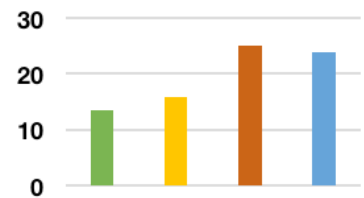


TRENDLINES

Turnover



According to the 2017 *Financial Performance Survey*, **very-high-profit firms** and **high-profit firms** are turning over work quicker than **average-profit firms** and **low-profit firms**. The days outstanding for “WIP turnover” determine the amount of working capital needed to run the firm’s daily operations. Firms must understand their invoicing practices and the implications for the firm’s cash flows. The lower this number, the better positioned the firm is to invest in their operations.

OPEN FOR PARTICIPATION
zweiggroup.com/survey-participation/

Getting back to profitability

“The fact is, this industry has never done better. With average profitability of firms in the range of nearly 14 percent and return on equity of almost 50 percent, there’s no reason you shouldn’t be doing well.”



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

Whenever you look at firms that aren’t profitable, they inevitably have one, some, or all of the following problems:

- 1) The owners aren’t involved enough with the business.
- 2) The owners take out too much money.
- 3) The firm doesn’t spend enough money on marketing.
- 4) The firm does not have good accounting information.

We see these same themes repeatedly.

Notice that I did not say, “The economy is weak” or “The market got bad.” Those are always cop-outs when the real problem is one or more of the above issues. Let’s take a look at these one at a time.

1) The owners aren’t involved enough with the business. I’m talking here about the firm owners who are either so wrapped up in projects they “don’t have time” to run their firms, or, the owners who are so burned out they have abdicated their roles as firm leaders and managers and left the job up to someone else who may not be equipped to succeed. Either of these situations is correctable **IF** the owner(s) care enough about their business to get back into it.

2) The owners take out too much money. Gosh, we see this a **LOT** in A/E firms. The owners simply decide they each need to make more than \$400K a year in a firm that should be paying them \$180K a year. Then, lo and behold, the firm isn’t profitable. Completely correctable situation and one (of many) reasons we don’t trust any income statement we see here from a privately-held company with-

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ON THE MOVE

SASAKI HIRES ALEXANDRA LEE AS THE FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HIDEO SASAKI FOUNDATION AND CURATOR OF NEW INCUBATOR

In a move that underscores Sasaki's drive to solve some of the world's most pressing problems through design, the firm has hired Alexandra Lee as executive director of its nonprofit Hideo Sasaki Foundation.

Lee, formerly executive director of the Kendall Square Association, will guide the foundation in a new direction. The foundation, created in 2000 after founder Hideo Sasaki's passing, has most notably supported academic programs at the Boston Architectural College and research grants at the Society for College and University Planning through the Perry Chapman Prize. With Lee, the organization will establish a more expansive research agenda and seek new partners to drive innovation. One facet of this effort includes the launch of the new Sasaki Incubator, one of the first of its kind within the design industry, at the firm's Watertown headquarters.

"Having Alexandra Lee as executive director of the foundation shows our commitment to expanding the sort of research, partnerships, and thought leadership initiatives that will help create a more sustainable future for our communities," said James Miner, managing principal, Sasaki. "The foundation will bring together committed and inquisitive partners to help solve societal challenges, such as sea level rise; affordable housing; public health; and, transit equity."

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

out diving into the details of it. There is wide variance here. And whether the money is taken out as excess salaries, excess bonuses, or excess distributions – while it may affect the income statement – doesn't ultimately matter. Too much is flowing out.

3) The firm doesn't spend enough money on marketing. Such a common problem.

Whenever you first start talking about marketing in these companies the first question that comes up is, "How much do other firms spend on marketing?" This is the **WRONG** question! Who cares? They may be smaller, older, or have different target clients. Not to mention the fact that most companies in this business are 15- to 20-person outfits. Half are smaller than that! So why compare yourself to them. Plus, you have a problem. Your firm isn't profitable. Top-line revenue growth is probably the antidote to that. Spend more on marketing. And don't kid yourself that "word-of-mouth" is the best marketing. You won't ever get word-of-mouth unless you actually work with clients.

