

Editorial | How to Have a Happy and Prosperous 2013

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



If the title of this editorial didn't catch your eye, you must have skipped a few pages. Truthfully, I wish for all structural engineering firms to have a Culture that exudes harmony and happiness for owners and staff, as well as their clients. Probably one of the most important traits of a firm's culture is the way in which staff communicates with one another and with clients.

A recent conversation comes to mind that I had with the General Manager of a local sandwich shop that I frequent for lunch. Chris was behind the counter helping make sandwiches and I told him how good it was to see him working *for a change*. He grinned and said that he was filling in for one of the guys they moved up to manage one of their other stores in town. They manage twelve stores and this one is by far the most friendly and profitable.

Chris stated that his goal is "to train" new staff in our South Broadway store and then transfer them with 'this store's culture' to our other stores to make them more appealing to customers, as well as more profitable. "Customer loyalty is what they are actually trying to achieve. "You can get a fresh baked bread, meat, cheese, and veggies sandwich almost anywhere, but getting the customer to return is where the real value lies. Having a happy crew makes managing easier too."

I think there is a message for us in that experience. How are you contributing to the culture in your firm? How do you see yourself with your colleagues? Do you treat them in the same way you expect to be treated? There are probably enough problems and situations that require staff time and patience. Problems create stress for all staff, so what can you contribute to lighten their load?

Just smiling while you drive to work in the morning can be the beginning of a great day. I recall noticing people smiling in their cars as they passed by me each morning. One day I intentionally made the effort to smile as I was driving. Again I noticed people smiling, but also the one's frowning as they passed by. It really gave me a new perspective. I made it my goal to encourage one person to smile each day, just by smiling as I drove by them.

2013 is going to provide many challenges and opportunities for our structural engineering community. My wish is that all structural engineering firms and structural engineers will step up to those challenges, seek out the opportunities and be prosperous in doing so.

The Council of "AMERICAN" Structural Engineers has a Risk Management Program built upon 10 Foundations. CASE's first foundation for Risk Management is "Culture". CASE member firms have the

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opportunity to provide leadership that will pilot our country, communities, and clients into the deep-water channels of prosperity. I challenge CASE members to seize that opportunity!

Looking forward, CASE will be having its 2013 Winter Planning Meeting preceding the NCSEA Winter Leadership Forum. I hope to see you there. I always look forward to visiting with CASE members and discussing the current issues that firms are dealing with around the country. Be sure to mark your calendars: March 5-6, 2013 at the Westin La Paloma Resort, Tucson, AZ.

Likewise, CASE is a coalition under the American Council of Engineering Companies, ACEC. The ACEC Spring Annual meeting will be held in Washington DC on April 21-24, 2013. That is where Structural Engineers can participate in going up on the Hill to lobby their Congressional Delegations on issues affecting engineering businesses. Our congressional delegations truly need our assistance in understanding the technical complexities facing our nation. Mark your calendars, and make plans to attend and participate. Network with the other ACEC Coalitions as well.

The 2013 CASE Convocation will be held at the SEI Structures Congress on May 3, 2013 in Pittsburgh, PA (Westin Convention Center). Plan to attend.

Finally, you are in control of your firm's culture, including your attitude. What is your attitude going to be in 2013? Is your glass half full, or half empty? It's up to you to be a happy team member. If you can achieve that, prosperity will follow. Good luck. I hope to see you at the CASE Winter Planning Meeting, the NCSEA Winter Leadership Forum, and the CASE Convocation at the Structures Congress.

Join CASE, get a CULTURE, and plan to PROSPER! ■



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