

AIA Central Pennsylvania



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Architext (Summer 2011 Edition)

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AIA National Convention

By: Chris Dawson, AIA



Architect Barbie Debuts Rich Gribble, President Elect, and I attended the 2011 AIA Convention in New Orleans to represent the AIA Central Pennsylvania Chapter. I have now attended 3 straight AIA National Conventions and they each have had their individual flavor. Rich and I voted for the candidates for AIA National Offices and participated in the Business Meeting where, among other things, amendments to the by-laws and resolutions are voted on. This year was not as contentious as recent

conventions but lively nonetheless.

Having never visited New Orleans it was interesting to be exposed to this unique environment. It had a grittiness to it with moments of beauty and hope sprinkled in which is not too far afield from how I view the struggles of practicing architecture. Thomas Friedman, Pulitzer winning author and writer of *Hot, Flat, & Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution*, gave the Convention's first Keynote address with observations about the state of affairs in terms of how our world is changing from an American perspective noting the need for architects to steer our country in a different direction. I sensed that his message was well received.

The state of the AIA seems to be very strong based on remarks by CEO Bob Ivy, President Clark Manus, Treasurer John Rogers, & CACE President Mike Waldinger. In their remarks, I heard a concise summary of the main reasons to be an AIA member: access to insights not available elsewhere, networking with peers, and being involved in something larger than one's self for the greater good. I am occasionally asked to make the case of why an architect should belong to the AIA and I feel I am not always the best at articulating the reasons because I almost feel like why wouldn't you belong. Witold Rybczynsk of UPenn was quoted during Convention stating to the effect that architecture is so interesting because it is one of the few arts that is a "team sport." To my way of thinking membership in AIA is the natural extension of being involved in such a collaborative profession.

Lawrence Speck was honored with the 2011 Topaz Medallion for Excellence in Architectural Education and I found him to be tremendously inspiring. He noted that his passion has been explaining what architects do, where architecture comes from, and how it affects everyone's lives. He is a professor at the University of Texas at Austin and observed that our culture is abysmally ignorant about architecture but that it shapes everyone's lives whether or not they are conscious of it. He noted that unlike other arts which you can choose to engage in or not architecture affects us all and there is a void in your life if you are not knowledgeable about this. Ultimately the public's ignorance results in less investment in good architecture.

In the Convention's closing Keynote, Honolulu Mayor Jeremy Harris ran with Lawrence Speck's sentiments noting that architects need to be the one designing our cities and urban centers because we are holistic designers that understand the need for our cities to be humanistic. He made a plea for us, architects around the world, to address the challenges of the built and natural environment in our society through political, community, and design leadership in the 21st century.

The Convention experience is rich and too much happened for me to provide a full report but it included such things as reconnecting with the AIA Europe President from Milan, Italy, meeting an architectural glass artist, having conversations with the likes 2010 AIA Gold Medal Winner Peter Bohlin, Marlon Blackwell, & Phil Freelon, getting to know related professionals better, seeing some Eskew + Dumez + Ripple work, attending my first Pecha Kucha, and even meeting Dana Delany. Next year's Convention is in Washington, D.C. and I would strongly encourage every AIA Central PA member to attend some portion of that Convention as it will be so close to home.

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Lessons Learned by a Yeoman Architect

By: James A. Mehaffey, AIA



Maintaining direction during a meeting may be one of the

most challenging tasks we have as architects, especially during presentations to the residents of the community whose lives our work will affect.

The most dramatic "left turn" I can remember occurred during a presentation to residents of a community for a proposed aquatic and fitness center. All the normal issues about number of lanes, water temperature, fitness equipment and the like came up, and as usual, no one agreed completely on any of them. One man in particular was an avid swimmer and was the most vocal during the meeting. Then, out of the blue, this man begins to talk about food service, which was not part of the program of this fitness center. It only got worse.

I will never forget the next words out of his mouth, "what are you going to do about my green beans, because they are always mushy!" Had it not been for his sensible wife and her pointy elbow, I don't know if we ever would have gotten out of there. "They're architects, not cooks!" she scolded him, as she delivered her elbow to his ribcage.



People are such an unpredictable species. To try and steer them in the right direction is not always easy, because a pointy elbow is not always handy.

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Inaugural Young Architects Award



Call for Nominations!! The Inaugural Young Architects Award will be issued at the Design Awards Gala Event on October 28, 2011. The award will be given to an architect who has been licensed 10 years or less and shows exemplary performance in architecture, leadership, vision and community service. Who in your firm should be recognized for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to the field of architecture?

Eligibility: Architect members of the AIA who have been licensed to practice architecture fewer than 10 years by the submission deadline are eligible to be nominated; the term young architect has no reference to the age of nominees. Any component, member of the national AIA Board of Directors, knowledge community, or College of Fellows may nominate one or more individuals

Submission: All information must be submitted online before 5pm on September 12, 2011. Nomination information and forms can be [found here](#)

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Design Awards Call For Entries

We are going **DIGITAL** this year! Please see AIA Central PA website for the [NEW Submission Requirements](#).

Submissions are due no later than 4pm, August 19, 2011. Winners will be announced and all

work celebrated at the Design Awards Gala on October 28, 2011.

