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Robert A. M. Stern 2012 Master Builder Award

Building a Brand

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Lisa Godlewski
Editor

The Spring 2012 Construction Today ® featuring Women in Design & Construction was a giant win for the General Building Contractors Association (GBCA) and a success that the entire Architecture/Engineering/Constructor (A/E/C) community can celebrate.

After the initial exhilaration of such a celebrated piece, we were left with the question of how to top that success. How can the GBCA put its best foot forward? This led us to the idea of taking our readers along for the journey as we learn about how to listen to our audiences, how collaboration can help us win, and how new technologies can give our brand a voice.

It is often difficult to approach the readers of Construction Today® from a singular angle that appeals to all people. Some stories have too heavy a construction slant; some are too light on engineering details. But the idea of branding as a universal theme that owners, contractors, architects, engineers, and service providers are interested in rings true.

On our own journey we are discovering that branding is not about getting your target market to choose you over the competition, but it is about getting your prospects to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem.

A strong brand is invaluable in the battle for customers, even here in the association world. We are learning that it is important to spend time investing in researching, defining, and building your brand. After all, your brand resides within the hearts and minds of customers, clients, and prospects.

It is the sum total of their experiences and perceptions, some of which you can influence, and some that you cannot. With that in mind, the GBCA welcomes you to explore the world of branding, marketing, public relations, advertising, and social media with us.

Construction Today® is pleased to partner with The Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia to recognize Robert A. M. Stern – 2012 recipient of the Company's Master Builder Award. As Stern says, architecture is a public art translating the dreams of people into buildings. And with buildings like the Comcast Center and The Museum of the American Revolution leading the way, Stern knows a lot about putting his best foot forward.

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ConstructionTODAY

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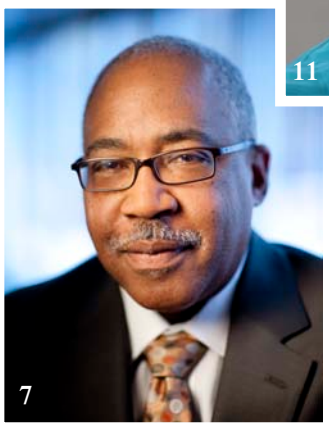

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JUST MY SAFETY OBSERVATIONS

Hiliary H. Holloway, Jr.

I recently ran into a former co-worker at a safety networking meeting (yeah, we talk and actually network) and a recent graduate asked how long we'd known each other. Without much thought I responded that we'd known each other since I started with OSHA in 1982. Now I was fine with 1982 until this young dude had the nerve to point out, "wow, that's 30 years, I bet you've seen a lot of changes… Sir!" Again, I was still kinda' okay until he added that "sir" comment, but lest I get off track, he was right, I have seen a lot of changes.

I was somewhat taken aback, stumbled to come up with an answer, and then found myself easily responding "the biggest change is probably the gap between those who get it and those who don't, put another way, the believers and the non-believers." There was a time when employers did not automatically declare any of the following statements: "our employees are our most valuable assets," "safety is part of our culture," "we believe in safety because it's the right thing to do!" And before about 1990, I don't think I'd ever heard "safety is good for business!" For that matter you'd never see the word "diversity" used either, (but that's another column for another venue).

> Safety became a no-brainer when the insurance industry began preaching that fewer insurance losses equated to more profit for everybody.

Reflecting on my observations of 30 years in the profession, safety originally was viewed as just another example of "government regulation" getting in the way of business and productivity. To that list you could add such nuisance rules pertaining to the environment (EPA) and EEO/Affirmative Action, each of which were often resented and commonly thought of as having no right to dictate their beliefs to others and/or add to the bureaucracy slowing things down. Indeed, being an OSHA compliance officer made us second only to IRS agents in terms of being unpopular in general, and a true public enemy in the minds of many. I can't begin to tell you how many times during an inspection we were told we were ruining business, were an obstacle to productivity (because we didn't know how business ran), were Communist, and/or un-American. Occasionally they'd feel entitled enough to use two of my personal favorites -- "I pay your salary," (to which I'd reply that I paid more of my salary than they did) or "you're only here because of an Affirmative Action quota." Of course there was no way they could fathom an African American could have a degree and actually be qualified without government intervention, but again that's another story for that other column, (and probably a much longer column than this).

My early observations witnessed employers spending more time trying to avoid and deceive OSHA than being compliant. Now in all fairness and with the benefit of hindsight, we/OSHA, did not do a stellar job presenting our purpose, our qualifications and/or truly listening to employers' complaints that we didn't understand how business operated. We were too often inconsistent in our message, our training, our compliance enforcement, and heaven forbid there be an administration change. We were the subject of ridicule, jokes ("Why are toilet seats split? So the OSHA inspectors don't bump their heads when they drink!"), cartoons (I'm sure some of you saw and remember the infamous "cowboy after an OSHA inspection" cartoon), and fodder for urban legends (i.e. "OSHA puts companies out of business").

Keep in mind, because insurance/workers compensation costs had yet to become a factor, safety related accidents (and indeed OSHA fines) were typically viewed as just part of the cost of doing business. Too many employers valued and promoted safety efforts that were

aggressively anti-OSHA. Instead of safety training, they trained employees on how to get around OSHA compliance, through an OSHA (or insurance) inspection, and absolutely punished any employee who got caught, reported a safety condition, or deliberately failed to conceal a safety issue. I vividly remember finding company issued fake GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters) face plates and new extension cords with missing ground prongs on numerous construction sites. We had to watch when, how, and where we interviewed employees because too often they were scared of being seen talking to us because of the stories they had heard OSHA.

On the flip side, during my time inspectors were routinely "cussed out," threatened, sometimes even assaulted. In one of our offices an inspector was thrown in a trench, and in my own area office an inspector was injured jumping on the hood of his car while trying to get away from guard dogs that were released. Employers joked it was better to kill an OSHA inspector because the fine for assault was up to $10,000 if convicted. We got no love! Only later did we find out our counterparts in the private sector were not faring much better reputation wise, generally they too "weren't feeling the love!"

I am somewhat hard pressed to remember exactly when the safety tide began to turn. I know it had to do with rising insurance costs, first reflected in workers compensation premiums and later as insurance companies sought ways to improve bottom lines by paying out less for losses. This became a no-brainer when the insurance industry began preaching that fewer insurance losses equated to more profit for everybody. Almost suddenly it made business sense. Safety became important, sexy even, and eventually companies began to market safety as a product, a value and a culture. At some point, somebody came up with slogan variations of "our employees are our most valuable asset-yada, yada, yada" and "ta da!" some companies actually believed, accepted, and began

> Safety has become important, sexy even...

to practice that philosophy. Of course not all did, some still don't believe it. They do know it's an easy way of being politically correct and if nothing more they liked saying the words and/or thought the words looked good on company signs, brochures, websites, etc, … but again, that's another topic for another column.

Stay safe.

PIN YOUR BUSINESS

Capturing the Construction Industry's Culture one Pin at a Time

Mary Meszaros

What is Pinterest? It is the fastest growing online social network, a community that allows users to share, curate and discover websites of interest via visual images and "pin boards." Users can either upload images from their own computer or "pin" images from other websites. The idea is to generate interest with the content by reposting or commenting. Content, including video, can be embedded in Facebook, Twitter, email posts, websites and blogs.

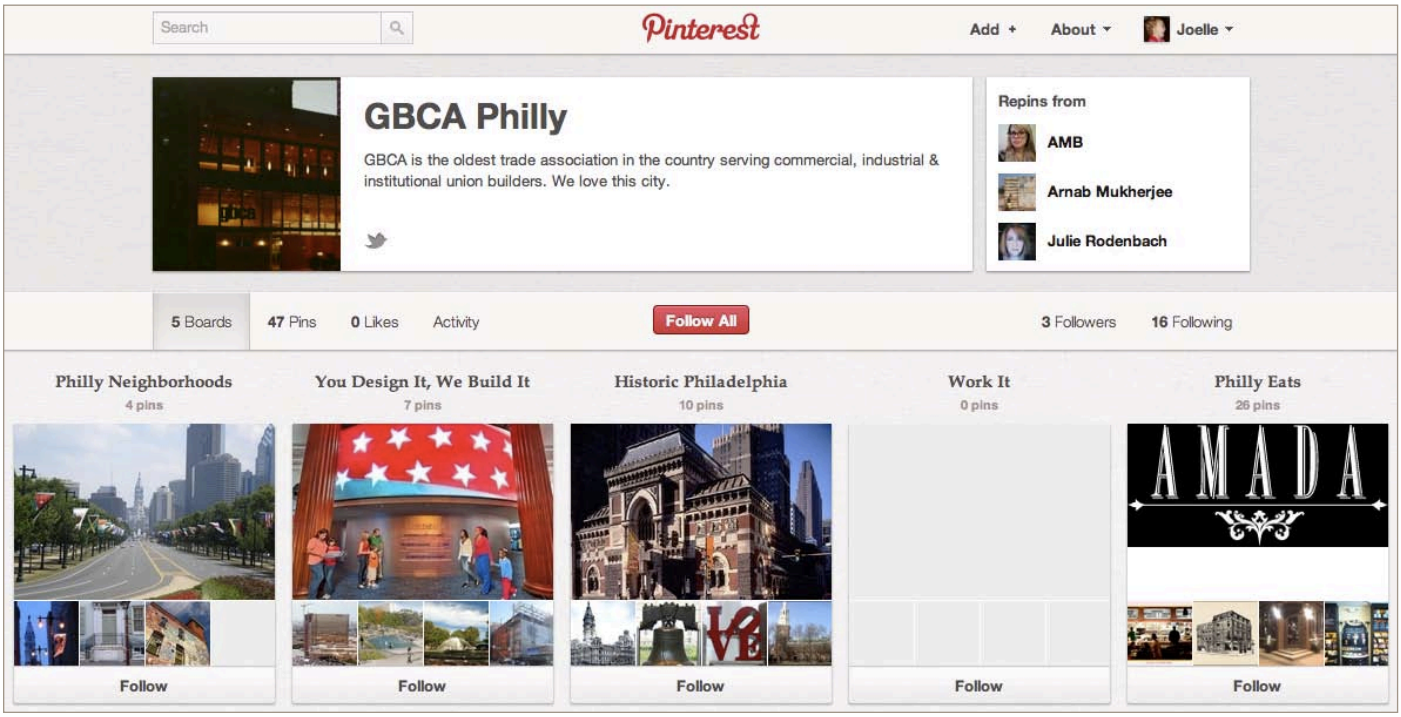
The site recently emerged as one of the top ten websites within the Hitwise Social Networking & Forums category. Launched in 2010 as a network to "connect everyone in the world through the 'things' they find interesting," the site has gone from 57,000 visits a month to over 1 million, and continues to grow.

People are visiting and become more engaged with browsing website content. While Pinterest is a natural fit for retailers showing off their latest products, the question is how can the rest of business, and specifically the construction industry, get in on the act? The answer lies in marketing.

Market your company and what you do through the industry's culture. Create a business presence. Link yourself to the culture of your city and how your business contributes to it. Showcase yourself as part of the environment in which you operate: this is what we do, here's how we do it, here's where we do it, why, and with whom. For example, Stetson Hat Company's pinboards feature Hats in Entertainment, The Great Outdoors, American Automobiles, Country Weddings, and Classic Stetson Ads among others.

In a nutshell, the key factors Pinterest provides are skyrocketing popularity, ability to drive online traffic, building search engine optimization, and appeal to vertical markets.

Getting Started You will need an email address and a Twitter or Facebook account to get started. Of the two, creating a Twitter (www.twitter.com) account is easier. Register your account with the same email address you use for your business' Twitter account so you can share your pins through the Twitter account. Currently, Pinterest



doesn't offer a connection to Facebook business pages.

Go to www.pinterest.com and request an invitation. (Invitations are the company's way of controlling growth.) It is likely that your invitation request will be accepted in a day or two. In the meantime, decide on a couple of pinboards you'd like to create.

Think of good content you have available such as high-quality photographs, data charts, and video clips. Pinterest has a heavy lifestyle focus, so showcase your company and your industry's personality. Consider featuring a board of satisfied customers, user-generated pinboard dedicated to their pins or a behind-the-scenes board.

Once your invitation is accepted you will have access to the Pinterest universe. You will be able to see the whole range of boards and this may spark some ideas. Pinterest content has something for everyone. Currently, the site is by dominated by images featuring home décor, crafts, fashion, and food, but don't let that stop you. The business presence is growing and as long as users are able to find your content and link back to you, you have accomplished that connection.

Next step is to create a profile. Keep it community-based, focus on the company's culture or mission. You will be able to upload a logo and include website address. Here's a tip, make sure the "hide your Pinterest profile from search engines" is OFF, so your profile can be found in searches.

