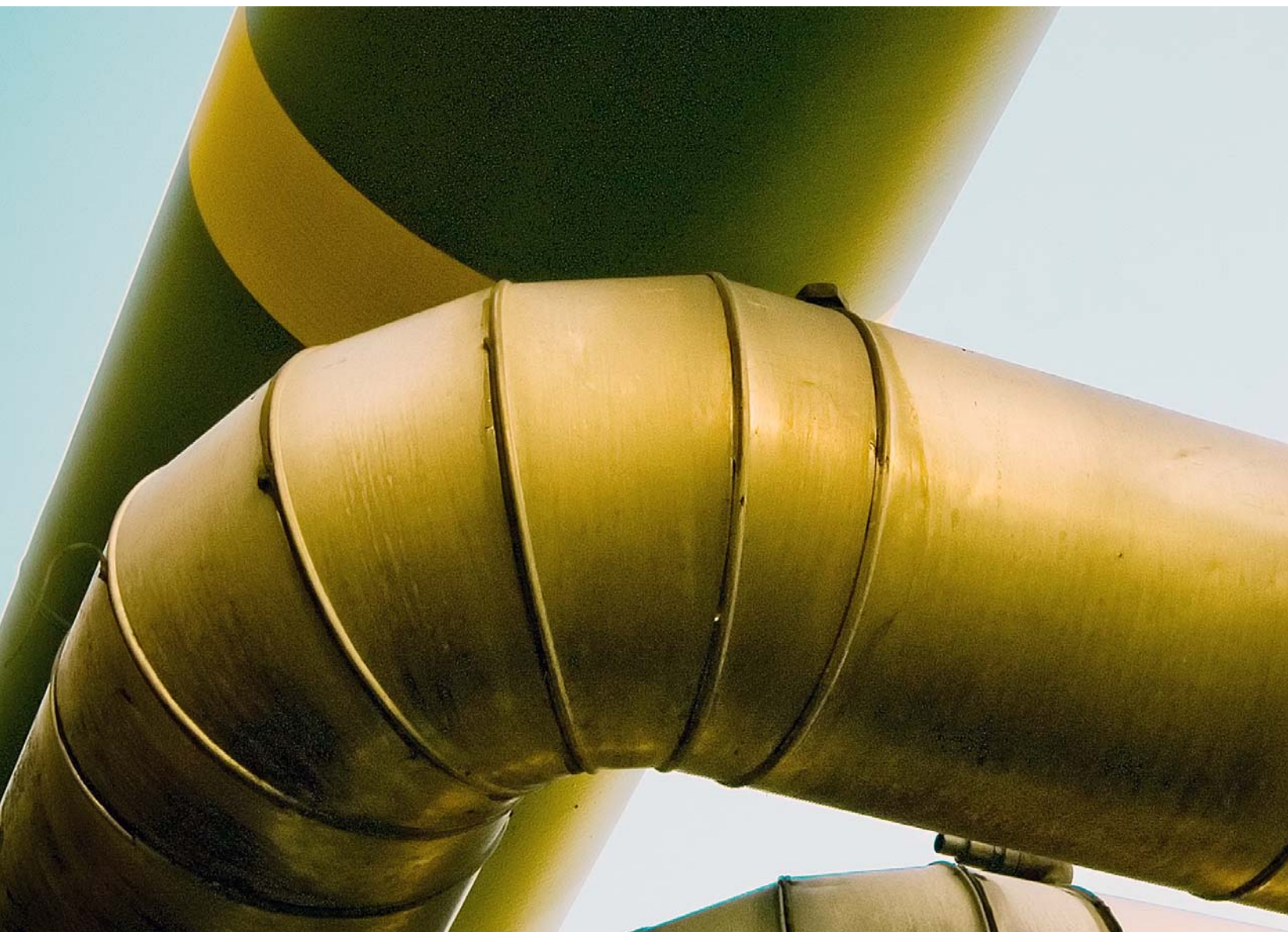


SMPS

# pipeline

THE LATEST INFORMATION FROM SMPS CHICAGO

Summer/Fall 2014



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SMPS





# presidents' letters

by **Megen Briars**, Past President, SMPS Chicago Chapter and  
**Megan Muter, CPSM**, President, SMPS Chicago Chapter

“The key to human development is building on who you already are.”  
—Tom Rath, *StrengthsFinder 2.0*

“We worked on creating  
a balanced, effective,  
professional, encouraging,  
and exciting year of  
programming and  
processes to better serve  
our Chicago members.”