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Spring Lecture Review

Our 2011 AIA Central Pennsylvania Spring Lecture was held Thursday, April 21 at HACC York's Glatfelter Community Room. **Sebastian Schmaling, AIA** presented the work of his firm Johnsen Schmaling Architects based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in a lecture entitled "**Restraining Order.**"

Sebastian proved to be talented, thoughtful, and sincere. Johnsen Schmaling Architects is an 8 year old firm with 4 employees with an impressive portfolio ranging from residential, entertainment, hospitality, and institutional projects. The designs were all highly contextual though abstract in nature and examined intensely through iterations of immaculate study models. The firm appears to be at a threshold of growing and being able to tackle larger commissions or reaching an equilibrium and staying satisfied with the scale of their current work. Sebastian spoke in a restrained manner befitting his message and the sincerity of his passion for architecture was evident in not only the images of the work but his stories about the process behind each project.

Our lecture series is not possible without the support of our sponsors... Thank you to each one:

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Creating a Powerful Personal Brand

On Wednesday March 2nd, AIA Central Pennsylvania held a Breakfast of Champions event for The Honorable Jeffrey Piccola, State Senator (R-15 Dauphin (part) and York (part) Counties) at the AIA Pennsylvania offices in Harrisburg. Senator Piccola is Chair of the Education Committee and a member of the Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committees.

If there is a word Frank Gehry hates, it is "starchitect." As he told The Independent in 2009, "I am not a 'starchitect,' I am an ar-chitect..." But don't tell that to the industry media. A simple Google search on "Starchitect" and "Frank Gehry" returned 37,000 hits. The term, which is based upon a combination of "star" and "architect," is usually limited to a handful of architects who have become celebrities; Gehry is probably the most famous of those currently architects currently practicing, though the term has been applied retroactively to such icons as Frank Lloyd Wright and I.M Pei.

The one thing these so-called starchitects have in common is that they've each built a powerful, unique personal brand. And while the odds of any architect rising to this level of fame are extremely limited, the concept of personal branding is something that every architect should embrace.

Whether you are a sole proprietor or part of a large, multi-discipline practice, your future success will largely depend upon the reputation you are able to build. Clients don't work with firms; rather, they work with people. Many Requests for Proposals reflect this, increasingly using the capabilities and experience of project team members as an indicator of how a firm will perform. Sophisticated owners understand that a firm can have an extensive resume of similar project experience, yet no longer employ the professionals who designed those projects. If you have ever completed a Federal Standard Form 330, you've see this in action: the form includes a staff experience matrix, requiring you to state whether or not your proposed team members worked on the representative projects you submit.

Your education, project experience, licenses, and certifications all make up part of your personal brand. So do your lectures and speaking engagements, articles published and blog posts, professional association involvement, volunteer activities, and much more. In today's competitive environment, owners often view A/E firms as equally qualified, so they look for differentiators. Some firms are able to differentiate themselves by using price; others use technology. However, there always seems to be a firm that will do it cheaper than you, or a company that has more advanced technology capabilities than you, reinforcing the need to have a distinct way to differentiate yourself or your firm from the competition.

Legendary AEC consultant Ford Harding has been aware of this for years. His landmark book, "Rain Making," taught professionals about the various approaches to developing new business - including writing and speaking, organizational involvement, networking, publicity, direct mail, and yes, even the dreaded cold calling. This second edition of the book, published in 2008, goes a step further by offering advice about how to become a "star." To Harding, "stars" are self-marketing experts who have successfully built their own brands. He suggests that professionals complete a Personal Evaluation Form.

To do this, list your area of expertise (Harding's case study is a laboratory architect), the target market for this expertise, proof that you have that you are an expert, what specialized knowledge you have gained along the way, the project experience that reinforces your expertise, and any unique skills that you can provide. Ultimately, this is an exercise in personal branding.

In recent years, social media like LinkedIn and Twitter have allowed professionals to build and promote their brands online. Writing blogs, posting informative Twitter updates or links to interesting articles, and creating a detailed LinkedIn profile are ways that you can build your brand as an expert at providing a certain kind of service or working in a specific market. There are many industry examples of blog posts or social media activities that have led to articles in national publications or speaking opportunities at local, regional, and national conferences.

My favorite example, one that I first learned about at a conference of the Society for Marketing Professional Services, is about a transportation engineer that loved to read about new ways of doing things. He became quite enamored with an innovative approach to intersection design that was built in France. As he further researched the concept, he gained a greater understanding of the design approach, and wrote a short article about it for his company's blog. A link to the blog was Tweeted by a co-worker, and soon representatives

from professional organizations and industry publications were checking out the blog and asking for more information. The engineer prepared a 3D animation of how the intersection functioned, posted it on YouTube, and before long he was leading Webinars on the topic and being interviewed by industry media. On the back-end, several existing clients asked for proposals to study how to use this innovative approach at existing intersections. This engineer was able to build his brand as a national expert on the topic without ever having designed a project using the technique!

You don't need to think big. Start local. If you want to build a specific brand, find an organization that is related to the brand, and join it. Attend meetings and build your network. Write an article for their chapter newsletter. Leverage that article into a presentation at a chapter meeting. Share the article with other surrounding chapters and present to them. While you seek to meet new people along the way, one of your goals is to have people want to meet you, or even seek you out. That is the power of a brand.

Corporate branding is an important component of any marketing program, but so is personal branding. Every staff member has a role to play, so it is important to think about how their expertise, skills, experience, network, and reputation can help your company. A personal brand can help bring new clients to your firm, enhance your network, elevate your reputation, and yes, even help you find a new job if the need arises.

During a company meeting a few weeks ago, I asked my co-workers if they knew who the most important employee was when it came to marketing the company. My answer: "The one that is sitting in your chair." So who is the most important person when it comes to the success of your future and your company's future? That's right: the person sitting in your chair.

Questions? Drop me an email at sbutcher@jdbe.com. I'd be happy to share some additional resources that will get you well on your way to building a powerful personal brand. Good luck!

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