

# BSB Design Revolutionizes Training with Growth Programs

*How a Blended Learning Approach Helps Build Culture, Employee Retention, and Sustained Growth*



## About BSB Design

*BSB Design* is a national architectural and design firm built on their passion for quality, innovative, and cost-effective architecture and has been providing top-notch customer service for over 50 years.

## Training for Success

*“[Vector Solutions’] robust platform, combined with the flexibility to upload our own in-house training, supports our commitment to continuous learning and professional development, making it a valuable resource for our firm.”*

— **Michelle Rothfus**  
Training & Development Manager

As an architecture firm with offices around the country, BSB Design has a diverse set of training needs that require a flexible and all-encompassing approach.

With their staff requiring accredited continuing education, they need to ensure their training is up to date with industry standards and aligns to state license and professional certification requirements. And they need training to meet the needs of a variety of job roles and employees at various experience levels.



## The Choice

*“The classes that Vector Solutions has match exactly what we do, our processes, everything.”*

— **Michelle Rothfus**  
Training & Development Manager

BSB Design recognized they needed a partner that would help them meet their diverse training needs at scale. With employees across the United States, online courses to complement their in-house training was a natural choice.



I selected Vector Solutions for two main reasons. First, they are the only platform that offers a wide range of training specifically tailored to the architecture and design industry. Whether it's advanced design techniques or state-specific compliance training, Vector covers the full spectrum of our training requirements.

Second, Vector is the only platform that ensures our professionals have access to accredited courses that satisfy these requirements across all the states we operate in. This simplifies the process for us and ensures that our team remains compliant.

— **Michelle Rothfus**  
Training & Development Manager



Although initially the main driver of choosing an eLearning partner was to support their licensed employees, eventually, other priorities came into focus.

## The Challenge

When Michelle joined BSB, she was their first full-time trainer. And in the beginning, as a Human Resources expert, she lacked technical architecture knowledge. This meant Michelle had to start by building trust and influence internally before she would be able to bring her dreams of a robust mentoring and employee development program to life.



**I understood that you don't do anything yourself. You do it with a village. As soon as I started building relationships within the company, it changed immensely.**

**Michelle Rothfus**  
Training & Development Manager

Michelle began working with other leaders across the company, gaining buy-in for building a training program where they could develop and mentor their staff. But the tipping point finally came during an economic downturn. The company became very cost conscious and limited their hiring.

Retirements were postponed and the opportunities for potential new leaders weren't being developed, creating a potential leadership vacuum as the economy rebounded. Dan Swift, BSB Design CEO and President, recognized they would likely need to replace a large number of the firms' licensed architects over a short period of time. They needed an action plan to fill their leadership pipeline and to retain and attract top talent.

It was out of this challenge that Michelle was able to create a tremendous opportunity for their firm.



## The Strategy: BSB Academy

*“At BSB Design, we recognized that our future leaders were likely already part of our team. That’s why we created growth programs: to identify and develop potential leaders at all levels in order to build a strong leadership pipeline that ensures the continued success and growth of our firm.”*

— Dan Swift  
BSB Design CEO and President



### About BSB’s Growth Programs

As soon as the BSB leadership team identified their need for a more robust L&D program beyond providing technical training and continuing education, Michelle got to work bringing her long-time dream to life: BSB Academy.

BSB Academy is their in-house training program, which is divided into three separate programs.

The first is a **robust Onboarding Program** to welcome their new team members and immediately set them up for success. The program covers all the traditional onboarding items—IT training, HR compliance, and so on—but the goal of bringing everyone together is to make them feel more confident and connected to their colleagues.

The second growth path is their **Leadership Bootcamp**, an optional program that’s open to all full-time, permanent employees. Bootcamp is a six-month commitment that focuses on building leadership skills and personal goal setting. Because the program is so hands-on and personalized, it’s limited to a small group of a dozen employees per year.