Next you'll want to download the "Pin It" marklet. Most importantly, download from the goodies section the "Pin It" pin marklet and install it on your toolbar or in favorites. (You can also download and add the "Follow Me on Pinterest" button for use on your website.) Now you're off and running!

To populate your boards with content either upload images from your computer or click and drag the Pin It marklet from your toolbar onto an image on the internet that you want to pin to your board.

Etiquette As with all internet communications, etiquette is important. Here are some tips:

> Think of good content like photographs, data charts & video clips. Pinterest has a heavy lifestyle focus, so showcase your company's personality.

- Pin and maintain your boards regularly.
- Link back to your site or the source site. Give credit where credit is due.
- Network with others in a community.
- Curate infographics relevant to your industry.
- Use high-quality photos.
- Make sure photos can be pinned, i.e. not copyright protected. (Note: sites in Adobe Flash cannot be pinned)
- Ensure photographs are properly tagged. For maximum search-finding use hashtags. (#Philadelphia)
- Educate others.
- Be Useful.

Over time, check your website's analytics reports to see if Pinterest has become a traffic source for your site. You may gain some exposure and become part of the fastest-growing social media site in the process.

Dudepins.com The interest in "pinning" continues to grow. Just look at the 2-month-old website Dudepins.com (slogan: "Man up. Sign up. Pin up."). Dudepins is designed to be a visual companion to Pinterest where the posting of male-oriented content is encouraged. It seems a natural extension of the industry to express itself on this up-and-coming site.

Construction photos, stories, and factoids can and should reside in the worlds of both Pinterest and Dudepins. Good luck!

GBCA pinboards can be found at www.pinterest.com/gbcaphilly

BUILDING a BRAND

How seemingly minor details cost companies time, money and reputation

By Elizabeth Zipf, Dorothy J. Verndon, Amanda Gibney Weko

A brand represents the emotional and psychological relationship a company has with its customers. Traditionally a brand has been called a "promise." What is certain is that a brand is the blueprint for your customer experience; it flavors all conversation from you and about you. It is crucial you recognize that everything you do – from proposal writing to public relations, and even simple punctuation, impacts the brand you work so had to preserve.

EFFECTIVE PROPOSAL WRITING

Elizabeth J. Zipf

The following paragraph was taken, with only minor changes, from an actual proposal:

Firm X is experienced with your culture/values, standards, regulations and processes and clearly understand the needs of the Army, particularly with the congressionally mandated BRAC program as well as daily challenges faced by installation commanders and Corps staff responsible for the execution and delivery of needed services to supported commanders. We led the Federal Engineer response in the state in the aftermath of Katrina and provided needed oversight and direction to the year-long mission which included over forty complex missions and involved over 5,500 responders from every CONUS based Corps District as well as numerous other federal agencies.

Would you hire this firm to manage your project? They are probably qualified and capable, but from reading the above, it's impossible to tell.

All too often, written materials in our industry are too dense and disorganized for clients to read or skim effectively. Rather than crafting and planning our writing, we cobble together a mix of boilerplate, marketing pitches and technical material and try to not embarrass ourselves with any careless errors. For our potential clients, however, the end result is a confusing mish-mash that makes it hard for them to understand what we are trying to say.

The first portion of this article outlines tips to make your proposals easier for your clients to read and present your team in the best possible way.

Write Clearly Expository writing should be clear and concise. This is especially true of the necessarily technical content of proposals, where a non-technical person often has to choose which complicated process or system is best for their project.

Choose a structure that best suits the piece of text you are working on, and stick to it. For example, in a project approach, the structure might be the client's scope of ser-

vices, with an explanation of how your team will execute each service.

Avoid loaded language. "Loaded" language has connotations beyond its intended meaning. For example, loaded language can refer to misused buzzwords and words with legal implications, such as "ensure" and "guarantee."

Use the active voice. Design, project and construction management is active, and this should be reflected in your writing. For example, a sentence such as "The project will be managed by John Smith," should be written as "John Smith will manage the project."

Omit needless words. A sentence such as "We have no doubt that, because of our extensive years of experience with this type of project, Company XYZ will be able to complete your project in an expeditious manner that can satisfy all involved parties," should read, "Because of our experience with similar projects, Company XYZ can complete your project quickly and successfully."

Keep ideas and items parallel. In lists and in paragraphs, keep words parallel. For example, the sentence, "This phase will include organizing, reviewing and assessment of client data," should read, "This phase will include organizing, reviewing and assessing client data."

Use "that" and "which" correctly. To make writing sound more professional, authors sometimes use "which" when they should use "that." For example, the sentence "The client chose the plan which offered the most flexibility," should be, "The client chose the plan that offered the most flexibility."

Eliminate redundant adjectives. Words such as "absolutely" and "final" are often extraneous whenever they precede another adjective. For example, a project is not absolutely complete, it is complete.

Use bold and italics sparingly. Bolding and italicizing text draws attention to particular phrases and ideas (or names), and can be very effective. However, if overused, it becomes meaningless. As a rule, only bold one phrase or term per paragraph. If you find you need to bold two or three passages, consider breaking up the text into separate paragraphs.

Be consistent. Writing that drifts from one tone to another is difficult to read, let alone understand. Find a tone that suits your ideas and stick to it. If you are using writing from different authors, make sure the final text has a consistent tone.

By following these guidelines in your writing, you will make your firm's proposals much more accessible and understandable to your clients. While clear and consistent writing will not win projects alone, it does present your team in the best possible way. This can only help your chances of winning work.

Write Efficiently Writing clearly is only half the process of writing a good proposal. Equally important is writing a well-planned and well-organized proposal. The six steps below offer a general methodology of how to write a proposal that focuses your message and makes your proposal easier for the client to evaluate.

> Clear and well-planned writing will not win a project for your firm. However, poor writing can lose a project you might have won.

Step 1 Gather Intelligence. Before writing, read the RFP and learn about your project and your client. In addition to the submittal requirements, scope of services and other relevant information on the project, the RFP often includes hints as to what the client is concerned about. For example, repetition of terms such as "schedule control" or "logistics and staging" can reveal a client's priorities on a project.

Once you have a grasp on the RFP, consult with your technical and business development pursuit team. Ideally, your team will have been in contact with the client long before the RFP was made public, and understand the project. Ask your pursuit team to define:

Client preferences. Does the client want detailed technical information? Do they prefer a short summary of your services, or an in-depth description?

Project Background. Beyond the RFP, what is the story of the project? Who are the stakeholders? Why is the project necessary? Do your own research in this area as well, using company and agency websites, articles and other sources. Good background information in your proposal lets the client know you understand their project, and that you are focused on their specific needs and challenges.

Competition. What other firms are proposing on the project? What will they offer to the client? If you know this, you can create text that favorably compares your firm with your rivals. For example, if a competitor has a long relationship with the client, you can focus on the advantages of your proprietary systems and methodologies.

Successes and Failures. Have you submitted to the client before? Did you win the job? If so, is the client pleased with your performance? If so, how? If you lost the job, do you know why?

Step 2 Create a theme. This can be the most challenging part of writing a proposal, as it encapsulates your team's message in a sentence or two. What, precisely, are you offering to the client? If your advantages are your team leadership and proven experience, then write a very short summary of those benefits. Here is a generic example of a theme statement for a rail project:

Our team offers to Client XYZ a team with more than 100 years of combined rail and transit experience, including work on active rail corridors in the community where your project will be built. We understand the challenges of delivering a project of this size and scope safely, on-time and within budget, and bring proven project management processes and systems to support your team.

The focus of your theme should always be the benefits you bring to the project. Use your theme to guide all of your proposal text, from the cover letter to the resumes to the approach.

Step 3 Outline. Following the RFP exactly, develop your section headings and subheadings. Don't worry about writing any text yet, first make sure your proposal is clearly organized and compliant with the client's requirements. Often, RFPs include contradictory instructions or are missing

parts of your scope of services that the pursuit team knows will be required. If possible, ask the client for clarification about these issues. If not, ask your technical and business development pursuit team how they want the proposal to flow.

Step 4 Draft. When you begin to write your proposal sections, don't worry about tone, style or even grammar. Instead, follow your theme statement, and just write.

With the exception of the project approach and project understanding sections, you will likely have a great deal of existing content to use as a starting point. Drop this text in where it belongs and move on, don't revise yet.

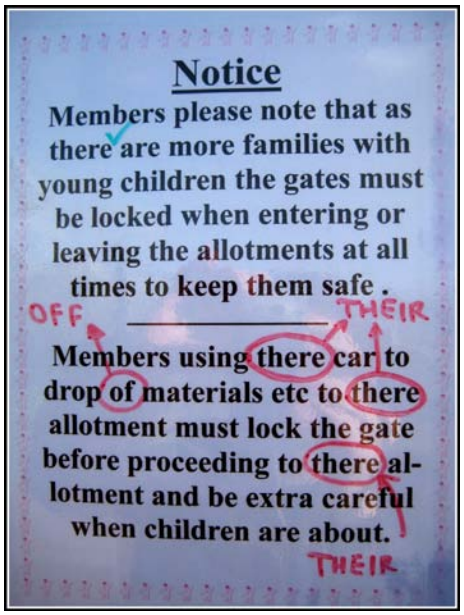
For the approach and the understanding, a technical pursuit team member should provide, at a minimum, a breakdown of what each section needs to say. However, if you are drafting these sections yourself, follow the scope of services in the RFP, using boilerplate text where possible, and highlighting places where your pursuit team must address gaps.

Step 5 Refine. Once your content is as complete as possible, go back to review and revise. In particular, make sure your draft:

- Follows your theme statement throughout.
- Has a consistent written style and tone.
- Uses proper text mechanics (discussed in greater detail later in this article).
- Uses the same language and labels as the RFP.
- Incorporates the latest dates, figures and other details.
- Is compliant with the RFP requirements.

You may want to repeat this process a few times, as a change in one section can result in changes to several other sections as well. You are then ready to share it with the pursuit team.

Step 6 Review. Distribute the draft to your entire pursuit team, with clear instructions on where you need help or are lacking information. Give them a reasonable deadline to get changes and input back to you, and explain any decisions made in terms of style (for example, making team titles match the RFP). You will likely want to repeat the review process at least twice as comments develop your content further. Make sure, however, they stay focused on your theme statement.



Incorrectness is a poor reflection on a company's image and brand.

As a final step in the review process, have someone completely removed from your proposal read through your document. Explain to them, briefly, the project and what your pursuit team is proposing, and make sure they have read the RFP, as well. In addition to checking for errors, ask your final reviewer if your message is clear and consistent and if you are compliant with the RFP instructions. If you have followed the rules and tips in this article, it should be.

TEXT MECHANICS: WRITING WITH CLARITY

By Dorothy J. Verdon

What are text mechanics and why are they important? Glad you asked!

In our jobs, we all have to write, right? From a simple e-mail to the written proposal discussed above, writing can be a daunting task. The purpose is to communicate with and provide information to another person or group of people. Clarity is the primary goal—above all, you want to be understood. As a bonus, succinctness in business writing shows respect for the recipient's time.

Without proper punctuation, clarity can easily be lost. Witness the brilliant example that is the title of Lynne Truss's bestseller about punctuation, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, wherein a single comma gives rise to a vision of a diner so unhappy with the food that he goes ballistic before exiting the restaurant. Minus the comma, the phrase aptly describes the culinary preferences of pandas. See my point?

Text mechanics refer to grammar, punctuation, capitalization, standard terminology, corporate word standards, and proofreading. You don't have to be a Pulitzer prize-winner to understand and use basic good grammar and punctuation in your business communications. And when you're representing an employer, and incorrectness can potentially lead to liability issues, the importance of understanding text mechanics becomes crystal clear.

Below are a few tips about the most commonly used punctuation marks and typical grammatical errors that will immediately improve your skills as an author.

Punctuation

The Apostrophe ('') Used to indicate the omission of a letter or letters from a word (contraction), the possessive case of a noun, and the plurals of certain lowercase letters.

Examples: don't (do not), the girl's hat, the children's school, two cats' toys, mind your p's and q's

Never use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns, personal pronouns or the relative pronoun "who," or the plurals for capital letters and numbers used as nouns. Examples: yours NOT your's, the 1990s NOT the 1990's, the ABCs NOT the ABC's.

One of my biggest pet peeves is the misuse of its/it's. For the record, "its" is the possessive form of the neuter pronoun "it": The dog chased its tail. "It's" is a contraction for "it is": It's been a long day. The dog did not chase it is tail, and its been a long day is like saying "Her been a long day." Finally, there is no such word as "its'." Enough said.

The Colon (:) Used after a word introducing a quotation, explanation, example, or a series; after the salutation in a business letter; and in designations of times or ratios.

