



Is A Quantum Leap In Your Future?

By John A. Mercer Jr. P.E.
CASE Chair

As I write this month's editorial, I am sitting in a cabin on Long Point, Minnesota's most northern point of land jutting into Lake of the Woods. Straight-line winds of at least 45 mph do not allow us to pursue the elusive and much sought after Walleyed Pike today. A better day will come. Ahhh... and so it did.



By now, our CASE summer meeting in Boston will have been completed with a successful gathering hosted by BASE and SEAMASS. CASE provided the dinner meeting's program by facilitating four roundtable discussions. CASE would welcome an invitation from you to provide a program for one of your SEA meetings, please contact us.

Topics discussed were, *The Engineer's Role in Government Advocacy*, *The Risk Associated with BIM*, *How to Collect Your Fees Without Getting Sued*, and *The Structural Engineer's Risk Working With The State of Massachusetts*, all timely and pertinent discussion topics beneficial to firms with daily business operations.

Firms operate smoothly when someone wears one of the many hats required to oversee daily activities. Perhaps your firm is large with many tiers of upper to mid and lower management. On the other hand, if you are small, then just a few people must wear the many hats of management responsibility. Are you aware of how management decisions are handled in your firm?

I just completed the fast read, *you²*...a succinct discussion of making a Quantum Leap in what you do with your life or career. The author, Price Pritchett, sets out 18 inspiring topics that direct our actions and outcomes.

The most striking theme that he proposes is that we START an idea without a complete plan because we can "rely on unseen forces"; support systems that will appear to us at the appropriate time. His contention is that people never get started because they wait for the "plan" to be complete and perfected.

A second theme is to "Focus on the ends and not the means". For a traditional engineer that operates 'in-the-box', I can see a lot of struggle and conflict, as the "Devil is always in the details". It would take a non-traditional approach for an engineer to get 'out-of-the-box' for project delivery without a complete set of construction documents. I think the Building Industry has called this Fast-Tracking a project in the past.

I am also reminded of new delivery processes that we currently use; Design-Contract-Build, Design-Build, and Integrated Project Delivery. There is natural conflict with each of these to deliver a project in other than a traditional sequence of events, as in Design-Bid-Build. All parties must cooperate and participate while keeping their eye-on-the-ball for their respective disciplines with the end result in mind.

My first reaction is that a comprehensive set of contract agreements would be important between all parties. The CASE Contract Documents with their itemized scope of services comes to mind as a good way to start.

Risk management would also want to become integrated into all of the service agreements. If all parties understand and comply with their respective coordinated agreements, then the issues of time, schedule and deliverables will be of little consequence.

Pritchett's theory for a Quantum Leap can be realized by the project team for both their benefit as well as the Client's, if a good coordinated set of agreements for services between the disciplines is in place.

Traditionally, a structural engineer designs a building from the top down, while the contractor builds it from the bottom up. Gravity and access requires foundations to go in first. A non-traditional approach would be to build it from the top down. Perhaps that would take a Quantum Leap in our approach. How would you accomplish that?

In my first editorial, I mentioned finding ways to make profit centers from our overhead cost centers. Have you considered starting a company separate from your engineering firm? Let's call it Company B. Its mission would be to conduct non-traditional business by selling products and services to your engineering firm as well as your clients and others.

Take travel as an example. Your new firm could act as its own travel agent and seek travel arrangements for its clientele. There are many non-traditional opportunities to pay for travel expenses that can both lower cost of travel as well as create revenues. Many exist, seek them out.

Are you satisfied with your firm's performance? What hat do you wear in your firm? Is it time for you and your firm to take a Quantum Leap? ■

Editorial Board

Chair

Jon A. Schmidt, P.E., SECB
Burns & McDonnell
Kansas City, MO
chair@structuremag.org

Executive Editor

Jeanne M. Vogelzang, JD, CAE
NCSEA
Chicago, IL
execdir@ncsea.com

Craig E. Barnes, P.E., SECB
CBI Consulting, Inc.
Boston, MA

Richard Hess, S.E., SECB
Hess Engineering Inc.
Los Alamitos, CA

Mark W. Holmberg, P.E.
Heath & Lineback Engineers, Inc.
Marietta, GA

Brian J. Leshko, P.E.
HDR Engineering, Inc.
Pittsburgh, PA

John A. Mercer, P.E.
Mercer Engineering, PC
Minot, ND

Brian W. Miller
AISC
Davis, CA

Mike C. Mota, P.E.
CRSI
Williamstown, NJ

Evans Mountzouris, P.E.
The DiSalvo Ericson Group
Ridgefield, CT

Matthew Salvesson, Ph.D., P.E.
Dokken Engineering
Folsom, CA

Greg Schindler, P.E., S.E.
KPFF Consulting Engineers
Seattle, WA

Stephen P. Schneider, Ph.D., P.E., S.E.
BergerABAM
Vancouver, WA

John "Buddy" Showalter, P.E.
American Wood Council
Leesburg, VA