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The Guide to Attracting and Keeping Great Clients

In This Issue

Lunch 'n Learn Inspires a Client Promotional Campaign

When David Golab of Superstructures: Engineers + Architects, New York City found that the firm's internal monthly "Lunch 'n Learn" sessions were not only educational and interesting but also an untapped opportunity, he decided to expand the program to include existing and prospective clients. "The primary goal of the campaign was to develop business in key markets and strengthen our brand as technically-oriented E/A exterior restoration specialists. We are demonstrating the enthusiasm and passion we have for our work, and the commitment to continuing education. It's a win-win solution that is also very cost efficient," said David. "Our audience consists of existing clients, as well as prospective clients in targeted areas: high-rise commercial/office, higher education, hospitality, and governmental agencies with an emphasis on those with multi-building portfolios. Geographically, the target is the New York City area," he said.

Providing an educational opportunity best reflects the firm's ethos compared to other promotional endeavers, and the results are more easily measured.

The seminars are held in Superstructure's office and presentations are made by manufacturers' technical representatives. The seminars focus on a consistent theme - exterior restoration - and have covered a range of topics that include; brick, copper, cast stone, silicone sealants, roofing, stucco systems, and terra cotta. Sessions are certified by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs). In the two years that the program has been open to guests, representatives from more than 65 firms and organizations have earned over 1,000 CEUs.

Research, Planning and Implementation

"First, we mined the internet and joined client organizations to obtain e-mail addresses for members of industry groups such as BOMI (Building Owners and Managers Institute), IREM (Institute of Real Estate Management), APPA (Serving Educational Facilities Professionals) , APWA (American Public Works Associations), etc. Each month we mail-merge about 1,000 HTML e-mail invitations using ACT contact management software. Prior to sending seminar invitations, we mail an introductory letter, a newly redesigned brochure, and make at least one follow-up phone call and/or e-mail to each prospect. The letters sometimes reference their industry organization and/or describe the seminar series

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Lunch 'n Learn Inspires a Client Promotional Campaign

(CONT. FROM COVER)

alerting them to future e-mails. This introductory step has helped to distinguish our invitations from spam," said David. "Twice, we sent press releases to *Real Estate Weekly* for private sector exposure and later used those clippings as attachments in direct mail letters of invitation to targeted prospects where we lacked their e-mail address, or to reinforce the e-invitations as being sent from a reputable source," he added.

To manage attendance they added a check-in process to discourage walk-ins and name badges to facilitate networking. When response is low or there are especially attractive prospects registered, they send reminder e-mails. "Project profiles relevant to the seminar or a targeted attendee are framed and decorate the classroom," said David. Their latest advance is having the firm certified as a Continuing Education Provider by the AIA and BOMI, and developing their own educational programs.

Results

Due to the popularity of the program and space limitations, reservations are required. Several weeks after the program, each attendee receives a certificate of completion. David notes that:

- Numerous RFPs have resulted along with several projects including a $6.2 million re-cladding of two high-rise apartment towers. Another example, almost two years after our initial introduction, a college sent an RPF for services.
- A powerful benefit is the increased recognition. At client organization meetings we are instantly recognized as "the guys who invite me to lunch"- even by those who have never attended.
- Each e-mailing results in approximately 100 responses. Between 30 and 60 register for the program by phone or e-mail, some reply with regrets, and the remaining are returned, outdated e-mails are processed to update the ACT database.
- No "selling" is done at the seminars. Only after the relationship of trust develops do we ask about upcoming opportunities, introductions with others in their organization, and insight on how companies/agencies select consultants.
- Success in penetrating targeted groups has been unequal. Governmental employees and residential managers are most likely to attend, but provide less direct opportunities for business than other groups.
- Our recent BOMI certification and educational program is attracting more private sector owners and managers.

While no budget was established for the program, it is the ultimate in cost efficiency. The firm uses their existing software and computers, minimal postage is used for the letter invitations. The classroom space is reserved for future growth, so just using the space is economical.

This program is a vehicle for the Director of Marketing to consistently make an unprecedented number of positive client contacts via e-mail, phone, and face-to-face meetings at the seminars, as well as warm introductions at industry meetings.

