



Questions for Mr Edward Basanese

<http://acoustics-in-the-us.com/>

General Presentation

West General Acoustics

Please describe here your company so as the reader can understand what is the purpose of your company. The description must be short and precise.

West General Acoustics is a wholesale distributor of custom acoustical materials, based in San Jose California. We provide applications assistance to customers throughout the United States.

Our purpose is threefold:

We work with specifiers, such as acousticians / architects / designers, by presenting for their consideration various custom acoustic panels / diffusers / ceilings / noise barriers / sound doors / acoustic tools, etc., so they may incorporate high performance, acoustically tested materials in their recommendations.

We assist in correct implementation of specifiers' plans by serving as a resource to installing contractors, since we are knowledgeable of specialized techniques for correct installation.

We respond to acoustical and noise-control related inquiries from end users with smaller projects. We guide them to appropriate acousticians, materials, finishes, etc., for their consideration.

Your job in particular

Please describe here your job within the company, your main missions and roles.

My role in senior management is to mentor and support our company leaders, to assist in maintaining good relationships with principals, and to oversee business aspects of running our company.

The mission of West General Acoustics is

- to serve specifiers and end users by offering the best custom acoustic materials, with prompt response, fair prices, and full satisfaction.
- to represent substantial principal manufacturers of high quality acoustic materials.
- to attract and retain motivated, service-oriented employees.

Why acoustics ?

Please describe here why you have chose acoustics and not another field. Where did you study?

West General began serving customers in 1975 as a mechanical engineering design firm. Over time, the customer base began to inquire more and more about noise control for their work spaces, and acoustical materials for their office and quiet spaces. The company gradually changed direction to focus more exclusively on satisfying these needs. Today, we no longer provide mechanical engineering, but have become a leading resource and supplier in the acoustical materials and noise control fields.

My degree is International Economics from Georgetown University in Washington DC. My role at West General was initially in the business end of the company. Over time, I learned acoustical theory through study and firsthand experience of working with our principals and our customers.

Your best project so far ?

What is your greatest pride related to your job so far?

A large water treatment plant near Lake Tahoe, California needed custom louvers having high sound attenuation performance. None were available on the market. I worked with our principal manufacturer to develop and test a brand new product. This met their needs and the installation went smoothly.

There are many projects I am proud of. These involve end users who have acoustical or noise control issues and want to apply the proper materials to solve their problem. They normally have already engaged acousticians who provide a report showing parameters of their existing situation, and the required amount of sound absorption or noise control to provide the solution. My role is working with the customer to put the data in the report into action with appropriate materials and finishes.

You in particular

The profile

According to you, what would be the photofit of an ideal candidate for your job ? What are the qualities we should try to improve?

An ideal candidate would be a service-oriented person with a combination of acoustical technical knowledge and business skills. Customer relationships are critical. We have found that many customers balk at the expense of acoustical treatment or noise control equipment. Good communications skills are needed to present the options clearly and assist the customer to make the best choices up front.

Your typical day

Please describe here your daily life in the company or the conduction of a project from the beginning to its end for example.

A typical day at West General would include a combination of

- visits to specifiers, designers, contractors, and customer jobsites,
- preparing quotations and negotiating with customers on new projects,
- managing orders at our various manufacturers, and
- keeping an eye on website traffic – an important marketing resource.

A typical project begins with a phone call to our office. First we determine the appropriateness of the inquiry, and whether they have already contacted an acoustician. We ask questions about performance, design, color, placement, etc., that will lead to a product recommendation for their need. A site visit and/or looking at site photos are useful. We have discussions about timeframe for the project. Will the client install materials themselves or do they need assistance working with a contractor? Discussions with their acoustician may be desirable to clarify particular issues. Then we begin the proposal stage and negotiations. Once the proposal is accepted, we go into project coordination mode with the customer's business department and selected installer. Leadtimes and deliveries are managed. Questions are answered about placement and installation techniques. After installation, there is a discussion on results: the customer's perception of the actual acoustical treatment.

Perspectives

Your short-term projects

What are your short term projects ? What are the current files on your desk?

My current project involves the upcoming launch of a new invention technology that will have a big impact on sound control within architectural spaces, as well as industrial and other applications. We are currently working with the inventor on putting together his team of licensees. We hope to bring the product to the US market by the end of 2014, and the international market sometime after that.

Your long-term projects

How do you see your life in 10 years for example ? Will you stay in your company ? Will you evolve or will you go somewhere else?

I have been with West General since 1987 and I hope to continue for many years to come. My office is currently on the east coast, near Hartford Connecticut, so I bring that different geographical perspective to the company. I am excited about our company's opportunities to continue helping customers and end users solve their acoustic and noise control issues and problems.

One more thing : Some tips for people like me

If you had a few tips to share, what would they be?

Being service-oriented, in addition to technically competent, is critical. We find that many end users who contact us do not understand acoustics, and need to be guided patiently to solutions that will actually benefit their situation. Another important aspect is the business end. While there are some large companies in the field, many acousticians are small offices and a strong business sense is important for that company's long term growth. So my tips would be: take some accounting, marketing, sales, and management classes if these are available. You never know when you may be the entrepreneur - starting a new company - who really could use that business knowledge in addition to the technical competencies!

Additional questions

Here are a few key-phrases that comes in my mind sometimes. You are not compelled to answer, but it could improve the quality of the interview.

☐ *State of the art, state of the market in the acoustics world*

Acoustics is an exciting field to be in! Companies are finally beginning to see that pleasing acoustical spaces improve office creativity, and quieter factories improve output and productivity. Acoustics is progressing from being seen as a "luxury," to being seen as essential to employee happiness and productivity. Where companies used to strike out acoustical enhancements from a budget for cost reasons, they are now designing in acoustics upfront, as well as spending more money to retrofit upgrades of existing spaces.

☐ *What do you personally want to improve through your work?*

I enjoy being able to help people to have quieter, more acoustically pleasing work places, worship spaces, sports halls, etc. And I would like every neighborhood to be shielded from the industrial noises that can disrupt their peace and quiet. Acoustics and Noise Control make for a better world!

☐ *If you work with engineers, what do you expect from them?*

I expect them to know how to listen to their customers, and to respond to them in a helpful way, with appropriately designed, sized, and priced solutions.

☐ *Soft skills, transferable skills of someone like you *

Some "soft skills" might be:

- Problem solving.
- Flexibility and creativity in considering different approaches.
- Team approach in working with other professions: contractors, architects, designers, etc.
- Patience and persistence
- Be a musician, because you need a "good ear" to appreciate good acoustical treatments!

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