

Empowering Talent: Becoming a Small Employer Who Delivers Big

Jeff Pelletier, AIA, CPHC
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WHY
AM I
HERE?

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Hi - I'm Jeff.

Board  Vellum

Architects



Landscape Architects



Interior Designers



You likely have a lot more employees than me...



We are small but mighty.

This helps us attract & retain top talent



This helps us attract & retain top talent



You're all here to learn and to create a team that's happy and kicks some butt.



Way back in 2011...



BOARDandVELLUM was founded by Jeff Pelletier in March of 2011. Jeff has extensive architectural experience working in single family residential, multi-family residential, mixed-use, commercial, retail, and interior design and will be leveraging that experience in his new firm focusing on smaller projects. The goal for design work is to exceed our client expectations and deliver them whatever style they are most comfortable with, although Jeff's strengths are in traditional and transition design.

The staffing size of the firm is anticipated to be 2 people by the end of 2012 with the addition of an intern to help in production and to provide an additional avenue for revenue. The firm will be located at Jeff's house with office space in the attic currently and eventually moving to a finished out building (former garage) where it could seat two people.

Jeff has extensive experience in working in the Business Development and Marketing department at GGLO and will be leveraging his large contact list in order to drum up work. Additionally, the experience in project management and running GGLO's BO budget has provided me a good base for firm operations.

MISSION STATEMENT

Your advocates for great architecture big or small.

WHO WE ARE

A small firm that is flexible, responsive to client needs, and passionate about defending the goals of our clients and not our own design interests. The goal is to eventually build a larger staff size but it isn't anticipated to be over 2 people by the end of 2012.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING STRATEGY

It became clear to Jeff while at GGLO that numerous smaller projects were flooding the market that GGLO couldn't effectively compete for as the overhead rate was too high and staff was too expensive. These projects were all ones that were made aware to Jeff but weren't ones he could effectively compete for. It is the goal of this new firm to initially leverage our contact list and acquire projects. Jeff will be extending his involvement in community organizations and serving as a visible resource. It is clear that projects, especially in this economy, are given to people who the Architect already knows or if there is a mutual contact. It is Jeff's goal to build that contact list and leverage online social media as much as possible. A blog with useful content to clients and consultants has been started with the goal of cementing the mission statement as an Architectural advocate. BOARDandVELLUM is also open to teaming with another smaller firm to work on potential larger multi-family projects and that would be conveyed to prospective clients.

HOW WE DISTINGUISH OURSELVES

There's a slew of small Architectural firms out there, however, it is believed that BOARDandVELLUM has a unique opportunity.

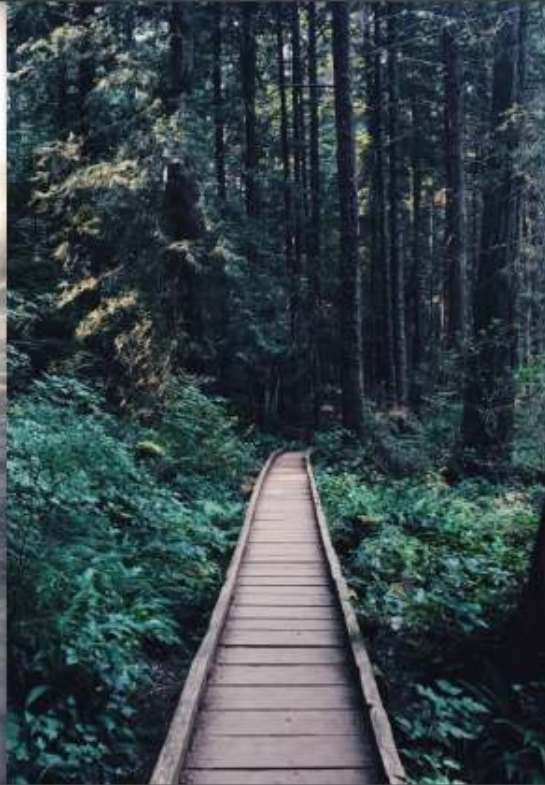
- The firm will focus on more traditional architecture, something that many smaller firms shy away from yet the vast majority of clients and buildings today are actually built in that style.
- Jeff's involvement in the community while at GGLO has given him an extensive client list which will be invaluable in getting studies for multi-family projects.
- Jeff's extensive project management training and skills are going to be invaluable in making sure that clients get what they need when they want it.
- A strong social media and blog presence will help connect to younger and more web savvy clients.

