

A/E Rainmaker

The Guide to Attracting and Keeping Great Clients

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THE VALUE OF VELCROED RELATIONSHIPS

By William Long, PE, LEED AP

Relationship building is the key ingredient in the buying equation, and helps you establish the trust necessary to close the deal. However, it does not happen overnight, nor is there a straight line formula. There is typically more than one decision-maker involved in every project, and each of these have their own issues and concerns for the project. They have their own hot buttons, their own likes and dislikes regarding procurement for example, or a particular mechanical system. They have their own past experiences with people, with firms, with processes, and they have their own personalities.

As a result, a lot of firms have developed zippered relationships, where an individual is matched up with another individual, so the mechanical expert at your firm lines up with the mechanical engineer at the client's company, and establishes a relationship. However, multiple staff really need multiple relationships, and hence my concept of velcroed relationships, which is basically a multiple client interaction. These are linked by skill sets, by knowledge, experience, interest, and by style. These relationships are built for the long term, they are interlocked, and are difficult to pull apart. If one of the components goes away, you still have many more relationships left with the client.

Here's how the concept works in an actual client pursuit that I participated in after opening an office in the Philadelphia marketplace. We had set up primary target accounts, secondary target accounts, and tertiary accounts. One of the targeted tertiary accounts had a development management contract with a public agency in our marketplace, and had issued an RFP for a construction manager to assist them. Although they were a tertiary target we decided to pursue this because it would give us name recognition in front of this potential client. I contacted the vice president of this company (labeled "A" in the Case Study Diagram, on page 2), submitted a proposal, and was not successful in getting this project. End of story? Not at all, only the beginning.

Months later, I was introduced through an architectural acquaintance, to another vice president of the same company, who was responsible for a local suburban campus, (labelled "B" in the diagram). Construction on the campus was winding down, but more work was coming up, and he thought we had the right qualifications and capabilities to be considered for that. I stayed in contact with him and had a number of meetings and discussions. The RFP finally came out, but there was an incumbent who ended up with the work. Our debriefing with contact "B" suggested that we stay in touch for even more additional work coming up.

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THE VALUE OF VELCROED RELATIONSHIPS (cont.)

Six months later, a business developer at a branch office, said he knew another VP that had just gone to work for this client (labeled contact “C” in the diagram below). He suggested that we all meet for breakfast, to discuss a new project coming up in downtown Philadelphia. I brought along one of our project executives, and was told, like the others before, that we would be considered. We continued to have discussions with contact “B” simultaneously with contact “C”, and introduced him to our project executive.

A while later, I was asked to moderate a program for SMPS (Society for Marketing Professional Services) on public/private partnerships. They were short one panelist, so I recommended contact “A”, whom I had met two years earlier.

When the RFP came out for the new project in downtown Philadelphia; we submitted, but lost out on that one as well. At this

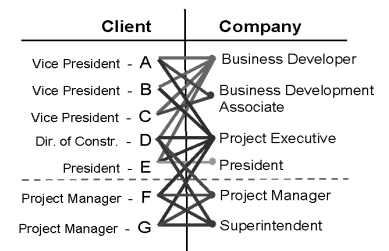
point we had a lot of decisions to make. With two years invested in this particular client, we came up empty, and had to decide if we should persist. The reason we did was because of contact “B” and his potential upcoming projects on that campus. This person called a few months later and said they had just hired a new director of construction who was having issues on this project, and asked if they could get our thoughts. We helped the new director of construction over the next two months.

Later that year, we sponsored a table at a formal event, and invited contact “B” and his wife to join us. Later, contact “B” convinced his president to meet with our president and expressed some concerns that he had. Our president responded with how we would take care of those concerns.

We later got the RFP for that project. It was the holiday season, but we stayed in constant touch with those three individuals. We were awarded

this project, the fourth one we had gone after with this same client. Five people were involved on the client’s side. On our side, I had established relationships with all five. The business developer in our other office had established two, the project executive met with four individuals, and our president had a one-on-one with their president.

