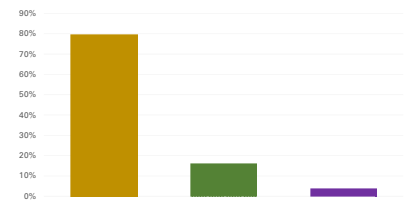


## TRENDLINES

### Firms' website hosting



Zweig Group's [2015 Information Technology Survey of A/E/P and Environmental Consulting Firms](#) finds that **38 percent** of firms surveyed host their own website. Of this 38 percent, **80 percent** report utilizing third-party hosting. **Sixteen percent** of the firms surveyed that host their own website do so on premises, and **4 percent** host their website in a co-location facility.

### UPCOMING SURVEY RELEASE DATES

- [2015 Project Management Survey](#): August 28
- [2015 Fee and Billing Survey](#): September 28 – [participate in this survey](#) and receive a 65 percent discount on your next Zweig Group purchase!

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■ THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP'S BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR: Pages 5-12

## More on being profitable

There are a few basic traits that differentiate firms that make money from those that scrape by.

"Believe it or not, not everyone out there goes into business with the assumption that they will, in fact, make a profit."



Mark Zweig

### EDITORIAL

Chad Clinehens and I were talking in the office yesterday about why some firms we work with make money and others seem to struggle with it. There are some basic differences worth noting. The following observations are based on 35 years in this business and working with thousands of A/E/P and environmental companies:

- 1) Profitable companies understand why it's important to be profitable.** They know everyone feels better when the enterprise is successful. They know that they need profits to be able to pay people well and keep building their teams. They know they need profits to buy other companies and accelerate their growth, to improve their IT systems, to pay for training, to spend money on marketing – and for many more investments. These people don't need to be sold on why profits are necessary!
- 2) Profitable companies have management that expects to run a profitable business.** Believe it or not, not everyone out there goes into business with the assumption that they will, in fact, make a profit. Some believe it's immoral to do so. Some just think you can't do it in this industry. And some set such low goals and budgets that they aren't going to be profitable. In the last year, we have twice seen companies set annual budgets to make \$0 profit – and these were not small companies. How can you expect to be profitable when your goals don't even describe a profitable outcome? You can't!

See [MARK ZWEIG, page 2](#)

## MORE COLUMNS

■ RECRUITING NOTES: What does it take to be the best? [Page 3](#)



# Top 5 Best Firms to Work For

Pages 5-12

## A LOOK AHEAD



Zweig Group is finalizing preparations for its 2015 Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference, September 3-4 in Boston. In fact, we're so excited about the conference, that we're devoting entire issues of **THE ZWEIG LETTER** to highlighting the event and award recipients. Next week's TZL will focus on the [2015 Marketing Excellence](#) awards.

Remember, attendees should [register for the conference](#) by **August 21**. We look forward to seeing you there!

### GOOD TO KNOW

Attendees of the 2015 Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference are eligible for 15 continuing education credits!

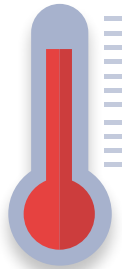
You don't have to be an award winner to come to the Hot Firm & A/E Industry Awards Conference! The event is a great place to network and learn, and all A/E/P and environmental professionals are welcome!

### #HOTFIRM2015 COUNTDOWN



DAYS

### #HOTFIRM2015 ATTENDANCE



More than **145 firms\*** have registered for the Hot Firm & A/E Industry Awards Conference, but there's still room for you! Register today at [zweiggroup.com/conference](http://zweiggroup.com/conference).

\*As of end of business on July 31.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Longtime readers will likely notice that this week's TZL looks a little different. That's because this special edition celebrates – and has been taken over by – all things **BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR!** **THE ZWEIG LETTER** will return to its normal appearance on August 24.

MARK ZWEIG, from [page 1](#)

**3) Profitable companies have management that takes action.** They don't just wring their hands or delegate the problem to a committee that cannot even meet because they have too much project work. They act. And they act quickly. They know that you cannot rationalize for why you aren't making money and instead have to match costs to workload. They know that you cannot afford a losing month because you have to make up for it next month and that losing months kill morale and motivation. They just plain **DO** what they need to do every month to make a profit, even if that means doing hard stuff that they don't like to do.

**4) Profitable companies have owners and managers who have a healthy self-esteem.** They don't go into a new client relationship expecting to get beaten down on fee or to have AR collection problems. They don't think they should just work for anyone who will give them a job. They know they are good – heck, they know they are **BETTER** than good – and **WILL** be paid accordingly. Because they have high self-esteem they don't want to waste their time. So, all of these good things happen and the virtuous cycle repeats itself.

I know this probably sounds terrible to some of you, but I can meet a CEO of a company in this industry and form an opinion within just a few minutes about whether or not that person is likely to be running a profitable business. I'm not always right, but I am right a lot more than I'm wrong about it. The defining characteristics above are only part of the story; the rest of it is not so clear. I'm not so sure charisma is such a bad thing, in spite of Jim Collins' work in *Good to Great*. But, that's the subject of another article! ▀

MARK ZWEIG is founder and CEO of Zweig Group. Contact him at [mzweig@zweiggroup.com](mailto:mzweig@zweiggroup.com).

### BEST FIRMS ARE ALSO PROFITABLE FIRMS

Research shows direct correlation between workplace morale and financial results. In 2010, *Forbes'* "100 Best Companies to Work For" earned 3.5 percent more than average returns.

