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With the New Year we have opportunities for change and expectations of what the year will bring

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We all have great ambition to start the New Year off with working smarter, being more focused, and better informed. This is expected by society for people to make resolutions, have a fresh start, a new beginning. What does that mean for you? Everyone has different goals and dreams for what could transpire in 2014.

For O'Sullivan Architects, 2014 is truly a fresh start. We have just expanded our firm by acquiring another architecture/interiors firm. Suddenly there are new faces in the office, new ideas for ways to work, more interaction and all that is just while getting coffee in the morning. Of course with this expansion comes new challenges but also new opportunities. We have staff that bring new skills and new areas of practice as well as new clients.

It is a new year and I think we all see promise for the year ahead with an improved economy lifting our spirits and hopefully helping our bottom line. What are you doing to stay on top? What expectations do you have for the New Year? What new skills, ideas or opportunities will you peruse?

The best approach to growing your business in 2014 is to network. There are events geared to many market segments sponsored by trade groups, alumni organizations, Chambers of Commerce, businesses and more. Go through your contacts and reach out to some people you have not spoken to recently. It is important to connect with clients, peers, and others with knowledge about your industry. The more informed and connected you are the more you can be of service to your clients and the more valuable a resource you will become.

The best start to the New Year for me is attending the International Builders Show. This venue has builders, suppliers and building industry professional from across the country for a week of networking, sharing and learning. The show has events for meeting people, classes to learn or improve your knowledge and more products than you could ever think of related to the building industry. I have also been appointed to some committees and boards which gives me access to peers from throughout the country. We meet to discuss trends, business issues, new innovations and better ways to do business. Having these peers to bounce ideas off, discuss business problems and learn what others are doing in other parts of the country gives me an edge with clients when I return home to Boston.

Another aspect of business which deserves attention in the New Year is your image. I am not talking about losing weight or a new haircut but a review of your business image. You need to look at your office space and the impression it gives about you and the company. Is the area cluttered or outdated, is the material on display still pertinent to your business today? Does it express your talents? We at O'Sullivan Architects had a quick lesson in this as we attempted to integrate material from two companies joining forces in one space. We had to reshuffle our space and decide whether

things were needed or were just taking up space. The joining of the companies also brought differing ideas of how to utilize our space, how we want clients to perceive what we do and the way to express it.

Beyond your physical presence there is your online presence, how you appear in publications and what associations your business maintains. We are looking at where we spend money and resources to promote ourselves. The stationary we use, our typeface for correspondence, the forms we use are all up for scrutiny and this is a healthy thing for the company. Looking at our website has promoted us to hire a firm to rebuild it from the ground up. We are reviewing many websites and deciding which ideas could work for us as design professionals. Getting new material for the website has spurred us to contact clients we have not spoken to recently and to discuss taking photos of completed project.

With the New Year being here we have opportunities for change and expectations of what the next year will be. The time is now here to shape those expectations through an evaluation of ourselves, our businesses, our professional focus and possibly who we do business with. You may look at everything and find some things need change, some need a little more attention and other are working just fine but it is important to take a look.

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