Velcroed Relationships – Case Study



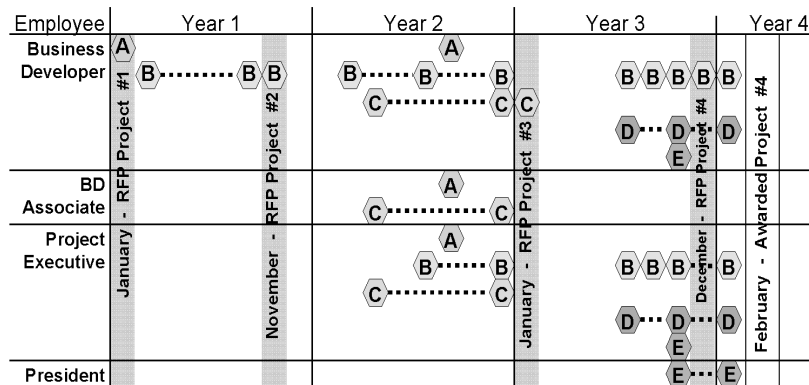
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President
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Not only did we get that project, but we got a second one, and their project managers established relationships with our PM and superintendent, as well as our project executive. You can see the intertwining of the velcroed relations on the graphic diagram above. If one of those lines gets taken away, you still have a very strong relationship. In fact, I moved on and they are still doing work for that client.

There were multiple client contacts, and the process took over three years before the ultimate buying decision, and while it’s a little longer than one would hope, it ultimately paid off. In the following three years, the firm received over \$100 million dollars worth of work from this one client. That’s the value and strength of velcroed relationships.

(bio of the author is on the next page)

Velcroed Relationships – Case Study



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INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AS A DIFFERENTIATOR

Any marketing program that doesn't differentiate itself from its competitors is going to be sledding uphill. This is where creating a unique position can help. Differentiation in a professional services firm really comes down to demonstrating the ability to understand a client's problem, and the ability to demonstrate that you can provide an innovative and imaginative solution. This is far more effective than trying to persuade clients that you provide better service or produce quality documents.

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Bill adapted this article from a webinar he presented for SMPS (Society for Marketing Professional Services) with Thomas S. Townes, AIA, CPSM, president and senior principal, Focus Architecture, LLC. For more information on the webinar series contact Mark Della Pietra, at mark@smps.org or visit: <http://eo2.commpartners.com/users/smps/index.php>.

THEMED PROPOSALS BRAND THE PROJECT

There is a world of difference between branding the firm and branding the project through a proposal, but firms have found an overwhelming success doing just that. Perhaps the main difference between branding and proposals is that branding is all about you, and a proposal is all about the client. The metric for branding is viewer retention. The metric for a proposal theme is win rate. Can they co-exist?

Why are branded proposals so successful?

They speak to the client and project issues first and foremost, both in the graphics theme and in the writing. What client would not be impressed with this approach? What client would prefer to read about the prior accomplishments of the firm, rather than one customized to their own project? None, I suspect.

HDR is very adept at branding the project, and it shows in their win rate. Whether it is building a graphics theme around a set of color crayons and small wire spiral-bound children's notebooks for the submittal for a Children's Hospital and Research Center, to a baseball theme for the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, Hollywood, Florida.

A contracting firm began using proposals built around a theme for the project, and enclosed the proposal in a box. One proposal and box had a barbecue theme, complete with steaks in

the box. They get pre-qualified for an interview almost every time and their proposals are in demand.

Another firm developed beautifully hand-carved 11"x14" wooden boxes, made in China, to fit their proposals. Since everybody wants these boxes, the firm is on nearly every bid list. They have even been able to bypass the process, and get pre-approved ahead of time.

Could Evans uses themed proposals often, such as their popcorn, candy and tickets theme for a 14-screen theater project, (which they won), or their use of a beautifully carved saddlebag with a custom logo to hold their proposal for a large hotel and conference center. It was delivered by a singing cowboy to the delight of the prospective client. They received a significant portion of the new development.

A firm participating in PSMJ's recent Circle of Excellence conference described how their proposal for a children's museum was delivered in a backpack by the lead design principal's children. One child delivered the proposal to the museum director, while the other delivered an apple.

Those who believe it's wiser to maintain the brand of the firm rather than showing creativity with the project at hand, may just be out of luck when it comes to getting the job.

TELLTALE SIGNS OF PROBLEM CLIENTS

By Michael W. McLaughlin

"Here's one project I wish I'd never taken on. They never even paid me," griped Steve as he waved a three-year-old client invoice at me. "And," he added, "I should've seen it coming."

Steve's project "blew up" according to the client and, piqued, the client withheld the final payment.

