Leagueline

Back to Basics... Back to Business

what I learned after architecture school...

effective communication
team building
coaching/mentoring
leadership
President's Column

The Education of an Architect: This past year has been challenging for everyone, but with the help of our wonderful members, board of trustees, committees, allied members, and sponsors it has been another successful year. Each meeting was very educational and highlighted both historical references and current trends in our ever-changing profession.

A Few Highlights from 2009: In September Director Michael Miner presented a movie documentary on Frank Lloyd Wright, A Child of the Sun – The West Campus of Florida Southern College. In October we had an educational seminar on Copper Use in Architecture featuring the Hoboken Ferry Terminal Copper Restoration at the Sheraton Mahwah Hotel designed by Gilchrist Partnership, AIA. In November we held our annual Fall Ted Kessler Walking Tour in New York City and co-hosted our annual spouses event with the newly formed NJIT AIAS, the Arthur Davis Lecture: The World Trade Center 9 Years Later. In December we finished off the year with a behind-the-scenes tour of the new NJ/NY Jets/Giants Stadium hosted by Skanska.

In Conclusion, it is important to note that as our role as an Architect evolves, so must our Education. Whether we adapt the way we draft by introducing building information modeling software, change the way we manage our construction schedules and budgets, or the way we shape our projects to be successful by integrating energy performance and age-old design practices, like orientation, it is important that we never forget to keep learning from our past and staying current with new trends and practices.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for your support throughout the year. It has been a very rewarding and humbling experience to serve as a leader of an organization filled with so many people I deeply respect and have come to know as my colleagues and friends. Please join me in welcoming Joyce Raspa-Gore as our new president, who I am confident will serve the League well as we begin a new year.

Frank Cunha III, AIA
AIA-ALNNJ President 2009

2010 is upon us. As incoming President of the Architects League I propose a theme of Back to Basics / Back to Business which will focus on Practice Management issues. Architecture is a demanding and rewarding profession having great influence on society. Last year was rough for most; this year will require continued work and perseverance in furtherance of our success. Architects have the versatility to adapt to change - with our trained sense of purpose - Succeed We Will!

On January 16th, the 2010 Officers and Trustees will be installed at the Liberty Science Center. We hope to see you there. Our February meeting on the 18th will be at the Williams Theatre for the Arts in Rutherford for a showing of Sacred Spaces, a film on Frank Lloyd Wright’s religious works; in support of the AIA NJ Mega Issue to promote Public Perception of the Value of the Architect and the Profession, this event will be open to the public. On March 18th we have invited an archivist to speak at the Sheraton Parsippany about the development of Historic Tuxedo Park, New York.

I look forward to getting to know you all, so please let me hear your comments and suggestions as the year goes on. My e-mail address is joyceraspgore@yahoo.com.

Joyce Raspa-Gore, AIA, Esq.
AIA-ALNNJ President 2010
The Making of an Effective Architect - From the Management Perspective

By Michael Busch Jr. AIA

Through the progress of an education in architecture, design professionals are taught the valuable design and technical skills required to obtain licensure as an architect and create beautiful projects. While these are the foundation to becoming a successful design professional, there are other skills that are beneficial toward becoming a more effective leader. Being a well rounded leader is becoming increasingly important in our field. While an architect may have the talent to design and create details, how an organization is run may mean the difference between success and failure, especially in these economic times.
While there are many different aspects to the art of management, there are a few critical items which may assist architects in building stronger management skills and lead to stronger teams, both internal and external of the organization. These are items which should be valuable to all experience levels, from entry level to the seasoned professional.

A leader is not someone who is focused on their individual performance and results they achieve, but rather they are someone who enables others to act. If we look at our business from this perspective, the potential begins to emerge of creating the highest performing teams and giving the greatest value to our clients. Every client would like to see a smooth running operation and a team based approach, both internally and externally, to their projects. That will be what keeps clients coming back.

