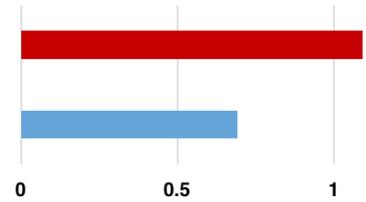


TRENDLINES

Firm value to backlog



Compare the **overall** median value to backlog (0.69) to the **fast-growth** firm median value to backlog (1.09). Backlog – or confidence that a firm can continue to get work in the door – really helps value, according to the 2016 Valuation Survey of AEP & Environmental Consulting Firms.

Getting serious about training your people

“You **HAVE** to train people to get the workers you need to run and grow your business.”



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

My extensive observations on the AEC business tell me that the only training most of us do is catch-as-catch-can, luck-based training. There’s no structure or thought or meaningful budget applied to it in most companies in this business (with a few exceptions). Yet it is so important! It’s not like it’s easy to just hire the people you want and need who already know everything they need to know to perform the way you want them to. You **HAVE** to train people to get the workers you need to run and grow your business.

Here are my thoughts on the subject:

- 1) You need to get involved personally.** This isn’t one of those areas where you can just get out your checkbook. You have to do some work. As the founders/owners/top managers/best people at what you do in your firm, **YOU** have knowledge your people need.
- 2) Not everyone wants to learn.** The best people, however, do want to learn. If you find, as you get into your training effort, that certain people don’t want to learn, you need to get them out. They will undermine all your training efforts with everyone else. Not being willing to learn is unacceptable and a good reason to cut someone from your team. Get ‘em out!
- 3) Office layout/seating is crucial.** People, ideally, should be physically located near those who are supposed to be training them. There are just too many “teaching moments” lost when that is not the case. Walled offices with closed doors are enemies to effective training!

See MARK ZWEIG, page 2

FIRM INDEX

Balfour Beatty Construction.....	2
BIG RED DOG.....	5
Boston Properties.....	7
Daniel Solomon Design Partners.....	7
David Baker Architects.....	8
Fluor Corporation.....	12
Foster + Partners.....	6
GARVER.....	8
GATE, Inc.....	8
Hines.....	7
Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.....	12
Lake Flato Architects.....	7
Landpoint, Inc.....	8
LJA Engineering, Inc.....	8
Maser Consulting P.A.....	8
Mithun.....	6
O’Neal.....	8
OpenScope Studio.....	8
Parsons.....	10
Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects.....	7
SCB.....	6
Snøhetta.....	6
Tantalus Systems.....	10
Trigon Associates.....	3
Westwood Professional Services.....	8
WRNS Studio.....	6

MORE COLUMNS

- **MARKETING MATTERS:** As temperatures rise, so does Hot Firm Page 5
- **BRAND BUILDING:** Are you an amateur? Page 9
- **RECRUITING NOTES:** Let’s talk about student loans Page 11

 **Clean water** Page 3

Busy in San Francisco Page 6

ON THE MOVE

BALFOUR BEATTY CONSTRUCTION ANNOUNCES NEW COO AND CHIEF OF ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Balfour Beatty Construction announced the promotion of **Eric Stenman** to COO and of **John Tarpey** to chief of organization development. These changes to the company's leadership team are in support of its strategy to continue a focus on operational excellence, innovation, and investing in talent.

"We are fortunate to have such experienced, passionate, and visionary leaders on our executive team," said Mark Layman, chairman and CEO of Balfour Beatty Construction in the U.S. "John has always been a great operational leader, who has a keen sense for adopting innovations and developing people. In his new role as chief of organization development, he'll lead our improvement, innovation and talent management strategies. Eric is another long-time industry veteran who has strengthened our operations across the West Coast and has played a key role in our innovation strategy."

Tarpey first joined the firm in 1978, working in both estimating and operations. After five years, he joined another national contractor, where he advanced to vice president and director of operations in the company's Mid-Atlantic region.

With a track record in senior management, Tarpey returned to Balfour Beatty Construction in 1996, taking responsibility for the company's business in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. He was promoted to regional CEO in 2010, responsible for overseeing all public and private projects across the Mid-Atlantic. Two years later, he was named COO.

Tarpey holds the position of chief of organization development for Balfour Beatty Construction Services U.S. — a testament to his strategic influence and progressive approach that offer a competitive advantage in a rapidly changing

industry. In this role, he is responsible for helping lead, guide, and implement the company's strategic growth strategies in both current and emerging markets. Tarpey's passion for redefining the way projects are delivered in our industry is raising the bar in areas of operational excellence, technology, innovation, lean construction, and alternate procurement strategies.

