



## YLG Spotlight

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**How did you find your way into the industry?** I discovered SimCity and Civilization when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I loved the idea of planning cities, finding resources and building infrastructure to expand from one city to an entire nation. During a session with my high school counselor I found out I could actually plan and build cities for a living. I focused my studies on math and science at graduated college with a degree in Civil Engineering. I'm lucky enough to have a degree with a pretty direct career path and with some hard work and a bit of luck landed a job with Kimley-Horn and Associates.

**What advice would you give to an emerging young leader just starting their professional career?** The development/real estate industry is a small community. Your reputation will precede you and it can be your most valuable asset or biggest detriment. To that end, be honest with others and yourself, follow through on commitments, and build a solid network of peers.

**What traits do you think define a successful leader?** I think successful leaders display empathy and communicate openly. These traits are incredibly powerful because it brings the leader to the same level as others and engages them in two way dialog that creates a personal connection. When people are connected to one another it creates a sense of trust and a willingness to follow. I think one of the best examples of a leader that displays these traits is President Bill Clinton. Despite personal shortcomings he is widely viewed as a man of the people and a highly effective, inclusive leader.

**What do you find most challenging about your profession on a day-to-day basis?** While I have plenty of challenges to choose from, the most taxing challenge is managing multiple projects and meeting client's expectations. On an average day I'll need to advance some aspect of about 6-8 projects. Providing a quality product takes time, and in private land development time always seems to be of the essence. The multitude of projects and demands of each can create a lot of pressure for me and my team.

**What is your greatest achievement outside of work?** I play golf and shooting par for the first time is one of the things I'm personally most proud of. The funny thing is, as happy as I am to shot par that day, I'm still mad at myself for putting my drive on 18 in a hazard and making bogie on the final hole. If you play golf you understand.

**Describe a situation that was a great learning experience?** I've had a lot of lessons learned in my career. Some by observing others, some by learning on my own, but as it often will, one of the best learning experiences I've ever had come in the form of a mistake made. I had a phone conversation with a contractor about a condition in the field and we

worked out a solution. The contractor followed up with a written Request For Information (RFI) and I quickly wrote back “per our phone conversation I find the solution acceptable.” About 3 months after construction was complete a problem with our solution surfaced. During the subsequent investigation we found out our interpretations of the solution varied and the lack of written or diagrammed correspondence left both the contractor and I with little to defend ourselves. I learned two hard lessons: the devil is in the details and be explicit in correspondence.

**How do you deal with stress at work?** I take my lunch break seriously. There are days where things are so crazy I get up from my desk twice; once for lunch and once to go home. I have established lunch as my time to step away from my desk, decompress, and recharge. And when the stress level is running high, I try to put things in perspective and remember that firemen put out fires, I’m pushing paper and sending emails.

**What do you find to be the biggest challenge for young leaders in the future and what are your suggestions for overcoming them?** Everyone has been squeezed by the economic conditions of the past several years and every dollar against the project bottom line counts. Design professionals such as surveyors, geotechnical engineers, civil engineers, and architects are being commoditized as a result. Professional fees can only be lowered so far without impacting quality and a low quality design is detrimental to everyone, from the design firm, to the contractor, to the end user. Focus on quality. Be diligent in your everyday tasks now, it eventually translates into a product in front of your client. Use high quality work as a separator between you and your competition.