## READER RESPONSE

In response to Mark Zweig's column in TZL issue 1113 on July 27, reader Chris Hillmann, president and CEO of [Hillmann Consulting](#) (Union, NJ), contributed three lessons he's learned:

- **Serve a charitable cause (or multiple causes) together as a company.** We do it every year, but this year we are doing it 30 times (actually more like 40) to celebrate our 30th anniversary. You can imagine how much this has built camaraderie within our team and with some of the client teams we volunteer with ... not to mention how good it feels. Imagine waking up to emailed photos of children an employee you sponsored is serving at an orphanage in Haiti or the thanks we received from a couple who lost their home in Hurricane Sandy as we put the finishing touches on their new home for Habitat for Humanity.
- **You've said it before, there is no substitute for personal contact with your clients.** So, get out of the office often, even just in the evening to attend cocktail networking events or, better yet, evening charity functions, if you are too busy 9-5.
- **Our first attorney 30 years ago taught me the value of respecting the corporation.** Pour money back in, and it rewards you with a healthy balance sheet, which our banking and insurance clients find very appealing. I asked our business banker back in the throes of recession in 2009 why we were still a good risk. He told me stories of owners with multiple vacation homes or big boats who were at the doorstep of bankruptcy because of lavish personal spending at the expense of retained earnings. The bankers simply love the respect we give the business. Don't kill the golden goose!

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

[Send us your responses](#) to columns and/or articles, and we might publish them in **THE ZWEIG LETTER**.

## THE ZWEIG LETTER

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## OPINION

# What does it mean to be the best?

Top ranking AEC firms have positive organizational cultures, provide employees with the tools they need to be successful, and foster open communication.



Randy Wilburn

### RECRUITING NOTES

**H**ow do you get your firm to a place where every one of your employees, or at least most of them, love coming to work and, more importantly, working on great projects?

Over the past few months, we've polled hundreds of employees AEC firms to get the low down on what it's like to work there. Zweig Group received a ton of responses, which help to paint a picture of what separates the good firms from the great ones when it comes to employee performance, satisfaction, and general happiness. As one of the chief recruiters here at Zweig Group, I've always said that money and a title only last for so long. You have to speak to the needs of the complete employee. Are they adjusting to your corporate culture and, more importantly, is that culture easily adaptable? Have you given your employees the tools and the training they need to be successful? Do you encourage open thought and allow for differences of opinion? In my opinion, all of these factors – and more – help to determine the Best Firms to Work For awardees in the AEC industry.

"I've always said that money and a title only last for so long. You have to speak to the needs of the complete employee."

**THE CULTURAL COMPONENT.** I recently discussed company culture in an article for our recruitment blog (ZGRecruiting.com), where I pointed out the ways for a candidate to determine the cultural fit of a company before he/she signs on the dotted line. The same guidelines are true for those currently employed with a firm. A good firm will make sure that its mission statement and goals are easily understood by everyone. And a firm with a clear cultural component has employees that eat, drink, and sleep its mission statement and know where the company is headed, or at least the general direction. In addition, these employees will identify with the key leaders of the firm, in addition to their teammates. All of these people have to care enough to make sure that everyone is being well taken care of. Finally, because of the strong culture, employees enjoy coming to work on a daily basis and giving it their all.

"The Best Firms to Work For make sure that their employees have the latest tools to do the job they've been hired to do."

**TOOLS AND TRAINING MAKE CHAMPIONS.** The Best Firms to Work For make sure that their employees have the latest tools to do the job they've been hired to do. Updated computers, a cell phone, and Internet access while out of the office are just a few of the ways that the best firms ensure that their talented employees are adequately prepared to take on any challenge they face. Having an arsenal of the proper tools is great, but training is just as important. The AEC industry is constantly changing, and the firms that have stayed ahead of the curve are the ones that consistently allow their people to be trained on new procedures, technology, and, most importantly, project management, which is the lifeblood of our industry. Any employee will tell you how exciting it is to learn new things and stretch themselves – at least the ones that want to grow personally and professionally will. These are mostly the only types of people that Best Firms to Work For have on staff. It has been my experience that a mediocre firm has a hard time keeping good talent like this.

"A well-rounded AEC firm allows for differences of thought and opinion, and it's clear to everyone that they won't get their head bitten off for sharing."

**OPEN THOUGHT AND DIFFERENCES OF OPINION.** While it's important to hire and work with like-minded people, it can also be dangerous if no one raises his/her hand from time to time to ask the question that everyone is afraid to ask. A well-rounded AEC firm allows for differences of thought and opinion, and it's clear to everyone that they won't get their

See [RANDY WILBURN, page 4](#)



## ON THE MOVE

**URBAN ENGINEERS NAMES OFFICE MANAGER FOR NEW LOCATION** [Urban Engineers](#) (Radnor, PA) announced that **Michael McAtee** has been named office manager of the firm's Cherry Hill location. He has served as Urban's New Jersey bridge department manager.

"Mike has spent more than 22 years bringing excellent engineering service to our clients and their communities, and he is an outstanding choice to lead our Cherry Hill office," said Urban Senior Vice President William Thomsen. "Through continuous leadership in our industry and his in-depth knowledge of the profession, many have come to rely on him as a trusted advisor, and mentor."

Urban Engineers recently moved its New Jersey office to the Woodland Falls Corporate Center at 220 Lake Drive East in Cherry Hill. The new office allows the firm to better provide planning, design, and construction services to a wide array of clients, including the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the New Jersey Turnpike Authority in

addition to several counties, municipalities, and institutions throughout the state.

McAtee's duties have included designing composite steel girder and prestressed concrete box beam and I-beam bridges, sign structures, fire protection utilities, drainage and rehabilitation of culverts, bridge inspection, three-dimensional modeling, construction inspection of bridge erection, paving, concrete placement, demolition, and earthwork.

**LEHMAN WELCOMES NEW ENGINEER** [P. JOSEPH LEHMAN Inc., Consulting Engineers](#) (Hollidaysburg, PA) announced that **Adam Katrancha** has joined the firm as an engineer within its transportation department. Katrancha brings more than 17 years of highway and site design experience to the firm.

