Blame It on the Fax Machine

I would argue that collaboration between designers and contractors is currently at a low point and the digital age has made things worse. 30 years ago, when a contractor needed information missing from the design, he picked up the phone and called the architect or engineer. That was the only option since snail mail was too slow. If the issue couldn’t be resolved over the phone, the designer volunteered to stop by the site and the two parties worked together to solve the problem. This back and forth built the relationship and spirit of collaboration between the designer and the builder.

That all changed with the fax machine. With the introduction of this technology, phone calls and site visits went away and everything was communicated in writing. Questions were asked and answered in writing and the general contractor copied every subcontractor on every question to reduce liability. A change in carpeting? Copy the steel subcontractor just to eliminate any chance of risk. Our industry has devolved into thousands of tiny bits of information arriving to the builder at the eleventh hour. Planning has been replaced by triage and crisis management. Computers have only made the problem worse. Back when we had real blue prints, the cost to print was high enough to demand a level of design completeness because changes and re-printing were expensive. In today’s digital age it doesn’t cost designers anything to have multiple options and endless changes. However, it does cost the owner. Studies show that buildings today include 50% waste.

Construction is the only industry with declining productivity over the last 30 years. The owner is paying for two buildings and getting one. The industry is ripe for a disruptive change. I look forward to the day when designers and contractors share risk and reward and return to an increased spirit of collaboration. In the meantime, successful contractors must develop strategies to build personal relationships with designers.

Executive Director’s Message

The pastor of my church lists his biggest strength as intentional relationships. He’s always talking about it. Intentional relationships made their way into our church’s strategic plan.

Of course when I think about ASCC I think of intentional relationships; MIX Groups and mentors particularly come to mind. The foundation of ASCC is communication, sharing information with your peers. You do a great job of it.

Industry Calendar

ACI Spring Convention
Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI
March 26 – 30, 2017

MIX Group Orientation
Lakebrink’s Custom Concrete, Washington, MO
April 27 – 29, 2017

Committee Week
ASCC Headquarters, St. Louis, MO
May 1 – 3, 2017

Concrete Executive Leadership Forum
Montage Palmetto Bluffs, Bluffton, SC
July 20 – 23, 2017

Annual Conference
Arizona Grand Resort & Spa, Phoenix, AZ
September 14 – 17, 2017

President’s Message

Chris Plue

MARCH 2017

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NEW ON THE WEB

Trustpoint Insurance, Salem, VA

Red = Sustaining Member
No surprise, however, that when the Concrete 2029 group that met on Feb. 22 discussed durability, they traced some of the problems to poor communication between the design/owner/contractor/producer. I’ve been hearing this since I began working in this industry.

In another conversation with the head of St. Louis’ concrete promotion organization, he brought up “the quality problem”; poor quality installations that hinder his efforts to promote. His take is that the quality problem needs to be fixed first; that will make promotion both easier and more productive. Again, lack of communication rears its head as we know that successful projects depend on clear, honest, consistent communication between all parties.

If ever there’s an opportunity for improvement in design/construction - - one that would have a significant impact on your business, including your bottom line - - it’s to become intentional in your relationships with all parties involved on a project.

I like this list from an article in The Huffington Post:

**Best Business Relationship Practices**

- Being authentic
- Getting personal. Your transparency will invite them to be transparent in return
- Being candid
- Always try to “pay it forward” and offer to help the other person first
- Being insatiably curious about others. Learn and remember personal things about others like spouse and kid names, hobbies, interests and birthdays
- Finding meaningful ways to touch base with your network consistently throughout the year
- Freely sharing ideas, connections and content. Always add value to the relationship
- Doing what you say you will do
- Meeting people in person whenever it is convenient and appropriate
- Always being grateful

And from the same article:

“Build a strong network of like-minded professionals and nurture these valuable relationships with a new mindset and approach. **Be the opposite of every bad encounter you have ever had in business.**”

**Avoiding Costly Sales Mistakes**

While recently reading a book by Thomas Nestor, I stumbled upon some sales mistakes I made when running a small masonry company years ago. I thought the following passages would be helpful to our membership, both large and small, but primarily those hustling for the small to mid-range projects that require more than just a bid.

1) **Know who controls the budget** – Many people may need to be convinced you are the right person to perform the job, but if the budget controller is not included in the discussion your time is being wasted.

