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An Assortment of Good Stuff to Know

by Dennis Schrag

Better qualifications documents

A 2008 research study by Ann Taylor and Doug Parker, both of Origin Design of Houston, Texas shows some fascinating results about professional service firms' qualifications documents. Qualifications that Break Away from the Pack: Essentials of Differentiation was commissioned by the Society for Marketing Professional Services Foundation. Qualification documents both introduce a firm to a new client, and demonstrate competence. Qual packages are like the ante in the game of poker. It gets you into the game.

Their study included the analysis of over 100 firms' qual documents.

The results:

Generic qualification packages are disappearing. Over 67% of the firms noted that they provide or will shortly provide customized qualification documents.

The best way to customize a qualification's document is to limit the content that is most relevant to the client's immediate needs.

Qual packages may take on the role of "first impression" of the service provider. As a result, they take on greater importance. Typos, strange lay outs, poor content and sub-par aesthetics will close you out of this game and perhaps future opportunities. Hire an outside proofreader!

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Smart qual documents are the result of researching the potential client and the opportunity. Know what the prospects needs and wants helps focus the qualification document, helps keep the message on point and clear and sets the firm apart from the competition.

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Help Employees With Finances

Two years ago, Pepsi started to provide employees an extra benefit. The program: “HealthyMoney.” The company provides employees group workshops, one-on-one consultation sessions, online resources and other outreach services about personal financial issues. Over 10,000 of the companies 70,000 employees have taken advantage of the new services. The topics: money management; debt management, budgeting, savings for college. The sessions are help at all hours of the day, taking into account workers long hours and varying shifts. (See *HR Magazine*, July 2008)

Are You Listening?

“Managers have skewed perceptions about their openness to challenging news” That is the result of a study conducted by London Business School Professor Emeritus Patrick Barwise. Over 4000 US managers from various businesses participated in the study. The gap between managers’ self evaluations



and their subordinates’ assessments was very significant. Employees indicated their managers did not encourage others to express their point of view. Employees rated their managers as poor in listening willingly to concerns expressed by others.”



Pro-social Workplace

When organizations hand out bonuses, they are rewarding preferred behaviors by employees. But even after a few months, many employees report that the “happiness” associated with the bonus was meager. In fact, many employees cannot remember what they did with their bonus. A study of 600 employees produced interesting results. The more bonus money people spent on pro-social causes (gifts to charities of their choosing) the happier they were. The size of the bonus had little impact on employee happiness. The size of the employee’s contribution to their charity had a direct relationship with their happiness. Lesson learned: employers should encourage their employees to contribute to pro-social causes at the time of the bonus payout. (As reported in the *Harvard Business Review*-July-August 2008)



Peer to Peer Bonuses

Some organizations have established spot bonus programs that allow one employee to reward a peer for extra help or unusual support above and beyond the expected. The spot bonuses can take any form... a \$25.00 gift card, company logo items, car wash certificates. Many of these programs ask the giving employee to publicly present the spot bonus in front of co-workers. Employers establish guidelines for the program. Getting the rewards must be easy and fast.

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