

## **Transcript\_Podcast#5\_Workforce Lens\_Hosting Sean J. Studzinski, AIA, President, ModularDesign+**

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Greetings and welcome to the fifth installment of our podcast series, The Workforce Lens, brought to you by Tarrant County College in North Texas. I am Shannon Bryant, Executive Vice President for Corporate Solutions & Economic Development, and I will be your host, moderating strategic conversations with employers and economic developers on all things related to preparing and growing the workforce today and the future.

Today, please help me welcome our guest, Sean Studzinski, President of ModularDesign+. Welcome Sean.

**Sean Studzinski:** Thank you, Shannon, glad to be here today talking with you.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Good talking to you, so happy to have you here. Let's jump right in. I want to learn more about ModularDesign+. Your website states that ModularDesign+ is a full service, modular design and prefabrication firm focused on enhancing the efficiency of building components through modularization. What does that mean, tell us about the company?

**Sean Studzinski:** That is a mouthful. We do a variety of things. Modular Design+ is a four-year-old company. We are a wholly owned subsidiary of a larger company, Canon Design, which is an architectural and engineering firm that is about a 105-year-old company with over 1200 employees across the nation. We were started about four years ago, just because of the change in the environment. What we've done is we've put together basically an integrated process of design and prefabrication, and what that entails is prefabricated components that we fabricated here in our 100,000-square-foot facility right here in Dallas, Texas, that are used to go into larger building structures such as hotels for hospitality. [Other applications include] medical centers, health care centers, multifamily mixed-use housing, student housing, etc. We have a variety of different components that we prefabricate, but what's different about ModularDesign+ is that we've actually integrated the design portion into it, too, so we also have a whole team of architects and engineers who work with the client architects and engineers on particular projects to really find and maximize the efficiencies of prefabricated and modular solutions into the building process. And what that does, with prefabricated modular solutions, is really speed up the process. It can cut down on construction time, it can significantly reduce the amount of labor that's required, and it also provides a much safer environment, safer productivity, and higher quality of productivity, out of a factory assembly line type of process in the construction market.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Very cool product. I was honored enough to get a tour of your plant and get to see some of your prefabricated hotel rooms, those were really, really cool. Absolutely. So, is North Texas your headquarters for ModularDesign+?

**Sean Studzinski:** It is, yes. This is our home base. We have people throughout the nation. We have sales forces in California and up in the northeast, and we also utilize our larger parent company as well with 20 offices across the nation. This is our headquarters for modular design class in our primary fabrication plant. We do have an expansion plan every two to three years. We look to build a new facility in different regions of the nation, so, within 10 years, our goal is to have approximately five possibly six

factories, building around the country so that we can regionally serve them. We're pretty much looking at every major market sector in the country.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** How do you go about choosing those particular sites? Is it based on client need in that particular region?

**Sean Studzinski:** It is primarily based on client need and where we see the most growth happening. But it is also based on the labor force, where we see the strongest labor force, as well as economically viable real estate, and of course the space -- we need a large base -- in order to build what we build. And then, of course, the shipping and logistics needs, being located near major highway systems and things such as that. That's why we're here in Dallas-Fort Worth, not only because I live here, but also the fact that it's a major hub for the southern United States. It is easy to get to us from the West Coast, East Coast, [from a] transportation [standpoint], which is an important factor in what we do.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Right, I'm assuming your major source of transportation is ground transportation [based on the size] of the things that [you move]. Tell us a little bit about the clients that you serve. And what is the typical lifespan of a client relationship for your organization?

**Sean Studzinski:** Typically, we would be serving general contractors and developers, to architects and engineers. It really depends, even directly to institutional clients. We are contracted in a manner of ways. Most right now are in the private developer market, just because this is a newer type of delivery process. Most of them are private developers, primarily in hospitality and several in healthcare, because our parent company is a big healthcare designer. That's where we've been serving mostly, but we are also tapping into the institutional market, higher education campuses and things like that, through public-private partnerships, primarily in student housing, which is a great facility type for what we produce. We're really looking at a variety of different market sectors and what we can provide. That's part of it, the product line that we provide is providing a variety of prefabricated products that really helps us to expand and provide flexibility in each one of those markets and better serves our customer needs.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Are there any local facilities that you could reference? Let's take a look and understand exactly what this is all about.

