

Editorial | "If It's Not One Thing, It's Another.... But It's Always Something"

By Ben Nelson, P.E., SECB, NCSEA President



In the immortal words of the late great American philosopher, Roseanne Rosannadanna (Gilda Radner), "If it's not one thing, it's another...but it's always something." How many times did Rosanne Rosannadanna express her off-kilter philosophy on Saturday Night Live and make you think, 'wow, she really is onto something!'

I couldn't help but smile last week and flash back to Ms. Rosannadanna when I overheard two recently hired young engineers talking in the office. They were both quite animated, if not exasperated, about some upcoming changes to the International Building Code we discussed in one of our Monday lunchtime classes. The training focused on yet another round of revisions to the IBC-2012 and one young engineer said to the other, "How do you keep up with the never ending revisions to the building code?" The other engineer didn't miss a beat and responded to him quite seriously, "Yea, if it's not one thing, it's another....but it's always something".

When I heard his response, I started to chuckle and asked him if he was a Rosanne Rosannadanna fan; and he had no idea of whom I was asking. I clearly have passed into the 'older' generation within my firm. However, that was just the start of our discussion, which lasted into the afternoon. Following much dialog, these two young engineers expressed to me what is resonating around the country with countless others. Young engineers graduating into their structural engineering careers have a lot to think about.

- How do you keep up with endless revisions to the various building codes and design standards?
- How do you learn the ins and outs of the building code, much less all the material specific codes and standards?
- How do you learn to model a building, when the most exposure you had in school was limited to elements and portions of buildings and not much with modeling an overall building?
- How do I become proficient in BIM without losing sight of basic structural engineering theory and application through calculations?
- How can I gain sufficient engineering expertise in order to pass the PE exam in another three or four years?
- How can I best prepare for taking the PE exam?
- How do I learn about what NOT to do and not repeat the mistakes of others?
- How do I know what I'm doing is right?
- How do I know whether to take the 8 hour PE exam or the 16 hour SE-1/SE-2 exam?

Fortunately for these young engineers and for all practicing structural engineers around the country, they are not alone in their desire

to advance their learning in their careers. NCSEA advocates for the practicing structural engineer, and one way in which we accomplish this is to provide exemplary continuing education and training opportunities that combine the technical and practical applications-oriented nature of a topic. Whether they are newly hired Engineering Interns, mid level Professional Engineers, Senior Project Managers, or even seasoned Principal Engineers, NCSEA focuses on fulfilling needs of the practicing structural engineer.

The continuing education opportunities that NCSEA presents are wide-ranging and offered in several learning environments. They are taught by the best of the best practicing structural engineers. They come in the form of live webinars, multiple-day conferences, training-certification classes, practical publications, and short course review training for taking the SE-1 and SE-2 NCEES tests.

Each of these training opportunities shares resources of NCSEA staff and is created within one of many NCSEA sub-committees that pool our collective national talent. There are NCSEA learning opportunities that actually address each of the earlier young engineers' questions.

NCSEA's continuing education does not solely focus on younger engineers but also addresses needs of 'more seasoned' staff in effectively managing one's practice. Beginning next year, NCSEA is building on the success of the technically-oriented NCSEA Annual Conference and evolving the focus of our companion conference (NCSEA Winter Institute) into becoming the NCSEA Winter Leadership Meeting.

Mark your calendars to attend the upcoming NCSEA Winter Leadership Meeting at the Westin La Paloma Resort in Tucson on March 7-8, 2013. There, you will learn management-level tips for developing the next generation of future leaders in your firm, coaching for mentoring, establishing an effective training program in your firm, how to avoid making the big mistakes when making choices in this soft economy, and share in exciting roundtable discussions with your results-oriented peers around the country.

The NCSEA Winter Leadership Meeting will offer 16 hours of learning and sharing the strategies of success. I fully expect our attendees will come away thinking like Rosanne Rosannadanna, and perhaps add a few of their own zany side-bar stories. I hope to see you in Tucson in March 7-8, 2013 where we can all learn, "if it's not one thing, it's another.... but it's always something!" ■



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Westin La Paloma Resort in Tucson, Arizona, March 7-8, 2013