Let Curiosity Drive Your Career

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Abstract

Curiosity is a key force in shaping one’s career. This trait drives one to learn and grow knowledge and skills. Curiosity about engineering principles, technical challenges, management practices, leadership and team building development, and other project challenges drives the development of our project management capabilities. Our skill sets developed up though our education give us the tools and means to use our curiosity as a strength and grow our capacity and capabilities throughout our careers. Numerous examples will be shared highlighting how curiosity can be used to drive your career as you graduate and enter the Construction Industry.

Jim Rowings was born in Mishawaka, Indiana. Jim worked his way through school with Chicago Bridge and Iron and worked as a Boilermaker and eventually as a field engineer. After graduation in 1975, Jim began his career working for ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia as a construction engineer on projects ranging in scope from 60 million to 2.3 billion dollars. While in Saudi, Jim met his wife LaDona who was a teacher for the expatriates. While in Saudi, they took every opportunity to see the countries of the Middle East, Europe, and the Far East. After a few years, Jim and LaDona returned to Purdue for graduate work. Jim earned his MSCE and then completed his PhD dissertation, “Modeling Energy Use in Construction.”

After completing his PhD in 1982, Jim accepted a faculty position at the University of Kansas. In 1986, Jim moved to Iowa State University as the Professor-in-Charge of Construction Engineering. During his academic career, Jim taught every fundamental construction engineering course and many graduate level courses related to Construction Engineering and Management. He was an active researcher on several Construction Industry Institute Projects dealing with Organization development and management. He also authored and co-authored numerous papers and several books.

On a national level, Jim served in leadership positions as President of AACE, International (Cost Engineers), Chairman of the Engineering Management Group in ASCE, and Chairman of the DBIA Education and Research Foundation. He was elected a fellow in ASCE and AACE. Jim served as the editor of the Construction Engineering and Management Journal.

After 15 years at Iowa State University, Jim started with Kiewit in 2001 as Vice President of Organizational Development. His responsibilities included organizing college-recruiting efforts, developing new approaches to employee training and improving existing training programs, such as Management Seminar. In March 2004, Jim transferred to Mass Electric in Boston where he served as Senior Manager. He was named Chief Learning Officer and Vice President – Kiewit University in 2007. Jim is responsible for the education, training and development programs of Kiewit’s 30,000 employees.

Kiewit University has 5 colleges covering 17 subject areas. The University offers 8 core schools, 11 technical schools and several specialty schools. In addition, several hundred online, eLearning courses and distributed learning courses are available through Kiewit University.

Jim and LaDona live in Omaha and have three grown children.