Photo: PCI.

Turning Internal Champions into External Stars

William Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

Our profession has an underlying set of rules and when followed they lead to consistent results. These traditional practices are being updated with new delivery schemes and complex new materials. The goal of high-performance assets is to go beyond what has been in the past: to deliver structures that will have low initial cost, low environmental impact, and extremely low reoccurring operating and rehabilitation costs over the long term.

Concrete structures are repeatable, rugged, and durable. Past practice has identified decks, bearings, and joints as the most vulnerable to environmental damage. In seismic areas, where integral superstructure and substructure details are most common, moisture and chlorides are no longer reaching substructure caps. These details have put a stop to a vulnerability of the past. Using two-way prestressing in decks keeps the concrete tensile stresses low and decks are lasting longer.

Dr. Bayrak wrote in his Winter 2015 *ASPIRE*™ article about some important traits of the profession and the need for strong engineering fundamentals. These key principals can be applied to all levels of our heavy civil construction industry.

The instability of long-term transportation funding has created unproductive angst and talented people have left all segments of our construction industry. Project managers, engineers, superintendents, crew chiefs, equipment operators, and the list goes on, are critical links in the delivery of new bridges and roads. When you find employees that have the skills and basics tenacity, please invest and grow those people by exposing them to new concepts and allowing them to further investigate recent innovations. Lee Iacocca said, "In times of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive."

Just run a benchmark test and identify one or two internal person(s) to investigate a recent change that has occurred for one aspect of concrete bridge delivery in your region. (There are plenty of topics within the Design-Build procurement delivery method or prefabricated bridge elements and systems [PBES] arena.) Ask that person to develop the idea as a parallel to a traditional solution and watch the excitement build. Developing internal mavericks will get your firm noticed. Two years ago in the Spring 2013 *ASPIRE*, I wrote of "Creating a Lasting Separation from your Competitor." Today, mid-size firms are disappearing because of consolidation. Whether a mega firm or a smaller boutique firm, both need to foster a new spirit of innovation that allows identification of a new internal champion and brings new vision to your customers. With this increased value, you will be able to win work and command higher fees with bigger margins.

Another way to engage employees is by allowing them to advocate sustainability efforts within your company or for your projects. In the next issue of *ASPIRE*, we will provide an update on sustainability activities in the bridge industry that may interest an internal champion in your firm.

This year, *ASPIRE* launched a few new series to help you refresh your whole team on detailed, specific areas of concrete bridge information. Take a few minutes to use the new online version to search for a topic in all past issues and look at how others have utilized concrete to achieve a desired outcome.

Retaining talented employees is a challenge for many in our arena, but mentoring those employees may inspire their creativity, which could Turn an Internal Champion into an External Star.

Editor-in-Chief
William Nickas • wnickas@pci.org

Managing Technical Editor
Dr. Reid W. Castrodale

Contributing Editor
Dr. Henry G. Russell

Program Manager
Nancy Turner • nturner@pci.org

Associate Editors
Emily B. Lorenz
Craig A. Shutt

Art Director
Paul Grigonis

Layout Design
Tressa A. Park

Cover
Self-propelled modular transporters allowed two spans of precast concrete girders for the Proctor Lane Bridge, Utah County, Utah, to be moved into place during a 6.5-hour overnight closure. Photo: Jacobs.

Ad Sales
Jim Oestmann
Phone: (847) 838-0500 • Cell: (847) 924-5497
Fax: (847) 838-0555 • joestmann@arlpub.com

Reprints
Paul Grigonis • pgrigonis@pci.org

Publisher
Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute
Robert Risser, President

Postmaster: Send address changes to *ASPIRE*, 200 W. Adams St., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606. Standard postage paid at Chicago, IL, and additional mailing offices.

ASPIRE (Vol. 9, No. 3), ISSN 1935-2093 is published quarterly by the Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute.

If you have a project to be considered for *ASPIRE*, send information to *ASPIRE*
200 W. Adams St., Suite 2100 • Chicago, IL 60606
phone: (312) 786-0300 • www.aspirebridge.org • e-mail: info@aspirebridge.org