

Flying with Eagles:

**Sylvia Kwan, FAIA,  
Founder and CEO,  
Kwan Henmi**



## In This Issue:

# What Color Is Your Tutu?

**I**s the recession over, or will it soon be? Only one year after it is alleged to have begun, many experts say so. That is nothing but good news for our industry. According to almost all accounts—including our fourth annual economic outlook piece by FMI Corporation—signs exist and are growing that a recovery is underway. By the end of this year, if not before, business “as we like it” should resume.

Until that happens, what should you do and where should your time be spent? The legendary Frank Stasiowski outlines a fairly simple game plan that will keep your practice sharp, seaworthy, and ahead of the competition. President of PSMJ Resources, Frank is a frequent seminar speaker, prolific author, and respected newsletter publisher. In a special contribution to *Marketer*, this industry giant shares tips that will help you weather uncertain times and navigate a steady course until the tide turns and business bounces back.

When it does, Sylvia Kwan will no doubt have moved on to even greater heights, as evidenced by the consistent and extraordinary success her San Francisco firm has achieved over the 20 years during which she has functioned as founder and CEO of Kwan Henmi Architecture and Planning. Subject of this issue’s cover story by Karin Doucette, marketing manager with mega—firm Parsons Brinckerhoff, Sylvia Kwan is more than just another firm leader. Born in Hong Kong in a family of accomplished professionals, she has traveled far—to the summit of the national board of AIA as well as the prestigious San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. As you will learn, her story, at once impressive and exceptional, is also the story of America—while adding a unique perspective to *Flying with Eagles*, our ongoing interviews with those whose achievements extend to the entire realm of professional practice, not just marketing. And you can read it only here.

In *Selling in Deep Carpet*—our series on the most effective methods, theories, and techniques for “making rain” and strengthening client relationships—Nadine Yates concludes her case for doing debriefings. Head of N.R. Yates and Associates, a strategic marketing and management

consulting firm, Nadine’s considerable experience enables her to argue convincingly and articulate the substantial benefits debriefings yield.

Instead of our usual focus on compelling communications, we take a different path and welcome the return of Desmone & Associates’ business developer Dave Fisher, whose review of *Everyone Remembers the Elephant in the Pink Tutu* offers fresh and important lessons on how to promote with impact and style—and avoid spending a fortune. Dave claims the book, by communications strategists Mary Maloney and Suzanne Caplan, opened his eyes (and will open yours) to new ways of thinking about image—building for your firm. After studying this book and writing the review, he knows the color of his tutu and if the bearded lady is really his friend. Do you? ■



### About the Editor

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*Cover Photo: Sylvia Kwan, FAIA, Founder and CEO, Kwan Henmi Architecture/Planning Inc.  
Cover Photo: Todd Friedlander of Kwan Henmi.*

## *Flying with Eagles:*

# **An Interview with Sylvia Kwan, FAIA, Founder and CEO, Kwan Henmi**

*There are few women CEOs in corporate America, and only a scattering in the A/E field. With generations of accomplished architects, engineers, doctors, and other social leaders behind her, Sylvia Kwan may have been destined to become a founding figure in our industry. Born in Hong Kong, China, and raised there and in Los Angeles, Sylvia may also have come full circle as an architect in San Francisco, with its historical links to the Pacific Rim and renown for urban design.*

This expressive, emphatic, and inexhaustible CEO is the pulse behind one of the fastest growing firms in the Bay Area. In addition to guiding Kwan Henmi's growth—in tandem with co-owner and husband, Denis Henmi—Sylvia Kwan chaired the Board of Directors of San Francisco's influential Chamber of Commerce last year, and is mother to two pre-teen sons.

Karin Doucette, marketing manager with transportation design leader Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), wanted to learn how Sylvia juggled these dynamics while keeping a steady hand on the maturation of a young firm in a hotly competitive marketplace.

**Karin Doucette (KD):** You're still at the early stages of "raising" a firm you conceived of 20 years ago. What prompted you to do this?

**Sylvia Kwan (SK):** There have been architects in my family for 75 years. My father, an engineer, comes from a long line of accomplished professionals. In fact, he was raised by two great aunts who were the first Western-trained medical doctors in China. So, being "leading edge" is part of who I am.

When I came to the United States as a little girl, 35 years ago, we came poor, even though we were a middle-income family in Hong Kong and come from well-educated people who are also well off. I was proud of my roots, yet I felt the stigma of being poor. I wanted to show my relatives that my

family was ok, too. Of course, my siblings and I all went on to get master's degrees, and now all my relatives admire us very much!

**KD:** Why CEO? Why wasn't it enough for you to contribute at a different level?

**SK:** My intense energy is satisfied by big efforts. I was greatly influenced by my father, who has many strong women in his lineage, so it is really natural for me to be a leader. Plus, I'm naturally bossy! My mother tells me that, as a little girl, I'd tell my sisters what to do and how to get in line. They called me "Little Mama."

