

A/E Rainmaker

The Guide to Attracting and Keeping Great Clients

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10 Midland Avenue
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Moving into the 4th Quarter

As we leave summer behind and move on into the beginnings of fall, there are those of us looking forward to football and the upcoming holidays. Some of us, however, suddenly realize the fourth quarter is here and we haven't yet met goals we set up for ourselves way back when. The content of this month's *A/E Rainmaker* works for both groups. Because when all is said and done, we all need to be doing the same things. And when I say the same things, I mean the RIGHT things!

If all is well, keep considering the things that got you there. Don't let up (and I know you won't). As we've all learned (and sadly again, just lately), nothing is certain in today's world. If you're not where you need to be, look at the reasons why. Chances are, attention's not being paid to those items you know you should be more in control of. We've stated it before: *it's the little things*. Take a brutally honest inventory and GET BACK ON TRACK.

To that end, we talk about great clients and get your input. You're as responsible for choosing great clients (or firing bad ones) as you are for doing great work. We also talk about ownership transition and how relationship building can help in the process. What happens when the Rainmaker leaves? We tell you how to keep your valuable clients. We also spoke to Bob Meza, former Director of Project Development for Best Buy stores. Want to work with the big boys of retail? Read on.

And finally, we send our prayers to those affected by Hurricane Katrina. Read about the Gulf Coast Rebuilding Fund, Inc., initiated by Frank Stasiowski and PSMJ. Please give what you can.

Carolyn E. Kenney

What Makes a Great Client?

Publishing Director Bruce Lynch hosts an on-line A/E Rainmaker discussion group at yahoo.com. If you're interested in joining, please contact him at blynch@psmj.com. Last month, Bruce posed the following question to the group: "What makes a great client?" This is what you said:

We are in a very specialized market (K-12 public schools) and our approach to the client is equally specific. Great clients have many ingredients; however, we have developed a grading matrix which we use to score every current and potential client in a market sector. We use ten characteristics to grade current and potential clients every quarter. These items range from "understands the need for a master plan" (a measure of technical knowledge in a client) to "solid administrator/school board relationship." We don't always know enough about potential clients thus sometimes we do additional "research" then as information is gathered "grades" will go up or down accordingly. The reason behind this method is a need to develop a "Top 50" – the fifty most desired clients. After starting this approach our market knowledge, quality of information and success with "Ideal Clients" have gone up 80% – we understand who to invest our marketing dollars and why. Fee has no place in our matrix. Paying timely, a reputation for being difficult (litigious) and growth rate (repeat business potential) are important.

Christopher M. Huckabee, AIA
CEO, Huckabee, Architecture I
Engineering I Management
www.huckabee-inc.com

Good clients understand the value of the consultant, expect to pay a reasonable fee for services provided and within agreed terms, are good listeners and are forthright in communicating information about the project and the consultant's performance. They can make decisions in a timely manner, accept responsibility for their decisions and never ask the consultant to compromise his or her ethics.

David Gildersleeve
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Good clients value your ideas and don't nickel and dime fees because they know the value that you bring to the team. They give you the benefit of the doubt if something should go wrong, as long as you do everything possible to solve or rectify the problem. They pay your invoices quickly and give feedback when it's needed.

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Good clients hire you to help them, not because they must. They demand you do your job, but do not have unreasonable expectations. Good clients understand every project depends on the team working together. Good clients expect to pay a fair and reasonable fee for fair and reasonable services, not a cut rate fee for reduced services.

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Keep Your Clients When the Rainmaker Leaves

Professional service firms win work when prospects trust them to solve their problems. “Trust” is the cornerstone of winning work and retaining clients. For most purchasers of professional services, trust begins with the key person (rainmaker) who really cares about the client’s problem and can orchestrate a solution.

Relationship-based selling is the single most powerful method of securing new clients and keeping existing ones. People don’t care how much you (or your firm) know until they know how much you (and your firm) care. It is a person-to-person business. What happens when a trusted seller leaves and the relationship changes?

The Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) Foundation funded a study to The University of Iowa Tippie College of Business, and The Longview Group, an Iowa City, Iowa management consulting organization. The study focused on three questions:

What actions do firms take to successfully retain clients when a key employee with an established relationship (rainmaker) leaves with advance notice?

