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A/E

Rainmaker

The Guide to Attracting and Keeping Great Clients

DEVELOPING AND EXECUTING A WINNING STRATEGY FOR MAJOR PURSUITS

Welcome to the exciting world of developing, leading, and executing winning strategies for major pursuits.

The definition of a "major pursuit" will vary depending on your firm but may include:

1. Client target
2. Geographic penetration
3. New market/service
4. Teaming partner success
5. New technology
6. Dollar volume (major program)
7. Multi-year engagement

However your firm defines it, the major pursuits can be classified as "must wins" or perhaps "game changers" for your firm. They have been an integral part of your strategic planning process and your firm has been planning and executing the pursuit for at least 12 months, some for more

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USING TWITTER TO BUILD BUSINESS

Much has been written and said about how Twitter is a revolutionary communication tool. And if you don't believe that it is, just ask anyone who uses it and/or follows others who use it.

Instant updates let you know where celebrities are and what they are thinking while offering everyday people the ability to share their thoughts with people who care about them without having to make 50 phone calls or visit all of their friends.

But what remains a mystery is how A/E firms can use this social networking tool to improve their marketing and business development efforts.

Dewberry and Coffman Engineers are two A/E firms with little in common. Dewberry is a 2,000-person multi-disciplinary engineering, architecture, planning, surveying, and environmental science firm headquartered in

(cont. on page 2)

Using Twitter to Build Business (cont. from page 1)

Fairfax, Virginia. Coffman Engineers is a 200-person structural, mechanical, electrical, corrosion control, and civil engineering firm headquartered in Spokane, Washington.

But their marketing and communications staffs use Twitter. We spoke with Molly Wagner, Dewberry corporate communications manager, and Jennifer Van Vleet, vice president of corporate marketing with Coffman Engineers, about how and why they use Twitter. Van Vleet's story is below. *(To read how Wagner and Dewberry use Twitter, see the accompanying article.)*

For starters, Van Vleet says jumping onboard an emerging technology allows her to stay ahead of her peers while riding the learning curve.

"One interesting thing about Twitter is that it is developing the way e-mail once did," Van Vleet says. "Think back to when e-mail etiquette was being established and abbreviations like LOL were being developed. Twitter is in that stage now and so by being involved in Twitter as it grows only helps one understand it better. I still have to go look up things like hashtags and so forth to understand what that is and what it means."

Van Vleet's description of how Coffman Engineers uses Twitter sounds reminiscent of how most marketers would describe their usage of other marketing tactics. "We use Twitter to pass along information that is relevant to the markets in which we engage for business and/or believe strongly in, i.e., sustainable design," Van Vleet says. "We also regularly Tweet information about noteworthy things happening at our company."

And those Tweets cover a wide variety of things. Here are some examples of recent Coffman Tweets:

"Coffman sponsors a child to swim for the summer through Spokane Parks and Rec for \$15"

"Coffman, Spokane, adds another 3 LEED professionals. Brings us to 32 accredited team members! Go Green or Go Home"

"To RT@PSBJ: Energy Dept to award \$3.3B for smart power grids: <http://tinyurl.com/krnsmu>."

"We use Twitter to extend our voice into an ever increasingly complex web of communication," Van Vleet says. "Beyond extending our voice, it extends our ability to monitor what is being discussed and shared, keeping us current with news. Twitter provides snapshots of news and we can digest what we

want, when we want. We use TweetDeck to manage our Tweets and categorize those we follow into manageable lists."

But even though Coffman is Tweeting on a regular basis, Van Vleet says the firm has not established a benchmark for what should be posted on its Twitter feed. "Right now, it is left up to best judgment, but we will be looking into that as we develop our usage. We do always approach our Coffman Twitter account using third-person voice. This way, nobody knows who is Tweeting. It prevents our corporate Twitter account from being associated with an individual when it should be the voice of the company. Individual Twitter accounts allow marketing people to find their own voice inside Twitter and at the same allow them to Retweet (RT) a Coffman tweet as they like to their own personal Twitter followers. For example, I could Retweet a Coffman tweet I authored or one that someone else here authored and nobody would know the difference."

