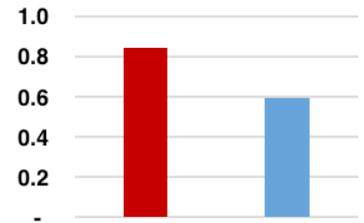


TRENDLINES

Ownership valuations



According to Zweig Group's 2017 Valuation Survey, majority owners have an advantage when it comes to the market value of their shares. When looking at the enterprise value, as a percent of net service revenue, valuations performed for **majority ownership** resulted in "Value/NSR" figures that were 30 percent higher than those for **minority or non-controlling owners**. This makes sense, as the median control premium applied to majority ownership stakes was 30 percent while the median minority interest discount was 24 percent. (Special discount to TZL subscribers: Use code **SRVY35off** to order surveys at 35 percent off at zweiggroup.myshopify.com/collections/frontpage)

'Can do' or 'can't do,' that is the question!

"A good place to start learning how to be a 'can do' person is learning all you can from those who are doers. Pick your mentors wisely."



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

Are you a "can do" person or a "can't do" person? I'm sure that virtually all of you readers of *The Zweig Letter* – 95 percent of which work in privately-held A/E or environmental consulting firms – have had exposure to both types of people. And I can say that in my experience in this industry accumulated over the last 37 years, most of us need more "can do" folks than we currently have in our organizations!

Some people think it makes them smart to tell you all of the reasons something won't work. Maybe that particular orientation is necessary for those who are teamed up with individuals who never seem to be able to get their feet on the ground and complete something. But for the rest of us, I find hearing all the reasons something won't work akin to sucking all of the oxygen out of the room I am sitting in. It makes it hard to breathe. And I don't like it.

Most clients – be they public or private – hire design professionals for only one purpose. That is to figure out how something **CAN** be done. Remember that!

So why do so many folks – engineers in particular, but other design and environmental professionals as well – people who should be "can-do" people – turn into "can't do" people? Here are my thoughts:

- 1) **We train them to be "can't do" people.** I think many firm work environments discourage experimentation by having too many rules, too much structure, and management that is

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One team – period

ON THE MOVE

PENNONI HIRES CINO Pennoni (Hot Firm #48 for 2016), a multidiscipline consulting engineering firm, hired Markus Weidner to serve as the firm's first chief innovation officer reporting directly to the president.

The creation of the role is an acknowledgement that many clients' needs have evolved beyond standard engineering services. A real need for ingenuity across all regions and service lines called for a dramatic shift in focus at the top. The broad recognition of this prompted president and CEO Anthony Bartolomeo to create this new officer position. "The field of engineering is constantly evolving and in order to stay competitive and offer the superior services expected by Pennoni's clients, we needed an individual dedicated to innovation," said Bartolomeo. "Markus' position will be key to Pennoni's growth in market sectors that leverage the latest technologies to satisfy the diverse needs of our clients."

Weidner is a seasoned information technology executive with more than 20 years of experience in the industry. His expertise includes technology infrastructure, enterprise resource planning, business process and workflow reengineering, document and project management, social/collaborative platforms, and voice/video communications systems. Weidner has held a number of director roles in the past, mostly in firms heavily focused on business transformation and growth through acquisition. He served as associate vice president and IT director at Pennoni several years ago.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

generally too risk averse. This makes the people who work there the same way. They are afraid to take a chance on doing something differently. That's too risky.

2) They are scared to be "can do" people. It seems risky. They could get fired if they are wrong. Or they could just look bad. Or they could be ridiculed and made fun of. Fear of failure makes people into "can't do" people. If you never try, you never fail. So don't try in the first place!

3) Their minds are so full of negative thoughts about what is going on in their own lives, or the world as a whole, and it colors all of their thinking. They think, "What's the point? Everything is bad. Life sucks." So they will then make your life suck by telling you why you can't do what you want to do.

4) They think it makes them look smart to be a "can't do" person. "If I can think of all the reasons something won't work, you'll see how smart I am." "If I don't do that I don't look smart." No one wants to be thought of as being anything other than smart.