Throughout Katrancha's career, he has demonstrated his abilities on projects for PennDOT, The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, local municipalities, and private developers. In his past position, he supervised

and mentored junior staff while maintaining project schedules, monitoring budgets, and scheduling resources to ensure the successful completion of projects.

**SVA ARCHITECTS RECRUITS WAHID YONUS** [SVA Architects Inc.](#) (Santa Ana, CA), announced that **Wahid Yonus**, an industry leader in mixed-use high- and low-rise multifamily residential developments, will join its staff as a senior associate partner. SVA, which focuses on public and private developments, including multifamily housing, student housing, and mixed-income transit-oriented developments, has made several personnel advancements and additions during the past year.

Yonus brings 30 years of architectural experience with firms such as Skidmore Owings and Merrill, SMWM, and MVE & Partners. He has served at the senior management level for a diverse portfolio of projects, ranging from mixed-use high-rises and commercial projects to institutional facilities and multifamily residential developments.

**RANDY WILBURN**, from [page 3](#)

head bitten off for sharing. This is the type of healthy work environment that smart and intelligent talent usually gravitate toward. Even if a firm's leadership feels very strongly about something, the mere fact that they will listen to all aspects of an argument can go a long way in cementing trust with employees. Trust me, no one wants to work at a firm where they feel like they are not being heard. This is an issue that Best Firms don't usually have.

There is an old proverb: "It's a pitiful frog that doesn't praise his own pond!" Obviously, professionals in the AEC industry, like most places, should be proud of where they come from and where they are going. If an employee is welcomed into a strong culture of excellence, where they understand the mission and goals and feel like they have a voice, they will shout it from the rooftops.

Over the past few months, AEC employees from all over the country have been shouting to Zweig Group the virtues of their companies and why they are the Best Firm to Work For. On September 3 and 4, we will hear more from these firms and their representatives at the 2015 Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference in Boston. I will be there, and I hope you will join us! ▀

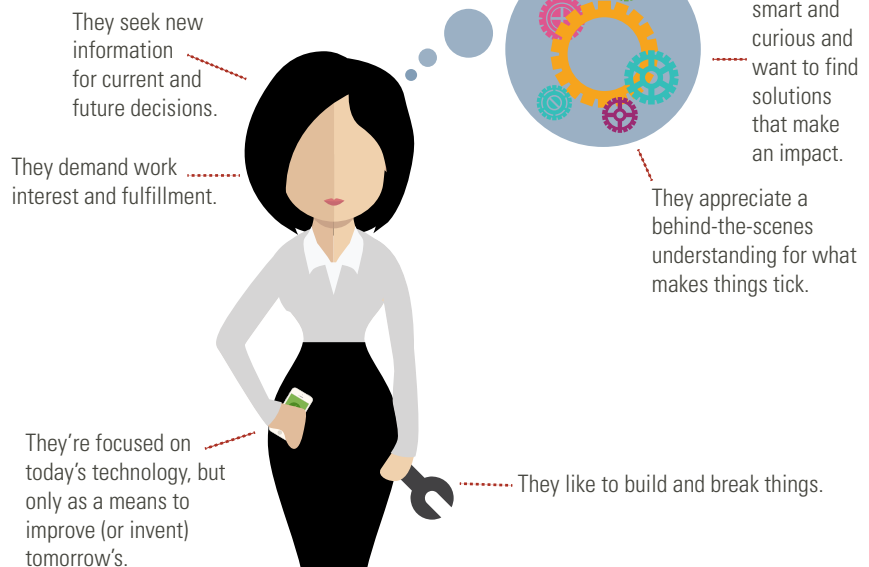
RANDY WILBURN is executive search director for Zweig Group. Contact him at [rwilburn@zweiggroup.com](mailto:rwilburn@zweiggroup.com).

## ATTRACTING TOP TALENT

Professionals with science, technology, engineering, and math skills are sought by a variety of firms because they are seen as key innovators in all industries.

### SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM THE CROWD TO COMPETE FOR STEM TALENT

#### KNOW WHAT MATTERS TO YOUR CANDIDATE POOL



#### SPRUCE UP YOUR BUSINESS POLICIES



Develop an engaging company culture.



Focus on work-life balance.



Offer competitive pay.

Source: [Business2Community.com](#)





## MULTIDISCIPLINE

# Fulfilling visions; building trust

Bowers + Kubota Consulting has consistently ranked as a Best Firm to Work For; leaders attribute success to adherence to SWIFT principles.

By Liisa Andreassen  
Correspondent

**B**rian Bowers, president of [Bowers + Kubota Consulting](#) (Waipahu, HI), a 150-person employee-owned architectural/engineering firm, says that the firm's mission statement was not always "Fulfilling visions. Building trust;" the former mission was actually updated as a result of attending the 2014 Zweig Group Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference.

"We proudly display the Best Firms logo on our website as well as name this award in all of our job postings."

**BE SWIFT.** Originally founded as KFC Airport Inc. in 1980, the firm had an objective of providing planning, design, and construction management services for the development of airport and airport-related facilities. In 1997, the firm's president died suddenly of a heart attack on Christmas Eve. Brian Bowers and Dexter Kubota stepped up to assume leadership, drafted and implemented a strategic plan and communicated a turnaround plan and vision. Since then, the firm has grown from 10 to 150 employees and now provides services to a multitude of public and private clients throughout Hawaii and the Pacific Rim.

Superior quality, wellness, integrity, family, and teamwork (SWIFT) are the values at the heart and foundation of Bowers + Kubota. Examples of the firm's commitment to these values include:

- Employees and their families are valued and taken care of through benefits that include 100 percent company paid medical insurance, a dynamic wellness program, and twice yearly bonuses, to name a few.
- The firm strives to keep employees engaged and empowered through employee-ran committees, flex time, and monthly company events and activities, which often include families. Employees also have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge through staff in-house training, outside classes, and seminars.