**KD:** I've worked for two centuries-old firms (Bechtel and now PB) that have evolved while sustaining distinctive cultures, and I'm curious to know how you are shaping KH's much younger corporate culture.

**SK:** I get excited by complicated projects that make me think, that don't come with the solutions attached. I naturally draw the same type of people into KH and foster relationships with the same types of clients. So my personal style is a big part of KH's distinctive style. We've honed our design and planning skills in San Francisco—which is a tight, urban world—and we excel at projects that are infill, urban-scale, civic projects that have an impact and leave a legacy. For example, we did the interiors for Pacific Bell Park, home to the San Francisco Giants baseball team. We're also joint-venture architect for the Moscone Convention Center

expansion and the AirTrain Light Rail stations at San Francisco International Airport.

**KD:** There have been dramatic shifts in the marketplace since you founded KH in 1980. Tell me about your biggest failures in the last 20 years, and your biggest accomplishments.

**SK:** We were immediately confronted by an economic recession in 1980, and by another in 1991–92. Because I deliberately chose to focus on general practice and not overspecialize, we remained flexible so we rolled with these market troughs.

It's clear to me that KH's failures or successes occur only when we don't stick to our process. By process I mean synthesizing the three dynamics that influence any project: relationships, benefits vs. risks, and politics. I recently lost a project involving a developer because I ignored the fact we didn't have established relationships in place to support us. I got caught up in the excitement of the opportunity itself and reacted to an RFP instead of strategizing beforehand. Conversely, we always hit our targets when we balance the decision-makers' goals against the benefits and risks of our involvement and against whether we have the right relationships to influence the process. To me, lack of political wherewithal is a deal buster for any pursuit.

<b>BUSINESS FACTS</b>		<b>KWAN HENMI</b> ARCHITECTURAL PLANNING, INC.
Headquarters:	San Francisco, CA	
Number of Offices (all domestic):	2	
Total Staff:	45	
Marketing Staff:	2	
Gross Fees in 1995:	\$2.87 million	
Gross Fees in 2000:	\$6.86 million	
Projected Gross Fees in 2005:	\$10.5 million	
Technology Budget in 1995:	\$130,000	
Technology Budget in 2000:	\$178,000	
Projected Technology Budget in 2005:	\$250,000	
Percent of Gross Revenue Allocated to Marketing:	6%	
Web Site:	www.kwanhenmi.com	

**KD:** KH sounds very strategic for a young organization of architects and planners.

**SK:** That's because we look at things through strategic planning eyes. KH tends to go after very complex, usually highly visible work—what I call high-ticket, legacy projects. We're still learning that there's no magic formula for shaping these projects. Each has its own characteristics, so the balance of features/benefits/risks is different. We focus on due diligence, then we weigh all of this against the expense of pursuing the project. And we do all of this way before the RFP appears, so that, when it does, winning the job is highly likely.

**KD:** Where do you start in this process?

**SK:** I start by understanding whom the key players and real decision-makers are behind the project. I ask myself, "Can they become a friend?" Of course, we never overlook their need for basic qualifications and competencies!

**KD:** How do the planning and design functions interact at KH?

**SK:** Planning is the first step toward creating architecture. We don't just plan for its own sake, but to set the stage for creating a vision and planning an implementation strategy. Our planners look at context, neighborhood, appropriateness of use, and scale...and so do our architects, because these elements are all part of that first step in actually creating architecture.

**KD:** What markets do you serve?

**SK:** While our core markets are housing and education, I'm very focused these days on transportation and livable-community issues. We work with clients in five areas of expertise: transportation and transit, education (K-12 and higher), multifamily residential, civic, and commercial. We aren't involved much in health care, and not at all in justice. Each sector is led by a principal, backed by an associate. A five-person executive committee serves as principals-in-charge for the projects in each sector, working closely with project managers and designers. This committee is composed of my husband Denis, our COO, design director, the head of our education studio, and myself.

**KD:** At what point do traditional marketing and business development (BD) fit in, and who in KH gets involved?

**SK:** Marketing is internally focused and BD is externally focused. Although mid-sized firms often assign these areas to one individual, I keep them distinct, and I recently hired new staff for both functions. Both are critical, but clearly BD is directly involved in client relations. My director of BD, Katie O'Brien (a CPSM and past president of the SMPS San Francisco Chapter—Ed.), handles business leads, manages



*Sylvia Kwan talking with staff. Photo: Todd Friedlander of Kwan Henmi.*

existing client relationships, and works with me to represent KH at external events and functions.

**KD: What is your own role in the marketing and BD processes?**

**SK:** I never stop marketing, and often wake up at 3:00 a.m. with planning strategies. KH likes to be involved in a project when it's still just a gleam in the client's eye, so when it comes to business development, I'm involved at the highest level of problem-solving—funding issues, community relations, and navigating the very intricate political landscape of San Francisco.