Stenman's tenure with the company began in 2001, when he served as vice president and general counsel for Douglas E. Barnhart, Inc. Stenman's strong leadership and construction business acumen led to his promotion to president of that business in 2007. When the company was acquired by Balfour Beatty in 2008, he was promoted to president, overseeing the firm's Southwest operations. In 2010, he was promoted to CEO in the Southwest. Two years later, he was elevated to the national role of chief enterprise development officer wherein he launched the national capability center, organizing a national team that focused on innovation, new capabilities, and industry knowledge sharing, along with leading the healthcare and mission critical vertical markets. After successfully launching these programs, he returned to a regional role where he served as CEO overseeing operations from 2013-2015 in Arizona, California, Oregon, and Washington.

As COO, Stenman will oversee operations for Balfour Beatty Construction Services US. He is a licensed contractor in California and Arizona. He is active at the local and national levels of the AGC, having chaired the National Contract Documents Forum and served on the board of directors for the AGC of San Diego. He also served as the national chair of the Building Division for AGC of America, and was a board member of the Downtown San Diego Partnership.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

4) Take people with you when going to job sites or visiting clients or regulators. This is how I was trained in how to sell A/E/P services. My "boss," the company president, just asked me to go along with him. I learned a lot watching him. And he told me in no uncertain terms to be quiet unless he asked me to say something!

5) Real world projects versus theory is crucial. I think too much training involves general concepts and theory, and not enough on practical problem-solving for real world situations. As a result, the training doesn't seem relevant. Why not solve real problems and train people for future generations at the same time? But to do this, the trainer has to get involved and poke their nose into specific project situations. You cannot expect your people to bring you these every time on their own.

6) Use your best people – not your worst – to train. So many companies dole out training duties to those who are the least busy. Huge mistake! The busiest people are the best people. You need them doing it – not your worst people. Your trainees need to emulate success, not mediocrity. And while you're at it – get some diversity going. Using more women and people with different ethnic backgrounds may bring a different perspective to things that could help with creativity.

There's a lot more to this topic. Your thoughts? Send them to me at mzweig@zweiggroup.com. ▀

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

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PROFILE



Lisa Cookmeyer on site in the West Bank working with a subcontractor.

Clean water

Up-and-coming public works and infrastructure firm looks to grow its footprint in the United States and abroad.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent



Lisa Cookmeyer, Cofounder and CEO, Trigon Associates

With more than 30 years of experience in engineering, planning, design, and program and project management, Lisa Cookmeyer, CEO of New Orleans-based **Trigon Associates** (Hot Firm #52 and #53 Best Firm Multidiscipline for 2015), is poised to lead the firm into the future, nationally and internationally. While the Trigon team stands at 48 people, which includes overseas staff, the personnel numbers fluctuate with the construction activities the firm manages.

Cookmeyer is currently the principal-in-charge for the Infrastructure Needs Program, Phase II, for the U.S. Agency for International Development, West Bank/Gaza Mission in Palestine. Trigon is a primary subcontractor and is handling program management services, planning, design, and construction oversight of water, wastewater, transportation, and other infrastructure and facilities projects. It's a \$750 million-plus program.

A CONVERSATION WITH COOKMEYER.

The Zweig Letter: How long have you been CEO of Trigon? What led to your position there?

Lisa Cookmeyer: I am one of four partners who founded Trigon Associates in 2009. Prior to this, we worked together for many years at a global engineering firm before making the decision to start our own firm.

TZL: What are your key strengths? What do you feel the key strengths are for an effective leader?

LC: My key strengths are those typically associated with introversion: serious, perceptive, intuitive, committed, and a good listener. I feel that the key strengths of an effective leader depend on the strength of the individual. The smart leader has a team with strengths in different areas – similar to the Trigon leadership team.

See Q&A, page 4



Q&A, from page 3

TZL: How would you describe your leadership style?

LC: I build teams based on relationships and encourage a collaborative spirit. Because of the strength of the individuals working for Trigon as well as the overall team, there is a high level of confidence which allows our upper management to delegate and not micromanage.

TZL: What has been your greatest challenge to date and how did you deal with it?

LC: It had to do with the USAID infrastructure program management project in Palestine, particularly my initial visit to the West Bank. I did not know what to expect and was relying on the U.S media portrayal to influence my perceptions. I was misinformed. I was quickly impressed by the professionalism and dedication of the Palestinian people – not to mention their ingenuity and patience. Now, I very much look forward to my visits and to spending time with our Trigon team. As a side note, all of the Trigon team working in Palestine are 100 percent local.

Another significant challenge has been to grow into my position and to realize that to succeed, I would have to handle things in a way that was true to my style and personality. Being a woman and an introvert in a man's industry, a good bit of my career was spent doing what I thought should be done to be accepted. Now I know that to succeed, I have to be true to myself.

“Make your workplace one where your team feels confident and safe in offering their opinions and suggestions.”

TZL: To what do you most attribute your recent sales growth?

