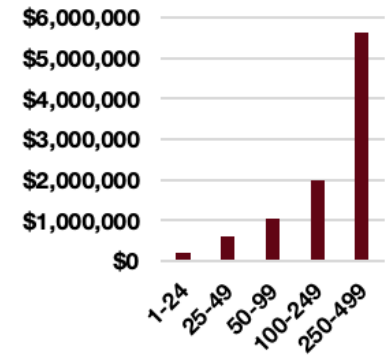


## TRENDLINES

PPP funding



Zweig Group's active [2021 AEC Industry Outlook and Response to COVID-19 Survey](#) asks firms if they received any Paycheck Protection Program funding in 2020. Out of the sample, 68 percent of firms secured PPP funds. The chart above shows the median amount received based on Zweig Group's staff size categories. Breaking this down a step further, firms claimed an average PPP loan amount of about \$18,000 per full-time employee.

[Participate in a short questionnaire to receive a free report of this survey's findings.](#)

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## Yin and yang

Problems can arise when two leaders have distinctly different philosophies about how to run a business.



Will Swearingen

I think I first heard of yin and yang when I was watching *The Karate Kid*, or maybe it was *The Ninja Turtles* – I'm not sure. But its ancient origins in Chinese philosophy highlight the simplicity and perhaps complexity of the idea. It "is a concept of dualism, describing how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent and may give rise to each other." I recently encountered yin and yang with a client's management team and want to take some time to better understand how this concept matures in an organization and highlight some potential issues with this dynamic. In this instance, Yin and Yang (not real names) are the founders of a 10-year-old AEC firm that has doubled its revenue the last three years and tripled its profit margins in that same period of time. It's been a truly amazing run for them.

When we first met with these guys, they referred to the yin and yang of their relationship almost immediately. As we did our management interviews with the next tier leadership, it became apparent that there were two distinctly different sides of the house and that their references to yin and yang were real. Though the division in the firm had naturally congealed partly because of differences in job functions, there was a deeper philosophical divide that would present structural challenges as we looked at leadership succession. The yin and yang had not translated to their successors. In fact, the complementary nature of their relationship was creating an opposite and contrary reaction amongst their staff. The two sides were almost pitted against one another.

When two leaders have distinctly different philosophies about how to run a business, it can be difficult. This is a fact. We have to find ways around the differences and highlight common opportunities. Sometimes, personality and leadership assessments (like Clifton StrengthsFinder) are great tools for teams to gain alignment. In this instance, we used the Clifton program and it became clear how these guys found such a groove with different skill sets and strengths. On paper and in practice they are perfect complements to one another. They have complementary skill sets and perspectives, even though they often disagree on how the business should fundamentally be run. They have been able to disagree and move forward with their business and balance disagreements with the ability to find common ground on behalf of the well-being of the firm.

At the top of an organization, there may be a level of understanding and respect between owners or founders that does not translate to the next tier. Visible differences of opinion at the top can morph into real tangible divisions amongst staff. As a

See WILL SWEARINGEN, page 2

## ON THE MOVE

**KARINS AND ASSOCIATES ANNOUNCES NEW HIRES IN DELAWARE AND MARYLAND** Karins and Associates, a leading engineering and surveying firm headquartered in Newark, DE, announced several new hires at their Forest Hill and Newark locations.

"We are pleased to be bringing on new technical and administrative staff," said Dev Sitaram, president. "Along with our recent acquisition of Adams-Kemp Associates in Georgetown, we are in a position for growth in the market and will continue to expand our teams to keep up with continued demand for our services."

■ **Mark Kilmon, P.E., project manager, Forest Hill, Maryland.** Kilmon is a senior civil engineer with extensive land development and site design experience, offering significant expertise in, storm water management, site grading, utility design/relocation, municipal review/engineering and project management. His specialties include pond design, hydrology, hydraulics, site grading, and design troubleshooting.

■ **Ian Yates, survey technician, Newark, Delaware.** Yates is a seasoned technician with more than 10 years of experience in land surveying, Microstation, and AutoCAD software expertise and design experience.

■ **Kristin Freebery, human resources and marketing manager, Newark, DE.** Freebery is an experienced professional with a background in HR, local government, business administration and development. She has a master's degrees in human resources and business administration, with more than 22 years' experience.