That said, Van Vleet and the Spokane marketing manager are testing how they manage and share the firm's Twitter account and the Tweets they send. "We are just about set in having a smooth way of monitoring Tweets so that we don't Retweet something one or the other of us has already lobbed out in the Twitter world. My vision is to next open it up to the other marketing managers, so we have a person in each of our markets that is able to Tweet about items relevant to their market from our single Coffman Engineers' account. I know that three of our four marketing managers already have personal Twitter accounts, so making the move to a shared corporate Twitter identity should not be too much trouble for anyone else in our team."

Finally, the all-important question: Has Twitter made a noticeable difference in your business development efforts? "Not yet, but I anticipate that we will," Van Vleet says. "We've only started formally Tweeting as a corporate entity about two months ago. It takes time to build a following and discover and identify who we want to follow. We see other entities that we want to connect with like architectural clients, industry publications, and news organizations that we want to be in contact with and Twitter allowed us to open dialogues with individuals that, before, may have been much harder to reach. I think it is another way to establish a presence and become a resource to others."

Sounds like another useful tool in a marketer's arsenal.— **ED HANNAN** (ehannan@psmj.com)

HOW DEWBERRY USES TWITTER

Examples of A/E firms that use Twitter to assist their marketing and business development efforts are few and far between, but they do exist.

Take Dewberry, for example. The 2,000-person multi-disciplinary engineering, architecture, planning, surveying, and environmental science firm headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia, launched a Twitter feed a few months ago to coincide with the Rock Band tournament it ran at last month's 2009 *ESRI International Users Conference*.

We spoke with Molly Wagner, Dewberry corporate communications manager, prior to the July conference about how the firm uses Twitter. "We are running a kind of 'test' to see how helpful Twitter will be in the current markets we serve," she said. "This is also a way for me to gauge how much support and input I receive to see if future additional accounts could be maintained.

"Of course, before we could actually Tweet about the (Rock Band) tournament, we needed to develop a following. We figured that using Twitter could help raise the profile of our firm and our booth activity, allowing people to track the tournament even if they can't be present. In anticipation of the conference (which ran July 13-15), I've also posted Tweets about GIS-related topics. (The firm's Twitter account is www.twitter.com/DewberryGISRcks.)

The firm promoted its Twitter account prior to the conference by sending a series of four e-mails to colleagues who would likely attend the event. The first e-mail had images of four characters resembling miniature globes with the firm's logo and musical instruments like drumsticks, a guitar, and microphone superimposed in each band member's hand. The text in the image read: "Dewberry GIS Rocks: Bigger and Badder World Tour ESRI 2009. Join The Band."

Above that image were a series of instructions showing e-mail recipients how to forward the e-mail to staff while keeping all links intact and removing the "FW:" from the subject line along with the instructions for forwarding.

Wagner said prior to the event that the e-mails increased the number of Twitter account followers. During the event, Dewberry posted a number of Tweets about the goings-on at the conference. "Our recognition had a nice jump when GIS User posted a list of who would be tweeting on their web site," Wagner said. Indeed, one week prior to the

conference, Dewberry's Twitter feed had 69 followers. One week later, that number jumped to 90 followers.

"I think you have to give people a reason to follow your feed," Wagner says. "You have to provide meaningful content and you have to follow others."

She says that Tweets must pass her litmus test. "The Tweets need to be meaningful and relevant to my followers," Wagner says. "I try not to post too much 'marketing' content, which is difficult because I'm not a GIS-topic expert."

Even though Wagner says she'll hold off on setting up additional Twitter accounts until she feels she has the input and backing of the firm's technical staff, she says that she's probably going to secure a couple of Twitter accounts just to secure various domain names.

"I see it as another tool to deliver a message," Wagner says. "I think there is a lot of hype surrounding Twitter that will fade. Will it bring in business? Probably not; I think it's also too early to tell and perhaps impossible to tell. Will people perceive us as responsive or forward-thinking because of it? Perhaps." — **ED HANNAN** (ehannan@psmj.com)

A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR: MARKETING TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR

**Your guide to winning public sector
A/E work in today's political climate.**

AEC industry marketing expert Bernie Siben explains what you can, and can't do, when it comes to marketing to the federal, state, and local government. Find out how the Brooks Act, QBS, and "best value" impact your ability to pursue public-sector work. You'll also learn how government entities get around QBS requirements to select based on price, and how you should respond.