Even though he had toiled long hours to deliver a great outcome, when the results fell short, he took the fall. Sadly, such project blow-ups happen more often than most consultants care to admit.

While misfires can happen because of unforeseeable circumstances and self-inflicted blunders, most project failings are avoidable.

Prospective clients often send unmistakable signals during the sales process about how they'll work with you and how the project is likely to unfold. Watch for and heed these early clues. They will help you to decide whether you should work with the prospect or move on to the next opportunity.

Canned Goods

Consultants often walk into initial client meetings with canned questions to "spur a dialogue on the issues." Such questions, the theory goes, demonstrate your analytical prowess while revealing the client's needs.

Naturally, you want to know the client's vision for the future, the obstacles the client sees, and

how the project will facilitate the client's goals. Unfortunately, over-reliance on generic questions can set your eventual project on the road to disaster.

When one consultant asked a client to "describe the problem your company is facing," the client laid out the shortcomings of the company's supply chain. The consultant did not question that analysis but accepted it at face value, and the supply chain shortcomings became the focus of the project.

After weeks of effort, the consultant discovered that inaccurate data from the company's accounting system was causing the problem – not inefficiencies in the supply chain.

The biggest drawback to canned questions is that they are rarely adequate for diagnosing complex problems. The answers you get can lead to a false sense that the client and consultant understand and agree on the definition of the problem. As a result, you might unintentionally end up treating symptoms instead of causes.

There is no magic set of questions to ask in every situation. Instead, you have to be a dogged detective. If you and the client aren't pushing past generic questions to the substance of the issues, it's likely that your understanding of the objectives will suffer, and so will the eventual project.

Yeah, Yeah, Whatever

I don't know any clients with lots of time to shoot the breeze with consultants, but

some clients are just too hard to reach. That should be a red flag. When your client is rushed, or doesn't have time for you during the sales process, the project isn't a priority. When that's the case, expect trouble down the road.

Once the project gets moving, you'll find access to client executives just gets more difficult. When review of your work becomes complicated, the schedule can slow to a crawl.

When faced with a disengaged client, you have four choices:

- ◆ You can wait until the client focuses on the project, which may be never.
- ◆ You can find your way around that person to a committed sponsor.
- ◆ You can proceed with the project in spite of the handicap.
- ◆ Or, you can walk away.

In my experience, it's rare for a disengaged client to suddenly jump on the bandwagon once a project launches, but it does happen. If you do go forward, just make sure you have a plan for inevitable project delays.

Fussy Over Fees

A disengaged client isn't the only warning sign to watch for. When you find yourself in endless fee negotiations, that's a clue about what's ahead.

Lots of clients understand the relationship between value and fees, and they are willing to spend more as their perception of value increases.

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(CONT.) TELLTALE SIGNS OF PROBLEM CLIENTS

Unfortunately, some clients never see that perspective. Instead, they will always haggle over fees, regardless of how fair they are.

It's also more common now to find yourself negotiating final fees with someone other than the buyer. Some clients believe that distasteful fee discussions can strain a professional relationship, so they prefer to let someone else handle the chore.

Don't expect the tendency to fuss over fee details to go away when the project gets underway. It's more likely to show up again and again in challenges about invoices, requests for detailed expense documentation, and slow payments.

Hired Hand

Some clients will specify from the get-go exactly what they want you to do, regardless of what you think. In fact, I've talked to clients who were only vaguely interested in an assessment of the problem - never a good omen. When clients believe they have all the answers and only need help putting the solution into place, you are no longer a business adviser, but contract labor.

If it suits your practice, nothing is inherently wrong with taking on such work. But once clients have settled on a solution, their expectations may outpace your ability to deliver. You'll have implied responsibility for ill-defined results with minimal control over how to

achieve those results. That's what happened to Steve, and he ended up holding the bag.

The key to success in this situation lies in your ability to influence the project scope and approach so you can create better alignment with the desired results. This often means lobbying for changes to the client team composition, the timing of achieving benefits, or tightening project scope.

Without this level of influence, expect to be simply a hired hand and to assume a disproportionate share of responsibility for the project outcome. You are, after all, the expert.

Follow Your Instincts

It's true that some client relationships and projects just don't work out. Yet, if you pay attention during the sales process, you will see problems coming from a mile away and you can stop them before they begin.

