By: Kemya L. Scott | Atlanta Chapter
Phisco Marketing

Now that you’re on the path of building your network with professional memberships, I want to tackle the benefits of such memberships and affiliations. If you’re not yet a member of any professional organizations, think of this post as an overview of the benefits you can reap. If you’re already a member of professional organizations, are you maximizing your membership dollars to build your network and expand your circle of influence?

Here are just a few of the typical benefits of professional memberships that I’m almost certain your business can use for marketing purposes:

- **Use the membership directory** to cross promote, build your network, and advertise. Some organizations post a directory online and make it accessible to members and non-members. Others include their directory in their monthly e-blasts to members and non-members. Some organizations publish a hard copy directory, which gets distributed locally and regionally. All of these distribution outlets afford you an opportunity for exposure.

- **Often times, there are spotlight opportunities**, whereby you can showcase your business to hundreds or sometimes thousands of professionals, who may become networking partners or clients. Some organizations use a spotlight moment as a part of their events, and some will include a spotlight on a new member in their publications. Put yourself and your business in the spotlight!

- **Does the organization have sponsorship opportunities available?** Events you can sponsor? Can you apply to be a speaker or host venue for the event? If your company is a sponsor, your company’s logo and website will probably be featured on the organization’s website. You may be able to use a cross-promotional banner on your own website or blog. There are usually different levels of sponsorships, so choose (or get creative and offer) a level that works within your budget.

- **Committees are a marketing goldmine, but not in the overt way you might think.** These committees may afford you an opportunity to network both inside and outside the organization. In other words, give you an icebreaker or a conversation starter. You may also use your committee participation as an opportunity to demonstrate your skill set. When you take part on committees, you naturally show your strengths as a thought-leader, team player, industry expert, meeting facilitator, public speaker, etc. In addition, you may have the opportunity to strengthen your abilities in areas in which you may not currently excel. In other words, learn to turn your weaknesses into strengths.

As a member of a professional organization you have built-in...
No, From Page 1   **leverage**, an automatic conversation starter. For example, I’m a sponsorship chair for an industry-specific international charitable event. So I basically have an excuse to call any firm or vendor affiliated with my industry. Talk about a HUGE promotional opportunity! Because I have a legitimate reason to call on companies, and not just push sales, I can usually get a decision-maker on the phone. Not too shabby huh? All because I’m a member of a professional organization and I voluntarily joined a committee.

I know you have a few organizations in mind that you have wanted to take a look at and potentially join. Make an educated decision to find the right organizations worthy of your time and money. Then integrate the benefits of your membership into your marketing plan to maximize those membership dollars!

---

**SDA’s 15 for 12 Campaign: Just One**

SDA is still holding its 15 for 12 campaign and each chapter can take advantage of this promotion. There are also individual incentives that could be beneficial to take advantage of as well.

During the past few months the Denver Chapter has been working to bring in new members. The numbers are low but we feel the ongoing exposure will be worth the efforts in the long run. We recently held a membership drive at a local restaurant. Our goal was to reach out to other companies and organizations in the A/E/C industry in our area and determine what it is SDA can provide for them.

We printed out a postcard invitation and also designed it to be in PDF format to be emailed. About three weeks before the event we sent out the invitations and emails to prospective members. Each board member was asked to provide five names and all these contacts were sent the invitation. We did not have the turnout we were hoping for with this event but we did learn that follow up is the key. Make sure you follow up your invitation with a personalized phone call a few days before the event. The person with the relationship should make that call but I think anyone that can reach out to these prospects and make them feel important would work just as well. The personal touch always makes a big difference.

We have adopted the “Just One” motto for this year. If each current member can bring in “Just One” new person we could double our membership. It seems like such a big task to think of doubling your membership but one by one it can be done.

Learn more about the 15 for 12 campaign on the SDA website.
**SDA News and Notes**

**SLK Management Solutions**
Stephanie Kirschner of SLK Management Solutions continues to work with Concepts Management to transition to the role of Executive Director of SDA in January 2013, and the process is going well. Please remind your members that dues renewals sent by mail should go to SLK Management Solutions. The new address is noted on the invoice.

