



Field Notes

From the Chairman: Surveying Change or Change Surveying

Tim Cawood, McKim & Creed

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results—that’s how Albert Einstein defined Insanity. Wow! Are they coming to take you away?

People don’t like change. We are creatures of habit and comfort and change requires risk, uncertainty, stress and hard work. But guess what? The AE industry, *especially* surveying, has and is changing at a dramatic pace. For those of you/us who refuse to change, hoping that things will eventually get back to the way they used to be, well, good luck. I for one don’t see it.

In our last newsletter, I stated that I thought that the AE had hit the bottom and was on its way to recovery. I still believe that, albeit, very, very slowly. Although we will recover, things will never be as they were; not necessarily worse or better, just different.

At this point you are probably thinking this is a terribly negative message. Sorry, that is not my intention. This is not about doom and gloom, but about **opportunity**. But in order to take advantage of these opportunities, change may be required.

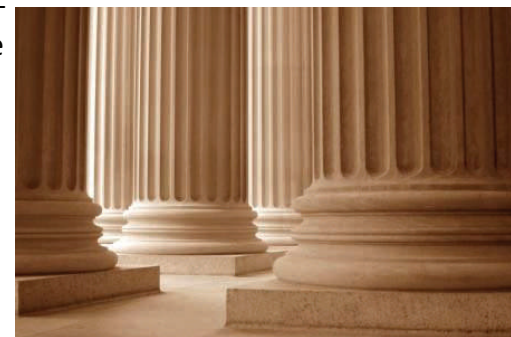
There are 2 major reasons for the drastic change in our industry. They are technology and market, more specifically the private residential development market.

Markets

The residential market requires a large amount of surveying. When booming, developers have big dollars invested, the survey work is fast and furious, and profitable. I’ve heard of a firm in Florida that had 15 survey crews all working within 30 miles of their office on large residential developments.

Not anymore.

That residential survey market is all but gone and the little work that is there is highly competitive. Based on what I have seen and heard over the last 6 months, survey groups that are in the federal market and firms that are in the energy market are doing better than most. Other markets that should pick up sooner are transportation and infrastructure and asset management data collection. Consider diversifying into these markets.



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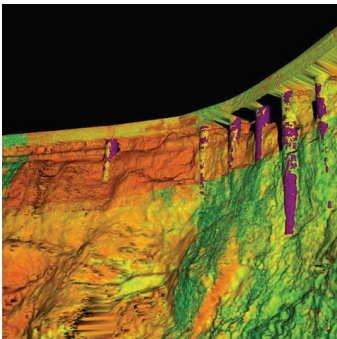
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Looking for information to help your firm?

Check out the COPS Members Only site for templates, guides and contracts!



From the Chairman (cont...)



Technology

Technology has always been a catalyst for change in the surveying industry and in some respects is a double edged sword. New technology allows us to do the job better and faster with fewer people, but being good surveyors and terrible business people we resist value pricing our work.

We now have Virtual Reference Networks established in most states. There are robotic total stations, GPS/laser machine control, 3D Laser Scanning and now (holy mackerel!), mobile laser scanning which collects survey data from a vehicle while driving at the posted speed limit. A PLS that finds him/herself out of work can purchase a robotic total station and VRS compatible GPS and **compete** with the larger survey firms as a one man crew.



Concerning? Yes. Reality? **Yes.**

The technology works, it is not going away.

If your firm has a survey group or you are primarily a survey firm, in my opinion, you must consider change. Find your niche markets and invest in some of the new and exciting technology begin to build back your survey revenues and profits.

By the way, if your firm has surveying and even if you don't have surveying but hire surveyors from time to time consider joining the **COPS** coalition. We can help you help yourself by providing you as members, products, education, support, and networking opportunities that can help you in these changing times.

COPS Membership Renewals

Membership invoices are now due. Get your payment in now to ensure you are receiving your full COPS Membership benefits. We hope you will choose to continue your membership—we have a lot of exciting opportunities coming up this year!