Presenters provide the catered lunch and get excellent exposure. The firm's only dedicated expenditure was $3,754 for 60 stackable chairs, $400 for a portable PA system, and $150 for a lectern, which are shared office-wide and are an incidental expense with respect to the seminars.

David said that since the seminars have proven so successful, the firm is relocating to larger offices designed to accommodate and expand the program.

David Golab is Director of Marketing for Superstructures, an architecture and structural engineering firm dedicated to the art and science of exterior restoration. He can be reached at 646-437-1350 or dgolab@superstructures.com

DOES CRM REPRESENT THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE?

Excepted from the SMPS Foundation Report of the 2005-2006 Study: *Client Attraction and Retention in the Design and Building Industry: Client Relationship Management for Professional Services Firms*

Client Relationship Management (CRM), when implemented well, will help a firm better understand and adapt its marketing and business processes to its customers' preferences. This facilitates the creation of an enduring personal business relationship between the firm and customer rather than a project-based relationship (which is more likely to disappear once the project is completed). CRM must involve every customer's "touch point;" it is not just for marketing information management.

The concept of CRM as an online, software program does indeed represent the wave of the future. As electronic linkages become more user-friendly and wireless equipment more common, information storage and retrieval has become an expected part of daily business procedure. Firms will be able to store and utilize far more detail about client interactions and preferences than in the past.

CRM does appear appropriate throughout the design and building industry, but the installation and application of a CRM program is not an instant guarantee of success. CRM really refers to the broader realm of client management, including the attraction of clients, retention, and even to extended care.

The investigators/authors came up with 12 critical lessons that they feel will help ensure effective CRM capabilities.

1. Clearly define the firm's vision and develop actionable strategies regarding client relationships.
2. Get consensus in the firm regarding the use of CRM.
3. Establish measurable business goals for your CRM project.
4. Get top executive support right up front.
5. Get end user buy-in early and maintain it.
6. Actively involve end users in solution design goals.
7. Let business goals drive the functionality of the solution.
8. Designate a consensus-building project manager for implementation.
9. Invest in training and communication plans for end users.
10. Use a phased approach in building CRM capabilities.
11. Measure and track results continuously.
12. CRM is a never-ending journey; don't look for a final destination.

The 138-page report provides insights for managers seeking effective CRM adoption and use in professional services organizations, particularly the design and building industry. However, they found these four scenarios of acceptance.

Scenario 1: CRM at its best ... where everything is working to keep the client relationship close (10% fell into this category).

Scenario 2: CRM installed, but...never fully implemented or integrated, or was not used as intended (38% of firms).

Scenario 3: Abandoned CRM! Did not work for them (8%).

Scenario 4: Never had a CRM system, firm too small (44%).

In general, the investigators found that firms in the design and construction industry tend to focus their energy on the more basic details of a CRM system — information management and storage, data input, and convincing users to provide data or update it regularly. It appears that the true value of CRM to the overall business and marketing strategies of these firms has not yet been tapped. Stay tuned.

Principal Investigators:
Dr. Robert F. Dyer, Professor of Marketing
Dr. Marilyn Liebrenz- Himes, Associate Professor of Global Marketing
The George Washington University, School of Business, Dept. of Marketing, Washington, D.C.
The entire 138-page report can be found at www.smps.org/AM/Template.cfm?section=research

10 Ways to Leverage Your Big Idea

By Virginia Daffron

Every design professional I've known has at least one big idea, and most have a drawerful. A big idea is simply some insight or technique, gained through a combination of education and experience that has been valuable to you in your work and would be valuable to others.

Identifying important ideas usually begins with reflecting on themes that arise frequently in your day-to-day work. Project managers might have an effective strategy for leading productive project meetings. Plumbing engineers might be seeing a lot of interest in water-conserving fixtures. Interior designers might realize that they've researched low-VOC finishes for their last four projects. Any of these themes could be leveraged to position the professional and his or her firm as thoughtful, innovative experts with timely insight.