Here's an example: A while back, developers proposed an underground, two-level parking garage in downtown as part of a public/private partnership with the city, school district, and Department of Recreation and Parks. To help explore revenue streams and bring the project closer to approval, I attended meetings between the developer's reps and the city's Parking/Traffic and Recreation/Parks departments and helped to facilitate the process.

**KD: Do you have a formal client relations program?**

**SK:** Yes. KH's intention is to foster a life cycle of business from each client and to maintain a relationship with each client for as long as they are in business. Denis and I guide the program. Katie leads a group of five principals who, in addition to their technical roles, are directly responsible for managing key contacts within the five market segments I described earlier. These market leaders explore and make recommendations about individual projects we should pursue. Katie manages overall strategies and tactics.

**KD: What governing philosophy underscores KH's design and planning work?**

**SK:** Everything we get involved in must be a legacy project. It's not so much a matter of size but one of timelessness and durability. We need to be especially mindful of design decisions in a built environment like San Francisco, where architecture and planning are matters of pride and the scale

of the city's very distinctive neighborhoods must be respected.

Even our little projects aren't simple. For example, a building could cast a shadow on a park or open space, or be sited next to an historic building, and either could represent significant design and planning issues for us. Frankly, those factors make our projects more stimulating because the solution isn't easy, and finding one requires a great deal of outreach and communication with those involved. KH excels at both.

**KD: Apart from your client relations program, what other BD mechanisms or vehicles has KH formalized to sustain a successful marketing and BD process?**

**SK:** We take a systematic approach that we refresh each year at a 1.5-day formal retreat. For half a day we focus on BD by revisiting our five-year plan, then evaluate and measure our effectiveness in each of the five target markets. I'll sunset any area that isn't working in a sustained manner and

# “I never stop marketing.”

replace it with an emerging market. Thus every year is an evolution. Each year I’ve seen the markets change—except for our core areas (education, multi-family residential, and transportation).

We also have a risk manager who pays attention to the operations side and has enlightened us to plan ahead for risk. He joined us from an E&O insurer, and I worked with him at the AIA National level. He risk-manages the design scope of services and the language of additional services—which is typically a fuzzy area where time and money get wasted. One immediate benefit is we’re getting much better at writing proposals!

**KD:** What types of projects make you particularly proud?

**SK:** KH wins lots of awards for housing for special populations, such as the elderly. Our educational projects include the new Bessie Carmichael Elementary School in San Francisco. Through word-of-mouth, we’re building a great client base with private schools, starting with The Episcopal School of the Peninsula. We’re designing a local school for them that will also have a brand-new curriculum design. It’s a typical KH opportunity: to design a new type of facility while pulling support and funding from the public and private sectors.

**KD:** How do you recruit the right people, and is there ownership potential for key staff?

**SK:** I look for talented people who rebel at cookie-cutter solutions. Our COO has both business school and architectural training—he “gets it.” Our director of design is a very trusted, go-to guy who doesn’t need a lot of care and feeding. In fact, there are no “black-cape” people here (those who are overly sensitive and whose egos won’t fit in the doorway)! As to ownership, that is already in process with

two of our folks, and I’m lining up the next generation of candidates for the next 10 years.

**KD:** What steps do you take to retain your talent?

**SK:** I worked for an international architectural firm at one time and have applied its large-firm mentality as well as parts of its business model—right down to the benefits and growth opportunities we offer. I recently had to sit down with one associate who thought he was offered a better career opportunity by another design firm.

I walked him through its likely growth scenarios vs. KH’s, and then I made him a counteroffer. I’m happy to say he decided to stay with us.

**KD:** How do you foster creativity within the staff?

**SK:** We create an excitement about projects themselves, so it’s even more important to pursue projects we really want to do. And we try to engage clients in discussions about creating value-added attributes. A client might say, “I’ve got some property and want to put a building on it.” We’d look to



*Sylvia Kwan stands before the Paramount 1, a mixed-use high-rise for which Kwan Henmi was the Architect of Record. Photo: Todd Friedlander of Kwan Henmi.*



*IDEC lobby at corporate headquarters in Sunnyvale, CA.  
Photo: Lance W. Keimig Photographics.*

see if there is a nearby park, for example, that could foster public/private partnerships, or we'd try to tie a potential performing arts center facility to a local school. For one client, with a seismically unsafe building located in a thriving San Francisco neighborhood, I suggested using air rights, adding retail at the ground level and housing above to put the site to best use. The client agreed and included that scope in our design contract.

**KD:** That leads me to ask how you find KH's clients.

**SK:** Many of my clients are also my friends. The reason they became our clients was for their life-long business potential and their potential to become a personal friend, too. It's always a chicken-and-egg thing for me: Are they clients first, or friends first? I met one client through his wife, who volunteers with me at the Chamber of Commerce. She arranged a social introduction, and during conversations we found a connection in terms of ethics and values. I knew he'd see me on his team as a partner, not as a commodity. That's vital.

**KD:** Do you ever reject clients?

**SK:** I'm comfortable saying "no." And I do so with clients who see architecture as a commodity instead of a valuable member of the team charged with bringing the project to life.