**Sean Studzinski:** I wish I could, but we don't have any local projects. We do have some that I did as an architect on Texas Women's University. The latest student housing up there, there are comments up there that I did as an architect, prior to coming into ModularDesign+ with one of our vice presidents. I was the pre-fabricator, and the panel is a wall system, which is a product we provide. So, we didn't provide it, but I was the designer, and my vice president was the fabricator on that, so it was built with prefabricated panels, wall systems. We do have our first major project going up here in Texas in Waco, and so that's being fabricated in our plant now, and so you should start seeing that going up probably around September or October, and seeing the units being shipped down the highway, out of our plant here in Euless.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** We'll look forward to seeing that. So, you are the president of ModularDesign+. How long have you been with the company? I know you said you've been in business for four years, so you've been there since the inception?

**Sean Studzinski:** No, I have not. I came on about two years ago, and we were working out of primarily doing smaller, what we call non-load-bearing volumetric units, which are bathroom pods, exam room pods, things like that. They are fully finished out rooms that slide into a superstructure, primarily in healthcare facilities. Prior to me coming on, Bradley Kinnick, CEO of our parent company, Canon Design, who I've known for quite a while, asked me to come over and take a look at what they're doing here and the possibility of being able to expand it into new market sectors, expand the business. So, we were operating out of a smaller facility, about 30,000 square feet out of Kansas City, prior to me coming on. One of the first things I did was I said, "You know we really need to expand our offerings. We need to expand what we're doing, and we need to get into an area with a better labor force."

Kansas City is highly unionized, and the labor force was expensive. It just wasn't the amount of workforce that we needed to expand into what we're doing now. So, that was one of the first moves we made. We are now in the process of running our last project out of that plant, now that's being delivered out to Los Angeles. That has been fully delivered now, I should say in the last couple of weeks, and so that one is shutting down and we opened up this 100,000-square-foot facility here last summer, - which you have already toured. And so, this expands us into offering a wider variety of products, such as the load-bearing and non-load-bearing panelized wall systems, the non-load bearing volumetric systems and then expanding into the full load-bearing volumetric systems, which are for hotel rooms and things like that. [They are] built so that they actually go up like Lego blocks, they actually make the structure of the building and they're completely finished out inside with everything in it.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Very cool. So, being the president, what is the day in the life of your role on the job, what does your typical day look like? You're an architect by trade, correct?

**Sean Studzinski:** Yes. The truth is there's no typical day. Every day is different, but you know that's one of the exciting reasons I became an architect in the first place. Every project is different, it's always a unique challenge and now, fully running this company, every day is a unique challenge. You never know what you're going to get hit with, whether it's something you know to deal with the plant, whether it's your design team's contracts, business development or looking at different aspects of this development. Where are the regions? What are the different products that we can offer? Every now and then, I still do a little bit of design and work with my design and engineering teams to solve problems. That's kind of fun when I get to do that. Mostly, it's one of the things where I say, "I'm an architect, but I haven't done real architecture in probably about 10 years." I've been mostly on the business side of it, business development and running different market sectors for different companies. So, with this one, I saw a real challenge taking this on. It's a very new type of delivery system that I've had experience with. Most of my projects over the last 10 or 12 years have utilized prefabrication and modular components in them, from the design side, so being able to actually be on the fabrication side and integrate the two processes was really exciting for me and it still is really exciting as we start to see our first products coming online now and getting produced. When we start seeing the high rise in Waco going up, it is going to be really exciting to see that. It actually creates the structure of the building, so I think that's really cool. My kids have come to the plant and my wife, and I've seen it and have walked through the modular model prototype. They always ask me, "Can we sleep in it?" And, I said no. Maybe in about a year or so, when it's completed down in Waco, we'll go down there and stay a night or two and just see it, just so they can actually see and say, "This is something Daddy built."