Once you've identified an idea, consider maximizing its impact by using several of the strategies below to share it. Since you've done the hardest work already, it makes sense to get the largest possible return on your investment of time and focused thinking.

1. **Write an industry article**
   An oldie but a goodie, and a step that can help you organize your thoughts. The article could be targeted to a journal in your specialty, an industry organization newsletter or a special section in a more general publication.

2. **Follow up with a trend article**
   Consider how your idea impacts those beyond your area of specialization. For example, hospital designers could weigh in on how facilities are being designed to help control the cost of providing care. Remember to focus on how your approach (or the overall trend) represents a departure from how things have been done in the past. Keeping the "new" in news is the key to a successful trend article.

3. **Present your idea**
   Whether to a specialized or general audience, presenting your big idea to a group is sure to bolster your standing as an expert on the topic.

4. **Create a web feature**
   From simple to elaborate, there are lots of ways to showcase your special expertise on your firm's website. For the sake of getting the information out there, a straightforward PDF file of your article or white paper is often the most effective approach.

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Block Party Idea Provided for a Creative Invitation

The 10th anniversary block party for a 10 person architecture firm began by informally polling a select number of existing clients on their reaction to direct mail promotional materials for special event invitations. Their findings were that most received invitations printed on paper and almost always discarded them.

They wanted to express that the firm is creative, forward-thinking and a builder of creative spaces. They chose the use of wooden blocks as their medium. There were 10 blocks, packaged in a box, that spelled archimania (the name of the firm); the other letters used on the blocks were those needed to build their invitation.

This creative invitation certainly related to the theme of the "block party." The turnout was 400 guests, from an invitation list of only 320. The blocks are still displayed on many desks and shelves all over the city, months after the event.

Archimania P.C. is an architecture firm located in Memphis, TN. www.archimania.com. Contact: Barry Yoakum, 901-527-3560 byoakum@archimania.com

See photos of this project plus hundreds more in the upcoming *PSMJ's Databank of the Best A/E/C Promotional Material On The Planet*. Contact: blynch@psmj.com for more information.

10 Ways to Leverage Your Big Idea (cont.)

5. **Start a blog**
   If you are ready to "own" your idea, be bold and launch a blog. That interior designer who knows a lot about non-toxic finishes, for example, could create a blog focused on preserving indoor air quality through careful specifying. Blog entries could be a combination of product reviews, insights based on experience and new research findings.

6. **Record an audio file**
   The technology required to create and disseminate a recording on your website is very simple, and audio can be an intriguing vehicle for your thoughts.

7. **Create a direct mail or email piece**
   Make sure it's interesting and offers real value to the recipients.

8. **Teach**
   Whether you teach a group of colleagues within your firm or present a class at an educational institution, teaching can be both rewarding and resumé-enhancing.

9. **Beef up your profile**
   Speaking of resumés, a well-written summary of your specialized expertise adds credibility and interest to yours.

10. **Seek out the spotlight**
    If you've pursued two or three of these strategies, you should be well-positioned to seek coverage as an authority on your topic. Reporters or conference organizers may find you, or you may need to make yourself known to them. As someone who has published an article, delivered presentations and written a blog or created an audiocast, you will have the credentials to be recognized as a bona fide expert.

Virginia Daffron is the principal of Verdant Communications (www.verdantcommunications.com), which helps professionals in the design, construction and real estate communities win work and receive positive recognition through marketing, public relations and business development programs.

No matter how much you know about marketing, and no matter how long you've been in the industry, never underestimate the collective energy and ideas that result from working with a team. When developing your team, be sure to include members from outside your marketing department; these people can offer new perspectives.

Core Values at Global Companies

According to a recent survey the following appear in the "core values" statements of global companies:

Ethical Behavior/Integrity - 90%

Customer Commitment - 89%

Employee Commitment - 79%

Teamwork & Trust - 76%

Honesty/Openness - 69%

Accountability - 68%

Social Responsibility - 65%

Source: Booz Allen Hamilton/ Aspen Institute

A 3-Question Survey on How Clients Perceive You

At your next opportune moment with a client, John Doerr, Principal of the Wellesley Hills Group suggests that you can find a lot about what they really think by asking these three questions:

1. What value do you get from working with me?

2. If you were to refer me to a colleague what would you say is good about working with me?

3. Complete this sentence: YOUR NAME HERE is a leader in ______________.

Source: Wellesley Hills Group www.whillsgroup.com.