Examples: John said: "That was a great play." , three shirt sizes: small, medium and large, Dear Ms. Jones:

The Comma (,) Used to indicate a separation of ideas or elements in a sentence to prevent ambiguity and promote clarity. Commas are

used in lists; separations of clauses; with certain adverbs; between adjectives; before quotes; in dates, names and numbers; and to enclose parenthetical words and phrases in a sentence.

Examples: He ate cereal, ham and eggs.; Martin walked to the party, but he couldn't walk home.; Adverbs: however, in fact, therefore, nevertheless, moreover, furthermore, and still; The shrill, persistent chiming of the alarm clock.; My father, a jaded and bitter man, ate the muffin.

The Semicolon (;) Used to connect independent clauses while indicating a closer relationship between the clauses than a period does; also used to separate a series that already contains commas.

Examples: The assimilation of iron in the system is synergistic; that is, it depends on other elements working together.; In Concord, New Hampshire; Princeton, New Jersey; and Raleigh, North Carolina

The Ampersand (&) and the Slash (/) An ampersand is a logogram that signifies the word "and" but is now primarily used in company names. Never use it in place of "and" in a sentence. Ditto the slash: it is not a substitute for "and" and should not be used as such.

Capitalization

According to grammarbook.com, there are 17 rules for capitalizing nouns, too numerous to address here. However, there are a few hard and fast rules for what should never, ever be capitalized.

- **Titles/positions.** WRONG: The Owner, Architect, Engineer and Construction Manager met to discuss the project.
- **Project phases.** WRONG: We will provide services in the Schematic Design phase.
- **Services.** WRONG: XYZ Architects pro vided Programming, Interior Design and Architectural services on the project.
- **States.** WRONG: They moved from Miami, FL to Philadelphia, PA. The two-letter capitalized version is the U.S. Postal Service abbreviation. It is only correct when used in an address field but never in body text. For that, the formal upper and lowercase abbreviation or full spelling of the state name is the correct form.

Numbers

Numbers can be spelled out or represented by the figures themselves, depending on the circumstances. The following offer some key guidelines.

- A number that begins a sentence should always be spelled out.
- Within a paragraph, numbers that refer to items in the same category should be treated alike; be consistent.
- Very large numbers are usually spelled out if they are round numbers, e.g., $5 billion, 2.5 million dollars.
- Write out numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above, e.g. nine awards, 28 projects.
- Write out ordinal numbers (fourth, twenty-third) rather than writing them as figures with letter endings (4th, 23rd).
- With dates, avoid ordinal numbers, e.g., February 15, 2012 NOT February 15th, 2012.
- %. Okay to use in lists but spell out in a sentence: The restaurant received a 90 percent approval rating.

Good General Writing Practices

Although not everyone is cut out to be a great writer, it's easy enough to avoid being a bad writer by keeping a few other simple but significant things in mind.

Be specific. Get to the point, say what you mean, mean what you say, and do it in the most concise manner possible.

Tone and voice. Writing is not like talking; when you talk, tone, pitch, volume and non-verbal sounds come into play. In written communication. Pay attention to tone and keep it consistent throughout your document. Positive is good, passive voice is not. Avoid the "could've, should've, would've, may, might" syndrome. You can and you will.

Redundancy and wordiness. Avoid repeating yourself except for carefully planned emphasis of a specific point. When you can say it with a single word, do so. It is amazing how many ways there are to say "because," but in writing, less is more.

Word usage. Don't allow spelling demons to possess you! Learn the meaning, proper usage and correct spelling of commonly misused words like effect/affect, comprise/compose, principle/principal, to/too and lead/led. Avoid industry clichés such as bottom line, action item, big picture, extensive (or significant) experience.

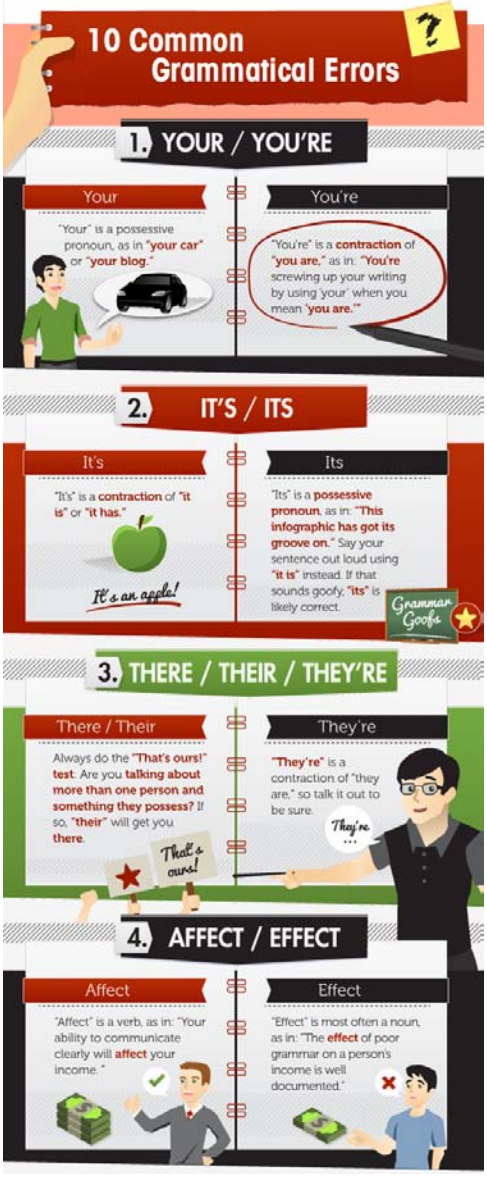
Clear and well-planned writing will not win a project for your firm. However, poor writing can lose a project you might have won. Consider how a client would react to a misspelled project name, or an approach that jumped from ideas without clear transitions. At best, the client would consider your marketing efforts disorganized. At worst, they would think the proposal was a reflection of your firm. Take advantage of the opportunity to present your firm and your team in the best way possible by writing clearly and concisely.

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS

By Amanda Gibney Weko

As busy A/E/C professionals, we are all crunched for time every day. Business development, marketing and even proposal writing tasks often take precedence over public relations. But it is important to stress that the firms that find time to prioritize PR realize multiple benefits:

- Media coverage positions your firm and its staff as thought leaders and market experts.
- Articles generate new business leads and more exposure than marketing alone.
- Media relations, when done correctly, perpetuates itself.



According to the Public Relations Society of America, "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics."

PR need not be expensive or time consuming. Advance preparation and relationship building with key members of the media can drive exposure and build connections with your target audiences, including potential clients.

Step 1: Develop a Media List

The PR process begins by developing a strong media list. The list describes publications – think print magazines and journals as well as electronic blogs and news sites – whose audiences may be interested in your firm and its work. The list forms the basis for building relationships with journalists and crafting publication-specific article pitches.

Consider those publications read by your staff, your current and potential clients, your colleagues and project teammates, and user groups for the buildings you design or build. For example, your staff may read *Architectural Record* to learn about trends and projects around the globe. Your colleagues might read *ENR* for the latest in construction and engineering news. Your healthcare clients read *Healthcare Design*, while the individuals working in the hospital read *Health and Medicine Week* magazine.

Your list should include local and regional publications (e.g. *Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Business Journal, Citybizlist.com*), trade media (*ENR, Architect, Construction Today*), and specialty publications (*STRUCTURE, Stone World*). A well-rounded look at the media helps develop a list that includes all of the audiences you could reach.

Simple online research will provide most of the details. Visit each publication's website and learn its subject matter, publication schedule (quarterly, monthly, daily), editor/journalist names and contact information, and posted submission guidelines or deadlines. Editorial calendars, often included within the advertising media kit, provide coverage topics for each issue of a magazine. The calendar might indicate an issue focusing on K-12 construction – a perfect fit for your recently completed school project. Keep in mind that most publications are developing stories several months in advance and plan accordingly.

Step 2: Build Relationships

Effective PR requires building relationships with journalists and editors. These relationships must be give-and-take. Read the publications on your media list and understand what each one covers. Sometimes the publication name alone won't help; Architect magazine might seem like a great place to pitch your architectural work, but the magazine does not cover projects – only trends and issues related to practice. Equal-

ly important is understanding the audience each publication targets. Know a journalist's beat or coverage area, deadlines, and way s/he prefers to receive news announcements or story ideas. Sending the same press release to 100 publications often elicits less coverage than sending ten carefully crafted emails to specific writers.

Alternatively, pick up the phone and introduce yourself and your firm, invite a reporter to your office to meet your staff and learn about your business, or schedule an introductory coffee. Remember, journalists are busy professionals just like you. Help make their jobs easier by offering insights and information.

Make every effort to build a two-way relationship, by providing information, answering questions, or offering to serve as a source for future stories. Maybe your plumbing engineer can clearly explain how geothermal heat pumps operate. While it might not be a front-page feature on your latest project, the interview helps the journalist complete her story, possibly gets your firm a brief line of credit, and builds a relationship. Your firm's helpful response may be top-of-mind for the journalist's next cover story.

As you build relationships, respect the journalist's role and time. Reply promptly to email or phone requests for information and be punctual for interviews or meetings. Never ask to see a story prior to publication. The only exception to this rule is editorial (often called advertorial) for which you have paid to participate, in which case most publications will share an advance copy for fact-checking or proofing.

Step 3: Craft a Strong News Release

Yes! Press or news releases, when executed well, still have a place in modern PR. Proper execution makes the difference. A carefully crafted news release should follow journalistic writing style. Own and use the *Associated Press Stylebook* (available in bookstores or online at www.apstylebook.com). Each annual edition offers spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage guidelines for standard media writing.

Once you have a handle on proper news release style, write objectively, concisely, and with to-the-point accuracy. All of the information contained in a news release should be factual. Use direct quotations to express feelings or offer opinions:

Wrong: XYZ Builders is pleased to announce John Doe has been hired as a new principal. John's exemplary background and exciting project experience will be an asset to the firm.

Right: XYZ Builders hired John Doe as principal on August 1, 2012. John brings 20 years of healthcare and higher education construction management experience to the firm.

"John's exemplary project management skills and strong team leadership will be an asset to our firm," said XYZ Builders' Principal Sarah Smith.

Your firm's news should be included in the first sentence. Your firm's pleasure doesn't constitute news. Recognize what constitutes news – a senior-level hire, groundbreaking or project completion, etc. Include who, what, when, where, why, and how. Remember, the type of news accepted will differ for every publication; just because the story is important to your firm does not mean it is important to every publication and its readership. If you have done your homework, you'll know where to send releases and where a simple email will suffice. You'll know, for example, that the *Philadelphia Business Journal* accepts new-hire and promotion announcements only via its online submission tool, not by news release.

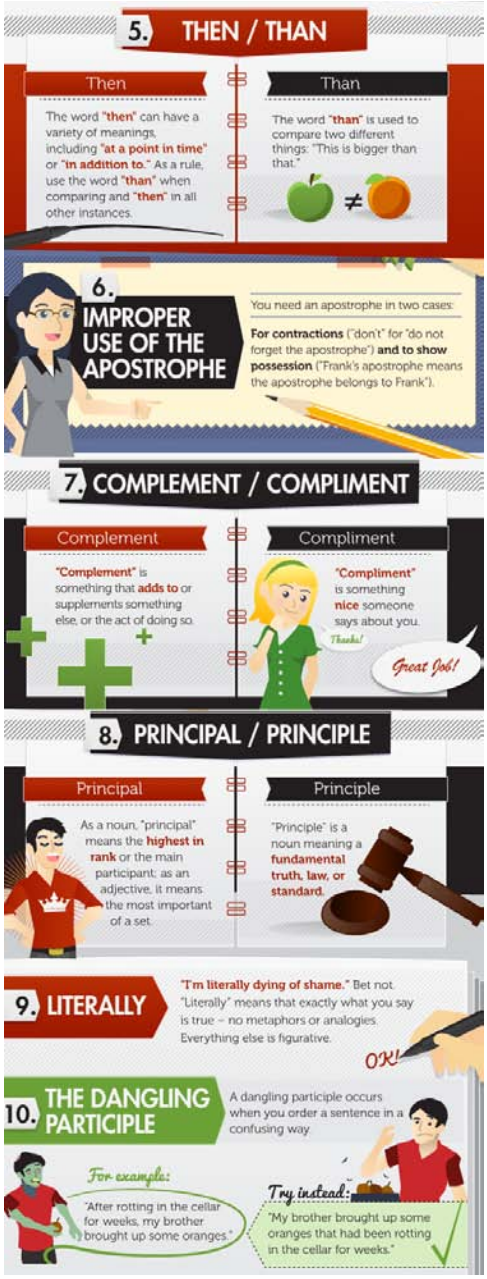
Remember to include contact information – name, email, and phone numbers (with extensions) – for someone who will be on red-alert for members of the media who may call with questions or requests for interviews. The contact should always be a specific individual, rather than the main office number or a general email address.