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** To see the fruits of your labor. It's definitely a fascinating thing to look at. Sean, obviously, I'm with the community college, TCC, and we're all about education and educating our workforce. As I was doing a little bit of research on you and the company, I noted that you have an industry credential after your name of AIA, and I was just wondering, from an architect's perspective, because I don't know that much about the architectural world, what does this credential mean? How has it enhanced your skill set in your professional career track, for you personally.

**Sean Studzinski:** Sure, so AIA stands for American Institute of Architects, and so it is the Professional Institute for registered architects, basically symbolizing that I'm a registered architect. You don't need the credential in order to be a registered architect, some are not members and just put RA after their name, but American Institute of Architects is a group that lobbies for architects, anything that would be in favor of architects and the profession overall across the United States and even internationally. They're part of a group that actually sets up the educational systems, the registration systems, continuing education systems. They hold an annual conference as well as regular state conferences every year. It's a great group to get together with colleagues and find out what's going on. Everyone in architecture is doing something different -- from people who do single family residential homes all the way up to massive, large developments. And so, [it is a good group] just to compare notes on what people are doing, what they're seeing in the industry, where they're seeing changes going on in this business. I've had a lot of contacts that I haven't talked to for many years contacting me saying, "Tell me about this, what is this, we've heard about it, but we don't know much about it." And, believe it or not, it's this type of delivery process and design process where the architects have probably the biggest learning curve, trying to figure out how we design this, how do we make this work, how do we make this efficient, and that's, what ModularDesign+ adds to it, that we actually provide that service for them, we provide that integration so that there's not as much of a learning curve in understanding that they can design it traditionally and then leave it up to us to really guide them in the process to modularize and prefabricate.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** The whole credential is the industry association, it's all about best practices and getting together and making sure that everybody is following the same guidelines so they're standardization across the industry.

**Sean Studzinski:** Absolutely, trying to work with the government on code compliance, setting codes and construction methods and building codes, compliance across states, etc. That's probably one of the biggest things that's very difficult for architects. There's so many ICC international code compliance [rules]. The book that we follow is the International Building Code. If you're working commercial with the International residential code, if you're working in residential single-family residential, and every state, and even more so, every local jurisdiction, city, or municipality, it has anywhere from 2012 or 2021. With COVID, it's really difficult, it would be much easier if they were able to actually all get on the latest code or the latest one out there. When you're working nationally, it's not as much a process, some are following older codes, some are following newer codes and they all have different implications in the design process, which makes it very difficult on architects and engineers to work through that. I'm sure it does absolutely need some standardization; standardization would be great.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Sean, let's segue just a little bit, talking about the employees ModularDesign+ has have here in north Texas. How many people employees do you currently have?

**Sean Studzinski:** We're currently around 50 or 60, and like I said, we're just at moderate ramp up. We're slowly ramping up to full capacity, which we expect to be later in the fall, especially early next year. When we are fully ramped up in our factory, we expect to have probably around 90 to 100. Here at this facility, the majority of those being the factory plant workers that would be the skilled labor and unskilled labor in the actual application process. That probably would account for about 70-80, then we have about 20 to 30 more in the office for architects/engineering administration, Salesforce, things like that, different office roles. We also have our sales teams. We have a sales team in California right now, and we're looking at one probably either in the southeast or northeast, as well, getting online here.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** So, you are going to have a ramp up of 90 to 100 here in North Texas, and across the country for all of the new locations that you're going to be expecting over the next few years. What do you anticipate your growth will be in that area, as far as employees across the country?

**Sean Studzinski:** Each factory would probably be relatively the same size; we'd be looking at about 100,000 square feet and each one would employ roughly about that same number. You wouldn't have as much of the front office because we'd have most of our executive staff here at this location, and most of our design staff, so we'd have smaller local design teams, inclination teams of engineers and architects, and then, of course, you'd have the same type of staffing in the back as far as area coordinators, plant supervisors, production leads, and then, of course, your skilled and non-skilled labor forces. I would anticipate somewhere around 70 to 80 people and each one of those, as we expand, and that would be about every week, would be based on our current pipeline that we're looking at. We're probably looking at, toward the end of next year, another location, possibly out toward the west coast along the California border, not in California, just because real estate is so high. Somewhere probably like in Reno, Nevada, somewhere in that area.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** So, as the President, tell me a little bit about your strategy on how you go about scaling your workforce according to the business drivers and the demands.