OUR CLIENTS

Generally urban residents with an interest in creating custom designs for their projects. It is anticipated that there will be a large percentage of same sex couples due to Jeff's involvement in LGBT community groups. Our clients will be respectful of the Architect.

Three large, white, stylized question marks are arranged horizontally in the center of the image. The background is dark and features abstract, layered geometric shapes in shades of grey and blue, creating a sense of depth and mystery.

What I imagined





I'm no romantic

I have an affliction

- I'm organized and determined.
- I wanted to create something great.

Starting My Own Firm - Pros and Cons		Things I need to figure out or Do	Things to Get from the office
PRO	CON		
I set my own hours	I have to find work	Mission Statement	PM forms
I can eventually earn more money there as an owner	will be able to separate work from home life?	how to get a business license	project photography I was involved in
I can wear what I want	pay is uncertain	business insurance	LEED study materials
I can interact with clients	it will be hard to diversify	business loans	office contacts / personal contacts
I get to design houses!!	will work alone	health insurance	F drive CAD details
I can eventually design what I like	won't have people to out my work	firm name	work authorizations / contracts
dogs at the office!	what happens if I get busy?	marketing strategy	building code books
maybe more time with kids	will miss mentoring / overseeing people?	how to set up a website	
pride in what I do	I won't have the prestige I could at a larger firm	talk to Don & Bryan Fish about partnering	
I don't have to have greater expectations besides just being a great architect with great clients	have to do everything myself	need computers / printers / etc.	
I can stop getting involved in larger than life nonprofits and just be involved in stuff I care about	if I fail will I be able to get a new job to replace the one I lost?	figure out how to make large reprographics	
I will get to travel around in my car a lot and meet people for BD opps	I lose 6 years of growth at GGLO towards becoming an owner there	buy desks	
can be a community leader		buy office supplies	
I could partner with Chris on a real estate venture		where the heck will my office be?	
real wealth comes from having your own business		need to hire an accountant / tax guy	
I can turn down projects I don't want		office paperwork / letterheads, etc.	

BLOG!



Interior Design

Simple Tips For Creating a Statement Bathroom

Why design a statement bathroom? For one, it's one of the most frequented spaces in the home. Have one you're proud of showing off, and you won't mind when friends and family visit it. What does it take to make a bathroom worth showing off? Here are some simple tips for creating a statement bathroom.

[Read more.](#)



Ask an Architect, Commercial Office, Custom Residential, Interior Design, Landscape Architecture, Multi-Family Residential, Retail

Hourly vs. Fixed-Fee Billing: What is the Difference?

How do you decide between hourly vs. fixed-fee billing? People really don't like to talk about money, but you need to talk about it enough to make the right choice about how you would like your project billed. Here is how these two billing methods work, and why you might prefer one over the other.

[Read more.](#)



Arts & Culture, Events

Work by Marysol A. Damo in the "By Others" Gallery at Board & Vellum

The Capitol Hill Art Walk is coming up again, and here in Board & Vellum's By Others gallery, we are hosting a show by artist Marysol A. Damo. Read our Q&A with her to learn a little about her work ahead of the May 10th opening reception.

[Read more.](#)



Other Tangents

Unlikely Inspiration: The Strange Journeys of the Creative Process

A lot of times, unlikely inspiration solves your problems. To non-designers, it may seem a little crazy, but just as any odd thing can remind you of something else entirely, for designers, that experience often triggers their brains about a project they are working on, taking them on a mental journey towards a design solution.