As this is my final president's letter, do not weep—I'm not fading away from SMPS Chicago just yet. I felt it was appropriate to end just as I began; with a Tom Rath quote, of course. As a refresher, last July, your board met for a retreat where we worked on creating a balanced, effective, professional, encouraging and exciting year of programming and processes to better serve our amazing Chicago members. At the end of this retreat, the board was given a summer reading assignment from me (insert “do we have to?” groan here) to read *Strengths Based Leadership* by Tom Rath before September 1, the official board start date. This book was a gift from my father to me when I first entered the workplace. I became a marketing major in college and after nearly eight major changes and two universities later, I realized I was searching for something that nearly every know-it-all college kid refuses to admit—when I grow up, I want to be a marketer just like my father. A sales and marketing extraordinaire, the kindest, most positive, and smart man he started at the Chicago Tribune in the printing center, working graveyard shift and packaging newspapers. From there, over a 25 year span with the Tribune, he created opportunities for his career growth to eventually become Vice President at Tribune Direct, directing their sales and marketing teams. Currently, he is US Managing Director of Sales with Pitney Bowes—and of course, my marketing hero.

As I launched into my first “real” marketing position, my dad equipped me with three things on that cool fall Tuesday: train money, a Milky Way for a mid-afternoon treat and Tom Rath's book. Admittedly... I didn't read it at first. I finally was done with required reading from college, now I have to read more—what more did I need to learn? Ah, so naïve. A few weeks later, Dad put a few more books in my possession: All Marketers Tell Stories and The Tipping Point. Well, now I felt behind, so I started reading *Strengths* and found myself rereading it once a year from that point on.

At the core of Rath's book is a message of leadership and teamwork, but also of concession and enlightenment: you don't always have to be right, don't always have to do it all, and hey—being a follower is okay, too, we need those! I felt that equipping this year's board with Rath's book was an important piece of their success story as directors. They would encounter challenges that would require them to rise and lead their committees and other situations that perhaps it was appropriate to take a backseat, lead as a follower.

I am so proud of these amazing directors, and you should be, too. They helped create five sold-out luncheons, a wait-listed, “Marketing Coordinator Bootcamp,” a Striving for Excellence Nominated, “Program of the Year.” The Holiday Party brought together industry associations for co-networking Pop-Ups, and membership reached new heights with an incredible retention rate, including 64 renewals in just one month! This year marked the first ever “In-Kind” sponsorship opportunities for our valued partners, the launching of our print newsletter and the debut of the SMPS Chicago video (which is sure to be a YouTube sensation). Please thank all of your directors.

They have put you, the members, first when leading their committees. And although we will say goodbye to our Past President Kate Mullaney, CPSM, our Secretary Derek Ward (aka D\$\$), Programs Director, Brie Yaksic, Membership Director, Shelley Finnigan, and Communications Director, Steve Nargang, P.E. —I would like to personally thank each and every one of them for their passion, commitment, teamwork, and service to this incredible chapter. I cannot wait to work with your incoming president, Megan Muter, CPSM. Hold onto your hats Chicago—you haven't seen anything yet! Megan is going to take this chapter to a whole new level, and I'm honored to be along for the ride. She is incredible and going to do amazing things for the members of the Chicago chapter, and SMPS as a whole.

Best,

Megen Briars

Director of Marketing, OKW Architects, Inc.  
SMPS Chicago 2013–2014 President  
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“Doing the same thing over and over, yet expecting different results, is the definition of crazy.” —*Unknown*

When we are in our daily routine, sometimes we forget to stop and think, “Can I do this differently?”

Do you find yourself walking down the street and see something like the Walsh Construction wall on Monroe and Clark, with pictures and short bios of the construction team and think, “What a great way to promote your project, share the people that are making it happen.” Instead of hanging a sign with your firm logo, try something different.

At the start of each year, each of my predecessors kicked things off with a theme. I would like to find ways to INSPIRE our members. How does a president achieve such a lofty goal? We surround ourselves with leaders with amazing creative ideas that will take this chapter to a new level.

What does this inspiring year look like? We have programs planned this year that we have never done before in my eight years as a Chicago Chapter member. We have professional development workshops with leading industry experts, and fun events so we can connect with each other after-hours.