And last, is a more advanced program called **Emerging Leaders**. Employees must complete the Leadership Bootcamp before they’re eligible to apply. Emerging Leaders is a year and a half program, encompassing everything BSB does internally from onboarding to strategic planning, handling difficult situations, and long-term career and succession planning. In this program, employees work with mentors who are all leaders in the organization who will likely be retiring within the next five to ten years, giving BSB a chance to transfer knowledge from one generation of leaders to the next



### A Blended Learning Approach

Creating programs like this requires a lot of internal resources and planning. This is where a blended approach to learning and development is a game-changer.

BSB Design uses Vector Solutions online training as the pre-work for applying to Leadership Bootcamp. Team members must complete their training in the LMS to be eligible. This includes a wide variety of courses, from project management to leadership skills and contracts.

Requiring employees to take the online training ensures they have the right foundational knowledge and have proven a commitment to advancing in their careers and building leadership competencies.

It also means that the BSB Design team has more time to focus on making in-person training time more intentional and impactful.



## Organized and Intentional Onboarding

At BSB Design, they're aware that onboarding is a critical first impression. It's not something to scramble to complete or to save for the last minute. It's a structured activity that sets each employee up for success.

The secret? An onboarding date is established for each month and all newly hired employees are scheduled to *start on that date*. That enables them to schedule one new hire orientation for a cohort, bringing together people from across the company.

While onboarding covers all the basics: from IT training to HR compliance, Michelle also assigns individuals Vector Solutions' courses based on their roles to start building technical competencies early.

They also schedule their onboarding programs to coincide with the monthly training all employees participate in, integrating them immediately into BSB's culture of learning and continuous growth.

*"We're no longer in reaction mode when we hire employees. Now they know that onboarding training is a two-week period every month, and since they have billable work too, they're able to manage that so much better."*

— **Michelle Rothfus**  
Training & Development Manager



## The Impact

*“Do you train everyone for them to leave? Or do you not train everyone for them to stay?” We’ve had our fair share of good people leave for various reasons. But everyone, those who are still at BSB, as well as those who have left the company, say BSB Academy made a positive difference in their lives.”*

— Michelle Rothfus  
Training & Development Manager



### Creating a World-Class Company Culture

BSB Academy was born out of a need to enhance leadership skills and increase retention to ensure the long-term success of the firm. But the impact of their growth programs is even farther-reaching than that. It’s also had a tremendous impact on their company culture.

Their three programs are an opportunity to bring people together.

“When you bring a dynamic group of individuals together in a situation where titles are irrelevant, relationships develop within that community and create a very tight-knit group. We have individuals from Southern California that are now best buddies with someone in Charlotte, North Carolina as a result of their BSB Academy experience. It helps BSB become one culture, instead of different offices across the country.”

At this point in the program, **over a quarter of the staff are applying for one of their growth programs every year.** While at some companies, employees begrudgingly complete job training, at BSB, they actively seek it out.



### Overcoming the Billable Hour Dilemma

One challenge that every AEC firm grapples with is how to maximize billable hours and get employees to want to engage with training. At BSB Design, they have cracked the code with employees willingly signing up for growth programs to take the next step in their careers.

Michelle explains that it was a tough challenge to overcome, but it started with strong support from their President and CEO, Dan Swift.

“Dan is a big advocate for training, and he supports that process. Every once in a while, Dan sends out a note to our Bootcamp participants saying how important it is to leave project work back in the office and focus,” Michelle explains. “They’re involved in development opportunities, networking and participating in activities. They’ve already left their family. They’re away from home. They need to focus, and they need to be there 100 percent.”

This reinforced message across the organization has created a culture where employees know that they have the freedom to take the time to focus on their development. And taking the time to participate in these programs will impact them so much more in the long run than worrying about maximizing their billable hours in the short-term.

*“Our long-term goals are to build a steady pipeline of strong leaders who are ready to guide the company into the future. We also want to be the best place to work, attracting and retaining top-quality talent by creating an environment that supports growth and leadership at every level.”*

— **Michelle Rothfus**  
Training & Development Manager