LC: As our reputation for providing top-notch services expands, so does our client base. We get follow-on projects once a new client understands the value we bring to a project. Our expansion into the international development and overseas market has also been critical.

TZL: What is your vision for the future of Trigon?

LC: In addition to continued growth in our full-service engineering offerings for infrastructure and public works, Trigon will also grow (in size and in geography), in its niche service offering areas of program management, consent decree compliance management and support (as related to Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act enforcement and compliance projects), and international development. Our corporate culture will continue to be one of respect, integrity, and inclusion, built upon a diverse team of people who work closely together to uphold our core principles of quality, commitment, and client service.

TZL: How have you helped your firm to outperform its competitors? What do you feel sets you apart?

LC: Although we started Trigon just seven years ago, we were quick to succeed in rebranding the experience and reputation of the four partners in the new firm. We have built

on our reputation for responsiveness, exceptional services, and the ability to make our clients successful. Their goals are our goals. We understand their pain points and how to eliminate or minimize them. We go the extra mile to make sure the details are thought out, addressed and presented at the top level.

We also excel at building the right team for each project and the right person for each job. Our team is outstanding as our expectations are high and we are able to recruit and retain exceptional people that are a good fit with our culture.

Finally, having worked in the global engineering market for many years, we have the background and experience of a large global firm. However, being a small entrepreneurial firm, we are very adaptable and flexible. We bring the best of both worlds.

TZL: Are you married? Do you have children? Pets?

LC: Perry and I have been married for 32 years. Our son, Eric, is in grad school at LSU and is pursuing a career in the professional sports industry. Our daughter, Evann, is a junior in public relations at LSU and is pursuing a career in PR for the music industry. Our schnauzer, Lucas, is the king of the house.

TZL: What's one thing most people at the firm don't know about you?

LC: My family lived in Ireland for a year (2004 to 2005), when my children were young. It was a fantastic experience for all of us and helped us to learn the value of spending time as a family as well as value the differences and similarities among different cultures in our small world.

TZL: What's the last book you read?

LC: I've been reading travel books on Germany in preparation for an upcoming visit to my daughter who is studying there this semester.

TZL: What's the last movie you saw?

LC: *Star Wars*. It was a family event over the holidays. We're all fans and were especially thrilled with the ending at Skellig Michael, which we have visited off the southwest coast of Ireland.

TZL: What's the best piece of work-related advice you've ever gotten?

LC: Make your workplace one where your team feels confident and safe in offering their opinions and suggestions. And realize that the person speaking the loudest does not always have the best ideas.

TZL: Who is a leader you admire? Why?

LC: Jimmy Carter because of his quiet and committed manner in carrying out significant humanitarian efforts before and after his presidency.

TZL: When you're not working, what types of activities do you enjoy?

LC: I enjoy relaxing with my family and friends, cooking, and planning our next travel adventures. ▀

OPINION



As temperatures rise, so does Hot Firm

The application deadline is June 1 for the 17th annual Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference, held September 22-23 at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix.



**Christina
Zweig**

**MARKETING
MATTERS**

Registration for the Best Firms To Work For Awards, Zweig Group's ranking of the best workplaces in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry, has come to a close, but entries to Zweig Group's other awards are just starting to heat up.

The Hot Firm List, now in its 17th year, is Zweig Group's ranking of the 100 fastest growing firms in the A/E/P and environmental consulting industry. Firms are ranked on a combination of dollar growth and percentage growth over a three-year period.

Applying to the list has major benefits. The Hot Firm List helps a firm benchmark its growth goals and also offers an opportunity for tremendous celebration of growth and success. Many firms have received significant press and media coverage as a result of Zweig Group awards.

In a recent podcast interview, Will Schnier, CEO of Austin-based **BIG RED DOG Engineering | Consulting** (Hot Firm #26 for 2015), says the award is a powerful motivator and a source of pride for all his team members.

"They are working very hard, day in and day out, we all are. These outside awards, Hot Firm award

in particular, is a great validation of these efforts," Schnier says. "When they can go home and tell their family members, tell their friends, and the people they went to school with: 'My firm was the 26th fastest growing engineering and architecture firm in North America' – that's an incredible feather in their cap."

"The Hot Firm List helps a firm benchmark their growth goals and also offers an opportunity for tremendous celebration of growth and success."

The Hot Firm List has seen a major shakeup recently. Last year, 25 firms were new to the list.

See CHRISTINA ZWIG, page 8



SPOTLIGHT ON: San F

PROFILE



The Salesforce Tower is under construction. Once completed, at 1,070 feet, it will be the tallest building in San Francisco. / Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects

Busy by the bay

At the center of the venture capital universe, San Francisco is in the midst of a development cycle that has attracted architects from near and far.

By RICHARD MASSEY
Managing Editor



Bryan Shiles,
Founding
Partner,
WRNS Studio

Fueled by a tech boom that has made it one of the most exclusive cities in the world, San Francisco, particularly the east side, is undergoing a profound period of infill that is transforming its residential, retail, and office spaces.