4) The firm does not have good accounting information. I'm not just talking about an "accurate" P&L statement. There is so much more to accounting than that. Accurate and timely project reports are crucial. Understanding where all your overhead dollars are going is essential. Having good cash flow forecasting is required. I could go on and on but can assure you that we see accounting as a problem in nearly every lack of profitability scenario we encounter in an AEC firm.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but if you aren't as profitable as you think you should be, these are the first four places I would look to diagnose the problem. Because the fact is, this industry has never done better. With average profitability of firms in the range of nearly 14 percent and return on equity of almost 50 percent, there's no reason you shouldn't be doing well. ▀

MARK ZWEIG is Zweig Group's chairman and founder. Contact him at mzweig@zweiggroup.com.

The foundation's renewed mission and vision also includes bringing more diversity into the design profession. The board of directors believes that design can lead impact on the world if designers more regularly reach across the traditional boundaries of practice, academia, and industry to partner with others who want to solve collective problems through coordinated effort.

"The opportunity to lead this initiative that honors Hideo Sasaki's legacy of collaboration and creativity resonates deeply with me," said Lee. "I'm passionate about bringing people together and through an entrepreneurial, research-driven approach, I aim to build partnerships, and connect with the design and startup communities to make meaningful impacts."

Lee will curate the Sasaki Incubator, a 5,000-square-foot co-working space that will bring like-minded nonprofits, institutions, organizations, and individuals together, offering the opportunity to partner with Sasaki to test new ideas, tools, and technology on projects to drive innovative solutions across industries.

For more than 60 years, Sasaki has brought together the best of architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, planning, urban design, civil engineering, graphic design, place branding, and data science to shape the places in which we live. Today Sasaki is a diverse practice of 270 professionals who share a singular passion for creating spaces and places around the world that prove human potential.

Take your advice
from Mark Zweig
to-go.



thezweigletter.com/category/podcast/

THE ZWEIG LETTERS

1200 North College Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703

Mark Zweig | Publisher
mzweig@zweiggroup.com

Richard Massey | Managing Editor
rmassey@zweiggroup.com

Christina Zweig | Contributing Editor
christinaz@zweiggroup.com

Sara Parkman | Editor and Designer
sparkman@zweiggroup.com

Liisa Andreassen | Correspondent
landreassen@zweiggroup.com

Tel: 800-466-6275

Fax: 800-842-1560

Email: info@zweiggroup.com

Online: thezweigletter.com

Twitter: twitter.com/zweigletter

Facebook: facebook.com/thezweigletter

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Emotions in business

It's not about what emotions we experience, but how we harness and direct our emotions that will impact our success or failure.



Stephen
Lucy

BEST PRACTICES

In the AEC industry, each constituent group has a stereotypical emotional profile. Engineers are characterized as emotionless number crunchers, architects as artistic prima donnas, and contractors as argumentative hard cases. We all probably know people who fit those generic descriptions, but if you focus on the most successful members of each group the public emotional profiles become much more homogeneous.

In the relationship-driven work environment, valuing your emotional intelligence – how you recognize and use emotional information to guide your behavior and thinking – can be one of the best predictors of your success and the success of your firm.

According to TalentSmart, an EQ testing organization serving Fortune 500 companies, of the 34 important workplace skills, including such skills as time management, decision-making, teamwork, and communication, EQ is the strongest predictor of performance and forms the foundation for the other business skills critical to success. So, as we are all emotional beings, it is not about what emotions we experience, but how we

harness and direct our emotions that will impact our success or failure.

■ **Harnessing negative emotions.** We have all experienced the manager with the explosive personality who is continually railing about everything that happens. Similarly, we have seen the business owner who was akin to an apocalyptic preacher during the economic downturn. In both cases, no one wants to be around them, each fails to achieve success and, in some cases, their firms are now gone. They focused on their negative emotions at the expense of all else.

Aggression, anger, fear, and grief – all of which have negative connotations – can actually turn into positive events provided they are managed and focused

See STEPHEN LUCY, page 4



BUSINESS NEWS

JACOBS ENGINEERING SELECTED BY AERIE PHARMACEUTICALS AS ITS ENGINEERING CONTRACTOR FOR AERIE'S FIRST PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING FACILITY

Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. has been selected by Aerie Pharmaceuticals Inc. to provide engineering, procurement, and construction management services for Aerie's first pharmaceutical manufacturing facility, located in the Industrial Development Authority's advanced technology building in Athlone, Ireland.

Under the terms of the contract, Jacobs will outfit Aerie's manufacturing facility for commercial processing of sterile ophthalmic solutions. The ophthalmic solutions will

be compounded, sterile filtered and filled aseptically. Aerie's lead product candidates are new chemical entities focused on treating patients with glaucoma or ocular hypertension.

