

CERT Consultants Take the Stage in Indianapolis



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Southwestern Ohio #38

This year's ASPE National Estimating Academy will feature a first ever seminar on the topic of establishing and operating an estimating consulting practice. Members of the Consulting Estimator Roundtable (CERT), a trade association founded by several ASPE members who are independent consulting estimators, have developed and will present a three hour session focusing on the requirements for starting a practice, marketing it, finding clients, running it successfully, collecting payments, and making it a sustainable enterprise. At the 2013 ASPE Convention in Philadelphia, CERT and ASPE executed a strategic alliance whereby each association would cross promote the other, and each group would provide member benefits to their respective members (many of whom are members of both). This opportunity for CERT to be a part of an important ASPE event is a natural fit for both groups. While there are a healthy number of formal estimating firms throughout the country (many of which are simply "one man shops"), there are many more times that the number of estimators who operate on a part time basis, "moonlighting" for subcontractors, suppliers, lumber yards, and others with a need for takeoffs from time to time. Anecdotally, we in CERT leadership have heard from hundreds of these part timers who have wondered if they could make a full time living as a consulting estimator. We hope to present a seminar that answers their many questions.

An important segment of the presentation will be a healthy dose of questions and answers from CERT members in attendance at the seminar. Their firsthand accounts of success stories, nightmare scenarios, and what works versus what doesn't will provide invaluable insight to those considering any level of consulting work. CERT membership includes consultants with less than a year's worth of business operating experience to those with 10 to 15 years to those with more than 30 years in the trenches. You will hear about proven marketing tips, establishing fees and hourly rates, advice on collecting payments, knowledge on networking and finding clients, information on incorporating and insuring your business, dealing with difficult clients, negotiating pitfalls and trouble spots, what to do when you make a mistake. You'll even hear about firing a client.....yes, sometimes that is a necessity!

We will also discuss trends in estimating technology and the tools of our trade. You'll find out about the benefits and downfalls of specializing in just one or a few trades, and the same thing about generalizing and providing services in all CSI divisions. We'll also discuss other technical services that many consulting estimators provide in addition to construction estimating, such as project management, owner's representation work, scheduling services, expert witness opportunities, and teaching. You'll discover that diversity in your



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services will help you sustain your practice and keep clients coming back for more.

CERT members are those who have taken those potentially scary steps of leaving regular employment behind, sometimes out of necessity, but often because of a sense of entrepreneurship. This seminar will provide an opportunity for group discussions as well as one on one chats with current consulting estimators, many of whom you already know or have heard of through your ASPE involvement. One of the best things about ASPE is also one of the best things about the CERT: there are some very smart people in the ranks, and all are down to earth, everyday people, who just happen to be that unique brand of human known as construction estimators. ASPE focuses on the professional development of the individual as an estimator, while the CERT focuses on the business practice of estimating. We hope to build more awareness of the CERT by the wider ASPE audience that will come from being at ASPE's prestigious event,

and we hope to help those ASPE members who are considering any level of consulting make an informed decision about starting a consulting estimating practice, or taking their current one to a more formal level. Please join us in Indianapolis to find out what the CERT is all about, but for now please visit www.CERTusa.org to find out more or find us on Linked In as well. 



Author's info

Daniel Frondorf, CPE is a member of ASPE Chapter 38 in Cincinnati and is also the ASPE 2nd VP as well as the CERT president for 2013-2014. He operates DG Frondorf and Associates, LLC, VCEF, a civil and sitework estimating firm that is a Validated Consulting Estimating Firm as designated by CERT for achieving the highest standards of consulting business practices.