



Photo: PCI

Stupid Choices Can Be Painfully Expensive

William N. Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

I mentioned the shortage of labor and its impact on our industry in my last editorial. The problem is a bit more complicated than just a lack of folks in the resource pool. We are definitely experiencing a personnel shortages. Whether caused by the “great resignation,” retirements, transforming professional opportunities, or our community not creating some positive excitement, this deficit of human capital is significant. Given our inherent technical and professional obligations, and the educational rigors of our discipline, there is no silver bullet to rapidly reverse this trend. Recognition is the first step in addressing this concern, and Dr. Brandon Ross from Clemson University shares some valuable feedback in the Professor’s Perspective article on page 59.

I remember quite vividly from earlier in my career, in both government and the private sector, the challenges of cultivating, educating, and developing a competent engineering workforce. I often thought, “How can I send a valued member of my design squad away for training for a period of time when we have projects to deliver?” I have always believed, and continue to believe, that by providing an opportunity to advance an employee’s knowledge and skill, the team as a whole reaps the benefits. I knew one supervisor who kept telling his leadership, “We do not have time for a week-long training of an employee who will leave us in two years.” The best response I ever heard was, “Okay, just remember: stupid choices can be painfully expensive, and then what are you going to tell me when they have stayed here for 10 years?” We must invest time and resources to help everyone grow their expertise so they can make greater contributions to our organizations.

The Summer 2022 issue of *ASPIRE*® contained two articles highlighting exciting programs designed to increase the level of understanding and advance engineering expertise. The Concrete Bridge Engineering Institute (CBEI) and Caltrans Bridge Design Academy are both great examples of programs

aimed directly at strengthening the knowledge base of our workforce. CBEI’s initial three pillars of learning, based on collaborative input from state, federal, and industry experts, are Concrete Materials, Bridge Deck Construction Inspection, and Post-Tensioning. These three areas represent some of the most immediate needs for knowledge development in our industry. The Caltrans Bridge Design Academy, which traces its lineage back to the 1960s, is a dynamic program aimed at employee development on a range of technical topics. Of note, completion of several PCI eLearning classes is now a prerequisite for admission into the Caltrans program. The eLearning courseware is an example of industry-developed online resources made available to everyone, at no cost, to help practitioners gain critical knowledge in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The challenge to the broader community is to create internal programs for developing your team by leveraging industry and institutional (federal, state, and academic) resources. Collaboration is key; don’t re-create what already exists.

I’m pleased to announce that going forward, *ASPIRE* will include a recurring CBEI column (see page 53). This is an exciting time in our profession, and this series will keep us connected and up to date on the many developments at CBEI. It is also appropriate to recognize the collaborative effort underway between the National Concrete Bridge Council (NCBC) and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) that is outlined in the Perspective article about NCBC on page 14. Expect to see, in the very near future, published industry resources that are cobranded by AASHTO and NCBC. These resources will provide opportunities for continued growth of knowledge for industry practitioners.

While collaboration is a necessity for our industry, we must also continue to innovate and leverage technologies and the sciences to our advantage. The saying “good science should lead to good policy” is just that, a saying, with an emphasis on the word *should*. Emily Lorenz writes in a Perspective article on

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Cover

Two innovative advancing rail systems were used to construct the Rodanthe “Jug Handle” Bridge on North Carolina’s Hatteras Island.

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CONCRETE CALENDAR 2022–2024

The events, dates, and locations listed were accurate at the time of publication but may change as local guidelines for gatherings continue to evolve. Please check the website of the sponsoring organization.

October 4–7, 2022
PTI Committee Days
JW Marriott Cancun Resort & Spa
Cancun, Mexico

October 23–27, 2022
ACI Fall 2022 Convention
Hyatt Regency Dallas
Dallas, Tex.

October 31, 2022
Submission Deadline for 2023 PTI Project Awards
<https://www.post-tensioning.org/events/awards/ptiprojectaward>

October 31–November 2, 2022
ASBI 2022 Annual Convention and Committee Meetings
Hyatt Regency
Austin, Tex.

November 6–12, 2022
PTI Certification Training: All Levels
Sheraton Austin Hotel at the Capitol
Austin, Tex.

December 7–9, 2022
2022 International ABC Conference
Hyatt Regency Miami
Miami, Fla.

January 8–12, 2023
Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting
Walter E. Washington Convention Center
Washington, D.C.

January 16–19, 2023
World of Concrete
Las Vegas Convention Center
Las Vegas, Nev.

February 21–25, 2023
PCI Convention at The Precast Show
Hyatt Regency & Greater Columbus Convention Center
Columbus, Ohio

April 2–6, 2023
ACI Spring 2023 Convention
Hilton San Francisco Union Square
San Francisco, Calif.

April 28–May 4, 2023
PTI Convention
JW Marriott Marquis Miami
Miami, Fla.

May 21–25, 2023
AASHTO Committee on Bridges and Structures Annual Meeting
Kansas City, Mo.

June 12–14, 2023
International Bridge Conference
Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center
National Harbor, Md.

October 1–4, 2023
AREMA 2023 Annual Conference with Railway Interchange
Indiana Convention Center
Indianapolis, Ind.

October 3–6, 2023
PTI Committee Days
Ritz-Carlton, Cancun
Cancun, Mexico

October 4–8, 2023
PCI Committee Days Conference
JW Marriott
Tampa, Fla.

November 5–8, 2023
ASBI 2023 Annual Convention and Committee Meetings
Westin La Paloma Resort and Spa
Tucson, Ariz.

February 6–9, 2024
PCI Convention at The Precast Show
Hyatt Regency
Denver, Colo.

September 23–27, 2024
PCI Committee Days Conference
Loews Chicago O'Hare
Chicago, Ill.