



Photo: PCI

Create a Lasting Separation from Your Competitor

William Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

Organizational excellence can mean many things in today's market. To some, it includes:

- improving customer service,
- delivering projects that exceed customer expectations, and
- building a coalition of experts to develop an innovative solution for a traditional project.

Whatever your organization's metric for excellence, the goal is the same: to create a lasting separation from your competitor. It's my belief that this lasting separation can be achieved through better communication and sound engineering.

Diversify your Team

A detailed analysis early in the project development phase can identify key components and innovative ways to meet the customer's requirements and expectations. Meeting customer expectations within the limits of sound engineering practice often creates engineering challenges. But by solving these challenges, we often find the best solutions.

Sometimes the most difficult part of solving these challenges is the process. Problem solving can create friction points between team members. Developing creative solutions to satisfy customer expectations and to solve the engineering challenges requires good communication. Understanding individual opinions, while embracing new ideas, is the basis of innovative project design and delivery. And it is exactly what our industry needs now.

One of the best ways to better understand individual opinions is through expansion of the project team. Subject matter experts in different disciplines (finance, community outreach, communications, and information technology) can often provide valuable insight that differs from that of project managers and engineers. These professionals are astute at reading audiences, understanding the undercurrents in the community, and are experts in finance and governmental strategies. They can often lend a different viewpoint because they stay above the engineering and

technical details inherent in project development and design. Their ability to listen and gather critical stakeholder information can advance a project from a potential solution to the solution.

Standing Out

Concrete's natural robust characteristics for long service, flexibility in forming, low maintenance costs, and inherent resiliency against multi-hazard conditions result in durable, legacy bridges that help meet customer expectations and technical challenges. Advancements in material technology, which reduces construction labor requirements and increases service lives, have become a constant in today's market. And a new emphasis on more sustainable construction, which requires balancing immediate needs with environmental impacts, means that today's concrete materials continue to evolve. These new materials will be lighter, stronger, and provide a variety of new advantages and options to designers, engineers, and producers.

Over the last 20 years, the Federal Highway Administration and state departments of transportation have utilized demonstration projects to gain greater knowledge on various topics, including new concrete materials. Recently a National Cooperative Highway Research Program report captured the practices and characteristics of high-performance concrete in a synthesis titled *High Performance Concrete Specifications and Practices for Bridges* authored by Dr. Henry Russell, *ASPIRE*TM's managing technical editor. This synthesis (No. 441 Topic 43-02) and others in this Transportation Research Board program are available at <http://www.trb.org/Publications/PubsNCHRPSynthesisReports.aspx>

Organizational excellence, project team diversity, and material advancements are ways our industry is adapting to keep pace with the global transportation community. The *ASPIRE* team is dedicated to featuring these advancements as they relate to our industry. Keep sending in information about those great concrete bridges that highlight innovative solutions and separate us from the competition. ▲



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Cover

The fiber reinforced grating conceals all the utilities under the deck of the Rich Street Bridge in Columbus, Ohio.

Photo: Ohio Department of Transportation District 6.

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