

Three Engineers Walk Into a Sports Bar...

No joke. It's how one NSPE member and colleagues launched a multimillion-dollar firm.

Everyone knows the age-old cliché: a million-dollar idea starting with a bunch of guys sitting in a bar, scribbling on a napkin. But in this case, it's actually a true story.

For NSPE member Blake Peck, P.E., it all started with a flimsy bar napkin. Well, that and two engineer colleagues who dreamed of starting their own construction management practice. In late 1989, Peck, Charlie Bolyard, and Frank McDonough, P.E., were gathered in Kilroys Restaurant and Sports Bar in Springfield, Virginia. They were formulating a plan on a paper napkin to launch McDonough Bolyard Peck Inc. (MBP), a construction management consulting company that would end up bringing in over a million dollars in its first year.

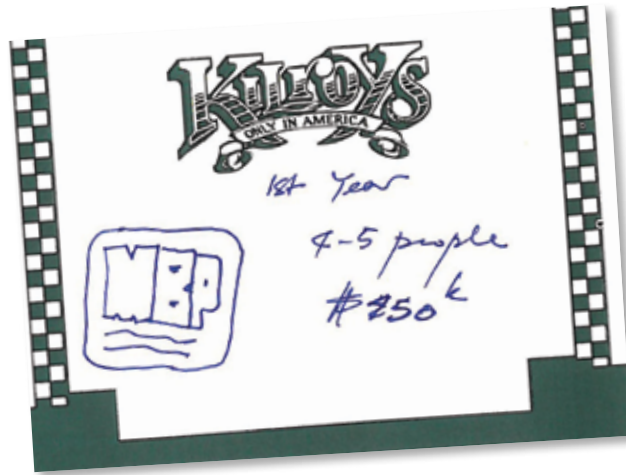
After all those years, Peck still has the napkin the men wrote their goals on. "Everyone thought we were crazy at first," he says. "But we never looked back."

Peck's strong leadership skills and dedication to the construction industry have helped him emerge as a go-to expert in construction and program management. Last year, he was named to the National Academy of Construction for his industry leadership and "as someone who has worked hard and successfully in professionalizing the industry, setting standards, and mentoring."

In his role as president and CEO of the Fairfax, Virginia-based MBP, he has led numerous domestic and international projects in planning, budgeting, risk management, quality assurance, and dispute resolution services, to name just a few. MBP has been recognized as a Top 100 construction management-for-fee firm and a Top 50 program management firm by *Engineering News-Record*.

MBP, which has 14 branch offices, is just one of the many engineering ventures in Peck's nearly four-decade career.

It could be said that Peck was destined to become an engineer from birth. The knack for engineering has been passed down throughout his family lineage; his mother was an engineer, as were his uncle and his maternal grandfather. Although engineering is in his DNA, the gene was



NSPE member Blake Peck, P.E., helped develop an idea on a napkin into one of the biggest construction management firms in the country.

coupled with passion, hard work, and perseverance to succeed in the field.

Peck earned a bachelor of science in civil engineering from West Point. He then went on to earn a master of science in civil engineering with a focus on construction management from the Georgia Institute of Technology. Peck served as a captain in the Army Corps of Engineers for seven years, where he worked mainly in design and construction management.

"It got me really focused on that area," Peck says. "I got experience in doing the design and actually implementing it."

After Peck served in the Army Corps, he ended up at a private engineering firm. He loved the work and helped the practice grow. But he wanted more: to start his own construction engineering business. Along with McDonough and Bolyard, Peck formed MBP, which has been honored twice in the last year as a top workplace by *Virginia Business* and *Zweig Group*.

"The three of us have very different personalities, but we work well together," Peck says. "Our strengths really melded well together."

Don Young, P.E., who was in the same Army battalion as Peck, now serves as a senior vice president and regional manager at MBP. Even though the two have worked together for a very long time, Young says their relationship is not rooted just in engineering; they are also close friends and were in each other's weddings. He sees Peck as both a mentor and a coach.

"Blake sets goals, but he doesn't micro-manage," Young says. "He's really positive as a leader. He's got a great sense of humor... he helps everyone stay stress-free."

MBP's project gallery includes big names like the US Capitol Visitor Center, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Dulles International Airport, as well as wastewater treatment plants, power plants, bridges, and schools.

"What's really great about this industry is that we build things that are tangible," Peck says. "The job satisfaction is so great. You can see what you're doing. It's there, it's real."

In addition to working at MBP, Peck also served as president of the Construction Management Association of America from 2001 to 2002, was inducted into CMAA's College of Fellows in 2004, and served on the Construction Manager Certification Institute's Board of Governors from 2004 to 2006.

Bolyard, one of MBP's founders who has worked with Peck for over 30 years, counts Peck as both a great friend and colleague. According to Bolyard, Peck has the ability to think about the "big picture" of a project and keeps things in perspective.

"Blake's got a great passion for our industry," Bolyard says. "There's a lot of challenges when you're operating your own company and competing with larger companies, but he's overcome it by exceeding our clients' expectations."