**AIA Affiliation**
Does your chapter have a strong relationship with your local AIA component? If so, please contact Deborah Gill, National SDA President, to share examples. Deborah and Stephanie will be meeting with AIA representatives on Nov. 29 and would like to demonstrate the value of our relationship with AIA at the chapter level. Deborah’s email is dgill@clarknexsen.com. ExCom feels confident that we will continue to have a relationship with AIA and will have more to report to you after the November meeting. Also, if you have been an AIA CEU Provider and have received a renewal invoice, you may want to hold off payment until after the meeting with AIA in November. We are hoping we can still give our chapters this benefit at no cost.

**EDSymposium13**
Our annual meeting and educational conference will be held in Williamsburg, Virginia at the Williamsburg Lodge May 15-18, 2013. Mark your calendar to join us for this great educational and networking event. Registration will open in December 2012. Look for information soon regarding the Past Presidents Council grants for attending EDSymposium.

**Awards**
Please consider applying for the Chapter Excellence Award! This is a terrific opportunity to showcase your members’ accomplishments. Does your chapter have a member deserving of the Lifetime Achievement Award? You can find the criteria for these submittals, as well as our other award opportunities, on the website.

**From Wikipedia: Finance & Accounting**

Finance is the study of how investors allocate their assets over time under conditions of certainty and uncertainty. A key point in finance, which affects decisions, is the time value of money, which states that a unit of currency today is worth more than the same unit of currency tomorrow.

Accounting is the process of communicating financial information about a business entity to users such as shareholders and managers. The communication is generally in the form of financial statements that show in money terms the economic resources under the control of management; the art lies in selecting the information that is relevant to the user and is reliable. The principles of accountancy are applied to business entities in three divisions of practical art, named accounting, bookkeeping, and auditing.

Accounting is thousands of years old; the earliest accounting records, which date back more than 7,000 years, were found in Mesopotamia (Assyrians). The people of that time relied on primitive accounting methods to record the growth of crops and herds. Accounting evolved, improving over the years and advancing as business advanced.

Today, accounting is called “the language of business” because it is the vehicle for reporting financial information about a business entity to many different groups of people. Accounting that concentrates on reporting to people inside the business entity is called management accounting and is used to provide information to employees, managers, owner-managers and auditors.
Texas Leadership/Planning Retreat

Summarized By: Melodee Schultz | Houston Chapter

On October 20th, Texas SDA members came together to attend a retreat intended to help transition their leadership, plan for the coming year, address chapter and member concerns, and expose members to a full day of leadership planning. The retreat was held at the centrally located, privately-owned Horse Thief Hollow Ranch in Austin, which Frank and Jane Neal of Frank W. Neal & Associates generously made available to SDA members at no charge.

Facilitated by National Past President Melodee Schultz, the six-hour retreat set a strong example for ways in which chapters can come together to share their strengths, discuss their success, and help find solutions to various challenges faced in membership, program attendance, fundraising, and volunteerism. The robust agenda included discussion of most successful programs and fundraisers, effective membership campaigns and business-development-type marketing collateral, member recognition, the value of certification, how to “fire up” member participation in chapter events and volunteerism on committees and boards, pursuing the Chapter Excellence Award, and improving local AIA relationships.

Melodee said, “All in all, this was a very good brainstorming session.” The Texas group is planning to create their own Texas member database and maintain communication within the state to ask questions, advertise events, recognize members, etc. They also plan to establish a quarterly Texas conference call. They agreed to keep Members-at-Large in the loop to help them feel more a part of the organization and hope they will begin attending chapter-sponsored events by phone. All in attendance agreed that in-state networking will strengthen the chapters/boards.

Attending the retreat were, from the Dallas chapter, Brooke Simcik and Becky Souter; from Fort Worth, Julie Meeks and host Jane Neal; from Houston, Sharon Cheatheam, Myrna Norman, and Melodee Schultz; from San Antonio, Monica Hodges, Paula Smart, Maricela Yanez, and long-time former SDA member Elaine Kalinowski; and Member-at-Large from Austin, Kathryn Garvin.

For all who came together for this leadership and planning retreat, and with special thanks to Melodee Schultz for facilitating and contributing gifts and to Jane Neal for the use of the Neal's ranch in Austin, this event was an inspiring celebration of member and chapter determination and camaraderie.

