



Advancing Design Quality Management ²⁰²²

Improving Technical Standards for Building Design

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH:



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Improving mentoring and continuing education seems to be critical to improving quality across the industry. Why is this?

The focus of an architectural education is to teach process-based thinking and problem seeking, which are critical to the architectural process and serve as a great foundation to prepare the young architect to understand design and be a generalist. However, in the full breath of roles an architect might have inside and outside of a consultant practice, it is just the springboard, giving the skills to acquire the knowledge needed to practice.

So it is necessary to provide formal and informal continuing education in specialty areas as architects evolve in their career. It starts with firm based methodologies of production and design but grows quickly into area of specialization and knowledge based expertise.

The only way to accelerate the learning and adjust to market and technology changes is continuing education and mentorship so the learn can be focused and mindful, which is necessary for any quality program.

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One of the best aspects of the architectural profession is being engaged by the world for architectural services through which you get front row seat inside your client's world, many times

teaching you some aspect of the world previously unknown to you, and if your lucky with a few clients see the way the world will be changed by what they are doing before it happens.

You describe CannonDesign's Quality program as the 'Quality Continuum'. What are the steps required to achieve this?

It starts with finding the best people available. We go to colleges and we recruit the best people we can get (we can't wait for them to come to us). It is important to understand their skills and their desires in terms of their professional aspirations so that we can meet their needs.

Training typical starts in the methodologies of practice, planning, design, documenting as a mechanism to promote the individual's productivity and success in the practice, taking care to not only teach how and what we do but why we do it. After a relatively brief period of time, the education will need to change focus to expand beyond this to meet member of the firm's educational and professional growth aspirations. Growing their interests and expertise contributes to satisfaction, which should allow them to grow and stay inside the firm. There is

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not a larger contributor to quality, than teams that have worked together for years and compliment each other with their skills. To get there you have to grow and retain your people.

You have spoken about how you have built, organized and connected a human infrastructure to improve Quality firmwide. What do you mean by this and how have you achieved it?

A process which is continuously evolving requires a support structure. Quality can often be seen as an oversight program but it should be seen a support system.

CannonDesign is a large organization and we have to communicate evolving processes, standards, and best practices effectively which means meeting members of the firm at different levels of engagement so that there is engagement.

We have an internal social media platform which communicates what's going on in the Firm in terms of projects, processes, research, evolving standards and social engagement. The system allows free contribution by members of the firm allowing even the newest member of the firm to contribute to the dialogue, while also allowing grassroots innovative processes and workflows to be shared from the desktop to the desktop, whether desk are across the office, on the other side of the country or the other side of the world.

Innovation seldom comes from the top-down, it comes from the desktop up and the people that understand the content in detail and their freedom to contribution is essential.

Quality is a result of a dialogue between leadership and the desktop leveraging innovation to improve quality or mitigate risk. At its highest potential our internal social media platform starts to approach providing the four characteristics for a system of profound knowledge espoused by Edward Deming and at its minimal level helps to allow people connection to something larger than themselves, their project or even their office.

What are you looking forward to most about attending Advancing Design Quality Management 2022?

Participating in and attending conferences serves as a health check on your practice. You can see how others are addressing the same or similar problem. Not everything will be earth shaking and somethings will just be reminders of things you knew, but dropped by the way-side. However every once in a while there is that one insight that resonates which has the potential to be a game changer for your practice or reinvigorate your quality program.

So I am looking forward to sharing and learning which is how you maintain a quality continuum.

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