

# LEVIEN & COMPANY INC.

## A PERSON WHO KNOWS HER FIELD & IS EXTRAORDINARY AT WHAT SHE DOES

Before joining the Owner's Representative/Project Management firm Levien & Company in 2005, Denise Ferris, AIA, worked as an architect for 14 years and as a project manager (P.M.) for five years.

Throughout her professional career, one of the most enjoyable aspects of Ferris' work has been taking part in the process that determines a project's design criteria and making the decisions that enable the team to achieve its vision. In many cases, the client and its owner's representative/management team will make those strategic decisions before the architect is even on board. This is what prompted Ferris to make the career shift to this field.

A graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a Masters of Architecture, Ferris decided to move into the project management industry in January of 2000 as an in-house client representative at Harvard University. When she moved to New York with her husband, who is also an architect, she was referred by a competing project management firm to Ken Levien, president of Levien & Co. She was initially hired on a three-month commitment and has been with the firm ever since.

To Ferris, the appeal of Levien & Co. is that the firm presents an opportunity to work with a wide range of sophisticated clients—people who know their fields well and are extraordinary at what they do but may not be as knowledgeable about the complex design and construction field.

A project manager's role is to serve as an advocate for the client, assisting in the decision-making process—whether it be related to budgeting, scheduling, zoning, or fundraising for nonprofit organizations—by dispassionately weighing every advantage and disadvantage. The P.M. participates in every step of the project.

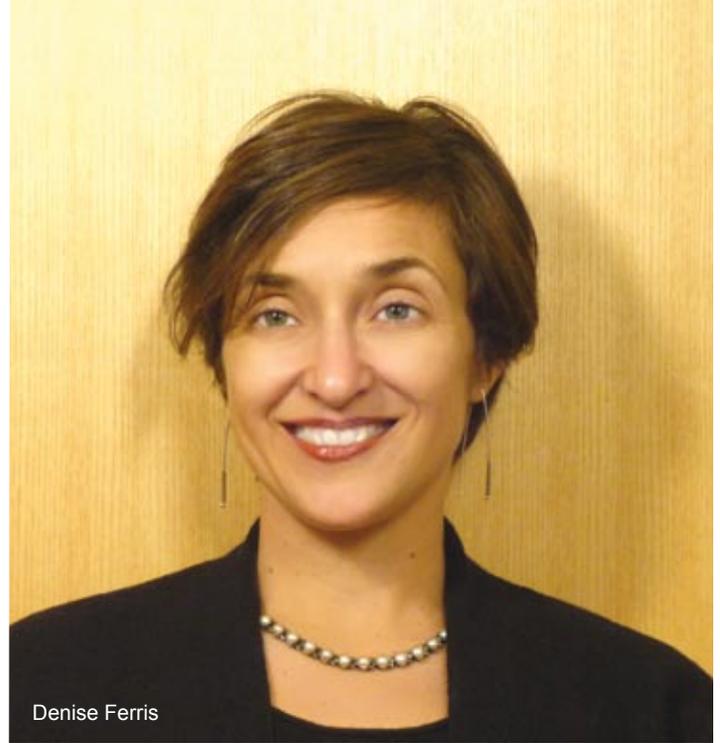
Every project has its own challenges, notes Ferris, but it is the problem-solving process that

makes project management such a worthwhile, satisfaction-rich career. She very much enjoys the diversity of Levien & Co.'s clientele, which includes independent schools, cultural institutions, synagogues and churches, and residential and office buildings.

One of Ferris' current projects is the high-end renovation of an international corporation's 175,000 square foot world headquarters. The company, which has worked with Levien for more than a decade, occupies seven floors in a high-rise building in Midtown Manhattan. The offices had not been renovated in 30 years and the client wanted the space to have a high-end but traditional look. The project was staged in three phases: the first, which was to develop swing space for staff, was completed in 2007; the second, the renovation of the executive floors, was completed in 2008; and the third, after extensive deliberation and some streamlining of the original design instigated by the current recession, is now in progress.

On occasion, some projects are so challenging that several project managers at Levien & Co. work together to overcome the issues. The expansion and renovation of a museum is one such case. The cultural institution has experienced a tremendous growth in attendance in the last several years and needed a larger space to accommodate its visitors. To help the museum meet its needs, Ferris was able to call on the firm's in-house landscape architect; mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineer; and another P.M. who specializes in the funding requirements of City and State agencies.

The project consists of several major components, including the additions of indoor and outdoor the-



Denise Ferris

aters, gallery space, a café, and a bookstore. As a non-profit, the museum relies on City and State funding, as well as private donations. The client was initially worried that the recession would take a toll on the project and decided to phase construction in several stages. However, recently designated funding commitments in this year's City and State budgets have allowed the museum to move ahead with the original plan. The design team is now working to reincorporate and fully develop elements of the design that were previously relegated to a future phase.

"Whether it's a developer putting up a new building, a non-profit institution looking to renovate its facilities, or a company outfitting the offices it's about to move into, we fulfill our role by addressing every aspect of the process," Ferris sums up. "We see that everyone involved on a project works collaboratively and we try to create an environment of respect for each team member, freeing the owner to focus on his or her own full-time job. That's what project management specialists like us are there for."

*Denise Ferris, AIA, LEED AP  
Project Manager  
Levien & Company, Inc.  
Tel: 212-702-0888  
Fax: 212-702-8758  
denisef@levienco.com*