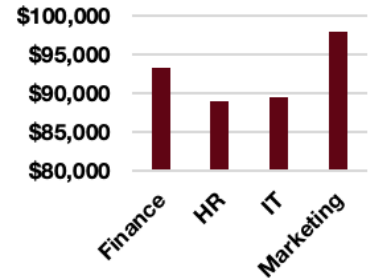


TRENDLINES

Nontechnical manager salaries



In Zweig Group's *2021 Salary Report of Mountain & Pacific Firms*, not only are technical positions covered, but administrative and nontechnical departments are covered as well. Base salaries for positions within the finance, human resources, information technology, and marketing departments are analyzed in the report. Shown in the graph above are the median base salaries for managers within those departments.

[Participate in a survey and save 50 percent on the final or pre-publication price of any Zweig Group research publication.](#)

FIRM INDEX

Derck & Edson, LLC	12
Dewberry	2, 12
HDR	10
JQ Engineering	2
Matthews Design Group	6
R.E. Warner & Associates, Inc.	4
SSOE Group	4
Stevens & Wilkinson	4
Ware Malcomb	8

MORE ARTICLES

- FRANK JOHNSON: Recognizing and developing future leaders Page 3
- Represent everyone: Shannon Acevedo Page 6
- MARK ZWEIG: Just when you figure things out, game over! Page 9
- JANE LAWLER SMITH: Fresh, handcrafted marketing Page 11

We can do better

In the past year, we've learned a great deal about how we can do better and have begun to seize opportunities created by 2020.



Stephen Lucy

There is little doubt that 2020 left all of us wondering what was next. And while external factors such as the pandemic, economy, and political unease continue to be stressful, the last year has given us opportunities to gain insight into how to improve everything from client services to communications, human resources to operations, and business development to marketing. I know we learned a great deal about how we can do better and have started to seize the opportunities that the past year has presented to us, among these:

- 1) **Focus on staff.** We all know our greatest resource is our staff and, thus, we all probably refocused on staff over the past year to determine both areas of weakness and areas of strength that we needed to nurture and protect. We could not risk having our best performers jump ship due to perceived lack of support. By focusing on retention of our key staff, we also enhanced the working environment for everyone. A win/win for both the firm and our employees.

Hopefully, you also did not stop recruiting as you will eventually need new staff even if you did not in 2020. How your firm treated recruitment and especially how you responded to hiring could set the tone for your ability to recruit future staff. We not only on-boarded new interns and staff during remote work, but in the case of interns we carried them over as part-time employees when they returned to the classroom as their physical location no longer mattered.
- 2) **Adapting to flexible work.** The idea that staff has to be in the office is now a lost proposition as the need for and benefits of flexible work policies were presented front and center. Gone is the notion that everyone has to conform to a specific work schedule in a specific location. Firms which were able to adapt proved to be successful. The key now is to continue the conversation and maintain those best-in-class work policies as we continue to migrate back to the office.
- 3) **Embracing technology.** Absent a robust IT infrastructure, 2020 would have been a lost year. If you were unprepared, you and your staff were seriously impaired in your ability to operate and could not immediately pivot to respond to remote work. Stating the obvious, it is much easier to invest in IT infrastructure when you have steady revenue than it is to experience panic buying along with everyone else. IT systems must be regularly upgraded to meet the changing demands of our work. Clients are now requesting information about our IT infrastructure not unlike asking about the technical capabilities of our staff. The last thing they want is a consultant who may impede the entire team due to technological shortcomings.
- 4) **Expanding business development.** The shift to remote work was a great equalizer as the importance of firm location and size were diminished as client's desire for service and expertise were increased.

See STEPHEN LUCY, page 2

BUSINESS NEWS

BLOOMFIELD AVENUE BRIDGE REHABILITATION RECEIVES NORTH JERSEY BRANCH ASCE AWARD
Dewberry, a privately held professional services firm, has announced that it was presented with an Honorable Mention Award – Project of the Year, by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), North Jersey Branch, for its engineering and design services on the Bloomfield Avenue Bridge (County Route 506) rehabilitation project.

Dewberry provided preliminary engineering, final design, and construction support services to rehabilitate this circa-1911, single-span, concrete T-beam bridge carrying Bloomfield Avenue over NJ TRANSIT's railroad system. The design restored the bridge's structural integrity while minimizing impacts to motorists, pedestrians, and railroad operations.

The physical constraints imposed by the bridge site, the skew at which Bloomfield Avenue crosses NJ TRANSIT's tracks, the non-redundant structural framing of the original concrete T-beam superstructure, the connection of NJ TRANSIT's catenary system to the bridge,

and the presence of critical utility lines all complicated the rehabilitation.

