

# Listen, Learn, and Pass It On

by Shane M. Maxemow

In today's society, sharing information seems to be more of an involuntary action than a conscious decision. Day by day, the world around us is becoming smaller and more connected. The concrete industry is no exception. The driving forces behind this information transmission include the pursuits of young professional members and the skills they leverage. It's important for each young professional to encourage collaboration and sharing between sectors of the concrete industry—not only to promote industry growth, but also to stimulate growth and development of each individual into a successful industry leader of tomorrow. There are several tools, some of which young professionals are very knowledgeable about, which can help drive the spread of knowledge and collaboration between sectors of the concrete industry.

The Internet is one of the most powerful resources that a young professional can use to effectively and efficiently encourage collaboration and the spread of knowledge. The concrete industry encompasses a multitude of professions (contractors, engineers, architects, and producers), which can be both a blessing and a curse. The industry casts a large net that involves a massive amount of knowledge and data, but with such a large amount of information, ideas tend to become diluted. The Internet gives the young professional the means to reach out to all these disciplines in one fell swoop. Internet tools such as LinkedIn and Facebook are excellent methods for generating special interest pages for sharing thoughts and questions. Video sharing and streaming sites such as YouTube and Skype also enable users to share ideas across the world. For example, a recent YouTube search of "RC Beam Design" resulted in 13,200 video links. Because the Internet can link multiple people to an idea of interest, regardless of time, location, or language, it can help drive knowledge and collaboration throughout the industry.

The cyberspace realm is an amazing platform to aid the spread of knowledge, but face-to-face events help solidify those ideas into realities. It's beneficial for young professionals to organize in-person meetings between groups to be able to facilitate growth of the organization, goals, and ideas. In-person meetings are particularly useful for the growth of young member groups and initiatives. For the concrete industry, technical presentations, informal group meetings, and hands-on demonstrations are the primary in-person events that help transmit ideas and knowledge.

In today's professional organizations, the latter two types of events (informal meetings and hands-on demonstrations) tend to be overshadowed by the technical presentation portion of an organization. However, these two types of events are

equally valuable for the spread of knowledge and collaboration between sectors. Informal gatherings and hands-on demonstrations tend to have a more comfortable and inviting atmosphere that encourages conversation and the spread of ideas between professionals. These events are particularly important for young practitioners and nondesign professionals because of the non-threatening environment displayed there. By participating in a wide range of programs, young professionals can successfully develop a culture of collaboration within the concrete industry.

The development of building information modeling (BIM) has given the concrete industry a great opportunity to enhance collaboration between various sectors of the industry. It affords the project team the ability to more effectively discuss the scope, possible complications, and constructibility of a project. Due to the fairly new nature of the BIM platforms, adoption has been slow in some sectors. It's important for young professionals to keep pushing this technology forward. By giving presentations and classes on the BIM platforms, young professionals can make those hesitant about the system more comfortable and driven to master the programs.

Concrete is a complex subject spanning multiple disciplines and numerous topics. With a culture built on collaboration and the transmission of knowledge, the concrete industry has the ability to reshape the world into an amazing place. Young professionals are a key factor in the concrete industry's goal of collaboration and the sharing of knowledge. By taking advantage of the many tools available today, young professionals can observe the industry's goals and constantly improve on them. I'll conclude with a quote from renowned management consultant Peter Ducker: "Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes."

Selected for reader interest by the editors.

*Winner of the 2015 ACI Young Professional Essay Contest.*



**Shane M. Maxemow** is a Structural Engineer with Silman, Washington, DC. He received his BS and MS in civil engineering from the University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.