Use canned questions judiciously. Focus on the real causes of the client's problem. Decipher clues from the client's behavior. And don't ignore your own instincts as you decide whether or not to take on the client's problem. Remember, the client isn't the only buyer. You're one too.

Michael W. McLaughlin is a RainToday.com Contributing Editor, a Principal with MindShare Consulting, LLC and the co-author of Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants. He is also the publisher of Management Consulting News and The Guerrilla Consultant. Before founding MindShare Consulting LLC, he was a Partner with Deloitte Consulting, where he spent more than two decades helping clients.

THERE'S LOTS TO DO AFTER THE PROJECT

Astute rainmakers know that their job doesn't begin with an RFP or end once the project is completed. Repeat business represents a fast-track to growth, and keeping clients happy is critical to that goal. Staying in touch is an absolute necessity. There are many ways to increase the mileage that comes from completing a successful project. Here's just a few.

- ◆ Get a performance evaluation.
- ◆ Ask for a letter of recommendation, or testimonial.
- ◆ Send an open-house gift with a note of congratulations.
- ◆ Send a thank-you note, letting the client know you value the relationship.
- ◆ Arrange to have the project photographed.
- ◆ Identify news release and publishing opportunities.
- ◆ Identify potential awards programs to enter.
- ◆ Identify direct mail opportunities for a creative announcement for the project.
- ◆ Explore internal marketing avenues, and get the staff to visit the project.
- ◆ Have marketing produce an internal newsletter detailing the project's completion.
- ◆ Treat the successful project team to lunch or dinner.

Finally, remember to establish a "tickler" system that will alert you to the 6-month and 1-year anniversary of the project's completion. This allows you to check back with the client on a regular basis, and keep a long-term relationship going.

THEY DON'T GET IT...THEY JUST DON'T GET IT

"They don't get it...they just don't get it. Our colleagues have all the things our clients need. They have all the expertise, and they're decent people, but if they don't get it... they can't sell." That's what Ford Harding believes, and he's got the facts to back it up.

For 15 years, he has worked with professionals to help them bring in business, and has come to the conclusion that; "unless they get it, if they are not driven to sell, if they don't have the power, the passion, there's very little chance they can succeed." So what is this "it" that people don't have, and if he can help them get it, then he can turn them all into rainmakers.

Ford's company, Harding & Company has done a lot of research, with over 300 interviews of rainmakers over the years. Ford searched through them to find examples of people getting it, who have had that moment of "aha." When Ford says "it," he means a big "IT," and he decided that it's something very simple; a belief that selling is good. "If you believe that, then you can go out and sell with enthusiasm and the natural fun of selling takes over, reinforces, and becomes self-motivating. But if you don't believe that, and not getting returned calls, and feeling shamed, it's almost impossible to do," Ford said.

Ford asked. "So, how can you take people who have a deep-seated belief that there is something sullied about the selling process, and help them make the transition to see that it is a good thing, and that they can do it in a way that is compatible with who they are?"

Here's four things that Ford said does *not* work on people who don't get it.

1. Simply telling them.

It won't work, because their reservation isn't based on logic, it's a deep-seated emotion and visceral reaction that this is something that is not for me.

2. Arguing with them.

Your feeling that they don't get it will show through in what you say. That is demeaning, and it will frustrate them and increase their resistance.

3. Putting all the people that don't get it in a room together, and working with them.

This is a disaster. Their bad feelings about it feed each other, and suddenly you're faced with ten people who don't get it, and are sure that you are wrong.

4. Labeling them as ones that don't get it is deadly.

Labels stick, and it is very harmful to the individual, and in the long run is harmful to the firm, because they tend to give up, and many of them

could make the transition if given the chance.

Here's Ford's advice on things he said *does* work?

1. Intellectualize the problem.

You then make it worthy for these educated people to contemplate. Now they have a puzzle to solve. It de-personalizes it. It's not about you, it's not about me. We're talking about how something works, and how the pieces go together.

2. Let the market speak for itself.

Have a marketing meeting and invite a few carefully selected clients to come in and speak on how they feel about being sold. Here's a sample comment that a client made in this context: "your competitors bring us ideas we find helpful. I always wondered why your people didn't."

3. Make people aware of their own thought processes.

You are fighting something that is deep-seated, has long built up, and is psychological in nature. Think logically. How many possible reasons are there that a person is not returning your phone calls? Why pick out the reason that they don't want to talk to you, as the only one?