Save the Date:
EDSymposium13 in Williamsburg, VA
May 15-18, 2013

EDSymposium13 will take place in beautiful Williamsburg, VA, at the Williamsburg Lodge. Click the icon above to watch an information video about the conference, and mark your calendars to attend next year!
Think You Can’t Say No? You Can and Should

By: Tracy D. Woodhams | Parsons Brinckerhoff

Administrative assistants are responsible for a variety of administrative and clerical duties necessary to run a department, office, or organization efficiently. We are increasingly relied upon to handle reception duties for the office, perform office management functions, provide human resource services, and support business managers and staff in their daily activities to contribute to the success of the company. This is a big role to fill for any size office or company. With such varied tasks and responsibilities, administrative assistants find themselves being pulled in multiple directions at once. So how do we do it? How do we get it all done?

Managing Your Time

Successful administrative support professionals have a wide array of skills they can use to complete the tasks at hand. One of the most important tools of the trade is effective time management. One critical part of effective time management is the ability to say no. Administrative assistants must master the ability to prioritize daily activities and learn how to deal with the constant requests of coworkers and managers. It isn’t possible to handle routine work assignments, urgent requests, and complete all the little extra duties that crop up in the day. Sometimes support professionals do try to do it all but end up falling short on one item or another. Prioritizing and choosing which activities to complete each day helps alleviate the stress of trying to get it all done and will help us to work more efficiently for our staff and managers.

Tasks must be listed and prioritized, and staff requests and unforeseen items must be handled according to prioritized tasks and goals. The top priority or urgent items are tasks that must be completed and have a high pay-off, medium priority items are tasks that would be nice to complete, and low priority items are tasks that can be completed when there are extra moments left at the end of the day.

It would be nice if each day could be arranged into a prioritized to-do list that always gets completed, but administrative assistants can’t bank on a planned day. We must be flexible and handle urgent requests and unexpected tasks as they arise. The best way to handle out-of-scope items is to consult the to-do list and shift items to create time to complete the task at hand. However, sometimes it’s difficult to decide which tasks can be delayed. If you hit this roadblock, consult your supervisor or local managers, they may be able to provide a tie-breaker. There will also be times when you cannot accept another task. When this happens you must say no.

Getting to “No” – Best Practices

Saying no is hard for administrative assistants because we are hard-wired to provide support. It’s foreign to add “no” into daily vocabulary because it does not sound helpful or polite and it can be a little scary, but no is necessary. Possessing the ability to say no will allow enough time to complete the tasks of the day and prevent stress from overloading.

The first thing administrative assistants must learn and convey to coworkers is that no doesn’t mean that you don’t want to provide support, but that the task can’t be completed at the moment. When administrative assistants say no, they really mean no, not right now or no, I’m not the right person for this task. Declining to take on a task does not have to be a negative exchange. No is never the last word, it should always be followed by an alternative and a suggestion. Assisting others by finding the proper person to handle the task or offering another time to complete the task is helpful and polite.

It takes practice to say no because we are not used to turning down a request for help. There are a few ways to make it easier to decline a task.

Be Careful with Emotions

Administrative professionals should watch out for emotions. It is important that emotions are under control during an exchange between coworkers regarding the inability to complete a task. If the situation is emotionally charged, ask for the request in writing, and respond when you are better suited to do so. This will reduce the risk of a negative outcome.

Offer an Alternative

You can always say no to completing the task now and offer to complete it later. This can be a good compromise for both parties, but be sure that the alternative time suggested fits the needs of your coworker. Remember to be respectful of others’ needs and to let them know that you do want to assist, but that it’s just not possible at this moment.

Refer to Your Schedule

When you find it hard to say no, use your schedule as reinforcement. Remember to be polite, and state that your schedule is really full and that the planned activities must be handled as scheduled. Be sure to allow the person requesting your assistance to view the calendar items or your to-do list with deadlines. Sometimes a visual aid is more powerful than words. This may even facilitate scheduling the requested task for another date.
Member Spotlight: Penny Nelson

For almost 2 1/2 years, Penny Nelson has been the Director of Finance at Douglas Pancake Architects, Inc., and jokes that "I do everything the architects don't do!" That includes all of the accounting, payroll, human resources, office management, party planning, and whatever else falls across her desk. Since this is a new firm, it's been fun setting up all of the standards and procedures, and creating their own unique working environment. They are a firm of 19 and concentrate their work on the senior housing marketing: independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing facilities and memory care.

Penny has been an SDA member since 2010 and is currently serving on the Board as Corresponding Secretary. She is the one who sends out the monthly meeting notices and collects all of the RSVPs for the Orange County Chapter.

Having been in the A/E industry for about four years, her favorite thing about SDA is that she's constantly using the various resources to help her learn and grow in her position.

Penny is currently in the running for the Orange County Chapter President position.