"Leveraging our extensive experience in EPCM for fill-finish facilities, we'll work alongside Aerie to support their important goal of developing first-in-class therapies for the treatment of patients with glaucoma and other diseases of the eye," said Jacobs Life Sciences, Consumer Goods, and Manufacturing Senior Vice President and General Manager Ken Gilmartin.

"Key to Aerie's selection of Jacobs to support the design and construction of our

first manufacturing plant was their proven capability and track record of delivering sterile manufacturing facilities," said Barry Ivin, Site Director, Aerie Athlone.

Jacobs has designed more than 30 fill-finish facilities across the world over the past 10 years.

Jacobs is one of the world's largest and most diverse providers of full-spectrum technical, professional, and construction services for industrial, commercial and government organizations globally. The company employs more than 54,000 people and operates in more than 25 countries around the world.

STEPHEN LUCY, from page 3

in the right way. These negative emotions can drive beneficial change in behavior and understanding. We chase new services because we do not want to experience the sense of loss when we were beaten by our competition. We enhance our quality control procedures because we want to avoid the anger over paying our deductible to an attorney.

Also, if you only experience the good emotions, you and your firm can become complacent because you begin to believe that no wrong can happen to you. It may be a hard concept to accept, but feeling bad can be very good.

- **Don't be emotion neutral.** Some take the position that instead of running the risk of emotional extremes, they will simply be emotion neutral. In theory, that may seem like a fantastic approach as you cannot offend anyone if you don't have any emotions toward anyone or anything. But who wants to be associated with, much less led by a person with no emotions?

Our businesses are based on personal relationships, and staff and clients expect you to have emotions, both good and bad, that are reflective of current events. Avoid hiding what you are really feeling, but do not display your emotions to the extent that they become the primary descriptors of who you are and what you stand for.

"In the relationship-driven work environment, valuing your emotional intelligence – how you recognize and use emotional information to guide your behavior and thinking – can be one of the best predictors of your success and the success of your firm."

- **Be emotionally consistent.** We may want our firms to be ready to expect the unexpected, but that is not what your staff or clients should expect from you. Consistency in how you manage your response to situations is essential. You cannot afford to be conciliatory toward one employee and angry with another if they have both made the same error unless you want to drive one away from your firm. If you are

"EQ is the strongest predictor of performance and forms the foundation for the other business skills critical to success. So, as we are all emotional beings, it is not about what emotions we experience, but how we harness and direct our emotions that will impact our success or failure."

consistent, your relationships can be strengthened as the unknowns in the relationships are removed.

Learning how to avoid emotional extremes is equally important. Showing fits of rage toward a team member can quickly alienate you from your team and your clients. Do you really think it is beneficial for your staff to fear approaching you because they are afraid of your probable volatile response?

- **Applying EQ to your team's experience.** We all have different individual emotional profiles and no firm should want monochromatic emotional clones. Just as technical diversity is important to the firm, differing emotional profiles can provide a more healthy and productive work environment. However, as the importance of emotional intelligence crosses all emotional profiles, it is essential for all firms to assist their staff in enhancing their individual EQ. Training, individual counselling and mentor-protégé programs all provide platforms from which this EQ training can take place.

- **The power of exercising EQ.** You should not shy away from your emotions, but you also should not let them take control of your actions. Pursue self-awareness and manage your behavior because your EQ will positively impact your firm and differentiate you and your team from your competition.

According to Dr. Travis Bradberry, president of TalentSmart, "emotional intelligence ... affects how we manage behavior, navigate social complexities, and make personal decisions that achieve positive results." Best of all, the more we exercise our emotional intelligence, the more positively ingrained our behavior becomes, enabling us to better understand ourselves and our teams and motivate them to greater performance and success. ▀

STEPHEN LUCY is CEO of JQ with offices in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and Lubbock, Texas. Contact him at slucy@jqeng.com.

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The two-day agenda covers several critical areas of business management from the unique perspective of architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting firms, and is presented in tutorial and case study workshop sessions.

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- Project Management
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- Ownership Transition Planning
- Recruitment and Retention

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SPOTLIGHT ON: Mike

PROFILE



Conference call: Mike Munn

President and CEO of McAdams (Best Firm Civil #17 and Hot Firm #29 for 2017), a 180-person civil engineering firm based in Durham, North Carolina.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent



Mike Munn,
President &
CEO,
McAdams

“There are many challenges with growth, but they’re all mitigated by making sure only the right people are hired,” Munn says.

