

Creating a Single Project Manager Philosophy

Contributed by Scott & Goble Architects, recipient of the 2007 IDP Outstanding Firm Award February 2007

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SUMMARY

The initial challenge for SGA was to design a comprehensive training program that was not too daunting in scope and length, yet thorough enough to ensure the emerging professional's success. Today's comprehensive training program continues to be refined to ensure its effectiveness and relevance are keeping pace with ever-changing technology and architectural methodologies. In addition, our comprehensive IDP training focus on managing projects has also served as an advantageous college recruitment tool, evidenced by the considerable attention we receive from graduating architecture students at our college career fair presentations.

Scott & Goble Architects (SGA) is a 16-person firm located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The firm is a nationally recognized retail architectural design firm. Its services include site feasibility studies, schematic design, concept development, 3-D visualizations, document production, construction administration, and building program management.

MENTORING/IDP ADVISORY SYSTEM

Demonstrated shareholder commitment, supportive mentors, and a positive work environment are key components of SGA's mentoring program.

Demonstrated Shareholder Commitment

- Appointed an SGA senior architect to serve as our mentoring/IDP facilitator. The facilitator markets our mentoring program to new interns, educates SGA's mentors on new mentoring skills, carefully matches interns with mentors (based on personality and training focus), provides ongoing intern guidance, monitors each intern's IDP progress via the "IDP Record Compilation Process" checklist, and reports the intern's IDP progress on a quarterly basis to the firm's owners.
- Authorized one of SGA's shareholders to serve as the Oklahoma IDP state coordinator. The state coordinator promotes IDP/AIA and related matters at Oklahoma's colleges/universities, assists Oklahoma interns/architects with IDP and licensure-related issues, and formally congratulates newly licensed Oklahoma architects on behalf of the AIA for their accomplishments.

- Authorized one of SGA's shareholders to serve on the AIA Central States Region Task Force to determine how best to support and invest funds in emerging professionals in the region.
- Selective appointments of SGA's mentors to help preserve the highest level of mentor knowledge, quality, enthusiasm, and character.
- Continually dedicate appropriate financial resources to equip an extensive IDP/ARE/architectural resource library as well as to sponsor continuing education seminars and on-site construction observation visits for our interns/architects.
- Designed a totally open office floor plan specifically to enhance intern access to mentors and to provide the opportunity for interns to observe the daily practice of architecture.

Supportive Mentors

Mentors formally meet at least monthly with their interns to evaluate their IDP progress and respond to any needs or concerns. The mentors then meet quarterly with the facilitator to discuss the status of their respective intern's development. Last, SGA's annual performance evaluation also requires that the mentor be evaluated by the owners regarding the quality of his/her mentoring support and effectiveness.

Positive Working Environment

Establishing a positive working environment is an equally important mentoring component. In a 2006 study conducted by the management consulting and research firm ZweigWhite Associates, SGA was nationally ranked as the seventh "Best Architectural Firm to Work For." ZweigWhite based its rankings on firms demonstrating a "commitment to provide a positive work environment and challenging and interesting design opportunities for their employees." We are proud of this acknowledgment, especially since their study required at least 20% of our workforce respond directly to the survey questions.

IDP IMPLEMENTATION

Details of our IDP program are typically introduced by the owners during the job interview. SGA

employed the following IDP initiatives/training methods for all of its emerging professionals:

- Daily “hands-on” on-the-job training addressing every aspect of managing a project, from due diligence to site analysis and continuing through construction administration.
- 52 company-wide “Monday Morning Meetings” conducted by the firm’s president to explain new architectural methodologies. These meetings also include mini-presentations by our senior architects on the firm’s current construction projects.
- 15 on-site construction observations on topics ranging from preconstruction meetings to store set-up and possession.
- 21 “Lunch & Learn” continuing education presentations conducted by SGA’s in-house personnel, clients, and/or outside professionals/vendors. SGA also occasionally invites professionals from other local firms to attend select presentations.
- 19+ formal individual mentoring-related meetings to chart the interns’ IDP progress and address training needs or concerns.
- 52 weekly Client Team Meetings addressing project-by-project status reports, design and detailing issues, client requests, and question-and-answer sessions.

SGA’s IDP/licensure commitment helps support our current employment of 22 licensed architects (27% of our total workforce). During 2006, two interns sat for the ARE and received their licenses. SGA currently has 14 interns in various stages of completing their IDP, and we anticipate at least four of them will sit for the ARE in 2007.

SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION

SGA continually provides various supplemental training resources to help fully develop our emerging professionals and architects beyond our basic job and IDP requirements. New and advanced architectural methods, concepts, regulations, etc., are continually evolving within the architecture profession. In 2006, SGA provided the following supplementary education resources:

- **RESOURCE LIBRARY:** SGA continually dedicates funds to properly equip its extensive resource library, which includes updated ARE study materials, current federal and state building code regulations, material samples, etc. The resource library is available to employees 24/7.

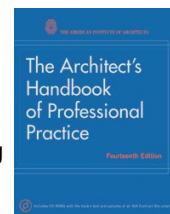
- **LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED) TRAINING/ACCREDITATION:** SGA sponsored two half-day LEED training/accreditation sessions for all interested SGA personnel and extended invitations to other local firms.
- **EMERGING PROFESSIONAL’S COMPANION TRAINING:** SGA dedicates an entire section on this subject in its “Mentoring Guidelines & Information” manual, which is distributed to all interns/mentors.
- **HARDWARE/SOFTWARE ENHANCEMENT TRAINING:** SGA’s IT Department stays abreast of new and updated hardware/software enhancements. As new hardware and software products are added, SGA conducts ongoing Lunch & Learn programs. IT-related training sessions implemented in 2006 included AutoCAD 2006, 3D Studio Max v9, and Acrobat v7. Lunch & Learn courses scheduled for 2007 included REVIT, Acrobat v8, and Microsoft Office 2007.

SGA continually sponsors supplementary educational opportunities for its interns and architects, even after they complete IDP or receive their license. Our profession is by no means static. Continuing education is crucial, not only for meeting IDP and licensing requirements but also to challenge the status quo and maximize our profession’s contributions to humanity.

RESOURCES

For More Information on This Topic

See “Mentoring,” by Marsha C. Littell, in *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 14th edition, page 66. The *Handbook* can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending an e-mail to bookstore@aia.org.



More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 09.03.38 Fostering Growth at JG Johnson Architects
- 09.03.40 Growing Well-Rounded Young Architects
- 09.03.43 Supporting the Path to Licensure

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Key Terms

- Practice
- Employment
- Staff development
- Professional development
- Intern Development Program
- Training