

MARKETER

BD TRENDS & PREDICTIONS

INTERNATIONAL BD IN THE
NOW NORMAL

SETTING A BASELINE TO
MEASURE TRENDS

EYES ON THE FUTURE:
MAKING BIG MOVES



CASE STUDY

Designing Your Firm's Future A Succession Story

By Mike Plotnick

Leadership succession is a formidable challenge for every A/E/C organization. It's a rite of passage that involves identifying and enlisting the individual(s) who will usher a firm into the future.

There's no common blueprint for passing the leadership torch to the next generation. Some firms choose a traditional path as founders retire and successors are named. Others take a less conventional approach, embracing a broader leadership platform.

When Krueck Sexton Partners (KSP) announced its new name and expanded leadership team in September 2020, it was the culmination of a succession planning process that began nearly a decade ago.

"We published the firm's first-ever strategic plan in 2012, which really set the foundation for everything that followed," says Thomas Jacobs, AIA, LEED BD+C, co-managing partner of the 40-person, Chicago-based practice. Jacobs and co-founders Ron Krueck, FAIA, and Mark Sexton, FAIA, started exploring several scenarios for the next generation of leadership.

Expanding Impact

KSP was founded in 1979 as Krueck + Sexton Architects. Throughout its history, the firm had operated as a traditional design studio, with its four partners making every decision—from what projects it pursued to where people sat in the office. The partners sought to expand their leadership team and allocate management responsibilities among a broader group.

"What ultimately made the decision fairly easy was that we identified five long-term employees whose combined talents are much greater than what might be considered a perfect individual partner," Jacobs says.

Not only did the approach provide several high-performing associate principals with career-growth opportunities, but it broadened the collective expertise the firm could bring to its clients.

"The diversity of perspectives is something we all felt was very important, especially in today's business and marketing

environment," Jacobs says. "In fact, I think the need for more partnerships has never been more important than it is today."

After considering several potential firm names to reflect the expanded partnership platform, the team ultimately selected Krueck Sexton Partners because it retained the founders' names and referenced the collaborative culture that's a hallmark of its design approach. "Two people partnered together to start this firm, and we wanted to formalize that model as something that we don't think should ever change," says Jacobs.

Each new partner is charged with overseeing one of five new strategic initiatives: operations, technology, empowerment, the future, and environment. Every employee gets to choose one of these groups, which meet weekly and report to the entire staff on a rotating basis during KSP's weekly Friday Forum gatherings.

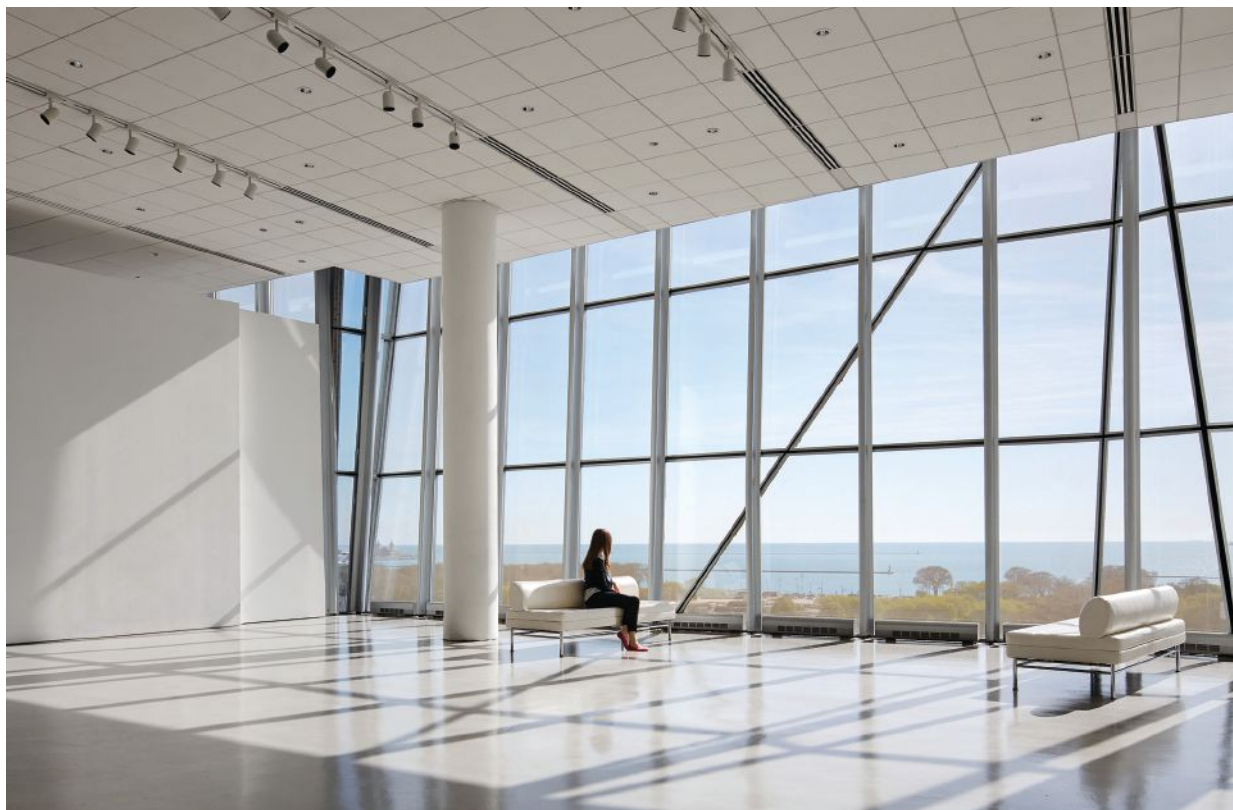
"Architecture is a team sport and you need every single person—whether they're fresh out of school or they've been practicing for 40 years," says Jacobs. "I think we're incredibly fortunate because there are a number of people who already act like they own the firm."