If you have any questions or concerns about your membership or need a fresh copy of your invoice, please contact COPS Executive Director Heather Talbert at htalbert@acec.org or 202-682-4377.

**COPS New
2010-2011
Members!**

**M.J. Engineering And Land Surveying, P.C.
David Evans and Associates, Inc.
Vaughn & Melton Consulting Engineers
Psomas**

FALL CONFERENCE WRAP UP

Joint COPS/LDC Roundtable Proves Valuable



The Council of Professional Surveyors and the Land Development Council (ACEC's newest coalition) joined forces to host a joint roundtable on issues facing surveying and land development firms.

As expected, surveyors and land developers are facing similar issues in this economy. Participants discussed the shift from private to public work. The decline in the housing market has halted new home building. Shrinking state budgets have stalled state infrastructure projects, forcing firms to turn to federal dollars for work.

This work is mostly in the transportation industry, a notable shift over the last decade. How can surveying firms get a piece of mega-projects dominated by larger firms?

Another big topic of conversation was chain of work and the contractor/engineer relationship. It is critical for engineers to be part of the planning of projects—know the expectations of the owners. The flow of information between an engineer and a contractor is critical to a projects success

If you would like more information on this session or have any comments or concerns, please contact Heather Talbert at 202-682-4377 or htalbert@acec.org.

COPS and Land Development Members Meet in Puerto Rico

Members of both COPS and Land Development came together to plot out the future direction of both groups. The member meeting is open to current dues-paying members of both COPS / Land Development Coalition as well as ACEC member firms interested in learning more about each group and their activities. Held twice a year: during the ACEC Annual Convention and Fall Conference, we invite you to make plans to join us in Washington, DC this coming March 30-April 2 at the Grand Hyatt.

Items discussed during the recent meeting included:

- Continue joint sessions at ACEC conferences where possible:
- Developing future web seminars on the following topics:
 - EPA Storm Water Regulations (2012)
 - Mentor / Protégé Program
- Looking into developing a way to share data on how certain markets are fairing across the country
- Developing a quarterly summary of trends in the land development / surveying-mapping industry on a quarterly basis depending on current material available.



Contact Heather Talbert, 202-682-4377 or htalbert@acec.org for more information or if you are interested in leading one of the above program ideas.

COPS AND SMALL FIRM COUNCIL SHARE WINTER MEETING EVENT

Once again, a combined COPS/ACEC Small Firm Council Winter Meeting will take place in San Diego, CA at the **Courtyard by Marriott San Diego Downtown**. Mark your calendar for January 28-29, 2011 as the seminar will feature discussions on *Improving Your Business Operations*.

Preceding this meeting, the COPS Business Practices Committee and Steering Committee will meet on Thursday January 27th.

Registration will be available in the near future, watch the COPS website www.acec.org/cops for more information as it become available.



SAVE THE DATE: ACEC ANNUAL CONVENTION



Save the Date

2011

ANNUAL CONVENTION &
LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

MARCH 30-APRIL 2, 2011

Grand Hyatt Hotel ♦ Washington, DC

ACEC

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES

100 Years of Excellence

More information coming soon!
Check
www.acec.org/education/conventions
for updates!

Industry News

DOT PUSHES \$35 BILLION TRACK LOAN PROGRAM



The Department of Transportation announced this month that it will increasingly tie a low-interest loan account for railroad track improvements to a variety of Obama administration policy objectives.

The new DOT guidelines for the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program could lay the foundation for greater use of the account, which is authorized to lend or guarantee up to \$35 billion at the government's own cost of borrowing. Demand for RRIF funding has increased significantly in the past two years, with a major increase in the size and complexity of the proposed transactions. Read more [here](#).

DATABASE TRACKS TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENTS NATIONWIDE

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development recently launched a first-of-its-kind web-based database to provide access to comprehensive information on more than 4,000 transit zones around the United States to help developers, investors, and city officials make planning decisions and take advantage of development opportunities around transit nodes.

