

Is Bigger Really Better When It Comes to Business?

 Jennefer Witter · 19 hours ago · 6 min read



Many of us are familiar with how the biblical story of David and Goliath ended, with tiny, unassuming David overcoming Goliath, the larger, heavier favorite in battle.

Much in the same way, Antonio Argibay, AIA, LEED AP believes that smaller firms — the Davids — are more adaptable than industry behemoths — the Goliaths — in a post-COVID world. His thinking is based on his experience as the leader and managing principal of Meridian Design Associates, Architects P.C., a 40-year-old, boutique-sized architectural firm with headquarters in New York City and satellite offices in Miami and Los Angeles. As a response to this paradigm, Argibay has maintained a leanness in his company's composition, mindfully fine-tuning his team as required to maintain a competitive advantage. Indeed, he cultivates a purposeful growth that evolves over a longer term that emphasizes individual skill sets.

Argibay's 'less is more' mindset is derived from the big picture concepts that have been essential to Meridian's consistent professional growth; its ability to win projects over much larger competitors; and its nimble, flexible structure that enables it to quickly pivot when the unexpected happens — for example, COVID-19. Argibay argues that smaller companies, particularly those which are service-oriented, offer multiple advantages over larger ones.

Breaking Assumptions

Argibay notes that prospective clients should be willing to break free and put to the side the commonly held assumption that bigger is better. "Larger, more complex companies tend to excel at lumbering decision making processes versus the more human-centered, problem-solving approach of more intimately sized ones," he says.

That's because the bigger the company, the more rigid and fixed its practices are for reaching objectives, says Argibay. In larger companies, the advantages of greater resources are countered by the need to create systems that are replicable, scalable, and adaptable to varying team sizes — all of which happen to be cornerstones of smaller enterprises. "Scalability," Argibay notes, "helps ensure predictable outcomes and ultimately profitability." What is often lost is the creativity, resiliency, and cutting-edge innovation that is vital to working with the constant change of business requirements, especially in the post-COVID era, something that more nimble and agile companies can easily accomplish.

Game-Changing Technology Reigns

Break-neck technological advancements have created a major competitive advantage

Jennefer Witter

Jennefer is the CEO of The Boreland Group Inc, a PR agency that focuses on women-led and minority-owned businesses. She is also an active public speaker.

Follow



for boutique-sized businesses. Because of the complexities of change and inertia, big companies, past and present, find themselves deeply invested in legacy software and technology platforms. Cumbersome, large-scale platforms create difficulties for larger companies that become locked into expensive one-size-fits-all capabilities. By contrast, Argibay notes that smaller enterprises can quickly pivot and adopt advanced design and architectural programs in response to the constant change now inherent in the global economy.

For instance, this holds true for architectural design. Many specialized programs have evolved since the original introduction of Computer-Aided Design (CAD) in the 1970s, to the present-day use of Building Information Management (BIM) systems. According to the Scan2CAD's *How Industries Use CAD: Architecture*, in many cases, CAD/CAAD systems have become fully integrated with BIM, giving architects the advanced interface they now require to ensure more cost- and time-effective design workflows. "Our size makes it easier to quickly train and roll out technological solutions, thus leveraging productivity in our workflow at least a decade ahead of competitors. That is our response to the ongoing rapid-fire changes in design software," says Argibay.



The new NBCU News Group Washington DC. Bureau. Credit: Meridian Design Associates, Architects PC.

Case in point: Meridian was the architect for the fit-out of two primary floors for NBC News' new location for its Washington, DC bureau. One of the project's most challenging aspects was the low ceiling heights, and overlaying infrastructure required to support the network's 24-hour news operation and accompanying technical requirements. "We were able to adeptly address this throughout the design process through the integration of advanced 3D modeling and comprehensive laser-scanning capabilities, both coupled with our real-time knowledge of BIM systems," notes Argibay.

Meridian met an aggressive but manageable schedule set by the client. "Although we were at the end of construction when COVID hit, the project was still completed under

rigid on-air deadlines, on-time, and within the established budget,” says Argibay. “Our tight group developed close-knit relationships with the project manager and client executives, so we were able to turn-on-a-dime to keep the project running smoothly despite the many challenges associated with pandemic.”