What actions do firms take to successfully retain clients when a key employee with an established relationship (rainmaker) leaves without notice or with very short notice?

Is there a difference in successful client retention when the rainmaker is a “doer-seller” versus a full-time seller?

The methods successful firms use to retain clients are largely the same regardless of the amount of advance notice of a rainmaker’s departure. There was no difference in successful client retention between “doer-seller” versus “full-time seller” platforms. Most firms that were successful in retaining clients after the rainmaker left used MOST or all of the following retention actions. Other studies show that using only one or two of these actions is usually inadequate to keep the client.

- Immediate contact by a senior executive of the firm.
- Personal, honest communications with the client by a senior firm executive. The executive must explain the departure (or planned departure) of the rainmaker.
- Face-to-face meeting whenever possible.
- Quick identification and introduction of the rainmaker replacement (by the departing rainmaker, if appropriate).
- Frequent communications (phone, e-mail, face-to-face) during the early stages of the transition by the firm’s executives and the new rainmaker.
- Enhanced and more frequent communications during the relationship transition period.

For a summary of the study see: <http://longview-group.com/research>. *Dennis M. Schrag is a Fellow-Society for Marketing Professional Services. He is president of The Longview Group a management consulting organization, working with the professional design industry exclusively. He is on the faculty of The University of Iowa, Henry B. Tippie College of Business (dennis@longview-group.com) 866-351-6510.*

The Secrets to a Successful Rainmaker Hunt: Part I

Very few of us in design services ever envisioned business development as an integral element in our personal career development plan. As firm leaders, how can we identify young professionals that have the potential, the interest, the peculiar drive, the business acumen that constitute a Rainmaker? It's not a case of "we know one when we see one" because at first we didn't even recognize ourselves as Rainmakers.

You need to plan proactive steps to involve candidate Rainmakers in the business development process. How do you start? Take a step back for a moment, look objectively at your firm and ask these three questions:

- ✓ Is there a business development process that is open and known to everyone?
- ✓ If you were a young design professional, would you know the firm's process?
- ✓ Is there a plan for involving individuals other than Principals, Associates, and other senior staff in the business development process?

The firms that really "get it" can answer YES to these three questions. They have a clearly communicated plan that makes participation in Rainmaking a positive, enhancing aspect of career development.

It is sad but true that most young (and sometime even older staff) have no clue about the "business side of the business." Most have heard terms like WIP, AR, AP and DSO around the office...however, most do

not have a true working understanding of the meaning of the terms, how they relate to the firm's success, how they relate to Rainmaking and how these and other factors define a firm's long-term success.

Coming in Part II: "The process" and how to use it in developing Rainmakers.

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SUPERIOR RAINMAKERS ANSWER YES TO THE FOLLOWING 8 QUESTIONS

As your 30-second litmus test, see how many of the questions below you answer yes to. This is a great test that you can hand out to your Rainmakers in your next meeting. Make them answer, and see where it goes. For any question that they answer no, challenge them to bring a solution to your next meeting that will turn that answer into a yes!

- ✓ Do we/you have a written marketing strategy?
- ✓ Do we/you participate in strategic alliance and/or lead exchange groups?
- ✓ Do we/you review market research findings on a quarterly basis?
- ✓ Do we/you have a targeted PR program?
- ✓ Do our marketing/brochure materials respond to our target markets?
- ✓ Are our proposals achieving a 90% short-list rate?
- ✓ Is our presentation process streamlined?
- ✓ Does our website encourage return visits?

Personal Relationships as Competitive Advantage

The next time you're asked to justify your Rainmaking expenses consider this:

In his research project titled *Sources of Competitive Advantage in US Engineering Firms*, Stephen Mayer, principal of Mayer Consulting in East Aurora, NY determined that having a personal relationship with the client is one of the top five sources of competitive advantage of the 25 he studied.