**AWARD DRIVES APPLICANTS.** Amy Matsushima, HR manager at Bowers + Kubota, says that receiving the Best Firms to Work For award now and in the past has been an excellent tool for recruiting people from all over the world.

"We proudly display the Best Firm's logo on our website as well as name this award in all of our job postings," she says. "The majority of the candidates that apply and are interviewed mention seeing this award as a reason for applying."

Deane Shephard, a construction manager, has been with Bowers + Kubota for more than a decade and says that she loves the wide variety of project experiences. For instance, she has been assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the past 11 years and has built hydrant fuel systems for aircraft, taxiways for aircraft, and huge barracks renovations

See [BOWERS + KUBOTA](#), page 8

### MULTIDISCIPLINE

1. [Bowers + Kubota Consulting](#)
2. [Fitzmeyer & Tocci Associates](#)
3. [Garver](#)
4. [Parkhill, Smith & Cooper](#)
5. [Maser Consulting](#)

6. [Langan Engineering and Environmental Services](#)
7. [Kingscott Associates](#)
8. [GATE](#)
9. [Wolverton & Associates](#)

10. [Pond & Company](#)
11. [DRMP](#)
12. [SCJ Alliance](#)
13. [Mead & Hunt](#)
14. [MBP](#)

15. [LJA Engineering](#)
16. [Passero Associates](#)
17. [Arrow Engineering](#)
18. [HAKS](#)
19. [GeoDesign](#)

THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP'S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR



## ENVIRONMENTAL



# Happy employees equal happy clients

EHS Support's founders started company with goal of establishing a culture of excellence for employees and clients; Best Firm to Work For award validates that approach.

By Liisa Andreassen  
Correspondent

**E**HS Support LLC (Pittsburgh, PA), a 71-person environmental, health, and safety solutions specialist firm, is all virtual. Though it has no offices, EHS provides an exceptional work environment that rewards and fosters employee growth and development based on a strong culture driven by company values and operating principles.

Kenny Ogilvie and Andy Patz founded EHS in July 2005 with just two employees and a vision for creating "a great place to work." Under their leadership, over the past 10 years, EHS has grown to more than 70 employees, with a vision of expanding to 100-150 employees in the next three years.

**DOING THINGS BETTER.** Mindful of the issues that drove away talented employees and great clients, EHS is focused on upholding a distinct culture that guides a commitment to excellence for both employees and clients.

The vision and strategy are based on doing things better for employees and clients. EHS treats employees with respect and offers an environment for professional development, with a balance of personal growth, to achieve satisfaction in individual careers.

"When surveying our staff in 2014, the results showed that more than 90 percent of participants plan on retiring at EHS Support."

An autonomous, yet supportive, environment has cultivated a company with an entrepreneurial spirit and a loyal team.

It appears to be the unique culture of EHS that drives a vision of long-term success and company health its for employees and clients.

"The opportunity to contribute to a shared vision, at all levels of the company; the capacity for professional development that will contribute to a rewarding career as well as the success of the company; and a focus on teamwork and collaboration all impact the satisfaction level of our team," says Bethany Evans, business manager.

**GIVING PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT.** EHS employees have:

- A flexible environment with a true work-home life balance
- A compensation package that is top of the industry

See [EHS](#), page 8

### THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP'S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| 20. <a href="#">Kluber Architects + Engineers</a> | 25. <a href="#">EAPC Architects Engineers</a> | 30. <a href="#">Morrison-Maierle</a>                  | 35. <a href="#">CES</a>                  |
| 21. <a href="#">Hanson Professional Services</a>  | 26. <a href="#">Allana Buick &amp; Bers</a>   | 31. <a href="#">PDC, Engineers</a>                    | 36. <a href="#">RTM &amp; Associates</a> |
| 22. <a href="#">P2S Engineering</a>               | 27. <a href="#">Gale Associates</a>           | 32. <a href="#">Westwood Professional Services</a>    | 37. <a href="#">Michaels Energy</a>      |
| 23. <a href="#">Foresite Group</a>                | 28. <a href="#">BRPH</a>                      | 33. <a href="#">GEA Consulting Engineers</a>          | 38. <a href="#">The Vertex Companies</a> |
| 24. <a href="#">Sasaki Associates</a>             | 29. <a href="#">JBA</a>                       | 34. <a href="#">Hargrove Engineers + Constructors</a> | 39. <a href="#">CP&amp;Y</a>             |



## STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING

## Success begets success



Huckabee built on philosophy that design documents should allow for constructability and that architects, contractors, and engineers should work together for clients.

By Liisa Andreassen  
Correspondent

**H**uckabee (Fort Worth, TX), an 80-person architecture, engineering and management firm, reports that it exists to provide committed, motivated professionals with integrity the opportunity to have an impact of excellence on the communities they serve through consistent delivery of innovation, quality, and value.

**FORESIGHT TO DELIVER.** Tommie Huckabee, father of CEO Chris Huckabee, started the firm in West Texas in 1967. At the time, Tommie was working as a general contractor for his dad and had grown tired of seeing poor design documents in the field. He became an architect and built his company on the philosophy that construction documents should be designed with constructability in mind and that contractors, architects, and engineers should work closely together – ultimately benefiting the client.

This philosophy is still at the heart of what the firm does today and is also why it provides in-house structural engineering alongside architectural services.

“If our employees are happy, see the value they each provide and believe in our mission, we deliver a better product to our clients and make a greater impact on our communities.”

Jennifer Brown, chief marketing officer, says that Huckabee invests in its employees – not just in the traditional sense, but through the creation of employee programs, committees, and engagement opportunities that build camaraderie and make Huckabee a fun place to work.

“Our firm is committed to creating a collaborative work environment and finding ways for employees to interact above and beyond their day-to-day roles,” she says.

