

A NEW

Sarah White and Lindsey Cannon of Quest Site Solutions

Lindsey Cannon and Sarah White have taken similar career paths to get to where they are now—directors of the year-old site selection services company Quest Site Solutions.

When Cannon worked at the South Carolina Department of Commerce full time, White served as an intern under the department's grants and incentives arm, the Coordinating Council.

They started jobs at McCallum Sweeney Consulting, Inc., one of the most high-profile site selection firms in the country, two weeks apart. When the owner of McCallum Sweeney, a Greenville-based company where both had worked for more than a decade, decided to retire and shut down the company, the pair formed Quest Site Solutions.

"We have followed each other around a lot," White says.

Quest Site Solutions provides site selection services for companies that are seeking a new location, a competitive expansion, or a consolidation, beginning with feasibility analysis through incentive capture. In addition, Quest is a wholly owned subsidiary of O'Neal, Inc., which gives Cannon and White access to technology and expertise they may not have had at McCallum Sweeney.



ADVENTURE

BY CINDY LANDRUM

PHOTOS BY AMY RANDALL PHOTOGRAPHY

FORMER MCCALLUM SWEENEY ALUMS
LINDSEY CANNON AND SARAH WHITE EMBARK ON
A NEW SITE-SELECTION PATH

"We looked at different options at different places and talked with other firms," White says. "But this was the best fit possible. We had worked on some projects with them (O'Neal, Inc.) so we knew the team."

The additional resources allow Quest to work more efficiently to find the right site, Cannon said.

"Before, we had to rely on our clients to provide us information. Now, especially for some of our clients for whom it would be their first U.S. facility, we can go to one of the people at O'Neal, Inc. and verify that the information is correct and makes sense," she says. "We're able to look for the right site for their facility right from the get-go. For companies, it is all about speed-to-market, so that gives us an edge."

Through its association with O'Neal, Inc., Quest has access to SCOPE, proprietary software that calculates near-exact costs estimates for each site based on design, materials, site conditions, and other parameters, allowing the company to compare the cost of various sites more quickly and accurately.

But clients don't have to use O'Neal, Inc. to utilize the pair's services, they say. Quest Site Solutions will continue to work on different types of projects.

"While the project drivers may be different, the actual process of how we get from beginning to end is the same no matter what the industry," Cannon says. "We've worked on all different types of projects in the past, and we will continue to do that. I think the difference is leveraging some of the industries where O'Neal, Inc. has expertise so we can take advantage of that. We're going to focus our marketing efforts on going after some of those industries where we can bring in that expertise."

Much of the work Cannon and White have done has been in the Southeast, but not because that's where the company is based.

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"During the last 10 to 15 years, the Southeast has been hot for industrial and manufacturing because of the cost of doing business and incentives being offered," Cannon says. While they worked at McCallum Sweeney, the pair worked on site location for Mitsubishi Electric Power Products in Memphis, Tenn., and DRT, a chemical company outside of Savannah, Ga.

In addition to helping clients find a site for a new facility, Quest also works with economic development organizations prepare for attracting and retaining capital investment and employment opportunities in today's competitive climate.

"There is no perfect site," White says. "Incentives can't make a bad location good. They can make a good location better."

On the site selection side, Quest evaluates factors from site characteristics to transportation and utility infrastructure to operating and community. The firm then helps clients make educated decisions. On the economic development side, the firm identifies strengths and weaknesses of potentially developable land by reviewing ownership, control, zoning, transportation, and utilities.

"If you know the weaknesses, you can offer a solution," White says.

After engineered plans and environmental studies are completed, the firm certifies that properties are ready for development, enhancing the marketability of the site and increasing a community's inventory of available industrial properties.

When it comes to the Upstate's chances of being chosen as home of a new industrial plant or the expansion of an existing industry, Cannon says, "The Upstate is hot. The challenge is having the sites and buildings to fit all the needs."