Attract Superstar Talent in 4 Easy Steps

By Brandon Gutman

What needs to be done to entice stellar candidates— the ones who are too busy being successful to spend time on job boards?

1. Have a compelling value proposition.
One of the first questions we ask potential clients is "why should someone join your company?" Companies need to have a luring pitch that will hook successful candidates. Think about how you win business or simply book a meeting with a prospective client. You or your salesperson must trigger a buying motive by targeting a prospect's needs. We must do the same when hunting for top talent.

Be able to explain in 30 seconds why your opportunity is perfect for the right person. Remember that stellar candidates are looking for more than a competitive earnings package because they might already have one. Leverage the available learning possibilities and growth potential. If it does come down to money, perhaps you're able to provide equity or a more enticing bonus/commission structure.

2. Empower your network.
Fabulous people know other fabulous people. Call up the most impressive contacts in your rolodex and pick their brain for potential candidates. If the person doesn't know you well enough to make appropriate referrals, invite them to lunch and cultivate a trusting relationship. Next time, bring them to your offices so they can absorb the vibe and get a sense of your culture. This should make them more comfortable about providing names and making the introductions.

If you aren't close with the top people in your industry, make this a reason to change that. Reach out to gurus who speak at conferences or write for publications like this one. Tell them you're looking to hire people who are just as smart and impressive as they are. They might even become personally interested in your opportunity!

3. Turn up the volume.
Companies today need to work just as hard to reach qualified candidates as they do when targeting potential clients. Here's the great news— having the right buzz will attract both. If your company has an impressive image in your industry, it should be easier to attract impressive individuals. They might even knock on your door.

Leverage all accolades (new business wins, product innovation, etc.) by publicizing them in the right places. This information needs to be reaching the eyes and ears of your most wanted candidate pools. You and your brand's positioning is so critical in winning top talent that you might want to hire a PR firm before an executive search firm.

4. Make first impressions last.
Try to leave a positive mark on every single person you meet. This might just sound like good business sense but it does prove rewarding in recruiting. Someone you impress at a conference might immediately call their friend to sell them on your open position.

Be sure all candidates leave the interview process feeling good about you. Don't forget that each of them becomes a spokesperson for your company— make sure what they're saying is working in your favor. Remember that a candidate who is not right for today's opening might be perfect for your next search.

Brandon Gutman is Director of Marketing & Business Development at Stephen-Bradford Search. Stephen-Bradford partners with companies to recruit top sales, marketing and business development professionals. Brandon spent his earlier years with RSL Communications, a marketing consultancy that helps salespeople reach brand marketers. (www.stephenbradford.com) 212-221-6333 or e-mail: brandong@stephenbradford.com

3 Top Rainmaker Traits

1. Ability to understand client needs and develop strategies to respond to them.
2. Understand the competition's positioning strategies.
3. Consistently implements networking strategies to develop relationships/gather leads.

Website Audit: From the Visitor's View

When was the last time you did a website audit? Whether you hire a third party or you do it yourself internally, focus on the following three areas, and look at it from the eyes of your visitor.

1. Usability:
Does the site load quickly? Is there anything that slows down performance or distracts the visitor (Flash pages, etc.)? Is the navigation clear and does it quickly take visitors to areas they want?

2. Content:
Keep your site fresh and complete. Make sure it reflects your brand and includes important and up-to-date information and content.

3. Search Engine Optimization:
Needless to say it is extremely important to have your site properly optimized for search engines. Focus on review of page titles, link text, and use of images.

Chances are you will find ways to improve your site after an audit. Create an action plan for how to address any deficiencies you discovered.

Remembering that you are not the audience will help you achieve the objectives of your all important website.

For an in-depth audit go to: www.gtms-inc.com/tip_AuditYourWebsite.htm for Website Audit Templates and SEO Checklist.