**KD:** Was relationship building the main reason you accepted the role of chairperson for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce?

**SK:** That was part of it. The San Francisco Chamber has a smart-growth focus, which centers on developing stronger schools, building more housing, and resolving city transportation issues. These are KH's core market sectors, and I was already a board member, so when I was invited to bring my leadership skills to the role of chair, I didn't hesitate.

**KD:** You also made some history with that move, didn't you?

**SK:** Yes, I was the first architect and the first Asian-American woman ever to lead the board, and only the third woman in the chamber's 151-year history to have the role.

**KD:** Speaking of history: A key strategy for any firm, but especially one at the 20-year milestone, is to manage growth. What are your plans for KH?

**SK:** Getting to the next level is very exciting for me. I see us doubling our current 50-person staff, and we will explore doing national and international work. I'm bullish on Internet opportunities, particularly because we're a regional firm and now facing a shrinking economy. I'm seeing the Internet for the first time as a strategic environment to promote ourselves and build our client base. Katie and a junior architect are currently rebuilding our web page.

**KD:** Where do you see the market heading for design firms?

**SK:** While I was involved with AIA's national board several years ago, I noticed a growing concern about architectural firms' ability to go back to being "master architects," embracing the business style that Frank Lloyd Wright, for example, embodied by doing all the design as well as the fieldwork and taking on much of the risk. Over time, because of liability issues and because many architects just wanted to specialize, our discipline has moved away from the "master" role. I'm part of the group that wants to take us back to it.

At KH, we're doing that through an owner's rep firm, Schwager Project Delivery, which we acquired in June 2001. The firm specializes in program and construction management, and we'll gear it to do that for private-sector clients. I've also seen that clients have a need for architects to be more hands on, especially at the construction phase, so KH is also offering more design services during construction. We're expanding into the predesign area, too. Often, a client has an idea but doesn't have land, or has a site but no team or board of directors. More of our clients are turning to us for strategies development and feasibility studies to bring in the missing elements.

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*Strategy:*

# Stay Afloat in Low Tide

*Is your backlog drying up? Are your project prospects vanishing? Are you thinking of crawling back into your shell? That is the worst thing you can do in trying times like these! Instead, you need to attack the opportunity to firm up your marketing system.*

Don't pull back from clients. Solidify client relationships so you'll be the first firm in their minds when project time rolls around. Discover ways to scrimp and save that will keep you ahead of the competition. Use this valuable time to patch any holes in your marketing practice so that, when the economic tide surges forward, your firm will stay seaworthy.

Here are 10 tools to keep your practice "afloat."

## **1. Visit every one of your best current and repeat clients.**

Solidify the relationships and explore every avenue of their businesses to learn about both short- and long-term opportunities. When times are tough, visibility is a key element in your marketing program. This is not the time to stay in your office and clean files. It's time to be visible. It's time to make face-to-face contacts with clients, potential clients, or future clients with everyone in the firm involved. Offer a free day of consulting to your most favored clients. Go in and help them with a problem. If you have lower utilization rates right now, why not make use of your resources in a marketing effort? You cannot be taken advantage of by one free day of consultation. In fact, during that day, you will identify problems, circumstances, and projects you can work on over the next few months.

## **2. Re-tune your promotional tools to be more targeted.**

If they still make you look like "all things to all people," revamp them to make you look instead like a specialist in each of your selectively chosen target markets. More than anything else, clients seek firms who know their businesses. Analyze your brochure to determine how well your niche is being portrayed. Ask yourself if your brochure really works for your clients by considering the following questions:

- Will your client have use for the brochure?

- When the brochure reaches the client's desk, specifically what will he or she do with it?
- What specific items are contained in the brochure that provide continual benefit to the client in his or her business?
- Is the brochure more than 10 pages? If so, will the client ever read it?
- Do the pictures in the brochure have captions?
- Are there dated "headshots" of principals who may have left the firm?
- Is there any "useful" information in the brochure that would prompt the client to keep it as a reference tool?

## **3. Redouble your efforts to find leads that fit with your focused marketing plan.**

- Visit your local zoning agency to learn who is requesting zoning variances or re-zoning land for commercial/ industrial development.
- Talk to your clients about their most pressing concerns. Offer to study their problems and propose solutions. You may be hired to implement your idea.
- If you're an architect, keep in touch with the engineering firms in your area—and vice versa. You might learn about who is building what projects—and more: You could develop opportunities to work together.
- Circulate among local business and trade associations, service organizations, and your local chamber of commerce to get leads and make yourself known.
- Attend local town board meetings to find out more about the problems and concerns of the local communities. You may be able to help.

- Create a lead exchange group. Recruit members of non-competing firms—for example, a broker, a land-use attorney, an architect, a structural, mechanical, electrical, and civil engineer—to meet once a month and exchange leads.