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Developing and Executing a Winning Strategy for Major Pursuits (cont. from page 1)

than two or three years. These major pursuits usually include the very best programs from the very best clients. Even within a firm, the dollar threshold for major pursuits may vary among the service offerings of a firm.

As you lead your team during a major pursuit, you will need a roadmap to guide you and your team through all of the activities needed for success. Any good strategy begins with a well-thought-out and comprehensive discussion of many items, including background of the project, the anticipated selection process, the client assessment and inventory of critical issues, a competitive analysis, strategy development, an overall theme and selling points, documentation assignments (proposal and presentation), a pursuit timeline, and an overall calendar of events. We like to call these disciplined activities a major pursuits capture plan.

It takes a good marketer with superb facilitation talents to make a successful long-term major pursuit successful. Oftentimes, the process runs the gamut from cat herding to culling the “group genius” from many smart people that may have more of technical bent than a passion for marketing and measured strategy. The ability to develop a “results-oriented” agenda and to tweak it as you go along a given process is central to keeping the team moving and on track.

Knowing the client and being able to know what motivates them, what keeps them up at night, and what will drive their support for selection is the primary ingredient to the best recipe and the winning formula. You have to have a structured process to inventory the key decision-makers and the myriad of motivations and drivers for each one. There are public agendas and there are hidden agendas that are often the keys to unlock the winning strategy puzzle.

You have to have a good grasp on the competitive playing field for major pursuits. From your keen intelligence gained with the client you should be aware of the serious competition and know some particulars about them including their differentiators and strong selling points. There are several ways to

determine what they are going to promote. This session will present two templates for harnessing this competitor pictures; one exercise called “Table Stakes” and another in a numerical system.

There are two things you must document. The first is effective documentation of the capture plan process and facilitated sessions. A quick turnaround keeps the strategy fresh and the interest level high. The second component of documentation entails identifying all of the required marketing materials including, submittals promotional materials and presentation items that will need to be produced during the major chase. Clearly defining responsibilities, content and timeframes is crucial to a streamlined team pursuit.

As the client’s needs become clear your team will be able to hone and refine the pursuit strategies.

Like the boats of ancient times, our pursuits need a leader/driver of all the players to make sure they are hitting the water in-time and with the right velocity. Distilling the single actions into one comprehensive strategic action takes craft, design and relentlessness.

Just like a puzzle with many interconnected vital parts, the major pursuit has critical pieces that have to be performed in order to assure your marketing success. The broad categories of these key elements to review are:

1. Communications
2. Technical skills
3. Relationships
4. Planning
5. Resources

Master these things and your firm will be on its way toward developing and executing a winning strategy for major pursuits.

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SELLING SERVICES IN TODAY’S RECESSION— YOU CAN DO IT

by Dr. Dennis Schrag, The Longview Group

Consider eBay’s business model. Fundamentally, it is based on enabling someone to do business with a stranger. EBay exploded when it provided reliability

ratings of vendors. Suddenly, prospective customers had previous customers’ evidence about the vendor. The person selling collectable stamps or vintage stereo

albums or Depression-era glass had a “trust ranking” right at their store. Customers trusted eBay when eBay provided trust-based data on its sellers.

Business literature is today is obsessed with the recession. At the heart of this recession is a lack of trust in our government, our financial institutions, and our business leaders. A survey by the *Harvard Business Review* conducted in January shows the fallout in trust. Respondents reported that between January 2008 and January 2009, their trust in U.S.-based company senior management fell 76 percent. Trust in suppliers dropped 21 percent. Trust in customers dropped 18 percent.

Professional service businesses are trust-based businesses. They always have been. In these times when trust-based confidence is eroded, people postpone engagements. The March 18 edition of the Harvard Business School’s newsletter, *Working Knowledge*, includes an article titled “Marketing after the Recession” by John Quelch, a Harvard Business School professor. Mr. Quelch says consumers are looking at your firm and your services through new lenses.