Jennefer Witter

Jennefer is the CEO of The Boreland Group Inc, a PR agency that focuses on women-led and minority-owned businesses. She is also an active public speaker.

Follow



Agile Management — A Key, Small Team Differentiator

That “turn-on-a-dime” facility is at the crux of Agile Management, which is often a critical differentiator for businesses that understand the benefits of intimate team structuring — and is a competitive threat to larger companies. In attempts to address this competitive imbalance, larger businesses are now trying to integrate this Management Philosophy through the creation of localized, specialized Agile teams within their organizations. “It will be interesting to see if such businesses can sustain this management philosophy to modify the work environments within their huge corporate frameworks to deftly turn work around as needed,” Argibay adds.

Although the twelve principles of the “Agile Manifesto” were introduced in 2001, its now widely validated processes provide a competitive edge to those who adopt it. The right company culture is central to making it work. Argibay’s long embraced #PeopleFirst philosophy, which has sustained the firm’s cultural foundation, dovetailed perfectly with the management philosophy’s operational implications.

Applying Agile’s methodology gives smaller companies a practical yet fluid way to address organizational issues that interfere with achieving client goals. Where conventional processes used by bigger businesses calls for top-down instructions that are constrained by economic considerations, adherence to contracts and documentation as well as fixed processes and tools, Meridian’s application of the Agile philosophy has liberated the organization to interact in a flat, non-hierarchical way.

Hence, when a small company takes on the principles and processes of an Agile workplace, team members focus on their relationships with each other and with clients instead of worrying about getting approvals from the executive chain-of-command of the company. And, most importantly, they show willingness to go back to the drawing board rather than stick to rigid procedures and tools.

The Small Business Difference: People

Meridian’s management philosophy places the highest value on its staff. “Our operational blueprint prioritizes relationships aimed at solving problems and enjoying each other as people,” says Argibay. “We see our staff as a long-term investment for the company. We’re interested in hiring trained professionals who aren’t afraid to step up and take responsibility for what’s next.”

Company leaders at Meridian are always accessible because that allows employees to become more independent, confident decision-makers. Principals are intimately involved in the process, both with clients and staff. Through the former, the company can more thoroughly articulate client interests to their teams so that those teams are better equipped to respond accordingly. “Ultimately, what you get are self-organized, inspired, motivated teams who are used to dealing directly with clients in order to move efficient-

ly and effectively to the next stage of development of a design,” says Argibay. “Team member should feel like they are more than just a cog in the system,” he adds. Argibay continues: “If like our larger colleagues, we designed the same space over and over again, such a people-oriented, flexible management philosophy would be less critical to our work. But because our clients need solutions on the fly, so do we. Modifying plans has become a fact of life for everybody. Every project we do is distinctive because our clients have to respond to a competitive landscape in their own unique way.”

The End Game

The effects of Covid may last longer than the actual pandemic, and businesses, regardless of their size, are entering a landscape that, for the most part, is permanently altered. However, smaller businesses, with their ability to be flexible and adaptable, will have greater opportunities to quickly pivot in creating to the ‘new normal’ and in continuing to serve the needs of their clients in a free, creative way without a pause in services. “As with David, who overcame a huge challenge when facing Goliath, due to technology, nimbleness, and ingenuity, smaller businesses are better able to overcome the issues in a fast moving, and demanding environment by being nimble, applying new technology to their advantage and engaging their clients personally at all levels,” Argibay says.



Agile

Business

Small Business

Architecture

People First

Jennefer Witter

Follow

Jennefer is the CEO of The Boreland Group Inc, a PR agency that focuses on women-led and minority-owned businesses. She is also an active public speaker.

Discover Medium

Welcome to a place where words matter. On Medium, smart voices and original ideas take center stage - with no ads in sight. [Watch](#)

Make Medium yours

Follow all the topics you care about, and we'll deliver the best stories for you to your homepage and inbox. [Explore](#)

Become a member

Get unlimited access to the best stories on Medium — and support writers while you're at it. Just \$5/month. [Upgrade](#)