The last paragraph of your news release may be "boilerplate" – a short paragraph describing your company, its work, and its approach. Often placed in italicized text, the boilerplate paragraph appears after the news content of your release. You are free to use adjectives and subjective content in the boilerplate, because journalists recognize its purpose. The last line of your boilerplate should include a link to your company's website: "For additional information about XYZ Engineers, visit http://www.xyzengineers.com."

Step 4: Ace the Interview

Congratulations! Your research and relationship building have paid off and you will be interviewed for a feature story. Preparation once again proves crucial. Have a goal; think about what you'd like to accomplish as a result of the interview (Do you want to emphasize leadership or accurately describe your firm's role in a project?). Plan the interview in advance by jotting down likely questions and preparing appropriate answers. While there's no need to script the conversation, planning will help get your thoughts organized and avoid the "um" and "uh" pauses while you try to remember construction cost or building area facts.

Sometimes, a reporter will catch you off guard with questions about sensitive issues, or will try to shift the conversation toward



points you don't feel are relevant. Keep your cool and remain calm. Use bridging phrases to redirect the interview toward the topics you are comfortable discussing:

"What's really important here is . . ."

"That brings up an interesting point . . ."

"I think the answer to that question will come after I've explained . . ."

During the interview, speak clearly, avoid jargon and acronyms, and don't over-answer – brief, concise statements are preferable. When asked about a problem, talk about a solution. Be engaging, likeable, and interesting. Remember, the reporter is doing her job – she wants your input. You should always correct false charges, facts, or figures. Never repeat a negative statement; instead, frame your reply as a positive (i.e. "Although the library project exceeded its original budget, the added costs represented a donor gift that was used to fund a new teen wing.").

Rules of conduct for a positive interview:

- Never criticize (the reporter, your competition, or teammates).
- Never speculate.
- Never say "no comment."
- Never lie.

If you don't know an answer, don't fake it. If appropriate, assure the journalist that you will find and provide the required facts in a timely manner, or refer the journalist to another source.

Going "off the record" can be an important part of the dialogue with journalists with whom you have a solid relationship, but do so with caution. Off the record does not give you license to badmouth a competitor or give unauthorized details. Rather, it allows you to share information that may not yet be public but will help a reporter craft an accurate story. For example, your firm may have experienced a series of layoffs. A reporter calls to learn more. Instead of offering no comment and allowing him to speculate about the worst (i.e. the firm is dissolving), an off-the-record conversation may tell him that your firm will soon merge with another firm and a big announcement is pending. He holds off on writing about the story and perhaps gets to "break" the news about the merger. The off-the-record discussion requires mutual trust and understanding to benefit all parties.

RESOURCES

www.apstylebook.com

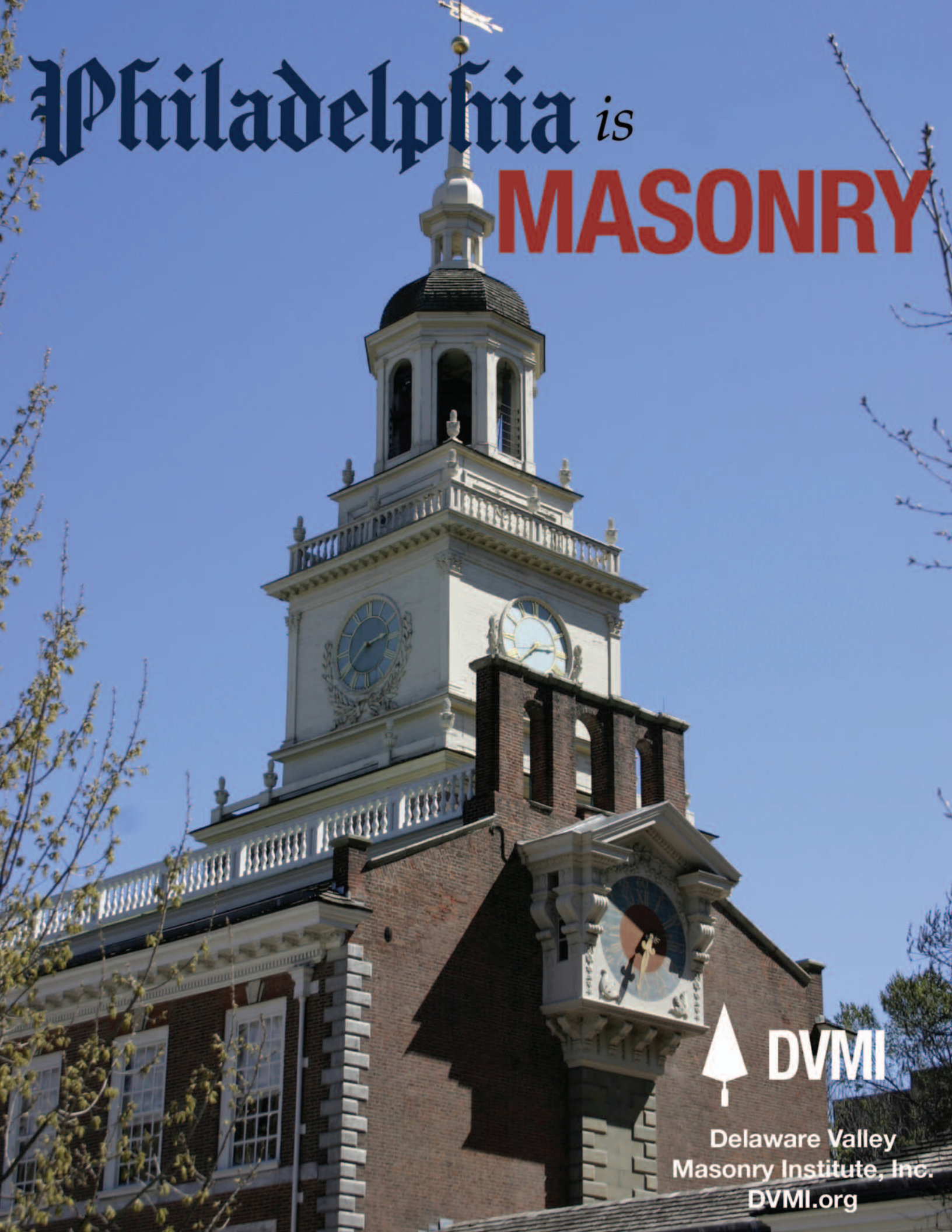
www.chicagomanualofstyle.org

www.grammarbook.com

http://www.bartleby.com/141/(The Elements of Style, by William Strunk, Jr.)

Strategize and Build Relationships

As a strategic process, public relations requires advance planning and thought. Spend time each quarter refining your media list, evaluating your company's projects and leadership for possible story ideas, and examining editorial calendars for opportunities. Work on your media relationships by talking with key reporters. Learn what types of stories journalists are interested in covering and then help them craft those articles. Be available for phone calls and responsive to emails. Be a resource, not just a story pitcher. No amount of PR activity ever guarantees coverage, but with time, respect, and relationships, you'll earn experience and exposure.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making HEADLINES

Building your brand through public relations

How public relations can serve as a support mechanism for your sales team.

By Erin Allsman

As an executive or marketing professional at a construction or design firm, chances are you've flipped through publications like *Construction Today*, *Architectural Record*, or *Environmental Design & Construction* and wondered why your competitor's project was featured while your company remains anonymous. You've noticed stories with commentary from sources with similar expertise, yet you've never been approached to participate. Perhaps you've issued news releases to the media, but have never received a response.

You are not alone.

Many A/E/C firms have great stories to tell, but lack the resources or expertise to effectively publicize their achievements or communicate the thought leadership of their executives. Smaller marketing teams are generally more focused on business development than brand building, and many would justifiably feel overwhelmed when faced with the prospect of implementing public relations tactics into an already stretched budget.

Typically a primary objective of a PR program is to secure ongoing editorial coverage in media outlets your target audience is reading or watching. By doing this, your company:

- builds name recognition
- establishes industry credibility
- communicates experience
- generates "buzz" around a unique project
- sparks curiosity that drives website traffic and inquiries

In other words, public relations is a cost-effective way to communicate your message on a mass level. Think of it this way – a prospective client who recognizes your firm from a recent publication is far more likely to answer your sales call.

If you want to be a leader in the field, you have to distinguish yourself from the competition. Editorial coverage is a great way to do this because it demonstrates the newsworthiness of your project and provides a third-party validation that advertising cannot. But generating that editorial coverage is not a simple task, and must be approached strategically in order to be successful.

Laying the Foundation

The reality is that most publicity does not happen organically. Reporters and editors do their own research, but more often than not, the projects and companies that you see featured arrived there through the

proactive, long-term efforts of the organization's public relations staff or agency. These efforts require an investment of time, tools, expertise and money. To begin the process, consider the following:

Resource specification Public relations requires a certain skill set, including a working knowledge of the editorial process, how to manage media lists and how to navigate editorial calendars. Practitioners must have strong writing skills, as well as the ability to "think like a journalist" to effectively develop story ideas and pitches that will resonate with reporters and ultimately yield interviews and news coverage. They must be able to think strategically about messaging and positioning, and they should also be able to manage communications in the event of a crisis.

In addition to skills, PR requires time. Depending on the size of your firm and the goals of your program, a typical PR program may require a minimum of 30 hours of dedicated time per month. Many larger organizations invest in a program in the range of 60 – 100 hours per month and beyond.

Tools of the trade There are many tools that support the execution of public relations, some of which are free online services and others require a financial investment. Tools to consider include a media contact database, expert source databases, press release distribution services, reporter inquiry services, news clipping services, and article reprint services. Today, most PR professionals and agencies also leverage social networks such as Twitter and LinkedIn to connect with reporters and follow industry trends. If you elect to hire an agency, you will benefit from the agency's many tools and resources, as well as established media relationships.

Subcontracting When you work with an agency, know that there will still be a time commitment on your behalf. The agency will require a dedicated point of contact from your internal team that can secure the necessary assets from throughout the organization and will work to manage the relationship. The best partners are those who will recognize their role as an extension of your team, and act as a strategic counselor for your marketing and business challenges. Depending on the extent of your program, your agency should provide a depth of resources at the senior, mid- and junior levels to complete the necessary tasks and offer ongoing strategy.

Drafting the Blueprint

With the right team in place, one of the first steps is to build the plan that will guide your efforts for at least a 6- or 12-month campaign. This plan will be informed first by your communication challenges as well as business goals that may be supported through improved communication efforts. Consider your audiences, how they consume media, and what barriers may impact your ability to reach them. Leverage various channels, everything from traditional and online media to in-person networking opportunities through industry associations and conferences. Do your research to have a clear understanding of the right reporters, editors and other influencers. You may also need to evaluate your messaging and your brand language prior to executing a public relations program. Ask yourself, do we sound like everyone else, or are we truly differentiated in our messaging? How will we stand out in a crowded marketplace?

> A prospective client who recognizes your firm from a recent publication is far more likely to answer your call.

Perhaps the most important yet often the most challenging element of a public relations effort is the need for stories. Companies often think PR isn't right for them if they don't generate a lot of 'news,' but many highly successful programs include very little news. Rather, they rely heavily on stories – project case studies, examples of theories or approaches put into practice, or commentary on a recent industry trend. Chances are these items occur regularly at your company, and your PR team's job is to translate your every day business into media-worthy stories.

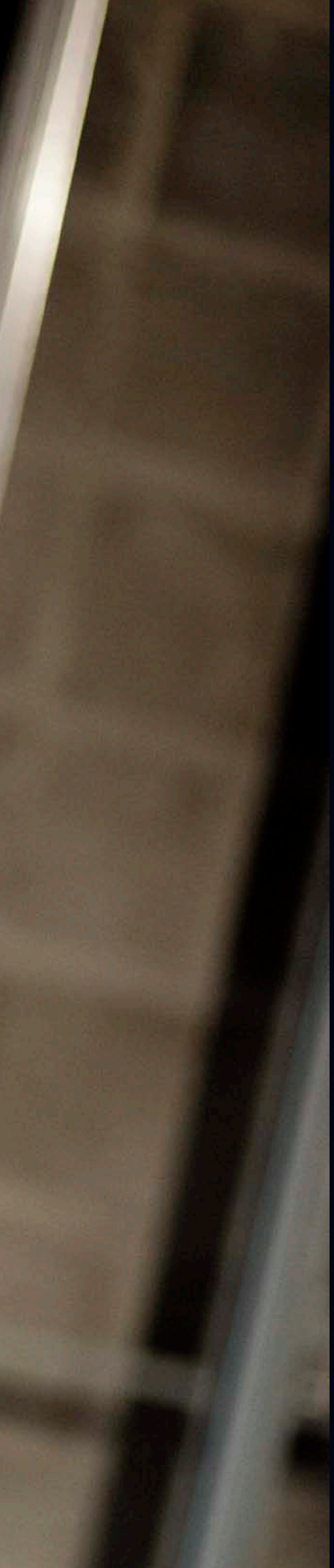
Your plan should act as the blueprint that guides proactive, positive communication about your organization. But that's not the full picture of public relations – you must also be prepared to react calmly and swiftly in the event of a crisis situation. This is particularly important in such a high-risk industry as construction. In the age of 24-hour news, companies are routinely destroyed due to a lack of proper contingency planning. Can your company survive a public crisis? Many think they can, but few are prepared for the onslaught of constant, critical media attention. Most PR agencies have a crisis communications specialty and can not only build a robust program to avoid these disasters, they can respond quickly and appropriately to mitigate a crisis if one should occur.

