

# BUILDING BLOCKS

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## Leadership is a Form of Risk Management in the Design Professions

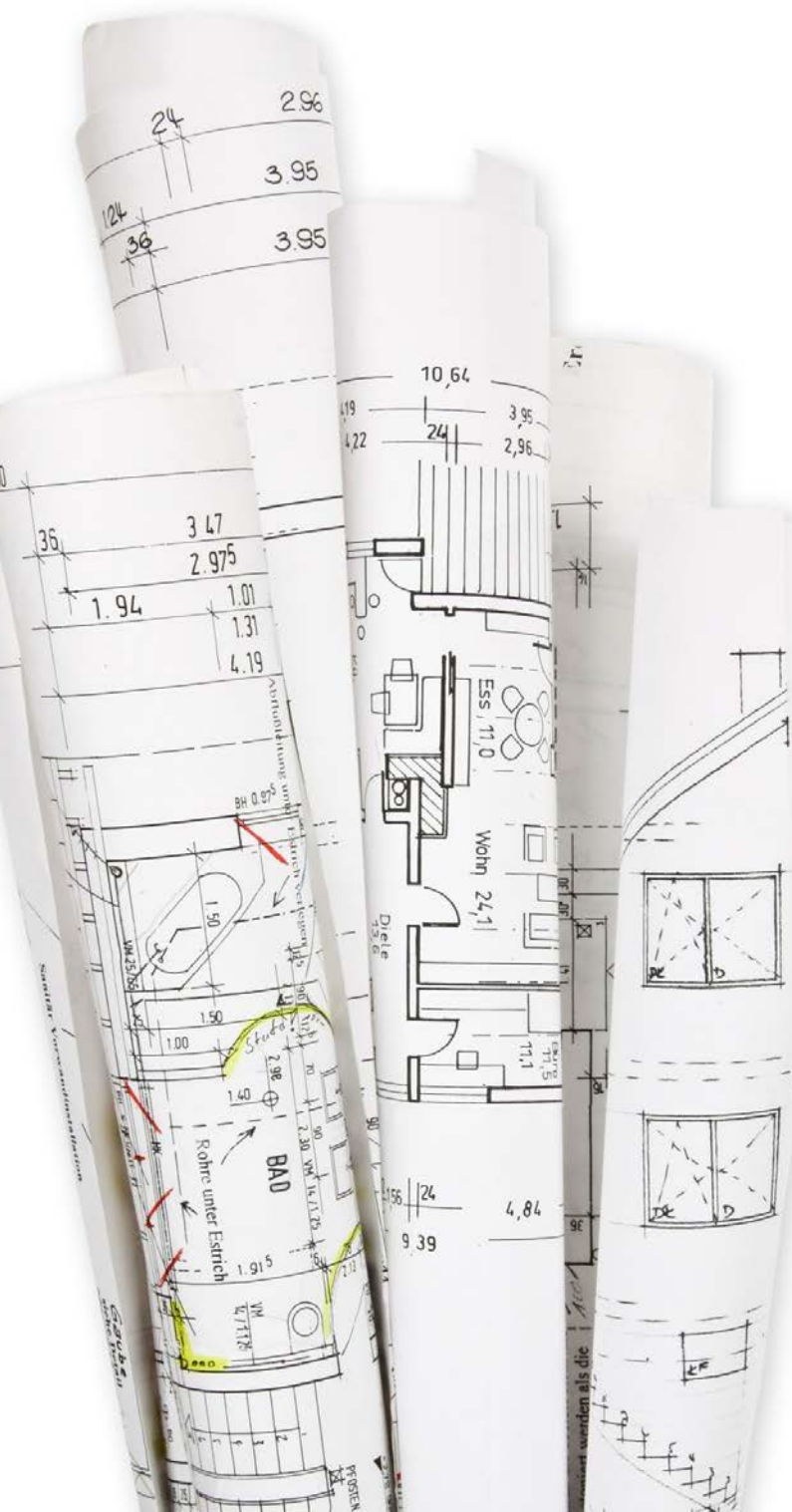
By: *Eric O. Pempus, FAIA, Esq., NCARB*  
*DesignPro Insurance Group*

Managing risks in the design professions requires effective leadership in the practice of architecture and engineering. Leadership in the practice can be defined as the ability to combine expertise, experience and ethics to lead a team to a successful outcome through positive actions, including:

- Serving the interests of others
- Implementing visions
- Building enduring relationships
- Taking risks and learning from mistakes
- Earning trust
- Facilitating change
- Encouraging excellence

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In today's rapidly changing business world, including the design professions, leadership is needed more than ever to support the advancement of the built environment. Complex problems require vision and direction for architects and engineers and their organizations, from project delivery methods, ever evolving technology, project site safety to dispute resolution, and more. The design professionals are uniquely positioned to fill leadership roles as they manage their risks, both internally in their firms and externally in the civic environment. However, many times A/Es do not see the potential in these roles.

## THAT IS WHY LEADERSHIP TRAINING IS BENEFICIAL

Education, ideation skills, creativity, visioning and problem-solving are fundamental to improving the design professions to support civic communities. The challenge is to develop internal firm involvement and civic engagement, motivating a spark to continually grow. Internally, leaders in professional firms work at developing their own management strategies. But externally, that is the challenge.

