



Roundtable Notes: Catalyzing Success

5.26.22

1. **About This Roundtable [2 mins]**

- a. Welcome, session outline

2. **Discussion Prompts [45 mins]**

Each member has 2 mins to respond to **one** of the following prompts:

- a. How have you jump started strings of success?
- b. What success have you proactively manifested through your decisions and actions?
- c. What is a specific thing you are considering doing to catalyze a previous success?

3. **Group Discussion [30 mins]**

Closeout [Total: 1hr 27 mins]

Brick & Wonder Member Attendees:

Antonio Rillissoi [SPECIALTY FABRICATOR](#)

Linda Cirigliano [OWNER'S REPRESENTATIVE](#)

Nancy Kleppel [CONSULTANT](#)

William Smith [GENERAL CONTRACTOR](#)

Kyle Twitchell [ENGINEER](#)

Hannah Foster [GALLERIST](#)

Paul Grech [SPECIALTY FABRICATOR](#)

Brick & Wonder Team

Drew Lang [ARCHITECT](#)

Ed Thompson Brick & Wonder

John Solomon Hanson Brick & Wonder



Notes

1. Antonio Rillosi

- a. Our company has 80 people, and I think part of our success is that we are a good family for them. I have lived in NYC since 2015 and my team is working alone in Milan - a demonstration of cooperation and responsibility. It was a big leap to move here and leave them to be artistically and mentally responsible for what they are doing. I don't have a principal manager on my behalf in Milan - we have a lot of people who are project leaders. So our success is based on trust and ownership.

2. Nancy Kleppel

- a. I've always thought of success as being defined by people. I'm in the ownership group for a large development project. We're on the verge of beginning construction of a \$45m building. The openness to meeting new people and letting things flow naturally has led me to opportunities like this.

3. Kyle Twitchell

- a. Despite myself, whenever I go to places, I'm an overly social engineer. I've been able to walk into places and meet people. It has taken away the fear of getting to know people - the curiosity to see where things go. Also, in 2011 I attended the Harvard Negotiation institute - a week long intensive to learn how to negotiate - all about assumptions, people, how they interact with stress. I would say it has jump started my success to be able to go in without assumptions and learn about the other side's interests. It was the most intense therapy session I've experienced!

4. Paul Grech

- a. We've found success in simplicity and elegance that we can roll out to our clients and collaborators. Because we make things, we often work with people who have a vague idea of what they want. The **more impediments we remove for that person to make their decisions, the more successful we become.** We work with a ventless fireplace company, making a mantle for these fireplaces into a seamless single piece. Typically, every fireplace we do is a custom single piece. So, working with our partner, we made a series of surrounds that match these specific fireplaces. This partnership will continue to evolve. But it's about making something that prompts people to make decisions about it. The more we can give people something to respond to, the easier it makes their decisions.

5. Hannah Foster

- a. I'm the director at Sugarlift gallery. We are working with a new client - a real estate developer. We had one project, with one developer in the company. We also wanted to meet the interior designers within the company. We were open to meeting new people - we call it "getting into traffic". We met with their team - went to dinner, had a nice time, got to know one of them, who then introduced us to the right person. "Getting into traffic" and meeting people even if you don't know where it will go. **Approach business relationships with enterprise clients from multiple angles - it creates a confirmation bias for decision makers to hear your name twice. Make sure you meet as many people as possible and triangulate the outreach to the people that matter.**



6. Drew Lang

- a. We started Brick & Wonder to catalyze success for ourselves and others. It's great to meet new people and give value to them by making introductions etc. The part that's harder and less clear to me is based on the idea of give and take as articulated by Adam Grant. In order to have success there has to be a give and an ask. How do we get away from a transactional place and get to a relational place? **We frequently coordinate introductions through the BW community. We think through the lens of adding value in two directions: if we can't see the value from both directions, then something is wrong and we question whether we should make that introduction.** It's a decision framework that we've found to be very effective.

7. Linda Cirigliano

- a. I'm an owner's rep, working in client services. I believe in the truth of my decisions and actions in terms of how I run my business. To thine own self be true. I am who I am - I can't adapt to be different. I like to laugh, I wear boots sometimes, but I'm honest to the approach I take to being an owner's rep. It has allowed me to build my company - it's the relationships I've made. It's being truthful to building the brand for my company. Lean in, don't lean back. The success has been in the commitment and passion for what I do, that is very evident to my team and myself. They want to live in that world. I think another success factor has been not getting too big too quickly. There is always an opportunity to learn more. So I ask people to educate me. Honesty and dedication to the work are the decisions and actions of my success.

8. Will Smith

- a. I'm an architect and builder working for a boutique GC in New York. We're both sailors and both architects. We were "dating each other" for two years before we started working together. That's the macro story. The micro is that our PMs have a lot of anxiety that they don't know what's expected of them in the totality of their roles. They don't know what a successful week of their work looks like. So I approached them and said: "I have a wish list" of thing I want from you, which I shared with them. I also asked for them to give me their "wish list". It was really helpful for them to tell me what they wanted. They wanted to know how well they were doing. And I wanted to know the status of each of the projects, what the real problems are, and what the success stories from the week are.

Conversation:

Nancy: The key to making things non-transactional is to remember that we're playing the long game. If you have the confidence to say I'm interested in connecting with this person - I like them. It becomes transactional in the long game - you need to have the presence to remember that it's patience, that the value will reveal itself.

Paul: Engaging in transactions helps build trust. There is an exchange of services that adds trust to the relationship. **Linda:** On transactions - I get brought into a lot of transactions. I'm brought in to be this person to help manage the transaction. Transactions are not necessarily meaningful all the time. I work in a team mentality - sometimes there is a situation where there isn't a team mentality. They are not always meaningful.