#### **4. Pay attention to office morale.**

Initiate whatever activities might help maintain or boost morale: project show-and-tell lunches, professional development programs, perks, ball games, improved staff meetings, reassignments. Education tends to enhance motivation. Create a series of brown bag lunches about marketing as training sessions for your technical staff. Assign topics and ask a different technical staff member to present the topic each time. This will not only educate the staff about marketing but will be an excellent presentation training opportunity.

#### **5. Reshape your organizational concept.**

Do an internal analysis, and in doing so assume it is you and not “the economy” that could cause you to falter. (Remember some firms grow during downtimes.) Gauge your strengths and weaknesses. Figure out what you need to change and then set it in motion. Do a complete analysis of your past marketing efforts. Include practice mix by type of project, client, and geographic area; profitability for each of these markets; proportion of repeat work and who these clients were; number of proposals submitted and interviews attended and the success ratio; marketing costs compared to annual revenues and bookings; and effectiveness of supporting functions such as public relations, marketing tools, and written and verbal presentation materials.

#### **6. Trim fat off every category rather than cut out things altogether.**

In a slow time, your marketing budget could come under scrutiny; but keep a steady hand. You need to keep business coming in. Don't stop photographing projects; shoot fewer pictures of fewer projects. Don't cut out all seminar attendance: Too much is happening to sever contact with other firms. Instead, be more selective and attend closer to home.

#### **7. Write all those “I-was-just-thinking-of-you” notes to important contacts that you’ve been putting off for months (or years).**

Most people get quiet when things slow down. You should stay noisy and visible. Consider sending an annual letter to your clients and prospects covering the highlights of your firm's practice over the past year and the outlook for the coming one.

#### **8. Keep abreast of the basics.**

Refresh yourself about how to:

- write a benefits-oriented cover letter
- call on a prospect
- learn the client's concerns before making your pitch
- put together an incisive proposal
- behave as a business consultant.

#### **9. Take the time to update staff resumes.**

Most we see are mediocre.

First, get the latest information from each key person. Then write short bios for the key players for each of your projects/service types. Put the most impressive facts first, and leave out the miscellany. Let the resume highlight the person and the capabilities. The client is not interested in the fact that the project manager graduated from Yale in 1972. What the client wants to know is that the project manager, today, has just completed a similar project to the one you are proposing on, saved the client \$50,000 or \$500,000 in cost on the project, and brought the project in ahead of schedule.

#### **10. Target your opportunities wisely.**

Make sure you know what is happening in your target markets. Identify your firm's micro-niche specialties (i.e., subsets of markets) and make sure you learn everything you can about your client's business in these areas to stay on top of your competition. Talk to people in those markets. Conduct mini-surveys. Research association news and statistics. Keep your fingers on the pulse of your core business areas—and focus your marketing in those areas. When the right project comes along, go all out. As in any market, the one who wants the job most usually gets it. ■



#### **About the Author**

Frank A. Stasiowski, FAIA, is the president and founder of PSMJ Resources Inc. ([www.psmj.com](http://www.psmj.com)), providing management information resources to the A/E/C industry. Author of numerous manuals and guides on firm management

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# SMPS Bookstore *News*

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## New Beginnings!

When we start a new year, we often feel the need to try something new: a new public relations plan, new lead-finding strategies, a new career challenge—or even a new method for keeping our desks organized. If you need inspiration for a new beginning, perhaps you will find it in one of these books...Good luck!

### **100 Ways to Motivate Yourself: Change Your Life Forever**

*By Steve Chandler*

*Hard cover. 221 pp, 2001. #BS-149, \$19.*

This extraordinary book is written like a psychological thriller. You will find yourself fascinated by the wealth of potential motivators, spurring you to new actions and new endeavors.

### **Focal Point: A Proven System to Simplify Your Life, Double Your Productivity, and Achieve All Your Goals**

*By Brian Tracy*

*Hardcover. 222 pp, 2002. #BS-201, \$22.*

Brian Tracy charges thousands of dollars for his coaching and mentoring program. He has spent 25 years helping clients double their incomes and get more out of their work and personal lives. You will be astonished and astounded at how very simple it is to make your life better and more meaningful.

### **How to Grow a Backbone: 10 Strategies for Gaining Power and Influence at Work**

*By Susan Marshall*

*Paperback. 197 pp, 2000. #BS-143, \$15.*

If you want to be heard at work, you must speak up.

If you want to drive change, you need an action plan. If you want to keep your job in an increasingly competitive world, you must show how you add value to your company daily. Using straight talk laced with wry humor, top business consultant Susan Marshall highlights skills every business person can learn and sharpen to become stronger, more confident, and more influential on the job. Highly recommended.

### **The Personal Efficiency Program: How to Get Organized to Do More Work in Less Time**

*By Kerry Gleeson*

*Paperback. 225 pp, 2000. #BS-198, \$17.*

Get more done faster and easier than you ever dreamed possible. This is the famed system for multiplying productivity that has revolutionized the work lives of 300,000 people around the world. A guide to working faster and smarter, the book gives you all the tools you need to get control of your workload and your career.

