



Marketing 101

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Introduction

As we all get wrapped up and consumed with the prospect and process of securing project contracts and making money, we sometimes lose sight of “The Basics”.

This is certainly not limited to the workplace. Take the holidays, for example. We endure great agony fighting crowds in the shopping mall – or slave over a traditional home cooked meal all for the sake of holiday bliss. When it finally comes time to enjoy the fruits of our labor – give and receive the gifts – eat the meal, etc, we are so incredibly burnt out and stressed from the process of getting there we can’t even enjoy the moment. It’s a let down and merely marks the end of the agonizing journey to get there.

Losing sight of the basics is so commonplace that it sometimes takes a hard core realist and pragmatist to stand up and say, “Hey Guys! What are we doing?!!!” Not that I necessarily fall into that category, but it is for this reason that I drafted the following program to present to the entire staff of my firm. The intended purpose of the program involves the following:

- Familiarize the company as a whole to the concept of marketing
- Inform them of what exactly I do aside from disappearing for lunches and SMPS functions
- Initiate a brainwashing strategy that pulls them into the marketing process

This program caters to being presented to various levels including highly technical people and administrative staff. If presented right, it can help boost morale. The information reinforces common sense concepts but also strives to shed light on why things work or don’t work.



Part I: Marketing = Sales, True or False?

Pose the question and solicit responses and reasons why they choose one or the other.

The correct answer is FALSE. You can sell without marketing. However, in this current day and competitive market of the A/E/C industry, marketing is a necessary component of sales.

In a theoretical realm, a firm's reputation and service record can be the marketing engine that generates sales (in our context, sales = contracts), particularly if the firm has a solid customer base that engages in repeat business. Then again, A/E/C firms are no longer commodity based. A/E/C firm commodities revolve around the experience and expertise of their professional staff. With the industry as dynamic as it is, this base is constantly shifting as professionals move from firm to firm. It thus places a burden on the firm to create the perception that despite shifts in personnel, their firm still carries the expertise, experience and tradition that accounts for all their successes. How is this perception extended and maintained? Answer: Through marketing.

Part II - 4 "P's" of Marketing

A decent marketing program revolves around 4 things, commonly known as the "4 P's", namely, Product/service, Place (service area), Price, and Promotion. Mid and lower marketing positions are primarily involved with the promotion aspect of marketing. The other three "P's" are typically defined by the company principals and upper management. The 4 P's interplay as follows:

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| Product/Service: | Are we specialists or do we offer full turn key services?
Getting down to the very basic level, what are we offering? Expertise? Problem Solutions? Need Fulfillment? |
| Place | Where do we offer these services? Are we home town experts?
Are we experts nationally / internationally recognized? Do we serve the Southeast, East Coast, etc? |
| Price | Do we underbid our competitors, or do we submit bids that profit our bottom line?
What will the market bare? |
| Promotion/Packaging | Proposals/SOQs (Utilize lots of color/graphics – or basic info in black & white)?
Do we produce multi color brochures?
What type of PR and Advertising do we engage in? |



Part III - Basic Concepts

There are four basic concepts that are crucial to understand when engaging in marketing. They are as follows:

Human Nature We all are “Worlds Unto Ourselves” and selfish by nature. Most people like to talk about themselves. We procrastinate doing things that are unpleasant. We lean towards doing things that we are comfortable and feel safe doing and avoid taking risks. People don’t like to say “No” to your face. We tend to take good things for granted and be consumed with things that are wrong/bad. Just turn on the news for example. Also, remember that beautiful proposal you worked so hard on and all the principals noticed was the misspelled word on the cover letter?

Anticipating human nature responses of marketing contacts, and realizing your own human nature tendencies and how they affect your behavior can lead to formulating a more effective approach to accomplishing your goals.

Opportunity Costs Is the value of what you’re pursuing greater than the value of what you’re passing-up in order to engage in that pursuit? Will the end-benefits far outweigh the sum of the efforts exerted to obtain the benefits? For example, will investing a few thousand dollars in labor hours and materials for a project that will only yield a few thousand dollars in fees lead to future more profitable projects for the same client?

Timing Timing is the “Uncertain Constant”. Everything is tied to some type of process, and each process has its own unique time frame. It takes time to build confidence levels and step out of comfort zones. Time can alleviate threats of risk.

Follow-up Follow-up bridges the gap between human nature, timing and opportunity costs. One can define follow-up as the integral efforts exerted to obtain an end-goal. Follow-up is essential in creating and maintaining a desired perception. For example, you want your firm to be recognized as responsive and client oriented, yet, if you neglect to follow-up with client contacts, the end-perception will be jaded.



Part IV - Marketing Mentality

Once you have grasped the key concepts and components of marketing, you can develop a “Marketing Mentality.” Technical professionals are typically uncomfortable with undertaking marketing tasks. They have a perception of marketing paralleling the genre of the used car salesman. The prospect of trying to be a smooth talking money grubber turns their stomachs, and besides, they have a lot of design work and submittal delivery deadlines to meet. In addition, marketing entails dealing with rejection and people blowing you off. Unfortunately, nothing can change this, although a solid understanding of human nature and timing helps. However, there are some tactics that can be employed to boost the comfort level for those faced with marketing tasks. Simple tactics are as follows:

15 Second Commercial to address “What do you do?” We face that question everyday and despite it being so common, few companies gather their employees to help them draft a consistent answer.

Ask Questions Just because you are “marketing” doesn’t mean that you have to have diarrhea of the mouth going into great detail about you and your company etc. People like to talk about themselves. Ask questions to put yourself off the hook and learn about the person/contact and their needs.

Open Mind / Think

Outside the Box Opportunities are everywhere. Although you may be outside of the work environment, you may come across a client contact. Don’t be afraid to ask for a business card. Also, when confronted with a project opportunity that you have no direct experience in, consider related experience you have that would boost your credentials.

Open

Communications Don’t be afraid to call someone back – even if it is not good news, i.e. “That project deliverable is going to be late”, or “Sorry, Joe, we can’t use you on our team, your experience doesn’t quite coincide with the project requirements”, etc.

Be Yourself

You don’t have to change your personality to market – there is no need to slip on the plaid used car salesman jacket and talk a mile a minute. Just be yourself.

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