A CONVERSATION WITH MIKE MUNN.

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

Mike Munn: We don’t take this lightly. In fact, this is one of my primary focus areas. We believe the most effective retention tool (and growth tool for our firm) is in career development and the ability for our stars to grow and prosper in their careers here, while working on the best projects, and for the best clients. While I believe that 75 percent of a

person’s development is dictated by the individual, we’re heavily focused on that remaining 25 percent to make sure our culture promotes and accelerates stars along an exciting career path.

Growth is a tenet of our firm, which creates lots of new and exciting opportunities for our teammates. In our all-hands meetings, I commonly cite that, going forward, each successive year will be “the best year ever.” Then I challenge them by asking if they’re stretching and growing to ensure that *they* are having the “best year ever” in their career. I am a poster boy, having risen from entry-level project engineer to CEO in less than 15 years.

Our leadership team understands, first-hand, how important it is to have personal engagement with their rising stars, helping each of them to envision a bigger future for themselves here at McAdams and then coaching and mentoring those rising stars.





As we identify shining stars, we have an incredibly successful ownership transition program that rewards our top performers and incentivizes them to increase the value of the company, while benefitting from real wealth creation. Today roughly 15 percent of our employees are McAdams' stockholders.

“Growth is a tenet of our firm, which creates lots of new and exciting opportunities for our teammates. In our all-hands meetings, I commonly cite that, going forward, each successive year will be ‘the best year ever.’”

In addition to career development and our ownership program, we have a great culture. Our HR team is deeply engaged and they pull out all the stops to ensure that our folks feel connected to the “McAdams community,” feel appreciated for their contributions, and are rewarded for their efforts.

TZL: Monthly happy hours and dog friendly offices. What do today’s CEOs need to know about today’s workforce?

MM: By-and-large, I believe the superstars in today’s workforce want the same thing that dynamic impact players of prior generations have always craved – opportunity to excel as an individual while being on a winning team filled with like-minded high performers.

This generation is more motivated and vested in understanding the purpose of their work and our company’s work. The sense of making a positive impact and contributing to a greater purpose is as important to them as their compensation, which is why we reinforce the personal nature our work has in the lives of people who will use the places we create.

We also talk a lot about “authenticity” for today’s workforce. We have to be who we are, and we have to be as open and transparent about where we want to go as a firm. If that doesn’t pair up with the candidate then we don’t try to make it fit. This generation, more than any, can tell a fake from a mile away. They’re looking for a place that’s transparent and honest ... what they would say is “real.” While a leadership structure is important, they will not tolerate layers of bureaucracy that does not allow for streamlined communication, sharing of ideas and the opportunity for accelerated upward mobility.

TZL: In the event of failure, how does your firm react?

MM: We’ve been fortunate to not experience any events that we categorize as “failures.” However, as a growing company, we understand the importance of taking risks. Guided by our five-year vision and strategic plan, we’re doing lots of things simultaneously, and everything isn’t perfect. When

we run up against challenges or adversity, we collectively assess what’s happening, adjust tact and get back to it.

What’s most important is that we’re unified and aligned about our goals throughout the organization. This makes it easier for us to overcome whatever obstacles may come our way.

TZL: The A/E market is great right now. What are you doing to cushion your firm in the event of a downturn?

MM: We’ve targeted office locations in growth markets where we strongly believe in the underpinning of their economic drivers. Additionally, we have a deliberate focus on delivering market sector expertise for a diversity of client sectors. For example, we’ve invested heavily into becoming experts within higher education, healthcare, energy and public sectors during this economic expansion to mitigate the effects of a slowdown in our residential or commercial sectors. We believe sector and geographic diversity are important, but we also believe that the best protection against the effects of a downturn in any sector is to be a definitive expert with a deeper understanding of the needs of each client, and a willingness to adapt to serve their specific needs.

TZL: How do you deal with underperforming employees? What are your steps for removal after they have proven to be ineffective, or even counterproductive, to your firm?

MM: Most times, our rigorous and deliberate hiring process helps us avoid this situation. However, when faced with it, we can’t let it go unchecked. Our managers work closely with our HR department to have those unpleasant conversations and to provide a very specific performance improvement plan for the employee. It’s reassuring to know that several times heightened communications and more specific expectations have resolved the problem. In other instances, it becomes clear to both parties that it’s not going to work and the employee usually decides to pursue something else.

“This generation is more motivated and vested in understanding the purpose of their work and our company’s work. The sense of making a positive impact and contributing to a greater purpose is as important to them as their compensation.”

