

Memo From the CEO: Advice for Young Engineers

When NSPE member Raymond Daddazio, P.E., was named president and CEO of the New York-based international engineering firm Weidlinger Associates Inc. in January 2006, he was praised for his experience, leadership, and passion for the company he has worked for since 1996. Today he oversees an operation involving 350 employees in five offices along the northeast corridor between Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Massachusetts, three offices in the West, and one in the United Kingdom.

Weidlinger Associates is a structural engineering and applied mechanics consulting firm with a portfolio that includes investigation of the World Trade Center collapses, design of San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, and structural design and blast engineering services for the new U.S. embassy in Berlin.

Daddazio recently agreed to field some questions from young engineers about career development. The questions were provided by the Young Engineer's Advisory Council of NSPE's Professional Engineers in Private Practice.

Do you think that active membership in organizations such as NSPE aid in career development?

Daddazio: The short answer is yes. Organizations like NSPE expose the engineer to important issues that they might not encounter in their everyday practice, such as responsibilities of licensure, ethics, matters of law, and government relations.

Did participation in organizations help in your own career development?

Daddazio: Certainly, especially starting in mid-career as my professional responsibilities increased. This is where issues such as risk management, liability, contracting, and mentoring become more important. From a technical perspective, conferences and journals are a positive way to be exposed



Raymond Daddazio, Ph.D., P.E.

Title: President & CEO, Weidlinger Associates Inc.

Hobby: I am not sure it is a hobby but I am a news junkie.

If I wasn't an engineer.... I really like engineering and never thought of it as a job. I have always enjoyed teaching and if I wasn't an engineer, I would probably be doing that at some level. I have also come to respect the job that our elected officials do and their capacity to positively affect the lives of people.

to other professionals, present one's peer-reviewed work, and keep abreast of new trends and ideas.

In which areas do you think young engineers require the most training?

Daddazio: Coming out of school, today's young engineers are the best educated and best trained group that I have encountered.

At the end of the day, engineering is an apprentice art and a young engineer's development is directly related to the mentoring that he or she receives on the job.

However, many of the younger faculty in engineering schools have never been outside of academia. As such, practical issues for example, like constructability, are not easy to learn in school. At the end of the day, engineering is an apprentice art and a young engineer's development is directly related to the mentoring that he or she receives on the job.

What classes would you like to see young engineers attend?

Daddazio: Communication is key in everything that we do. Written and verbal

communication skills are essential. Lifelong learning is critical for engineers. The half-life of our formal education is quite short. Continuing education is essential and should be required by all states in order to maintain a license to practice engineering.

Do you support mentoring activities within Weidlinger and, if so, do you feel these mentoring relationships have helped your firm?

Daddazio: As part of Weidlinger's professional development program, all new engineers are assigned a mentor. We utilize existing senior engineers' knowledge and experience to assist the new engineer to begin development within the Weidlinger work environment. Mentoring is mandatory for an engineer entering the company with less than five years of professional experience and strongly suggested if the engineer has less than 10 years of experience. Additionally, being a mentor is part of our professional development program, as well. To be a mentor you must be with Weidlinger for at least three years. In addition to being assigned a mentor, each new

engineer is assigned a senior advocate. The role of senior advocates is to take ultimate responsibility for a junior engineer's technical development and ensure that the engineers that are assigned to them are receiving a well-rounded, technically sound education from the firm. The senior advocates are generally chosen from the ranks of our associates and senior associates.

I think that these relationships help the firm but following a checklist is necessary but not sufficient for these programs to be effective. Individuals must be committed to the process in order to get the most out of it.