Hannah: A meaningful relationship balances what you need from someone now to keep up a longer term relationship over time. **Nancy:** Over 30 years I had to do things and didn't recognize where I was going to land. If this is the only tangible thing I've built in my career. It brings things in my career together in hindsight - something about being towards the end of a career is different. It takes faith - it's a slow process. **Drew:** I'm



reminded of “Who luck” by Jim Collins. If you connect the special people together, there’ll be a multiplication of the things. It’s not that complicated. You can’t have long term relationships with everybody - it’s hard to reconcile that. **Linda:** With one specific client and team, it has been a transition to learn that the person I thought I was working with is not who I imagined he would be. **Will:** We have subs, we have architects, owners, engineers, consultants with different elements. When you get a call from a sub who is saying I’m having a hard time paying my insurance this month - you have to make those decisions. As a builder a lot of the money flows through us. **Drew:** I think we all want to protect and shield our owner clients from them. To bring hard truths to them, is that an opportunity - even though it’s messy and hard and ugly to bring them into the equation. OK, yes, this is going to stress the client. **Linda:** Figure out how to do therapy with my clients - having the dialog with the clients. Ask them what level of communication you want from the project. How do you want to approach the financial dialog of the project? Do you want a weekly summary or something else? it’s getting out in front of it. **Nancy:** I think judgment is so important. There are times when you want to be candid, and there are times when you wait for the right timing. You have to trust your gut when the right moment is to be candid. **Kyle:** Owning your mistakes and putting them right, but you don’t want to be hiding things and also not presenting things that are problems you haven’t figured out. **Drew:** I think going to the place of simplicity is key. **Paul:** There’s the paradox of choice - people don’t know how to react to these choices. Anything we can do to funnel down choices for people - still give them reasonable directions to do still gives them choices. We don’t want to suck a lot of bandwidth out of their minds. Even actual choices - the choices are infinite - the back and forth dialogue. A lot of times people want something to happen. **Kyle:** I have a 6 and 4 year old - the best piece of parenting advice is no more than 3 options - the one you want, and the other thing that lets them make a choice. Reducing choice is always important. **Hannah:** We do a goldilocks principle - we sandwich the one that’s the right fit between something that they might want but don’t have the budget for, and something lower quality they don’t want. With art, people are not comfortable with using the language of art history and philosophy, so you keep it simple - you speak the language of color, composition, shape, feeling. **Linda:** A lot of what I do is translation. One of the mentors I have - you translate everything in a way I can. **Antonio:** Simplicity is a great aspect of our job. When we can be meaningful - one is knowledge - using our knowledge - all our experience for the good of the project. Responsibility - we can hide something sometimes - because it’s not presentable right now. Great communication is not about being transparent 100% of the time - it’s to be responsible for what I need to communicate. Know what is digestible, understandable. The third thing is intention - what we intended to make. We play the game transparent enough and clear enough. It’s very important for us to be who we are and not to be a mask of something different. We are the company we are. If we work with Knowledge, responsibility and intention - we are ethical. People like people who are ethical - even if they don’t agree with our ideas. We can be successful when we’re free to express ourselves in this way. If we can deliver after the time we said we’d deliver it, we deliver it. I can’t work with some architects because they don’t do projects who think they don’t have the budget. We can’t say yes every time. We are small enough so we can decide as the owner. We don’t have to do all the architectural projects in the world, we can’t, so we understand what the projects are for us. For the first 14 years of my career we produced mass production - 2 major customers - plasma screen monitors. We made 1.5m monitors, the second customer we made kitchen hoods. After having done this mass production, my team asked me: we’re tired, we’re bored, we don’t want to do this any more. So they said we want to do something that we can be enthusiastic about. **Antonio:** Another triangle we use is: affinity. I feel like a father sometimes. I know it’s strange. I’m younger than some of my guys. Affinity, responsibility and communication. It’s like you have a balloon - they are all open. Where you can blow in. Sometimes you have to blow more on the communication valve. Sometimes you have to blow more on the responsibility value, sometimes more on the affinity valve. **Nancy:** When people feel condescended to - as a first principal to say everyone is deserving that respect. **Antonio:** In 2004 I decided to be transparent with 19 statistics at the coffee machine. Including how many euros we sold every week. How many we received, how



many euros we delivered. How many meetings I do - because I'm here. I put myself under control and that's the way we can really trust each other. I'm not supervising you - I'm not patronizing you. I'm doing my side of the job. I've done 230 trips back and forth - to be there, a week every 3 weeks. We need to figure out the level of communication the customer needs. We do only the shop drawings - transforming the dream into reality. Affinity, responsibility and communication. Knowledge, responsibility, intention - they need to work together. Two triangles make a star. I think those triangles have to work together. Employees, subs, architects, customers. I think you receive a lot back. **Will:** My responsibility is to make sure the project is financially healthy. The PMs, the level of respect for us - sharing those metrics is something I'm driving us towards as being millennials working. Our PMs want to know. I've started to tiptoe into that pool. It's not that they are going to be demanding massive salary increases, they want to continue to feel that success and they want to be more transparent. **Antonio:** We received a study in 2004 - taken in all of Europe, 10k people in the study. 85% said Number 1: I want the satisfaction of my boss - communicate what is good every week, every month. Number 2: I want to know the difficulties of the company. (It doesn't seem to make sense for the owner). Number 3: I want to share the difficulties of my family. If you don't give these 3 things, in first place is: I want money. **Kyle:** Because the thing the company gives me is my paycheck. The individuals that understand their contribution to the company are the things people are looking for. How am I helping the company overall? We have to build meaningful relationships with our employees to transcend transactional relationships.