**Sean Studzinski:** Sure, so we have to maintain a certain level of flexibility in that. And we have tried to keep roughly about 50% of our staff fully trained on the production side, and the other 50% are what we call our temporary staff, who we use either for pre-agencies or internships or things like that. We want to give people the necessary skills and training, and in labor force, this is more flexible. We can bring them on for a month or two as needed. And then, release them for a month or two if we need to, but keeping that base there for sure. As we continue to grow and stabilize, we expect that to be more like a 75 or 80 to 20 split. We would have probably about 20% that would be the temporary force and the rest of it would just be based on stabilization in the market sector and growing our business.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** You mentioned internships, so I'm going to have to ask the question: Do you currently have interns, or do you have an apprenticeship program that you run through your organization?

**Sean Studzinski:** We are working on that. Yes, it's in development. I know we talked last year and, to be honest, in looking at community involvement engagements with campuses like TCC, and looking to utilize that workforce, we definitely want to get something in place. Because of COVID, and TCC being shut down in a lot of areas, and most of our other resources – UT Arlington, UNT – all those have really prevented us from being as active as possible, and engaging groups like yours, and doing that just because of all the restrictions, so we haven't. We haven't made much headway in that, but we look

forward to that in the coming year, to really engage you guys more and see what we can do together, to get workforces over there, get internships, and, absolutely, we are we are totally on board with getting internships, whether it's over the summer months or however we need to set that up. We look forward to that.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Well, we absolutely do as well. We're going to be reopening our doors here very soon, so we look forward to engaging and helping you in any way we can. I know you talked a little bit about the skilled labor you have at the plant. Can you speak a little bit more specifically to what kind of skill sets you have, as far as what the needs are for these types of positions, and where are you currently finding the talent, outside of just the traditional temp services?

**Sean Studzinski:** Sure, absolutely. So, we have anything that you can think of on a traditional construction site; we do [it] in a factory – welding, framing, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, finished work; taping, bedding, drywall, tile workers, flooring, anything to do with construction would be the skilled labor sets that we would be looking for. The benefit of what we do is that we don't necessarily have to have [licensed workers] because we are a licensed manufacturer, [which is] very different than onsite construction. We don't necessarily have to have licensed plumbers, licensed electricians; all of that we do in the supervisory role, but we are state certified as a manufacturer.

Think of it like a TV manufacturer. Everyone building those TVs is not a licensed electrician. It works the same for us. Of course, we go through a very stringent inspection process with a third-party state inspection group that's representative of all 50 states. That allows us to build in all 50 states and ship our product to all 50 states to be built. This allows us to hire much more non-skilled labor forces and train them in those aspects. They get the education that they need and that gives them more flexibility in their career. If they want to stay with us and work in a quality-controlled environment, they go through that then. That's certainly their choosing. If they choose to go on and become a licensed plumber, electrician, any other trade, they can certainly do that, as well.

One of the benefits we have in our factories is an assembly line process. We have 24 stations, going all the way from the initial framing through the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing, all the way through the finish out and inspections. What that allows us to do with everyone that we bring on is train them in all 24 stations. They're not only getting the skill set that they come in with, but they're also learning many different skill sets. That gives them [the opportunity] to say, "Hey, I might want to do this, or I might want to do that." The reason we do that is because it is an assembly line production process and every project is different, so it's not like you're doing the same monotonous thing over and over. You know every project is going to be a little bit different design. It gives them that opportunity to learn different traits and it gives us the opportunity to have several people [trained in case someone] calls in sick from the station. We can shift people over from one of the other stations who are already trained on that skill set and [they] can do the work as well. We find that it also provides a higher quality of product at the end of the day, simply because, let's say, for instance, I have a framer that is working over in the finish section. He may say, "Hey, you know this this framing doesn't look exactly straight. He can flag that box and get it corrected. So, being trained in all the different aspects, you constantly have vigilant, quality control measures, because everyone is always seeing the work of others, and can critique it and correct it, so, when the product goes out, it's the highest quality that we can provide.