"The Federal Transit Administration's goal is to partner with communities that want to develop smart transportation solutions that will inspire new economic development, reduce congestion and our dependence on oil, and help connect people with work, school, or the doctor's office," says FTA Deputy Administrator Therese McMillan. "Having the best data available at your fingertips will help cities, neighborhoods, and developers, achieve the goal of a more livable, walkable community that benefits all of their residents." Read more [here](#).

DEADLINE FOR ASCM SURVEY SUMMIT ABSTRACTS APPROACHING

The American Congress on Surveying and Mapping (ASCM) is holding its Survey Summit July 7—12, 2011 in San Diego, CA.

Deadline for submissions is **December 6, 2010**.

Click [here](#) to learn how to submit abstracts and for registration guidelines.





ACEC Education Opportunities

GET READY FOR 2011 WITH NEW IDEAS, KNOWLEDGE, STRATEGIES: ACEC ONLINE

Nov. 9—Value Pricing for A/E Firms

Whether you're a principal, project manager or aspiring project manager involved in putting a price on your firm's services, you'll get valuable insights and "profit arithmetic" basics from presenter **David Stone**, Stone and Company, that will help you meet the challenges of *competitiveness, accuracy and profitability*.

Nov. 11—Retirement Plans: Which Is the Best Fit for Your Firm?

Finding a retirement plan for employees that is affordable for your firm yet offers good benefits for the employee is a big challenge. **Robert Kuna**, Wachovia Securities, presents the fourth in the CASE online Seminar series to help you work through the qualified and non-qualified plans available. *Special time: 1-2:30 p.m. ET.*

Nov. 16—Systematic Client Feedback: How to Get It, Use It, and Benefit From It

Presenter **Mike Phillips**, Design Facilitator, walks seminar participants through a quantifiable system for collecting feedback from clients that is designed to help firms "reduce mistakes and project liability, reduce wasted time and effort, increase firm profitability and contribute to employees' professional satisfaction."

Nov. 17—Short-Term Economic Outlook: Will Financial Reform Help Your Business?

ACEC Convention keynote speaker **Greg Ip**, U.S. Economics Editor, *The Economist*, updates and expands his unique take on the current state of the economy and the outlook for growth and inflation, why the recovery is likely to be muted, how the composition of growth—with less consumption and more exports—will differ from recent history, and the implications of the recent financial reform bill.

To get more information and/or register for these or other upcoming seminars / courses, please go to the following link: <http://www.acec.org/education/index.cfm>

Steer Your Peers to Trustworthy Vendors!

Engineering Inc. is featuring various service providers (vendors) in 2011. The magazine needs your input! We are collecting from members a list of vendors they use to be listed as companies recommended by members. For example, if they decide to do one of the features on companies providing service in the HR field, they might include a list of companies that do payroll services, employee recruitment, background checking, employee benefits, etc.

Submit information about companies your firm uses and that you think is a great vendor at the following link: <http://listserv.acec.org/peers/>



**COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL
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(COPS)**



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The Council of Professional Surveyors (COPS) is a national association of surveying firms that provides a forum for members to improve the quality of the surveying profession through enhancement of business practices, reduced professional liability exposure and increased profitability.

Our mission is to strengthen the business environment and image of member firms, focusing on quality professional surveying services in a competitive global marketplace.

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Calendar of Events

- January 27-29:** COPS/Small Firm Council Winter Meeting
San Diego, CA
- March 30-April 2:** 2011 ACEC Annual Convention
Washington, DC

COPS STEERING COMMITTEE

The following COPS Steering Committee members are here to serve your needs. Please feel free to contact any of the members at their email addresses shown below.

- Chairman:** **Tim Cawood**, McKim & Creed tcawood@mckimcreed.com
Vice Chair: **Michael Yeoman**, Perteet, Inc. myeoman@perteet.com
Secretary: **Ken Brown**, Hatch Mott MacDonald. ken.brown@hatchmott.com

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