The solution utilized prefabricated superstructure units to improve the vertical clearance over the tracks, improve the quality of the completed product, reduce the duration of track outages, and shortened the overall construction duration. To facilitate the staged replacement of the deficient superstructure, a strong-back girder was designed to temporarily support the loads imposed on the portion of the original superstructure, which remained in service during the initial construction stage.

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.

STEPHEN LUCY, from page 1

We were able to bundle our specialized skills and make them more portable. New clients located outside our normal market limits were suddenly available as they too projected into new geographic markets and were open to strong regional partners. Such new opportunities will reinforce your entrepreneurial spirit if you are open to thinking beyond the status quo.

5) Sharing time and listening better. Deepening the relationships with your clients is always important. In many ways, the past year has enabled us to get to know our clients better as we mutually shared our biggest challenges and expectations. Time became our ally as we listened better and became closer advisors. By being available and candid, our clients have reached out to us more frequently leading to stronger relationships.

Similarly, enhanced two-way communication with our staff has reinforced that we are mutually reliant and in this together. The perceived "them versus us" has been more easily eliminated as we listened, had conversations, and then worked together to chart a path through the unknown.

6) Solidifying your mission and business decisions. There is no greater test of a firm's leadership and capabilities than working through a crisis. Every past planning decision is tested and exposed to all when rapid business decisions have to be made to preserve clients, employees and revenue. The stress can also highlight decisions made which do not fit within the firm's mission and goals.

2020 helped clarify our mission statement – achieving excellence in the pursuit of a better community – which is inclusive of staff, client, and societal communities. We have increased our workload, maintained our work quality, reinforced our market diversity, and emphasized treating everyone with respect while prioritizing safety and the economic, health, and mental well-being of all. We truly have all been in this together.

We all adjusted during 2020, but the opportunities that arose from being more flexible, innovative, and technology-driven will continue to provide a strong foundation for growth. So, as we put 2020 in the rearview mirror, let's also commit to a continuous process of assessment and forward thinking improvement as none of us want to relive the past. ▀

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



zweig group

Elevating Doer-Sellers Virtual Seminar

6 PDH/LU

This webinar was specifically developed to help design and technical professionals in architecture, engineering, planning, and environmental firms become more comfortable managing clients and promoting the firm and its services. Led by two retired and current CEOs with extensive experience from the design desk to the board room, this one-of-a-kind webinar presents business development techniques proven to drive real growth and value in your AEC firm.

REGISTER TODAY

STARTING APRIL 6, 2021

THE **ZWEIG** LETTER

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Recognizing and developing future leaders

Be deliberate in identifying those who have the potential to grow into leadership roles, and help them develop the skill sets they need to be successful as future managers.



**Frank
Johnson**

Our firm will be celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2021. Over the years, we've had discussions with colleagues who ask the secret to our longevity – how we've managed to continue on through multiple generations of leaders. There are multiple factors, of course, but one of the crucial components has been the ability to recognize and develop staff members who will be our future firm leaders.

We believe the success of any firm rides on the ability of the people at the top to effectively lead and manage. That's why we are very deliberate in identifying those who have the potential to grow into leadership roles, and helping them develop the skill sets to be successful as future managers.

Here are a few of the traits we look for:

- **Energy.** Our future leaders are self-motivated to do better as individuals and for our firm to do better as a company. They take action toward those goals.
- **Technical excellence.** These individuals are proficient and up-to-date in their discipline. They consistently and efficiently produce high quality work.
- **People skills.** The ability to work well with others is highly important as a leader and manager. We take note of those who communicate clearly and

“This careful and deliberate approach to cultivating future firm leaders has served us well over the years and has seen us through multiple successful leadership transitions.”

effectively, who are team players, who can build relationships, and are generally strong in the so-called “soft” skills.

- **Share our values.** They uphold our company culture. This will differ from firm to firm, but for us, we value providing excellent customer service, doing things right, striving for improvement, and work/life balance.

See FRANK JOHNSON, page 4



TRANSACTIONS

SSOE GROUP ACQUIRES STEVENS & WILKINSON

SSOE Group, a global project delivery firm for architecture, engineering, and construction management announced the acquisition of **Stevens & Wilkinson**, a 100-year-old design firm with offices in Atlanta, Georgia and Columbia, South Carolina and their sister interior design studio IDEA | SPAN. The alliance expands the Southeast U.S. presence, market capabilities, and overall portfolio of both firms.

A national leader in project delivery for semiconductor, automotive, chemical, and food markets, SSOE has more than 40 years of experience delivering projects in the Southeast U.S. from existing offices in Atlanta, Birmingham, Huntsville, and Nashville.