As we all know, you don't just *have* a personal relationship with a client. Relationship building, like all sources of competitive advantage, must be subject to a process of continuous improvement and incremental innovation. As a Rainmaker, you have one straightforward way to assess improvement – did you bring in more profitable business over the current timeframe than the previous timeframe? Assessing innovation is more difficult to quantify. Here are three elements of your Rainmaking process that you should subject to a process of continuous innovation:

Interpreting client needs. Can you do a better job at finding out what the clients' real problems are? Articulate the specific tactics you are using and develop ways to improve them.

Interpreting dynamic changes in market demand. Can you do a better job at collecting market data from sources beyond your clients and prospects? Identify new sources of market intelligence and keep track of the usefulness of these sources.

Intelligence sharing and knowledge management. Is your firm making sure that what you learn from clients and prospects is being disseminated to key people in your organization? Does your firm have a system in place to make your body of client and market knowledge easy to access and use? Develop strategies to ensure that every bit of information your firm gathers is readily available to anyone who needs to use it.

The innovative strategies and tactics your firm develops will facilitate the personal relationship-building essential to improving Rainmaking performance. Successful firms leverage these competencies into long-term advantage – continually strengthening and nurturing them and making them difficult and costly for competitors to replicate.

A/E/C Winning Proposals & Presentations Seminar

Set yourself apart with innovative marketing techniques and unique sales tactics that guarantee you won't waste your time on a proposal that has no chance. We won't just tell you how to do it, we'll give you the tools – PSMJ's Winning Proposals and Presentations Digital Toolbox CD, worth \$495! It's packed with tools and checklists so you can improve your strategy, writing and presentation delivery. Call PSMJ's Education Department at 800.537.7765 or visit www.psmj.com for seminar dates, locations and to register.

Commitment/Communication/Consistency

This month associate editor Tim Aebi spoke with Bob Meza, founder and President of RDM Project Management. Bob is currently on the editorial board for Retail Construction Magazine.

TA: Tell me about your background and positions within the retail industry.

BM: I've been in the retail industry 28 years now. The last 20 of those years I've been focusing on project and facilities management. Most recently I was Director of Project Development, managing the construction and architecture teams for Best Buy.

TA: Why is it that you decided to leave the corporate world in favor of providing your own PM services to retail entities?

BM: Managing the work stream that I've had and talking with other retailers about how they do business or would like to do business has led me to seriously consider starting my own consulting practice. I've actually been planning to do this for about the past three years. Given my experience in the industry, I believe I can offer real value, given the growing business trend I've observed to use outsourcing as a tool. Many firms are being caught in what I refer to as "the bubble." Too many projects, not enough people, and they can't just keep hiring. Outsourcing allows retailers and developers to capitalize and charge to projects what had previously been carried as expense....It's truly all about understanding retail, the process of it and what retail ownership is really looking for with these projects to be successful.

TA: What retail trends are important for design/construction firms to know about?

BM: More companies are trying to expand at a faster pace and with multiple types of stores. Best Buy has 45,000 SF boxes, 30,000 SF boxes and models of 20,000 SF, necessitated by the desire to get into some of the smaller markets. As companies look to grab more market share, they continue to look in those smaller markets and continue to look at how they can capture those customers. There are a multitude of different types of delivery systems being used by a lot of retailers. Customer centricity becomes very important very quickly.

TA: What are the key objectives that retail corporations have related to development of a new operation or modification of an existing retail location?

BM: Staying ahead of the game, market-share. Best Buy renovated over 200 stores this year alone. Everyone is trying to stay ahead of the competition. As stores reinvent themselves and begin carrying new and varied merchandise, that competition grows. Best Buy isn't just competing with Circuit City, they're also competing with Wal-Mart, Dell, Amazon, etc. What is it that the customer in that particular market is looking to buy? Best Buy tries to match the store with customer expectations. Everyone is attempting to make that happen. You have to cater to the customer, and the store design must reflect that.

TA: Are these objectives different for developers?

BM: I really don't think it's that much

(continued on page 7) →

The Three C's (continued from page 6)

different, though the developer has the bigger task within the same arena of keeping up with the market and renovating the various shopping centers, keeping everything up-to-date. Where the cycle used to be about five to seven years, now renovations need to take place about every three to five years, maybe even sooner than that to stay ahead of the competition.

TA: What are owners and developers of retail projects particularly looking for in a design and/or construction firm?