Karins and Associates is an award winning, client-focused firm that goes beyond traditional design and planning. For more than 48 years, the firm has provided exceptional value to its clients in civil engineering and land surveying services and proudly serve its diverse clients from three states and five office locations.

Karins offers services including subdivision/land development, surveying and 3D laser scanning, stormwater management/water resources, utility planning and engineering, transportation and traffic engineering, certified construction review, and construction permitting.

Karins is certified as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) with the State of Delaware, a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) with the Delaware Department of Transportation, a DBE with the State of Pennsylvania, an MBE with the City of Philadelphia, a DBE and Small Business Enterprise (SBE) with the State of Maryland, and a Small Minority-Owned firm with the federal government.

Karins and Associates' mission is to transform ideas into successful projects with superior customer service and advanced technological solutions to clients. Karins places the highest importance on its vision by creating "Better Communities Through Better Engineering." Karins and Associates delivers extraordinary projects that come alive in the communities that it serves.

Karins and Associates' corporate headquarters is in Newark, Delaware, with additional locations in Georgetown, Delaware, Bryn Mawr and Exton, Pennsylvania, and Forest Hill, Maryland.

WILL SWEARINGEN, from page 1

founder or directional leader of a firm, beginning to phase out of your professional career is tough for a variety of reasons. The legacy you leave behind is bound in the relationships you've built with peers and staff but it's also deeply rooted in your clients and the communities you serve. As you leave the organization, you must tend to both the internal and external relationships well in advance of your departure. Cultural disruption is one potential outcome of leadership transition and mitigating the impacts of this disruption should be a top priority from leadership. This starts with the top of the organization and rallying around a set of core values and a mission and vision for the firm to follow.

We were initially charged with finding a replacement for one of the outgoing founders but came to the conclusion that no one person was going to replace this co-founder and that we needed to re-evaluate the overall leadership and corporate governance structure. This has led to a new strategy for the ongoing management of the firm and marks the beginning of a new era. Oftentimes firms want to try to find a way to recreate the sauce that thrived in a previous generation. The reality is you're probably not going to find it, so you have to take the opportunity to make a new sauce. Succession planning is tricky and takes lots of time. Keep this in mind, regardless of where you are in your career, because this dynamic will inevitably impact you at some point. And always remember: wax on, and wax off. ▀

WILL SWEARINGEN is director of ownership transition advisory services at Zweig Group. He can be reached at [wswearingen@zweiggroup.com](mailto:wswearingen@zweiggroup.com).



zweig group

## Ownership Transition Strategies Virtual Seminar

3 PDH/LU

In this is a three-week program, Zweig Group examines the ever-complex environment of ownership transition in an AEC firm. This program covers a range of topics, giving attendees a new view of ownership transition and how an effective plan can be put into place. Whether the attendees are young, up and coming AEC professionals or principals looking at their impending transition, the content gives everyone an introspective view of their career.

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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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## Be on mission

This requires more than just a clever slogan. It is a call to be focused, driven, and dedicated to a common goal.



Seth  
Carlton

**I**t's better to be on mission than on brand. In the service industry, a strong mission statement the firm backs whole-heartedly is a more powerful motivator than the firm's brand. While brands create awareness, actions are motivated by a common mission and these actions underscore and support the brand. Think of the firm as a book; while the brand is the book cover that draws the reader in, the mission is the story and substance that keeps the reader hooked.

Mission statements are designed to organize a group around a common goal and motivate them toward achieving it. This focus on a common goal empowers people to achieve together more than they can do as individuals, meaning the group is greater than the sum of its parts. It is powerful stuff! Does your firm's mission statement do this?

There is no shortage of great mission statements to examine. Tesla's mission is "to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy." The popular car company sees itself as more than a product or symbol – they are aiming to achieve a better, cleaner future for the entire world. In fact, many see Tesla as just one piece of Elon Musk's greater mission, which he sums up nicely on SpaceX's mission page:

*"You want to wake up in the morning and think the future is going to be great – and that's what being a spacefaring civilization is all about. It's about believing in the future and thinking that the future will be better than the past. And I can't think of anything more exciting than going out there and being among the stars."*

The motivational potential of this mission is through the roof – when you are working for Musk you are partaking in something much bigger than yourself. It is not hard to see why so many bright and ambitious people want to work in his companies. Now is a great time to take a look at your company and ask yourself, does your mission

See SETH CARLTON, page 4



## ON THE MOVE

**BRIAN DEY PROMOTED IN DEWBERRY'S CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA, OFFICE; CLINT RODGERS PROMOTED TO SENIOR ASSOCIATE**  
**Dewberry**, a privately held professional services firm, has announced the promotion of nearly 50 professionals nationwide, including Brian Dey, PE, LEED AP, and Clint Rodgers, RA.