The acquisition of S&W and IDEA | SPAN was driven by their architectural, engineering, and interior design expertise in healthcare, education, judicial, and other commercial building markets. S&W boasts noteworthy projects in these sectors, such as the Medical University of South Carolina's James E. Clayburn Research Facility (Charleston, South Carolina), the Nathan Deal Judicial Center (Atlanta, Georgia), and the historic renovation of the David T. Howard Middle School for Atlanta Public Schools.

Commenting on their decision to join SSOE, S&W's Chairman Ron Stang, AIA, LEED AP, explained, "We are excited to enhance our combined offerings to clients and grow the general building brand to the same national prominence SSOE's industrial sectors enjoy. We also believe there is an opportunity to augment SSOE's services to industrial clients to provide design for their corporate, research, and workplace projects as well as tap into their involvement in the growing investment taking place in the Southeast, including hot markets like manufacturing facilities for electric vehicles."

Through this acquisition, both firms are doubling the architectural and engineering resources they are able to offer to the

healthcare, education, and other commercial building markets. This will not only provide a larger geographic footprint, but an improved ability to execute large projects for clients in all of SSOE's locations.

"We are excited to welcome Stevens & Wilkinson to our SSOE family," said Catherine Myers, PE, chair of SSOE's Board of Directors and chief operating officer. "With their demonstrated performance of architectural design excellence and their continuous emphasis on client success, they are the best in their field and a great addition to our global team. We are committed to the general building market and thankful that S&W's entire leadership team will remain actively involved in the operations of the integrated business unit. We see immediate opportunities to grow our overlapping markets as well as take S&W's impressive judicial and historic renovations portfolio across our geographic footprint."

As a testament to their resilient business models, both firms posted some of their most successful years ever in 2020 despite the global pandemic and recession. The acquisition adds nearly 100 employees to SSOE and expands its portfolio and capabilities to better deliver upon the organization's mission to save clients time, trouble, and money.

Vince DiPofi, PE, president and CEO of SSOE Group commented, "Culturally, our companies align perfectly. We both prioritize relationships with our clients to deliver positive outcomes. Through our combined strength and a shared goal to provide great client experiences, this strategic partnership will take us to the next level in architectural design. Clients of both firms can anticipate access to the same familiar teams, with an enhanced ability to provide resources and expertise to their projects."

Founded in 1948, SSOE Group is a full-service architecture, engineering, and construction management firm with locations throughout the U.S., Mexico, and India. For the past

seven years, SSOE has been ranked as a Top 10 Engineering / Architecture firm by BD+C and a Top Healthcare Design Firm by Modern Healthcare. The company is also nationally ranked among the Top 10 firms for the design of semiconductor, automotive, chemical, and food and beverage projects. With a mission to make clients successful by saving them time, trouble, and money, SSOE specializes in delivering complicated, high-stakes projects and value through long-term program management and sustaining support across a wide variety of industries.

SSOE's portfolio of work in the Southeast includes the \$1 billion Volkswagen Assembly Plant and first LEED Platinum automotive assembly plant in the world, Continental Tire manufacturing facilities in South Carolina, a greenfield manufacturing facility for BOCAR in Huntsville, Alabama, and most recently the design of a greenfield advanced transmission manufacturing facility for GEDIA in Dalton, Georgia. Clients in the Southeast also include Children's Hospital of Alabama, Encompass Health, and UAB.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia with an office in South Carolina, Stevens & Wilkinson is an architecture, engineering, and interior design firm with a 100-year history of delivering smart design solutions to clients. Specializing in judicial and historical renovations, healthcare, and education, Stevens & Wilkinson's recent landmark projects include the following: The Nathan Deal Judicial Center, AIA Georgia award-winning McKenney's office building renovation, Clemson University's Core Campus Precinct, the Oxford College of Emory University Student Center, the Florence County Judicial Center, two new nursing homes for Veteran Affairs, the historic renovation of Auburn University's Gavin Engineering Research Laboratory, and Georgia Southern University's new Center for Engineering and Research.

FRANK JOHNSON, from page 3

In our firm, once we have identified future leaders, we help them grow. We assign them to challenging projects, helping them grow technically and interpersonally, as sometimes the challenge is collaborating effectively with others. We also solicit, encourage, and support their plans for professional development and ideas to improve our firm.

We also enroll these individuals in a leadership coaching program that aims to provide information and tools that give participants the ability to be successful and grow both personally and professionally.

This careful and deliberate approach to cultivating future firm leaders has served us well over the years and has seen

"Once we have identified future leaders, we help them grow. We assign them to challenging projects, helping them grow technically and interpersonally, as sometimes the challenge is collaborating effectively with others."

us through multiple successful leadership transitions. It is a continual process, and it is exciting and rewarding to watch these team members advance in their careers and propel our firm's success. ▀

FRANK JOHNSON, PE, chief operation officer and vice president with R.E. Warner & Associates, Inc. Contact him at fjohnson@rewarner.com.