Communicating the Shift

As part of the leadership expansion, the practice also added a controller and director of marketing and communications to work hand in hand with the partners in support of the firm's strategic growth goals.

Marjanne Pearson, founder and chief of Talentstar, served as an advisor to the partners on strategy and direction. She worked closely with Linda Wallack, who functioned as an interim director of marketing and communications, to activate the process as well as the marketing and business development strategy.

Jonas Foster, Associate AIA, Industry IIDA, who joined KSP as director of marketing and communications in July 2020, guided the development of messaging and materials to announce the new KSP brand experience to clients, employees, and others. He developed a six-week implementation and execution plan to maximize the impact and awareness of the announcement.



"Originally, the firm had planned to produce a traditional mailer, but because of COVID-19, we pivoted that strategy to embrace the digital ecosystem," he says. The multifaceted campaign included a video, e-blast, PR, and social media outreach.

Before announcing the changes externally, Foster convened a series of internal staff forums so employees could hear about them first. "Everyone has embraced our evolution from a founder's firm to a partnership practice and what it means to be a brand ambassador for the firm," he says. The video was a unique opportunity for KSP to promote its values of inclusivity and diversity by featuring all employees in the overall message.

KSP collaborated with Span, a Chicago-based branding studio, to develop its new logo, website, visual identity package, and video.

Ultimately, Jacobs believes the new practice model will increase KSP's overall value to clients. "We want clients to recognize that we not only deliver traditional architectural services, but that we can also leverage our skills as innovators and advocates for the benefit of the broader community, which ultimately benefits them as well."

Foster adds, "When most firms are consolidating or liquidating, we're doing the exact opposite by investing in our talent and business infrastructure." By pivoting and focusing on its employees and clients, KSP is setting itself up for long-term success. ■

✶ **Editor's note:** Marjanne Pearson appears with Brien McDaniel in our feature, "Eyes on the Future: Making Big Moves," on page 40.

Designed by Krueck Sexton Partners, the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership in Chicago, IL, fosters community and transparency within the organization and is also used for revenue-generating event rentals. Photo by Hall + Merrick.



MIKE PLOTNICK is principal of Plotlines, a communications consulting firm in St. Louis, MO, that helps organizations identify, build, and share their stories. Before launching the firm in 2012, he served as vice president and communications manager at HOK. Contact him at 314.477.4530 or mike@elevateyourstory.com.

Case Study Contributors



Jonas Foster, Associate AIA, Industry IIDA
Director of Marketing & Communications
KSP



Thomas Jacobs, AIA, LEED BD+C
Co-Managing Partner
KSP

MARKETER

Editor

Christine Chirichella (christine@smps.org)

Contributing Editors

Mark Buckshon, CPSM (buckshon@cnrgp.com)

Ida Cheinman (ida@substance151.com)

Craig S. Galati, FAIA, FSMPS, CPSM (cgalati@lgainc.com)

Matt Handal (matt.handal@traunerconsulting.com)

Ed Hannan (edhannan@gmail.com)

Jen McGovern, CPSM (jmcgovern@vhb.com)

Michael J. Reilly, FSMPS (mreilly@reillycommunications.com)

Nancy J. Usrey, FSMPS, CPSM (nusrey@hntb.com)

Jennifer Van Vleet, CPSM (jennifer.vanvleet@stantec.com)

Joy Woo, CPSM, LEED AP (joy.woo@aecom.com)

SMPS President

Doug Parker, FSMPS, CPSM (doug@elevatemarketingadvisors.com)

Chief Executive Officer

Michael V. Geary, CAE (michael@smps.org)

Publisher

Marci D. Thompson, DES, Chief Growth Officer (marci@smps.org)

SMPS Marketing

Molly Dall'Erta, Awards Program Director (molly@smps.org)

Josh Miles, Chief Marketing Officer (josh@smps.org)

Michele Santiago, M.S., Director of Marketing (michele@smps.org)

Linda Smolkin, Content Manager (linda@smps.org)

Lauren Waldron, Associate Director of Marketing (lauren@smps.org)

Design

TGD Communications (tgdcom.com)

Advertising Sales

Christine Chirichella, Manager, Professional Development and Partnerships (christine@smps.org)



123 N. Pitt Street, Suite 400, Alexandria, VA 22314-3133
TF: 703.549.6117 • smps.org

Business Transformed Through Marketing Leadership.

The Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) is the only organization dedicated to creating business opportunities in the A/E/C industries. With almost 7,000 members, SMPS provides leadership and professional development programs, industry research, business-building events, and vital marketing resources. Through SMPS, A/E/C professionals tap into powerful networks to form project teams, secure business referrals and intelligence, and benchmark performance. The Society is committed to validating the practice of marketing and business development as essential to the success of all professional services firms.

Marketer (ISSN 0 199-3690) is published bimonthly (February, April, June, August, October, and December).

©2020 Entire contents copyright by SMPS with all rights reserved. Partial quotation with attribution is encouraged, but reproduction in whole or part is strictly prohibited. All material submitted for possible publication becomes the property of SMPS. The views expressed in this publication are the opinions of the authors and not necessarily of SMPS. Letters should be addressed to the editor or publisher; please include your name, address, and phone number. *Marketer* reserves the right to edit all submitted material.

Postmaster: Send changes to *Marketer*, SMPS, 123 N. Pitt Street, Suite 400, Alexandria, VA 22314-1588.

Member annual dues are \$399, of which \$27.50 is allocated for *Marketer* subscription; nonmember subscription rate is \$115.50.



Second Lives | After Bottles (plastic bottle pavilion), Troy, NY. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI): School of Architecture + Lydia Kallipoliti. © Ines Leong / L-INES Photo, l-ines.com. See Page 31 for the Story Behind the Picture.



Featured Photographer

INES LEONG is an architectural photographer based in Brooklyn, NY. With over 15 years of experience as a photographer, Leong has collaborated with clients in the built environment locally and globally. Her motto of “creating the best-case scenario in reality” is in full display in her work, which has led her to be in publications such as *A+U*, *Architectural Record*, and *The New York Times*, just to name a few. Leong is a member of SMPS New York and often can be found in coffee shops when she's not photographing. For more information and her work, please visit www.l-ines.com. Contact her at 347.422.7883 or hello@l-ines.com.

Story Behind the Picture | Throughout *Marketer*, we feature the photographic work of an SMPS member. Photographs for each article are chosen with intention to highlight a concept in the article or to provide aesthetic value. We have added an icon to some of the photo credits to delve a bit into the story behind the picture. Look for this photographic insight on pages 1, 22, 31, 51.

United States Postal Service Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (Required by 39 USC 3685)

Publication Title: *Marketer*,
Publication No.: 42-3890

Filing Date: 9/29/20; Issue
Frequency: Bimonthly (Feb., Apr.,
June, Aug., Oct., Dec.); Issues
Published Annually: 6

Annual Subscription Price:
\$27.50 as member dues, \$115.50
nonmember

Mailing Address of Office of
Publication and Headquarters:
123 N. Pitt Street, Suite 400,
Alexandria, VA 22314

Publisher: Society for Marketing
Professional Services, 123 N. Pitt
Street, Suite 400, Alexandria,
VA 22314

Business Manager: Michele
Santiago (address above)

Owner: Society for Marketing
Professional Services, 123 N. Pitt
Street, Suite 400, Alexandria, VA
22314

Known Bondholders/Mortgagees,
or Other Security Holders Owning
or Holding 1 Percent or More of
Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages,
or Other Securities: None

The purpose, function, and
nonprofit status of this organization
and the exempt status for federal
income tax purposes have not
changed during the preceding
12 months.

Issue Date for Circulation Data that
Follows: 7/20/20

The first number is the average
number of copies of each issue
during preceding 12 months.

The second number is the actual
number of copies of single issue
published nearest to filing date.

Total No. Copies (Net Press Run):
4210/500

Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
3526/0

Paid Distribution by Other Classes
of Mail through USPS: 28/0

Total Paid and/or Requested
Circulation: 3554/0

Free Copies Mailed at Other
Classes Through USPS: 235/127

Free Distribution Outside the Mail:
401/353

Total Free Distribution: 636/480

Total Distribution: 4190/480

Copies Not Distributed: 20/20

Total: 4210/500

Percent Paid and/or Requested
Circulation: 84.82%/0%

Signature and Title of Editor,
Publisher, Business Manager,
or Owner: Michele Santiago,
Business Manager, 9/29/20