**Being an Effective Communicator**

An important part of management in any field is effective communication. While many principals may focus on their presentation and marketing skills the most important, and often overlooked, component of communication is listening. Many managers make the mistake of injecting what they think while a colleague is speaking to them. It may be a conscious decision, but most people do not even realize they are doing it. New managers are typically uncomfortable with someone else coming to them with a problem or awkward topic, so it may be a nervous reaction. It may be a really important issue being brought to them and the person cannot even get the thought out because the manager is telling them how it is from their perspective. A great way to earn the respect of others, whether they are employees, clients or external consultants, is to employ the concept of “generous listening”\(^1\). What this entails is essentially turning off your internal conversation when you are listening to someone. This by the way, is not an easy thing to do! What most of us do during a conversation is to start to formulate our response before the other person is even finished talking. You stop hearing what the other person is saying when you hear what you want to hear or some trigger word that gets your attention. Generous listening is hearing what the other person is saying without doing this; it is a selfless skill that takes time to master. A good way to show positive reinforcement is to ask clarifying questions as the conversation moves along to make sure that you understand what someone is telling you. Most experienced managers feel that they have the obligation to tell it how it is, while most of the time the other person is simply looking to be understood. Typically the good listener is more effective than the good teller.

**Make Sure Expectations are Aligned**

Another important factor regarding communication is alignment of expectations. It is good to make sure that as a manager you are not only looking out for your best interests, but the interests of the other team members as well. Lack of such an alignment results in miscommunication where two people or team members are not working towards the same goal. Architects may do well at aligning client expectations, making sure that they are giving clients exactly what they are looking for and showing that they understand the clients program, but how often do managers make sure they have the same level of clarity with their team members? It can be easy to lose touch with others and end up running into human resource issues or even losing good people due to miscommunication and lack of clarity. It is a manager’s obligation to speak often with team members about this, whether it be what their expectations are when working on a new project, what their role may be or what their position entails. If an employee is going into a project with the expectation that they will be in a design role and the manager has the expectation that they will be in a technical role, they have the obligation to tell it how it is, while most of the time the other person is simply looking to be understood. Typically the good listener is more effective than the good teller.

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**What I wish I had learned in Architecture School**

“I wish Virginia Tech had mandatory courses in Contract Law and the Art of Negotiation. As Architects, we need to know how to prepare and negotiate contracts that will serve us well through Project Completion and avoid ambiguous terms which lead to dispute.”

Joyce Kapa-Gorre, AIA

“I wish that some basic business skills were taught in architecture school. Graduates should have a rudimentary knowledge of basic accounting principles, taxes, etc. that a first year business major would know. A marketing class would have been great, too.”

Jacob Solomon, AIA
problems are likely to arise. This may sound obvious, but make sure that you are clear when you are communicating these topics and make sure that the other person understands what your intentions are. It is another way to build stronger relationships with others and they will respect you for being honest and not misleading them.

Give and Receive Feedback

Feedback is a great tool which can help bring your perception of how things are going and the reality of the situation into alignment. It is like any relationship where one partner may think that it is going great and the other does not. If the communication does not happen the relationship may completely fall apart. This can happen in business relationships also. You may think that you are giving your clients great service, but they are having their own internal conversations about how unsatisfied they are. If you do not ask for the other person’s perception, the information may come out too late to salvage what you may have already spent a lot of time building. This also applies in a management situation because if you do not give feedback to your team, and ask for it in return, then you may think that you are doing a great job when you are not. An effective manager does not blind-side an employee by saying that they have not been performing well for the past six months. Rather, they discuss issues when they happen and provide a path for correction instead of stacking grievances until they are ready to share them. Asking for feedback shows that you care and is crucial to being an effective manager. It is also a great learning tool because seeing things from a different perspective is a great way to reflect on ourselves. Remember to keep it professional when engaging in these conversations and try to make points that address behavior without being judgmental.