Megan R. Muter, CPSM

Central Region, Marketing and Proposal Manager —  
PMCM Division  
President Elect



## FEATURE ARTICLE

# going to market: the death of content marketing?

by The Pepper Group

## SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

# eriksson engineering associates

responses by Lauren Stark



## Content marketing is proven and reaching maturity. But is there a content shock on the horizon? Is content marketing over already?

A great post in early January entitled “Why Content Marketing is Not a Sustainable Strategy” kicked off a spirited discussion about content marketing’s long-term viability.

The idea is that content production continues to increase exponentially. With it, technology has also enabled a rise in the capacity in all of us to consume content. This is rising more slowly, however, since there’s an inviolable limit to how much content people can consume. As a result, the production of content will soon dramatically swamp the ability for people to consume it, making content marketing economically ineffective. (If you’re interested, a response to this article can be found on the Content Marketing Institute’s website.)

We’ve seen something like this coming too; although we view it differently. Yes, the content tsunami continues to overwhelm human bandwidth. But what we see instead is not the death of content marketing, but the increasing importance of two factors: Specificity and Creativity.

Specificity is about creating your content for a carefully defined audience. This might be a long-term, loyal audience, people

looking to solve a very specific problem, or people who are interested in a niche topic. General content or fluff content (of which there is a ton), won’t cut it anymore. The content shock will make this approach less and less effective. It will be a very long time, however, before highly specific or niche content succumbs to any kind of content shock.

Creativity is the other, even bigger, factor. We’re witnessing a rebirth of the importance of creativity and novelty in successful content marketing. Generating a large amount of standard, average content created results in the past, but with ever-more content being produced, this will no longer work. The bar is higher. It’s about creativity and novelty of ideas. But it’s also about novelty of delivery method, novelty of format, and novelty of distribution channels. We even have our own term for it—the “Novelty Multiplier™.” It’s the boost that creativity delivers, and it’s significant.

So is content marketing soon-to-be dead? For some, yes. But for companies that are specific and creative, content marketing will be tremendously effective for years to come.

### Tell us about your company and what you do.

Eriksson Engineering Associates, LTD. (EEA) provides civil site design and traffic and parking consulting on projects throughout Chicago and the Midwest. We work in a variety of market areas, and our clients include owners of small and large sites, developers and architects.

As the Marketing Coordinator for EEA, I facilitate the tracking of and response to opportunities, develop promotional materials, plan team and client events, and network in the industry. I support my team by assisting with recruiting, trade shows, professional development initiatives, and recently, the development of our new website.

### What is the biggest challenge you are facing in your position right now?

Like many who market for A/E/C services as part of a small team, there is always the challenge of prioritizing activities and balancing time to ensure all team members’ needs are met. Working with my team at EEA and SMPS colleagues, it has become more important than ever to clearly outline, monitor and adjust personal and professional goals for me and my company. With these goals in mind, it becomes easier to focus on initiatives that will support those short and long-term plans. A positive outlook and clear communication never hurt.

### What value has SMPS brought to you and your firm?

SMPS has provided many opportunities for professional growth and development. I’ve been able to pull from others’ best practices and areas for improvement to assist my team. Additionally, SMPS allows me to get to know design partners and clients in a professional, yet casual atmosphere. Whether brokering a connection, opening the door to new work, or simply learning how I can add value to my contributions at EEA, SMPS has no shortage of smart, thoughtful members with great insight to share.

### What is the best part of being an SMPS sponsor?

Tickets to monthly programs. Each month, we send at least one representative from our team to SMPS programs, so the package is a great value. Our sponsorship helps us reinforce that our work goes beyond each project, to building relationships and an understanding of how site functionality should complement, rather than take away, from a unique design.

### What is the most valuable part of sponsorship?

EEA values professional development and we’re happy to support an organization that strongly embraces the concept. The EEA team is committed to being actively present in our industry through event attendance and committee participation. Our sponsorship helps remind us to set time aside to focus on growth and how we can assist others. It is exciting to be a part of a group of people who want to learn, support one another and push the industry to its fullest potential.





## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# kim pool

Operations Manager, KSA PR

### What are your main responsibilities as Operations Manager at KSA PR?

I oversee and control the daily operations and am involved in helping make decisions that help shape the direction of the firm. I find solutions to everyday problems, keep clients happy, ensure that KSA runs smoothly, and is profitable. I am responsible for all financial management aspects. I expedite the flow of projects; examine contracts, addendums and RFPs; maintain KSA's certifications; create and implement social media strategies; and manage human resources functions.

