

PROGRAM SUMMARY

A/E/C Business Development - The Decade Ahead

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November 19, 2013 at 8:30 a.m. / Harrisburg, PA

Program Presenters:

- Scott Butcher, FSMPS, CPSM
- William Long, PE, LEED AP, FSMPS

The presentation was based on the book published by the SMPS Foundation *A/E/C Business Development – The Decade Ahead*.

The content of the book was developed from research through qualitative interviews with more than 100 industry stakeholders: clients/buyers from public and private corporations and institutions/agencies, as well as executives from design and construction firms.

The purpose of the year-long initiative to develop the book was to answer the following questions:

- How are A/E/C sellers currently selling?
- How are A/E/C owners currently buying?
- How will this change in the coming decade?

Did You Know?

Create Space, an Amazon company, handled the printing of the book. The hardcopy can be purchased on Amazon.com and an electronic version through the SMPS Shop.

Presentation Highlights

What are sellers of A/E/C services saying?

- Sellers of A/E/C services need to be aware that the "Owner" is becoming more sophisticated and educated. Many of our clients now have a degreed architect or engineer as their representative and understand the construction process very well and can talk intelligently about it.
- We are finding that company CFO's are becoming decision makers in the hiring process. So our approach to selling needs to adjust based on who the "buyer" is.
- A/E/C firms are spending more time and money providing a higher level of customer service to their existing client base. They are also very protective of that client base because of the investment they are now putting into those relationships.
- Project Managers need to be much more customer service oriented than before. They need to be encouraged to remain in contact with past clients even after they have moved onto their next project.

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- Unfortunately, client loyalty is changing and the amount of repeat business from existing clients is shrinking - meaning more effort will need to go into increasing our client base by investing more in new business development efforts.
- Be careful of turnover in your firm; it can be a reason for an existing client to look elsewhere. Therefore, don't have all your eggs in one basket when it comes to your clients. Be sure to have multiple relationships with your clients across the organization.
- Get involved with your client's industry associations and organizations and by all means include technical staff in this involvement.







Thank you, Scott and Bill for such a pertinent and informative presentation.

***Tip – Be client focused instead of project focused – Know your client's client!**

- As we all have probably experienced, larger firms are now going after the "smaller" projects that they may not have even considered in the recent past. Until things change economically, this trend will continue.
- Finding the decision maker in a firm can be difficult - let alone getting to them. They all respond to phone, email and social media differently. Research the decision maker's network and get to know those people who will help you get to the right person in the right way.
- Last but not least, create a business development culture in your firm.

What are buyers of A/E/C services saying?

- Relationships are still very important. Even though client loyalty is changing, the way to hold onto them is through quality relationships across all levels of the organization.
- Many owners like technology and innovation and how it can benefit them as long as they aren't the guinea pig. They don't want to pay for your learning curve, unless you can prove it will save them time and money in the long run.
- Talk about the buyer's company and then about their project. Again, know your client's client and the trends they are experiencing. When talking about their project have the technical person there.
- Buyers are expecting firms to provide consultation that goes beyond their typical scope of services. We have to be ready to bring more to the table.
- Owners do not want us coming to the table expecting the next BIG project. Be willing and expect to start small and work up to the larger projects.

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