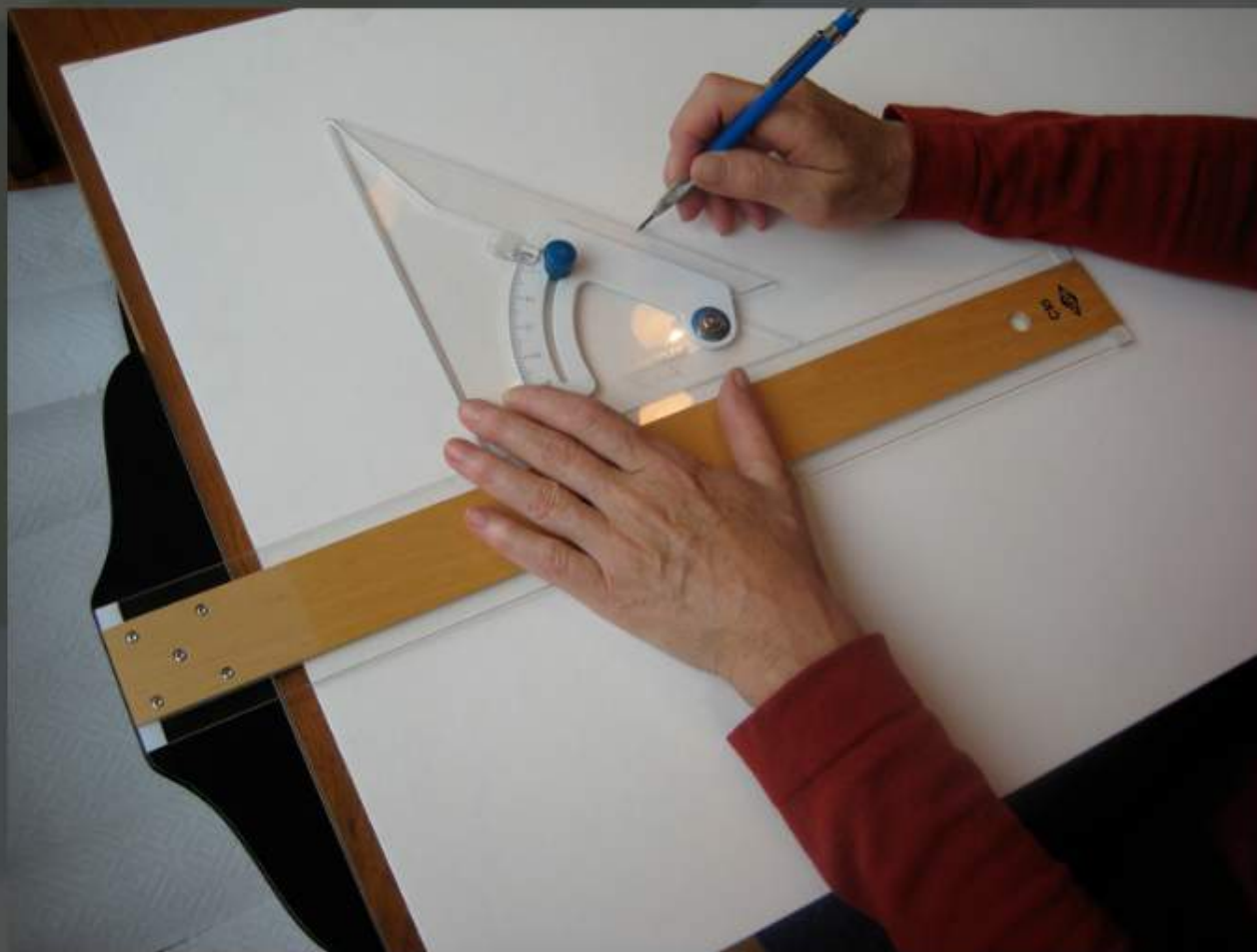
[Read more.](#)