5) That's just the way they are. Genetics? Who knows, but some people come out that way. They are negative, and when presented with a problem to solve or opportunity to cash in on, they immediately think of why they can't do something. You probably can't fix this.

A good place to start learning how to be a "can do" person is learning all you can from those who are doers. Pick your mentors wisely. Hang out with the right "other people" in your life as well. Look for inspiration. Dump the negative and pick up the positive. There's more within your control than you realize and it starts with what's in your own head. Clear out the junk inside your mind so you have room for the good stuff. ▀

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

RICK KEATING PARTNERS WITH HED Harley Ellis Devereaux (Hot Firm #23 for 2016) announced Richard Keating and HED have joined forces.

A recognized leader in design, Keating brings vast experience as a designer on large-scale, complex project types, including corporate headquarters and office buildings, high-rise residential buildings, research facilities, and retail centers.

Keating began his career with **Skidmore, Owings & Merrill** in Chicago and went on to become the youngest partner in the firm's history and eventually assumed leadership of its Los Angeles office. After 23 years with SOM, Keating opened his own practice — **Keating Architecture**.

Based in L.A., Keating will provide design consultation services for all of HED's five offices.

"We are looking forward to leveraging Rick's extensive design experience across the United States to continue to grow our practice nationally," said J. Peter Devereaux, CEO of HED. "Rick's experience designing complex urban high-rise office and residential buildings as well as corporate headquarters projects in the cities that as HED has offices both complement and enhance our portfolio. As partners on several recent pursuits, we saw first-hand the knowledge and passion he has for design excellence. We're excited to join forces."

Keating will focus on design excellence and continue to be a thought leader on design within HED's corporate and commercial practice.



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Promote risk-taking

For the next generation of leaders to be successful, they'll need a mindset sculpted by strategy, new ideas, and a willingness to embrace the unknown.



**Julie
Benezet**

**GUEST
SPEAKER**

Iroutinely hear AEC firm leaders express frustration about finding the next generation of leaders. Their feelings are understandable when so many firms continue to be led by founding or legacy partners who are in their late 50s or early 60s and want to move on to a different life stage.

Their comments on the next generation include:

- “So many of our people don’t have the DNA to be entrepreneurial.”
- “They’re so risk averse.”
- “They just don’t get the broader picture of business.”
- “They focus on the bottom instead of the top line.”
- “They just sit in the comfort of their desks doing projects instead of going out there to see what’s happening.”

Sound familiar? To be sure, there are some serious practical issues that complicate leadership transition: The Great Recession eroded firm coffers needed to repurchase senior partner stock, downward pressure on fees in an increasingly fickle market hurts profitability, and leadership development was deferred due to slashed

recession era training budgets. These are real issues that must be addressed.

“To succeed as a leader you must pursue ideas whose outcome is unknown. That can be scary, and as a leader you need to be okay with that. That is the leadership mindset.”

However, there is a larger leadership transition issue. That issue is building a leadership mindset. It is trickier to solve, as it involves human behavior, and yet it’s essential to developing the next generation of leaders.

See JULIE BENEZET, page 4



BUSINESS NEWS

JACOBS NAMED IN FORBES JUST 100 LIST Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. was named in the inaugural *Forbes* Just 100, a list of America's best corporate citizens. Jacobs was ranked as one of the most just companies in the Capital Goods category.

The list ranks large publicly-traded companies against the expectations of American employees on several drivers of justness, including pay and benefits, worker treatment, leadership and ethics, environmental impact, and others.

"At Jacobs we are committed to keeping our company strong and our people engaged; we work every day to improve and build on these

values," said Jacobs Chairman and CEO Steve Demetriou. "We're very proud to receive recognition from *Forbes* as one of America's best corporate citizens and we will strive to continue to make Jacobs a great place to work."

According to *Forbes*, this is the first time America's top companies have been ranked according to the most important issues facing American employees. The list was compiled through a survey of approximately 50,000 Americans over the course of 18 months using focus groups, interviews, polling, and analysis of attitudes and perceptions.