Are Questions a Key to Successful Communications?

Why does a marketing person always answer a question with another question? Well, why shouldn't they? And therein lies the power of a question. According to consumer industry customer relation experts, the person who asks the question is the one in control of the conversation.

There are two rules to asking questions, aren't there?

1. Always end your side of the conversation with a question.

2. Give the receiver the information they need to make a decision, then ask a question to make sure you are on the right track.

There are several reasons this works.

♦ We know we must listen first, acknowledge what we've heard, comment, or present a solution. Then, ask a question to move the conversation to the next level.

♦ Once you've asked the question, it gives you time to prepare mentally for the next part of the presentation, solution, or recommendation. And you are still in control, aren't you?

♦ If you control the pace of the presentation, the receiver always knows what to expect. Isn't it to answer the question?

When you ask a question about the person's needs, isn't it logical that they will feel more comfortable answering it?

Ask a feedback question periodically, such as "does that represent what you had in mind?" This gives you the chance to periodically check to see if you are on the right track.

Communications Mistakes Survey

A recent research study found that people interviewing for important positions often make serious mistakes. These same mistakes are also often made by people seeking work from clients.

- **Dont know enough about the company - 47%.** Do your homework! Look at the entire Internet site, you might even find bios of the decision makers.

- **Unprepared to discuss skills - 17%**. Why should they hire you, presented clearly with benefits geared to them.

- **Unprepared to address (career) plans - 9%.**

- **Lack of enthusiasm - 3%.** Have plenty of eye contact, and show confidence.

For important assignments, research is the prime ingredient to prepare you to overcome these errors, and will give you the confidence to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the assignment.

Stop the World: A New Business Model

By Dennis Schrag, Ed.D, CPSM

Many, many years ago, there was a Broadway play called "Stop The World, I Want to Get Off" The musical centered on the life of a fellow, "Littlechap," who managed to step out of his day-to-day existence. He was able to look at the larger picture of his subsistence and gain a new perspective.

Many professional service organizations would be better positioned if they could stop their business development world, and view it from a less myopic perspective.

Lore International Institute is a Colorado business research and consulting organization. It has written extensively on the full range of relationship marketing/selling. I like their thinking. It allows us to "Stop OUR World." Here is its business development model:

There are three major segments in the relationship-based marketing and sales model:

OPENING (Get to know the Market) - impact on winning - 20%

Components in sequential order:

Market analysis

Client planning

Strategic planning

Business planning

Branding

MIDDLE (Get to know the Client) - impact on winning - 70%

Components in sequential order:

Client management

Relationship management - including:

Information management

Perception management

Opportunity management - including:

Pursuit management

Capture management

CLOSING (Get to know the Deal) - impact on winning - 10%

Components in sequential order:

Proposal management

Presentation negotiations

Contracting

Getting to know the client and understanding the client's problems is where you need to focus time, energy and effort.

How many times has someone in your organization stated, "We will submit our proposal to introduce ourselves to the client." Proposals are very expensive and time consuming. They represent the last 10 percent of the total effort needed to make a sale.

Without the preceding 90 percent effort your proposal is wasted. At this stage, clients are ready to buy the car and you are offering them a test drive. The proposal is much easier to prepare when the 90 percent up front is done.

Batson-Cook Construction, a construction firm located in Georgia and Florida, has a terrific positioning-line in its logo: "The First Thing We Build Is The Relationship." It all boils down to ... no relationship, no work.

Stop your world and see how your firm's actions fit into this model.

Dennis Schrag, Ed.D, CPSM is the President of The Longview Group, a national firm headquartered in Iowa City, IA. He is on the faculty of the University of Iowa Tippie College of Business. He was corporate marketing manager of The Stanley Group, a 700-person E/A/C and environmental firm with 12 domestic and 5 international offices. Contact him at dennis@longview-group.com or at 866-351-6510.

Strategic Research for Proposals and Presentations

By Frances C. Gretes

The November 2006 issue of A/E Rainmaker featured the second article on research tactics for new business by Frances Gretes. The focus was on research for publicity activities.