Dey has been promoted to senior associate in the firm's Charlotte, North Carolina, office. Rodgers has been promoted to senior associate in its Tulsa, Oklahoma, office.

Dey is a senior project manager with more than 25 years of experience. He joined Dewberry in 2013 with an expertise in design, modeling, and project management for parks, greenways, municipal infrastructure, and commercial land development.

Dey earned his master's degree in civil engineering from North Carolina State University (2013) and his bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from the University of Florida (1995).

Dey is a member of many professional

organizations, including the American Society of Civil Engineers, The Home Builders Association of Greater Charlotte, Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure, International Council of Shopping Centers, Urban Land Institute, and the Water Environment Federation.

Rodgers is a senior project manager and has spent his entire 19-year career with the firm where he manages architecture projects with a focus on healthcare, K-12 education, higher education, and municipalities.

"We are so pleased to see Clint promoted to senior associate," says Dewberry Principal and Business Unit Manager Bruce Henley, RA, LEED AP. "He is well known by his clients as being a problem-solver with a passion for their best interests. Clint is diligent to bring his very best talents to every project, client, and the office each day."

Rodgers earned his bachelor's degree in architecture from Oklahoma State University (2001) and is a registered architect in Oklahoma, and Texas.

Rodgers is a member of the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards.

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.

Dewberry creates responsible and innovative solutions for those who own, operate, and maintain natural and built environments. The firm values lasting relationships, achieving its clients' visions, and celebrating in their success.

SETH CARLTON, from page 3

statement engage and motivate your people to achieve more?

For us at JQ, we gather behind the mission of "achieving excellence in the pursuit of a better community." While broad, this leaves room for people to connect their individual skills and contributions to a common goal: improving our community. Who wouldn't want to get behind that? We pursue that mission in many ways across our varying services, from our focus on our internal customers to our dedication to the end users of the projects we work on.

Our mission breaks down neatly into three components: excellence, pursuit, and community. Excellence in every service we provide, internally and externally; quality of work is one of our key values. Pursuit references the aspirational aspect of our mission; while we can never officially achieve it, we can forever pursue the improvement of our communities. Community is a huge term that encompasses all of JQ and all the people JQ touches, from our partners to our clients to the end users of our projects and those impacted by them – all are part of our community. Our goal, our mission, is to better ourselves and each other, understanding that achieving excellence takes passion and a relentless pursuit for progress.

Developing a purposeful mission statement requires great effort and input, but it simply does not work unless it is personal and meaningful. First, company leadership must be aligned and focused on a goal that is both tangible and inclusive. Think about how the mission statement engages everyone in the firm, empowering them to find their own expression of that common goal. If people are empowered to find ways they can add value aligned with the firm's

goals, then they will not only find work more rewarding, but they may uncover opportunities others might not see. Developing such a culture of empowerment will surely be a boon to morale and business.

"Think of the firm as a book; while the brand is the book cover that draws the reader in, the mission is the story and substance that keeps the reader hooked."

It is not enough to have a great mission statement that is mentioned during firm presentations every once in a while. For the mission to be enduring and impactful, it must be discussed frequently and at every level in the firm. When a team member accomplishes something deserving of praise, acknowledging the effort publicly and connecting that accomplishment to the firm's mission underscores the unifying power of a mission statement. It may be beneficial to elaborate on the mission statement with cultural tenets or guiding principles, which help shape what it means to embody the firm's mission. The more the mission is expressed in relatable terms, the more it is talked about, and the more attention it is given.

Finally, to "be on mission" requires more than just a clever slogan. It is a call to be focused, driven, and dedicated to a common goal. It is the embodiment of the firm's ability to achieve more together than we do alone. Does your firm have a solid mission statement that you can get behind and does it live the mission? If your answer is "no," I would encourage you to spend a little more time thinking about how you can express the mission in a way that is meaningful to you, your team, and your clients. ▀

SETH CARLTON, PE, is a project manager and team lead for JQ Engineering. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).