2021 Online Learning Opportunities

KEEP YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT A PRIORITY

VIRTUAL SEMINARS



Advanced Project Management for AEC Professionals – VIRTUAL SEMINAR

DATE: March 3, 2021

[LEARN MORE](#)

PRICE: \$799

PDH/LU: 6 Credit Hours

OVERVIEW: This course is ideal for people that have existing experience leading projects and teams. A new advanced skills training course for project managers led by a panel of three experts backed by a ton of research on how to best train project managers to be more effective and efficient. This advanced project management course is designed to take a Project Manager to the next level, with a focus on anticipating problems, communicating with leadership and other important stakeholders, and transitioning from managing to leading people and projects.



Elevating Doer-Sellers: Business Development for AEC Professionals – VIRTUAL SEMINAR

DATE: April 6, 2021

[LEARN MORE](#)

PRICE: \$699

PDH/LU: 6 Credit Hours

OVERVIEW: This will be the same great content that is taught during our in-person The Principals Academy seminar that has trained over 900 attendees in the last five years. The Principals Academy is Zweig Group's flagship training program encompassing all aspects of managing a professional AEC service firm. Elevate your ability to lead and grow your firm with this program designed to inspire and inform existing and emerging AEC firm leaders in key areas of firm management leadership, financial management, recruiting, marketing, business development, and project management.



Project Management for AEC Professionals – VIRTUAL SEMINAR

DATE: April 7, 2021

[LEARN MORE](#)

PRICE: \$699

PDH/LU: 6 Credit Hours

OVERVIEW: Each team member brings their own unique experiences and skillset to project teams. Effectively leveraging the talents of your team can optimize team effectiveness. This course provides people-focused, science-driven practical skills to help project leaders harness the power of their team. By addressing the most important aspects of any project – the people – this course will provide practical techniques that can be immediately implemented for a positive impact on any AEC team or business.

[VIEW ALL ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES](#)

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

PROFILE

elevate**HER**
**Shannon
 Acevedo**



Represent everyone: Shannon Acevedo

Improved representation improves our ability to problem-solve, to be strategic with our strengths, and to think critically and comprehensively about topics.

By SARA PARKMAN
 Senior Editor

Acevedo currently plans and manages development for residential, commercial, and industrial projects with Matthews Design Group. Previously, she led a team of planners in development review for St. Johns County, a government within northeast Florida. She was a member of Zweig Group's 2020 ElevateHer cohort. Zweig Group founded ElevateHer as a commitment to embrace, promote, and ensure equal opportunities for everyone in the AEC industry regardless of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

"It is important to ensure that diversity and inclusion in the AEC industry is a priority, as these fields affect everybody," Acevedo says. "We deal with developing the spaces around which we live and work which should represent everyone, not just a minority."

A CONVERSATION WITH SHANNON ACEVEDO.

The Zweig Letter: You've had a colorful work history

spanning regional planning work to educational non-profit research. What is something you learned in a previous role that is still valuable today? How is it valuable?

Shannon Acevedo: I did a brief teaching stint for a K-8 school in downtown Phoenix. It was the most difficult position I've ever had with a high physical and mental demand. It forced me to be prepared, intentional, and to constantly think on my feet. This experience helped me tremendously in my presentation skills and ability to improvise when needed in the planning field.

TZL: What made you decide to share your story and apply for the 2020 ElevateHer cohort?

SA: Honestly, I was not aware there was such a disparity of women compared to men in the industry and was moved by the statistics shared with me from Zweig Group and Jamie Claire Kiser. I think it is important to ensure that

diversity and inclusion in the AEC industry is a priority, as these fields affect everybody. We deal with developing the spaces around which we live and work which should represent everyone, not just a minority.

TZL: What first drew you to the AEC industry? What do you love about working in it today?

SA: I was first drawn by the aspects of urban design. I love to imagine and reimagine places and wanted to have a part in that. Once I began my journey in the field of urban planning, my passion morphed to include environmental sustainability and resilience. With all of the pressures on the earth and the interesting research on how to design places more thoughtfully and efficiently, the field is never boring and there is always more to learn. What I love about my present job is the constant newness of having a variety of projects and challenges. No day or project is the same as the one before.

“If a person is included just to meet a checkmark on some diversity metric, but is not wholeheartedly engaged or encouraged to contribute, their value will not be fully realized.”

TZL: What advice would you give to someone who is considering pursuing a career in the AEC industry?

SA: This is a wide and diverse industry with so many different avenues. If you decided to pursue a degree within the AEC industry whether its engineering, planning, architecture, or something else, don't define the industry by your first job or professional encounter. If you find yourself in a place or job that you don't feel fits you, don't immediately search for another career. It may be that you just haven't found your niche or the right organization where you can be fulfilled and flourish.