### **Building Your Career Portfolio**

*By Carol A. Poore*

*Paperback. 223 pp, 2001. #BS-159, \$14.*

How well are you building and investing your career assets? What kind of "return" are you enjoying for all your hard work? Will your career wealth enable you to fulfill your dreams and meet your goals? If we analyzed our careers the way we analyze our investments, many of us would be in for a rude awakening. This ground-breaking approach to career planning is rewriting the rule of work.

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# *Opinion & Outlook:*

# **Economic Expectations for 2002**

**A**s in previous years, we are pleased to present this annual forecast and roundup of market analyses from FMI's 2001–2002 U.S. Markets Construction Update.

## **Nonresidential Construction**

### **Office Construction**

Privately owned new office construction grew 16% in 2000. Suburban communities watched almost 21% more office buildings go up in 2000, while downtown areas saw little to no growth in office buildings. Research indicates there was a higher vacancy rate by the end of 2001 and little prospect for significantly lower vacancy rates until 2002 at the earliest. There is still much uncertainty surrounding the long-term effects of the World Trade Center attacks on the volume and the design of new office buildings. Almost everyone agrees that more must be done to stabilize tall buildings and to make them easier to exit in an emergency.

### **Healthcare Construction**

Healthcare construction has been anything but stable in the past 5 years. The industry saw a 12% increase in new buildings in 1997, followed by a 2% drop in 1998, and virtually no change in 1999. Last year, new healthcare construction rose 11%, and FMI estimates it will increase 5% in 2002. The uncertain nature of healthcare construction is attributable to many factors. Healthcare providers have received substantial pressure to reduce costs and many are taking advantage of mergers that help attain economies of scale, thereby lessening the need for new buildings to service patients.

### **Airport Construction**

In recent years, the situation at most U.S. airports was one of insufficient capacity for dealing with ever-increasing demand. An overstrained air-transportation system was causing service and safety concerns to planners in the air-transport industry. Since the terrorist attacks, the situation has deteriorated further. Many cities, including Atlanta; Boston; Dallas; Detroit; Fort Lauderdale, FL; Manchester,

NH; Miami; Orlando; Raleigh, NC; Salt Lake City; San Francisco, and Tampa have halted expansions or placed them under review. A few plans, including a \$2.7 billion project in Houston (a current economic bright spot), will go through.

### **Hotel Construction**

The hotel/motel construction market, which relies on business travel and tourism, has been hit particularly hard by the terrorist attacks, and the outlook is for flat to negative growth through 2002. The average U.S. hotel will experience a 5% decrease in operating profit this year following a 10% increase in profit in 2000. Following a record amount of new supply, there are simply too many rooms available and not enough travelers to fill them. As demand catches up with supply in late 2002 and 2003, new hotel construction will increase.

### **Education Construction**

While the education debate often appears to be a national phenomenon, the responsibility for educating our children lays with state and local governments with an annual price tag around \$650 billion, according to Department of Education figures. Of that total, around \$26 billion to \$27 billion annually will be used for school construction and renovation over the next two years. There is an immediate need to build new schools that is driven by a growing, transient population. The population increase from 1990 to 2000 was caused by increased immigration, higher birth rates among recent immigrants, and a Baby Boom "echo" as Boomers had children.

The Baby Boom echo is resounding at colleges and universities as spending increased to a record \$13.96 billion in 1999. And college enrollments are expected to increase by another 8% by 2008, according to *American School and University* magazine's "2000 Education Construction Report."

## Postal Service Construction

Competitive pressures in the market—such as priority-mail delivery, electronic media, and inflationary pressures from major inputs like fuel and labor—have caused the U.S. Postal Service to project a potential loss of more than \$2 billion for 2001. No changes have been made to the announcement last March that all projects not under contract as of February 22, 2001, (with a few exceptions for critical projects) would be put on hold. Even if that hold is lifted, the Postal Service also announced that the planned \$670 million budget for new construction in 2000 would be cut to \$400 million. In all, more than 800 projects are affected by this announcement.

## Courthouse Construction

If funding continues to be approved, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has an ambitious 5-year plan for building over 50 courthouses and renovating many others. Currently, the 5-year plan approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States is projected to total \$3.1 billion for new construction and \$2.5 billion for renovations. While we are in the midst of building new federal courthouses, many smaller state and county facilities need renovation and replacement. Many older county courthouses with historical significance are also important landmarks for local citizens and tourists. Considering that there are 3,066 counties in the United States, this market offers high potential for builders efficient at high-profile, complex projects.

## Public Safety Construction

FMI forecasts that construction of public safety and correctional facilities put in place for the period 2001–2006 will modestly increase by 5%, 7%, 7%, 7%, 8%, and 4%, respectively. Although the United States now incarcerates 1.8 million people—and this number is expected to increase—the current forecast is for a slower growth rate in this sector than in years past.

