



We usually reduce our lean discussions to the adage: remove waste, increase value. But that's an oversimplification of what we do. Lean construction and design are philosophies grounded in science and scholarship and implemented through processes that we believe generally result in better projects. But there's a lot to that. Some is engineering—if we do x, y will result. Some of it is education—if we learn m, we'll be better at n. But much of it has to do with people—most of all, respect for people.

Respect for people is at the heart of our commitment based processes. Unless we allow someone to speak, speak freely, under no sword of Damocles that will sever the speaker's noggin if the speech is wrong, we cannot get to the heart of an issue, much less make reliable commitments about our work. This is not constitutional free speech, it is visceral free speech. But like constitutional free speech, it carries the obligation of responsibility. In our community, what you say matters. Consequently, free speech comes with the responsibility to be respectful to others, speak based on facts that you know or assumptions that you identify and carry the conversation forward in a constructive manner.

Another ethic of our community is that one should fail often, so that we can succeed. What this means is one should be free, if not required, to admit errors, mistakes of judgments and learn from those.

This week those principles came together like the Monongahela and the Allegheny join in Pittsburgh to form the Ohio River. I am here to admit that I was wrong—not only in my facts but wrong in the way that I tried to move our conversation forward.

If you read this update regularly, you will know that I am the No. 1 Cheerleader for lean construction and design principles. Cheerleading leads to collecting the facts in a way that is beneficial to our cause—an advocacy function I've practiced as a lawyer for 38 years. And I do advocate for what we do because it is the special passion of my life.

The guy that happened to ignite that passion is Greg Howell. There are many others that I respect, admire and like a lot in our community but Greg is the North Star for me. He's the one that convinced me of the essential truths—of the science if you will—of what we're trying to do. I am a story guy. Greg's stories of projects and processes are told with such zest, such energy and such commitment to the work that is actually performed by hundreds of people around the world that my skepticism of "just another fad" was overwhelmed by the substance of the learning. He is a great respecter of the work, and a greater respecter of those that do it. He emanates respect for people.

I hope many of you have had the chance to meet Dana Howell, the Mrs. Howell of our community. She is the embodiment of grace, creativity, warmth and support—not only for



Greg and Emily but for our entire community. Greg and Dana often attend LCI functions together and Dana's input is no less important or insightful than Greg's. Having been the survivor of two marriages and constantly in search of model relationships, I have viewed Greg's and Dana's with envy and wonderment. The most touching moment I've witnessed in a relationship was Dana's soft kiss to Greg's head when he fell asleep for a few minutes at the conclusion of the Boulder Congress a few years ago.

Last week in this space I disrespected and embarrassed both Greg and Dana. I was making my usual sleight of hand reference to Tax Day and thought it would be a good time to talk about how hard it really is to raise money from corporate sponsors and others—not just the sale, but the actual process of sending out invoices, accounting for money coming in, keeping track of anniversary dates and the right contact people and otherwise managing a \$1,000,000 enterprise with a small staff. I alluded to the way that Greg and Dana had managed before we implemented our newest technology. I made it sound like our organization was in the hands of country bumpkins with no sophistication. Of course that made the point that the transition has been progress. But in my energy and desire to cheerlead, to paint the picture up, I mis-stepped across facts. Mostly, however, I tried to make my point at the expense of Greg and Dana's leadership (and those who helped including Cynthia Tsao and others).

That such was not my intent, of course, doesn't matter. The damage was done. Word-smithing, as Rush Limbaugh has taught us, can be mean, petty and disrespectful. The Lean Construction Institute was founded, driven, ignited, empowered and yes, well-managed by Greg and Dana and others long before I got there. The Pioneer Award co-presented to Greg this year and accepted by both Greg and Dana attests to that. But I know the truth, and for the sake of a word-smithed publicity advantage, I took a shot at that long history of stewardship and honorable service. For that I have privately apologized and asked Greg and Dana if I could make my apology public. The presence of this newsletter indicates that they have allowed me the privilege to admit that I was wrong in front of our community.

David Graham at Austin Commercial taught me an early lesson that was forgotten here: never make humor at the expense of a human. I re-learned that lesson as a result of the fallout from my last column. Greg and Dana, I apologize for demeaning in any way the service you have brought to the community. I thank you for your service and I thank you most of all for your lesson—communities survive by the active participation of thoughtful, respectful dialogue. Those of us privileged to live within this community best keep that in mind.