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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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*Zweig Group is an approved provider by the American Institute of Architects (AIA).*

## PROFILE



## Seeing farther: Tom Newhof

President of Prein&Newhof (Grand Rapids, MI), a 100 percent employee-owned firm that is dedicated to thinking ahead, building lasting relationships, and crafting long-term solutions.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN  
Correspondent

**A**t the onset of the financial crisis in 2008, Newhof decided it was time to leave his 20-year commercial real estate lending career behind and pursue a different career path – one that would lead him back to the family business.

“We have gone against our financial interests to recommend against clients taking on projects that would generate significant fees for us because it was not the best thing for them to do,” Newhof says. “We have a number of clients who have been with us for 40 to 50 years, which speaks to the trust that has been built and maintained.”

### A CONVERSATION WITH TOM NEWHOF.

**The Zweig Letter: The firm was co-founded by your father. Please tell me a little about the overall career transition.**

**Tom Newhof:** During summers in high school and college,

I worked on survey crews for Prein&Newhof. I went to college leaning toward an engineering degree, but not really sure if that’s what I wanted to do. Sharing a name with the co-founder of Prein&Newhof brought with it the expectation by many that this would be my career path. Eventually, I decided I would rather go in a different direction, one in which I wouldn’t be compared to my successful father.

After two years of pre-engineering courses, I switched to the accounting program and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in accounting. I then obtained an MBA in finance and pursued the commercial banking industry. I spent 20 years as a commercial real estate lender, a career which blended my background in civil engineering and my interest in financial analysis.

I enjoyed commercial real estate lending, however, the economic challenges in Michigan in the mid-2000s made

the job much less fun and more stressful than it had once been. In early 2008, management at Prein&Newhof decided that it was time to hire someone to manage the business functions of the firm. A job opening was posted; I applied for it and was eventually hired as the company's first business manager, managing the overhead functions – accounting, facilities, human resources, IT, etc.

“Our company motto is ‘Seeing Farther.’ By this, we mean we want to step back and take a big-picture view of things, looking beyond what is directly in front of us.”

I came to Prein&Newhof looking forward to taking on a new career challenge. At the same time that I was hired, the company was beginning a five-year management transition plan in anticipation of the retirement of five key principals. I had the opportunity to work closely with Jim Cook, the president at the time, as well as the other principals. I also worked with the next generation of leaders who were being groomed to take over team and company leadership.

In 2010, I was selected to serve as corporate treasurer and in 2018, president. Having a non-engineer as president of an engineering firm is not typical, but because of our officer team, we've been able to make it work well. We work closely together and share responsibilities. As a non-engineer, I can handle many of the non-technical aspects of running the company, freeing time for the billable professionals on our officer team to do what they do best.

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

**TN:** One of our top CAD designers has worked for us remotely from South Dakota for more than 15 years. However, before COVID-19, remote work was not something we encouraged or supported to any degree. We believed that daily in-person interaction was the best way to build and maintain culture. However, the necessity of working remotely when our state government shut down office work made us quickly adapt. The technology we had in place and which we added since the shutdown has been invaluable in helping

us to stay connected and accomplish our work from home.

We have found that while we can accomplish a lot away from the office, we need to be together in person, even if only for short periods of time, to be able to effectively mentor, manage projects, and maintain our culture. Having seen how remote work is feasible, we are certainly more open to accommodating future employee requests for remote work.

**TZL: How far into the future are you able to reliably predict your workload and cashflow?**

**TN:** We can reliably predict workload about six to nine months into the future. COVID-19 has created more uncertainty among our clients regarding the timing and/or viability of projects, which has made workload forecasting more challenging.

**TZL: What role does your family play in your career? Are work and family separate, or is there overlap?**

**TN:** Family is important. We emphasize the importance of family to our colleagues by paying them time and a half for all overtime worked, which we view as additional time away from their families. We encourage them to take time to be present for their kids' activities. We don't seek work outside of our geographical footprint which would take employees away from home; we want them to be at home every night.

“Every employee in our company is there for a particular reason, is important and necessary to our success, and should be treated that way.”