To complete the survey research, *Forbes*

collaborated with JUST Capital, an independent nonprofit organization based in New York City, and NORC, an independent research organization at the University of Chicago. JUST Capital provides continual data, information and rankings on how large corporations stack up against the American employee's definition of just business behaviors.

The complete list of the just companies can be found at forbes.com/just100 and was featured in *Forbes Magazine's* December 20, 2016 issue.

JULIE BENEZET, from page 3

Leadership simply defined is about discovering strategic ideas that lift the organization to a better place and bringing others along to make them happen. It takes you away from the well-worn routines of business life into corridors not seen before, unknown places that hold endless promise, ambiguity, and trepidation. In short, to succeed as a leader you must pursue ideas whose outcome is unknown. That can be scary, and as a leader you need to be OK with that. That is the leadership mindset.

For most mortals, the pursuit of scariness sounds, well, silly or ill advised. Who in their right mind would want to move in the direction of discomfort? Answer: someone who dares to dream and believes that the bumpy road to get there is worth taking.

How does this apply to A/E firm leadership? Think of the possibilities for growth that need attention to build a future. Some of them are:

- What work will our clients value enough to pay higher fees?
- How do we teach our professionals to listen actively to clients not only to deliver better work, but also to discover broader opportunities to serve them?
- How do we build a culture that attracts the best talent and motivates them to stay and do generative work, without us having the ability to pay them more money than our competition?

"For most mortals, the pursuit of scariness sounds, well, silly or ill advised. Who in their right mind would want to move in the direction of discomfort?"

Finding strategic ideas to address these issues requires testing them. It also involves adopting new behaviors for their implementation. Next gen leaders often find themselves in the awkward place of motivating team members to experiment with new initiatives with no guarantee of success, holding difficult conversations when others react cynically to anything new, and giving full throated praise when teams achieve success, of any size. In

other words, new initiatives push people outside of their comfort zone. That is where many next gen leaders stall out.

"Developing next gen leaders calls upon the current leaders to promote the risk-taking that comes with finding new ideas and to support them while they work through the discomfort of making them happen."

How can a firm support its next gen leaders to take the risks that come with new ideas and behaviors, while recognizing they will enter the zone of discomfort?

Here are some important starting points:

- Make it a priority for next gen leaders to generate strategic ideas that will move the organization forward.
- Help them identify personal motivators to give them the drive to push through the discomfort of trying new ideas and behaviors.
- Recognize that defensive behaviors are normal and appear in many forms, including micromanagement, personalizing, and conflict avoidance.
- Make it a strength to admit defensive behaviors and to deal with them openly.
- Work with them on behavioral approaches to manage their discomfort while testing new ideas.
- Celebrate every gawky effort toward creating the future.

Developing next gen leaders calls upon the current leaders to promote the risk-taking that comes with finding new ideas and to support them while they work through the discomfort of making them happen. That is how the future gets built. ▀

JULIE BENEZET spent 25 years in law and business, and for the past 15 years has coached executives from virtually every industry. She is the author of the recent book, *The Journey of Not Knowing: How 21st Century Leaders Can Chart a Course Where There Is None*. She can be reached at julie@businessgrowthco.com



Says 'Gridlock Sam'

Do whatever it takes to get your foot in the door, and then keep your foot on the gas pedal if you want to compete in a big market.



**Samuel
Schwartz**

**GUEST
SPEAKER**

Had I known in 1995 what I know now, I wonder if I would have started my own company; in any event, I made the right choice.

Government work in NYC was pretty much out of the question for a one- to two-, then five-person firm. Set-asides for minorities and women were quite high and the big firms used the MBE/WBE/DBEs for their subs. Whenever I approached a prime to team the answer I got back was the same. "We'd love to include you but we need to fulfill our set-aside goals so there's no room for you." Clearly I needed a business plan that did not count on the public sector.

Private sector work has no such requirements. To break into that market I built on my history as an NYC traffic commissioner and chief engineer. I emphasized my know-how, know-who, and know-what to do to expedite the process mainly for developers. Twenty years in the government sector gave me an edge.

My second selling point was that the client would get the CEO in attendance, not a staffer,

for agency meetings, legislative hearings, and community outreach. For the first few years I billed 40-60 hours per week to projects and another 20 or so to marketing and administration.