His advice:

- **Focus on high-potential clients.** Build stronger relationships with them where pent-up demand is or soon will be intense.
- **The longer the recession, the more likely clients will adjust (downwardly) their attitudes and behaviors towards service providers, permanently.** The relationship needs to start from scratch.
- **Assess your target client’s trust in your organization.** (When was the last time your company had a third party, client-perception study completed? Do you know how your clients rate your timeliness, technical ability, communications, follow-through and problem-solving capacity?)
- **Focus on costs.** There is a glut of competitors with low or no backlog ready for break-even or loss-leader work from your clients. Know your costs. Know what you can negotiate.
- **Gauge your clients’ confidence in the market.** How? Ask them. Take your best clients to lunch, ask a few questions, and listen.
- **Plan for demand.** We don’t know when the recession will end. Be careful about your talent. The demand for business developers has never been greater. The demand for highly educated technical talent is very high and will become more acute once the recovery kicks in.

Recent professional business literature is saying:

- “What was” will not be again for a long time.
- Know your own mood. No one wants to do business with a grumpy organization or person.
- Ask for referrals
- Use testimony
- Follow-through is critical with every client and each lead. Frequency of contact is critical. Be a helper first and a peddler second.
- Powerful offers will resonate with cautious purchasers.
- Focus on the services you are great at
- Upgrade your business— development plans and processes
- Re-think your marketing plans and processes
- Upgrade your service— more frequent communications; “how are we doing” calls
- Protect your best clients— connect more with them

On this point, there are still more tips to share:

- Visit with them face to face— more frequently. It is hard to trust someone you can’t see— unless your firm has an eBay reliability rating.
- Find ways to build more value for those clients. This can only be done via face-to-face communications. (How can you make your client’s constituents love your client?)
- Emphasize on your value proposition. You must know what your individual clients value and need most.
- Emphasize your firm’s ability to work together with the client to get things done— fast.
- Emphasize trust.

Lastly, your competition will be waiting for you to screw up. Don’t.

Dr. Dennis Schrag is the president of The Longview Group, a management consulting organization that provides training services nationally and internationally. He has more than 20 years of experience in executive management, marketing, and human resource leadership. He is a Fellow of the Society for Marketing Professional Services and a trustee of the SMPS Foundation. He can be reached at dennis@longview-group.com.

TURNING LEMONS INTO LEMONADE

Organization will allow your 'expanded marketing team' to contribute to your firm's marketing effort

In the August issue of *A/E Rainmaker*, we talked about how to structure a program where you—as the marketing/business development professional—can guide your 'expanded marketing team' (aka underutilized staff) to make meaningful contributions to your firm's marketing effort.

Now, I'll share some additional thoughts on organizing the effort, along with specific to-do marketing and business development tasks that might make sense for your new 'expanded marketing team.'

1. Sourcing the tasks

In addition to the obvious (i.e., having staff tap into their existing network/contacts), use these three sources to identify and prioritize tasks that will make the most sense for these professionals.

- **Your own master to-do list.** If you are highly organized, you might have a short-, mid- and long-term list. At a minimum, most of us business development professionals have some sort of a 'wish list' of ideas that we'd like to see realized if only there were enough resources (typically manpower) to make it happen.
- **Outstanding items you had previously delegated.** If others are unable to deliver on their promises, perhaps you reallocate those activities/assignments to those who are willing and capable of full execution.
- **The firm's strategic business development plan.** While most of us seek to create business development plans that are fully executable, there are often a few plans that do not get executed because they were missing a champion. Are there holes that can be filled by your 'expanded marketing team'?

2. Organize tasks into skill set buckets

Examples of this include:

- **Market research: Collect/synthesize data on prospects; markets; geographies; competition; project leads.** Many of your junior, mid-level staff have retained research abilities from university. Provided that you are highly specific with them about what you are looking for and web sites/sources to review, they will come back to you with concise, informed content that will help guide your firm's future marketing strategy. Well-guided research projects are a valuable asset to help inform your firm's

marketing strategy. You may want to provide them with a straightforward report template in which they can organize and deliver the information you've asked them to collect.