4. Help them learn experientially.

Nothing teaches better than experience. Sit with them, hold their hands while they go on meetings, until they get the experience to reduce their fears about selling.

5. Help them develop standards.

One simple standard, as an example, is the small successes

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THEY DON'T GET IT...THEY JUST DON'T GET IT

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standard. If we are not having small successes along the way, we will never have the big success. And if people don't recognize these small successes to keep them motivated, the only thing that matters is the project they lost, and they are going to lose more than they win because that's the nature of what we do.

Help them keep their eyes on the prize.

Different people are motivated by different things, and part of the job as business developer coach, is to figure out what motivates Jane and Bill. Is it money, financial security, ambition, recognition, acceptance, esteem; what motivates this person? Once you know that, you need to keep it in front of them at all times, so that they can find the time to do the things that don't create immediate results, but must be done in order to get the business development results they want in the end.

A Telling Example.

There's this young man who is decent, self-effacing, shy, introverted, not terribly self-assured, but a wonderful person to work with. But in order to grow and have a position in the firm, he has to start selling, and he's not getting around to it. What motivates him, because he's been to the precipice and looked over, is financial ruin – having the money to take care of his wife and two kids. So we took the picture of his wife and kids down off the

bookshelf and put it next to the phone, and said I want you to look at this three times a day, and whenever you know in your heart that you are procrastinating, look at this picture, and he's now making his calls.

Ford added, "and we should keep our eyes on the prize too. The prize for us is making a difference in other people's lives; helping people learn that they can do this, and that they can do well for their company. When I meet someone that doesn't get it, I still feel frustrated, but I also feel hope and opportunity, which means, as a people developer, I finally got it, and that's good."

Ford Harding is the president of Harding & Company, which trains professionals to win new clients. He is the author of *Rainmaking: Attract New Clients No Matter What Your Field*, the newly released and updated edition of his well-known book, (containing 40% new content). Contact him at fharding@HardingCo.com, or call 973-763-9284.

This article is an abridged version of Ford's lecture at the SMPS/NY Annual Chapter meeting.

PROMOTING YOUR FIRM VS. PROMOTING YOUR PEOPLE

There are a lot of ways to spend your marketing dollar — some tactics work really well to extend the brand of your firm while other activities work to promote an individual. It is important to understand which tactic is best for what you want to accomplish. Here is a short list:

Promoting Your Firm

Activities that raise awareness of your firm at-large more than building the brand of an individual.

- ◆ Sponsorship of associations, events, and award dinners.
- ◆ Advertising in business journals, dailies, newsletters, and program guides.
- ◆ Practice or firm specific newsletters (unless the newsletter "sent from" line is from an individual to an individual where a relationship already exists).
- ◆ Charitable contributions and sponsorships of community activities by your firm (even when championed by a specific partner).
- ◆ Press releases highlighting high-notes, transactions, and firm landmarks.
- ◆ Announcements.
- ◆ Firm web site.

Promoting an Individual

- ◆ Time as a panelist or keynote speaker in the area of their expertise.
- ◆ Participation on key committees for industry, profession or community organizations.
- ◆ Personal notes and announcements.
- ◆ Mealtime meetings.
- ◆ Blogging.

Obviously there is crossover in some of the points above, but if you have a promotional goal in mind (firm or individual recognition) try to stick to a tactic with the best chance of accomplishing its mission.

ARE YOU MAKING ANY OF THESE 20 MARKETING BLUNDERS?

By Andrew Neitlich

Professionals who market their services can attract more clients by avoiding the following deadly business development mistakes:

1. Talking about technology and specialized knowledge more than about solutions.

Speak your client's language. Show him or her how you will get specific results that will help their organization, career, or personal aspirations. Demonstrate your ability to provide significant value, in specific, measurable ways.

2. Focusing on you instead of the prospect.

Build credibility and demonstrate value by establishing yourself as the expert who understands the prospect's situation and ways to get results.

3. Letting your achievements or expertise speak for itself.

Reach out to prospects in ways that build your credibility. For instance, provide education and information that matters to them, and also shows the value you offer.

4. Not choosing a specific niche or target market.

Focus on a target market, with a specific number of prospects.

5. Not reaching your target market effectively.

Develop a series of messages and strategies that reaches and attracts prospects from your target market.

6. Not dominating your target market.

Position yourself as the leader by establishing your credibility and authority with prospects.