"I emphasized my know-how, know-who, and know-what to do to expedite the process mainly for developers. Twenty years in the government sector gave me an edge."

Thirdly, to get my foot in the door, I guaranteed my fee would be at or lower than the competition's. Private clients will often let you know if your fees are a bit high if they want to

See SAMUEL SCHWARTZ, page 8



SPOTLIGHT ON: Har

PROFILE



The Hargrove Adaptive Toy, a project started by Hargrove instrumentation engineer Michelle Jones. The toy gives mobility-limited children the chance to learn how to independently control an electric wheelchair so that they can qualify for an insurance-provided wheelchair.

One team – period

Alabama firm looms large along the Gulf Coast, and a lot of that's due to a laser focus on service and always starting out at the top.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent



Ralph Hargrove, President and CEO, Hargrove Engineers + Constructors

Years ago, while working in the construction and engineering industries, Ralph Hargrove, president and CEO of **Hargrove Engineers + Constructors** (Hot Firm #7 for 2016) sensed the need for a responsive team to provide support for small projects and turnarounds. He had no idea that when he started the business in 1995 that the Mobile, Alabama-based firm would turn into what it is today – a 1,200-person juggernaut recognized as one of the nation's best.

“Because our clients and those who work with us see the value of our ‘one team’ mindset, as we demonstrated a strong level of commitment to meet

clients’ needs, we started to be asked to perform larger projects, including capital expansions. Soon, clients were asking us to assist their facilities outside of the Gulf Coast, and we began opening regional offices to serve these customers with local resources. Not only did Hargrove expand regionally, our client-base also evolved to include a wide variety of industries.”

“We’re proactive, not reactive and we have an unwavering drive to compete and win.”

Today, Hargrove has 11 offices and provides services outside of engineering such as

commissioning and startup, controls and automation, and EPC project execution. In addition to being consistently recognized by Zweig Group as a Best Firm to Work For and a Hot Firm, the company has also been named #76 on ENR's list of 500 Top Design Firms. Its controls and automation team was recognized as Integrator of the Year for 2016 by the Control System Integrators Association, and it has also been named to the *Inc.* 5000 list every year since 2008, with 115 percent growth over the last three years. Hargrove ranked 36 on the list among engineering firms.

“Because our clients and those who work with us see the value of our ‘one team’ mindset, as we demonstrated a strong level of commitment to meet clients’ needs, we started to be asked to perform larger projects, including capital expansions.”

A CONVERSATION WITH RALPH HARGROVE.

The Zweig Letter: What are your key leadership strengths?

Ralph Hargrove: Understanding that Hargrove’s strength is its team. I’ve composed a team of winners – teammates who are driven to achieve project excellence and clients that recognize the value in building relationships that lead to success. Leaders understand the importance of hard work and quality, as well as their role in the community. At Hargrove, having a positive impact on the community is integral to our measure of success.

TZL: How would you describe your leadership style?

RH: My daughter once gave me a poster listing out “Peter’s Law,” a different take on Murphy’s Law. It is also known as “The Creed of the Persistent and Passionate Mind.” Some of the points include:

- If something can go wrong, fix it.
- When faced without a challenge, make one.
- Start at the top and work your way up.
- Do it by the book, but be the author.

This list of 19 witticisms hangs in all of our conference rooms, and I feel it closely represents my leadership style.

TZL: To date, what has been a top challenge and how did you deal with it? What was the outcome?

RH: Fluctuating economic conditions are a constant challenge across our industries. However, we focus on what we can control, whatever it may be, by delivering quality products and building relationships and looking out for the interests of our clients. Even in tough economic times, dedication to these efforts pays off.

TZL: Tell me about a recent project you are especially proud of and why.