The third level of research is where you need high-precision strategic tools. This is where the important Go/No-Go decision is made and when research is being conducted in preparation for the proposal and presentation phase.

There are several things at play here: major players, the client's environment, the competition, funding and consultants. Designing for a client involves understanding the mechanics of politics. This is why you need to spend time researching the people involved with the project; the decision makers, the stakeholders, the political influencers, collecting biographical information. This can easily be found on the web. Then, it's "who knows who," and what their interests are. Those searches can be done in Factiva, community board meetings, letters to the editors, public profiles, and board memberships from directories.

Before important presentations, prepare biographical summaries of the selection committee members, with photos if possible, so you know who to direct your attention to in a conference room. The level of detail depends on the importance and complexity of the project.

In pursuing a university master plan for example, typical sketches of campus histories and early master plans are valuable, and if you're pursuing a lab, you'll want to get very educated in that scientific discipline, like stem cells, master physics, or nanotechnology. You don't need to become an expert, but you do need to put it all in layman's terms so you all can speak intelligently about that subject. The art and science here is summarizing what usually amounts to a lot of information down to the causes essential to the project.

You must also research the competition, who has worked with the client before, is the project funded, will it be profitable? For funding capacity you can just ask. If it's public it's going to be available. As for political, you can find out who knows who, or who has worked at that institution. If you know who worked for that client on projects surrounding the one you're going after, you can find out who all the consultants were and if they had any problems, and who were favored. This can tell you which ones to avoid putting on your team and who to seek out. You can do some of this on the news retrieval searches, to see if there were any community issues, prior protests or the like. This information will be available primarily through phone calls and some online searching.

As for researching consultants, calling your colleagues at other firms is the easiest and will yield the best information. Clients like it when you use the same consultants, as that shows that you have a strong relationship. For new consultants, they need to have a specialty in a niche market that you know about it ahead of time. Keep a database of all consultants, especially the ones that have a unique specialty.

For niche consultants, check periodical indexes for similar projects that have won awards, then find out which consultants were used on those projects. If the same name keeps showing up, they are good choices. Take it one step further and confirm, through a phone call, whether that consultant has a good relationship with the client.

After you have learned of the results of your submission or presentation, follow-up research is essential. After the presentation, analyze it and pull out what you can use again, and determine what you can do differently. Always ask for a debriefing whether you want it or not. You need to know what worked and why, and what didn't work, and how you can improve. This tells you how your firm was perceived.

Frances C. Gretes is President of Gretes Research Services, a full-service research consultancy that specializes in providing a broad spectrum of information to professional services firms. Web: www.gretesresearch.com. She can be reached at fgretes@cs.com or Tel. 212-535-7472.

ART NIGHT CREATES MORE THAN JUST A GOOD CAUSE

Hickok Cole Architects interest in contemporary art and the firm?s strong community service commitment spawned the foundation for Art Night seven years ago. The original purpose was to benefit local artists and the Washington Project For the Arts\Corcoran (WPA\C).

Each year the firm's 75-person office transforms into a bustling art gallery; paintings, drawings and sculpture by some of Washington?s most talented modern artists line every inch of available wall and counter space. In addition, the curators designate an area for HCA employees to showcase their own artwork.

Now in it's seventh year, the event was patronized by some of the Washington's most well-connected art patrons and buyers, including the Executive Director of the Corcoran. From an expected attendance of 200 or more guests, this year?s attendance topped 730.

The firm holds an in-house art competition among the staff to go along with the event. A theme is set for each year?s competition, such as art for a post card promotional campaign, or a banner for an event. This year it was shadow boxes. Friends and family of the firm are also invited to display their own personal artwork along with the other invited artists. They hold a brown-bag lunch before the show with the curators explaining the art and give them a guided tour.

While Art Night is a private event, the firm considers it to be a major community service project. The firm also invites other architecural firms to attend this event for a night of art and comaraderie.

Shared between the artists and the WPA\C, all proceeds from the sale of artwork will flow back into the Washington, DC art community. The Art Night?s curators select a diverse collection of art in a variety of mediums. Over the years, the annual event has raised over $125,000. This year they sold over $30,000 worth of art in less than 3 hours!