2) **Fully understand the purchasing criteria** – Is the owner looking for the best design or the lowest price? Be sure to find out prior to spending significant time on your proposal.

3) **Have a clearly defined next step** – Leave each visit or phone call with a defined action plan for the next step. Have specifics as to when proposals are due, or when decisions will be made.

4) **Is the buyer willing to make the investment** – Working in mid-Michigan I learned to qualify customers prior to making the drive. It was well worth it to ask a couple questions of the customer to save me hours on the road.

Your time is valuable, whether it allows you to produce additional output or spend more time with your family. Either way, avoiding these sales mistakes can help increase your close rate and spend less time chasing tire kickers.

**Understanding ACI Document Jargon**

ACI’s Technical Activities Committee (TAC) forms technical committees and assigns each a mission. A technical committee mission identifies the knowledge area the committee is responsible for and is usually not document-specific. Thus a single committee could develop both a Code or Standard and also a Guide. For instance, ACI Committee 117 on tolerances developed a standard, ACI 117 “Specification for Tolerances for Concrete Construction and Materials” and also a guide, ACI 117.1R “Guide for Tolerance Compatibility in Concrete Construction.” The committee determines what documents are necessary to their mission and develops those documents after TAC approval.
Technical committees are organized into five groups based on their scope:

100—General
200—Materials and properties of concrete
300—Design and construction
400—Concrete reinforcement and structural analysis
500—Specialized applications and repair

Each committee has a number related to these groups. Committee 347 on Formwork is a construction committee so it has a 300 number. Subcommittees and task groups are also assigned designations. Subcommittees use the committee number followed by a letter. Task groups use the committee number with “TG” followed by a sequential number. For example, Committee 318-A is a 318 subcommittee and Committee 318-TG7 is a 318 task group.

ACI design standards are directed to the design professional, not the construction team. Design standards are worded in explicit, mandatory language so there is only one possible interpretation. Design standards cite only mandatory-language documents. Examples of design standards include code requirements such as ACI 216.1 “Code Requirements for Determining Fire Resistance of Concrete and Masonry Construction Assemblies,” and design specifications, “Design Specifications for Formwork (under development by 347).

ACI construction standards are written to direct the producers, testing agencies, and construction team and not the design professional. Construction standards are also worded in explicit, mandatory language so that there is only one possible interpretation.

ACI construction standards consist of the following documents:

- **Construction specifications**—reference specifications that can be included as part of a contract between Owner and Contractor. Example: ACI 301 “Specifications for Structural Concrete”.
- **Material specifications**—reference specifications that prescribe requirements for materials used in projects, are written to the producer, and may be incorporated by reference into construction specifications or into Contract Documents. Example: ACI 423.7-14 “Specification for Unbonded Single-Strand Tendon Materials.”
- **Test methods**—prescribe means of testing for compliance of materials or construction methods that are proposed for or used in projects. They are written to the testing agency and may be incorporated by reference in material specifications, construction specifications, or Contract Documents. These are normally developed by an ASTM committee. In rare instances, ACI committees develop a test method when none exists in ASTM.
- **Inspection services specifications**—reference specifications written as part of a contract between Owner and inspection agency. Example: ACI 311.7 “Inspection Services Specification for Cast-In-Place Concrete Construction.”
- **Testing services specifications**—reference specifications written as part of a contract between Owner and testing agency or between Contractor and testing agency. Example: ACI 311.6 “Specification for Ready Mixed Concrete Testing Services.”

Contractors are most familiar with guides and reports such as ACI 302R “Construction of Concrete Floors and Slabs” and ACI 363.3R “Report on High-Strength Concrete”. Other examples of documents that fall into this category include:

- **TechNotes**—narrowly focused, single-topic guides, usually practice-oriented that present specific direction on a particular issue. TechNotes can cover topics such as design, construction, or repair methods, or can provide recommendations on a concrete technology. TechNotes are written in nonmandatory language. Example: ACI 364.13T “Repairs for Reinforcement with Shallow Cover”.
- **Emerging Technology Report (ETR)**—provides information on emerging concrete technology in the committee’s area of expertise where there is insufficient knowledge to write a comprehensive ACI report. It is intended to introduce a new technology into practice by providing basic information to allow implementation and permit accumulation of performance histories. Example: ACI Committee 239, Ultra-High Performance Concrete, has several subcommittees working on Emerging Technology Reports covering this subject.