- **Due diligence.** Similarly, for the opportunities that you are pursuing, positioning, and determining go/no go, why not assign staff to conduct due diligence (going out to a site, talking to people in the town where the project is located, wrap up research that you have not yet completed, etc)?
- **Electronic communications/media.** Web site design or updates; blogging; micro-blogging; social media; e-marketing; monitoring RSS feeds and Google alerts of competitors, prospects, clients, market sectors. This category is especially pertinent, because we know what a time sucker it is to properly execute a solid e-communications plan. There's not a single firm in our industry that has mastered social media, so tapping into junior to mid-level staff who have a mentality and affinity toward social media attributes is an ideal way to get your firm more entrenched in this phenomena that is not likely to go away.
- **Graphic design.** Have them prepare options for various special projects such as a postcard mailing series. Or, have them liaise between your firm and Crowdspring (www.crowdspring.com), an online graphic design and branding service.
- **Technical writing.** Project understanding; scope of services; preparation of fees.
- **Marketing writing.** Press releases; project descriptions; award submissions.
- **Journalistic interviewing.** External client perception interviews; internal data gathering.
- **Computer software.** *PowerPoint*, CRM databases. Elevate the aesthetics of *PowerPoint* presentations (include hyper links, proper animation for stronger emphasis of message, etc).
- Data entry: lead tracking; project information (collected internally; cross-referencing projects and stories), verification of reference contact information.
- **Coordination/administrative.** Assemble hardcopy packages— proposal; collateral; presentation leave behinds.

• **Networking.** For the mid-senior level staff who are highly versed with your firm's message as well as the 'perfect' client to pursue, their networking efforts need to be managed in a far more organized manner when there is unbillable time that needs to be filled with prudence. My suggestion is creating a master document of the entire networking effort, literally going through a list of potential functions/events every single week (along with their costs) to ensure that visibility is at an all-time high. Further, if those people are attending educational functions or events where clients are plentiful (ideal!), then create a methodical way for them to come back and deliver a mini-lunch/

learn within one week after the session. This sort of knowledge transfer is often neglected during busy times, and what better time than now to reshape old habits!

In the next issue of *A/E Rainmaker*, Anne offers some final tips on maintaining structure, underscoring accountability, and attending to those that seem to have the most promise as part of your firm's marketing 'solution.'

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THINKING ABOUT TEAMING? GET IT IN WRITING!

by David Burstein, P.E., PSMJ Resources Consultant

Teaming is becoming an increasingly popular way of competing for large (mostly public sector) projects. And for good reason. Two (or sometimes more) firms working together can fill each other's "gaps" and emerge victorious.

But teaming has also created problems. Perhaps the most common problem is when a small, local firm teams with a much larger national firm. The synergy makes sense—the smaller firm has the local knowledge and contacts; the national firm has in-depth expertise. But such "marriages" sometimes end bitterly after the award because one side feels that the other isn't honoring the commitments it made during the marketing phase. For example, small firms often feel that the large firm (which is usually the prime consultant) isn't giving the small firm an adequate share of the work. Or that it is given only menial work.

The best way to avoid this is the old Russian adage, "Trust, but verify." That means you should never enter into a teaming relationship unless you trust the other firm. Even so, you should sign a formal teaming agreement that defines the following elements of the arrangement:

1. Which firm will take the lead in preparing the proposal?

2. What contribution will each firm make to the sales effort?

3. What proposal information is confidential and how will it be protected?

4. Is the arrangement exclusive or non-exclusive?

5. Which firm will be the project lead if you win?

6. Which firm will supply the PM?

7. How will the work be divided?

8. Are there any strategic commitments that extend beyond this project?

9. What are the rules regarding recruiting each other's employees?

One of the best templates for teaming agreements was developed by Chastain Skillman, Inc. (a PSMJ Circle of Excellence Firm). They have graciously agreed to make their template available. If you'd like a copy, send an e-mail to ehannan@psmj.com.

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THE FOUR GOLDEN RULES OF PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT THAT YOU SHOULDN'T FOLLOW

By Matt Handal, Trauner Consulting Services

Lately, I have been hearing some reiteration of certain best practices regarding proposals. I would like to share these with you.

1. Have a good go/no go process to determine whether you are going to win the proposal process
2. Only go after work you are certain to win.
3. Ask your clients to pay you to develop proposals.

I am going to add another golden rule to this wisdom.

4. Always fly your unicorn to the presentation and make sure you wear a suit made of rainbows.

It's important to have at least one of the rules grounded in reality. That's why it's so essential to add this fourth rule.