At the center of this transformation are the architects, who, in firms large and small, are seeing an uptick in work, but also an upgrade in competition. Once the purview of mostly San Francisco firms, the City by the Bay has attracted the attention of heavyweights like **Mithun**, **Snøhetta**, **SCB**, and **Foster + Partners**, all of which have opened San Francisco offices in recent years. And since 2010, at least 23 firms have been established in the Bay Area, according to the AIA-San Francisco membership roster.

Office rents have skyrocketed, finding talent is

difficult, and, according to a Bay Area poll by Charles Schwab, 82 percent of the residents say what they hate most about the city is its cost of living. But the architects aren't necessarily complaining. Even though they have to fight for it, there's plenty of work, the quality of life is about as good as it gets, and as long as San Francisco and Silicon Valley remain the center of the venture capital universe, there will be plenty to nourish the A/E/P industry.

"The competition here is brutal, just brutal. It's clear that a lot of firms are opening here."

Bryan Shiles, a founding partner at San Francisco-based **WRNS Studio**, which has designed everything from a high school to the headquarters of tech giant Airbnb, says the times have definitely changed. He recalls making the short list on a higher education





The Yard, a food and retail center made out of up-scaled shipping containers, sits near AT&T Park. OpenScope Studio provided construction administration services for the project. / OpenScope Studio

project, and his firm was there alongside big names like Foster + Partners and **Lake | Flato Architects**, something that wouldn't have happened 10 years ago.

"The competition here is brutal, just brutal," says Shiles. "It's clear that a lot of firms are opening here."

To keep pace with demand, his firm has hired as many as 40 people, and now stands at more than 100 employees. In terms of recruiting, WRNS has hired designers from around the world – Ireland, Korea, China, Japan, Mexico, Argentina, and France.

"The whole nature of the practice has been energized," Shiles says.

As firms scramble for work, and as firms compete for market share, mergers and acquisitions have also been on the rise. A key transaction took place in 2012, when San Francisco-based **Daniel Solomon Design Partners** merged with Seattle-based Mithun.

An example of what's taking place in San Francisco, at least in the office segment of the market, is perhaps best embodied by the 1,070-foot Salesforce Tower – when completed it will be the city's tallest – named after one of the most innovative tech companies in the world. The cloud computing and business management company leased the bottom 30 floors and the 61st-floor penthouse, about 714,000 square feet. Designed by Cesar Pelli of **Pelli Clarke**

Pelli Architects, and developed by **Boston Properties** and **Hines**, the tower is expected to open next year.

Other lessees include CBRE Group Inc., a global real estate broker, management consulting firm Bain & Co., and financial services firm Vy Capital, according to the *San Francisco Business Times*.

"We don't see that market slowing down in the near future."

The Salesforce Tower is but one of a handful of towers proposed around the Transbay Transit Center, a massive redevelopment of the city's transportation hub, scheduled for completion late next year.

Shiles, a veteran of the San Francisco scene for decades, says the Transbay redevelopment project is a "huge deal," but in regard to the neighboring Salesforce Tower, he sees just dollars and cents, not necessarily inspiration.

"It's tall, but it's not that tall," Shiles says of the tower. "This is pretty much an economic prospect. This is not one of those cultural, ego moments. This is what the economy called for."

Along with tech money and private equity, the San Francisco

See SAN FRANCISCO, page 8

CHRISTINA ZWEIG, from page 5

Twenty-nine firms were both Hot Firms and Best Firms to Work For. Merger and acquisition activity was partially responsible for large changes on the list, but 62 percent of last year's firms grew organically during the three-year period.

GATE, Inc. (Houston, TX), has climbed the list by leaps and bounds over the past few years to hit the number one spot in 2015. **LJA Engineering, Inc.** (Houston, TX), just made it onto the list in 2013, taking the number 100 spot, but steadily climbed the list over the next three years to land in the number two spot last year. **Landpoint, Inc.** (Bossier City, LA), number four on the list in 2015, has stayed near the top of the list after a climb from number 28 in 2013. The firm was narrowly edged out of the number three spot last year by **O'Neal** (Greenville, SC), a company that is no stranger to the top 10.

From 2014 to 2015, the average growth rate increased from 108 percent to 115 percent, and median growth rate increased from 74 percent to 88 percent. Will the trend of increased growth rates continue for 2016? Our experts predict yes, but we won't know until entries close June 1.

Last year, the Trifecta Award was introduced, an award honoring firms that win three separate awards: Hot Firm, Best Firms to Work For, and Marketing Excellence. Three firms, **Maser Consulting P.A.** (Red Bank, NJ), **GARVER** (North Little Rock, AR), and **Westwood Professional**

SAN FRANCISCO, from page 7

economy is awash with cash from Beijing. According to an April report by the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and the Rhodium Group, since 2000, Chinese investors have pumped about \$3 billion into the Bay Area, with about \$1 billion of that invested just last year, and more is expected in 2016.