I'm a heck of a hustler

It's about the people

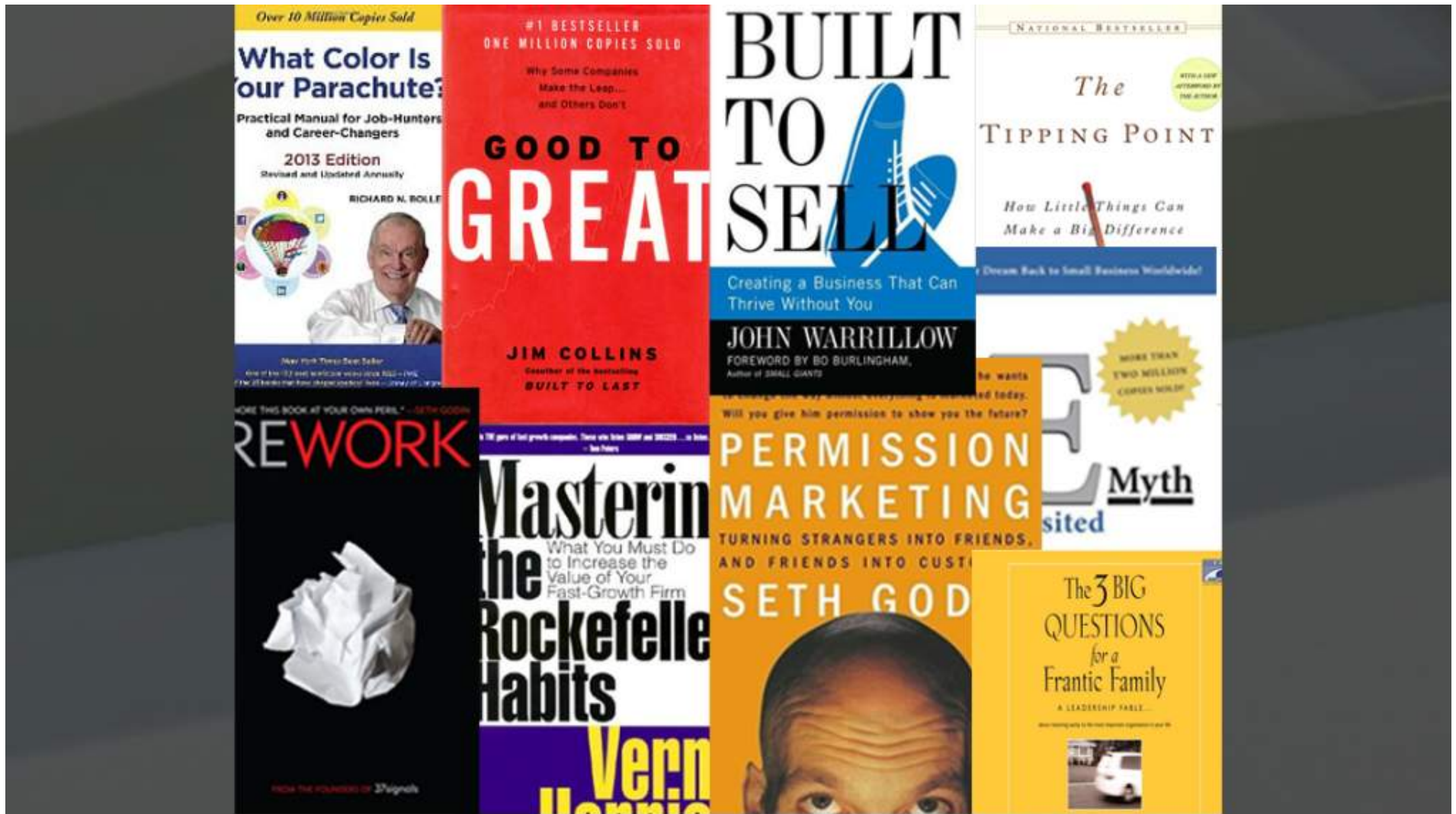
- Treat them well
- Get out of their way