Related Articles and Links

Get Read, Get Results! How to Write Better
By: Business Management Daily
Imagine you've just opened an email, and you see that it's four lengthy paragraphs. Do you read it? Scan it? Close it quickly? Leo Babauta, author of top blog "Zen Habits," says that when he receives a long email, it's almost always a case of the sender not taking the time to edit. It leaves the impression that the sender believes his time is more valuable than Babauta's.

IRS Provides Template for Employee vs. Contractor Mess
By: Robert W. Wood | Forbes.com
Determining who is a true independent contractor and who is really an employee involves more than labels. The IRS, Department of Labor, state labor and employment boards, unemployment insurance and worker's compensation authorities all investigate this. It also comes up in private lawsuits over benefits, liability, and more.

SDA Calendar of Events
Keep up-to-date on the latest with SDA by frequenting the Calendar of Events!

No, From Page 5

Allow Someone Else to Say No
When all else fails and you find yourself caving into the pressure of an urgent request that you cannot handle, allow your supervisor to say no for you. There are many ways to do this. You can ask for the request in writing and discuss it with your boss, or you can let the person know you are handling some hot items for your supervisor and need to ask permission to stray from the task at hand. You also can ask them to send the request to your boss for assignment to the work group.

The Art of Saying No
There is an art to saying no. The exchange must be professional, polite, and positive to all parties involved. Whether you ask for a request in writing to defer a no answer, offer an alternative, or reinforce your words with a look at the day’s schedule or a conversation with your boss, the decision to say no must be strategic and not emotional.

The goal of every administrative assistant is provide top-notch support for their organization and everybody knows it. That’s why we get all of the special, urgent requests, because our coworkers know we’re good and we can handle it. We can handle it all, but not always at the time of the request. So practice saying no to the little things that can wait until the end of the day or week. Soon you will be a pro at prioritizing and choosing which activities to complete each day and preventing the stress of workload overload.

Tracy D. Woodhams has twelve years of experience in the office administration profession. She is committed to continuing education, continual improvement, and supporting others to attain excellence. She serves as a Local Office Administrator in Lansing, Michigan for Parsons Brinckerhoff, a leader in the development and operation of infrastructure around the world. Tracy has an Associate’s Degree in Business Administration, and is a member of IAAP.
A/E/C Quiz

1. Current assets are those that a business will turn into cash or consume within ________________.

2. Records of insurance policies should be kept for ________ years from expiration; settled claims ____________ years from the date.

3. Bank statements should not be reconciled by someone who makes the ________________.

Answers: 1. one year; 2. 6, 4, settlement; 3. deposits

Employee Name/SSN Mismatches

The biggest cause of no-match letters is W-2s, on which the name and SSN do not match or when a company is audited. The most common causes of mismatches are: typos in payroll or HR data entry; misread employee handwriting on payroll forms; the person has a different last name on different forms; marriages not reported to HR; or payroll fraud.


Share Your Thoughts - CONTENT, CONTENT, CONTENT

Share your ideas, articles, issues, letters, opinions and more. The SDA Today newsletter is a monthly publication. The deadline for submissions is 15 days prior to the first day of each month. We look forward to hearing from you!
Submit to: Jodi Ross, jross@intergrouparchitects.com

The Society for Design Administration Needs YOU!

“There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer”
Colonel James H. Doolittle (WWII)

This year’s National Nominating Committee is currently seeking qualified SDA members to run for positions on the 2013-14 Executive Committee.

Want to know if you’re qualified?

♦ Are you interested in what’s happening in the Society for Design Administration?
♦ Do you believe that you have leadership qualities that you would like to share with the design community?
♦ Are you interested in helping steer SDA’s future?

If you answered yes to the above questions, then consider running for a position on the 2013-14 ExCom!

Check the SDA website for more information and to submit your nomination today.
# Congratulations to Our November Anniversaries!