Regardless of how much money has poured into the city, at least one key problem remains unsolved – housing. There is not enough of it, and what's available is increasingly out of reach for ordinary residents. The result is a big market for residential, especially multifamily.

“When you're competing with Google, it's hard to get office space.”

OpenScope Studio, a San Francisco firm established in 2013, is in the thick of the action. The firm's mantra is simple.

“From a business standpoint, housing, housing, and more housing,” says Ian Dunn, one of OpenScope's founding principals.

Firms from across the West Coast have descended on San Francisco, and what they have found is that the city is a tough place to work. Growth boundaries, federal parklands, and topography, have all come together to form a challenging environment. And with a rigorous permitting and

Services (Eden Prairie, MN), were given this award in 2015. More firms are expected to win this award in 2016, and Zweig Group is offering a financial incentive for those that do.

“With an extensive educational agenda and networking opportunities in a beautiful setting, it's an event that anyone who wants to learn about success in the industry cannot afford to miss!”

Winners of all the awards will be celebrated at the 2016 Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference held at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix on September 22-23. With an extensive educational agenda and networking opportunities in a beautiful setting, it's an event that anyone who wants to learn about success in the industry cannot afford to miss!

Apply to Hot Firm, the Marketing Excellence, and the Jerry Allen Courage in Leadership Award today at zweiggroup.com/awards. ▀

CHRISTINA ZWEIG is Zweig Group's director of research and marketing. Contact her at christinaz@zweiggroup.com.

entitlement process, projects can take years to complete – if they ever get approved.

Dunn and co-founder Mark Hogan were both associates at San Francisco-based **David Baker Architects** before forming OpenScope. Both have an institutional knowledge of the ins and outs of the public process, and both are experts in sustainable urban housing.

Dunn and Hogan have put their knowledge to good use. Though the firm wants to remain diversified, it has also found a couple of niches – installing new housing units in existing buildings, and working with the city's planning department to interpret some of the most taxing environmental and land use regulations in the United States.

In partnership with the San Francisco Planning Department, OpenScope even wrote the 100-page handbook, *Accessory Dwelling Units*. Other lines of business that are expected to grow, and in which OpenScope is active, are affordable housing for seniors, veterans, and the homeless.

“We don't see that market slowing down in the near future,” says Dunn.

As the east end of the city continues to develop into a high-density, high-dollar area, firms like OpenScope expect to remain busy. But even in good times, architecture firms aren't immune to the problems facing the population at-large. Due to soaring rents and property values, a number of firms are working out of homes, or, like companies across the business spectrum, moving across the bay to Oakland.

“When you're competing with Google, it's hard to get office space,” Dunn says. ▀



Are you an amateur?

A professional firm should have professional collateral, but all too often, bad photos, poor design, and sloppy writing dilute the brand.



Chad
Clinehens

BRAND BUILDING

Of course you're not an amateur. You are a professional. You work for a professional organization. You put the "pro" in professional. So why do you let bad grammar and poor graphic design impair how your firm is represented to the world? We set such high standards for our profession, yet we allow a constant flow of bad brochures, reports, communications, proposals, and presentations to influence our brand image. Even our routine emails to clients say something about our organization and incrementally affect how we are received.

Even though there are numerous examples that could be discussed, I'll focus on the ones that seem to be the most common in this industry:

- **Bad pictures.** Even though I am seeing improvement, this is a huge problem. The improvements I am seeing are mostly driven by technological advances, rather than an intentional strategy to improve project pictures. Are you sending your junior staff out to take photos of projects with no direction or training? This is how we end up with images taken through the bug-splattered windshield of the Ford Taurus company car. Pictures of poor pixelated quality, bad angles, people frowning or in odd poses, and pictures that do not show anything meaningful, are just some of the bad graphics that need to be culled from your inventory.
- **Bad grammar and spelling.** The misuse of me, myself, or I, incorrect punctuation, jarring fonts, over-

"Don't look like an amateur with bad pictures and written communications, silly fonts and stale messaging."

use of center justification, improper indentation, and incorrect spelling are some of the offenders in this category of brand busters. These also represent the most common and most visible of mistakes your people are making in their communications. This is happening all day, every day, in emails, reports, proposals, and presentations. The list goes on. Now that we have moved from verbal communication to almost all written, our shortcomings in this area are greatly enhanced and visible to our audience.

See CHAD CLINEHENS, page 10



ON THE MOVE

SANTONI JOINS PARSONS AS LAND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST AFRICA

Parsons announced the appointment of **Pierre Santoni** as land development director for Middle East Africa. In this role, Santoni will manage land development throughout the region, with a special focus on growth strategies, new geographies, and developing new business.