## Military Construction

In today's wartime climate, very large increases in military spending could be approved almost without debate. Because of this climate, FMI projects that construction of military facilities will increase over the next 5 years at an average rate of 8%. The amended Department of Defense Military Construction and Family Housing Program for 2002 totals approximately \$10 billion and includes more than 400 major construction projects at approximately 225 sites. This total includes approximately \$4.1 billion for construction and maintenance of new family housing, \$500 million for planning and design, and nearly \$5 billion for unspecified and miscellaneous infrastructure construction. Substantial increases in the construction of military facilities should carry through to 2006.

## Industrial Construction

Industrial building construction decreased by an astounding 15% in 1999—the largest drop since 1993. That impression seems to have been borne out in 2001, with flat growth projected through 2002. Industrial building improvements equaled nearly two-thirds of total new industrial construc-

tion, revealing the increasing attractiveness of revamping previously built industrial buildings instead of constructing entirely new structures.

## Warehouse Construction

Warehouse construction is forecast to grow slightly, increasing by 3%, in 2002. Expenditures for warehouse construction in 2000 were \$19.7 billion, up 12% from 1999. A decline in retail construction and just-in-time inventory modernization are both responsible for the lagging performance in this sector.

## Nonbuilding Construction

### Public Utility Construction

Public utilities include railroads, electric power, gas/petroleum pipelines, and telecommunications. We expect utilities building and nonbuilding construction to increase approximately \$50 billion in 2001 and to increase another 7% in 2002.

### Water and Sewer Construction

The demand for clean drinking water is at an all-time high in the United States. The 2001 federal budget provides \$2.4 billion in discretionary funding for the third year of the Clean Water Action Plan. This amount is a 21% increase over the 2000 level, and it includes a \$151 million (87%) increase in mandatory funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentives Program to help farmers prevent polluted runoff.

### Highway Construction

Halfway through the current federal highway act, it seems appropriate to review the results of the past 3 years and what the future holds for the remaining program years and beyond. Following several years of double-digit growth, 2000 became the first year in more than 8 to witness a decline (-4%). The picture looks to be the same for 2001, as well, with another 4% decline projected. But keep in mind that construction of highways and streets will remain at the high level of almost \$50 billion. What this correction in the market signifies is a leveling out of transportation spending now that TEA-21 has come into full effect.

### Mass Transit Construction

Mass transit funding will get another boost in fiscal year 2002 with a 7.8% increase in federal funding (\$31.7 billion). Monies will continue to be directed primarily at creation and expansion of light-density rail, high-speed rail, and magnetic levitation transportation.

### Telecommunications/High-Tech Construction

Five years after substantial deregulation of the U.S. telecommunications industry, spending on wireless and wire line communications infrastructure remains strong. How-

■ continued on page 17

## *Selling in Deep Carpet:*

# Building Strong Client Relationships Through Debriefings, Part II

*In the conclusion to this article, the author details the process and spells out the benefits of building positive client relationships through debriefing.*

### **The Right Questions**

A successful debriefing session results from determining in advance what information to elicit. The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer's preparation. Firms may prepare by asking:

- What is the specific purpose of this debriefing session?
- Which members of the client organization should be interviewed?
- What specifically do we want to learn?

From the answers, prepare debriefing and probing follow-up questions for the client, then call to schedule the meeting. Coming to the meeting with a prepared list of questions and a notepad for writing down answers shows the client that their responses are being taken seriously.

During the interview, maintain flexibility to be able to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerges from a given response. Allow the questions to flow from the immediate context and build a conversation rather than automatically reading them in order. Use the list of prepared questions to keep the interaction focused but encourage opinions and emotions to surface. Also use the prepared questions as a guide for listening to what is not being said.

Phrase questions in a manner that encourages a client to talk freely. Such questions often start with *how*, *what*, and *where*. Be careful with questions starting with *why*—they may inadvertently sound threatening. Avoid questions that may be answered with a curt yes or no or with a terse factual answer. Review the questions to assure that the wording does not suggest an expected answer. For example, when asked, "How satisfied were you with our communication?" the client might feel limited to a modifier as an answer: "pretty satisfied," "kind of satisfied," "mostly satisfied," and

so on. A better question would be, "What is your opinion of our communication?"

Use preliminary statements to let the client know what is going to be asked before it is asked, especially when making a transition from one topic to another. For example, "Now I'd like to ask you about our proposal organization." This serves two functions. First, it alerts the client to the nature of the question that is coming, it directs their awareness, and it focuses their attention. Second, a cue about the upcoming topic gives the client a few seconds to organize some thoughts before a question is actually asked.

The value of the answer is often determined by the value of the question. Asking simple or meaningless questions will only elicit simple or meaningless answers. Dare to ask important questions to evoke thoughtful answers. Below are some appropriate questions for each of the debriefing opportunities.

### **Advance Marketing**

- What is most important in this client's selection of a firm?
- What kind of information and materials may we provide to help the client in the selection process?
- How may we best stay in contact with this potential client?

