

PRINCIPAL SPOTLIGHT
Featuring
Randy Kaster
Senior Vice President
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Olsson Associates

What is your Job Description?

It's quite varied. In addition to being involved in the firm's high level transportation projects I am a member of the firm's Operations Team/Executive Committee. I get involved in firm operations, strategic planning, business development, and a wide variety of one shot items.

What do you like best about Olsson Associates?

I like the freedom I am given to be an entrepreneur, and to "color outside the lines". I really like that my efforts and unique talents are recognized and valued.

Tell us when you decided to pursue engineering – your "I must be an engineer "ah-ha" moment.

This is probably typical of future engineers, but I was digging in my backyard, making a dam, filling it with water, then creating all sorts of "disasters" to cause the dam to fail and carry away my plastic army men. Not that disasters are cool, but to a little boy with firecrackers it's an opportunity waiting to be taken.

What was the most important lesson you learned from a mentor or a client?

I hated hearing it at the time, but it was accurate: "You have to have made some mistakes along the way to be a good engineer." We've all made mistakes. The smart people learn from those mistakes and especially learn from those of others.

How long have you been a member of ACEC Nebraska?

I've been in consulting for 23 of my 25 years, all in member firms. So, in that respect, I could say I have been part of ACEC my whole career. But I have been active in activities, primarily on various committees, since the mid 1990's.

What is the most important way ACEC Nebraska helps you in your professional career?

ACEC is a staunch advocate for engineers working in the private sector. Most people don't realize how active they are in promoting and defending QBS, fighting government intrusion into the private sector, and promoting the fair and ethical practice of engineering.

Most memorable engineering project?

It would have to be leading the design effort for the Lincoln South Beltway. We did a lot of quality work in a very short amount of time on a high profile project. Unfortunately, the project stalled due to funding, but I was proud of the work the team accomplished.

Another that really stands out is leading a five man survey crew through the Pere Marquette State Forest and Manistee National Forest in northern Michigan shortly after I graduated from college. Armed only with machetes, axes and traditional survey equipment, we surveyed a 62-mile-long path for a fiber optic cable in 3 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days (funny how I still remember that detail). By the end we were a rough, grisly group. To this day I can't stand the buzzing of mosquitoes around my ears.

What was the most recent book (or movie) you read (or saw)?

**Most recent book read – Conservative Victory by Sean Hannity
Currently reading – American Assassin by Vince Flynn
Most recent movie seen – The Help**

Preference: Plain or Peanut M&M's?

Absolutely, Plain!

Tell us about your family.

**My wife Kathy and I have been married for 24 years and we have four children:
Daughters Danielle (age 22) and Miranda (age 16), and sons Alex (age 20) and Max (age 9).**