"Pierre has acquired a unique set of commercial managerial and technical skills throughout his career and has a proven ability to deliver successful solutions in high-stakes, tight-timeframe situations," said Gary Adams, Parsons president. "We are glad to welcome Pierre to Parsons; his knowledge will greatly enhance our business."

"Pierre brings to Parsons a wealth of experience in our markets," added Gregg Welch, MEA land development and buildings division manager. "His position will be integral to our success as we continue to grow. We're pleased he has joined the team."

Santoni has more than 20 years of experience in managing portfolios of major global programs, developing new business, and realizing growth in new markets. He holds two master's degrees in civil engineering, from École Spéciale des Travaux Publics in Paris, France, and from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, respectively.

Parsons has been working in the MEA region for more than 60 years and has offices in the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain. Parsons' portfolio of ongoing work in the region includes major oil and gas projects as well as highways, bridges, rail and transit, airports, ports, water infrastructure, plus hospitals, public schools, universities, mosques, and other public buildings.

Parsons – celebrating more than 70 years of growth in the engineering, construction, technical, and professional services industries – is a leader in many diversified markets with a focus on infrastructure, industrial, federal, and construction.

HUGO HODGE NAMED TANTALUS' EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER, CARIBBEAN BASIN

Tantalus Systems announced that its board of directors has approved the addition of **Hugo Hodge** to the company's senior leadership team as the company's executive vice president and general manager, Caribbean Basin. Hodge is an accomplished utility veteran with more than 25 years' experience in power distribution, engineering, and utility marketing leadership roles. He most recently served as executive director and CEO of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority.

"Tantalus is uniquely positioned as one of the fastest growing smart grid companies in the

municipal and cooperative utility space," said Peter Londa, president and CEO of Tantalus. "With our expanding portfolio of value-driven applications, we're proud to add a proven leader like Hugo to accelerate our expansion in the Caribbean. His wealth of knowledge makes him ideally suited to lead our strategic international growth."

"I am honored to join the dynamic team at Tantalus, a company that has proven its commitment to helping municipal and cooperative utilities address critical operational challenges," said Hodge. "I have experienced firsthand the impact that applying the right smart grid technology can have on day-to-day utility operations. I am excited about the prospect of helping more Caribbean communities adopt technology that will lead to a more sustainable energy future."

In addition to extensive distribution utility leadership experience, Hodge brings significant regulatory knowledge through his previous roles as an industry advocate representing the American Public Power Association, Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation and the Electric Cities of Georgia. He will also leverage his technical experience in system sustainability and efficiency projects, coupled with his deep understanding of regional utility drivers to contribute to Tantalus product roadmap planning.

CHAD CLINEHENS, from page 9

■ **Bad message.** Another way we look like amateurs is saying things like: "Our projects are on time and within budget." Congratulations! That means you provide the minimum standard of performance to be a practicing professional. The further translation of such statements is that you are an amateur among your peers. This industry seems obsessed with overused statements like: "We pride ourselves in offering cost effective and innovative solutions." If you are saying the same thing everyone else is saying, then you are calling yourself a commodity. We are not putting enough thought into what we are saying and instead our messaging is being lost in a sea of similar messages from competing firms.

"Bad uses of graphics and pictures, grammar, and spelling incrementally erode the image of quality that nearly every firm is trying to project."