Below is a list of every member with a November anniversary with his/her chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Join Date</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>Pearce, Brinkley, Cease &amp; Lee, PA</td>
<td>11/3/1997</td>
<td>Member-at-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith</td>
<td>Hayduck</td>
<td>HHI Design (Herbert-Halback, Inc.)</td>
<td>11/9/2000</td>
<td>Orlando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>Heckman</td>
<td>Wiss Janney Elstner</td>
<td>11/22/2000</td>
<td>Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>Sommerville</td>
<td>Wells Fargo Insurance Services USA, Inc.</td>
<td>11/14/2002</td>
<td>Orange County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsha</td>
<td>Wilmot</td>
<td>Black River Design Architects, PLC</td>
<td>11/11/2003</td>
<td>Member-at-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou Ann</td>
<td>Hight</td>
<td>SLATERPAULL Architects, Inc.</td>
<td>11/15/2003</td>
<td>Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>York</td>
<td>NTD Architecture</td>
<td>11/17/2003</td>
<td>Southern Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Falkanger</td>
<td>Central Consulting Group</td>
<td>11/21/2005</td>
<td>Minneapolis/St. Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>Myrie-Perry</td>
<td>CWB Architects</td>
<td>11/20/2006</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>Lovelle (Schneider)</td>
<td>Cuningham Group Architecture, P.A.</td>
<td>11/28/2006</td>
<td>Minneapolis/St. Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertha</td>
<td>Pena</td>
<td>O'Neill Conrad Oppelt Architects Inc.</td>
<td>11/28/2006</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>Rawson</td>
<td>BASE BUILDERS, LLC</td>
<td>11/12/2007</td>
<td>Member-at-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimee</td>
<td>Mandala</td>
<td>Environ Architecture</td>
<td>11/14/2007</td>
<td>Orange County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Hamm</td>
<td>Accessibility Unlimited</td>
<td>11/27/2007</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Marks</td>
<td>Rogers, Lovelock &amp; Fritz, Inc.</td>
<td>11/29/2007</td>
<td>Orlando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Dugle</td>
<td>Shaffer Baucom Engineering &amp; Consulting</td>
<td>11/1/2008</td>
<td>Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Hinsley</td>
<td>Clark Nexsen</td>
<td>11/5/2008</td>
<td>Member-at-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Kriege</td>
<td>THP Limited, Inc.</td>
<td>11/6/2008</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendra</td>
<td>Dillard</td>
<td>Walter P. Moore</td>
<td>11/17/2008</td>
<td>Houston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimee</td>
<td>Slovensky</td>
<td>Clark Nexsen</td>
<td>11/12/2009</td>
<td>Hampton Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicki</td>
<td>Marcellino</td>
<td>Withee Malcolm Architects, LLP</td>
<td>11/12/2009</td>
<td>Orange County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Duron</td>
<td>L. A. Fuess Partners, Inc.</td>
<td>11/12/2009</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Young</td>
<td>Hargrove Engineers + Constructors</td>
<td>11/3/2010</td>
<td>Member-at-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>Garvin</td>
<td>Seton Healthcare Family</td>
<td>11/3/2010</td>
<td>Member-at-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>Swofford Construction, Inc.</td>
<td>11/17/2010</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>Wiley Wilson</td>
<td>11/18/2010</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture, LLC</td>
<td>11/19/2010</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>Norgaard</td>
<td>GRI</td>
<td>11/29/2010</td>
<td>Portland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Hammel</td>
<td>URS Corporation</td>
<td>11/4/2011</td>
<td>Orange County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Henderson</td>
<td>Griffin Structures, Inc.</td>
<td>11/8/2011</td>
<td>Orange County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Perkins + Will</td>
<td>11/10/2011</td>
<td>Northern California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Waller, Todd &amp; Sadler Architects, Inc.</td>
<td>11/12/2011</td>
<td>Hampton Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>Phelan</td>
<td>ARC Ridgways</td>
<td>11/14/2011</td>
<td>Hampton Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chasity</td>
<td>Knick</td>
<td>Clark Nexsen</td>
<td>11/17/2011</td>
<td>Member-at-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Taussig</td>
<td>Epsten Group</td>
<td>11/17/2011</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay</td>
<td>Bigbee</td>
<td>Research Facilities Design (RFD)</td>
<td>11/17/2011</td>
<td>San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>Neale</td>
<td>Bizport</td>
<td>11/29/2011</td>
<td>Hampton Roads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Future of the A/E/C Industry

By: Phil Warner | FMI Corporation

On October 29, 2009, FMI hosted a one-day workshop in Chicago, attended by more than 60 industry leaders, to present the research results from several months of discussions and interviews with an advisory panel of A/E/C industry leaders concerning the possible future of the A/E/C industry. According to a subsequent report from our findings, “Discussions were framed around the idea that “the dialogue is just beginning … an effective industrywide strategy can only succeed with the input of all stakeholders. FMI anticipates repeated workshops in a similar format to continue into the future.”