TZL: How has COVID-19 impacted your work-life balance?

SA: I've been able to adapt quite well since COVID-19, fortunately. I'm set up well to work flexibly in the office and at home and have been able to maintain somewhat steady hours. The only downfall is now everyone has my personal cell phone number, which I used to keep quite private! To help keep separation between work and personal time, I make a point to not answer my cell on the weekends if it is a work call or phone number I don't recognize.

TZL: You're a volunteer with UrbanPlan, an organization that engages high school students in urban planning. What do you do as a volunteer with UrbanPlan, and what role do you think programs like this play in engaging the next generation of planners?

SA: I became a planner because I wanted to do landscape architecture as a second career, but couldn't afford to quit my job to take the daytime studio classes. I started looking into other academic master's programs in similar fields and found one that was mostly at night for “urban

planning.” I had never heard of it or ever realized this was a career field, much less know it would become such a great passion of mine. This is the primary reason I volunteered to do UrbanPlan. It's an amazing high school special topics program that gives students the opportunity to plan a development from complex and wide perspectives including political, financial, and community development viewpoints. Students are divided into teams and build their projects using LEGOs and must defend their developments to a city council. It is very realistic and provides a window for students who may be interested in urban planning as a career.

TZL: The 2020 ElevateHer cohort worked in smaller project groups on self-chosen topics to create a focused deliverable that was shared with the rest of the industry at Zweig Group's ElevateHer Symposium and Elevate AEC Virtual Conference. Which topic did your group choose and what was one of the ways you addressed it?

SA: We chose the daunting task of coming up with a metric system to measure diversity and inclusion. Our dream is to develop an index that can measure this nuanced topic much like how LEED has become the go-to metric on environmentally-conscious design. We got the ball rolling by defining some of the characteristics we think will be important factors and then we scouted out a project success story that we could use to identify some of the attributes and presented it at the first ElevateHer Symposium. We hope the work will continue with the next cohort.

TZL: Why are inclusion and engagement an important part of diversity initiatives?

SA: Inclusion and engagement is so important to diversity initiatives, because these elements give the initiative authenticity. It's not enough to make the numbers work, whether it's generating enough diversity in terms of gender, race, background, or ethnicity for example. The diversity must be valued and the need genuine for the results to reap rewards. In other words, if a person is included just to meet a checkmark on some diversity metric, but is not wholeheartedly engaged or encouraged to contribute, their value will not be fully realized.

“Having a diversity of backgrounds as part of our organization allows us to be nimble and capable to pair the right person with the right project to ensure success.”

TZL: According to research, 66 percent of girls and 68 percent of boys are interested in science during the 4th grade. However, by freshmen year only 14 percent of women intend to pursue a STEM degree, as opposed to 32 percent of men. How do you think we can attract more girls to STEM fields from a young age (school outreach, scholarships, etc.)? When did you become interested in your field?

SA: We need to give them more opportunities earlier. As mentioned earlier, I didn't learn about urban planning

See REPRESENT EVERYONE, page 8

BUSINESS NEWS

WARE MALCOMB ANNOUNCES CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETE ON RELOCATION OF KEY FOOD CORPORATE OFFICE IN NEW JERSEY Ware Malcomb, an award-winning international design firm, announced construction is complete on the relocation of Key Food's corporate office located at 100 Matawan Road in Old Bridge, New Jersey. Ware Malcomb provided interior architecture and design and branding services for the project.

Founded in 1937, Key Food Stores Co-op, Inc. is a cooperative of independently owned supermarkets located in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Florida, with the corporate office located in New Jersey. The mailing address for the new corporate office is 100 Matawan Road, Matawan, New Jersey.

The relocation of Key Food's corporate office from Staten Island to a Class A office building in Old Bridge covers two floors. The space is over 38,000 square feet and includes a reception area, open and private offices, conference rooms, fitness center, wellness room and multiple break rooms featuring custom millwork. The project also features a dedicated executive suite and a test kitchen facility.

The first floor has a designated waiting area for vendors and consultants visiting Key Food. The test kitchen is used to create new

recipes to carry in store and functions as a demonstration area that allows vendors to experience food preparation firsthand. Ware Malcomb took advantage of the window line in the cafe and workplace to provide ample natural light to flow throughout the office. Sit-to-stand workstations and a fitness center were designed for employee comfort and overall well-being.

"The new corporate office was designed to promote Key Food's strong company culture and tell a story throughout the space," said Marlyn Zucosky, Director, Interior Architecture & Design of Ware Malcomb's New Jersey offices. "Ware Malcomb focused on creating a space offering productivity and efficiency throughout the departments for their growing team, while upholding the innovation and values of Key Food."