TZL: Firms that have principals and firm owners that lower their compensation and invest back into the firm perform better, grow quicker, and have higher valuations. How do you balance owner compensation with investment in the firm?

See CONFERENCE CALL, page 8

BUSINESS NEWS

O'CONNELL ROBERTSON AND ALAMO COLLEGES FOUNDATION HOST 4TH ANNUAL A/E JOB SHADOW DAY

On October 13, 68 students enrolled in the architecture and engineering programs at San Antonio College shadowed at 20 participating local firms as part of the Fourth Annual SAC A/E Job Shadow Day. Students were assigned in groups to firms across San Antonio based on career interests. They visited workspaces, took project tours, and participated in project meetings. They observed how the different disciplines collaborate across project phasing, gained exposure to design software utilized, and discussed the skills and education required to attain their chosen profession.

Daniel, a SAC engineering student stated, "The Job Shadow was an amazing, career-changing event. It made me realize I want to be a civil engineer, and how we can make a big impact in the world."

O'Connell Robertson, which hosted the event with the Alamo Colleges Foundation and sponsored lunch, started the program in 2014 with the architecture and engineering program coordinators at SAC and Alamo Colleges Foundation staff. Following the shadow, students and representatives from each firm gathered for a catered lunch on the San Antonio College campus. Leaders from Alamo Colleges, San Antonio College and the Alamo Colleges Foundation were also in attendance.

"The Architecture/Engineering Job Shadow Day is an example of experiential learning at its finest," says Dr. Robert Vela, president of San Antonio College. "Each year, the number of firms which participate has grown, and the companies involved have been very generous with their time and talents in giving our students an up-close look at their

profession. Our students return from the day energized. They gain an enthusiasm for their major. Several students remember the day as a turning point on their academic pathway to success after college."

O'Connell Robertson has had projects on the San Antonio College campus since opening their San Antonio office in 2000. Participating firms include: Alamo Architects, Bain Medina Bain, Big Red Dog Engineering, CNG Engineering, Ford, Powell & Carson Architects, HEB Architect/Engineering Department, IES, Lake Flato Architects, LPA Architects, Munoz & Company, Overland Partners, PBK, RVK Architects, Terracon, and WestEast Design.

O'Connell Robertson is a full-service architecture and engineering firm whose mission-driven approach creates educational environments that enrich the lives of the people they were designed to serve.

CONFERENCE CALL, from page 7

MM: From the beginning, John McAdams created a culture that focuses on the long-term by maintaining company health and relevancy. Our culture fosters the benefits of growth for advancing our careers; for serving the best clients on the best projects; for advancing the careers of the up-and-comers; and for growing wealth in ownership. Growth requires cash, and there is no way to achieve that growth and ever-increasing stature of our firm if we sweep the profits out every year. We reward ownership, but we overwhelmingly leave the money in the firm to grow the firm and ultimately grow the owner's equity when they become a divestor.

"Marketing is instrumental to our current success, and increasingly more vital for our vision for the future. Our ability to effectively and attractively communicate our story to prospective clients (and prospective hires) is instrumental for our strategic initiatives in growth, diversification, and geographic expansion."

TZL: How does marketing contribute to your success rate? Are you content with your marketing efforts, or do you think you should increase/decrease marketing?

MM: Marketing is instrumental to our current success, and increasingly more vital for our vision for the future. Our ability to effectively and attractively communicate our story to prospective clients (and prospective hires) is instrumental for our strategic initiatives in growth, diversification, and geographic expansion. We're never content. As we continue to have success in new sectors and grow geographically, we will continue to increase our investments in marketing.

"The single most important thing to get right is to hire the right people. If we get the right people inside our 'boat' it ensures that we protect (or even enhance) our company culture."

TZL: If there was one program, course, or degree program that you could take or recommend before becoming a principal or owner, what would it be?

MM: In addition to coursework in finance, a minor in communications would probably be the most helpful.

TZL: What's the greatest challenge presented by growth?

MM: There are a number of managerial and analytical challenges that come to mind, but the single most important thing to get right is to hire the right people. If we get the right people inside our "boat" it ensures that we protect (or even enhance) our company culture; it means we protect our plan quality; and it enables growth of our current team. There are many challenges with growth, but they're all mitigated by making sure only the right people are hired.

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

MM: It's critical – especially for market sector leadership and geographic office leadership. We work to set ourselves apart from other firms because of how we get to know each client's needs. What can we do differently for them? How can we help them achieve something great? These questions require entrepreneurial thinking.