Technology makes it such that it is difficult to separate work and family time. We want to be responsive to our clients and colleagues, so we will do work from home that previous generations would not have been able to do. That often intrudes upon or interrupts family or personal time. I think a certain amount of separation is necessary to be successful at work and family – which is something we want for all of our colleagues.

See SEEING FARTHER, page 8



**HEADQUARTERS:** Grand Rapids, MI

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 150

**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1969

**NUMBER OF OFFICE LOCATIONS:**

6 offices and an environmental laboratory

**SERVICES:**

- Airports
- Asset management
- Drinking water
- Environmental
- Funding
- Geotechnical
- GIS
- Laboratory
- Landscape architecture
- Marine and marinas
- Non-motorized trails
- Roads and streets
- Site development
- Stormwater
- Structural
- Survey
- Wastewater

**VALUES:** Develop relationships, invest wisely, build expertise, take responsibility and support community

SEEING FARTHER, from page 7

**TZL: What type of leader do you consider yourself to be?**

**TN:** I prefer to lead by example and by reaching consensus. Being a non-engineer in an engineering firm which is blessed with many capable leaders makes the latter characteristic important. Every employee in our company is there for a particular reason, is important and necessary to our success, and should be treated that way. In my previous career, I worked for companies that were hierarchical and political. I strongly dislike that and attempt to treat my co-workers as peers. That is an important part of our culture and is a contributing factor to our long-term employee retention.

“As a non-engineer, I can handle many of the non-technical aspects of running the company, freeing time for the billable professionals on our officer team to do what they do best.”

**TZL: What do you believe makes you one of the “most-trusted” engineering firms in Michigan?**

**TN:** Our company motto is “Seeing Farther.” By this, we mean stepping back and taking a big-picture view of things, looking beyond what is directly in front of us. We want to build long-term relationships with our clients in which we are a trusted advisor, we understand their infrastructure system better than they do and can bring more value to a relationship than simply designing a project. We have gone against our financial interests to recommend against clients taking on projects that would generate significant fees for us because it was not the best thing for them to do. We have a number of clients who have been with us for 40 to 50 years, which speaks to the trust that has been built and maintained.

**TZL: How often do you value your firm and what key metrics do you use in the process? Do you value using in-house staff or is it outsourced?**

**TN:** As an ESOP company, we have an external valuation performed annually. The valuation takes into consideration industry transactions, industry revenue and earnings multiples and earnings capitalization. Our valuation firm looks at long-term trends and doesn’t swing valuations sharply based on unusually high or low performance.

**TZL: Since being president, what’s one of the things you are most proud of that you’ve accomplished and why?**

**TN:** Being transparent with our financial reporting. We’ve been an ESOP company since 1995 and have very broad employee ownership outside of the ESOP. Enabling all employees to better understand our financial position and how their individual efforts impact our financial performance has been a focus. We do this with quarterly reporting and an in-depth annual performance update. In addition, our team leaders and board of directors receive detailed monthly financial reporting.

This financial transparency has led many of our employees

to purchase stock outside of their ESOP stock ownership. About half of Prein&Newhof employees have used personal funds to purchase stock outside of the ESOP, including about two-thirds of eligible employees.

**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?**

**TN:** Prein&Newhof formed an ESOP in 1995 to transition the ownership of one of its co-founders, representing about 40 percent of total shares at that time. Since then, the ESOP has been an integral tool in managing through subsequent transitions, including a significant transition in the early 2010s. Our ESOP owns about half of our stock, with our employees individually owning the other half. Over time, share ownership which was concentrated in a few individuals has become very diverse. This reduces the financial burden associated with subsequent ownership transition.

Failing to plan for transition is a big pitfall often seen in our industry. Our founders and next generation of leaders had the foresight to establish our ESOP and fund it adequately to transition smoothly through subsequent ownership changes. Forecasting future needs is an ongoing process which we take seriously. We consistently contribute money into our ESOP to maintain liquidity needed to meet our anticipated future ownership transition needs.

“Prein&Newhof formed an ESOP in 1995 to transition the ownership of one of its co-founders, representing about 40 percent of total shares at that time. Since then, the ESOP has been an integral tool in managing through subsequent transitions, including a significant transition in the early 2010s.”

