



The Council of American Structural Engineers is the premiere organization for principals of structural engineering firms. Twenty four years of seniority in *Best Business Practices* and the recently added *Risk Management Practices* has been a guiding light for structural engineering firms across the nation and across the world.

This editorial is all about your membership and an effort to clarify the “what” each of the three organizations contribute to the structural engineering community. It will paint a picture of WIIFM (what’s in it for me) for practicing structural engineers and firm principals.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) is the most senior of organizations. Most structural engineers have been members at one time or another in their career. ASCE supports the Structural Engineering Institute (SEI). SEI has the goal of supporting structural engineers globally with their Codes and Standards committees, clearly a labor of many dedicated professionals from academia to the young structural in their first job out of school. Without the Standards crafted by SEI members, our structural engineering design community would be in turmoil.

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) is an engineering business organization that supports the Council of American Structural Engineers or CASE. It has been the goal of CASE to positively impact the bottom line of the structural engineering firm from its outset. They accomplish this by developing contracts, practice guidelines and tools for firms to minimize professional liability insurance premiums, and assisting firms to develop a culture of risk management and best business practices. CASE promotes these practices by encouraging firms to become engaged with the *Ten Foundations of Risk Management*. Structural engineers who are firm principals and who may be on the fast track to exciting management positions will find CASE membership a positive and powerful step in their career paths.

The National Council of Structural Engineering Associations (NCSEA) is the youngest of the organizations and represents a compilation of state Structural Engineering Associations (SEA’s). “Their goal has been to constantly improve the level of standard of technical practice of the structural engineering profession throughout the U.S.” NCSEA has developed a library of training webinars that can enrich the structural engineer’s knowledge of technical issues in the practice of structural engineering.

The stability of the structural engineering profession will depend upon the continued support of these three organizations, and their maintaining a focus on the above described

areas of competence. Like a three-legged stool, each leg needs to be strong. Each organization and its leadership will, hopefully, continue to support their competencies and not venture beyond their area of expertise, attempting to be all things to all structural engineers. Quite an impossibility.

So, what’s in it for you? I am hoping that as you read this editorial and STRUCTURE® magazine, you will begin to formulate an image of where you fit into the bigger picture of the structural engineering community. It doesn’t matter if you are the newest hire at a large structural engineering firm or, perhaps with the downsizing of the recent past, you have decided to venture out on your own and begin your own structural engineering practice, there is a place for you to belong and participate.

As Chair of CASE, I would like to direct a few thoughts to those of you that have decided to venture out on your own, either by yourself or with partners, to create a new firm. The economy has been down considerably but, as I hear from my CASE colleagues, there are signs it is beginning to slowly recover.

If you have had management experience in your prior employment and have all of the contracts and guidelines of practice memorized, you probably have a good start. However, as in all things, the business world rotates and things change. You will need a way to stay up to date with current Best Business Practices, and perhaps add a Risk Management component into your practice.

ACEC, as the mother ship to CASE, has some exciting things presently going on and evolving, to assist firms of all sizes and disciplines. New coalitions have been formulated that will facilitate enrichment of relationships between the engineering disciplines. Best teaming arrangements will be a result. Participating coalition members will have a better understanding of the scopes of work of their colleagues on projects and how they can synergistically interact to improve the bottom lines of all team members, thereby enhancing Risk Management for all.

I would like to personally invite those of you who are serious about the business of structural engineering to attend the ACEC Fall Conference to be held in Boca Raton, Florida beginning October 14, 2012. CASE and other coalitions will have sessions at the conference and will look forward to your attendance. To check it out, please go to www.acec.org and consider attending.

In today’s world, structural engineers are only good because of “what” and “who” they know. Come join us and participate! See you in Boca. ■



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