RH: Because of Hargrove’s confidentiality agreements with clients, we cannot disclose our project information. However, with a strong pipeline of EPCM projects, 2017 is shaping up to be another year of record growth. Outside of client projects, I am particularly proud of and love sharing the far-reaching effects of Hargrove’s community service efforts. A recent example of this is the HAT (Hargrove Adaptive Toy) project that was started by one of our Instrumentation Engineers, Michelle Jones, PE, after she learned that many mobility limited children are unable to qualify for an insurance-provided electric wheelchair as they must prove their ability to independently control the chair before they can receive aid. She assembled a team from her Hargrove family to modify a toy car for the first recipient: a young girl she met on a field trip with her son. These adaptive toy cars will provide a convenient, accessible pathway for the recipient to develop the necessary skills to meet the insurance requirements. This has combined our teammates’ engineering and technical expertise with a perfect opportunity to give back. The first toy car was delivered in October, and the team plans to modify 10 cars per year going forward through a partnership with the University of South Alabama’s Capstone Engineering Program.

TZL: What do you feel sets your firm apart from others?

RH: Our dedication to the team. We’re proactive, not reactive and we have an unwavering drive to compete and win. This culture, along with the company’s dedication to community involvement (through the established Hargrove Foundation) and the betterment of the communities in which we live makes for a high morale.

“Soon, clients were asking us to assist their facilities outside of the Gulf Coast, and we began opening regional offices to serve these customers with local resources. Not only did Hargrove expand regionally, our client-base also evolved to include a wide variety of industries.”

TZL: Any news you care to share about Hargrove projects or anything else?

RH: To support our clients as they strive to shorten outages for increasing plant availability and production. Hargrove’s full-service startup and commissioning team works with owners and contractors to lead commissioning and startup activities. Our full-service controls and automation team has seen tremendous growth as clients recognize the benefit of using a systems-independent firm that can

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SAMUEL SCHWARTZ, from page 5

work with you. You must be willing to negotiate. I also took on “lost leaders” where I did not make a profit and even took a loss to build my firm’s résumé.

But, all that was not enough to make a big enough splash. NYC was and is a media capital. In 1995 newspapers and television ruled the day. At one point I wrote columns for four newspapers for very low fees. Depending on the paper I was Gridlock Sam, Transit Sam, the Queens Traffic Guru, and Gridlock Shmuel. I made myself available to comment on transportation matters for television and radio. The public has a tendency to think if he’s on TV he must be good. Many clients came forward wanting Gridlock Sam on their team.

“My second selling point was that the client would get the CEO in attendance, not a staffer, for agency meetings, legislative hearings, and community outreach.”

A decade later my firm reached a mass of 50 people and we found it easier to team up for government work with the

Q&A, from page 7

vide a single solution for systems integration, process safety management, and IT control network and security support alongside detail engineering, construction management, life sciences, and panel fabrication.

TZL: Are you married? Children? Pets?

RH: My wife, Kimberly, is a mechanical engineer. We also have a recently married son and a daughter who has blessed me with two grandchildren.

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

RH: I’d love to be doing what they do.

“Leaders understand the importance of hard work and quality, as well as their role in the community. At Hargrove, having a positive impact on the community is integral to our measure of success.”

TZL: Best vacation spot? Dream destination?

RH: One of my favorite vacations was my trip to the Isle of Skye, in Scotland, where I have family ties. While we were there, we visited the Dunvegan Castle, also known as Castle McLeod, which was really special since my late mother is a McLeod. One day I’d love to visit the Strait of Magellan/Patagonia, and the Outer Hebrides.



TALK TO US

Do you have an interesting story to tell? Is your company doing things differently and getting results? Let us know. We’d love to contact you and feature you in an upcoming case study. If interested, please email rmassey@zweiggroup.com.

“big guys.” Today, we are 115 people and are able to serve as prime on some jobs.

“The ethos never changed: a satisfied client is considered the low bar; a happy, successful client ready to bring us onto the next job is our goal.”

We are also no longer Sam the ex-commissioner and his students (I was a professor at Cooper Union when I started). Yes, if the client needs to see or hear from the CEO, they will. But, for the vast majority of jobs it is the other 114 people who lead the charge, deliver the product, and make the profit. I’m just 25 percent billable and I like it that way. But the ethos never changed: a satisfied client is considered the low bar; a happy, successful client ready to bring us onto the next job is our goal. We accomplish this with ingenuity, accessibility, and integrity (which also happens to be our tag line). ▀

SAMUEL I. SCHWARTZ is president and CEO of **Sam Schwartz Engineering**. He is the author of *Street Smart: The Rise of Cities and the Fall of Cars*. He can be reached at sschwartz@samschwartz.com.