7. Having an incomplete or non-compelling marketing message.

Develop a message that describes the problem you solve for your market, how you solve it, the specific results you have achieved, and why you are better than anybody else. Be especially sure to highlight your "edge" and why it matters to your prospects/clients.

8. Trying to "close the sale" too soon.

Provide a series of educational messages to establish credibility and attract qualified prospects to you. This will establish you as the authority in your field, lead to more sole source deals, and earn loyal clients.

9. Making poor use of publicity.

Use publicity to attract prospects to your business, capture their information, and build a relationship with them.

10. Not asking for referrals.

Ask for referrals at key times in the client relationship. Develop proactive referral strategies within your sphere of influence.

11. Relying too much on referrals.

Make sure your marketing strategy includes tactics to at-

tract requests and inquiries directly from prospects, clients and your sphere of influence.

12. Competing on price.

When prospects perceive you to be the authority in the field, you no longer need to compete on price.

13. Forgetting to stay in touch with past clients.

Develop a plan to strengthen your relationships with past clients, maintain their loyalty, and continue to show how you can provide them with ongoing value.

14. Providing poor or mediocre service during engagements.

Develop a system to delight clients on every engagement.

15. Cutting or delaying your investment in business development, especially in bad times.

Commit to investing in business development. There are plenty of low-cost ways to attract clients in good times and bad.

16. Not creating a simple, clear business development plan.

Create a plan every quarter that sets aggressive goals and lays out a path to accomplish them.

17. Creating a business development plan that misses some crucial steps in the process of attracting and retaining clients.

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ARE YOU MAKING MARKETING BLUNDERS?

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Your plan must establish yourself as a credible authority, demonstrate your value, earn trust and commitment, and keep your clients' loyalty.

18. Not taking action on your business development plan.

Make business development a top priority. Budget time as if you were your own client.

19. Relegating marketing to an administrative role.

Marketing should be a core part of your strategy, and handled at the top levels of your organization.

20. Not getting help. Many professionals tend to want to do it all on their own.

Hire competent professionals who can help you build your business. The investment will more than return itself in results.

I sincerely hope you don't make these, or other costly mistakes. The market is extremely competitive, filled with professionals who are struggling to attract clients. The good news is that you don't need to be a huge firm, or have a huge budget to succeed.

Andrew Neitlich is the author of *The Professional's Essential Business Development Manual*. For more information and free business development articles, visit www.marketbasedontrust.com. Andrew's system helps you attract clients without the awkwardness and indignity of having to sell.

AN IMPORTANT SURVEY

PSF MARKETING / BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INTEGRATION DOES IT BENEFIT CLIENTS?

This survey conducted by Suzanne Lowe, president of Expertise Marketing, maintains that many professional service firms (PSFs) indicate that erasing the functional silos between marketing and business development improves PSFs go-to-market effectiveness. But does erasing marketing and business development functional silos make a positive difference for the clients?

The survey and Suzanne's analysis show how PSFs are answering the big questions. Suzanne explored some issues that she will feature in her upcoming book, *The Integrations Imperative™*. These findings and Suzanne's analysis are intended to help you find out if other PSFs think the effort to break down marketing and business development functional silos will benefit their client - and how.

First, the questions:

1. *Do you think there are benefits to clients if PSFs erase the functional silos between marketing and business development?*

The results:

Strongly Agree56%
Agree 40%
Disagree 4%

2. *What do you think is the most important reason why erasing the functional silos*

between marketing and business development helps (or could help) a PSF positively benefit its clients?

Better value proposition.....64%
Better quality service/delivery...28%
Better understanding32%
Other.....20%

Suzanne states; "The largest vote-getter (at 64 percent) was that PSFs should integrate because they could develop a better value proposition or solution for the clients. Anecdotally, we know professional service firms spend too little time examining their true value to their clients, both for the present moment, as well as what that value could be in the future. And from my previous studies (chock full of statistically significant findings), we know that PSFs have traditionally underfunded innovation endeavors."

What is most impressive and interesting about this report, is not only the tabulated data and Suzanne's analysis of the data, but the scores of actual comments from the respondents as well, presented in a bulleted format. This not only makes for more interesting reading, but gives a more realistic and informative discourse.

For more information on the survey, contact: Suzanne C. Lowe, Expertise Marketing, LLC www.expertisemarketing.com info@expertisemarketing.com or call 978-287-5080.

