is not something I have previously addressed in these pages, but it's crucial. I remember some clients of ours who lost everything (or came darn close to it) in the early '90s because they didn't understand the risks of owning income-generating properties (like their office buildings). When the firm is growing and establishing new performance records every day, and office rents and real estate values are going up and up, and you see how much money your developer clients are making, it's easy to rationalize why you should own your own building or buildings. It is, after all, a classic small business wealth-building strategy. But when investment properties are financed with three- to five-year notes (even though the payments are based on a 15, 20, or even 25 year amortization schedule), those loans have to be renewed every three to five years. If there's a big loan on the property and the value goes down, you will either have to kick in more cash to have sufficient equity, or the bank may have to foreclose. That means you could be making all of your payments on time and still lose your building or other investment property! Don't think this can't happen. We had a New England-based environmental consulting firm client that we had to quickly find a buyer for because they maxed out their credit line at the same time that six of their office buildings that their principals owned were devalued by a real estate crash. We had days to find a buyer for their business and real estate, and were very lucky to do so, or they all would have lost everything because they personally guaranteed the loans.

6) Keep politics out of your company. We are too polarized. Don't add to it in the office because you feel so strongly about the righteousness of your political opinions. Do not try to get your employees to sign petitions or strong arm them to contribute to any cause or candidate. It's very dangerous. I worked at a firm in the mid-'80s where a principal posted a petition to "draft" a particular individual they were high on to run for president. It got a lot of people upset who did not like that particular individual because they felt obligated to sign or face negative repercussions from that principal. I was one of them. Not good. People quit over it.

So, there you have my thoughts for this morning. Hang on tight. It's going to be a bumpy ride. But we can all get safely to our destinations if we keep our cool. ▀

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OPINION



Parental advice you ignored

Reconsider some of this advice, and you may find some insight to guide you through our current world of disruption and stress.



**Tammi
Nagucki**

Think back to your childhood, when things were simple, and stress was left to the grown-ups. The wisdom imparted on us was from stressed-out parents sharing their life lessons – typically nothing we needed in the moment or in the foreseeable future, but rather something that our parents were hoping would “sink in” for later retrieval.

Well, that time is now, especially if you’re in a leadership position.

A few gems were shared with me growing up, and I’m pretty sure I had no idea what they meant at the time. My dad used to say, “life isn’t fair” – typically in response to my “that’s not fair” proclamation. Surely you can relate and even visualize a petulant teenager perfecting her eye roll. Fast forward a few (30) years, and I can apply this wisdom in my grown-up life. Leadership is filled with opportunities to prove that life isn’t fair – you put in countless hours because of your drive and passion, but the effort goes unnoticed. Or better yet, you put in countless hours behind the scenes and then give credit for the final product to a team member who pushed it across the finish line. Leadership provides this opportunity to share

the spotlight or give it to someone else entirely. Fair? Probably. Someone likely did the same for you along your career path. Be sure to look at the big picture when considering fairness.

Let’s try another one. Ever heard, “don’t burn the candle at both ends?” Of course, you have. And when you were 12, it made little sense – since what your parents really meant was, “you need to get some sleep.” However, in their stressed-out world, it clearly meant a whole lot more. Today we’re beginning to understand the negative impact of trying to do too much at once – work and family life have merged for most of us, and as those lines blurred, separating all the related issues has become complicated. The lesson for us

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BUSINESS NEWS

WARE MALCOMB ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF TRUSTILE HEADQUARTERS IN DENVER Ware Malcomb, an award-winning international design firm, announced construction is complete on the new headquarters of TruStile located at 1111 E 71st Avenue in Denver. Ware Malcomb provided architecture, interior design, and civil engineering services for the project.

Founded in 1995, TruStile is an industry leader and innovator in interior doors. The company's new 310,000 square foot headquarters is comprised of approximately 50,000 square feet of office space and 260,000 square feet of manufacturing/production space with a large outdoor amenity deck. Every door throughout the facility showcases a different model designed and manufactured by TruStile, creating a walking showroom of the brand.

Like the company's products, the overall design blends modern technology with old world craftsmanship. Utilizing a modern mountain aesthetic, the space includes an expansive reception and lounge area with a steam fireplace, client-facing conference and training rooms, open office areas, private offices, collaborative areas and huddle rooms, a fitness center, and a large café with an exterior patio. To reflect the company's target residential market, the space incorporates furniture, lamps, and accessories such as books and houseplants to give it a more residential feel.

Access to natural light was also a top priority for TruStile. The design team ensured the layout of the open office areas and primary amenity areas were located near windows as much as possible. By incorporating windows in the training room and at various points in the office, architects and designers touring the space can also get an inside look at the 260,000 square foot production area. All glazing, both interior and exterior, was designed and manufactured by TruStile's parent company, Marvin Windows & Doors.

The project was designed to be environmentally friendly and features a two-story mechanical building located on the north side of the facility, which houses a bio-mass boiler. The bio-mass boiler converts sawdust that is produced through the manufacturing process into energy used for heating/cooling the facility.

The project also required multiple creative civil engineering solutions due to being located within the 100-year floodplain with tight site constraints not allowing space for traditional detention. The site required a floodplain development permit/LOMR-F and a very large underground detention system. The restrictions involved with construction near the onsite overhead transmission line and the desire to limit the export from the site pushed the project to use an underground detention solution that was the first of its kind in Colorado.

"TruStile previously operated out of 4 buildings

in north Denver. This new headquarters brings all of TruStile's operations together under one roof, doubling their square footage and giving them plenty of room for future growth," said Matt Chaiken, principal of Ware Malcomb's Denver Office.

"Working closely with TruStile we created a unique design – from the civil engineering to the architecture and interior design - which reflects their commitment to innovation and technological advancement, and supports long-term success," said Chris Strawn, principal, of Ware Malcomb's civil engineering department.

The general contractor for the project was **Ryan Companies, Inc.**

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, Ware Malcomb 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 a Hot Firm by Zweig Group.

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today: be aware of how much you're trying to do at once, slow down, focus on the priorities, and get some sleep.

How about "stop and smell the roses?" If your parent said this to you in your tween years, I can imagine your irritation. In one ear and right out the other. You were clearly too engaged in video games or television to be bothered with a gardening analogy. Our parents were simply trying to remind us to slow down and be grateful for the blessings in our lives. Frustrated, no doubt, that we didn't find the same joy in a home-cooked meal or an afternoon bike ride through the park that they did. However, pausing to appreciate the things that bring beauty to our lives can provide a sense of calm and balance to the negativity in the world. The AEC industry is filled with creativity and innovative solutions – stopping, occasionally, to appreciate their design can give us a sense of purpose in this crazy world.

Finally, "honesty is the best policy." Growing up, you learned honesty was critical because a violation of this virtue was likely the reason you were grounded. Learning the importance of honesty as a child – even if we test these boundaries fiercely, leads to developing integrity as an adult. I bet if we did a show of hands, most of you would say integrity is on your list of company values (if it's not,

it should be). Integrity is vital to the long-term success of any company. Unlike in childhood, an ethics violation could end in something much worse than being grounded. Conversely, a company that leads with integrity has an opportunity to learn from mistakes and influence future generations of leaders.

"The wisdom imparted on us was from stressed-out parents sharing their life lessons – typically nothing we needed in the moment or in the foreseeable future, but rather something that our parents were hoping would 'sink in' for later retrieval."

At the time, the wisdom from your parents seemed meaningless; but reconsider some of the advice, and you may find some insight to guide you through our current world of disruption and stress. You can take comfort in knowing that wearing sweat pants on a Zoom call equates to dressing for success – at least for now. ▀

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