Our purposes in this long-range study and workshop were to:

• “Look ahead at the possible futures of the industry beyond the normal one to five-year planning horizon.
• “Learn how leaders of the industry were looking at their futures
• “Introduce clients and prospective clients to the benefits of scenario planning, especially in an uncertain political and economic climate.

Four future scenarios resulting from this collaborative effort represent plausible futures for the U.S. A/E/C industry in 2020, and are shaped by worldwide trends.

1. **Perfect Worldview** is the story of an idealized tomorrow, where firms enjoy the luxury of ethical decision-making, mandated environmental standards and a surge in innovation.
2. **Struggle for Stability** is a tomorrow much like today, where A/E/C firms strive to transcend a financial and competitive limbo, with scarce private investment and limited natural resources.
3. **Building Walls** is an isolationist future in which infrastructure is severely lacking, and a low-bid culture dominates. Geopolitical barriers to trade prevent exchange of ideas and talent, and the battle for survival takes place on spreadsheets and in underhanded dealings.
4. **Controlled Environment** results from the germ of nationalization we see today: pillar industries are appropriated by the government and strict mandates brand everyone a contractor or subcontractor to public projects.

In discussions about the scenarios, most agreed that the “Struggle for Stability” was the most likely to fit the future over the next five years. Three years later, that scenario still seems solid. We fear the “Controlled Environment” scenario as socialism, communism or just too much government control and debt, yet it remains a possibility. On the other hand, how long can we remain in a future of the struggle for stability without falling into an isolationist future of building walls where everyone is acting in their own self-interest in the most fearful and greedy sense of that idea? The “Perfect Worldview” has been noted as being too utopian, and thus will not happen, to which I have responded that it certainly won’t unless we work toward it. Overly optimistic? Naïve? Agreed.

In the latest results of FMI’s “Nonresidential Construction Index” report (NRCI Q3 2012), we cautioned readers to “beware the upturn” after receiving a number of responses from NRCI panelists in response to questions about profit margins and contractor failure rates. We found that the recovery we have all been waiting for could be the downfall of more marginally surviving contractors.” Panelists raised their concerns that too many contractors have been taking on too much low-bid work just to keep their backlogs full, and now it is beginning to show up as businesses become unable to finance ongoing losses. This potential outcome was predictable, and many panelists note they have been surprised it has not happened sooner. (NRCI Q3 2012) Sounds like our “Building Walls” scenario could be just around the corner, doesn’t it?

None of the above discussion solves any problems in the construction industry. After all, the construction industry is just a reflection of the broader economic situation, right? Yes and no. The construction industry is a foundation industry, both figuratively and actually, that serves a key role in the economy, both from providing jobs for workers and in designing, building and shaping our environment in myriad ways. Should it speak with one voice? Act on one long-range plan? Or just react to the multiple evolutionary forces in its socio-political and economic surroundings? It is easy to ask some tough questions, and likely impossible to find one right answer.

At the end of the inaugural A/E/C Futures workshop, we said we expected to have similar workshops and discussions in the future. The Recession and survival seems to have sidelined that discussion on a broader scale, although we discuss such things in strategy sessions with clients frequently. Now, I am asking readers for their ideas. What should or could the future of construction, especially infrastructure construction, look like in America? And who can really do anything about it anyway?

Reprinted with permission from FMI Corporation, 919.787.8400. For more information, visit www.fminet.com or call Sarah Avallone at 919.785.9221.
A Look at the SDA’s Online Discussion Forum
Please note: The views discussed on the Member Discussion Forum are those of individual members and should not be construed as official advice from, or the stance of, the SDA.

What’s Your Input on These Topics?

Gmail Professional — has anyone switched to this email system?
Vision 7 Anyone?
Company Name Change

Check out the SDA Forums today to communicate with your peers and get the answers YOU need!

Access the Forums Here!

Are You Staying Up-to-Date on Forum Topics?

Do you try to stay in tune with the discussions happening on the SDA Forums? Make sure you adjust your settings to receive email updates when topics are posted in certain forum subjects! Go to the SDA website, log in and click “Forum Discussions” under the new “Member Resources” dropdown. Once you’ve accessed the forums, scroll to the list of current discussions in each topic. In the dark gray title box, click “Preferences.” Here, you can choose which discussions you would like to receive and whether you would like to receive all posts or just threads. This is an excellent way to monitor the forums without having to click through each discussion topic!