BM: From a retail standpoint, you look first to someone with retail experience. This isn't the ultimate criteria but it's certainly key. You find out what kinds of relationships have been built with other retailers? Have they done a good job of building trust within those relationships? Are they competitive? Are they "Committed?" I use that word *committed* a lot these days. Lots of firms want work, but they're not committed. They must try to understand what the company goals, objectives and core values are. When someone gets that, they can start building on those relationships. The experience will speak for itself over time.

TA: How have you seen design and construction firms provide value on projects?

BM: I've seen more of the design-build type projects. Then I've tended to see a little more value with the negotiated deals, less with the hard bid. The one thing that I have noticed over the years is that many of the

A/E firms we've dealt with seem to just provide the bare minimum to prototype provided to them and code compliance rather than trying to add actual value engineering. I'm not sure if that's because the owner is saying don't veer from the plan or not. There have been many situations where something pops up, the owner or the general contractor finds or questions something that should have been caught earlier. We want that relationship where the A/E firm is proactive in their approach, with input throughout the project. Not just tweak what we give them. Firms need to stretch their limits.

"Find out what the retailers' needs are in services from your firm....if you approach with the typical/standard interview and proposal, you may miss the boat."

TA: What have you seen design or construction firms do that has furthered their relationship with a client and best positioned them for future work?

BM: Well, certainly some of those things we've mentioned already having to do with relationship building, etc. Obviously, they must exceed the customer's expectations. They have to be proactive versus reactive. There must be constant communication and a real desire to understand what are the retailer's goals and objectives....I've had several problem projects over the last year

(continued on page 8) →

The Three C's (continued from page 7)

and some of that came from the firm taking on too much, trying to please us. We appreciate the thought, but the lack of honesty in terms of what they could handle ended up hurting them and the relationship....*Commitment, communication and consistency.* That's what it all really boils down to.

TA: For a firm that is interested in moving into the retail market sector, what would be an appropriate strategy?

BM: It's my opinion that they do their research on the retailer's build-out or remodel program to understand what the company is trying to accomplish. Find out what are the retailer's needs in services from your firm. This could be different for many companies and if you approach with the typical/standard interview and proposal, you may miss the boat. That said, retail can be unique in that you must cater to them a little more in terms of the relationship building process we've talked about. Need to sell where and when they have built those quality relationships, as well as have exceeded customer expectations, regardless of the type of project. When considering someone new, it's always about how that company has performed for others. Certainly persistence can help. If the criteria we've talked about are met, we very well could give some one a starting shot with a smaller project. If they perform well, we could move them up to a bigger project.

TA: How can firms with retail experience get the attention of a large corporation such as Best Buy?

BM: We (Best Buy) have a database of firms to start with for bidding projects. For the selection process we empowered the Project Managers to recommend who they want to use on their projects because they're the ones who are actually going to be working with the A/E firm....Then there are times we need to draw from a group of firms on a regional basis, depending on the project. The process for a firm to be considered in these situations was contacting and convincing the PM they were qualified in those things we've mentioned here today. That PM then had to do due diligence in terms of verification. So, when firms would call me, I'd direct them to my regional project manager and encourage them to set up a meeting with the PM....Once that firm had passed all interview processes, we understood and agreed with their costs and fees, they were added to the pool and would be invited to bid on projects or may get assigned a project.

TA: What advice would you offer design and construction firms interested in working in the retail market?

BM: Be committed. Communicate at the level expected by the owner. Be consistent. That's my motto. Do your investigation. Look at company websites for information. Really try to understand the company's goals, values and objectives. Want to work with Best Buy? Understand customer centricity. That's what Best Buy is all about. The more you try to understand what big retailer's programs are all about, the better chance you have to work with them.

Bob Meza can be reached at bmeza@rdmpm.com

Partner with the Next Generation of Up and Coming Designers

The next time you are going after a project that requires highly creative, innovative design, consider partnering with one of the following seven architects, featured in the July 2005 edition of Esquire Magazine. In the article *If They Build It...*, Esquire talks about a new breed of architects using artistry and imagination to reinvent our landscape.

