

Geo-Strata

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**INNOVATIVE
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What You Wish For

The day began like all days for geoprofessional Doug Downs. He walked along the beach bemoaning his fate. "I'm just a commodity," he said aloud, to no one in particular. "I'm marginalized. All the other professionals get invited into the project at the start and stay involved to the end. What I have to say isn't important." And then, as usual, he kicked the sand, but – this time – with a most unusual result.

"Ow!" Doug yelled, while hopping on his left leg and holding his right foot. He'd stubbed his toe on a small, tarnished oil lamp buried in the sand. It looked very old.

"This'll probably polish up great," Doug thought to himself as he rubbed the lamp's patina with his thumb. The lamp suddenly became hot. Doug tossed it toward the sea and, as he did, a purple cloud filled the air. When it cleared, Doug stared in disbelief: Before him stood a giant – seven feet tall at least – swathed in a flowing blue-and-silver silk tunic, bright red pantaloons, a bejeweled white turban, and a gold sash with an ivory-handled scimitar tucked inside. "I am the genie of the lamp," the genie's voice boomed. "You have freed me and so I shall grant you your wish. What shall I call you?"

"Uh, Downs....Doug.... Doug Downs," Doug stammered. "I can have anything?"

"Anything at all, Downs Doug Doug Downs."

"Call me Doug." The genie nodded in acquiescence. "And I know just what I want."

"What?"

"I want to be the only geoprofessional there is. I want to create the mother of all supply/demand imbalances so I can never, ever be marginalized or commoditized again."

"So be it," said the genie. He clapped his hands twice

and disappeared as a whirlwind into the lamp.

Doug ran to his office, holding the lamp. Shirley Eugest, his administrative assistant, was speaking on the telephone. "Yes, as soon as he gets here, I promise," she said, ending the call. She looked up at Doug. "I don't know what's going on, Mr. D, but in the past 20 minutes you've had 15 calls. They all want you to call back right away." She handed Doug a list.

Doug went into his office to review the list, thinking about whom he'd call first. "Bill Davis the architect," he said to himself. "He's always treated me like dirt. I'll show

him." Doug tapped in Davis' number. The architect's receptionist transferred the call immediately.

"Bill, hello. This is Doug Downs."

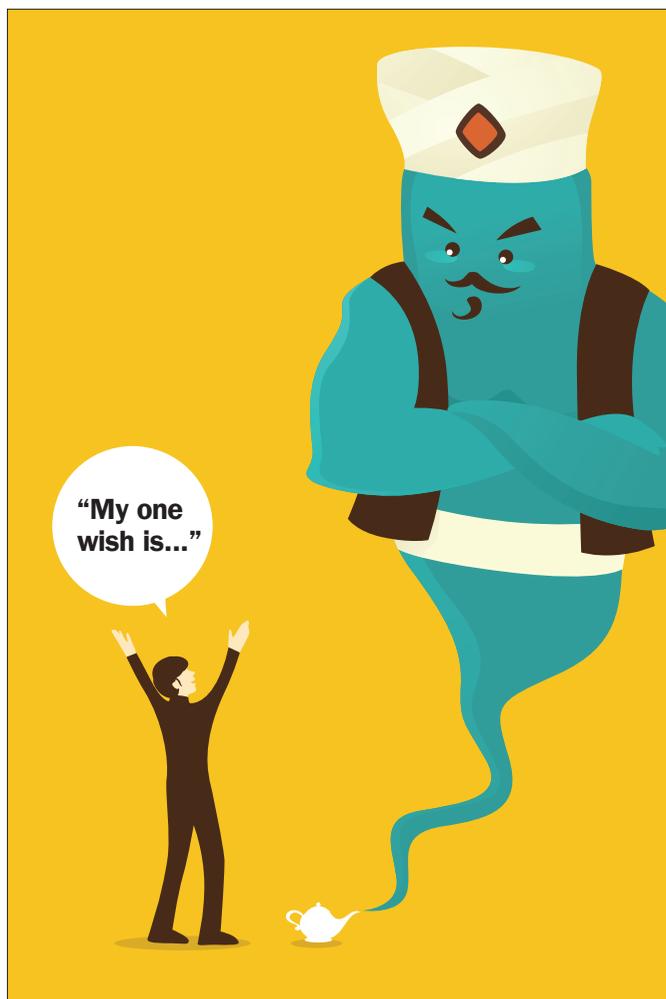
"Doug. Thanks for calling. Listen, we have this great new project; a contemporary art museum. The trustees want a building that will stand the town on its ear, kind of like a Frank Gehry. We're building it over on the old Hatrack site, and you're the geoprofessional I want."

"It's going to be tricky, Bill. We'll need to do a phase two and a lot of geotechnical sampling, too. I know the geology there. The building will need a really complex foundation system. I'd want to be involved from beginning to end. We should do the CoMET work, too."

"I'll think about all that, Doug, but I pretty much know what I want right now. I figure about six 20-foot borings will do. I'll show you where to put them."

"No way, Bill. I...."

"Now listen, Doug: This is the chance of a lifetime for



you. The only reason I'm calling is everyone else is, uh, busy or something. How much do you want?"

"Five thousand dollars."

"Five thousand? Are you nuts? I'll give you a hundred an hour and ten percent on the drill crew."

"Wait a minute, Bill. I..."

"Look, Doug, a hundred an hour not to exceed a thousand. That's good money. And we'll use your contract, except for that limitation-of-liability stuff. Deal?"

"Well, I..."

"Take it or leave it, Doug."

"Well, I guess I'll take it."

"Good. Come by tomorrow at ten."

Doug turned off his phone. "I can't believe I did that," he said aloud. "What's wrong with me? I'm the only geoprofessional in the world and I still let myself be marginalized and commoditized." He began to weep.

"What's wrong, Doug?" he heard a huge, familiar voice ask. It was the genie, outside his lamp yet again. "Was your wish not effective?"

"No, it wasn't," Doug replied.

"Can I have a do-over?"

"I'm sorry, Doug. One wish is all. But I think I have all you really need right here." And with that, the genie handed Doug a mirror and disappeared back into the lamp. Forever.

..... | AUTHOR |

John P. Bachner is the executive vice president of ASFE/The Geoprofessional Business Association, a not-for-profit association of geoprofessional firms; i.e., firms that provide geotechnical, geologic, environmental, construction materials engineering and testing (CoMET), and related professional services. ASFE develops programs, services, and materials that its members apply to achieve excellence in their business and professional practices. Contact john@asfe.org

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