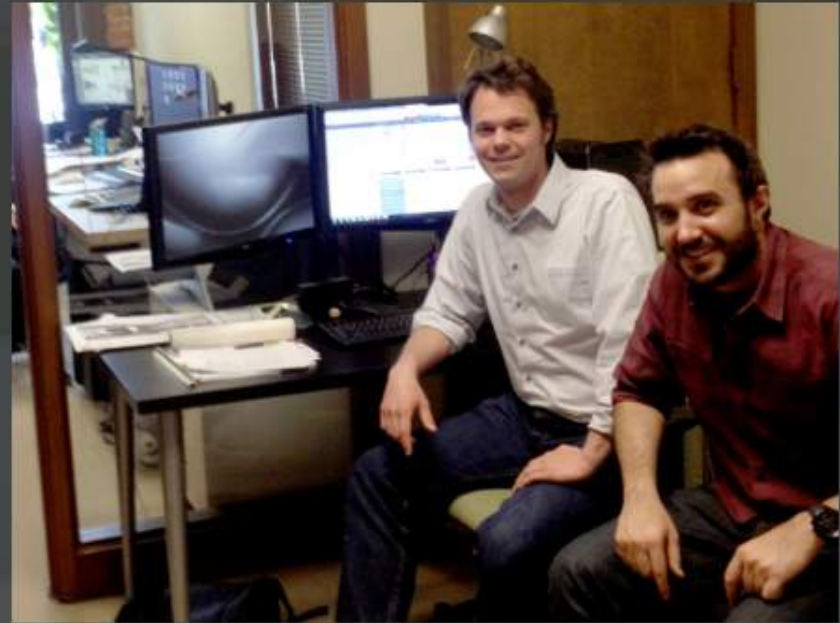




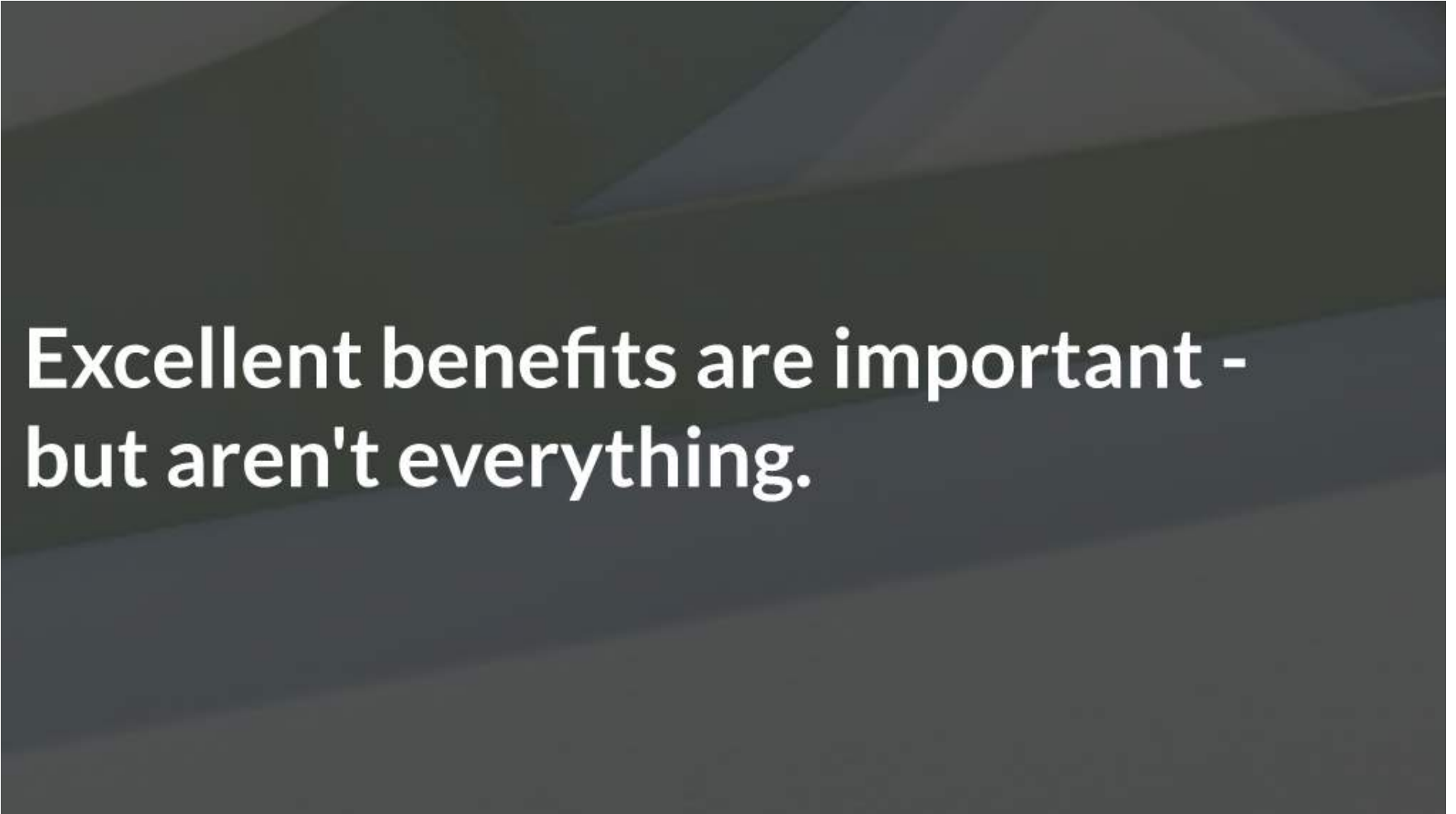


What worked?

- Hiring great people
- Let them add to the vision
- Luck!







**Excellent benefits are important -
but aren't everything.**





Mistakes happen!

Mistakes happen!

Ditch that software!

Mistakes happen!

Ditch that software!

Not all your people are right!

Mistakes happen!

Ditch that software!

Not all your people are right!

Move!

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Not all your people are right!

Move!

Take that vacation!

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Annual Retreat



Strategic Plan

Board & Vellum



Board & Vellum
115 15th Avenue East, Suite 100
Seattle, WA 98112
206.707.8895
boardandvellum.com

Your advocate for great
architecture, interior design,
and landscape architecture,
large and small.

Core Drivers

We Are Approachable

We Are Active Communicators

We Are Authentic

We Are Honest

Our Decisions Are Anchored By Ethics and Morals

We Don't Shy Away From Profit

We Have Fun

We Evolve

We Are Flexible

We Strive For Excellence

6 Major Efforts

For 2018 and beyond, we have grouped our efforts into six major categories:

1 Oil The Machine

Refine our process, improve our methods, increase productivity, and just make everything work better.