**TZL: A firm’s longevity is valuable. What are you doing to encourage your staff to stick around?**

**TN:** We have historically had very low turnover, which I believe speaks to the way we treat our co-workers and the rewarding work they do. We have a strong ownership culture, which we encourage through significant contributions to our ESOP, as well as making stock available for all employees to purchase, subject to some restrictions. Having a financial ownership stake encourages employees to think and act as owners. The work they do does not just benefit a small group of shareholders or some publicly traded entity, but it directly benefits each one of them. That is meaningful to our colleagues. ▀





## Get ready for a big boom

Firm owners need to be thinking about and planning for the huge wave of business that's coming just around the corner.



**Mark  
Zweig**

**S**ome of us older people who have been in this business for more than four decades remember when architecture and engineering wasn't so lucrative. Heck, I'm so old, the first company I worked for and became an owner of in the early '80s had a major internal debate about whether or not it was morally right to charge more for our highly in-demand asbestos abatement consultants than the 2.6 multiplier we got for structural engineering services! Can you imagine that happening today? I cannot.

In any case, if I owned an A/E firm today I would be thinking about and planning for the huge boom I can see coming just around the corner. Not only is there tremendous pent-up demand for residential healthcare and warehouse/distribution facilities of all kinds, there is also all manner of roadway, bridge, water treatment and distribution, alternative energy, and other infrastructure projects that are badly needed.

We are likely to have a huge, more than \$3 trillion infrastructure bill get through Congress in the near term. That, along with pent-up demand in so many vertical-construction categories is going to be throwing gasoline on a fire that is already burning, and create unprecedented demand for A/E services and opportunities for those owning and working in these companies.

In light of the super-boom that I can see headed our way, here is what I would be doing:

- 1) Tune up your recruitment, hiring, and on-boarding processes so you can be ready to quickly staff up. You will not be able to capitalize on the coming boom if you aren't ready to hire the people you are going to need. It's already a really tight market in terms of supply of talent and it is about to get much worse. Is it realistic to keep recruiting on an ad hoc basis as you most likely have done for years? Or is it time to appoint someone in-house to manage your processes firm-wide and commit to devoting some real money to recruitment?
- 2) Figure out what you are going to do to help keep the people that you have on your team right now,

See MARK ZWEIG, page 10



# BUSINESS NEWS

**WARE MALCOMB ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF MEDLINE INDUSTRIES INC. CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER** Ware Malcomb, an award-winning international design firm, announced construction is complete on the Medline Industries Inc. Call Center. Ware Malcomb provided architecture and interior design services for the project.

Medline Industries Inc.'s new call center located in Dubuque, Iowa is 130,000 square feet and LEED Certified. With a design goal of creating a "town within a town," the impressive size of the call center offers more than 1,000 workstations. To help designate the space, the design team implemented neighborhoods and active, interwoven landscaping using materials and fixtures such as acoustical clouds and colored lighting to serve as beacons for each area. Break out spaces were implemented throughout to serve as individual oases for those needing to unwind away from their desks.

Adjacent to the cafeteria is a light-filled corner city center with access to an outside patio, providing employees an opportunity to connect with nature and unwind. To enhance staff members' well-being, a 5,200 square

foot gym/multipurpose room with a full-size basketball court is available to all employees. The gym also boasts a 2,200 state-of-the-art fitness center. To encourage activity, the space includes a quarter mile track around the interior of the open office.

"Medline's unparalleled growth created a need for a new customer service center, which supports and responds to all of Medline's Core Business Units," said Cameron Trefry, principal of Ware Malcomb's Chicago, Oak Brook and Washington D.C. offices. "With such an expansive space, it was our top priority that the entire facility emphasizes connectivity and community," said Dawn Riegel, Director, Interior Architecture and Design of Ware Malcomb's Chicago and Oak Brook offices.

Medline Industries has become one of the county's largest employers according to the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, with the Dubuque Call Center adding over 100 new jobs. Medline is the largest privately held manufacturer and distributor of healthcare supplies in the United States. In addition to providing architecture and interior design services for more than 30 projects across

the country, the Ware Malcomb and Medline teams collaborated to develop a national prototype for their distribution facilities.

The general contractor for the project was Alston Construction.

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 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.