Level Measurement

Although the question of measurement often comes at the end of a campaign, realistic goals, objectives and measurement criteria should be established in the plan development phase. Measuring outcomes can be complicated; particularly in relationship-oriented businesses or long-lead sales cycles, so be sure to put the structure in place to accurately connect your PR efforts to the sales process.

When setting goals for your PR program, be realistic both in terms of expected volume of activity as well as the potential outcomes on your business. If you are working with an agency, they should be able to give you at least a ballpark figure for the volume you should expect based on your investment.

Overall, will PR dramatically increase positive exposure for your brand? Absolutely. Will it bring exponential return to your bottom line? Perhaps - there are many cases where one lead generated through editorial coverage can pay for an entire campaign – but mostly your PR program will work as a support mechanism for your sales team and should be evaluated as part of the bigger picture. It can't complete the job, but it certainly can break new ground.



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ROBERT A. M. STERN:

SUCCESSFUL BY EVERY MEASURE

Stern to Be Honored by the Carpenters' Company of the City & County of Philadelphia

Robert A. M. Stern, FAIA, is not an unknown in Philadelphia. His work as an architect in Philadelphia includes Comcast Center, the 975-foot obelisk that set a new standard for the Philadelphia skyline; the 2002 redevelopment plan for the Philadelphia Navy Yard, and two office buildings there, one completed in 2005 and the other now under construction; the residential tower at 10 Rittenhouse Square; a small building—the McNeil Center for Early American Studies—at Penn; and two buildings now under construction at Drexel University: the new home of the LeBow College of Business and the residential Chestnut Square. His design for the new Museum of the American Revolution, at Third and Chestnut, was unveiled in June.

"Comcast Center reshaped the skyline for the better," says Eric Rahe, Vice President of the Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia. And it is certainly a balancing act to have worked within the parameters given by a developer and yet produce a building that has been catalytic for the community. For this reason, and for the conversation he has ignited throughout his career in the world of design, development, and construction, Robert A. M. Stern will receive the 2012 Master Builder Award from the Carpenters' Company in October. And the union of this historic organization and this forward-thinking architect, with his appreciation for the past, could not be more perfect.

> A building should not represent the ego of its architect but rather the client's mission, in a way that respects the physical and cultural context.

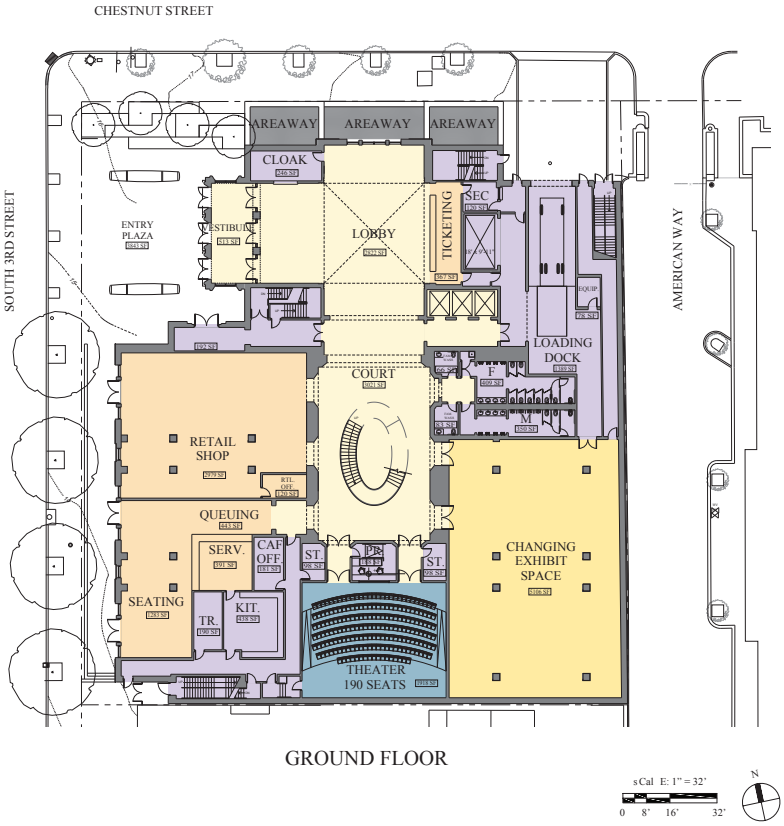
A balance of flash and force

The firm of Robert A. M. Stern Architects (RAMSA) is clear in its conviction that no one style is appropriate to every building and every place. Instead the firm, and most importantly its founding partner Robert A. M. Stern, understands that a building should not represent the ego of its architect but rather the client's mission, in a way that respects the physical and cultural context. Any of the Philadelphians lucky enough to have worked with Stern agree.

Michael Quinn, President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Revolution Center, says of Stern and his partners, "I've been really impressed that RAMSA is not an ego-driven architecture firm." Make no mistake, Stern is the leader, but "he's so confident he doesn't feel like every building has to have his signature on it. His goal is to design the right building for its location and purpose," says Quinn.

John Gattuso, Senior Vice President and Regional Director of Liberty Property Trust's Urban and National Development team, takes it a step further. "Every building [Stern] has designed for us has been a benefit economically and has been received well aesthetically by our clients, the design community, and most importantly, by the community at large," he says. "By every measure—environmental, aesthetic, economic—Bob has been successful."

Gattuso attributes this to Stern's ability to listen. He is a strong advocate for design and urban planning, and responsive to the briefs and aspirations provided to him. "And to do all of it from a respon-



ABOVE: Draft of ground floor museum plans. (Courtesy of the American Revolution Center)

RIGHT: Night rendering of The Museum of the American Revolution.

sible budgetary standpoint? That distinguishes him from peers who are noted for their designs but have no regard for budget," says Gattuso.

Stern has realized four major projects with Liberty Property Trust and he has completed a number of studies for Liberty that have not yet gone forward. "What unifies them all," says Gattuso, "is that they're forward-looking." The completed buildings have raised the bar for environmental performance and responsibility: the first LEED Gold corporation headquarters building (The Plaza at PPL Center in Allentown), the tallest LEED Gold building in the U.S. at the time of its certification (Comcast Center); and the first LEED Platinum speculative multitenant office building in the U.S. (One Crescent Drive at the Philadelphia Navy Yard). "Bob has a long track record of sustainable design," says Gattuso. Stern worked with his partners Graham S. Wyatt and Meghan McDermott on all of the firm's projects for Liberty.

The Museum of the American Revolution

That record of sustainability comes into play in Stern's design for the new Museum of the American Revolution. The three-story museum, to be built amidst the historic and architecturally significant buildings near Independence Hall, will carry forward the classical principles of nearby Revolutionary-era buildings in a contemporary, environmentally sustainable way.

Which seems a tricky feat to accomplish. After all, a museum's need for constant temperature and humidity levels can be at odds with the goal of sustainability; the same goes for maximizing natural light—a fundamentally "green" idea—which conflicts with the need to conserve the museum's Revolutionary-era artifacts in relative darkness. Despite the challenges of devising mechanical systems that satisfy all of these requirements, the museum, with Stern's help, will target LEED Silver certification.

One way that Stern, working with RAMSA partners Alexander P. Lamis and Kevin Smith, has begun to tackle that responsibility is by placing the café and museum store on Third Street, opening the building to the street with large shopfront windows despite the need

> The museum will carry forward the classical principles of nearby Revolutionary-era buildings in a contemporary, environmentally sustainable way.

for windowless galleries above. On the museum's north side, large windows open into a skylighted interior court, and at the corner of Third and Chestnut, a plaza connects the museum to the outdoors.

Second office building at the Philadelphia Navy Yard designed by Stern for Liberty Property Trust (currently under construction). Neoscape for Robert A. M. Stern Architects, LLP

These sustainable and decidedly urban elements are married to the same traditional architectural principles that inform the museum's disparate neighbors. Quinn says that "Stern determined that the right role for the Museum in the context of the neighborhood is to transition, rather than to insert a whole new aesthetic. When you home in and really see the proportions—when you look at the recessed niches on the west façade, for example—you see echoes of the small brick buildings in the vicinity." The sense of grandeur and timelessness is in keeping with the purpose of the museum.

In addition, the design reminds Quinn of the traditional tripartite composition of a classical column. "Here you have a strong foundation and then articulation at the top with the white stone and the set back. There is a lot of historical resonance that pulls all of the threads together." It is all a very subtle symbolism.

The schematic design phase of the Museum is now complete. Now it is onto the design and development phase. The groundbreaking is set to occur within a year and the Museum will open in 2015.

A View from the Top

The Master Builders' Award Gala is a biennial event celebrating the built environment. The 2012 Gala, set to take place on October 27, 2012, literally reaches new heights in celebration by honoring Stern. It is only fitting to host such a party in the Comcast Center. Stern will receive the Carpenters' Company Master Builder Award in Ralph's Café, high atop the tower. The event will attract hundreds of contractors, architects, structural engineers, and A/C/E service providers. "We feel there is no parallel to the Carpenter's Company not only as an institution, but as a way to bring together a range of people who put together a dialog outside the confines of a project," says Rahe.

After all, from the way those who have worked with him tell it, Stern understands how to bring people together. "Bob is an important part of our team. We've learned a great deal from his knowledge and experience and that is reflected in the Comcast Center," says Gattuso. "At the end of the day it's us talking about our projects, but I feel [the Comcast Center] is one of the most significant high rises built in the US in the last few decades," he says. And for that he should be celebrated.

For more information on the Carpenters' Company Gala or to RSVP contact Christy Thompson at (215) 925-0167 or christythompson@carpentershall.com.

©Peter Aaron for Robert A.M. Stern Architects

The Master Builders' Award Gala will take place atop the Comcast Center.

85 % OF THE TIME—WINNING IS EVERYTHING!

Looking at Cooperation vs. Assertiveness in Construction

By Charles Cook

We all remember Vince Lombardi's expression: "winning isn't everything—it's the only thing!" More and more, we are finding he was right, but not for the reasons one might expect. In sports a winner requires a loser. In life, there may, and should be a different result.

Despite the expression "All is fair in love and war," win/lose in war may be fine, but not in love, or in most of our daily encounters with family, friends, business associates, and clients. So let's take a different look at our daily encounters, and in the process we might find we have more conflicts that can actually become win/win encounters than we originally thought.

First, what is a conflict? We encounter a conflict with the laws of the universe the moment we get out of bed. Gravity attempts to pull us back down, and yet, most of the time, we stay upright. We encounter another conflict when we try to open a door. It resists us and we interact with the door in accordance with Newton's three laws. So every day we encounter benign conflict that we win without destroying gravity or the doors we open and pass through. Could we then find a means of viewing other conflicts as more benign than confrontational? Between the extremes of swatting a fly and nuclear war, we should look for some means of resolving our differences successfully.