Huckabee is also dedicated to educational design, something that touches all of its staff. With 100 percent of its clients in public education, employees truly



feel they are making a difference for the teachers, students, and communities in their state.

“Our shared investment in impacting communities brings employees together and has helped build a culture of innovation and excellence,” Brown says.

**TRIPLE-PLAY ACTION.** Kim Hopper, HR director, says that, from an HR perspective, winning this award has several advantages:

- It brings a level of prestige and highlights the firm’s reputation.
- It attracts potential employees who are looking at awards and company rankings to determine who will prosper in the future.
- It can improve employee morale. When employees are proud of their company’s achievements, they will spread the word to potential new hires about the firm’s excellence. This, in turn, will continue to help the firm attract the best people in the business.

“Huckabee is the employer everybody wants to have. We have the privilege of working with the brightest professionals in the industry. Leadership truly cares about their employees’ and families’ wellbeing. And, we have Nerf wars, a corporate barista, and the coolest working environment in the business,” says Eric Ramirez, structural REVIT drafter.

**IT’S ALL CONNECTED.** Brown says that they want to

See [HUCKABEE](#), page 8

## THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP’S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR

40. [Braun Intertec Corporation](#)  
41. [R.E. Warner & Associates](#)  
42. [Wantman Group](#)  
43. [Crafton Tull](#)  
44. [BCC Engineering](#)

45. [MSA Professional Services](#)  
46. [ESI Consultants](#)  
47. [Pennoni](#)  
48. [Sam Schwartz Engineering](#)  
49. [The Thrasher Group](#)

50. [McCormick Taylor](#)  
51. [HGA](#)  
52. [HFA](#)  
53. [Trigon Associates](#)  
54. [LNV](#)

## ENVIRONMENTAL

1. [EHS Support](#)  
2. [Comprehensive Environmental](#)  
3. [BrightFields](#)  
4. [P.W. Grosser Consulting](#)

**BOWERS + KUBOTA**, from [page 5](#)

and is currently working on a flood mitigation project.

“Though many of our employees are posted on projects, the company actively plans events such as picnics, university baseball games, and hikes to bring us all together,” she says. “There are also quarterly staff meetings, and a ‘canstruction’ event to create a sculpture of canned food to raise food contributions for the Hawaii Food Bank, among many other opportunities to volunteer and have fun together.”

**A FEW OF THEIR FAVORITE THINGS.** Company perks are rich. Staff favorites include:

- For some, a company vehicle is provided. The employee selects the vehicle, and the company purchases and maintains it.
- A company-sponsored health program called Whip-It, which offers incentive prizes to employees to improve their health by exercise, healthy eating, meditation, and volunteering.
- The company pays for professional licenses and for ongoing training opportunities, which includes a bonus for passing.
- For the past three years, the company has created an employees’ stock option program, which helps employees to plan for a favorable retirement, and this is above the 401K with a matching 3 percent that is also provided.
- The vision of the company to be the very best employer.

“This last point keeps us alert to ways to improve the health and welfare of each employee and to attract the very best talent to our company, which makes us competitive in the marketplace,” Shephard says.

She adds that striving to be a Best Firm to Work For is just the right thing to do. Bowers + Kubota has worked to create a “We Company” and a culture and environment where employees can thrive and perform superior services for their clients.

“Going the extra mile and always improving both our culture and our level of services is not only what distinguishes us, but is a prerequisite for our continued success. As we create a better workplace, we also create a better community and a better world,” Shephard says. ▾

**EHS**, from [page 6](#)

- Training and mentoring opportunities
- The ability to participate in various professional and social groups within the company.

“Our exclusive 100 percent virtual structure, commitment to impeccable client service, consider-it-done attitude, and commitment to the communities in which we live and work set us apart from most firms in our class – allowing us to deliver results and exceed expectations,” Evans says.

Senior leadership at EHS believes that you must love what you do in order to make your role within a company worthwhile. They support that by offering employees opportunities in areas they would like to pursue and have a passion for – whether that is a new client, project, relocation to work in a different market, or additional responsibilities in line with the growth strategy of the firm.

“When surveying our staff in 2014, the results showed that more than 90 percent of participants plan on retiring at EHS Support,” Evans reports. “We are very proud of this statistic, and it speaks to the organization that we have built.”

Beth Hesse joined EHS in 2011 and says that the people she works with are what really makes the firm the best.

“It’s such a unique and remarkable firm,” Hesse says. “Beyond the technical and managerial expertise, which we have, the people and the culture drive the success of our company. We all want to come to work each day, and each day we put our best foot forward. My coworkers help motivate me and hold me accountable, thus enabling me to become more than I ever dreamt possible on my own. We do this for each other. We do it for our clients. EHS Support has the best people, period.”

**THIS AWARD SERVES AS VALIDATION FOR EHS.** “As the only virtual environmental consultancy, it demonstrates that providing a rewarding and fun place to work is possible and successful,” Evans says. “As we continue to recruit the best in the business, this award will serve as a constant reminder of our ongoing commitment to our clients, current employees, and future employees.” ▾

**HUCKABEE**, from [page 7](#)

retain top talent and create an environment that makes them want to stay at Huckabee for life.

“If our employees are happy, see the value they each provide and believe in our mission, we deliver a better product to our clients and make a greater impact on our communities,” she says.

For example, Huckabee is a charitable organization that gives through a donor-advised fund and encourages employees to actively give back through volunteering or providing leadership on boards and committees. A shared interest in philanthropy has brought employees together to organize supply drives, renovate homes, and raise funds for local nonprofits.

Potential clients often make hiring decisions based on a firm’s reputation.