Martin Finio- Since forming the architecture firm Christoff Finio with partner (and wife) Taryn Christoff, Martin Finio has become one of America's most promising young architects. A professor at Yale, he's best known for his original approach towards residential projects. His hybrid prefabricated residence in Upstate New York is a good example of his work.
Contact: www.christofffinio.com

Daniel Libeskind- Working on monumental buildings on a large scale, Libeskind has worked on such buildings as Berlin's Jewish Museum, Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum and the expansion of the Art Museum in Denver, Colorado. He's also heading up the Freedom Tower in Manhattan, which is rising on the former site of the World Trade Center.
Contact: www.daniel-libeskind.com

Richard Gluckman- Known for his work on high-end retail projects, Gluckman has done work for Helmut Lange, Versace and Yves Saint Laurent.
Contact: www.gluckmanmayner.com

Mathew Baird- Baird recently completed

the The American Folk Art Museum in Manhattan. The building features a façade composed of 63 metal panels. He applied this metal façade theme to a townhouse in the city's crowded Meatpacking District, which included a single 40-foot piece of steel secured to the buildings front.
Contact: www.folkartmuseum.org

James Corner- Corner is the director of the urban-design firm Field Operations and the chair of the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Pennsylvania. He's currently (among other things) working on the Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island (teaming with Stan Allen Architecture), a public area almost three times the size of Central Park.
Contact: www.stanallenarchitect.com

Brian Healy-A visiting professor at Yale, Healy heads up his own firm and has created innovative residential projects in the Napa Valley and in industrial areas of Chicago and Boston.
Contact: www.brianhealyarchitects.com

James Slade-In the last five years, Slade has designed everything from a subway multimedia center in Seoul to a bubble shaped retail space for French fashion Designer Martine Sitbon. His theoretical design for the Hyperlink Tower, presented at the Milan Furniture Fair, features an outer skin that would project moving images.
Contact: www.sladearch.com

For the full article, refer to the July 2005 special edition issue of Esquire, page 126.

Proposal Response from the Client's Perspective

The most important rule in writing proposals is: if you know your audience, you can persuade them to give you the project. Before finalizing your response, review the following questions to be sure that your proposal addresses each of the issues below from the client's perspective:

Who will read the material and hear the presentation? The owners? The users? The people who control the funding? Who will actually make the decision and what's their relationship with my audience? Is our response written for the right audience?

"If you know your audience, you can persuade them to give you the project."

What are their goals for the project and what are their priorities? Is there a hidden agenda that we have addressed?

What might influence them for or against our team: people, experience, issues, constraints?

Against what standards am I being judged? What expectations does the client bring to its evaluation of our team?

What does this audience really know about design-related services? Have they been "burned" in the past?

Design & Construction Industry Establishes Gulf Coast Rebuilding Fund

PSMJ Resources Inc. is spearheading a unified effort of the design and construction community to raise funds to help rebuild areas of the U.S. Gulf Coast devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Named the *Gulf Coast Rebuilding Fund, Inc.*, the 501(c)3 organization was established in Massachusetts as a special design and construction industry charity focused on the long-term rebuilding needs of communities damaged by Hurricane Katrina. The fund's goal is to raise \$10 million to be donated specifically for use in the planning, redesign and permitting of work necessary to start the rebuilding.

In making the announcement, PSMJ CEO Frank A. Stasiowski, FAIA said: "Our thoughts and hearts are with those who have been affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. When the clean up is over, the reality remains that these people need to reestablish their lives. They'll need engineering, design, and construction help to rebuild the infrastructure. But it's more than bricks and mortar, it's instilling optimism for their future. What better way for us to help than to marshal our industry in a historic effort to rebuild what was destroyed?"

Those interested in contributing should contact Joan Tomaceski-Stasiowski at joan@psmj.com or 800-537-7765.

Monthly Calendar of Events

Marketing Workshop

Sponsor: American Marketing Association

Date: 10/17/05 – 10/20/05

Format: Conference – Walt Disney World Resort, Florida

This event for marketing professionals offers the opportunity to design a customized program. Over twenty two- and four-hour presentations to choose from, including tracks specializing in strategic marketing, CRM, branding and customer satisfaction/value/loyalty. Create your own schedule to meet your personal objectives.