More than one thousand proposals have passed through me, each ranging in fees from thousands to millions. Public and private clients, you name the type of project and I have submitted on it. I'm sure someone reading this has submitted more proposals than I. But I feel that I have submitted enough to speak to this topic. So, let's explore why these conventions are more whimsical than wisdom.

Have a good go/no go process to determine whether you are going to win the proposal process. The go/no go process is a lot less black and white than you are led to believe. As a landscape architect, you are not going to submit a proposal to design the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) systems for an opera house. Frankly, the go/no go decisions you will face won't be that easy.

Here is a more realistic example: You are a MEP firm that designs opera houses. Do you submit a proposal to design a pharmaceutical lab for a new client?

Here is an even better example: You are a MEP firm that designs pharmaceutical labs. Do you submit on a proposal to design the systems of a BSL-3 lab for a long-time client if you have only ever designed BSL-1 labs?

Looking at the lab example, the answer could go either way. There are many questions to ask. Do I know who else has been asked to submit? Is the firm that did original planning qualified to do this work? Is there a competitor that is much more qualified? How will our price match up to our competition? What is

our client's perception of our ability to do this job? Can we do this and make a profit? Will this open up new business opportunities for us? Is submitting on this proposal going to negatively affect other proposal efforts?

What if the client tells you that price is the deciding factor? Now, there is no way, save for corporate espionage or mental telepathy, that you can accurately determine your chances of winning.

A good go/no go process can certainly weed out the no-brainers. But the reality is that most go/no go decisions we face require us to take into account so many factors that the math required to determine an accurate probability of win is far beyond what you can do in your head. What you are left with is something that is much more qualitative.

In the end, someone has to make a gut decision. Is this the right move for the organization? Is this the right opportunity to go after?

Only go after work you are certain to win. If you receive enough opportunities that are "wired" in your favor, then maybe this is good advice. But also you are probably involved in something that is criminal, or at the very least, of questionable ethics.

Consider this: If, using a low estimate, we assume every competitive bid has at least three bidders, then you have to concede that 66 percent of the industry goes after opportunities that are not wired for them. And if any one of those firms has ever won a competitive bid, then that could further erode the remaining 33 percent. That is because 33 percent of firms have never lost a proposal submission. Raise your hand if you've never lost a proposal submission.

The reality of the situation is that winning 100 percent of your proposals only tells you one thing, you are not submitting on enough. If you average a 70-80 percent proposal hit rate, you are much more likely to be inducted into the proposal Hall of Fame.

Ask your clients to pay your proposal costs. I'll admit there are instances where I could see a firm doing this. But those are rare instances, like developing a design-build proposal for a large bridge project. I'm willing to say that 90 percent of all government RFPs include a clause that states that they will not pay any proposal costs whatsoever.

The majority of clients should laugh at this request. Here is why. Your rates or fees are probably based on a multiplier goal. That goal takes into account your overhead and indirect costs, such as developing proposals. By paying your proposal costs, the client is getting double-dipped.

So what have we learned?

1. Use a go/no-go system that is qualitative and helps you make an educated decision.

2. Aim for a proposal win rate of 70-80 percent. That's a high win rate for this industry.

3. Make an ethical judgment before asking any client to pay your proposal costs.

Good luck with those proposals and don't forget to wear your rainbow suit to the interview!

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THE POWER OF NOT HAVING A WEB SITE

by *Tim Klabunde, William H. Gordon Associates*

I received a message the other day from a friend telling me that I needed to visit Skittles.com. It wasn't that Skittles had an incredible web site and they were giving away free candy samples. Instead, it was that the Skittles web site isn't a web site!

I have been enjoying watching the evolution of the web for years, so you can only imagine then that a message about a non-web site was well worth a trip to the World Wide Web. Here is what I found:

The Skittles.com home page is a Twitter page with a little box in the corner of your browser window that has links to each of their other "pages." If you click on "Products," you will be taken to Wikipedia to learn more about each of the different types of Skittles. If you want to see videos or pictures, you are directed to YouTube and flickr. If you want to know what people think about Skittles, you'll end up at Twitter. Actually, the only time you end up on a Skittles web page is when you click "contact."