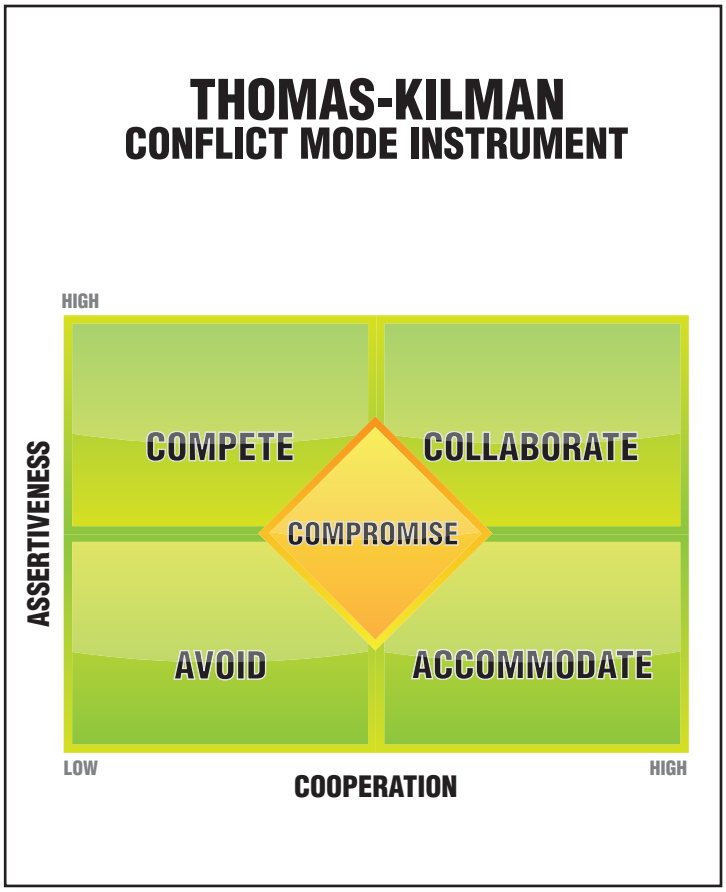
Cooperation vs. Assertiveness

Researchers Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann set out to define conflict modes based on a cooperation and assertiveness grid. Along the X axis they plotted the amount of cooperation one party would give to the other and on the y axis they plotted the amount of assertiveness that same party would make for its own benefit. By doing so, they recognized five basic conflict resolution modes.

> We now know that in many instances of conflict, my winning does not depend on your losing.

Cooperation

Avoiding: If one party has a Howitzer and you merely have a pea-shooter, it is best to avoid confrontation. This could be the case when dealing with a design pro-



LOCATIONS OF CONFLICT AND CHANGE

A - Inception/Briefing/Tendering

Client or Users lack experience
Briefing procedure
User committees : low recognition
Getting a consensus view from users
Coordination of information
User committees : lack of authority

B - Design

Design Error
Design not meeting specification
Interpretation of drawings by client
Insufficient/late design information
Getting written approval from users

C - Construction/Operation

Construction: failure to meet design
Cost overrun
Operational faults
Site: quality of work
Running late

D - Project management/Other

Client's internal politics
Bypassing a 'single' point of contact
Different levels of change control
Maintaining interfaces to serve the client
Contract condition modifications
Lack of agreement between users and PM
Conflict of loyalty (e.g. clerk of works)
Changing emphasis on project change
Use/misuse of quality system

fessional over a latent defect in the design if you do not yet have all the details of what makes it a costly change and why. Perpetually putting off, however, leads to procrastination, and that usually leads to crisis at some point.

Accommodating: If we intend to let the other party have their way, and we will bear the expense, then we are accommodating them. This is often the case when we are trying to serve the client or create a team atmosphere for future mutual growth.

Competing: If we insist on getting our way and will not allow the other party to do whatever they intended, then we are competing, and this is the typical win/lose scenario we usually think of in a conflict. Of course in competitive bidding this is necessary. It is also necessary in such issues as safety. We do not allow individuals to take chances one day simply because it is convenient. Everyone has to do the safe thing at all times.

Collaborating: This then is the win/win mode of conflict resolution. In this mode each party gets what they want. We cooperate and see that their needs are met. And they also recognize that we have a "price" for doing what we do.

We will come back to this mode after we discuss the final, middle of the road mode.

Compromise: This mode is a bit of all the other four modes and most everyone thinks it is the default mode for conflict resolution, but I suggest it is the one to most avoid if possible. There is consider-

able evidence to suggest compromise will be more beneficial to the party with the stronger position.

Unfortunately, whether you get a lot or a little, you never get everything you want, and so compromise usually puts off an issue until another day—a "kick the can down the road" scenario. Those who do not get what they want often keep deep feelings of resentment and revenge until their opportunity comes to get what they wanted in the first place. Labor negotiations often end in compromise, and if one or both parties ignore the bigger picture in order to get to compromise, the contract might be settled while the market for one or both parties shrinks.

A great example of both the value and the danger of compromise is what is called "the great compromise" of The United States Constitution. There is no doubt compromise was necessary for the founding of our government. Without compromise the thirteen original states would have remained independent of any United States. However, achieving the compromise as they did, would four score and seven years later lead to the loss of 600,000 American lives in our tragic Civil War. Compromise can have short term resolution that is good, but unresolved issues can lead to long term unfortunate, even sometimes horrific, consequences.

Can we get to Win/Win?

So that brings us back to win/win—or collaborating. Can we, in fact, get there? A Ph.D. student in the mid twentieth century, named Morton Deutsch, studied conflict and came to the amazing conclusion that almost 85% of all conflicts can be win/win. He, in fact, coined the term "win/win." Today, social psychologists are recognizing more and more the potential to achieve that 85% is very real if both parties want to get there.

We now know that in many instances of conflict, my winning does not depend on your losing. What I need to know is your needs and you need to understand mine. Communication of genuine long term objectives for the group, team, or partners needs to take place. Most importantly, we need to "expand the pie." Rather than fighting over a single small slice, we need to find the "bigger picture"—the bigger pie. Where do we want to be long after the conflict is over, rather than what do we want here and now? Sometimes we have conflict when our objectives are the same, but the means to get there seem to put blinders on our seeing other possibilities.

There is no guarantee any of us will not re-act emotionally to conflict. In all likelihood we will. If before we get too drawn into the competing mode, however, we are able to disengage emotionally and set a structure for achieving collaboration, maybe we can find Morton Deutsch and Vince Lombardi were both right—85% of the time winning is everything!

CONSTRUCTING A CONNECTING PLACE

The Nation's Oldest Presbytery Gets a Sustainable New Home

By Amanda Gibney Weko

"We strive to be . . . a hub for networking and communication within and beyond the borders of our presbytery. We are a 'connecting place'."
– Presbytery of Philadelphia

Designed to reflect the Presbyterian Church's mission and service to the greater Philadelphia community, the new administrative headquarters for the nation's oldest presbytery helps the church empower, support, and join with its congregations and neighbors. The building houses business and executive offices for a staff of 11 serving over 135 churches in Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, and Delaware counties. Amenities include a large conference space for use by local churches and community groups, a small chapel, and the Presbyterian Resource Center, which houses shared resources for the presbyteries of Philadelphia and West Jersey.

The project gives built form to the presbytery's mission, and does so in a sustainable manner. The administrative offices were relocated from an historic mansion at 22nd and Locust Streets in Center City, Philadelphia, to a property on East Gowen Avenue in the northwest part of the city. New construction allowed for on-site parking and easier access, both of which were challenges of the original headquarters. It also presented opportunities for environmentally and economically responsible construction.

Bill Cobb of Haverstick-Borthwick Co. led the design-build project for the presbytery. Active in the church for decades, Cobb volunteered his time as owner's representative on behalf of the presbytery's board of trustees.

> "Sustainable design was a priority for both the presbytery and the design team"
> - Joseph Powell, BKP

"The project made a statement about the presbytery's core values," explained Cobb. "The new headquarters is still within the city but serves more communities and offers more uses, in an extremely energy-efficient building."

Buell Kratzer Powell of Philadelphia, Pa., designed the facility, with construction provided by LSN Contractors & Construction Management, LLC, of Essington, Pa.

"Sustainable design was a priority for both the presbytery and the design team," said BKP Principal Joseph Powell, AIA, LEED AP BD+C. "We also considered the building's neighborhood context and long-term functional efficiency. The design encourages a new sense of collaboration among different departments and with church leaders and community members who visit the building for meetings and events."

Energy performance was optimized through the use of a geothermal groundwater-source heat pump HVAC system, controlled lighting systems, and water-efficient restroom fixtures. Clerestory windows and skylights flood the interior with natural daylight and views, with exterior sunshades maximizing solar gain in winter and minimizing it in summer. Porous bituminous paving and rain gardens for storm water management complement natural indoor finishes and furnishings such as bamboo paneling and terrazzo tile. A green roof has been designed for inclusion in the future. Although the building was designed to achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver, the presbytery did not pursue formal certification.

The headquarters shares its northwest Philadelphia site with Oxford Presbyterian Church, and sits within the context of semi-urban brick twin homes. The new building's exterior brick and manufactured stone veneer systems offer an insulation factor while complementing nearby architecture. The building's 8,500 square feet are comfortably spread on a single story for both accessibility and appropriate scale within the neighborhood.

In the former headquarters, staff members were divided among four floors—a logistical challenge for regular interaction. Now, executive, managerial, and support staff are centralized in a skylit quadrangle. Each of four departments: Finance (e.g. business administration and accounting), Ministers (e.g. pastoral ministry, general presbytery, and stated clerk), Churches (congregational ministry), and Mission/Partnerships are organized around shared filing and support spaces. A combination of open workstations with private and semi-private offices ensures flexibility of use over time. The openness of the plan allows the staff to interact with patrons and visitors.

> As an emerging MBE contractor, LSN viewed the presbytery headquarters as a keystone project

The new arrangement offers two wings: one each for administrative and public spaces. The division permits community meetings and events to take place away from staff member areas and allows public areas to operate when administrative staff members are unavailable, such as in the evenings or on weekends.

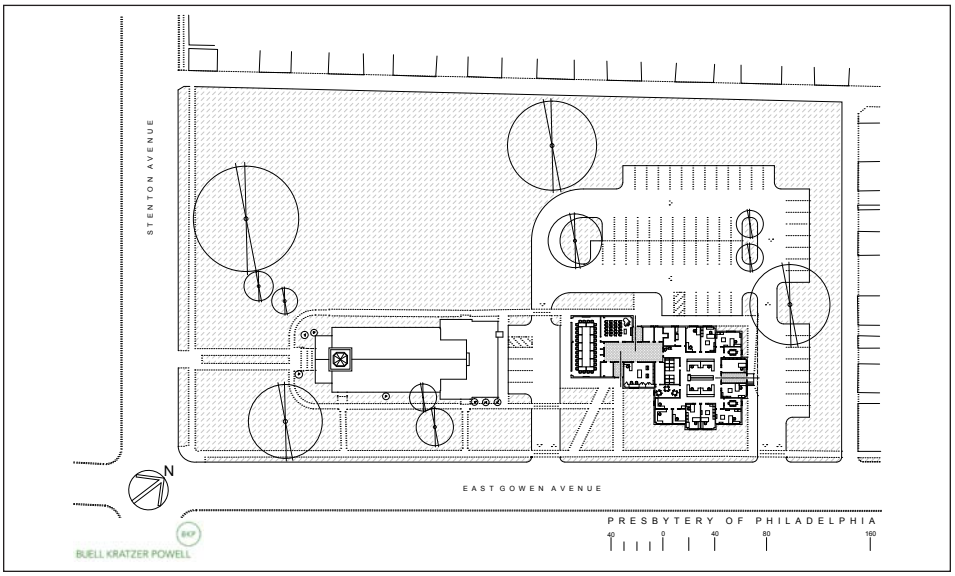
The Resource Center serves all member churches as a library, educational center, welcome station, and research facility. It is immediately visible through the building's main entry, welcoming and inviting members to share information and a sense of community.

"The design has been very effective for us because it helps us connect in a more collegial way," said presbytery Busi-

RIGHT: Presbytery of Philadelphia Administrative Headquarters Lobby.

BELOW: Presbytery of Philadelphia Administrative Headquarters with neighboring Oxford Presbyterian Church in the foreground.

Images ©Jeffrey Totaro, Photographer and used courtesy of Buell Kratzer and Powell.



Presbytery of Philadelphia Administrative Headquarters site plan.

ness Administrator Larry Davis. "We are working together a lot more; there's more staff interaction and communication."

Davis indicated over 600 people each month visit the new administrative headquarters for meetings and events. Although the presbytery reduced its building area from 14,000 to 8,500 square feet, a functional layout improves efficiency. The new building allows the presbytery to hold far more meetings for committees and churches in a centralized location and contributes to organizing other aspects of the ministry that weren't possible in the previous building.

"There's a great sense of space and light and air," added Davis. "We don't feel like we've downsized."

Randy Washington, owner of LSN Contractors, oversaw the construction management scope of work along with his quality control team of Henry Cooper and Ben Spillard. LSN was responsible for selection of all subcontractors, cost and quality control, budget monitoring, schedule maintenance, and coordination of biweekly construction meetings.

As an emerging MBE contractor, LSN viewed the presbytery headquarters as a keystone project, and worked collaboratively with Cobb and the design team to execute effectively. According to Washington, the biggest project challenge was overcoming difficult weather conditions. Fast-track construction proceeded through the winter of 2010, when major storms caused multiple delays. However, the team maintained its schedule and the headquarters was completed in August of the same year.

Additional project teammates included structural engineers Joseph Barbato & Associates of Chadds Ford, Pa., and civil engineers Hunt Engineering of Malvern, Pa.