“Outside of client projects, I am particularly proud of and love sharing the far-reaching effects of Hargrove’s community service efforts. A recent example of this is the HAT project that was started by one of our Instrumentation Engineers, Michelle Jones.”

TZL: What’s the last book you read?

RH: *Leadership* by Lieutenant General Russel Honore, Army (ret.). General Honore spoke at our recent Hargrove Foundation Gala, and I found his discussion to be moving and inspiring. If you aren’t familiar with him, he is best known for serving as commander of Joint Task Force-Katrina.

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

RH: If you think it, do it. You know what to do.

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

RH: I’m enjoying the Gulf Coast – boating, running, and biking, spending time with my family, reading, and snow skiing.

TZL: Favorite lunch?

RH: I usually have a piece of locally-caught blackened grilled fish over a salad or seafood gumbo. ▀



Energy efficient

As designers, it's time to redefine the world and make it better, and that starts with preserving our resources.



Ed
Friedrichs

FROM THE
CHAIRMAN

As I read the various architecture, interior design, and engineering journals, I see many people, firms, principals, and designers described as “leaders.” But I don’t see much evidence of where they’re leading, how they’re leading, or what’s changed because of their leadership. In fact, I’m not sure, from what I read last year, that much has changed.

Entering 2017, I see a lot of things I’d want to change, and I’m sure you do as well. What will your role be? Here are a few:

- **Energy and the environment.** Debates about global warming and climate change aside, there is much we can do from where we sit to create healthy environments and preserve natural resources. Here are some thoughts:
 - There is only a finite amount of petroleum on this planet. Our supply may last 500 years or 10,000, but it’s not infinite. I’d rather see us using dramatically less oil than we do today so there is some left for future generations, not for power but other things for which oil is an important ingredient.

“Debates about global warming and climate change aside, there is much we can do from where we sit to create healthy environments and preserve natural resources.”

- Other natural sources of power – sun, wind, and tidal action in our oceans will go on until our sun burns itself out. By that time, I suspect we’ll be colonizing other planets. I continue to aim toward a deep reduction in oil consumption as a

See ED FRIEDRICHS, page 10



ED FRIEDRICHS, from page 9

most appropriate path and would be happy to share with you the projects I'm working on that are moving strongly in that direction.

- New glazing products are entering the market, such as photo-voltaic clear glass that can generate a great deal of electricity from our buildings' vertical surfaces. We'll be using this on a building we have on the boards currently. Combined with a photo-chromic coating (like on sunglasses that darken when exposed to direct sunlight) on the #3 surface of a dual pane window system, we'll reduce heat gain and may obviate the need for expensive shades or draperies.
- **Water.** As our planetary population continues to grow, we're seeing a reduction in potable water in addition to water for irrigation around the globe.
- Water is a much-talked-about diminishing resource. I'm a strong advocate for and am working on water recycling from our waste systems. This should be done on both a district level in our communities and at a municipal level as our sewer systems are expanded or rebuilt. Sadly, it's not appropriate (yet) for a single building, so if this is a path you would like to pursue and you're not building a whole district, nor are part of a municipality, partner with others who are building in the immediate vicinity and form your own district.
- Hydroponic gardens in enclosed structures are an extremely water-efficient way to grow produce. I'm working on a business plan to use a portion of our recycled water from our waste water recycling system to grow things extremely efficiently in parking decks that will soon become redundant in an era of autonomous, electrically-powered vehicles. This is a win-win-win – less oil and water consumed, along with fewer or no pesticides required.
- **Building materials.** We're rapidly depleting the natural resources on this planet – copper, aluminum, iron, titanium, and many others. Are you taking leadership on the projects you're working on to recycle – recycling construction waste and using resources that are recycled from buildings that are being dismantled? When I built my house in San Francisco in 2001, I clad it in copper shingles made entirely from recycled copper. Are you working with renewable materials, like wood? We're coming very close to being able to erect a 20-story building using cross-laminated timber made from rapidly growing trees grown for that purpose.