2 Elevate Our Work

Slowly and carefully grow our project mix, elevate our design quality, and produce better documents.

3 Streamline Our Human Resources

Fine-tune how we on-board new employees, rollout resources for what it is like to work here, document and implement a clear performance review process, resolve hierarchy issues.

4 Revolutionize The Design Industry

Be a force for greater good in the industry, and help change the national and global conversation about what working in a design firm can actually be like.

5 Community Engagement

Be active in our neighborhoods, solidify our role as a neighborhood-friendly design firm, help our neighbors, and lead our communities.

6 Up Our Financial Game

Ensure that we stay profitable, while still providing excellent value to our clients.

Protect Personal Time

- Build into your contracts.
- Overtime after 6:00 = 1.5 hourly rate.

Transparency

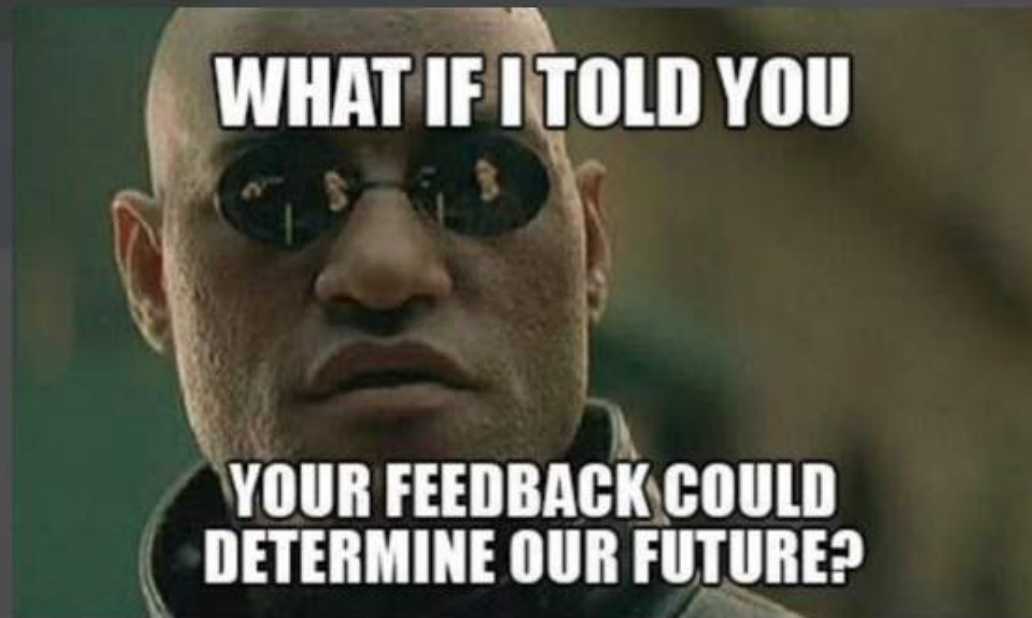




Budget Together!

Hiring - Group Interviews

Surveys



"Getting Real with Jeff"



Awesome Benefits

Awesome Benefits

- Four Weeks Vacation - for everyone

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- PAID Parental & Family Leave

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- PAID Parental & Family Leave
- Paid time to: Study & Volunteer

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- Salary in top 25% of architecture firms

Awesome Benefits

- Four Weeks Vacation - for everyone
- PAID Parental & Family Leave
- Paid time to: Study & Volunteer
- Project Revenue
- Salary in top 25% of architecture firms
- Awesome internal training program

Fire people!
You aren't a family.
You are a team.



Sunk Cost Fallacy

Why change now?

We've already wasted
so much money.



som^{ee}cards
user card

Micro Management = Misery



Your employees will do things differently than you - that's ok.

Let Your Staff Lead

Let Your Staff Lead

Flat structure - remove the process

Let Your Staff Lead

**Flat structure - remove the process
Champions**

Let Your Staff Lead

Flat structure - remove the process

Champions

Mentoring

Let Your Staff Lead

Flat structure - remove the process

Champions

Mentoring

Employee Ownership

Let Your Staff Lead

Flat structure - remove the process

Champions

Mentoring

Employee Ownership

Same title - values younger staff

Empower!

- Let your staff make mistakes.
- Make sure your clients know they will make mistakes.

Tell Your Story



Firm Culture



Disrupting the Design Industry with Great Benefits

By Jeff Polletier February 6, 2018

Why the design industry can (and should) offer great benefits.

I want to disrupt what it means to work in a design firm.