PUT YOUR PEOPLE FIRST WITH INTERNAL PROMOTION

It's no secret that many firms tout the fact that their biggest asset is their people, and many claim they are successful because of the people. Proof can be found through the use of internal communications - the internal newsletter. The focus and subjects run the gamut from awards programs, recognition programs, intranets, to new business initiatives and completed projects. The format also runs the gamut from casual single-page announcements to four-color print pieces, to highly sophisticated electronic formats delivered as color PDF documents.

Putting People First

The majority of internal newsletters are designed to either recognize accomplishments of the staff, or to provide the staff with information about new project wins, or project completions. However, there is a wide variety of other reasons that firms have adopted this format, such as:

- ◆ Encourage collaboration between offices, disciplines, or studios.
- ◆ Celebrate the success of a project.
- ◆ Influence and impact the morale of the staff.
- ◆ Feature the teams that worked on a particular project.
- ◆ Demonstrate that the firm is passionate about what they do.

- ◆ Encourage the staff to get to know each other.
- ◆ Provide updates on the firm's news.
- ◆ Provide "how-to" tips on internal topics.
- ◆ Advertise internal staff perks.
- ◆ Create a sense of community and camaraderie.

Ware Malcolm, for example, produces theirs electronically and delivers it online. It includes staff announcements, promotions, licenses, marriages, company events and employee profiles. They maintain that it creates and reinforces employee pride.

Perkins + Will produces a sophisticated report on the firm's latest healthcare research projects and delivers it in a PDF format in color.

Some firms conduct interviews with employees to form the content. Some survey the staff to find topics of interest, and suggestions for improvements. A few have developed editorial calendars with strict deadlines. Some have developed templates for their publication, and come up with a theme for each one, others provide thought-provoking examples, and include personal testimonials from individuals or groups about what they are doing to make a difference in their firm.

CREATIVE TALENT AT FIRM'S "CREEPY" EVENT EXCITES CLIENTS

HMC Architects, headquartered in Ontario, CA, created a collection of exceptional collateral materials that compelled clients to attend their client appreciation dinner. They used print materials that were graphically consistent with the dinner's theme of a 1920s haunted mansion, and titled "An Evening at Regency Manor."

The invitation list consisted of more than 500 existing K-12 clients. These clients were targeted for appreciation for their ongoing business with HMC and their desire to continue to build business with them.

In order to effectively communicate the dinner's theme, many hours were spent researching photography, graphic styles, fashion trends, and music of the 1920s.

The themed mailings included a main invitation with a menu card, a reminder card for those who had not responded, and a confirmation card to those who had responded. Collateral used at the event included room cards for seating assignments, oil painting portraits, welcome signs, table signs, thank you cards, wine labels, game cards, and various graphics to complement the elaborate 1920s decor and HMC hosts' spirited costumes.

HMC's annual event is not only an appreciation for key clients, but also an opportunity for HMC to display its creative

(Cont. next page)

CREATIVE TALENT AT FIRM'S "CREEPY" EVENT EXCITES CLIENTS (Cont.)

talents in a venue outside of the office and the business of architecture. Much of the graphics took inspiration from Art Deco trends and vintage posters of the 1920s, as well as the silent motion picture era of the 1930s. Typeface on the collateral was also reminiscent of 1920s-era script.

Inspiration was also taken from Disneyland's "The Haunted Mansion" amusement park ride for its whimsical take on horror and the supernatural. In order to communicate this part of the theme, all of the collateral materials were "aged" in PhotoShop to make the pieces appear "creepy."

Invitations were delivered in manila interoffice-style envelopes and indicated that the contents were not your typical direct mail pieces.

All collateral pieces were designed by HMC in-house graphic designers.

These exceptional pieces can be seen along with hundreds more examples of successful promotional material campaigns, on the CD: *PSMJ's Databank of the Best A/E/C Promotional Material on the Planet*. To view a sampling, go to www.aecadvisors.com and click on "Publications." then "Promo Material CD."

NEW PSMJ TWO-DAY PROGRAM FOR MARKETERS

If you are interested in establishing a powerful brand and distinct identity for your firm, and creating hard-hitting promotional materials, then come join us at *PSMJ's Designing Powerful Promotional Materials for Your A/E/C Firm*.

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A/E Rainmaker

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