“Leadership is not just talking. It often involves a long and difficult path with many obstacles along the way. It takes persistence to make a difference.”

- **Building design.** Are we designing buildings that can adapt to future, yet undetermined needs? For years, I've done adaptive reuse plans for every building I've designed. The reuse is never exactly as I'd envisioned it, but thinking about it ahead of time steers you to design solutions that can be adapted in several ways. I've pulled many of these out of the drawer when the current occupant could no longer use the building for the unique purpose intended and needed to sell it. A good example is a three-story data processing and call center with 80,000-square-foot floorplates for a credit card processing

company. We insisted on putting courtyards into the building so that no area of the floor was more than 40 feet away from daylight. Along came a TV station that used the courtyards for TV studios. Another was a corporate headquarters which desired 40,000-square-foot floorplates. The average tenant size in the area was between 3,000 and 5,000 square feet. We suggested putting bays along one side that would allow a series of 3,000-square-foot office suites so each have a corner window. Within a few years, the corporation was acquired by another company and moved out. Guess what? The building leased up virtually immediately.

“I challenge you to create a way of doing things that will redefine our world. We need you. If you can't do it yourself, enlist a team and keep the fire burning under each other until you've gotten to a new world that you're proud of, with new ways of doing things that others can adopt.”

So, what does leadership look like in our professions? Leading involves innovation and inspiration. One person or a group of people can have an idea or pursue a direction that will change the world or people's lives for the better. The topics I've proposed offer many opportunities to lead.

But leading means being bold and convincing others to follow. On a project, it may be as simple as inspiring the team – your in-house team, the contractor, subcontractors, building officials, lenders, everyone – to embrace your vision and take the message to others.

Leadership is not just talking. It often involves a long and difficult path with many obstacles along the way. It takes persistence to make a difference. You must create the proof statements and evidence of success that give others the ammunition to embrace and carry forth your innovation.

We're in dire need of leadership in so many areas beyond what I've outlined above. Every new direction must be based on a way of doing things that has become outmoded. Each of you can make a difference if you become a student of the world and identify something that needs to change or evolve. I encourage you to muster the energy, focus, and tenacity to bring your ideas into your profession and the market place. I challenge you to create a way of doing things that will redefine our world. We need you. If you can't do it yourself, enlist a team and keep the fire burning under each other until you've gotten to a new world that you're proud of, with new ways of doing things that others can adopt. ▀

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OPINION



Walk the plank!

As a firm grows, new people have to come on board. But if those people threaten to damage your culture and sink the ship, you can always toss them back out to sea.



**Will
Schnier**

**GUEST
SPEAKER**

We tell our team members every day that we've worked very hard to be blessed by the obstacles we now have the luxury of facing. Let me share one of those obstacles that we overcame last year in hopes that our experience can translate to success in your organization.

Our firm, **BIG RED DOG Engineering and Consulting** (Hot Firm #22 for 2016) has grown remarkably from our humble beginnings in 2009. We started with three guys who had no clients and no money. At the conclusion of 2016, we were more than 100 team members strong, had more than \$15 million in annual revenue, and were embracing the tailwinds of back-to-back Zweig Group Hot Firm awards.

For a long time, our culture was protected by a close-knit group of team members. There was little to no negativity or resistance to what we were trying to accomplish. What we've discovered is that as firm leaders we need to be much more intentional about protecting our culture as our firm becomes more successful and grows

even larger. We've learned that a great culture, focusing on positivity, does not come about by happenstance.

"For a long time, our culture was protected by a close-knit group of team members. There was little to no negativity or resistance to what we were trying to accomplish."

