

FDOT Newsletter

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Florida Skanska executive talks Tampa Bay construction and need for diversity

Skanska is involved in some of the largest development projects in Tampa Bay.

The global construction firm is currently working on the University of South Florida's Research Park, the renovation of the Tampa Convention Center and Imagine Clearwater. It's also had a hand in the St. Petersburg Pier, Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park and the expansion of Tampa International Airport's main terminal.

Michael C. Brown, executive vice president and Florida general manager for Skanska, joined the firm in 2017 and manages local construction projects. He's also responsible for building up the construction company's talent amid a labor shortage. In this conversation with the Tampa Bay Times, Brown discusses what's affecting local construction projects and the need for more diversity in development.

Tampa Bay is changing quickly. What are some challenges in the construction industry of trying to meet the moment?

I've not seen in my extensive career a market this active. There's a tremendous amount of opportunity. There's certainly no lack of ability to grow your business. I think it's important right now that we're thoughtful about what we do and how we do it. And we meet the moment strategically. We try to stay true to what we do. We do large, complex projects, and that's where we tend to focus on.

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How Creative Conflict Can Propel Business Negotiations

The business-to-business (B2B) landscape has changed dramatically over the years. But several megatrends continue to progress, including globalization, technological disruption, instant information exchange and customized solutions versus commoditized inputs. These trends have led to new ways of doing business and new kinds of business transactions. Long-term agreements, exclusivity, strategic relationships, joint ventures and partnerships have grown in place of old-style competitive price bidding. However, many construction business owners learned to negotiate based on rules that are no longer suited for the current environment.

One thing has stayed the same, though, and that's conflict — all negotiations inherently involve conflict by their very nature. Creativity is the best way to break through the conflict and attain negotiating success in a way that solves the problem and builds a relationship. Fear and avoidance of conflict can lead to poorly negotiated agreements and missed opportunities. Negotiation is now more important than ever in a fast-paced and ever-changing industry. It's time for a more sophisticated negotiating approach. Business negotiators must address the evolving nature of B2B transactions.

While common advice such as "don't split the difference" and "don't concede first" will always be a necessary part of a negotiator's toolkit, these tips miss the point of conducting a negotiation within a relationship setting.

Not All Negotiations are the Same

There are three major regions to consider with creative negotiations: bargaining, creative deal-making and relationship-building. Understanding the type of negotiation — and which region it falls into — will help you use the appropriate strategies and tactics.

The first region, bargaining, is the domain of The Gamesman. Buying and selling of true commodities (lots of options for the buyer) or one-off sales or purchases are typical examples. Here, like in the game of poker, a certain amount of gamesmanship, bluffing and misdirection goes on. Bargaining can be best thought of as a zero-sum contest, typically over one main issue like price, where anything you win comes out of my pocket and vice versa.

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About The FDOT

The goal of the DBE Supportive Services Program is to increase the number of DBEs participating on FDOT contracts and facilitate the opportunity for DBEs to obtain contracts. The services are designed to:

- Assist established construction firms to move them from bidding as a subcontractor to bidding as a Prime Contractor to produce sound bids.
- Provide access to training increases DBE expertise in handling of daily business operations.



CEI DBE Supportive Services

(800) 423-7058

www.fdotdbesupportservices.com