Contact: www.marketingpower.com

Business of Design Consulting

Sponsor: ACEC

Date: 10/26/05 – 10/29/05

Format: Seminar – Dallas, TX

This intensive program offers up-and-coming design firm leaders the chance to look in-depth into eight different management areas. Individual modules feature hands-on activities, extensive discussion and interactive workshops to prepare you for difficult issues ahead.

Contact: education@acec.org

21st Annual Build Boston Conference

Sponsor: The Boston Society of Architects

Date: 11/15/05 – 11/17/05

Format: Conference – Sea Port World Trade Center – Boston, MA

Described as the nation's largest regional convention and tradeshow for the design and construction industry, attendees can earn AIA learning units and continuing-education credits.

Contact: www.buildboston.com

Clinic For Marketing Professionals

Sponsor: SMPS / Coxe Group

Date: Ongoing (dates to be announced)

Format: Seminar

The Clinic for Marketing Professionals evolved from the Clinic for Marketing Coordinators, the first program of its kind specifically designed to train people to meet the marketing needs of design firms. To receive information on the upcoming schedule, contact:

consultants@coxegroup.com

Contact: www.smps.org

Focus on Construction Drawings – New Solutions to Old Problems

Sponsor: AIA

Date: Ongoing

Format: On-Line Course

Discuss the complex dynamics of construction document preparation, including innovative techniques for achieving greater accuracy and efficiency and the essentials for achieving realistic goals for improving construction document preparation.

Contact: www.aia.org

A/E/C Principals Bootcamp

Sponsor: PSMJ

Date: Various Upcoming Dates and Locations

Format: On-Site Seminars

Change your strategic thinking, identify new sources of revenue, and transform your organization. Receive the tools and information needed for long-term success.

Contact: www.psmj.com

A/E

Rainmaker

The Guide to Attracting and Keeping Great Clients

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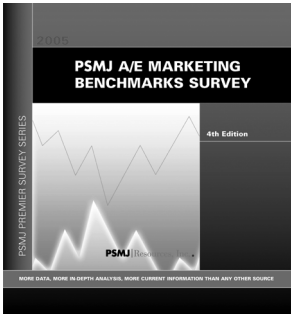
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Win More Projects Than Ever Using 2005 A/E Industry Data



A month's growth in your firm backlog saves a substantial portion of your marketing budget, plus generates thousands of dollars in guaranteed revenue.

Increasing your firm's backlog by securing new work benchmarks your success as an A/E marketer. In order to accomplish these goals, you need to identify which marketing techniques work, know which items to include in a proposal and leverage existing clients' business.

For this, you need a definitive source of A/E marketing benchmarks so you can communicate crucial pricing and contract details accurately in your next proposal or presentation.

The 2005 **PSMJ A/E Marketing Benchmarks Survey** is the authoritative source to help you strengthen your firm's proposal and marketing efforts.

The Survey data and spot-on analysis helps you to:

- IDENTIFY** what your proposal hit rate tells you about your pricing strategy, and what you can do to improve it
- STIMULATE** client loyalty to build a strong backlog
- DETERMINE** if your key employees bill enough for your firm
- NEGOTIATE** winning contracts with government agencies, using the latest public sector data
- DECIDE** if your marketing activities will generate the work you want

Plus, we are now extending a special offer. If you order the Survey by October 31, you will get PSMJ's BRAND NEW White Paper, **47 Business Development Checklists, FREE!**

From creating effective marketing materials and giving outstanding presentations to servicing clients well and generating add-on work, you'll find this White Paper to be an invaluable resource that your entire staff will use.

Win more projects and elevate the marketing performance of your staff with the 2005 **PSMJ A/E Marketing Benchmarks Survey!**

For fastest service, call **1-800-537-7765**, or fax order to **(617) 965-5152**.

"The Survey reassures us that we're on track with decisions we're making, such as with our hourly rates."
-Beth Reath, DPR Associates

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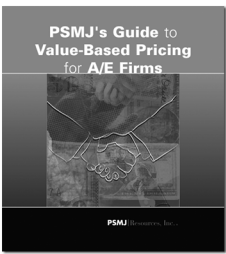
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