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Leading the AEC industry into the future - by Maria Maia

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Every group of people working towards a common goal requires leadership in one form or another; and firms and interest groups within the design, construction and real estate industries are no different. Leadership begins with the ability to communicate ideas effectively and to grow from there, learning from trusted mentors, eliciting best performance from your teams, navigating conflict, managing change within your organizations, becoming a mentor to the rising wave of new talent, and setting the stage for subsequent generations to succeed. There are as many different types of leaders and leadership styles as there are groups to be led. The study of leadership is a field unto itself, but some of the most common leadership styles include the following:

Authoritarian Leadership: Authoritarian leaders lead from the top-down, focusing almost entirely on results and efficiency. This leadership style can work well in high-stress environments with a single, focused goal for a team to accomplish, but often strains relations among teams.

Coaching Leadership: Coaching leaders seek to recognize team members' strengths, weaknesses, and motivations to help each individual improve. They provide guidance to advance individual skills and strengthen the team as a whole. This style is most effective when followers are self-starters, responsible, agreeable, and accept accountability.

Visionary Leadership: Visionary leaders seek to inspire team members with a bold vision for the future and offer strong support for new ideas and ways of operating. These leaders can create a thriving organization with long-term success. (Think Steve Jobs.)

Servant Leadership: Servant leaders seek to meet the needs of their team members before asking what team members can do for the group. These types of leaders believe that team members work best when their emotional and professional needs are fulfilled, allowing them to be fully engaged. Furthermore, the servant leader shares power and helps their people develop and perform as highly as possible. (The Ultimate Mentor)

Hands-Off Leadership: The hands-off leader is resourceful, creative, and compassionate. They build capable, specialized teams, then allow them to do what they do best, which can lead to greater creativity. The hands-off leader keeps the big picture in perspective and offers regular feedback to individuals and teams. This leadership style works best when all team members are competent, experienced, and trust one another.

As an industry group dedicated to being a leading knowledge network for the exchange of information and innovative ideas, the Construction Institute (CI) continually strives to create stronger collaborative relationships among architects, engineers, constructors, owners and other industry stakeholders. The study of effective (and ineffective) leadership is a subject near and dear to its core mission and values. That's why last year, CI began holding an annual AEC Leadership Conference. The CI's advisory council saw the need for such a program to provide a resource specific to our disciplines, and to help set a course to the future. This year's conference will take place on November 7, at Goodwin College, with the theme "Get to Know the Leader in You."

It will provide participants with the tools to design their own unique paths to leadership by hearing from keynote speakers, panelists, and workshop leaders who will share their insights and take participants through a self-discovery assessment that is both inspiring and practical.

Leadership programs come in many shapes and sizes across local, regional, and national areas, but leadership programs focused specifically on the AEC/O industry are few and far between. Our purpose-driven program gives you the opportunity to meet the challenges you will face as our industry embraces new technologies and new ways of working. We hope that you will join us!

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