As a memento of each year, the employees vote for a piece of art for the firm to purchase. HCA has acquired quite a collection of artwork over the years, raised a lot of money for a community cause, but in the process, created a PR event that is ... priceless.

For more information on the event contact: mmendell@hickokcole.com, or kpreston@hickokcole.com, or call Marilynn or Katie at 202-667-9776.

ARE YOU 'TAGGIN' TO STRENGTHEN YOUR BRAND?

Taglines have become very important to professional service firms wanting to clarify and strengthen their brands, and differentiate themselves in the marketplace. A tagline is a verbal expression of your brand to the outside world. It's a phrase that helps clients remember your brand and reinforce a mental association. Internally, it keeps everyone on the same page, and clarifies your brand in the mind of employees.

Tagline recipe
Communicate a simple idea... One that your company can own in the marketplace that will differentiate you from competitors.

- **Keep it short**... Three to six words is a good rule.
- **Avoid being literal**... It's an attitude, like Nike's... "Just do it!"
- **It's not a description** of what you do or for how long, like "Construction Management since 1982."
- **Be accurate**... You need to live the brand promise.
- **Use a phrase**... It's more memorable than the typical three individual word taglines, like "Quality. Experience. Service." It's hard to remember too many independent ideas and their order.
- **Integrate it**... When using a tagline, unify it with your identity.

From: Bligh Graphics' *Brand Crumbs* "serves up some tasty bits of brand strategies and ideas". Contact: carolyn@blighgraphics.com, or go to: www.blighgraphics.com.

Presentation Questions + Answers

The presentation is the moment of truth. Yet how often do firms fail to prepare adequately for this important culmination of the business development process, where it's win or lose? There are many checklists available on how best to prepare for a client interview, but more important are the questions that are not answered by those checklists alone. Here are some of those questions:

Q: How do you avoid reiterating quals when that's what government clients' evaluation criteria focus on, and the panels haven't reviewed your quals?

A: Nobody ever wins on qualifications. At this stage the differences between yours and others is meaningless. Consider a presentation as having 3 parts: an opening, main body, and closing. The opening is yours (but not to spout off qualifications, or waste it on introductions of your team). This is your opportunity to tell the client how much you already know about the project (from your research, site visit, or whatever). The main body is theirs. Don't rearrange their criteria sequence to suit your story. Answer all questions, and address all issues. If they want quals in their part, give it to them. The closing is yours again. This is where you tell them how your firm matches exactly what they're looking for in a benefits-related summary.

Q: When interviewing for a term contract (no seed project), what should be the focus of the presentation?

A: Since there is no specific job, they want to know that you are available on an as-needed basis with adequate staffing and quick response. They also take MBE/WBE very seriously since many term contracts are for subconsultants.

Q: What are some common value-added services being offered by consultants?

A: Value-added offerings are used primarily as discriminators, so anything that stems from the project is a good thing. For architects or interior designers, it could mean moving the client to their new facility, hanging their artwork on the new walls, hooking up their computers, so that when they came to work in their new space everything is ready to go. The cost to the client - nothing. For engineers or CMs it could mean helping to get regulatory approvals, assisting with obtaining financing, donating services for specific work meaningful to the client, setting up a web site or intranet for the job. It's the one thing that competitors won't be able to counter. They won't know what you are offering since it wasn't specifically asked for in the RFP.

Q: What do you see as the most important trend affecting how client committees are choosing A/E/C firms?

A: The main trend is towards having all parts of the process, from pre-qualifications to notice of final bidder on the client's web site. Many public agencies are going this route, as they feel it opens the selection process up to more people, and is more equitable. Some public agencies are carrying it to extremes, and are actually evaluating firm's qualifications and proposals electronically, by computer, without human intervention. Some firms are also learning that they can set up similar computer programs internally to mimic the agency's program, and determine beforehand if they will make the required score. Where there's a will, there's a way.

If you have any questions regarding proposals or presentations, please submit them to us, and we will have the answer for you. **Editors**

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