Inspired by Key Food's culture and history, Ware Malcomb's in-house branding studio designed environmental graphics into the workspace and amenity areas. The graphics celebrate Key Food's strong New York roots, long-term success and visually convey the company's spirit and culture.

Historic black and white large format graphics in the workspace serve as a nod to the company's history and longevity. The meeting rooms are thoughtfully named after the New York boroughs to pay homage to

the company's roots. The branding solutions seamlessly tie in the interior design and weave the workspace and amenity areas together to create a unified experience.

CBRE was the broker and project manager and Unity Construction Services, Inc. was the general contractor on this project.

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.

REPRESENT EVERYONE, from page 7

until I was an adult looking for a second career after working in marketing and research roles. UrbanPlan is a great program to introduce students to the field of planning in high school. I think scholarships are a great idea and so are high school internships. At my company, Matthews Design Group, we hire high school and college interns, giving opportunities for young people to learn and be exposed to the industry early on. Their roles are not making copies and getting coffee. They are learning how to use software, designing site plans, and even researching local codes to develop an understanding of planning and engineering.

TZL: Improved representation – regardless of gender, race, or age – benefits everyone in the workplace. What examples have you seen of this?

SA: Improved representation improves the ability to problem-solve, to be strategic with our strengths, and to think critically and comprehensively about topics. An example of strategy may come with how we assign project managers for new clients and projects. There may be specific needs for a project related to location,

"If you find yourself in a place or job that you don't feel fits you, don't immediately search for another career. It may be that you just haven't found your niche or the right organization where you can be fulfilled and flourish."

industry, relationships, or jurisdiction. Having a diversity of backgrounds as part of our organization allows us to be nimble and capable to pair the right person with the right project to ensure success. In terms of thinking critically and comprehensively, we have spent time as an organization collectively brainstorming motivators for building success within the company. By including everyone, we get a more comprehensive or creative list of ideas, for example, versus just a higher bonus or salary which typically comes to mind as a carrot. With greater representation, you learn other things that make people tick like having more vacation time, more celebrations, better work/life balance, or more funding for professional development opportunities. ▀



ELEVATEHER

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. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Just when you figure things out, game over!

Look in the mirror and ask yourself if you are still doing what you want to do every day. Maybe now is the time to get really serious about your transition.



**Mark
Zweig**

I'm soon to be 63 and have been working in the A/E business for 41 years now. I got right into it after finishing my MBA degree that I pursued immediately after getting my BS at age 21. I had a grad assistantship for the MBA. It didn't cost me a cent, plus they paid me \$400 a month (\$358.95 after tax).

At the time (1979), I could live on about \$250 a month, although I had a variety of other jobs and ventures that made me much more than that every month. My overhead was super low. My 1964, two-bedroom "New Moon" mobile home in what was called a "married (trailer) court" was paid for, and the lot rent, including water and sewer, was \$50 a month. I had a '72 Chevy van with a bed in back and a '75 Honda CB550 Super Sport. Life was pretty good.

Of course, after I graduated, I started my long climb up the aspirational ladder, culminating in a large number of houses, apartment projects, commercial centers, and more. I had as many as 20 cars and 10 motorcycles at once, two ex-wives to support, and four daughters and one stepdaughter who is now a freshman in college. On top of it, I was an owner in two companies I founded and

working as a 3/4-time college professor. And I spent way too much time on social media. My attention span was about 10 seconds.

A little more than a couple years ago, I started the process of winding down everything. I shed most of my properties, vehicles, business interests, and commitments. The result has been I actually have time to spend doing things I want to do and am much happier.

One could say it's a rationalization for my life situation. The truth is I was burned out and becoming less effective at everything. While I think I may have been able to carry on like that for a few more years before getting crushed by a real estate recession or having a heart attack, thankfully, for a wide variety of reasons I came to

See MARK ZWEIG, page 10



ON THE MOVE

HDR'S ERIN SLAYTON PROMOTED TO TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

With nearly 20 years of experience in the planning, design and delivery of major transportation infrastructure programs, Erin Slayton, P.E., DBIA, ENV SP, has been promoted to serve as HDR's transportation program management director.

In her new role, Slayton will lead delivery of program management services for clients in all transportation markets and continue to diversify HDR's service capabilities. She will guide the further development of HDR's program management practice, with a focus on the delivery of holistic, value-added services throughout the project life cycle.

Slayton brings a deep background in successful program management, including working in the public sector for the Seattle Popular Monorail Authority before she came to HDR in 2006. At HDR, her work has involved co-locating with clients on-site to provide project oversight and coordination of management services on large, complex infrastructure programs in three different regions. In addition, she served as an HDR department manager for the \$4.56 billion Washington State DOT SR 520 Floating

Bridge Replacement and HOV Program from 2012 to 2014. More recently, Slayton helped develop and manage the procurement and delivery of the \$1.7 billion Arizona DOT South Mountain Freeway Project, before moving to Columbia, South Carolina in 2018 to focus on the management of the South Carolina DOT's \$1.6 billion Carolina Crossroads Project.