Taking part in a community adds meaning and fulfillment to design firms. In addition, it makes good use of the resources design professionals have to offer in economic and intellectual terms. There is a need for A/Es to step up and become leaders. In the past, community leaders turned to corporate organizations within their cities and towns to undertake the responsibility to run civic projects. But a void in community leadership has evolved. This void provides opportunities for a new type of leader to emerge, and A/Es are uniquely positioned to answer the call. The need for talented, creative, visioning and problem-solving involvement to address complex issues and challenging situations perfectly suits the skill set possessed by design professionals.

In a socially diverse environment, having participation by a group accustomed to sorting out solutions from various interests is essential to achieve desired results. Many problems and challenges we face can be addressed through the process of design solutions.

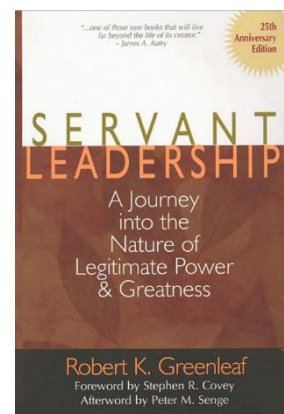
## FOLLOWERSHIP & SERVANT LEADERSHIP—TWO CONCEPTS COME TO LIGHT

### Followership

What initially sounds contrary to leadership, is actually the more effective leadership model. A leader cannot be successful without followers. Throughout our lives we all play the role of followers more than leaders, regardless of our position. Effective followers demonstrate many of the same characteristics as effective leaders. Cultivating the skills of followership can be an excellent way to become a more effective leader. Engagement in active followership results in knowing when to follow and when to lead. Followership comes alive in group dynamics, particularly with teams and organizations. It requires a willingness to cooperate in order to achieve common goals.

### Servant Leadership

This type of leadership emphasizes the leader's role as a steward of resources provided by an organization. This concept encourages leaders to serve others while staying focused on achieving results in line within an organization's values and integrity. Servant leadership embodies collaboration, trust, empathy, and ethics. An individual is first a servant, making the conscious decision to lead in order to better serve others. Servant leaders focus on creating an environment where their team can thrive. For more thoughts on this type of leadership concept, see the work of Robert K. Greenleaf.



## LEADERSHIP FOR THE TEAM

**A group of wolves:** The three in front (red circle) are old and sick. They walk in front to set the pace of the running group to ensure they don't get left behind because more than likely, if an ambush happened, they would be sacrificed. The next five (yellow box) are the strongest and best of the pack. They are tasked with the job of protecting the front of the pack if there is an attack. Naturally, the pack in the middle are always protected from any attack. The last (almost) five behind them (green square) are also among the strongest and best; they are tasked with the



job of protecting the back of the pack if there is an attack. The last one wolf pictured (blue arrow) is the LEADER. He ensures that no one is left behind. He keeps the pack unified and on the same path. He is always ready to run in any direction to protect and serve as the 'bodyguard' to the entire group. If you think about the qualities and characteristics of the Alpha wolf, you would think of confidence, loyalty, trustworthy, strong, and knowledgeable of the pack. Those characteristics remind some of a CEO of a business. Leadership isn't always about being the most visible, the loudest, or even the highest earner.

<https://www.jashleypanter.com/the-true-meaning-of-leading-from-behind/>

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### **About the Author of this Risk Management Building Block Article**

*As a risk manager for the last 19 years for the design profession, Eric has experience in professional liability insurance and claims, architecture, engineering, land use, law, and a unique background in the construction industry. Prior to risk management, he has 25 years of experience in the practice of architecture/engineering, and as an adjunct professor teaching professional practice courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels for the last 37 years at Kent State University's College of Architecture & Environmental Design.*

*As a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and AIA National Ethics Council 2021 Chair, he has demonstrated his impact on architectural profession. He has presented numerous loss prevention and continuing educational programs to design professionals since 2000 on topics of ethics, contracts, and professional practice in various venues across the United States and Canada. He has been the former member and chair of his city's Board of Zoning & Building Appeals for 24 years, and is a licensed architect, attorney, and property & casualty insurance professional.*

*His educational background includes a JD from Southwestern University School of Law, Los Angeles; Master of Science in Architecture from University of Cincinnati; and BA in psychology/architecture from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.*

The above comments are based upon DesignPro Insurance Group's experience with Risk Management Loss Prevention activities and should not be construed to represent a determination of legal issues but are offered for general guidance with respect to your own risk management and loss prevention. The above comments do not replace your need for you to rely on your counsel for advice and a legal review, since every project and circumstance differs from every other set of facts.

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# MEET OUR PEOPLE:



Brad Bush, CPCU, AU  
Principal  
brad.designproins@wichert.com



Eric Pempus  
FAIA, Esq., NCARB  
Risk Manager  
eric.designproins@wichert.com



Connor Bush  
Account Executive  
connor.bush@wichert.com



Mike Pettit  
Risk Manager  
mike.designproins@wichert.com



Roger Perry  
Account Executive  
roger.designproins@wichert.com



Tracey Heise  
Account Manager  
tracey.designproins@wichert.com



Tracy Combs  
Risk Manager & Loss Control Specialist  
tracy@wichert.com

## DesignPro Insurance

5991 Chandler Court, Suite A  
Westerville, OH 43082  
614-794-4820

[www.designproins.com](http://www.designproins.com)

2301 Blake Street, Suite 100  
Denver, CO 80205  
614-426-3045