TZL: What's your prediction for the next five years?

MM: Right now we're on track for 22-23 percent growth for 2017 – all organic. Our vision for the next five years is roughly 20 percent annualized growth through a combination of organic growth and acquisitions for geographic expansion. ▀



Schmucks in the office

They're everywhere, and the key to dealing with them is to understand and appreciate their bad behavior by exercising a little empathy.



Michelle Joy



Jody Foster

GUEST SPEAKERS



We spend a lot of our lives at work. So it makes sense to acknowledge that a difficult workplace can make life miserable. Often, there is a disruptive person at work who throws the whole place off kilter. Co-workers feel miserable, angry, and frustrated. They feel their creativity, productivity, and commitment drain away. They want something to change but don't know what steps to take and often just hope the difficult worker changes. Which unfortunately never happens.

THE COUNTER-INTUITIVE SOLUTION. But there is, in fact, a way forward. It can seem counterintuitive and downright frustrating, but it's simple, and it works. The key is committing to it and entrusting the idea that each individual has a responsibility to help make the workplace better.

The approach can be summed up in just one word: Empathy. Empathy is the key to managing difficult workplace relationships. And in this context it means really trying to understand and appreciate the very person you likely have the least desire to think or care about. But when we look at what might be driving disruptive individuals to act the way they do, we can begin to understand them, empathize with them, and even begin to work better together with these three steps:

“Empathy is the key to managing difficult workplace relationships. And in this context it means really trying to understand and appreciate the very person that you likely have the least desire to think or care about.”

- 1) What is the pattern of behavior?** Step one is trying to nail down the individual's pattern of behavior. What exactly is disruptive about how they act? Maybe they are always overestimating their abilities and blaming others for any shortcomings. Perhaps the person explodes when their authority is

See MICHELLE JOY and JODY FOSTER, page 10

BUSINESS NEWS

THE CONGRESS COMPANIES TO BREAK GROUND ON \$60 MILLION WHITE PLAINS INSTITUTE FOR REHABILITATION & HEALTHCARE, WHITE PLAINS, NY

White Plains Healthcare Properties I, LLC selected the Congress Companies as developer and the joint venture Congress/Consigli JV as the construction manager for its 110,000 square foot rehabilitation and skilled nursing facility. Design for the facility is by **The Architectural Team**, Chelsea, Massachusetts.

The \$60 million dollar facility consists of 160 beds of skilled nursing, including 76 specialized rehabilitation beds, 42 Alzheimer's secure beds, and 42 long-term care beds, each on specially designed nursing units.

Congress' strong track record in the rehabilitation and skilled nursing sectors

includes more than 100 SNF and AL projects. Over the past 45 years, Congress has completed more than 9,000 beds and 5 million square feet of health care and long-term care construction throughout the eastern United States. Congress' recent senior living and health care projects include a 110-unit assisted living facility in Hillsborough, New Jersey; a 120-bed SNF in Hope, New Jersey; a 74-unit, 86,000 square foot assisted living facility in Easton, Massachusetts; a 45-bed, 45,000 square foot assisted living and memory care facility in Windsor, Vermont; and an 83-bed, 76,000 square foot assisted living facility in Ipswich, Massachusetts.

William Nicholson, CEO of Congress, said, "We are excited to have completed our work with the NY Department of Health,

our construction financing, and our work with the city of White Plains for this project. Congress' unique design/build/turnkey delivery method was perfectly suited for the tenant, EPIC Healthcare. EPIC CEO Lizer Jozefovic and his team are committed to the future of rehabilitation and skilled nursing. We are also pleased to continue our relationship and collaboration with TAT, which has been successful for more than three decades and 30 projects."

Congress/Consigli JV worked with TAT and EPIC to bring the project through preconstruction to the construction phase, providing scheduling, line item budgeting, value engineering, cost estimating, and evaluations of alternative building system options.

MICHELLE JOY and JODY FOSTER, from page 9

threatened. Some difficult workers frustrate us by cutting corners and always falling short on tasks – and then lying about it! Yet others are a pain with their need for perfection, orderliness, and control.

Whatever it may be, the task is to figure out just what the pattern of behavior is. What is the action that bothers you and in what settings does it occur? Only by having a clear sense of the problem can you find a solution.