We do have skilled welders. We provide a welding training program and Ernest Levert, who was actually one of the initial welders who began the welding program for NASA, and actually created the protocols

for welding in space, and did initial welding the original space shuttles and things like that, is actually the guy who trains our welding staff and our welding crew. That is something that is really strong for us. Then, of course, we have licensed plumbers, mechanical guys, electricians, all of that, that we also training in all of the different stations as well.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Very nice, that's really good to hear. It sounds like you really have put together an organic growth strategy for your talent, for your team, as you're not only providing some kind of career pathway for them but you're really investing in their learning and development and also planning for any kind of cross training. That's wonderful. It's so nice to hear. Not all companies do. Kudos to you.

**Sean Studzinski:** Our philosophy is, if our workforce is happy, then we're just providing a better quality of work and a better-quality product, which we all benefit from.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** As I always say, people are the number one asset. It sounds like you really, really care, and you're really invested in them. That's wonderful. Speaking of the employees, what is the average age, and I know you said you've been in business for four years now, but what is the average age of your employee.

**Sean Studzinski:** We have basically two different categories, the front office, and executives, which would be in the 35 to 40 range, and then, of course, the plant workers are probably a little bit younger, in the 25 to 30 range. We do have some older guys back there that have been doing construction business for a long time.

I think I didn't fully answer the question earlier; You asked about where we locate a lot of our skilled labor and staff? [We work through] temp agencies for our plant supervisors and area coordinators, who oversee [line workers]. [They have] six different stations each. They all come from the prefabricated modular world; [that is] where they've been working for the last 25-30 years. They actually know a lot of high-quality skilled laborers in the market already that we are bringing over. [They] see what we've put in place for our workers, the benefits and things that are above what we're seeing in other plants, and [that we are] providing a better-quality work environment for them. That's what's attracting the money. We're paying the same, sometimes even lower, than some of the other manufacturers in the area, but the benefit, I think, [is that] we're just a different type of work environment, [offering] better benefits, paid time off, things like that. This [is important to maintain our labor force] because turnover is inherent in this industry.

While we're planning for that, we're going to try to avoid it, because [high] turnover costs money and time to retrain. Providing a work environment that they will like, enjoy, and see the benefits of, we think will give them more respect for themselves and more respect for the job, or respect for what they're doing, which I think is going to be, like I said, beneficial for everyone.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** You talked a little bit about the skills you are hiring for today. How do you go about assessing the skills that will be needed, three to five years from now, because your industry is ever changing, as most industries are these days? How does that work for your industry specifically?

**Sean Studzinski:** It is ever changing. I think it's really just seeing what you know. You've got to have a crystal ball to predict what's out there. The benefit of construction is that it is not rocket science, so we were not seeing massive changes when we were building our plant. We did a lot of homework, a lot of research on other factories and [brought that] together. Even Tesla's Elon Musk wrote an article, I think early last year, basically talking about automation robots and robotic welders, things like that, replacing manual labor forces. As we started to study a lot of this, we saw these different companies investing tens of millions, sometimes hundreds of millions of dollars, into these automation systems. We started to research it even deeper to understand what the benefits are. These companies that build and sell these robotic welders will claim [they are] 50 to 60% more efficiency over manual labor. As we started to dig down at these companies and see what it really was, it was more [like] 10 to 15%, and yet they have this debt of hundreds of millions of dollars and it doesn't give them flexibility.

I think that was one of the biggest problems with Tesla and why they were not profitable for almost a decade. They couldn't show a profit even though they were selling tons of cars, it was a popular product. It was a great product, but the problem, like Elon Musk probably realized, was he liked to change his mind, he changes his mind all the time. He was constantly going in there trying to make it better, and every time he changed his mind, it costs him [money]. [It would take a] month and a half of shutdown to reprogram all the automated systems. Finally, what he realized was that automation is not working for the flexibility I want in my business, and he removed most of the automation. Last year they showed their first profitability in over a decade of existence of the company. In fact, because he removed it [automation] and kept a manual labor force, that gave him the flexibility [he needed].

