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2021 Ones to Watch: Steven Dube, Design Center Manager, Helical Drilling Inc.

May 28, 2021 - Spotlights

What led you to your current profession? My senior year capstone project required us to design a multi-story tower in the Boston area. During that project, I learned that I enjoyed the foundation design far more than the structural design. This experience led me to apply to GEI Consultants, where I spent the first 3+ years of my career in geotechnical consulting. At GEI, I was exposed to ground improvement design for the first time, which I really enjoyed. When an opportunity became available to work for the ground improvement contractor HELICAL, I jumped at the opportunity to dive more into the ground improvement world.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career? Over my career, I've had two notable mentors. Mike Flynn, who I worked with at my first full-time position after college, had a huge impact on my career development. Mike frequently pulled me into a variety of design/construction work and offered in-depth training/guidance along the way. Working with Mike helped to develop the foundation for my career in the geotechnical industry. My current mentor is also my manager at Helical, Mike Pockoski. He has helped guide me to becoming a better communicator and leader, which continues to push my career forward.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles? In my experience, motivation is rooted in an employee's belief that the work they do is important and that the company has a vested interest in their skills and well-being. I foster those principles by explaining the purpose/value of each task, regularly guiding, educating, and training to make sure they 'understand' rather than just 'do' the work, promoting a strong work-life balance, and providing bi-annual performance reviews (in addition to HR conducted reviews). I frequently put in the extra work to help my team get the job done and pride myself in being someone they can always count on.

What advice can you offer to someone who is interested in a career in your industry? The geotechnical industry is a diverse and complex mix of theory and experience. Young engineers should strive to gain exposure to as many different aspects of geotechnical design and construction as possible during the first few years after college. Getting out in the field to observe borings, subgrade prep., pile testing, etc. will help develop a more complete understanding of geotechnical design and construction. As a young engineer's career transitions to more design and office work, the field experience will be the backbone that a good design engineer can work from.