2) Empathy and understanding. The key here is thinking about why the person might be acting so disruptively. Much like a child throwing a tantrum, the goal is not necessarily to be bad but the difficult person often doesn't know another way to handle stressful situations. In understanding their behavior, we can have empathy for their situation, and figure out ways to engage them rather than merely complaining about how frustrating they are.

Begin by asking what you know about this person? What is her life like? What is the office like for her? What is she worried about that she covers up by being difficult? Because that's what is usually going on: The bad actor has some internal struggle that is causing the inappropriate behavior.

"When we look at what might be driving disruptive individuals to act the way they do, we can begin to understand them, empathize with them, and even begin to work better together."

Even acknowledging that general conclusion can be incredibly comforting. The person that is making your life a living hell is actually insecure and taking it out on you. The arrogant, condescending person is often covering up their own feelings of inadequacy. Once you understand this, you can acknowledge that little compliments might avoid a blowout. The inflexible micromanager is only controlling you because she is out of control and overwhelmed. Recognizing this can provide for the technique of avoiding challenges over details and expressing appreciation for their dedication (while emphasizing yours!).

While each difficult person might be different, there tends to be general types. And once you figure out what they're struggling to cover up, you can approach them with more empathy and specific techniques that minimize their anxiety. At the end of the day, even if you're the one doing the legwork, this will make your job and your workday more pleasant.

"Instead of just hoping that the difficult person changes, each of us has the ability – and responsibility – to improve the office. Committing to the steps of identifying patterns of behavior, harnessing empathy, and looking at our own contributions can all help to improve our time at work."

3) What am I contributing? The last step is figuring out why the person's pattern of behavior bothers you so much. As much as the disruptive co-worker is labelled as a "jerk" or "schmuck" it is just as important to figure out why we are bothered by the behavior. Why do you hate being blamed? Does the individual remind you of someone else in your life? Is there a reason that certain demands rub you the wrong way?

By assessing your own contribution to the problem, you are more likely to be able to take a step back and diffuse some negative feelings for the disruptive person that you are carrying with you throughout the day.

While certain people at work can be extremely frustrating, we can take solace in knowing that there is a way forward. Instead of just hoping that the difficult person changes, each of us has the ability – and responsibility – to improve the office. Committing to the steps of identifying patterns of behavior, harnessing empathy, and looking at our own contributions can all help to improve our time at work. ▀

DR. MICHELLE JOY and DR. JODY FOSTER are the authors of *The Schmuck in My Office: How to Deal Effectively with Difficult People at Work*. For more information, please visit, schmuckinmyoffice.com.

OPINION



Calling the shots

When taking control of proposals, squat down, get dirty, and just like a baseball catcher out on the diamond, manage your team.



Javier
Suarez

POP
MARKETING

Johnny Bench, one of the greatest baseball catchers of all time, said: “The catcher is in the middle of everything. He sees it best.” Having spent 12 years as a catcher, with the busted knees to prove it, I can attest to those words and how applicable they are to a marketing professional coordinating a proposal effort. Even though the manager oversees the team, the catcher is the one “in the trenches” leading the players on the field.

The proposal process is long, tedious, and repetitive, but at the same time exciting. You must be driven to guide it successfully time and time again, just like a catcher. Here are some of the similarities that could get you thinking like one during your next proposal:

- 1) Deep knowledge of the competition.** Studying other teams, their roster, lineups, bench, viewing tapes, and understanding each batter’s idiosyncrasies and how they have fared against different pitchers are just some of the research a catcher dives into to prepare for a game. Similarly, we should study our competition, our history against them, their relationship with the client, their differentiators, and their possible approaches for the project at hand.

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- 2) Positioning the players.** Just like a catcher, marketers have the perfect vantage point to position and adjust the players during the proposal cycle. It is always challenging to keep practitioners engaged. Technical staff are working on multiple chargeable

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BUSINESS NEWS

KBRWYLE WINS SEAT ON \$500 MILLION REMIS CONTRACT FOR THE ISS KBR, Inc. announced its global government services business, KBRwyle, has won a seat on the NASA Research, Engineering, Mission Integration Services contract to provide research and engineering products and services for the International Space Station. NASA's Johnson Space Center awarded this contract, which has a five-year base period and a two-year option with a maximum ceiling value of \$500 million.

Under this multi-award contract, KBRwyle will have the opportunity to compete on task orders to support NASA's ISS program and potentially other NASA organizations and federal government agencies.

KBRwyle may provide spaceflight and ground hardware and software development, engineering function sustainment, engineering services, payload facility integration assistance, and research mission integration and operations services. The company will primarily perform this work at NASA's Johnson Space Center.