Ask a Lot of Questions

A manager can improve a team’s buy-in by resolving issues both as they come along and at the end of projects. It shows real leadership to sit down throughout the process and ask a lot of questions. What are we doing right? What could we be doing better? What are the hurdles that we are coming across and did we make the right decisions? Such discussions can help eliminate errors and miscommunications among team members if the issues are discussed and addressed. It also provides a framework for how to deal with issues in the future. By having input from all of the parties involved it is not a rule forced upon them, but a process that everyone understands. It is not just the manager who should be asking the questions and the team members listening, it goes both ways. When you are a member of a project team make sure that you are understand issues as they are happening and do not sit by idly. It builds a high level of trust when everyone involved knows that you are all committed to the project and you all want to learn from the process.

Conclusion

While many firms are simply focused on getting the work, problems arise when the work is not managed properly. Architects may become more successful not only through their design skills, but by improving management skills to grow a stronger and more connected staff. Even a sole practitioner needs to interact with outside people and hopefully some of these suggestions can help in your development. Leadership is not just telling others what to do; it is having a 360 degree view of operations and understanding the internal and external forces that shape our business. Through effective listening and communication you will gain respect among your team members and the organization as a whole. By having a holistic approach to business management you also create a better work environment and you will make your employees work lives more fulfilling at the end of the day.

If the communication does not happen the relationship may completely fall apart.

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Stacey Ruhle Kliesch, AIA

“‘I wish a BArch had an MBA stuck in there somewhere.’

Stacey Ruhle Kliesch, AIA

Roy Sokolinski, AIA

‘Well it has been a long time since I graduated in 1976, but probably within the first year of practice I was learning more about our profession than I ever learned in College. Probably the greatest new things I learned were that architecture is not so much about buildings, but about people. Designing for people means understanding them, their wants, their needs, their psychology. I have developed a philosophy that only 10 percent of what architects do is technical; 90 percent is dealing with people and personalities.’

Srok Sokolinski, AIA
The Industry Standard is excited to announce the launch of its latest AIA Contract Documents software. This ground-breaking release includes the following documents:

- The new C191™-2009, Standard Form Multi-Party Agreement for Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) - Get the C191 Commentary for FREE which provides an explanation of key clauses
- The updated B108™-2009, Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect for a Federally Funded or Federally Insured Project

Visit the AIA Contract Documents homepage
http://www.aia.org/contractdocs/index.htm

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ALNNJ 2010 Budget
Report from Treasurer, Donna Berardo, Assoc. AIA

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Business Conditions at Architecture Firms Making Progress, But Still Short of Recovering.
Most firms see 2010 as another challenging year.

by Kermit Baker, PhD, Hon. AIA, AIA Chief Economist

Summary: U.S. architecture firms reported progress toward an eventual recovery in October, as the AIA’s Architecture Billings Index moved up three points to 46.1. This reading is the strongest since the serious problems in the financial sector emerged in late summer 2008 and points to further improvement in our index in the months ahead. Inquiries for new project activity remained strong. Firms report that business conditions in all regions of the country are roughly comparable, while those that specialize in the institutional sector have reported the sharpest gains of the sector-specific billing indexes in recent months.
Members Tour New Giants Stadium
December 4, 2009

Skanska, who was awarded the design/build contract for the new $1.4 billion Meadowlands NFL Football Stadium project in East Rutherford, New Jersey hosted the Architects League for a discussion on the design-build process and a thorough building tour on December 4th. The new stadium will be the home field for the New York Jets and the New York Giants, the first facility built specifically to accommodate two U.S. National Football League (NFL) teams. The stadium will also be used for concerts and other entertainment and sports activities. Construction is planned to be completed for the opening of the 2010 football season. The exterior design for the stadium is expected to be completed by early spring, with groundbreaking slated for later in the spring or early summer.