I think that's the difference in what we're building. We're depending more on the manual labor forces and skilled labor. That gives us flexibility. It's very easy to go back there and teach my team, within a day or two, what the differences [are on] a design from the last one they built, versus having to go back there and reprogram automated machines, which could take weeks or months to do. It still takes people to reprogram, right? But people reprogram much quicker. And they learn much quicker in that aspect of it. So that's the route we went. We wanted to give our clients that flexibility of design. We wanted to give them that flexibility to say, "We're going to provide a product that meets your design and your critical path of your project," not the other way around, where most other prefabricated modular companies are actually saying, "This is what we produce. You have to design around this and design around our parameters." We don't have an ego and we want to design what we want design, but we also want you to know, as an architect, we want to serve the client. If a client doesn't want something, then you have to customize. We want to customize; that's one thing that we saw in the industry that we chose to do differently and find an efficient manner of doing it. I think that's been very beneficial for us.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** All right, good. That's great. I love the strategy. Sean, when I was out visiting your plant, you and I were talking as we were walking along, and you mentioned to me that you recently launched a diversity, equity inclusion team within your organization. And that obviously is a huge passion of mine. What are the strategic goals and [what is] the primary focus of the company as it aligns with this new team and how does it fit into your existing workforce culture?



**Sean Studzinski:** So it is basically in everything I've said; it's what we believe in. Our first equity inclusion group provides an either anonymous or a place of refuge for someone that doesn't feel comfortable voicing to me or to my executive staff, issues that are going on. This is a place where they can come and speak freely. They can let us know what's going on because, obviously, when running a large company, I can't have my eyes and ears everywhere. I can't see everything, and we really depend on this group, that's integrated throughout both areas – the front office as well as the plant staff. [It helps people] to feel that they can speak freely, and then tell us what's going on, inform us, so that we can make adjustments either to policies or make adjustments to the way that things are running and operated so that everybody is being provided a fair and equal chance to move up to improve.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** So, essentially, you're giving everyone a voice. Everyone's at the table, it sounds like.

**Sean Studzinski:** It's even for things that are not necessarily going wrong but things that we can improve on, [like] providing support in the education system. We're trying to work with the community, with the HEB (Hurst, Eules, Bedford) Chamber of Commerce, to collaborate. A lot of our workers don't speak fluent English, English as a second language, and we're providing opportunities for education or to provide them [with banking and money management help]. Most of them take their checks and they go down to these check cashing places that take 25-30% of their checks. They just don't need to do that. And so, the banks are helping out in educating them on opening a checking account, and not having to lose that money, and being able to bring that money back to their family and improve their own personal lives. So those are ways that we're trying to help them, again, just providing those better benefits, and showing them that we care, that we're looking out for them, because they are what creates our business. Without them we wouldn't have the business.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Right, they are the boots on the ground. Absolutely. So, that's wonderful. I also know from your website – in case you didn't notice, I combed your website quite heavily – that you highlight a lot of industry associations and how your teammates are very active in these organizations. Just to name a few, you mentioned Modular Building Institute. American Institute of Architects, Associated General Contractors of America, and Design Build Institute. If you were talking to a TCC student, let's say in our construction area, and that student was just graduating, we just had graduation a few weeks ago, and they were going to be starting a new job, what advice would you give that student about the importance of joining and actively participating in such industry associations?

**Sean Studzinski:** Well, much like very early, even back when I was still in school and I was working an internship, while I was finishing my master's degree in architecture, with a firm – I went to Texas Tech out in Lubbock – and so I was working with a firm out there in Lubbock, and I became a member of the AIA. It's an associate member before you're registered to clean associate AIA, and the benefit that I found in doing that was that I was able to get something beyond the theoretical education that you typically get in a college environment or university environment. I was able to get more of the practical experience and knowledge, talking with architects who have practiced for 10 or 20 years, that understand the things that they don't always teach in school. What am I really going to expect, what am I really going to see? I know I've got this education. I know that I can do this, but what can I expect coming out into the real world? That, along with my internship, I think was very beneficial early in my career, and really bringing me to a next level. As I went out and finished my degree and then later on

