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## 12 New Year's resolutions for engineers

Here's a roadmap for career and company refinement and growth heading into 2011.

**E**ngineers, however detail-oriented, problem-solving, over-achievers that they are, need more of a challenge. So, here are 12 New Year's resolutions, conveniently divisible into monthly goals, for engineers and engineering managers for 2011. The purpose of the resolutions is to get individuals and firms in alignment with changing technologies and market conditions and to prepare for the tremendous opportunities awaiting those who've invested in the future. Some of these resolutions are personal goals or company goals, and many make great leadership development opportunities to delegate to younger staff.

**1. Get introspective.** Think about your career and firm and determine your needs for self- and corporate improvement. What have you been wanting to learn but haven't taken the time to act on?

**2. Invest in training for yourself.** Whether it's technical training on new software, such as BIM, electrical design, or energy modeling; or soft-skills training such as time management, public speaking, or English as a second language, set up a training program that will benefit your career.

**3. Establish or evaluate the corporate mentoring program.** If your company is large enough to support mentoring, i.e., if it has one or more employees, then make sure the engineers and technicians have mentors inside and/or outside the compa-

ny. If you have a mentoring program, take its pulse and see if it needs sprucing up.

**4. Establish or evaluate a brown-bag internal training program.** Whether you have internal or external speakers once a month or more, brown-bag or lunch-and-learn seminars are great ways to enhance staff members' technical skills and help them earn professional development hours (PDHs) or continuing education units (CEUs).

**5. Join and be active in essential engineering societies, such as ASHRAE, IEEE, ASHE, ASPE, and others.** Having staff update the company on codes/standards, conference sessions, awards programs, etc., is grist for the brown-bags mentioned in number 4 above.

**6. Research new technologies and share with the staff.** Ask one or more engineers assigned to technologies such as controls, standby power systems, lighting, HVAC, refrigeration, etc. to prepare an annual or semiannual report (and brown-bag presentation) on emerging or underused technologies.

**7. Research research.** That's not a typo. Spend some time looking for new or recent research reports you might have missed on topics such as economics of energy efficiency, green buildings, the Smart Grid, construction markets, accident reports, litigation rulings, and communications trends. Use informal seminars to share knowledge.

**8. Get into the field.** Shadow commis-

sioning providers, operators, suppliers, and construction contractors. Learn how systems perform and age in the field. Share the knowledge.

**9. Get visible.** Many of the above resolutions will lead to publishable technical articles in trade publications. Also, become a Webinar and/or conference speaker—there are tons of opportunities in engineering and green building events and with the many trade publications. Develop a reward program for staff members whose articles are published or who participate in a conference or webinar event.

**10. Focus on economics.** Learn the ins and outs of your clients' businesses so you can frame engineering decisions in their hot-button financial terms. Hire economic experts to coach you. Share the knowledge in brown-bag sessions.

**11. Check on past projects.** Overtly or subliminally check to see how past projects are doing in the "real world." Try to learn strengths and weaknesses of past work to improve future work.

**12. Reassess guide specifications and internal processes.** Take everything learned in 2011 and apply it for 2012 and beyond.

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