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Copper Restoration Seminar, October 15, 2009, Sheraton Crossroads, Mahwah

Kevin C. Sommons, PE of KSI Professional Engineers was joined by Mr. Harold Munder of Schtiller & Plevy, copper restoration contractor, to present an information packed seminar exploring the history and use of copper culminating in a first hand account of the copper restoration at the historic Hoboken Ferry Terminal. The Ferry Terminal is the largest copper clad building in the United States with the detailed east façade suspended above the Hudson River creating difficult challenges in the restoration process. Kevin & Harold showcased a photographic timeline which walked through the amazing process of copper restoration including the reuse of many existing pieces. We extend our thanks to Kevin Sommons, Principal of KSI Professional Engineers and Harold Munder, Executive Vice President of Schtiller & Plevy for their professional presentation.

The venue for October’s meeting was the Sheraton Crossroads, designed by the Gilchrist Partnership AIA. John Gilchrist, AIA, presented an overview of the building, which is a 25 story poured in place concrete structure with a full service 230 room hotel with banquet facilities, bar, restaurant and swimming pool, and 10 floors of office space, with parking for 1,700 cars in a three level garage. There is an on site co-generation plant that produces electricity and heat. The master plan anticipated 3 million square feet of new construction arranged around a central garden and reflecting pool, this being the first building. The building opened in 1988 and is the tallest in Northwest Bergen County.

The Third Annual Ted Kessler Memorial Walking Tour of Manhattan, November 1, 2009

The tour followed an all new route starting at Madison Square and heading through parts of the Bowery, Little Italy, Soho, the East Village, Cooper Square and Gramercy Park. The tour visited historic neighborhoods as well as some of the most interesting new buildings in Manhattan. If you missed this year’s Fall tour, we plan on repeating it in Spring 2010.

Robert Arens Lecture
November 19, 2009

At the Arthur Davis lecture series on November 19th at NJIT, Robert Arens, Professor of Architecture at California Polytechnic State University, presented an update on the World Trade Center Redevelopment project eight years later. Arens, who was project architect at Studio Libeskind during the master plan redevelopment phase of the WTC site, discussed the delays of the reconstruction due to the competing interests of the many stakeholders involved. Arens also presented some of the exciting visions that were put forth at the time.

Announcing A Revolutionary Concept In PL Insurance For NJ Architects: A Choice.

When it comes to professional liability insurance, about the only choice available for architects has been “take it or leave it.” With limited options available it’s no wonder so many architects overpay for the coverage they know they need. Or worse, leave themselves exposed because adequate coverage is simply unaffordable.

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Best of Luck to Joyce Raspa-Gore, AIA, Esq. 2010 President of the Architects League and Fenner & Esler’s Account Executive / In-House Counsel
**New Members**
The League is pleased to announce their newest members:

James Henry Cornell, AIA  
Richard S. Davidson, AIA  
Brian Laughlin, AIA  
Shane S. Bell, Assoc. AIA  
Gregory Capone, Assoc. AIA

**and Allied members:**

Dominik Presybrygda, Mele  
James Dei'Veccio, Emerald Financial Resources  
Andrea Volter, Design Concept Associates

The League welcomes you and looks forward to your involvement and participation. Please make a point of introducing yourself at the League's next dinner meeting or event.

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**Architects League of Northern New Jersey Calendar of Events 2010**

**Special Event:**
- ALNNJ Installation Dinner  
  Sat. Jan 16th  6:30pm  
  Liberty Science Center

**Recommendation:**
- Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future  
  thru Jan 31  
  Museum of City of New York  
  www.mcny.org

**Recommendation:**

**Save these dates...**
- May 20, 2010  
  Trade Show at Marriott Glenpoint
- June 9-13, 2010  
  AIA Convention, South Beach, Miami, Florida
- July 13, 2010  
  ALNNJ Annual Golf Outing
To: David C. Hall, CDT, CSI
Architectural Account Representative
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