“When clients see that we’ve won an award like this, it speaks to our stability, quality of our team, and strength in our industry,” Brown says. “Also, winning this award will help us continue to recruit highly-qualified employees looking for a company that is a leader in their field and a great place to work.” ▾

**THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP’S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR**

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| 5. <a href="#">Rincon Consultants</a>                 | 10. <a href="#">Barr Engineering Company</a>        | 1. <a href="#">Choice One Engineering</a>      | 6. <a href="#">A. Morton Thomas and Associates</a>          |
| 6. <a href="#">TerraTherm</a>                         | 11. <a href="#">Epsilon Associates</a>              | 2. <a href="#">Bowers + Kubota Consulting</a>  | 7. <a href="#">Provost &amp; Pritchard Consulting Group</a> |
| 7. <a href="#">Capaccio Environmental Engineering</a> | 12. <a href="#">E2 ManageTech</a>                   | 3. <a href="#">Comprehensive Environmental</a> | 8. <a href="#">Delta Airport Consultants</a>                |
| 8. <a href="#">Envirocon</a>                          | 13. <a href="#">Partner Engineering and Science</a> | 4. <a href="#">Finley Engineering Group</a>    | 9. <a href="#">P.W. Grosser Consulting</a>                  |
| 9. <a href="#">Nova Consulting Group</a>              | <b>CIVIL ENGINEERING</b>                            | 5. <a href="#">Affinis Corp.</a>               | 10. <a href="#">Kjeldsen Sinnock &amp; Neudeck</a>          |





## CIVIL ENGINEERING



# Making lives better

Choice One's founders sought to provide employees with stable, enjoyable workplace with individual responsibilities and opportunities.

By Liisa Andreassen  
Correspondent

**K**aye Borchers, client relations/funding specialist at [Choice One Engineering Corporation](#) (Sidney, OH), a 33-person civil engineering firm, says that the firm's mission is "to provide a fulfilling life for a lifetime by making lives better with an enjoyable experience."

"Because of our culture, our clients often tell us that they enjoy working with us, and so not only are we providing a quality place to work, but we are improving the lives of our clients with happy, productive employees responding to our needs."

Founded by Tony Schroeder, Tom Coverstone, Jeff Puthoff, Sharon Maurice, and Brian Barhorst, Choice One was created in 1994 to:

- provide a stable place to work
- enjoy work
- provide responsibility and opportunity to its employees

**DRINK THE COLA** "We also connect with people who

expect responsiveness, who are looking for a firm that makes their jobs easier, and who are counting on a firm to offer the peace of mind that a project is going to be taken care of," Borchers says.

Over the past few years, Choice One has created initiatives that are geared to meeting its mission. For example, it has implemented Choice One Learning Academy (COLA), based on employee feedback to help all employees learn more about their work and that of others.

"We teach and attend classes designed around software, communication, and constructability," she says.

Choice One has also created and fostered a culture that allows all employees to feel comfortable as leaders and contributors. Here are just two ways that they do this:

- In place of traditional performance reviews are now "Enjoyment Checkups." They take place twice a year and measure adherence and commitment to core values and work on developing leadership plans that confirm that the employee's performance and responsibilities align with the strategic plan priority issues. For 2015-2017, priorities include: "Get More Work," "Get More Work Done," and "Enhance Culture."
- The "Choice One Great Game" is a type of open-book management. The goal is to improve business results and the lives of the people who drive those results. The strategy behind it is to create a "company of busi-

See [CHOICE ONE](#), page 10

### THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP'S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| 11. <a href="#">Barr Engineering Company</a>        | 16. <a href="#">R.A. Smith National</a>          | 21. <a href="#">McMahon Associates</a>              | 26. <a href="#">BKF Engineers</a>                             |
| 12. <a href="#">West Yost Associates</a>            | 17. <a href="#">Wolverton &amp; Associates</a>   | 22. <a href="#">SCJ Alliance</a>                    | 27. <a href="#">EMCS</a>                                      |
| 13. <a href="#">Criado &amp; Associates</a>         | 18. <a href="#">McAdams</a>                      | 23. <a href="#">LJA Engineering</a>                 | 28. <a href="#">Gunda Corporation</a>                         |
| 14. <a href="#">Calibre Engineering</a>             | 19. <a href="#">Simpson Gumpertz &amp; Heger</a> | 24. <a href="#">Thomas &amp; Hutton Engineering</a> | 29. <a href="#">Geotechnical &amp; Environmental Services</a> |
| 15. <a href="#">J.L. Patterson &amp; Associates</a> | 20. <a href="#">Slater Hanifan Group</a>         | 25. <a href="#">AE2S</a>                            |   |

CHOICE ONE, from [page 9](#)

nesspeople” who “think, act, and feel” like owners. It provides a stake in the outcome and shows people exactly how they can make a difference.

**HELPING HR.** Mitch Thobe, one of the firm’s 11 owners, has been with the company for five years. For the past three, he has been tasked with recruiting college co-ops and helping leadership recruit, interview, and hire new employees.

“The competition for our company to attract ‘A’ players is becoming progressively more challenging due to the ever growing competition of more and more companies looking to hire interns and full-time staff,” Thobe says. “When a job seeker sees Choice One Engineering as being the No. 1 Civil Engineering firm to work for in the nation, it instantly catches their interest and communicates our commitment to our employees.”

Additionally, Thobe says that they are fortunate enough to have a culture worthy of award to publicize to universities and career-development networks.

Allen Bertke has been a project manager in the survey department for nine years. He says that Choice One is his “second family.”

“Coming into the office is not work – instead it’s been my home away from home for the last nine years. Everyone has a role in our extended family, and, because of this, we are able to provide the best experiences for our customers. Each employee is empowered to make a difference, which makes Choice One better each and every day.”

Choice One takes a personable approach to civil engineering because its leaders think surveying, civil engineering, and the service opportunities they provide can be really fun – as in satisfying, enjoyable, and fulfilling.

“Because of our culture, our clients often tell us that they enjoy working with us, and so, not only are we providing a quality place to work, but we are improving the lives of our clients with happy, productive employees responding to our needs,” Bertke says.