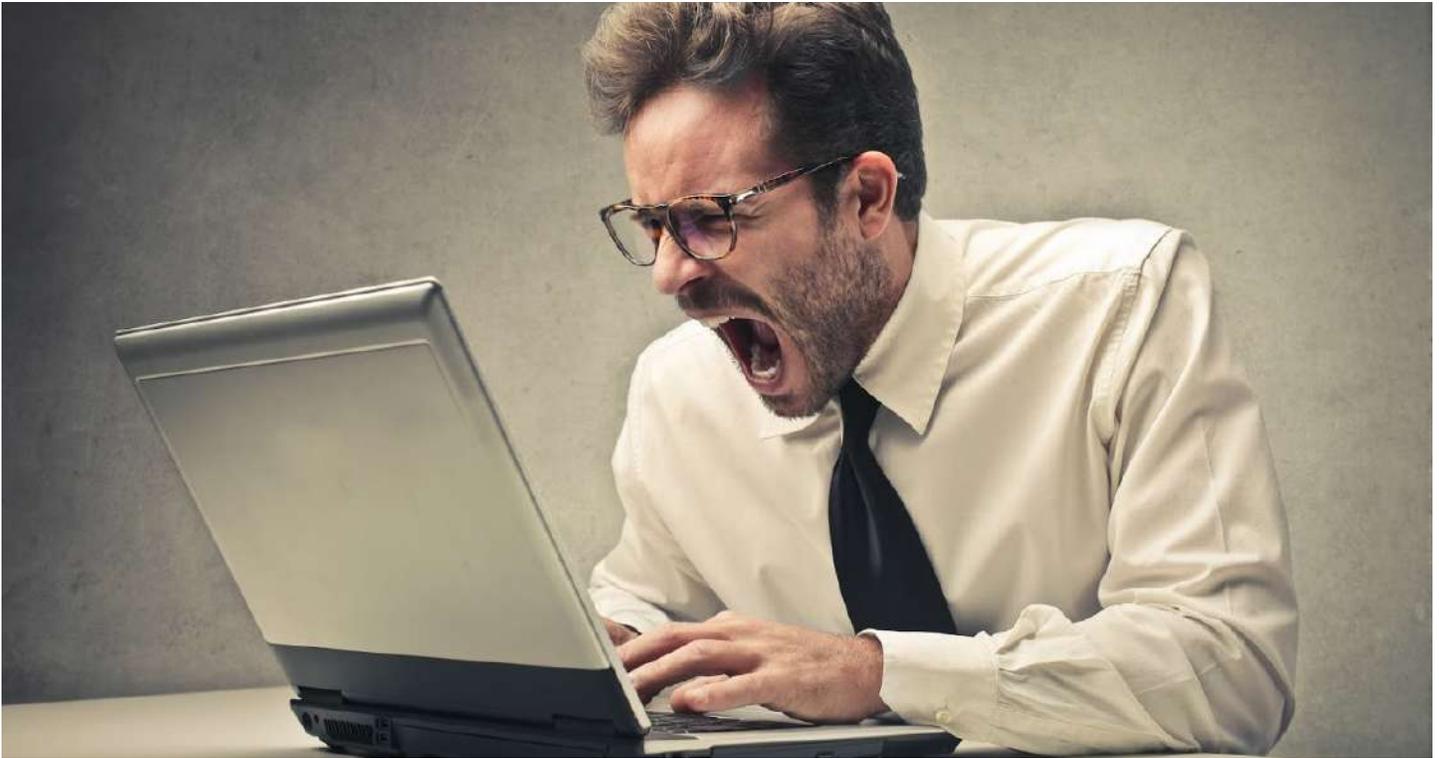
The overarching point here is that your brand is defined daily by a number of influencers. It is everything written, visual, and experiential that involves your company. Bad uses of graphics and pictures, grammar, and spelling incrementally erode the image of quality that nearly every firm is trying to project. I would challenge you to do an audit on the pictures and communications that are being used by your firm right now. I'm certain you will find at least a few examples that will make you cringe.

"Set the standard high for everything your firm does and have it permeate every area of the organization. Say something different and say it correctly and you have already set your firm apart from the others!"

The situation can be improved, and the problem even solved, through education and accountability. There are a number of resources available that offer basic training on grammar and graphics. Online sources such as Lynda.com can provide employees simple courses to work through. Access to the site can be purchased for your entire organization. Also consider "lunch and learns" to engage staff and foster ideas for best practices.

Additionally, a quality control process for outgoing transmissions and materials should be developed and implemented. Recognize that everything your firm produces defines the level of professionalism of your staff and the firm overall. Don't look like an amateur with bad pictures and written communications, silly fonts, and stale messaging. Set the standard high for everything your firm does and have it permeate every area of the organization. Say something different and say it correctly and you have already set your firm apart from the others! ▀

CHAD CLINEHENS is Zweig Group's executive vice president. Contact him at cclinehens@zweiggroup.com.



Let's talk about student loans

With college debt at an all-time high and expected to increase, now's the time to think about adding loan reduction as a benefit.



**Randy
Wilburn**

RECRUITING NOTES

Recruiting great talent takes skill, a little bit of luck, and some great benefits. The other day I was trying to figure out ways our clients could separate themselves from the competition when it comes to recruiting the best talent.

Of course, everyone wants to just throw money at the problem without thinking about the factors that drive a candidate to decide to go with one firm or another. It's probably a bit more involved than that. Ask any recruiter and they will tell you that the deal isn't done until the candidate signs the offer letter, and even then things can fall by the wayside through no fault of your own.

"The other day I was trying to figure out ways our clients could separate themselves from the competition when it comes to recruiting the best talent."

I was on a plane recently and stumbled across an article in *The Wall Street Journal* that addressed student relief as a corporate perk.

What a novel idea!

This issue got me thinking about the challenges facing young engineers and architects who are looking to work for a great company. It's hard enough beating the pavement and finding a job, and when you add to it the stress of dealing with student loan debt (\$35,000 average student loan debt at graduation in 2015), the decision-making process for these newly minted engineers and architects becomes a bit tricky.

Here are some ideas to consider as you work to fine tune your pay and benefits package to attract this millennial generation of talent.