### Why did you get involved with SMPS?

A colleague told me about SMPS and after learning about the benefits of membership, I knew this was an organization that would enhance my personal and professional development by allowing me to network with people and companies involved in exciting projects.

I have a deep understanding of the construction industry, having worked with many construction companies in the past. I get to work closely with communications and marketing departments. Because of this, I am able to use my skills to bridge communications between the two industries, which makes me a natural fit for SMPS. SMPS is a great place to meet and network with professionals in the A/E/C industry who share my passion and interests.

### How did you get your start in the A/E/C industry?

For more than 15 years I managed the operations of several busy construction offices and have witnessed many miscommunications and missteps. In the construction industry you can be involved in a difficult situation, and it's important to be able to clearly and concisely convey your message. This experience has helped me transition seamlessly into the public relations field. My A/E/C background adds to our overall offering of services to clients.

### What advice do you have to those just starting in the A/E/C industry?

In order to live a fulfilling life, I think it's imperative to seek out and find things that motivate and inspire you, and then do them. If you are working on something that you aren't invested in or committed to, it's hard to put everything you have into it. If you're passionate about the A/E/C industry, then surround yourself with people who align with your interest.

### What do you like to do for fun when you're not working?

I am the Secretary for the Logan Square Dog Park and our goal is to bring the best dog park in Chicago to Logan Square neighborhood. We've been raising funds for building the park for more than five years. Recently we were given the green light by the Chicago Park District to begin construction this fall.

When I'm not busy helping with fundraisers, I'm an active proponent against puppy mills and breed specific legislation (BSL). I organize and collect supplies for shelters and help transport dogs from high kill shelters and place them in safe and loving homes.

### If you were a Super Hero, what super power would you like to have?

I would love to have the power to transport myself to any location on a whim. If I could, I would be on a Tahitian beach as you are reading this. Pass the sunblock, please.

### What is your favorite place to eat in Chicago or the suburbs?

If I had to pick just one restaurant, I would have to show my loyalty to my Logan Square neighborhood and will select Longman and Eagle at 2657 N. Kedzie Ave. The folks behind this Michelin-starred restaurant source local ingredients and embody the farm-to-table concept that is so popular today. The hour-long wait for a table is worth it, trust me.

## CHICAGO CHAPTER

# new members

Welcome to SMPS Chicago!



#### Scott D. Brown

Director of Business Development, WT Engineering Inc.

#### Catherine Carpenter

Marketing Manager, EJM Engineering Group

#### Charleen Catt Lyon

Principal, Catt Lyon Design Inc.

#### Kristin Goodchild

Director Business Development, Barton Malow Company

#### Taylor Hannasch

Marketing Coordinator, T.Y Lin

#### Regine Jeune

Vice President, DB Sterlin Consultants

#### Julia A. Kuhn, Assoc AIA

Marketing Specialist, CTL Group

#### Kari Lavezzi

Marketing Coordinator, Earles Architects & Associates

#### Sarah Lichtenberg

Student Member, University of Chicago—Illinois

#### Heather Morrison

Marketing Coordinator, FCL Builders

#### Kim Pool

Operations Manager, KSA PR

#### Lindsey Schaffer

Marketing Coordinator, VOA Associates, Inc.

#### Annette Schulte

Marketing Director, MMS Consultants, Inc.

#### Regina Serna

Business Development Manager—Healthcare, VOA Associates, Inc.

#### Joanna Skiadopoulos

Marketing Coordinator, GSG Consultants, Inc.

#### Michele L. Westphall

Marketing Administrator, Development Solutions, Inc.

#### Jacqueline Whittington

Proposal Coordinator, HW Lochner

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**MAY 6–8, 2015 PALMER HOUSE HILTON IN CHICAGO, IL**

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[smpsheartland.org](http://smpsheartland.org)



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Anne Kulick, International

Contractors, Inc.

### Coordinator

Kelly Thomas, Aon Fire

Protection Engineering

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David Copeland, Chair,

Shen Milsom & Wilke LLC

Lauren Fitzgerald, Valenti Builders

## Feature Article

The Pepper Group

## Graphic Design

Julie Usalis, Echo Design Group