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because if you have anyone who's good at what they do they will be aggressively getting recruited by other firms in this business. What is your stated mission and vision? Do people get excited about your purpose? If not, they need to be or you will lose the best of them. Also – pay **IS** critical. How do you stack up compared to the firms that will want to hire your people. It is important. So are benefits, work hours, open-book management, well thought-out incentive plans, quality leadership, and much, much more. Don't allow yourself to put off the changes you need to make to make your firm a better place to work. You have to get on it immediately.

"We are likely to have a huge, more than \$3 trillion infrastructure bill get through Congress in the near term. That, along with pent-up demand in so many vertical-construction categories is going to be throwing gasoline on a fire that is already burning."

- 3) Staff up your marketing department to get ready for the onslaught of RFPs needing proposal and qualification document responses. Yes, I know marketing for an A/E business requires a lot more than responding to RFPs and RFQs. But those things **DO** take a lot of time to do properly and you already have a lot of them. Imagine if the volume went up by a factor of two or three! Better be ready for that because it very well could.
- 4) Get your systems and processes for performing remote work

finely tuned because it is going to be even more necessary than ever. I think most firms in this business did a pretty good job here over the last year, but if not, now is not the time for foot-dragging on this important initiative, at all!

- 5) Get your credit facilities ready for unprecedented use, because your coming growth is going to require more working capital availability. That means you should get the largest line of credit you can before you need it. Growth sucks up cash. You have to hire people, outfit them, pay them, and then bill your clients for their services. That can take multiple months. This means you will need more credit available to float all that. Get it now while your business doesn't need so much of it!
- 6) Take a hard look at your future facilities needs and be ready to expand your space. Sure, we will undoubtedly still have a lot of people working remotely after COVID-19 is long-gone. But we will also be having meetings and other gatherings for your people that will require space. And those who do come in the office aren't going to want to be packed in like sardines and will want more space and more privacy.
- 7) Model your pending ownership transition to see if you are going to be able to afford the stock buybacks coming your way as turnover increases and retirements go up. This is so critical, and it is so rarely done in A/E firms it's almost shocking. Ownership transition is going to be a bigger problem than ever compounded by firm values that will be growing off the charts.

**So, what do you think? Are we headed for a boom? Will you be ready to "catch a wave and be sitting on top of the world," as the old Beach Boys song went? ▀**

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## It's all in the follow through

Develop a muscle memory around follow through and follow up to get ahead in the business development game.



**Roger  
Marquis**

**I**n the sports world, most any athlete knows the importance follow through has on their ability to hit an object or move in a certain direction. Most athletes also know that when they anticipate the thought, and hold back on follow through, it will alter their body mechanics, so hitting an object or moving in a certain direction often becomes less powerful and/or less accurate.

In the field of business development, follow through or follow up works much in the same way. When a business developer dedicates a certain amount of time, energy, and resources into connecting with a prospect, often the full potential of that connection (i.e., the power and accuracy for an athlete) will not be realized if the business developer holds back on their follow through. Let's look at a couple of examples to better illustrate the point.

■ **Mixed messages.** As you conduct your market research, you learn John Doe is a person with whom to connect because John is a key stakeholder in most any building design project with which his company gets involved. Knowing this, you take the time to craft a compelling introduction email, and,

with a certain degree of confidence, you send it to him. One week passes, then another, then another, and you never hear back from John. Because of this, you believe he isn't interested in meeting with you and learning more about your product offering, so you move on. But what if you followed up on your initial email and, in doing so, learned John had been on vacation for 10 days and your email simply got lost in his inbox? John, it turns out, is very interested in your company's product, and looks forward to meeting with you. Without follow through you would have written off John entirely, but with it you learn you're still in the game.

■ **Top of mind.** Suppose you go to an industry event one February afternoon and find yourself talking

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# BUSINESS NEWS

**TWO CORE EMPLOYEES ACCEPTED TO ZWEIG GROUP'S 2021 ELEVATEHERM COHORT** Heather Calvert, COO and Kaley Konecny, SHRM-CP, HR manager of **CORE Consultants, Inc.** have been accepted as members of Zweig Group's 2021 ElevateHer cohort – a special task force comprised of individuals with a commitment to promote diversity as a means to combat recruiting and retention challenges in the AEC industry. CORE is proud to support Zweig Group's mission to elevate the industry, and is pleased to have two members of the CORE team join this groundbreaking initiative in 2021.