Working on complex, multi-billion-dollar programs, she has demonstrated her ability to meet aggressive schedules, build consensus between diverse stakeholders and drive decisions to keep projects moving forward. Slayton's background includes civil design, project management, program management and business management.

"Erin's long history in program management combined with her passion for employee professional development make her an ideal fit as our Program Management Director," said Transportation Group President Tom McLaughlin. "Her skills managing diverse teams and delivering complex well-known projects will pave the way for us to enhance our technical capabilities, capture new geographic markets and build stronger client relationships."

HDR's program management teams create customized and comprehensive systems and tools to help clients successfully manage the development and delivery of complex infrastructure projects, improving overall risk management and alignment with program goals. Services include program planning and project prioritization, project delivery method selection, cost risk assessments, stakeholder engagement and communications, procurement support, project controls, feasibility studies/preliminary design, environmental planning and documentation, final design, value engineering and construction management, with a consistent focus on effectively managing costs and risks.

For over a century, HDR has partnered with clients to shape communities and push the boundaries of what's possible. Our expertise spans more than 10,000 employees in more than 200 locations around the world – and counting. Our engineering, architecture, environmental and construction services bring an impressive breadth of knowledge to every project. Our optimistic approach to finding innovative solutions defined our past and drives our future

MARK ZWEIG, from page 9

the realization about what is really important in life. That is your relationships with other people and doing some good. But up until recently, much of my motivation has really been driven by my need for ego gratification. That's not good – it's not healthy. In fact, it's rather pathetic. He or she who craves the envy or admiration of others will surely go off-course in their life. I was definitely going off-course.

"I encourage you to look in the mirror and to ask yourselves if you are still doing what you want to do every day. Maybe it's time you moved over and let some of those younger, fresher, and more motivated people take over."

Don't get me wrong. I have a lot of friends still (many of which are clients in architecture and engineering firms that I worked with over the years). We did a lot of good and helped a lot of people see the opportunity they had with their businesses, I taught a lot of students, and my older kids turned out to be independent and successful. I also have a wife (third time is the charm!) who is my best friend and has helped me become a better person. We have a beautiful house and still have a couple cool cars and bikes. But I was lucky. It all could have gone the other way.

Maybe now if my diet and other bad habits don't catch up with me, I may have 15 or 20 years to really live. Being a

college professor in a really well-run business college in a state-owned university is a fabulous job, and one I can throw myself into because the mission is worthwhile. Maybe I will still do some other things and start another business some day. Or maybe not.

I know many of our readers can identify with what I am saying. I see way too many of my 60 and 70 year-old architect and engineer friends who are on the same path I was on. I am fairly certain that I have worked with as many of you over the years as practically anyone else. I encourage you to look in the mirror and to ask yourselves if you are still doing what you want to do every day. Maybe it's time you moved over and let some of those younger, fresher, and more motivated people take over. It doesn't mean you have failed if you do so. It's the opposite of that. You have gotten the ball rolling. Now maybe some other people can increase the size of that ball and get it rolling even faster.

Your willingness to back off and let go will be essential to the survival of your business. You don't want to lose all your best people because you are unable to pass the baton, do you? You don't really want to be carried out of there on a stretcher, do you? You don't want your family to say they barely knew you because you were always gone, and when you were there you were distracted, do you?

Maybe now is the time to get really serious about your transition. Design the perfect life for yourself just like you have designed incredibly complex construction projects. Put the same thought into it. And do it before it's too late to do so! ▀

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Fresh, handcrafted marketing

Make sure your marketing uses fresh ingredients, is thoughtfully assembled, and temptingly delivered.



**Jane
Lawler
Smith**

I remember the days of going out to dinner with my spouse, meeting colleagues for lunch, and grabbing a latte in a trendy café with a friend before the workday began. In pre-COVID days, my kitchen was suspiciously clean for days at a time. With two working adults and two active kids at home, who had time to cook?

Contrast to now, and our hard-working kitchen. Without a doubt, like your favorite diner, we serve breakfast and lunch all day, every day. With luck, and a litany of precautions, we might opt for take-out for dinner every now and then.

So it is no surprise services like HelloFresh and Blue Apron have taken off. These meal delivery services have one key thing in common – a promise to deliver delicious, easy to prepare ingredients for meal preparation, when and as often as you want them.

The words surge and booming have been used to describe sales for both companies as many Americans exhausted their culinary repertoire right around April 2020.

