

Human Resources Session
ACEC Annual Summit
Mature Professionals / Young Professionals session
June 25, 2009

1. *What characteristics, policies, or culture do you try to create in your firm to attract top talent / What characteristics, policies or culture do you look for in a consulting engineering firm of choice?*

Mature Professional:

- Long term security and stability
- Commitment from both sides (the company and the YP)
- Opportunity for growth, new experiences, business development, and advancement
- Performance based compensation and reviews, based on merit and not necessarily seniority, as well as continuous feedback
- Flexible hours, compensation for overtime (within reason)
- Respect for younger professionals and reflection of personal lifestyles
- Ensuring a fun workplace
- Providing leading edge technical challenges, motivating projects
- Possibly providing an opportunity for ownership
- Opportunity for mentorship
- Offering coop programs
- Involve YPs in the recruiting process (eg, using them at career fairs)

Young Professionals:

- Offering flexibility in such areas as hours, work diversity, and offering unique challenges
- Providing mentorship and support programs, and ensuring high quality mentors
- Providing growth opportunities and choice in career paths, although with an understanding that base experience is necessary
- Offering ownership opportunities, or equity in the firm
- Offering progressive management techniques
- Learning about social responsibility
- Value diversity among employees

2. *What actions has your firm taken to retain key employees / What actions can your company take to keep you in the firm for the longer term?*

Mature professionals:

- Offering shareholding or profit sharing
- Use of promotions and titles
- Offering a clear metric for performance bonuses, and offering transparent communication performance
- Innovation awards

- Helping employees to move when they want to, due to personal circumstances
- Offering more responsibility early
- Offering mentorship
- Offering peer management, and a continuous feedback loop
- Recognition programs
- Implementing formal training programs
- Providing work that the employees enjoy doing
- Be committed to their professional development, and follow through on commitments offered
- Offering non-engineering assignments
- Don't forget the existing staff when pursuing new staff

Young professionals:

- Recognition and awards, if they are warranted
- Receiving ongoing feedback on work, both good and bad
- Professional development investment, both good and bad
- Creating a sense of team
- Being able to meet directly with clients

3. *The current economic downturn is the first recession in the careers of young professionals. What steps has your firm taken to alleviate their concerns? / What has been your reaction to the recession and actions that your firm has or hasn't taken in alleviating your concerns?*

Mature professionals:

- Provide honest and proactive communication
- Act decisively if need be
- Provide work sharing and cross training
- Ensure strategic retention; retain those with high potential
- Help those employees who have been let go
- Reduce workweeks
- Diversify the types of projects being worked on; a recession may offer a chance to try new things
- Perhaps an opportunity to reassess human resources
- Have a strong strategic planning exercise
- Note that this will not be their first recession – downturns are cyclical
- Use the time to upgrade skills and develop training opportunities

Young professionals:

- Communication is required
- Be honest, and provide early communication on potential impacts
- Provide continual updates
- Some YPs are questioning if there is even a recession (at least in engineering).

4. *What actions can ACEC or member firms take to increase the number of women in the industry?*

Mature professionals:

- Encourage women to join the ACEC Board of Directors
- Showcase the involvement of women in engineering, use them as role models (eg, Julie Payette)
- Promote women to leadership roles
- Offer more flexibility to reflect family choices
- Look at how other professions are encouraging women
- Women should be guided towards the sciences while in high school
- Glamorize engineering in popular media and culture
- Many women who leave on maternity feel “left behind” when they return – help with that transition, and keep in touch with them while on maternity
- Offer company day care
- Create different career paths; offer career planning
- Offer work from home arrangements

Young professionals:

- Promote the value of a career in consulting engineering, as early as high school
- Conduct a survey of women who remain in engineering after their first year of university
- Firms need to develop policies to account for what they will do for women employees who choose to raise a family.
- Need to find ways to shatter the glass ceiling; there should be proactive promotion of qualified female staff to leadership positions
- Offer women as mentors
- Work with other groups to promote the industry and profession (such as Engineers Canada)