completing my architectural registration, which is a very arduous process in that, I think having that knowledge and knowing what to expect, really helps you prepare you. It really helps you to see the world in a different light and know what to expect. There were so many architect colleagues that I graduated with that had not worked any internships or collaborated with practicing architects. They wanted to get out and get published in magazines and on the covers, win design awards and all that. It's just not the reality. There's a very small percentage that do that. So, I think, [it is beneficial to] join those organizations. You can collaborate with people who are already in the business or have been in the business for a long time, and really ask the straightforward questions and get straightforward answers to what you can expect and what can help you in your career path. It was very beneficial to have several mentors that I met, and I am still in contact with today on a regular basis. They still mentor me to this day and even I mentor to them back now on things in their career, even though they're 10 or 15 years older than me. I've been doing it longer, just because we've had different career paths, we've had different experiences, so we can learn from each other. I think that's probably the biggest benefit of finding the organizations. I would say join as many as you can, in different areas. Like I said, we have a variety of professionals in our company that come from the general contracting [world]. They come from the prefabricated modular world, they come from the architectural engineering and design world. That's why we're a member of so many different groups. As we integrate, we are able to learn about each other's background, each other's specific profession, where they come from more wholly, and understand that so it really creates a better, homogenous group and holistic ability to provide better solutions as we collaborate internally with that combination of different backgrounds and seeing it from a different perspective.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Exactly. It is wonderful for students, because it's not just about the theory, it's about gaining the knowledge and then also learning how to take that and apply it to the skill set and be able to meet other people. Absolutely.

**Sean Studzinski:** And you can never meet enough people to better your career. The more people you meet – some good, some bad – you just have to be able to filter through that and understand, so that's how those organizations really help.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Right, learn who your mentors can be and then like you said, when we get to our age, then we can then reciprocate, we can give back, because now we can be mentors to those people, like we're doing here today. I hope that's the goal, that's what we're hoping to accomplish here. So, Sean, talking a little bit about collaborative partnerships and things [like that], tell us a little bit about some of the key community partnerships of your organization and how has that been a value add, I know, COVID aside, right in the past year, is the best knowledge for us, but, on a typical day, what kind of collaborative partnerships have you gained since being here in North Texas?

**Sean Studzinski:** One, of course, is with you and Tarrant County Community College. We've been very fortunate that we hope to do more. Here and in the future. HEB Chamber of Commerce has helped quite a bit in connecting us with various banking and financial institutions. Some of our suppliers in the area, and even identifying areas of workforce, and helping us get the message out there of, the different workforce that we're looking for. And, institutions, of course you know other institutions like UT Arlington, which has a very strong architectural and engineering group. Educational programs – we've been able to coordinate with them and identify a different path for these individuals coming out. Like I said, modular prefabrication is relatively new to the US, even though it's been done in Europe for the

last 40 to 50 years very successfully. It's something that hasn't fully caught on here but is at the cusp of what we think is going to be a very major force moving forward, simply because of what we're seeing in the work environment today. [It is] becoming more and more challenging to create good construction projects, so this really solves a lot of the issues that we're seeing to that degree.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** It is what's new and exciting, for sure. Well Sean, we greatly appreciate having you here today. Are there any other thoughts or closing remarks that you would like to share with our listening audience about either you or ModularDesign+?

**Sean Studzinski:** Absolutely. When talking to the students, you really have to keep your eyes wide open and look for what you don't have to decide in the first couple of years of your career. It's more about seeking out different things. We certainly are interested in talking to you. ModularDesign+ is hiring. If you're interested in an innovative career, in something that's different than the traditional construction method, we are hiring now, so please go to our website at [ModularDesign+ | Customized Modular Building Solutions \(modulardesignplus.com\)](https://modulardesignplus.com) and look for opportunities there. And feel free to reach out to us. Like we said, we'd love to have some of your students over to see what's going on at the plant tour and they're interest in exploring it. You are welcome to come by; we're just 10 minutes down the road.

**Shannon Bryant (Host):** Alright, Sean, thank you so much. We really, really appreciate your time today, and, to our listening audience, thank you so much again for attending the fifth episode of The Workforce Lens. We look forward to seeing you next time. Thank you.