RIDING THE CONCRETE ROLLERCOASTER

Profiling Madison Concrete Construction

By Kimberly Kayler

James Dolente Sr., the company visionary who continues to guide the Madison team today, built Madison Concrete Construction from a strong foundation of concrete construction knowledge and a desire for excellence. With great admiration for his grandfather and father, James and his brother established the company in the fall of 1969 with a vision to bring their passion for concrete construction to the region. Today, the next generation of the Dolente family is actively involved in the leadership of the company.

Rollercoaster "In today's market, every firm in the design and construction industry has had to face tremendous challenges," said Jim Dolente, Sr., Chairman of the Board. "Unfortunately, for our team, the challenging economy resulted in a bit of a rollercoaster. However, no matter how challenging, we were adamant about not wavering our commitment to safety, quality and innovation."

And so, in spite of the challenge economy, Madison's commitment to growth has helped make them one of the most successful pure commercial concrete contractors around. Through careful planning and a lot of perseverance, the company has been able to ensure ultimate flexibility in staffing projects and meeting the needs of multiple clients at the same time. For example, Madison responded to the changing economy by conducting a survey of clients to ensure the company understood the challenges its clients were facing in their projects. "We recognized that the marketplace wasn't just challenging for us, but also for the general contractors and owners we serve," said Jim Dolente, Jr., President. "As such, we wanted to make sure that, as we adapted our approach to these changing times that we truly understood the needs of our clients."

> Too often, price is viewed as the only factor. In reality, low price sometimes is an equivalent to higher cost.

One of the lessons learned was that Madison's clients were also being asked to take on more responsibility and liability. Owners continue to ask for more guarantees than ever before in terms of financial backing, safety and on-time performance. Such stringent requests resulted in increased requests for financial statements, Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) logs and other forms of validation of a firm's sta-

bility. Recognizing this need, Madison spent long hours reviewing its bonding capacity, banking relationships, financial history, safety record and performance record to offer its customers a dependable solution.

Dolente, Jr. recognizes that the company's role isn't simply to earn work, but to help customers earn work by providing them with a stable subcontractor solution. In addition, with budget as critical to project feasibility as ever, clients count on Madison to provide the most cost-effective structural solution very early in a project's development.

"It is critical that we stay on top of historical costs on past projects, current and future trends, the changing use of technology as well as spend the time and effort necessary to determine what system is the most efficient solution," said Dolente, Jr. "In some instances, the ability for a project to be built depends on us providing the correct input and the correct cost. While the information we receive to provide the correct answers is often very schematic, we aim to be within a five (5) to ten (10) percent maximum variance in cost and schedule so the client and owner can make confident decisions."

Continued Investment According to Dolente, Jr., Madison's employees try very hard every day to adhere strictly to their mission statement: "To consistently provide superior quality concrete construction, in a safe environment, with a reputation for honesty, integrity and responsiveness to our clients, vendors, and our employees." To this end, though many firms cut training and research efforts during the last few years, such innovation is central to Madison's business approach. Throughout the firm's growth process, they have invested in extensive improvement efforts, utilizing the latest technology and developing innovative techniques for field implementation. The investment extends to the office in terms of technology to streamline payroll and timekeeping, project management software and items such as surveying and finishing equipment.

And this approach to business also extends to strategic alliances with several key suppliers and subcontractors.

"While price is again a driving force today, we do not necessarily view price and cost as the same," said Dolente, Jr. "Cost is a combination of price and schedule and safety and quality. If we save a few dollars on the actual material or installation price, but the vendor or subcontractor impacts our ability to perform the work, there is actually a cost overrun rather than a savings. This is why we work closely with our key allies and have relationships that have lasted as long as Madison has been in business in some instances. Too often, price is viewed as the only factor. In reality, low price sometimes is an equivalent to higher cost."

Ambulatory Care Center Madison's business approach has earned the company an impressive list of projects in the Greater Philadelphia area. From the Revel Casino Tower, to Harrah's Bay Tower, the Barnes Foundation, The Federal Detention Center, The National Constitution Center, Lincoln Financial Field, PPL Park, Wells Fargo Center and Princeton University Chemistry Building, the Madison team continues to build the region around them.

Case in point is the new Ambulatory Care Center (ACC) at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Madison Concrete began work on the project, which involves construction of a new nine-story outpatient ambulatory facility and a

TOP: 2116 Chestnut Street

LEFT: Ambulatory Care Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

RIGHT: "Our staff take pride in representing Madison in the field and completing work the 'Madison Way'."

five-level underground parking garage, in April. The 750,000 square foot parking structure will feature post-tensioned and conventional cast-in-place concrete construction, with 400,000 square feet of steel deck slabs. Madison previously worked on the neighboring South Campus facility for Children's Hospital (Colkett Building). This new project will also extend the hospital's central utility plant.

A unique feature of the parking structure is the design of cast-in-place braced frames in the portion of the structure below the structural steel ACC tower. The decision to utilize this type of concrete element was borne from the owner's desire to maintain open sightlines throughout the structure, creating a safe and secure environment for the facility's visitors. These concrete diagonal braces support the steel braces directly above throughout the steel structure. Without the owner's specific requirements for openness, more traditional concrete shear walls would most likely have been designed.

While this type of design is not new to concrete construction, this is one of the first, if not the first, structure in the Philadelphia region to use this method. The brace frames included extremely congested areas of reinforcing steel, complex connections to adjacent columns and beams and 8000 and 9000 psi concrete. Due to the amount of reinforcing steel, Madison is placing Self Consolidating Concrete (SCC) in order to minimize voids in the frames.

The Ambulatory Care Center (ACC) at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia involves the construction of a nine-story facility and a five-level underground parking garage.

The Granary Many of Madison's projects also help build or redevelop communities, such as The Granary. Located in the Logan Square neighborhood of Center City, The Granary is surrounded by world-class museums and located a stone's throw from The Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The Granary is also within easy walking distance to Center City's major office buildings, restaurants and entertainment destinations. Comprised of 227 luxury apartments and more than 20,000 square feet of prime retail space and underground parking, the three-year, $66.2 million project is expected to be completed by late 2013. Madison is proud to have helped convert the design of the structure from a structural steel wall bearing hybrid system to a cast-in-place concrete structure utilizing the filigree wide slab method of concrete construction.

2116 Chestnut Street Redevelopment is also the theme for the new John Buck Company structure at 2116 Chestnut Street. The new mixed-use building will feature ground floor retail on Chestnut St., new space for the Hillman Medical Center, and a 34-story tower of 309 residential rentals. Completion is expected second quarter of next year.

One of the main objectives for this project is to open the building for rental far enough in advance of the start of the 2013 school year to maximize the opportunity for university students, one of its core target tenant markets, as the property is situated closely to several local facilities of higher learning. Due to developers' overall belief that there is a demand for rental units in the City, The John Buck Company believes the key is being one of the first to market. Madison is answering the call by achieving a three-day "cycle" on the typical floors, from level six (6) through 34.

Family Court Madison is also involved in the largest construction project in Philadelphia since the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center and the renovation of the former 30th Street Post Office for the IRS. The new $160 million Family Court facility, located at 15th and Arch Streets, will allow all juvenile delinquency cases and family court cases in the First Judicial District (FJD), Philadelphia's court system, to be held at a single location. The 14-story, 510,000 square foot building also will have three underground levels for parking. The project is scheduled to be complete by spring 2014.

With several high-profile projects in the works, Madison Concrete is poised to continue growing. "My father instilled in me and other managers at Madison the importance of our mission statement," Dolente, Jr. said. "Our success depends on working hard and surrounding ourselves with talented people like our dedicated field staff. They take pride in representing Madison in the field and completing work the 'Madison way,' which circles back to our mission statement and the importance of quality, safety, honesty, integrity and responsiveness."

ELEVATOR PITCH: PUTTING YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Young architects learn to pitch projects with help from seasoned professionals

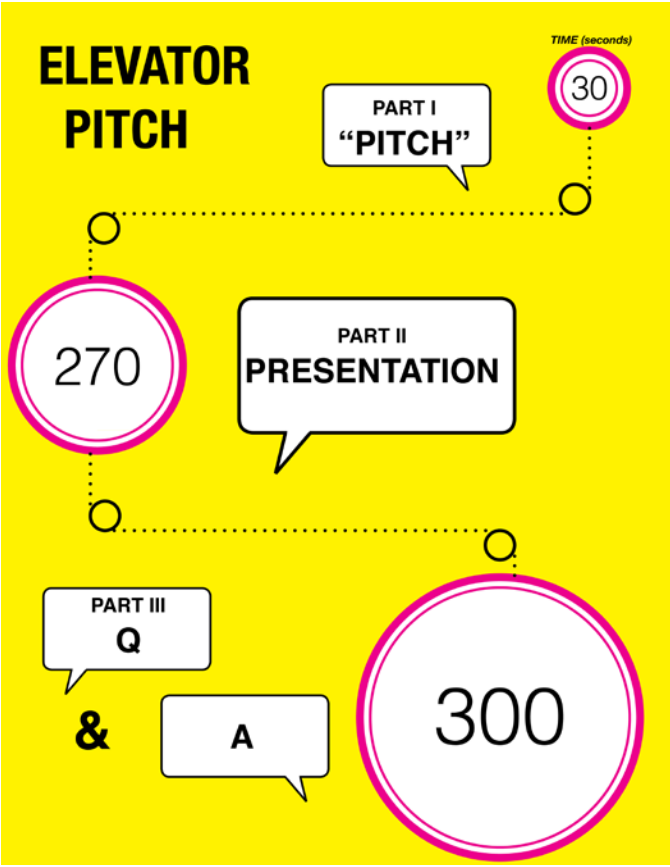
Jeff Pastva

Elevator Pitch is an opportunity for young architects to pitch a project to a panel of seasoned professionals in return for constructive criticism. This industry feedback helps shape the inexperience of the emerging generation of designers and was started because many young professionals never get the chance to present a project, design, or idea in a professional setting until years after graduating from design school. Even though they may have proficiency from their academia years, the designs they present are often at a level below what it would take to convince a client, a civic review board, or zoning board buy-in – all people or entities that hold the power to approve or fund a project.

The Young Architects Forum (YAF), an organization that provides mentorship to maturing architects, recognized this gap and responded with the opportunity for these up-and-coming designers to present in a simulated environment -- with the immediate goal of helping them achieve the necessary skills to succeed at the next level. Long term, skills learned from presenting academic projects with intellectual agility, expose them to real world concerns, and the confidence to speak comfortably. Beyond the ability to tackle the public speaking arena, these skills can also translate into a coherent interview, communication within a team, and ultimately expressing their ideas in/externally when the time arises.

The three phases of the Elevator Pitch program include an initial pitch, a longer prepared presentation, and finally a Q&A/feedback session. Phase I is classic scenario of having 30 seconds to make a first impression. Phase II, gives presenters an extended period of approximately five minutes to explain the bones of the project. Presenters are allowed upwards of 20 images to make their point and are directed to include only the most pertinent information to do so. At the end of their 5 total minutes, the panel of professionals had the opportunity to interact with the presenters, asking both follow up questions and providing feedback where they could improve in the future.

The YAF's most recent Elevator Pitch featured four presentations, representing four major design schools in Philadelphia – Penn Design, Philadelphia University, Drexel University, and Temple University. They were chosen through a Call for Entries process and vied for the coveted spots for the chance to pitch their ideas to the jurors and audience.



Elevator Pitch is an exercise in which young architects gain experience by pitching seasoned professionals.

The presenters and presentations were as follows:

Britt Chapman presented on the concept of **Expand PHL** -- a way to solve a number of problems that currently exist in urban centers. Brian Johnson presented on **Urban Connections** -- a response to the under funded SEPTA transit system. Johnson addressed the issue by proposing a public/private partnership in order to drive improvement of a public service with private development incentives. Nam Il Joe presented a collaborative **Penn Design project: Cloud Cloak – a wearable object**. Finally, Nick Auman and Keith Hartwig, presented on the **Between Space Tensegrity Hammock** -- a user-centric apparatus that can be installed in parks around cities. These objects require assembly by local neighborhood members and thus unify the community as they fund, build, and assemble it. As a park object itself, it can be used for leisure or play.

For more information on Elevator Pitch visit **http://bit.ly/Ot-Pxo0**.

FROM SOLAR PANELS TO ICRA TRAINING, CARPENTERS JAC IS WORKING TO HELP CONTRACTORS SUCCEED

Open Enrollment for Carpenters' Continuing Education Classes is September 25, 2012

Education is an important tool to be utilized alongside any hammer or tape measure on a job site. Its success however depends upon the workmen and women who use it. The Carpenters Apprentice School of Philadelphia & Vicinity (Carpenters JAC) has taken great care to provide the union construction industry with excellent education tools. It is up to the contractor to encourage the workmen and women to take advantage of what is offered.