After all, not everyone is a chef, but we pretty much all like to eat good food. So it follows that one of the keys to the successes of these brands is breaking down more complicated cooking tasks into bite-sized, easy to manage tasks, with clear directions that, when brought all together, deliver a culinary masterpiece.

A similar recipe can be applied to marketing for AEC firms.

■ **Fresh ingredients.** Whether you are preparing qualifications, a proposal, direct mail, or any other type of marketing connection, you need to make sure it is fresh. We are all fighting to keep our inboxes lean, to address and organize the content

See JANE LAWLER SMITH, page 12



ON THE MOVE

ERICA NELLES PROMOTED TO PRINCIPAL Dewberry, a privately held professional services firm, has announced the promotion of nearly 50 employees nationwide, including Erica Nelles, AIA, LEED AP, who has been promoted to principal in its Sacramento, California, office.

Nelles is a business unit manager in the firm’s architecture practice and oversees a team of approximately 20 staff in Pasadena and Sacramento, California, who provide architectural design services for clients in the state/local and commercial markets. She joined the firm in 2017 and has more than 20 years of experience in studio operations,

client management, project management, and design.

“Erica is a proven leader who has done an exceptional job growing her team and our West Coast presence,” says Dewberry President David Huey, AIA, LEED AP. “Her dedication to finding innovative solutions to help achieve client goals through thoughtful design sets her apart as a great leader.”

Nelles earned her master’s degree in architecture from the University of Florida (2005) and her bachelor’s degree in bio-resource engineering from Rutgers (2001). She is a member of the American Institute of Architects.

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.

JANE LAWLER SMITH, from page 11

from our Zoom chats, to bring order to the buffet of PDFs, webinars, and listservs that are a normal part of our everyday existence.

If you are thinking of adding anything more to the glut of things called “communication,” do everyone a favor and make it fresh. Make it pointed. Make it count.

Stop using those figurative dried parsley flakes that have been sitting on the shelf for too long.

“One of the keys to the successes of these brands is breaking down more complicated cooking tasks into bite-sized, easy to manage tasks, with clear directions that, when brought all together, deliver a culinary masterpiece. A similar recipe can be applied to marketing for AEC firms.”

■ **Some assembly required.** When the freshest ingredients are available, you may be tempted to send along, as the saying goes, everything but the kitchen sink. However, in the mid-1940s, that expression was connected with thoughts of intense bombardment. Not exactly the best way to communicate.

Instead, like HelloFresh, consider portion sizes and strive to provide exactly what is needed – no more, no less.

Also, think about your last visit to a restaurant or the last time you viewed a menu for take-out dining. Chances are high that there were options. Lots of options. Today, if you are vegetarian, lactose or gluten intolerant, or have any number of food allergies, you can find something that caters to your needs. HelloFresh offers pescatarian-friendly meals. Blue Apron has Beyond Meat, Weight Watchers Approved, and Diabetes Friendly options even in their “standard” offerings.

In a past article (“[Personalize Your Marketing](#)”), we explored B2H (business to human) marketing – an individualized approach. Take that into account. If you are investing the time to connect with someone, focus on that someone and what they need to know right now, and in what order your message should be received.

Most firms have a standard collateral package or proposal template. This is meant to be a starting point – not the final product for everyone. Attentive customization is key.

■ **Plating.** Check out @HelloFresh and @blueapron on Instagram. Without a doubt, you will see food photos. But you will also notice fancy plates, lit candles, bottles of wine, colorful textiles in the form of napkins, pot holders, and tablecloths, and many more non-food items. All because, as much as it is all about the food, the presentation is the first line of judgement. It may even sway a reluctant diner to at least sample the offering. Conversely, plating also has the power to turn someone off and turn up their nose. How do you think dino-nuggets got their start?

The concept of plating has easy application to marketing. Your fresh ingredients are thoughtfully assembled with a particular person’s needs and desires in mind. You know this. But the person you are offering these materials to? They don’t know that. You can expound “never judge a book by its cover” all you want. It doesn’t mean people won’t do exactly that.

What does your delivery presentation look like?

- Are you sending something physical or digital?
- Are you required to use a standard form or follow an RFP’s specific directions?
- Are you delivering PDF files or another file format?
- Are materials a combination of words and imagery or is there an opportunity for video?
- If files are sent via email, download, or overnight delivery, what does that look like?

Although seemingly benign, each of these steps, in practice, holds potential pitfalls that can negate all the progress you have made up to this point. In fact, these steps stand firmly between your message and its consumption.

HANDCRAFTED AND FRESH. The basic recipe is fairly simple: fresh ingredients, thoughtfully assembled, temptingly delivered. Layer that with your in-depth knowledge of your business and your target audience to create a true masterpiece.

In the words of Julia Child: “The more you know, the more you can create. There’s no end to imagination in the kitchen.” Bon appétit! 🍴

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