That's a simple sentence, right? I certainly didn't start out with the goal of Board & Vellum being "disruptive." I wanted to do some good work, with some good people, and have a good time. Nice and simple. But in the end, that wasn't enough.

However, what happened (is happening!) at Board & Vellum is far from simple.

It became clear that there's a tangible benefit to taking the path less traveled when it comes to how we operate and how we structure this firm. Not only do we get to work in an environment where people are pushing themselves professionally to do better work and to serve our clients better, but also — as a business owner — there are all sorts of other benefits to creating a great place to work.

Business owners reap their own benefits by offering a great benefits package:

- **Low Turnover:** In fact, turnover at Board & Vellum is basically non-existent, except for people leaving for personal reasons. (For instance, hello, Anne in Arkansas, we miss you.)
- **Low Training Time:** Due to that lack of turnover, our time to train new employees is

You have too much to do



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**Seattle
Business**

WASHINGTON'S

100

**BEST COMPANIES
TO WORK FOR**

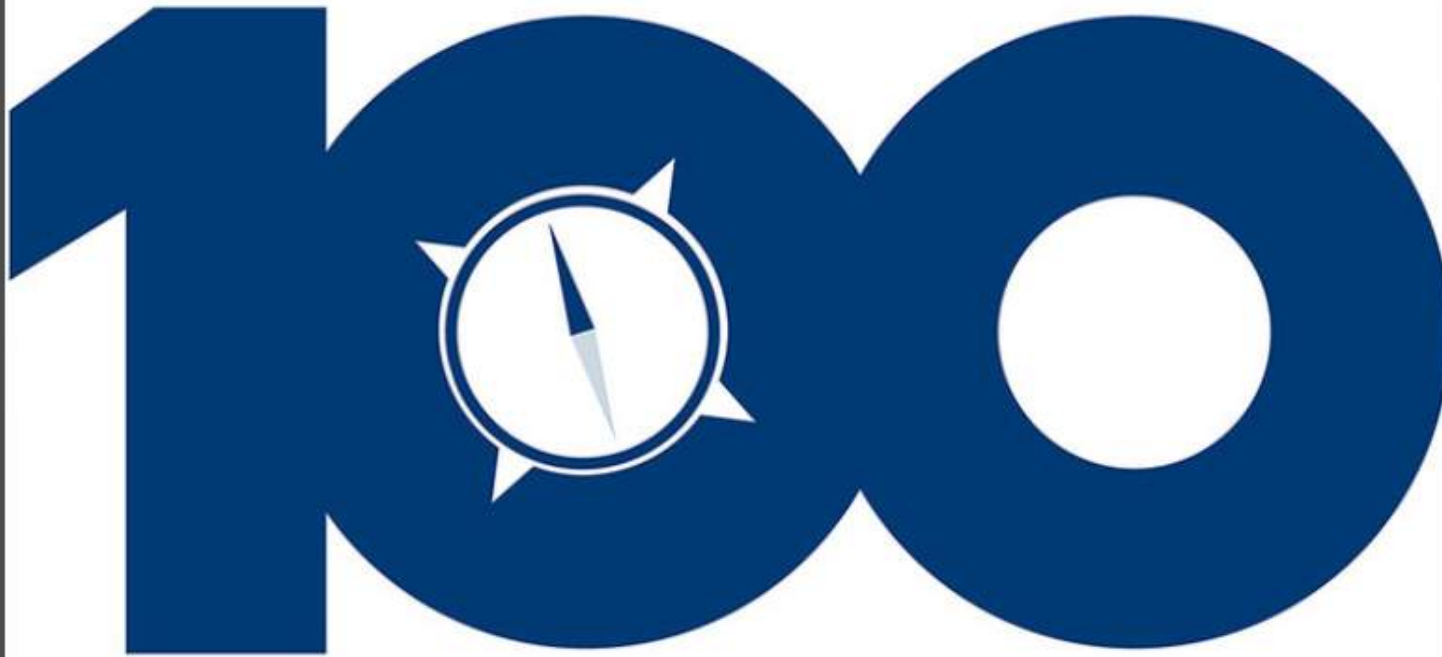
WINNER

PUGET SOUND **BUSINESS JOURNAL**




**2017 WASHINGTON'S
BEST WORKPLACES**

PUGET SOUND **BUSINESS JOURNAL** | 2017



FASTEST-GROWING
PRIVATE COMPANIES



**Recognized by our peers as the
"#1 Residential Architect and the
#5 Restaurant Architect in Seattle"**

SeattleArchitects.org



It's (Really) About More Than Awards...