Last summer, our company leadership visited over the course of two days for our shareholders and

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TRANSACTIONS

THORNTON TOMASETTI ACQUIRES SWALLOW ACOUSTIC CONSULTANTS Thornton Tomasetti has entered into an agreement to acquire Swallow Acoustic Consultants Limited, a specialist in acoustics, noise, and vibration control engineering based in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. The addition of Swallow will bolster Thornton Tomasetti's Structural Engineering and Forensics practices as well as its Canadian presence. The deal is scheduled to close in early 2017. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Founded in the early 1990s by John Swallow, SACL offers a broad range of services in acoustics design and forensics and noise and vibration analysis and control. These include architectural acoustics; environmental, industrial, and mechanical noise control; acoustic and vibration testing; expert witness testimony; technical writing and standards; construction vibration assessment; and vibration control.

In addition to its Mississauga headquarters, the 13-person firm has an office in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Swallow will become a principal at Thornton Tomasetti, while Ramin Behboudi and Michael Wesolowsky will join as associate principals.

SACL is one of a small number of firms worldwide that designs tuned mass dampers, a device used to help stabilize buildings against wind sway and other kinds of motion. Its TMD work includes tall buildings and long-span structures, such as sports facilities and bridges. SACL's tuned mass damper capabilities will dovetail with Thornton Tomasetti's efforts in the field, which includes the development of a fluid harmonic disruptor based on NASA technology.

Starting with Manhattan's LaGuardia School for the Arts in 1988, Thornton Tomasetti has collaborated on many projects with SACL. These include Chifley Tower in Sydney,

Australia, Soldier Field in Chicago, Illinois, Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha, and most recently, T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada, which opened this past April.

SACL has worked in some 20 countries and has a considerable presence in central and eastern Canada. This will give Thornton Tomasetti a larger footprint in Canada, having opened its first office in the country, in Toronto, earlier this year.

"For nearly 30 years, Swallow has been our go-to partner for vibration issues. Through our close collaboration on many diverse projects, we have built a strong working relationship based on mutual respect and a shared commitment to professional excellence. This combination of our complementary services will help us build upon our leadership position and provide better value to our clients." said Thomas Scarangelo, chairman and CEO, Thornton Tomasetti.

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leaders retreat. This is an annual event for us and it's our first chance to really dissect, affirm, question, and trash portions of the initial draft of our business plan for the following year. We had a handful of action items following our retreat to complete prior to the end of the calendar year and really get us ready for a strong 2017. I'm proud to report that we accomplished all of our action items with time to spare.

One of our first action items was to determine who's in our boat and who needs to be thrown overboard. The objective was two-fold: We needed to eliminate a very limited number of negative people from our organization, and we needed to take care of our culture and protect our team members who are working so hard to make our clients more successful. Our outstanding team members do not need to be dragged down by negative people or people who cannot perform up to the standards of the company.

There is an apt quote from the great business philosopher Tony Gaskins: "Negative people need drama like it was oxygen."

"One of our first action items was to determine who's in our boat and who needs to be thrown overboard."

What happened as a result of this action item? Really great things! HUUUUGE things even, in a nod to the newest leader of the free world. We intentionally parted ways with three of our senior leaders who were sapping the company of its energy and entrepreneurial spirit.

First up was an office leader who had a host of unhappy clients, neglected colleagues, and zero desire to put the effort in to address either camp. Time to walk the plank! Second up was a key member of our administrative team

who appeared to not understand that every sentence should start with "yes" instead of "no." Overboard with her! Finally, another office leader who didn't want to share the sandbox with his colleagues and who couldn't help but include the words "me" and "I" in every thought he shared. He now sleeps with the fishes!

"We needed to eliminate a very limited number of negative people from our organization, and we needed to take care of our culture and protect our team members who are working so hard to make our clients more successful."

Far from hurting us, these three key departures have had dramatic results for our firm. We're as strong as we've ever been. Everybody is enthused about what we're accomplishing and understands our plan to take over the world of engineering. We're coming off of our best year in the history of the firm. And more importantly, our culture has been protected. Today, everybody knows that the surest way to be removed from our BIG RED boat is to be negative. And that makes everything more positive.

Consider this thought from Les Brown: "Don't waste another minute dealing with a toxic, negative, energy-draining person. Some people are wired for negativity. They love being argumentative, combative, and abusive. Run for your life as quickly as possible."

Ask yourself, who do you need to throw overboard in order to make your boat travel faster?

What are you waiting for? ➤

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