The Industry Advancement Program (IAP), established in the 1960's, sets aside funds paid by contractors for the continuous education of the union labor workforce. What this means for contractors who contribute to the IAP is the opportunity to train a labor force with no out-of-pocket costs. The General Building Contractors Association (GBCA) encourages all of its members to take advantage of the IAP and keep their carpenter workforce cutting-edge.

One of the newest educational tools offered at the school is the Carpenters UBC Rigging and Signaler Certification. This 40-hour program offers training to carpenters on the rules and regulations of hand signaling and the proper rigging techniques used with cranes on job sites. This program ensures that carpenters meet the current certification requirements for the City of Philadelphia and prepares them for future regulations currently being vetted by City Council.

The Carpenters JAC is also developing Building Information Modeling (BIM) courses for all of its students – both apprentices and journeymen. The ability of field labor to understand what a BIM model can do, read a model and provide comments has great value for contractors. For that reason, the school has been participating in national discussions about the process of BIM and how carpenters can help accelerate the use of BIM in the office and in the field.

And then from OSHA to ICRA, the school offers both Occupational Health & Safety Administration (OSHA) 10 and 30-hour courses and Infection Control Risk Assessment (ICRA) training on a regular basis.

The dedication to training does not end there. Carpenters maintain courses on EPA Lead RRP certification for lead removal, courses on the installation of solar racking systems for solar panels, and the school has even purchased robotics layout equipment and new concrete gang forms – all in an effort to provide contractors with a workforce that uses education as a tool to increase productivity, work safely, build skillfully, promote the union construction industry as the best trained workforce available to employers.

Open enrollment for carpenter's classes will take place on September 25, 2012. For information on the courses offered or how to encourage your employees to attend, contact Charles Brock, Director at (215) 824-2300.

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES & INSPECTIONS PERMIT AND BOARD DECISIONS EXTENDED BY STATE

PA General Assembly extends all valid permits and Board decisions until 2016

Property owners, builders, and developers in Philadelphia may now have their valid building and zoning/use registration permits and Board decisions of approval extended for three years or more. An amendment recently passed by the Pennsylvania General Assembly extends until July 1, 2016 all valid permits and Board decisions that were originally set to expire between January 1, 2009 and July 1, 2013. The amendment was passed in part to provide additional time for projects throughout Pennsylvania that had been affected by the difficult economic climate. In the City of Philadelphia, the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) is responsible for processing applications for the extensions of permits and decisions.

To apply for a permit extension, an owner or permit holder should submit a completed permit application to the Department of Licenses and Inspections indicating their intent to exercise their right to a permit extension. Requests must include the address of the permit and the original permit number along with a check in the amount of ½ the permit fee (maximum $5,000). Any permit revoked by the Department is not eligible for an automatic extension. Applicants should take note that prior approvals from the Water Department for water distribution and sanitary sewer connections are not automatically extended under Act 46.

Similarly, for extensions of Board decisions of approval, an owner or Board decision holder should submit a request to the Department to exercise their right to a Board approval identifying the associated property address, along with a check in amount of ½ the appeal application fee. Any Board approval scheduled to expire after July 1, 2016 is subject to local code requirements for expiration. Extensions of Board approvals will extend the time period for obtaining a permit. Such permits associated with a board approval must be issued before July 2, 2016.

Important information for applicants, including mailing instructions, can be obtained by contacting the General Building Contractors Association (GBCA) at (215) 568-7015 or by visiting the newly launched L&I website at **www.phila.gov/li/**. L&I will respond to valid applications by issuing a document confirming that the original permit or Board approval will not expire until July 2, 2016.

LEADERSHIP, PEOPLE & ACTION: FUNDAMENTALS OF A SOUND SAFETY CULTURE

Hard times breed tough people

Jeffrey A. Spatz

Ancient Greek historian Thucydides is credited with the statement: "He is best who is trained in the severest school." For us present-day folks, that translates roughly to: "Hard times breed tough people." With the construction industry bearing the brunt of the slow-to-recover economy, we could all agree there have been some tough times for sure, but hopefully such times are now in the rearview mirror.

Has the industry become better through it all? Are we poised to exit the tough run in the pole position, battle-hardened and ready to take the prize? Or have we allowed ourselves to whimper and take the last few positions available, all the while making excuses for our last-place status? These are the times when leaders are made. These are the times when leaders are desperately needed—leaders trained in the severest of schools. So when I'm asked the question, "What are the basics of a sound safety culture," my immediate response is "Leadership."

Leadership

Quite simply, safety does indeed start at the top. Leadership is more than just management—good leadership refers to how a person influences and motivates others. If the leadership is disinterested in or distracted from the importance of a sound safety culture, the idea is likely doomed from the start. Since people tend to emulate the leaders they respect and admire, it is the leader's job to set the tone. In today's construction industry, margins are slimmer than ever, contractors are hungrier than ever and it can be easy to take desperate measures. But strong leaders understand that safety must prevail no matter the situation. Excuses for acting otherwise are just that: excuses. True leaders choose action over excuses and inspire others to do the same.

People

As important as strong leadership is, so is the role of the employees who carry out the daily duties and front-line efforts. Motivated, enthusiastic and inquisitive employees who recognize and value good leadership are necessary components of a sound safety culture. One of my mentors, is fond of saying, "People don't do what you say; they do what you do." Having the right people in place will result in a culture that inspires as it is inspired.

Action

Once the leaders are committed and the right people are in place, it's time to act. As the industry and economy continue to rebound, there can be no sideline spectators if we're going to thrive. To act, there needs to be a plan—a well-written safety program that is a living document and not one relegated to a dusty life on a shelf. Coupled with strong leaders and the right people, a safety program that is known, understood, and implemented by all personnel—both management and front-line employees—will produce positive results and a sound safety culture.

ENABLE POSITIVE INFLUENCE: 6 Management Techniques

1. **Coaching:** Supervisors need to develop a non-threatening coaching method that reinforces rules and processes. Consider a mandatory Safety Huddle every morning, at every site to discuss the general hazards - this is a key component of educating and empowering employees about safety.

2. **Problem Solving:** Seek the input of other people. Solicit feed back from co-workers, survey the feedback and brainstorm for solutions.

3. **Measuring:** Apply a proactive approach to measurement. Lagging indicators such as injury rates or the number of previous OSHA citations are considered reactive. Try measuring leading indicators such as compliant safety observations, completion of self-inspection reports, completion of pre-task plans, etc.

4. **Relating:** A successful leader is able to form bonds with fellow employees by discussing similar situations they have worked through and give advice based on experience.

5. **Enforcing:** Enforcing rules are made much easier when everyone operates under the umbrella of accountability. Try these techniques when handing out discipline:
   - Give positive with negative – general rule of thumb is to give four positive comments for every one negative comment
   - Explain the exact consequences of non-compliance
   - Specify the desired behavior or method to assure future compliance
   - If necessary, schedule a safety training for the desired behavior
   - Allow the employee to discuss barriers to compliance
   - End by assuring the employee's future success in compliance

NEW NAME & NEW BUILDING CELEBRATED TOGETHER

Northern Children's Services breaks ground on construction to expand housing for homeless teenage mothers and children

Northern Children's Services (formerly Northern Home for Children) marked the beginning of construction to completely renovate Merrick Hall, the oldest building on its six-acre campus, at a ceremonial groundbreaking on Monday, June 4, 2012. The project also includes the construction of new permanent housing for homeless teenage mothers and their children. The festivities were sponsored by Wawa, Inc., whose partnership with the agency spans 25-years and represents contributions of close to $1 million. Wawa President Chris Gheysens presented a $430,000 check at the ceremony in support of the Merrick project.

The newly renovated three-story Merrick Hall will encompass 15,000SF of residential space that will double the number of mothers and babies served, including service to pregnant teens. The building will include both transitional and permanent housing in a supportive living environment for the families.

In addition to the groundbreaking, the agency announced its new name, Northern Children's Services. "Over the years, our organization has evolved greatly from a refuge and respite for children that was founded in 1853, to the comprehensive social service agency it is today," says Tracey Lavallias, President and CEO, Northern Children's Services. "Our name change to Northern Children's Services reflects our core mission and response to the emerging needs of the children we serve and allows us to more effectively work throughout the region."

Today, Northern Children's Services is the oldest residential facility in Philadelphia and continues to assist children and families to achieve their maximum psychological, social and economic potential, while fully respecting the dignity and worth of each individual and the integrity of the family. "Although our name and logo have changed, our commitment to keeping children safe, strengthening families, and providing high quality services in the most compassionate, professional and cost effective environment of excellence remains the same," says Lavallias.

(left to right) - William C. Morsell, Chairman of the Board, Northern Children's Services; Joseph P. Christ, Advocacy Council member, former Wawa executive; Tracey Lavallias, President & CEO, NCS; Vicki Schwartz, Area Manager, Wawa, Inc.; Chris Gheysens, President, Wawa Inc; Craig Spencer, Vice Chairman, Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation.

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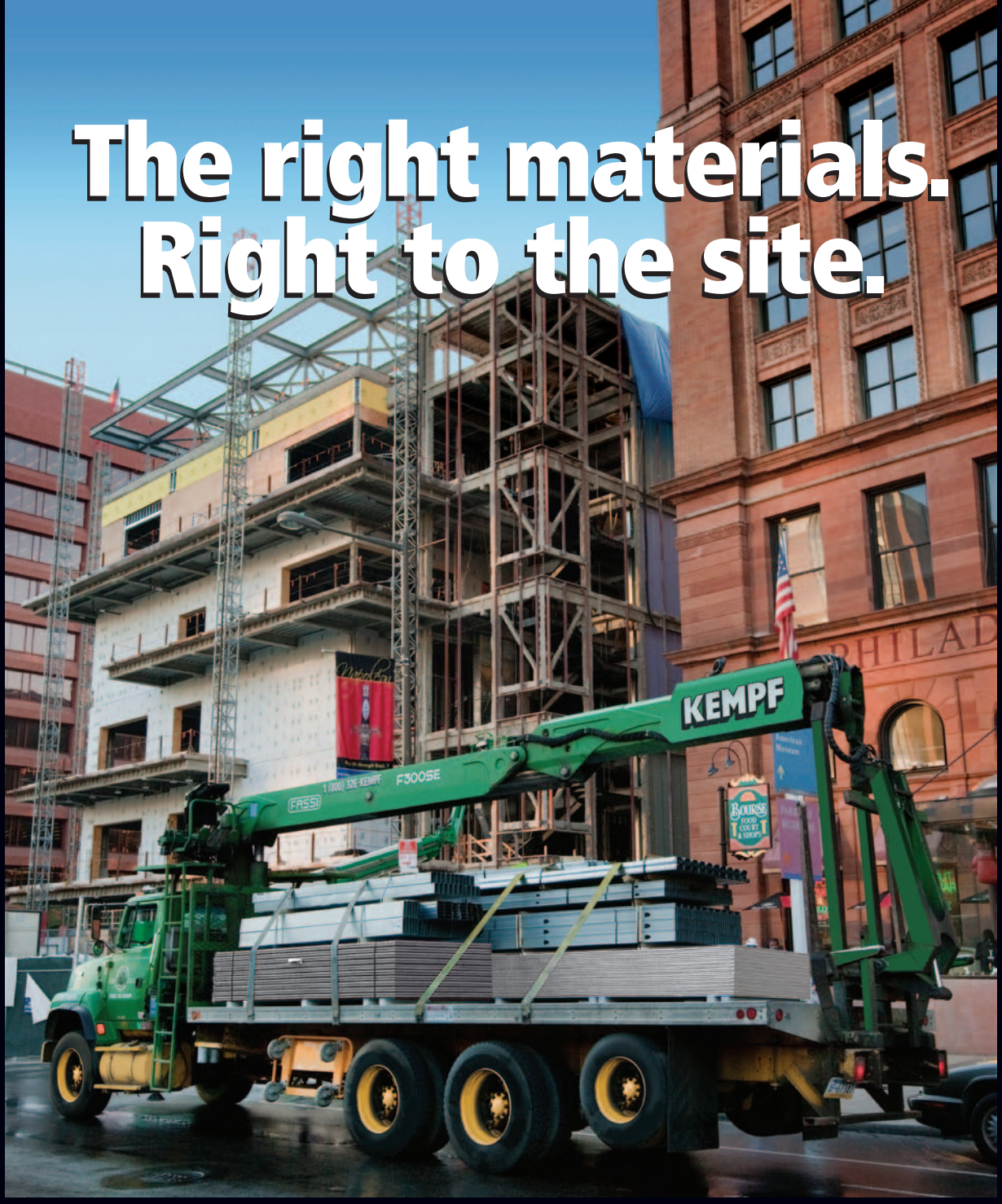

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