



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES

Business Development & Marketing Forum

Hilton Cleveland Downtown – 100 Lakeside Ave E, Cleveland, OH

September 27 - 29, 2026

- Daily Schedule of Events -

Sunday, September 27, 2026

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm **All Forum Opening Reception**
Cocktails & hors d'oeuvres

Monday, September 28, 2026

7:30 am - 8:00 am **Continental Breakfast & Networking**

8:00 am - 8:30 am **Introductions – Open Roundtable**
Superior Ballroom A

8:30 am - 10:00 am **Topic 1 – Digital Transformation & Technology & Technology**

Moderator: *Diana O'Lare, VP Market Intelligence, ACEC National*
Katherine Fey, Assistant Vice President | AI Product Owner &
Strategist; Technology Stake Lead, WSP in the U.S.
Sarah Verschoor, Proposal Content Strategy Manager, WSP in the
U.S.

Tim O'Rourke, Chief Technology Officer, Wade Trim

Tom Brzezinski, PE, Executive Vice President, Wade Trim

- Using AI and automation to enhance marketing efficiency.
- Digital tools for proposal management, CRM, and client engagement.
- Adapting to new digital channels as traditional marketing funnels loses relevance.

10:00 am - 10:15 am **Coffee Break & Networking**
Superior A Foyer

10:15 am - 11:00 am **Roundtables**
Table Topics: AI Tools, Emerging Trends, AI for Research, Ethics and Risk Management, AI Agents & Prompting

11:00 am - 12:00 pm **Topic 2 – Data Management: Building a Culture of Accessible, Actionable Information**

Moderator: *Holly Painter, Associate, Client Account Manager, KCI*
Karen Cotton, Senior Marketing Manager at Timmons Group
Elizabeth Scarce, Chief Marketing Officer, Dewberry

- Clarify what “the right information” is for A/E firms and how to



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capture and maintain it effectively.

- Ensure that accurate, reliable data is easily accessible across the organization through thoughtful workflows, governance, and tools.
- Drive the cultural shift needed to motivate engineers, architects, and project managers to contribute consistently, overcome resistance, and build healthy data habits into daily work.

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Buffet Lunch, Exhibits & Networking

1:00 pm - 1:45 pm

Roundtables

Table Topics: CRM Selection, Integration, Data Quality, Client Insights, User Adoption, Business Development, Emerging Trends

1:45 pm - 2:45 pm

Topic 3 – Leading Culture Through Change Panel

Moderator: *Maxinne Leighton, Senior Vice President Marketing/Communications and Business Development, JB&B*
John Lavey, Vice President Director of Strategic Marketing, Morrison-Maierle

Meghan Stiklestad, Director of Communications, Mead & Hunt

- Understand organizational culture shifts during growth, mergers, acquisitions, and evolving political climates.
- Apply communication and change-management strategies that strengthen alignment, trust, and employee engagement.
- Identify approaches to attract, integrate, and retain talent while preserving cultural cohesion during expansion.

2:45 - 3:00 pm

**Coffee Break & Networking
Superior A Foyer**

3:00 - 4:00 pm

Roundtables

Table Topics: M&A Culture, Onboarding, Talent Attraction, Internal vs External Communications

4:00 - 4:30 pm

**OpenAsset Shred: Your AEC Proposal Partner
Superior Ballroom A**

See the purpose-built proposal software and enjoy a sponsored happy hour.

5:30 – 7:00 pm

**Offsite Reception at The Great Lakes Science Center
(0.7 miles | 13-minute walk)**

Join us for an evening of networking, drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and interactive exhibits at Cleveland's Great Lakes Science Center.

Tuesday, September 29, 2026

7:30 am - 8:00 am

Continental Breakfast & Networking

8:00 am – 9:00 am

Topic 4 – Back Office to Boardroom Panel

Moderator: *Diana O'Lare*



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Jamie Mabile, Principal, Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement with CDM Smith

Laurie Lumish, Principal, Director of Marketing & BD, Degenkolb

Cecilia Tran Arango, Principal, Marketing Director, Thomas & Hutton

- Explore career journeys and success stories that illustrate how professionals advance from back-office and administrative roles to influential leadership positions.
- Identify pivotal turning points that help emerging leaders gain credibility, expand influence, and elevate their strategic impact within the firm.
- Structure and lead effective teams that support organizational growth, enhance client service, and strengthen firmwide business development efforts.

9:00 am - 10:00 am

Roundtables

Career Pathways, Credibility Building, Influential Moments, Team Structure, Training, and Support.

10:00 am - 10:30 am

**Coffee Break & Networking
Superior A Foyer**

Hotel check out is 11am – Take this time to gather your bags and return to the ballroom.

10:30 am - 11:30 am

Topic 5 – Strategic Public Relations for AEC Leaders

Jeff Lavery, Managing Principal, Pedigree PR

- Master essential PR skills in media relations, crisis communication, and public-facing messaging.
- Strengthen government relations by engaging elected officials, coordinating with agencies, and leveraging their communications teams to amplify your message.
- Enhance BD impact by training teams to communicate strategically and build relationships that elevate your firm's visibility and credibility.

12:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Economic Outlook 2026: Trends, Risks, and AEC Industry Sentiment

Buffet Luncheon | Superior A Foyer & Ballroom

Joe Bates, Senior Research Consultant, ACEC Research Institute, Thomas Grogan, Chief Economist, ACEC National

- Gain a clear understanding of current U.S. economic trends and their implications for the AEC sector.
- Interpret the latest AEC industry sentiment data to identify emerging opportunities and risks.
- Apply insights from ACEC economists to inform strategic planning and decision-making within your organization.

1:30 pm

Adjourn