Web 3.0

Could it be that a candy company was the first to Web 3.0, where customers create content rather than owners? Skittles has captured something incredible by creating a non-web site: they have shifted the focal point of the content to the customer! We often focus on creating fresh and new web sites that provide great information; yet too often, the content of a web site is designed more to make an owner feel good than to benefit the customer. Skittles turned the tables by reaching to their customers and giving them a voice. In doing so, they turned over the ownership of the Skittles web site to the people the site was created to reach in the first place.

Your non-webpage

What would a potential customer learn about you and your company if your corporate web site was suddenly down for a day? Are others writing good things about your service and your capabilities? Do you have a blog, a Wikipedia page, a LinkedIn group, or a Twitter group that gives an active voice to your company? Take a couple of minutes today to Google yourself and your company, and take special note of the information on Page Two and Three of your search. Is your web presence painting a picture of your company that you want to see?

The future of the web

We truly don't know what will happen next on the World Wide Web, but one thing is certain: it is the people that are searching for information that will dictate the future of the web, not the web site owners.

Tim Klabunde serves as the director of marketing for William H. Gordon Associates. He is a Johns Hopkins University Fellow and contributing author of the *Marketing Handbook*. You can read his weekly posts at cofebuz.com.

Check out the October issue of *A/E Rainmaker* for more of Ed Hannan's exclusive interviews from the 2009 SMPS Build Business conference.

MEASURING MARKETING ROI

In the August issue of *A/E Rainmaker*, we talked about the importance of measuring marketing effectiveness.

Veteran AEC industry marketing consultant Sally Handley echoed those sentiments last month at a webinar conducted by the Society for Marketing Professional Services titled *Measuring Marketing ROI: Current Trends in the AEC Industry*.

Handley, who published *Marketing Metrics De-Mystified: Methods for Measuring ROI and Evaluating Your Marketing Effort* in 2006, surveyed 180 A/E firm principals, CMOs, directors, managers, and coordinators in late July and early August. The survey gave Handley a baseline from which to draw from in the webinar.

She asked recipients if their firm used metrics to evaluate their marketing effort. Sixty-two percent of respondents said they did not use metrics. She asked the same question of webinar attendees and interestingly 58 percent said they did not. "While it's still less than half of the firms that are using metrics to evaluate their marketing efforts, these results show progress from the time I first started researching this topic 10 years ago," Handley said.

Handley then asked which metrics firms were using to calculate their ROI. "While more firms appear to be using metrics, I was a little dismayed to see that jobs won remains the most-used metric. Eighty-two percent of firms said they used jobs won to evaluate their marketing effort. In second place, we had hit rate: proposals to wins. Essentially, firms are still using the same metrics that have been used since the beginning of time to gauge where your marketing effort is."

Continuing with the survey results, 50 percent of survey respondents said their firm uses number of new clients won to measure ROI. Forty-five percent use the number of repeat/referral jobs and 45 percent also use client satisfaction to assess marketing effort. "Overall, the most used marketing metrics are those that measure proposal effort and jobs won," Handley said. "Things like improved identity, press coverage, and improved reputation are at the low end. That's understandable; they are much harder to measure than jobs won. Similarly, other metrics like increased volume of new contacts/sales leads and increased proposal opportunities should be used more. They help you see how your market research is doing and whether or not you are finding qualified opportunities for your firm."

Another survey question asked firms that do not use metrics which reason best describes why. The

number-one answer was, not surprisingly, no time. "Because using any of these methods to measure ROI requires a substantial amount of time, that's going to remain one of the biggest problems marketers face in trying to implement metrics to evaluate marketing," Handley said. No time is followed "closely and disturbingly" by outcomes cannot be directly attributed to specific marketing activities. Twenty percent say they feel they just 'know' what works and what doesn't. "This hints at an attitude that marketing is a 'voodoo' that can't be measured. This allows firm leaders to cut at marketing arbitrarily. Anyone working in marketing has to work hard at countering that viewpoint and use of metrics is one way to do it."

Handley asked whether firms have a budget line item for ROI measurement and only seven percent of firms said they had a line item in their budget to measure ROI. "Make no mistake about this, folks; measuring takes time and I find that firms that don't budget for something and won't pay for something don't value it and won't use it. Marketing metrics require an investment of time and money on the part of the firm."

