

SMPS Chicago membership increases to among top 10 in nation



Photos by Bob Elmore & Associates Photography

Endless vitality, openness, and experience combine to support career development for AEC marketing and business development leaders

Chicago Construction News staff writer

The Chicago chapter of the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) combines endless vitality, openness and experience in supporting the career development of marketers and business developers within the architectural, engineering and construction community, says the chapter's leadership.

"We strive to appeal and balance our program and events as a chapter to bring its members a great value,

says Nikki Dvorak, current president of the SMPS Chicago Chapter and business development leader at DLR Group.

The SMPS Chicago chapter has focused on the many levels of marketing professionals from its inception. With more than 80 percent of the top ENR firms as members, it appeals to many building professionals in the Chicago market. Evidence of this diversity is displayed in the monthly programs focused on client development, including the Marketing

Coordinator's Group for early and mid-level marketing coordinators.

The chapter, one of the largest (and most rapidly growing) in the 57-chapter national organization, has more than 230 members, and several programs, meetings and initiatives to provide support and mentoring for members throughout their career, says Kate Brannelly, one of the chapter's senior members, and director of business development at Raths, Raths & Johnson Inc.

"Nationally, there's a huge correlation with the size of AIA (American Institute of Architects) and SMPS chapters," because there generally are more marketing and business development leaders where there are large architectural and engineering practices, Brannelly said.

Chicago was the first chapter in SMPS to formally start an official mentoring program more than fourteen years ago. It was launched with one of its members, Deborah J. Hodges, principal of Golden Square, and past president of the Chicago Chapter, who received an SMPS National Foundation Grant to conduct research and to pilot a mentoring program.

Many specialized programs were added over the years with high levels of participation from members. The chapter has more than 30 events and programs throughout the year. As an example, the Business Enterprise Exchange was started a few years ago to address networking and marketing, with its many nuances, for professionals in client and business development.

"In addition to numerous educational programs and networking events throughout the year for the AEC industry, our members enjoy several members' only events each year, including a new member lunch and member appreciation events, a robust mentor-protege program, CPSM (Certified Professional Service Marketer) study groups, leadership opportunities through the board and committees, many marketing and research publications only available to members, and more," said David Copeland, senior consultant, busi-



ness/marketing at Shen Milsom & Wilke, LLC and chapter membership director.

The result: SMPS Chicago chapter programming continues to attract owners, principals, and leaders. As well, the chapter has recorded the largest increase in membership in the past year compared to the last few years, Copeland says.

"Also, members can login into mySMPS.org, which provides access-shared documents and information including marketing templates and business strategies, as well as contact information for members in other chapters for networking throughout the U.S."

Tom Petermann, P.E. incoming president of SMPS and principal of Eriksson Engineering Associates, Ltd. says, "We will continue to focus on bringing together top firms of areas of the building industry in the Chicago area and professionals at all levels to create a dynamic chapter that shares ideas and expertise. We look to help companies work together on many projects within the Chicagoland area. SMPS has been a great benefit to me and my employer. I sincerely appreciate their support in recognizing SMPS and its benefits."

"We invite others to come and meet us at any of our events. Please introduce yourself to me when you are at a meeting. SMPS is a very friendly group and open to all," says Petermann.

SMPS Chicago will be celebrating its successes and giving a perspective of its coming year at the SMPS Annual Meeting which will be held on Aug. 25. The new board members and committee chairs will be introduced to all in attendance. "We hope new members, principals and owners will join us for this annual event and it's a great place to network," says Dvorak.



For more information, visit the SMPS chapter website at <http://smps-chi.org>. You can connect with one of the chapter's committee members/leadership at http://smps-chi.org/SMPS_Chicago_Committee_Members for an invitation to an upcoming event.