"KBRwyle has a history of solving the challenges of human spaceflight, pioneering breakthroughs in microgravity research, and providing innovative engineering and technical solutions to NASA," said Stuart Bradie, KBR president and CEO. "We are proud to continue this legacy supporting NASA and the International Space Station."

KBRwyle has supported the ISS for more than 16 years. As the number one life sciences provider to NASA, the company has been engaged in a broad range of human

spaceflight activities for NASA for almost five decades. KBRwyle has worked with every U.S. astronaut since 1968, including record-breaking astronaut Peggy Whitson. The company has also supported 135 Space Shuttle missions and seven NASA human spaceflight programs beginning with Gemini.

Expected revenue associated with this project will be booked into backlog of unfilled orders for KBR's government services business segment as task orders are awarded.

BURNS & MCDONNELL COMPLETES EXPANDED POWER ASSET TESTING AND RESEARCH LAB

Today's demand for a smarter and more resilient power grid requires a leap forward in planning, analysis, and assessment of everything from load flows, and reliability to operational efficiency, standards compliance, and total lifecycle costs.

As part of an effort to assist the T&D industry in meeting today's demands, **Burns & McDonnell** has completed a large-scale expansion of its Asset Health Center, a facility dedicated to analytics, data collection, and testing of advanced new power equipment being deployed in response to an upsurge in renewable power sources and other distributed generation being connected to the grid. Completed for \$100,000 at the firm's world headquarters in Kansas City, the center serves as an equipment testing and demonstration resource free of charge for current clients.

With a surge of renewable power sources flooding the grid, along with new demands created by increasing numbers of electric

vehicle charging stations and other new demands, utilities face unprecedented challenges. New and more advanced technologies are required to provide the flexibility and data needed by grid operators to maintain resilience and reliability.

The newly upgraded Burns & McDonnell Asset Health Center will enable real-time testing and demonstration of substation monitoring equipment and automation systems, enabling better prediction of failures and equipment deterioration. The center will enable Burns & McDonnell to work closely with equipment vendors and suppliers to determine the resolution and data required for developing algorithms needed for predictive modeling that will enable better planning for maintenance to prevent outages and other disruptive events.

The expansion has organized lab equipment for more efficient testing between automation systems, remote terminal units and relays, and their associated networking systems. The new equipment expands existing capabilities in development of settings and testing of automated systems such as Remedial Automation Schemes and Substation Automation Schemes protective relaying of grid networks. It also expands existing facility support for advanced substation protocols, such as 61850.

In addition to the Asset Health Center expansion, a 16-person conference room was constructed to create a more effective client testing experience. The conference room is set up to provide an integrated space for testing configurations with a direct view into the center.

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projects and a specific proposal is just one thing on their plate. As owners of the process, marketers need to bring people in at the right time and expand or compress the team as needed.

"Get ready to squat, get dirty, and take control of proposals, just like catchers manage their team on the field. Remember that 'even though it does not sparkle, catchers guard the diamond with their lives.'"

3) Calling the shots. To maintain control of the process, marketing coordinators must be one step ahead of everyone else. As each write-up is handed in by the team, we must assess not only its merits, but how it interconnects with the other pieces of the puzzle. Even with the best plans forged at the beginning stages of the process, submittals are moving targets and we must react, improvise, and lead it to the successful finish line. Catchers call the shots with the pitcher

to overpower the batter, but it is not that simple since they also must take into consideration on-base runners, outs in the inning, who is the next batter up, the score, and how the pitcher is feeling.

4) Blocking pitches. "Baseball is 90 percent mental. The other half is physical." These wise words from Yogi Berra can apply to catchers blocking wild pitches as sometimes all you need to be is physical to get the job done. There will undoubtedly be moments in the proposal cycle where we need to stop being cerebral and simply be reactive. For example, the submittal has been reviewed and approved with one caveat – two resumes are at 80 percent of where they should be. Your multiple follow-ups have fallen onto deaf ears and the proposal needs to be printed, assembled, and shipped. Assess the situation, make a "physical" decision, and move on. Block that wild pitch!

Get ready to squat, get dirty, and take control of proposals, just like catchers manage their team on the field. Remember that "even though it does not sparkle, catchers guard the diamond with their lives." ▀

JAVIER SUAREZ is the central marketing and sales support manager with Geosyntec Consultants. Contact him at jsuarez@geosyntec.com.