Taking it a step further, Handley spoke of the "marketing dashboard" which includes your proposal/presentation sales effort, jobs won, client satisfaction, identity, leads/prospects, and communications/public relations. "Jobs won is always the ultimate measure for marketing success, but I believe that there are distinct elements of the marketing effort that have to be measured independently to truly evaluate a marketing effort. How do you evaluate proposal/presentation sales effort? How do you evaluate leads/prospects effort that get you those proposal opportunities? What about communications and public relations that build your identity and feed this whole process? What about client satisfaction? Firms take very seriously repeat work and want to measure client satisfaction in order to assess the repeat work that yields jobs won.

"Each of these elements requires a separate measurement and while jobs won is the ultimate measure, it won't tell you what works and what doesn't, and where your marketing dollars are best spent. What's a firm to do?"

We'll answer that question in the next issue of *A/E Rainmaker*.— ED HANNAN (ehannan@psmj.com)

For information on *Marketing Metrics De-Mystified: Methods for Measuring ROI and Evaluating Your Marketing Effort*, visit www.sallyhandley.com. To order a copy of the SMPS webinar recording, visit www.smps.org.

FORGET MARKETING MANAGEMENT...

What professional services firms need now is marketing leadership.

I learned the importance of leadership early in my career, and it has served me well. I was fortunate to grow up professionally in a firm that placed great emphasis on developing leaders at all levels. In fact, one of the founders taught a course on leadership year after year. He did this for a good reason. Leaders make things happen!

My current firm has a robust marketing department, including many marketing managers. These individuals cover a lot of ground during the course of a typical week—facilitating internal meetings, attending client events, running major pursuits, writing and reviewing proposals. Oh yes, let's not forget forecasting and other administrative duties.

What is the job of a leader in the midst of all this necessary activity? I believe that marketing leaders can serve three very important functions.

Create a vision. Vision sets the overall direction, and provides a compass for people to gauge how their actions fit into the bigger picture. You can create a vision for your company, your office, or even your department. Whether for the entire firm, or just your piece of it, think about what you want to accomplish on a three- to five-year horizon. This might include markets to enter, clients to develop, or specialty services to offer.

Use your principals and senior staff to help you think beyond this year. Make sure the vision is big enough and far enough out so it will take several years to achieve. One of my favorite sayings applies here: "If your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough." The timeframe is important because a longer-term view will help staff see through the sometimes mundane activity of their jobs.

Deliver a consistent message. Develop a message that you can deliver to staff whenever you have an opportunity. The message should reinforce your vision, and provide an underlying theme for many internal discussions. As an example, my current message ties back to what I call "positioning and proposal excellence." It's a broad enough topic that I can use over and over. Depending on the audience and occasion, I will share personal stories or select specific examples to demonstrate what we do well or where we need to improve. A consistent message keeps the focus on what's important.

Inspire staff. This is one of the more challenging aspects of leadership. But when you get it, you have the ability to motivate staff to achieve beyond what they thought was possible. How can you do it? Think big. Think broad. Think different. Personally, I try to provide inspiration through a combination of vision and creativity. Take a moment and reflect on the last time you listened to someone who inspired you; the best examples may be ones in your personal life (perhaps a minister, counselor, friend, or trusted advisor). What was it about the encounter that inspired you? Maybe it was what they said or how they said it. Now use this experience as a template as you set about the task of inspiring others at work.

I recently gave a presentation on our new marketing organization to a large internal audience during a day-long meeting. On the surface, a quick read of my slides would tell you the basic structure and functionality of the new marketing department. But this segment of the meeting was designed to engage the audience, make them think and participate, articulate the challenges ahead, and show them our path forward. It was delivered with energy, passion, and a little humor. When I sat back down, a woman at my table leaned over and whispered, "That was inspiring." Mission accomplished!

Leadership is essential, not optional, in any successful firm. Think about the position your company has in the marketplace today, your position with selected clients, or your position in niche technical areas. How did you achieve this status? It was most likely the direct result of a vision and inspiration provided many technical and marketing leaders.

PS: You don't need a title to be a leader!

Wally Hise is vice president of federal marketing for HDR Engineering, Inc. (Omaha, NE). Contact him at wally.hise@hdrinc.com.

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successful firm."**

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