"Despite this program only being in its second year and many new challenges relating to the pandemic, we still saw significant growth and interest in this program. I'm excited to see how this year's class can build on the momentum from last year and also bring fresh perspectives and creativity," said Jamie Claire Kiser, Zweig Group managing principal and program founder.

Lack of diversity and inclusion are a big problem in the AEC industry, and CORE is passionate about addressing the issue head-on. The firm's president and CEO, Blake Calvert was a member of the inaugural ElevateHER cohort in 2020 and found great value in the initiative. "A huge component of our work at CORE is the overall problem solving and collaboration of people," said Calvert. "Diversity helps us to collaborate, see the bigger picture, and provide the best service that we can for our clients."

In addition to ElevateHer, CORE supports STEMBlazers, Curls on the Block, Women in Energy, and the Society of Women Engineers. Together with these groups, the firm is working to shift the culture and embrace diversity in the AEC industry.

CORE Consultants, Inc. is a professional services firm based in Englewood, Colorado offering civil engineering, natural resources, land surveying, and development services. The

team specializes in land development, energy, and public infrastructure projects. founded in 2014, CORE has created a unique culture that empowers our people to thrive at home, at work, and in their community. Their focus on balance has resulted in happy employees, happy clients, and successful communities.

ElevateHer is a movement and a commitment to Zweig Group's mission to Elevate the Industry.

ElevateHer is about the future of the AEC industry and Zweig Group's commitment to embrace, promote, and ensuring equal opportunities for everyone in the AEC industry regardless of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

Zweig Group serves as an advisor and hub of information and resources to leading this movement – a movement that brings us together to promote, advance, and elevate the industry.

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with a potential prospect, as well as a direct competitor. During the conversation, you learn about the prospect's line of business and realize she would be a good person to know for potential future projects, so you exchange contact information with her. After the event, a couple of days pass, then a week, then a month, and you never contact the prospect again until it's time to send holiday cards in December. But, what if the competitor you met at the event emailed or phoned the prospect every four to six weeks throughout the remainder of the year? When it comes time for the prospect to send out a request for proposal in say, September, to whom do you believe the prospect would be more inclined to send the request for proposal: you or your competitor? Yes, I'd say the competitor, too.

If it all sounds so simple, why do so many business developers fail when it comes to follow up? As someone who has practiced business development for several years, I believe it's a matter of three main issues:

- 1) Not having a follow through or follow up routine or schedule
- 2) Not knowing what to write or say in a follow through or follow up contact
- 3) Not keeping detailed notes

Regarding a routine or schedule, there's no fixed rule here, so you really need to take your cues from the prospect and/or previous experience. For one prospect it might make sense to follow up within two to three days after the initial contact, for another it might be closer to two to three weeks, and for yet another they might be the one to tell you when to follow up. Regardless, it's safe to say that some follow up over time is always going to be better than none at all.

With respect to knowing what to write in a follow through or follow up email, or say on the phone or in person, the most important item here is to offer information

or something of relevance, value, and/or benefit to the prospect. For example, you can forward an article you believe the prospect would find of interest. You can invite the prospect to an event your company is hosting which is relevant to their line of business. You can send the prospect a new research study you found that discusses the market in which the prospect's company operates. It could be almost anything, but the focus must be on the prospect and his/her needs, wants, expectations, interests, etc., not yours.

The third issue, detailed notes, can help with keeping track of the timing and frequency of the messages you send out and the actual connections you make, as well as with the subject or content of the messages themselves. You can also keep track of personal information that you learn about a prospect, like an anniversary or birthday, so an appropriate message can be sent accordingly. What really helps in this area is a customer relationship management (CRM) application, or some sort of database, of which there are many on the market.

As I practice business development, I try to keep these best practice points in mind and, like an athlete, I've developed a certain muscle memory around follow through and follow up. Hardly a meeting, phone call, email, referral, etc., goes by without me making a concerted effort to follow up. With the information provided here, I hope you can recognize the importance and impact follow through and follow up can have on your business development game. ▀

ROGER MARQUIS has practiced business development in the AEC and design industries for the past 10 years. Prior to this, he managed business development and marketing at his own company, where he manufactured, marketed, and sold nautically-styled travel accessory bags. Roger is active in his local CoreNet and SMPS chapters. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).