**ALL ABOARD.** In 2014, Choice One made strides in developing a representative organizational chart that truly identifies the roles and relations of each employee; it’s represented as a train.

“The engineer (no pun intended) driving the train is our president,” Borchers says. “His role is to guide the company strategically. Trains can’t be turned on a dime, and neither can strategy. Strategy is looking ahead to the future and making slow adjustments that result in big changes over time.”

The caboose is their chief production officer. The CPO views the train from the rear, overseeing production and the workings of the entire train. He or she can see the entire company from its final product and can direct the people in the cars in front to adjust to make the train more efficient as it moves along its track.

The rest of the staff fills the train cars. Each department has a developer who oversees the educational, professional, and fundamental development of the employees in his/her department. Engineers and designers have specialties (e.g., site plans, roadway reconstruction), as do business development/marketing personnel (e.g., graphic designers, grant writers, client relations specialists) and so on.

“Most notable is the flatness of the organization. There is no hierarchy in the company. In this way, we are accompany of leaders. During a typical day, an employee might have three different ‘bosses’ and actually might switch roles performing as a ‘boss’ of someone who is his/her ‘boss’ in a different situation. We, therefore, remove the ‘boss’ idea from our language and call everyone ‘leaders,’” Borchers explains.

**THE BOTTOM LINE.** Choice One wants to change the way that people do business in the industry (and the world, if it can)! ▀



## GOOD TO KNOW


Zweig Group’s Best Firms to Work For award recognizes the top architecture, structural engineering, civil engineering, environmental, and multidiscipline firms in the U.S. and Canada based on their workplace practices, employee benefits, employee retention rates, and more.

Participating in the award process is an effective and efficient way for firms to gain employee insight – all participating organizations receive a summary report of their employees’ survey responses and a report containing valuable benchmarking data from all firms in their submission category.

The award process was upgraded this year to a mobile-friendly platform for a better and more streamlined user-experience.


## Application process:

 **Step 1:** Firms register online and pay an application fee for each desired entry category.

 **Step 2:** Firms complete the corporate survey, which includes questions about the organization and structure that should be answered from a management point of view by someone with access to financial and policy information.


 **Step 3:** Firms receive a link to the anonymous employee survey, which they share with employees.

*Firms with 25 employees or more must have at least 25 percent of their staff complete the survey. Firms with less than 25 employees, must have at least 40 percent of their staff complete the employee survey.*


 **Step 4:** The two surveys are graded and combined to determine a final score.


 **Step 5:** Firms register for the Hot Firm and A/E Industry Awards Conference.


## Entrants receive:

 A summary from firms’ employee surveys and an aggregate benchmark summary from all participating firms in the submittal categories.

## Entry Criteria:

 At least 40 percent of 2014 fiscal year gross revenue must have been derived from the selected discipline category.

 Public entities, such as departments of transportation or municipal public works offices, are not eligible.

 Firms must have a minimum of 10 full-time employees, with at least five design or engineering professionals.

## THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP’S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR

30. [The Blueline Group](#)31. [R&M Consultants](#)32. [Foresite Group](#)33. [Schnabel Engineering](#)34. [Traffic Planning and Design](#)35. [Frank Surveying](#)36. [DH Charles Engineering](#)37. [Process Plus](#)38. [Jones & Carter](#)39. [Hattenburg, Dillely, & Linnell](#)40. [Wallace, Montgomery & Associates](#)41. [EMC Engineering Services](#)42. [Chen Moore & Associates](#)43. [Draper Aden Associates](#)44. [Gomez and Sullivan Engineers](#)45. [Trigon Associates](#)46. [W.K. Dickson & Co.](#)**ARCHITECTURE**1. [The Collaborative](#)2. [Randall-Paulson Architects](#)



## ARCHITECTURE

# Stretching limits

The Collaborative strives for constant improvement through recruitment, retention, a commitment to excellence, and constantly seeking new ways to impress clients.

By Liisa Andreassen  
Correspondent

**T**eamwork is its guiding principle. And the name – [The Collaborative Inc.](#) – is a literal reflection of how this firm came to be and continues to operate. Based in Toledo, Ohio, this 45-person architectural and design firm is a fellowship of diverse design professionals committed to:

- creating environments of excellence and distinction that enrich the human experience
- exceeding client expectations
- thriving on team relationships
- fostering environmental stewardship
- enhancing the value of the organization

In the late 1960s, three design firms worked together on a major resort in Durango, Colorado. In the 1970s, their client decided to develop a second resort north of Tampa, Florida, and the three companies opted to merge together to facilitate design and coordinate efforts. In 1973, The Collaborative was born.

“We are always striving to be better, to retain and recruit exceptional talent, and to find ways to continuously impress our clients. The principals of the firm are true leaders and mentors. They lead by example and encourage the betterment of the employees.”

**IT TAKES A VILLAGE.** Brook Jones, director of marketing and perceptions, says that the firm has gradually matured into a recognized multi-disciplined practice that is known for its design excellence, client service, and an innovative management style.

“We are always striving to be better, to retain and recruit exceptional talent, and to find ways to continuously impress our clients,” she says. “The



principals of the firm are true leaders and mentors. They lead by example and encourage the betterment of the employees. The strong emphasis on culture reflects throughout our internal and external firm perception. We are “The Collaborative” – one firm comprised of multiple talents, varying personalities, and collective passion for incomparable design.”

The Collaborative’s principals are dedicated to the well-being of its employees. They are a family; they work hard and play hard as a team. In addition to the already generous benefits, the attention paid to extra benefits and professional training out-shines most other companies of the same size. For example, each employee is given an AAA membership annually.