Imagine being able to offer new employees healthcare, a 401(k) program, and a student loan repayment option or bonus. That's a big deal for a young employee dealing with the kind of debt that this millennial generation is facing.

See RANDY WILBURN, page 12



BUSINESS NEWS

JACOBS RECEIVES ENGINEERING CONTRACT FROM SAINT-GOBAIN INDIA PVT LTD. Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. announced that it received a contract from Saint-Gobain India Pvt Ltd. to provide civil engineering services for the proposed third float glass line capacity expansion of SG IPL's World Glass Complex in Chennai, India. SG IPL is a subsidiary of Saint-Gobain S.A., one of the world's largest manufacturers of building and high performance materials.

Under the terms of the contract, Jacobs is providing civil engineering and design services for the float glass line capacity expansion. The project is a key component of SG IPL's expansion program in India.

The two float glass lines in the existing complex were also designed by Jacobs. The complex caters to local markets in addition to the markets in West Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN countries.

In making the announcement, Jacobs Senior

Vice President and General Manager, India and Asia Vinayak Pai stated, "We are proud to extend our relationship with SG IPL as it continues to invest in this region. I'm confident our global experience in the industry combined with our strong local knowledge can contribute significant value to this strategically important facility."

The project is being led by Jacobs' industrial line of business.

FLUOR WINS INNOVATION EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR INTEGRATED SCAFFOLDING SOLUTION Fluor Corporation announced that Fiatech has named Fluor a Celebration of Engineering and Technology Innovation Award winner for the company's innovative integrated scaffolding solution on the North West Redwater Partnership Sturgeon Refinery Project in Alberta, Canada. Fluor received the award in the Scenario-Based Project Planning category. Fluor's turnkey solution incorporates scaffolding into a project's detailed design and

encompasses 3-D design, logistics, and field execution expertise. With a focus on efficient assembly sequencing, this approach optimizes scaffolding quantities and onsite productivity, thereby reducing costs. Additional benefits include schedule predictability and reduced site hours and congestion. The program is a partnership between Fluor and AMECO, Fluor's equipment unit, as well as scaffolding manufacturer PERI.

"Fluor is honored to be recognized by the capital projects community for our innovative execution methods that reduce costs and improve schedule certainty for our clients," said Jack Penley, Fluor's president of construction and fabrication. "Fluor's integrated scaffolding solution drives a step-change in efficient scaffolding execution compared to traditional approaches. It is just one example of how our integrated solutions approach delivers project execution advantages."

RANDY WILBURN, from page 11

National student-loan debt is at an all-time high – and is expected to double in 10 years. Projections by the Congressional Budget Office put the total outstanding federal student-loan debt at \$2.4 trillion by 2025.

According to a 2015 survey by Iontuition.com (a website that helps manage student-loan payments), more than half of current students and recent college graduates with student loans said they would rather receive an offer of loan help than a health plan. Nearly half of those surveyed also stated that they would rather have student-loan help than a 401(k).

These survey results are very telling. In the immortal words of the great R&B group, the O'Jays: "Give the people what they want."

This new opportunity has even spawned start-up companies that have developed student-loan repayment programs. Companies like Boston-based Gradifi Inc., and Student Loan Genius, located in Austin, have developed platforms that can help firms implement these new benefits.

"This is one of those benefits that has yet to take hold in the design industry."

PricewaterhouseCoopers has taken this idea and leveraged it to their advantage on college campuses throughout the nation as they work to attract new hires. PwC worked directly with Gradifi to get the program up and running and make student loan repayment a reality for new employees joining the firm.

Now I should say that, according to an SHRM survey, only 3 percent of companies in 2015 were currently offering to help their employees pay off their student loans. Based on anecdotal evidence, it appears the number is quickly rising.

"Imagine being able to offer new employees healthcare, a 401(k) program, and a student loan repayment option or bonus."

The biggest challenge to this option is the tax implication. Money to help pay student loans is taxable income. There is a bill in Congress right now, the Employer Participation in Student Loan Assistance Act, introduced by Rep. Rodney Davis (R-Ill.) on the House side, and on the Senate side by Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.). The House bill seeks to extend the tax exclusion that currently applies to employer-provided tuition assistance – up to \$5,250 per year – to include employer contributions to employees' student loans. The bill would also provide incentives for employers to subsidize student loan repayments.

Whether this bill passes or not, there are some creative ways that a company can implement this benefit and create a strong recruitment and retention tool for new and current employees. This is one of those benefits that has yet to take hold in the design industry. I suspect that those early adopters who figure out a way to make this work will have a tremendous advantage over peer firms that are unwilling to be creative when it comes to developing new ideas and programs to attract and retain the best talent available.

I honestly hope that someone will read this article and sit down with their CFO, controller, and head of HR, and figure something out. Please, do share your efforts with me and let me know how things go. As always, I'm available to discuss this topic or anything else related to recruitment, retention, and leadership. ▀

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