



Scott L. Melnick

Who are the superstars of the structural engineering profession? Larry Griffis? Les Robertson? Shankar Nair? Who are the rising stars? Dave Eckmann? Greg Lakota? John Rolfes? Would you go out of your way to hear any of them speak?

Structural engineering is a strange profession in that there is very little attention or accolades given to individuals—or even to firms. Sure, everyone knows Walter P. Moore, Magnusson Klemencic Associates, and Thornton-Tomasetti. But can you name three recent projects from any of those firms?

According to a variety of studies, structural engineering firms spend less on marketing than almost any other profession. Even when recognition is inexpensively available, few structural engineering firms make the effort to obtain recognition. However, I don't think it's from a lack of pride in their work. Rather, I think it stems from an inherent modesty combined with a mistaken idea that there's no real benefit from seeking public recognition.

In actuality, there are very tangible benefits (though purely anecdotal, as far as I know) to public acknowledgement—such as through nationally recognized awards programs—of excellence in work. The clearest benefit comes from the ability to include such awards in the portfolio sent to prospective clients. But other benefits come on the employment front, both when you're recruiting new structural engineers and when you're considering moving to a new position. And finally, there's the internal morale boost that comes when your firm wins an award.

One of the most interesting award programs is sponsored annually by AISC. The prestigious Engineering Awards of Excellence give recognition to structural engineering firms for innovation in steel-framed building projects (the awards are presented at the North American Steel Construction Conference). Judges consider the total structural design with an emphasis on:

- A creative solution to the project's program requirements;
- Application of innovative design approaches in areas such as connections, gravity systems, lat-

eral load resisting systems, fire protection, and blast;

- Use of innovative construction methods such as EDI, design-build, or advanced computer modeling; and
- Significance of engineering achievement and elegance of design.

But what makes the awards really special is that they're not just designed for mega-projects that typically make the front page of the New York Times or the cover of Architectural Record. Instead, projects are judged in four size categories—less than \$10 million, \$10 million to less than \$25 million, \$25 million to less than \$100 million, and more than \$100 million.

To be eligible, projects must have been completed between January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2004. A significant part of the framing system must be steel wide-flange structural shapes or hollow structural sections, and the building must be located in the U.S., Canada, or Mexico. Both new construction and significant renovation projects are eligible.

Deadline for submission is March 1. For more information on this fabulous competition, visit www.aisc.org/awardseae. (Incidentally, AISC also has a parallel awards program for architects. You can find more information on that program at www.aisc.org/awardsideas.)

P.S. — For those of you who have watched AISC evolve over the past few years, you'll be interested in some of the latest membership statistics. AISC now has more than 8,900 structural engineer members, 600 fabricators, six steel mills (Nucor Steel Corporation, TXI-Chaparral, Steel Dynamics Inc., International Steel Group, Oregon Steel Mill, and Ipsco), four service centers (INFRA-Metals, Metals USA, Reliance Steel and Aluminum, and NAMASCO), and more than 300 manufacturers and suppliers (including more than 200 steel detailers). For more information on joining AISC, please visit www.aisc.org/membership.

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