

Career Day @ Howard S. Wright

When: Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015 from 9 am to 1:30 pm (check-in at 8:45 am)
Where: Howard S. Wright's Portland office, 425 NW 10th Avenue
Industry: Construction and design
Careers: Urban development, skilled trades, construction, digital modeling, project management
Notes: Lunch provided. Wear close-toe shoes and jeans (good condition) for construction site tour.

What is Howard S. Wright, anyway? It's one of Portland's leading construction companies, specializing in commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. It was founded in 1885 in Port Townsend, Washington, by a man who was a cabinetmaker and entrepreneur. Today, HSW describes itself as "one of the oldest continuously operating building contractors in the West," with offices in four states. The company was acquired by Balfour Beatty Construction of Dallas, Texas, in 2011.

What makes Howard S. Wright special? Can you say Space Needle??? Howard S. Wright built this Seattle icon as the focal point for the 1962 World Fair. The company also worked on the Grand Coulee Dam in the 1930s. As for local landmarks, HSW was the main contractor for the Pioneer Place Mall and the 42-story U.S. Bancorp Tower in downtown Portland, also known as "Big Pink."

What have Howard S. Wright employees worked on in recent years? Oregon projects include the Oregon State University Student Success Center, the downtown Nike Retail Store, the Edith Green Wendall Wyatt Federal Building, Forest Grove High School and the Residence Inn by Marriott in the Pearl District. Projects elsewhere include the RioGlass Solar Manufacturing Plant in Arizona, the Bell Helicopter Simulator Facility in California and the PeaceHealth Breast Health Center in Washington.

Interesting tidbit from a 2011 news article in The Oregonian: "... Like virtually all construction companies, HSW was hit by the housing bust and the recession. From revenue of \$900 million in 2008, it expects 2011 revenues in the low-\$600 million range. Nydahl and his management team, recognizing that 'the bottom was dropping out of the market,' took some tough steps in 2008 to shore up the company's bottom line. It pared its workforce by 25 percent. ..." (HSW is now enjoying the fruits of a building boom.)

What students would do: Students meet at HSW's main office and talk with working professionals in the building industry, who will answer questions about their career paths, job responsibilities and industry trends. The professionals will also describe the many different jobs within the construction field, and they'll explain the work involved in bidding, estimating, building-information modeling and project management. Students will go on a tour of a job site and participate in a hands-on activity, such as a simulation of the bidding process.

*Check out Portland Workforce Alliance's full calendar of career days for 2015-16:
www.portlandworkforcealliance.org/events*