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- **70% of staff have referred work to the firm.**

It's (Really) About More Than Awards...

- **70% of staff have referred work to the firm.**
- **No one has left for another job.**





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WHAT
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WHAT
YOU
CAN
DO





Be Genuine



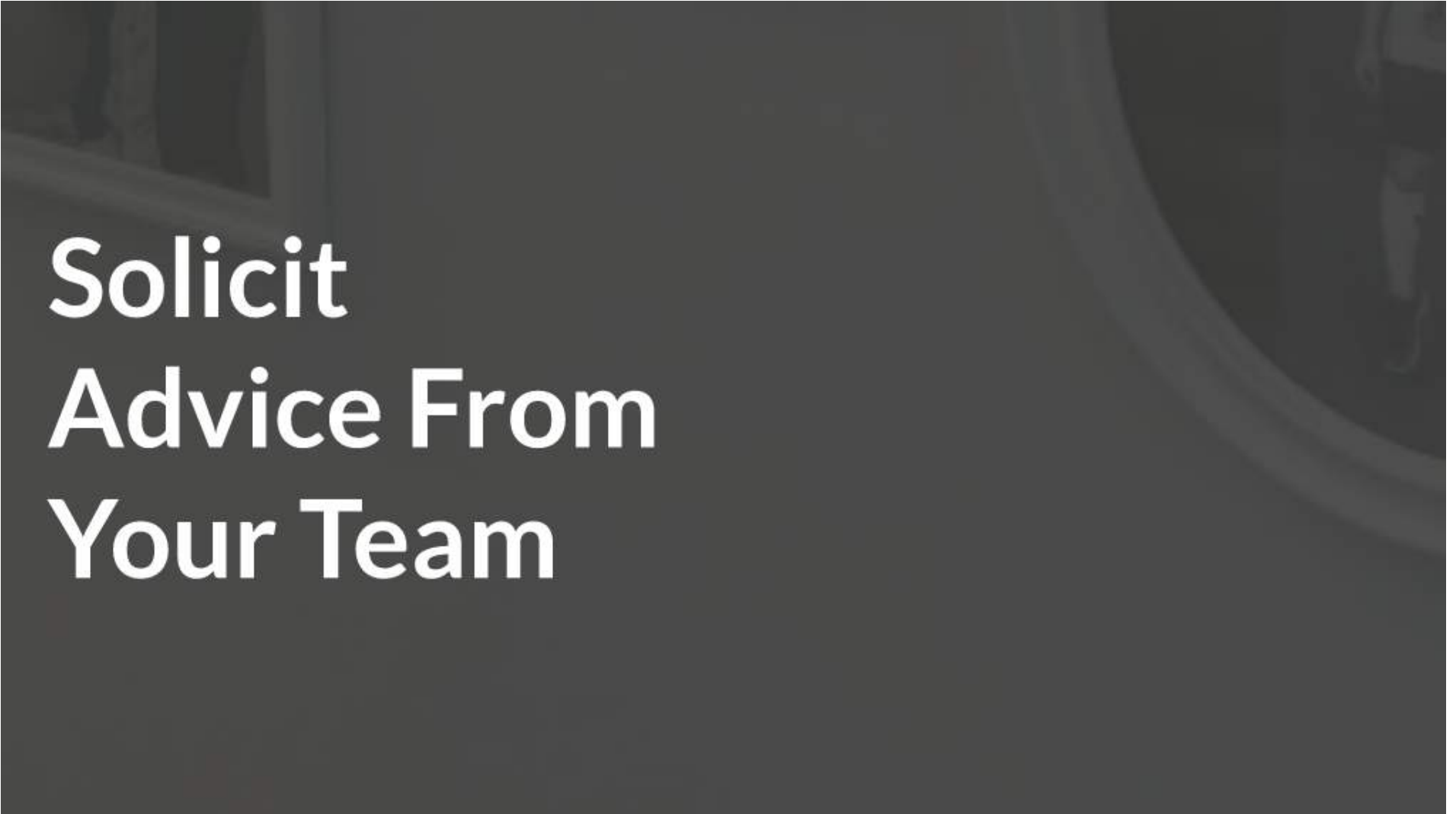
Be Honest



You Won't Always Agree



People May Leave



Solicit Advice From Your Team

Your Strategic Plan - Lofty Goals + Small Milestones



**Track Your Progress &
Course Correct Quickly**

Ownership



Teach & Train



Let People Change Their Roles



Learn How to Hear 'No'



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ANY QUESTIONS?

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