



President's | Message

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International. Whenever you hear that word associated with any project, doesn't it just somehow become more exciting? Different cultures and geographies, the possibility for travel abroad, and the perception—real or imagined—that you are going to do something different; all these images come to mind whenever we hear “international.”

Projects can and do have different flavors based on the geographies with which they are associated; and, let's face it, each corner of the world does have its own way of doing things. But as our world becomes more “global,” isn't the concept of the international allure a bit outdated? Surely to the engineer working in China we comprise part of their “international” world. Change your perception slightly and we are ALL international, arguably just as exciting.

The theme of this month's *Journal*, *Working Overseas—The Importance of Doing Your Homework*, could not be more appropriately titled. As I am sure all of us who have been exposed to markets outside of our own country can attest, working abroad always involves more than just the project delivery. Failure to do your homework can easily result in disaster.

I had the privilege of serving on my firm's International Board, and it was quite an education on the intricacies of what is required to work abroad. The variances in technical approaches and other project-delivery issues are the “easy” stuff; after all, good engineering principals are universal. Currency concerns, federal regulations, and a multitude of other contingencies make working in international areas complex, and the decision to pursue something outside of your geographic region is one that should not be taken lightly. With all the requirements and risks, making sure you can deliver the product and secure the work is, ironically, secondary.

When my firm joined the Atkins family, we became part of a much more global enterprise. As a result, I along with my fellow North American employees became “more international” by default, even if we did not personally work on one project overseas. Every approach we take to business is now looked at for global consistency. This has forced us to understand, recognize and relate to the varying business practices throughout the globe on a daily basis. Our internal practices are now being influenced by a much larger and more diverse network. This learning process has been inspiring, and it is amazing to discover all the things that we had not been exposed to before, and to work through integrating global best practices more firmly in our business. Many of us, including me, are now regularly interacting with colleagues from all over the world, and bringing new ideas and innovative solutions to our clients as a result.

Whether or not you are working internationally, working for an international firm, embracing best international practices, or simply engaging professionally in your own back yard, I am sure you can appreciate the fact that we are all moving toward a more global and interconnected marketplace. The world is becoming more intertwined, and we can no longer easily remove ourselves from what is happening in other regions of our globe. So yes, we are all becoming more “worldly” in many aspects of our personal and professional lives. From my perspective, that's a good thing.

With these thoughts in mind, take some time to expose yourself to the truly awesome international projects that are highlighted in this month's *Journal*. You never know when some of those innovative solutions will turn out to be just what the client in your own back yard has been looking for. ■