



Washington & Oregon Joint Fall Conference

September 9, 10 & 11, 2010

Session Description & Speaker Bios

“Creating and Retaining Star Performers”

with David Aitken, Mike Baker, and Sean Sullivan

Creating and retaining star performers is an essential leadership task. Yet it poses a daunting challenge and a largely unexplored opportunity for most professional service firms today. It is a challenge primarily because the conventional wisdom is that emerging performers (young professionals in their twenties and thirties) are uniquely hard to manage. They are thought to be entitled, demanding, and high-maintenance.

These generalizations and judgments tend to obscure the need for sustained, strategic investment in the younger generation. The innovation, passion, and purpose of young stars must be channeled to create value for the firm and, eventually, an escape route for elder leaders.

This session will study what works and what doesn't, with regards to developing, coaching and keeping young leaders. It will explore the 'mental models' of each generation, driving beliefs that can help or hinder the effort to bridge the apparent generation gap. Case examples and real-life experiences – of both the facilitators and the participants – will be used to illustrate the fact that young leaders are well worth the investment and that traditional performance management will not suffice.

Insight, generosity, courage, and the willingness to change are the hallmarks of leaders who are successfully developing the next generation. You are invited to join facilitators David Aitken, Mike Baker, and Sean Sullivan in this highly interactive, educational session.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

David Aitken, FRAIC

After concluding a distinguished 27-year career in architecture, David Aitken began assisting professional service firms with communications, culture, conflict resolution, teamwork, and leadership. When his son Geordie joined him in the business ten years ago, he became interested in the synergy between the generations and the personal mastery required to overcome the differences.

Today, David and Geordie co-lead a consulting business that specializes in helping professional service firms with their leadership and cultural development. As a master facilitator, David brings a lifetime of professional experience to his work. Humor and compassion combine with razor-sharp insight in David's style of group leadership and executive coaching. David lives in Vancouver, Canada with his wife, Janie, and two Dobermans. www.aitkenleadership.com

Mike Baker, PE

Mike Baker is a Senior Associate and business development/project manager at David Evans and Associates, Inc. (DEA), with 19 years of experience in managing the delivery of transportation engineering and planning projects. Mike is the Transportation Business Development Leader for DEA's Oregon region.

Beginning in 2001, DEA retooled its approach to firm wide strategic planning and sought to engage a younger cross section of the firm with new voices and varied experiences into a dialogue about the firm's future. The resulting Future Leader program has evolved to challenge and equip DEA's early career professionals to exercise self and team leadership and influence positive change within the firm. Actively participating since 2001, Mike helped launch the program and has served as program director since 2003.

Mike is most satisfied by influencing the transformation that occurs in people when they openly and honestly assess the gaps between where they are and where they want to be, in their lives and their results.

Sean Sullivan

Sean Sullivan is an award-winning project manager with 18 years' experience in project development including projects in water resources, transportation, and energy. He joined DEA in 1996 where he is currently a Senior Associate and leads the firm's Utilities practice. In 2001, DEA tapped Sean into its original class of Future Leaders (FL). During his tenure with the FL Program, Sean led its expansion into DEA's California Region, has coached and taught workshops to current participants, and was instrumental in the Program's redesign in 2007.

His philosophy is simple: Work hard, play hard, and leave this place better than we found it. He is an avid fly fisher, water fowler, and soccer player. When not at work, Sean enjoys sharing his passion for these sports with friends and his two sons, Patrick and Hewitt.