ACI uses specific numbering of its documents. For instance, codes and standards consist only of numbers—no letters. Guides and reports include a number and the letter “R” after the number. If the document number includes a decimal, it indicates the order in which the committee developed several documents on multiple topics. And finally, the number after the hyphen indicates the year the standard or other document was adopted.

For example, let’s look at ACI 117-15 “Specifications for Tolerances for Concrete Construction and Materials” and 117.1R-14 “Guide for Tolerance Compatibility in Concrete Construction.” We can tell this committee has developed a specification, both by title and by noting there is no “R” behind the number, and a guide, by noting the “R”. The specification was the first standard developed by the committee and the current version was adopted in 2015. The Guide was the first non-standard document developed by the committee, hence the XXX.1, and it was adopted in 2014.

My advice: The best way to get familiar with the ACI jargon is by joining a committee!
**Safety & Risk Management Council**

**ASCC First Owner Safety Award**

**SPOTLIGHT ON KEITH WAYNE, WAYNE BROTHERS, INC.**

At the Annual Conference in Minneapolis, MN the ASCC presented Keith Wayne, CEO, Wayne Brothers, Inc. of Davidson, NC with the association’s first Owner Safety Award. The award recognizes an owner/executive of an ASCC member company that displays a clear focus and passion for safety, and provides the leadership that creates a best-in-class safe work environment. The award application covers education, ASCC activities/offices held, other professional activities, company honors/awards (safety related), candidate honors/awards (safety related) and other significant accomplishments. The application also takes into account company history such as injury and illness incidence rates, EMR and OSHA citations. A minimum of one letter of recommendation from someone outside the company must be provided. The recommendation addresses items such as top-down leadership, engagement with the safety process, accepting responsibility, involvement in field operations, training, communication, accountability, consistency and recognition.

For Keith Wayne, the well-being and safety of all employees is his highest priority. “Safely Exceeding Expectations” is not just the company’s motto, but the way he operates every day. In 2007, Keith began Wayne Brothers, Inc.’s (WBI) journey to become a safer company. Prior to 2007, it was WBI’s intention to provide a safe work environment for its employees and subcontractors, but safety was not the number one priority. Over the past ten years, Keith has worked to implement new safety initiatives, policies and procedures to help ensure that safety is the first priority on all projects. This includes criminal background checks for all new hires, post-offer pre-employment fit-for-duty exams for all craft level employees, a two-day new hire orientation that includes OSHA 10 Hour training, daily pre-task planning, daily stretching routine and a 100% cut level 3 (or higher) glove policy.

Valued clients repeatedly tell Keith that Wayne Brothers is the safest company they have ever had on a job site. While safety preparation requires more time, the benefits to productivity and client satisfaction are incalculable. Safe practices keep employees, subcontractors, and the public out of harm’s way while creating a positive work environment for everyone involved.

Keith’s efforts in safety have truly paid off. Since March 8, 2016 WBI has worked 811,308 hours and 11 months without a Lost Time accident.

**ASCC Partners with Safety Week 2017**

**It’s In Our Hands: May 1–5**

This year’s Safety Week theme literally and figuratively takes matters of safety into our hands. The 2017 theme not only focuses on hand safety, it demonstrates the opportunity to leverage the pride each worker feels as they shape the landscape of their communities across the U.S. and Canada. Every day, these professionals answer the call with confidence. All this is reflected in this year’s Safety Week campaign logo, which features interlocking hands. **For more information go to constructionsafetyweek.com.**

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**HOT LINE QUESTIONS**

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<th>CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION</th>
<th>SAFETY &amp; INSURANCE</th>
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<td>800-331-0668</td>
<td>866-788-2722</td>
<td>888-483-5288</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruce Suprenant – <a href="mailto:ascchotline@ascconline.org">ascchotline@ascconline.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:srmc@ascconline.org">srmc@ascconline.org</a></td>
<td>Todd Scharich – <a href="mailto:dchotline@ascconline.org">dchotline@ascconline.org</a></td>
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ASCC members have access to these toll-free numbers for assistance.

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<th>Webinars begin at 3:00 p.m. CST</th>
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Members no charge. Non-members $35; MC, Visa, Amex only. Call 866-788-2722 to register.