

Editorial | Like A Flight of Geese

By John A. Mercer, P.E., SECB



I am sure you have seen a gaggle of geese flying in a “V” formation. The lead goose creates an “aerodynamic draft” for the other geese in the flight enabling them to fly farther. He expends his energy fighting headwinds to create the draft while the other geese in the flight honk, encouraging the lead goose along their journey. From time to time the lead goose will fall back into the “V” and honk to encourage another goose taking the lead position.

As the soon to be Past Chair of CASE, I will be dropping back into the flight, to honk encouragement for our new Chair, Andy Rauch of BKBM from Minneapolis, MN. Andy will become CASE Chair for 2013-2015 at the conclusion of the ACEC Annual Convention the end of this month. CASE is all about the **business of the structural engineering** and Andy is going to be a great leader.

CASE recently held its Winter Planning Meeting preceding the NCSEA Leadership Forum in Tucson, AZ. A round table discussion kicked off the CASE meeting, with several discussion topics including: reduction in cost of professional liability insurance, design-build issues, social media and the use within firms. One participant expressed how great it was to “*be able to sit among fellow structural engineers and openly discuss internal business issues and challenges.*”

The following day, CASE held its committee meetings to continue developing, updating, and improving CASE products supporting *Best Business Practices and Risk Management Enhancement* for CASE firm members. Watch for new and updated publications later this year from CASE.

As one of the 57 attendees of NCSEA’s two day Winter Leadership Forum, I had the privilege to hear the guest speakers make presentations on the following topics:

Kelly Riggs discussed **Winning Business in a Losing Economy**. Kelly’s take away is that we all look alike to the buyer and will likely be selected on price instead of capability or quality of service. He discussed strategies that we can use to overcome the price mentality.

Scott Braley’s presentation was entitled **Key Financial Indicators for Leading Your Firm to Success**. One take away was, profits will depend more on productivity than on support from the economy.

Kelly returned kicking off the afternoon with **Coaching for Leaders: Transforming Potential into Performance**. One quote I wrote down was, “you can’t be efficient with people, you can be effective with people”.

Glenn Bell, CEO of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, kicked off day two of the Winter Leadership Forum with a presentation **Developing the Next Generation of Structural Engineers** looking towards the future out to 2050.

The forthcoming challenges for US engineers will include global

population growth to a projected 9 billion people, a shift in primary global languages putting Chinese and Arabic on top, pushing English lower on the list, the need to maximize resource utilization, and realities of nature, e.g. global warming. A take away from Glenn’s presentation is, “will you be relevant in the future”?

Ben Nelson & Martin & Martin spoke about **Establishing a Successful Structural Engineering Training Program**. This was followed by two presentations by Jon Stigliano, **Top 10 Keys to Managing Multiple Deadlines & Expectations**, and **8 Actions to Get People Goal Directed, Self-Motivated and Engaged in the Relentless Pursuit of Excellence**.

NCSEA’s excellent program is just a taste of the upcoming ACEC 2013 Annual Convention and Legislative Summit in Washington DC, April 21-24. If you were excited by speakers at the NCSEA Leadership Forum, you will be totally inspired by the ACEC Convention. They have one day of round tables based on firm size addressing HR, M&A, Finance, Legal, and other issues, and three days of nationally acclaimed speakers on a multitude of relevant business issues. This year’s convention will feature Geoff Colvin, *Fortune* speaking on “Outpacing Business Trends” and Chuck Todd from NBC News will talk about “Battleground Politics.” I would encourage you to consider attending. (www.acec.org/conferences/annual-13/index.cfm)

Structural engineers are best equipped to provide vision, insight, and innovation into the problems our nation faces going forward. As trusted advisors, our honesty and integrity, lacking in so many other professions, gives structural engineers a solid foundation from which to launch a regime of initiatives to make significant contributions to society. We each have the opportunity to make a significant contribution to sustainability of our infrastructure, our resources, and mankind. It is in our culture to do so.

As my swan song editorial, I would like to express my appreciation to everyone that made it possible for me to Chair CASE for the past 3 years. I would like to thank the leadership and staff of ACEC/CASE, NCSEA, and ASCE/SEI for their willingness to cooperate and coordinate the activities of the three organizations.

I have been a proponent of participative membership in one or more of our 3 organizations. I envision the three Organizations like a 3-legged stool, CASE/NCSEA/SEI = Best Business Practice & Risk Management/Technical Practice/Technical Codes, providing a stable foundation for the future practice of structural engineering.

I will now drop back in the flight with honks of encouragement to our incoming CASE Chair, Andy Rauch. ■



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