“As The Collaborative pursues a growth strategy, by opening new offices and recruiting talent, the Best

See [THE COLLABORATIVE](#), page 12

### THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP'S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR

3. [Huckabee](#)
4. [FKP Architects](#)
5. [English + Associates Architects](#)
6. [JLG Architects](#)
7. [KSQ Architects](#)

8. [EAPC Architects Engineers](#)
9. [SHP Leading Design](#)
10. [ROSSETTI](#)
11. [Cuhaci & Peterson Architects](#)
12. [Bergland & Cram Architects](#)

13. [McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture](#)
- STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING**
1. [Huckabee](#)
  2. [Mulhern & Kulp Structural Engineering](#)

3. [Hinman Consulting Engineers](#)
4. [Barrish Pelham & Associates](#)
5. [SidePlate Systems](#)
6. [KL&A](#)
7. [Ehlert/Bryan](#)



## THE COLLABORATIVE, from [page 11](#)

Firm to Work For award will bolster our national reach. In addition to recruitment of talent, the award acts as a reminder to our current employees of the incredible culture and firm they are helping to build. Retaining current talent is at the forefront of our future strategies,” Jones says.

**WHAT ARE “COLLABORATORS” SAYING?** Audie Bates, architect and senior professional, has worked for the company for eight years. He says that they provide a flexible environment to take calculated risks, work independently within set parameters, and challenging opportunities to stretch limits beyond one’s comfort zone.

“The camaraderie resembles family rivalry with a desire to support one another in efforts in place of the anticipated ladder-climbing competition found in architectural firms of similar size. Other design firms are highly risk-averse, and the environment stifles innovation, exploration, and discovery; all of the key elements required for award-winning design and creativity. This makes The Collaborative an exciting and enjoyable environment to develop a career,” he says.

Keith Rousseau, architect and principal, joined the firm 18 years ago, when he was in college.

“I stayed here because of the care that was shown towards advancing my career. That experience, working beside senior leaders who went out of their way to provide insight and opportunities for professional growth, was invaluable. This award celebrates and promotes the value that The Collaborative has, for so many years, placed on mentoring, professional enrichment, work-life balance, and the culture that makes us so unique. It provides us with additional validation that should prove beneficial as we continue to seek out and recruit talented and top-tier professionals at multiple office locations,” he says.

Jones adds that the Best Firms to Work For award provides proof that what the employees declare, is actually true.

“Announcing this award to potential, future collaborators at career fairs and social media outlets will build buzz around our firm. At the very least, the new recruits will wonder: ‘What’s so special about The Collaborative?’ I say: ‘Come on by, and you’ll see!’”



## GOOD TO KNOW

Past top-ranking Best Firms to Work For have included:

### 2014

■ **Architecture:** [Davis Bews Design Group Inc.](#)

■ **Civil Engineering:** [Bowers + Kubota Consulting Inc.](#)

■ **Environmental:** [EHS Support](#)

■ **Multidiscipline:** [Bowers + Kubota Consulting Inc.](#)

■ **Structural Engineering:** [Hinman Consulting Engineers Inc.](#)

### 2013

■ **Architecture:** [Davis Bews Design Group Inc.](#)

■ **Civil Engineering:** [Affinis Corp.](#)

■ **Environmental:** [Comprehensive Environmental Inc.](#)

■ **Multidiscipline:** [Bowers + Kubota Consulting Inc.](#)

■ **Structural Engineering:** [Barrish Pelham & Associates Inc.](#)

### 2012

■ **Architecture:** [ACAI Associates Inc.](#)

■ **Civil Engineering:** [Bowers + Kubota Consulting Inc.](#)

■ **Environmental:** [Hodges, Harbin, Newberry & Tribble Inc.](#)

■ **Multidiscipline:** [GATE Inc.](#)

■ **Structural Engineering:** [Degenkolb Engineers](#)

## APPRECIATED PERKS IN OUR INDUSTRY

Respondents to Zweig Group’s [2015 Policies, Procedures & Benefits Survey of A/E/P and Environmental Firms](#) were asked if their organizations provided any special benefits that employees especially appreciated. Responses included\*:



**Vacation/tip off/trips:**

84 percent



**Social events/celebrations:**

79 percent



**Work remotely/from home (telecommute):** 70 percent



**Breakfasts/lunches/free food:**

50 percent



**Fitness/wellness benefits:**

46 percent



**Financial benefits:**

45 percent



**Tickets/passes to events:**

26 percent



**Parking/transportation:**

23 percent

Some participants elaborated on the special benefits offered by their firms:

### Vacation/time off/trips:



Flexible work hours or time off for family



Paid time off to participate in community service



“In good years, we send one employee to Italy for study

### Social events/celebrations:



Bicycle tune-up benefit event

### Fitness/wellness:



On-site biometric screenings and health risk assessments



On-site flu vaccination program



On-site gym



Patient advocacy program to assist with healthcare management

### Financial



Financial wellness program



Licensing cost-sharing



Professional education reimbursement

### Other



9/80 work schedule, with every other Friday off



Casual dress policy



Employee assistance program



Employee recognition program

\*Totals sum to more than 100 because answer choices were not mutually exclusive.

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION!



What are you most looking forward to at #HotFirm2015? Tweet us @ZweigLetter and/or @ZweigGroup, and come to the conference ready to live-tweet along!

## THE COMPLETE LIST OF ZWEIG GROUP'S 2015 BEST FIRMS TO WORK FOR

8. [Cornerstone Structural Engineering Group](#)

9. [GACE CoConsulting Engineers](#)

10. [Simpson Gumpertz & Heger](#)

11. [Baldrige & Associates](#)

12. [Reaveley Engineers + Associates](#)

13. [Eclipse Engineering](#)

14. [DH Charles Engineering](#)

15. [Beaudette Consulting Engineers](#)

16. [PES Structural Engineers](#)

17. [O'Donnell & Naccarato](#)

18. [Jaster-Quintanilla](#)

19. [Bliss & Nyitray](#)