### **A Proposal Under Consideration**

- When may we expect the next step in the decision-making process?
- What additional materials or information may we provide to help the client in the selection process?
- Is there someone else or a group of people we should talk to?

## An Accepted Proposal

- What were the factors influencing the client's selection?
- What do we have that other firms don't? Is there anything they have that we don't?
- What are the client's expectations for this project? Has anything changed from the RFP?

## A Rejected Proposal

- What were the factors influencing the client's selection?
- What factors led the client to believe that the firm selected will be successful?
- How effective were our proposal and presentation?
- What else could we do, or what could we do differently, to be considered another time?

## An Ongoing Project

- How effective are our frequency and means of communication?
- How is our on-site staff relating to the client's staff?
- What would the client like us to pay more attention to?
- What areas of disappointment may we rectify?

## The Process

Debriefing may be conducted on projects or proposals of any size.

Clients are most receptive to debriefing interviews at their offices at their convenience. The interviews are most effective when conducted in person, but they may take place over the phone. Whether conducted by a trained team member or an outside consultant, it is the interviewer's responsibility to build an atmosphere of trust and open dialogue. Set the tone by demonstrating friendliness and a willingness to listen with an accepting attitude. The critical task is to pose open-ended questions in a manner that encourages complete answers. Taking notes during the discussion shows the client that such feedback is deemed worthy of further consideration.

Make sure to follow with a letter reiterating the value of the meeting.

## Analysis

To maximize the benefits from the debriefing session, the information should be processed through the following steps.

1. Immediately after the meeting, find a time and place free of distractions in which to review the debriefing notes and make additions and corrections. This time of reflection and elaboration is critical to guarantee that the information generated will be accurate and useful.
2. Send a letter of appreciation to the client. Cite one or two key discussion points as being especially beneficial.
3. Transcribe the debriefing notes so they remain useful—spell out shorthand abbreviations, write complete sentences,

arrange information under headings. Clearly indicate ideas and interpretations that arise following the interview.

4. Write a summary of the meeting with recommended steps for improving proposals and presentations.
5. List any remaining questions and issues to be probed with key people. If areas of vagueness are found, check back with the client for clarification. A brief phone call indicates the seriousness with which the information is being treated.
6. Pass along relevant information to those who will benefit from it. Talk personally with the project leader, management, and marketing personnel. Be certain that compliments are passed along to those who deserve them. Similarly, make certain that areas in need of improvement are brought to the attention of the appropriate people, including management.
7. Solicit ideas from these people on future debriefings—what information would be useful to them?
8. Write a report stating the value of the debriefing and submit it to management, marketing, and perhaps the company newsletter.
9. Review the debriefing session with someone objective to determine what could be done differently next time. Did we find out what we really wanted to find out in the interview? If not, what was the problem? Poorly worded questions? Wrong topics? Poor rapport?
10. Determine an appropriate strategy for remaining in contact with the client for future opportunities.

## Summary

My research findings from conducting debriefings for 16 firms over 10 years indicate that a firm gains the following 6 benefits:

- a clearer understanding of market needs
- increased esteem from clients
- insights applicable to strategic planning
- revelation and resolution of client dissatisfaction
- ongoing, honest communication with clients
- opportunities for additional work and revenue. ■



### About the Author

Nadine R. Yates, FSMPS, is principal of N.R. Yates and Associates, a strategic marketing and management consulting firm based in Maynard, MA. Nadine can be reached at (978) 897-0474 or [nrya@aol.com](mailto:nrya@aol.com).

# Classifieds

## Marketing Coordinator/Director, Williamsburg, VA

Tired of a job? Interested in a position where you are appreciated for your efforts? DJG Inc. has an immediate opening for Marketing Coordinator/Director for leading E/A firm located in Williamsburg, VA. Must be self-motivating. Should have experience with proposals (free form, SF 254/255 and state A/E forms), qualifications packages and client interviews. Ability with MS Word, Corel WordPerfect, MS PowerPoint, Adobe Photoshop, and Internet research required. Salary commensurate with experience, 401(k) and generous benefits package. EOE

Forward cover letter and resume to:

Daniel J. DeYoung  
DJG Inc.  
449 McLaws Circle  
Williamsburg, VA 23185  
Voice: (757) 253-0673  
Fax: (757) 253-2319  
E-mail: ddeyoung@djginc.com



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## Business Developer, West Palm Beach, FL

Nodarse & Associates Inc., a 140+ person geotechnical, environmental and construction materials testing firm seeks an assertive, well-spoken BD person. Position includes identifying markets, generating leads, followup, developing client relationships, minimal proposal preparation. Will work collaboratively with the Corporate Business Development Director and West Palm Beach Branch Manager. Private-sector relationships in South Florida a plus. Excellent writing skills a must. Minimum five years, A/E/C experience. Woman-owned business. Great atmosphere and benefits.

Send resume and cover letter to:

Sandra Winkler, CPSM  
Vice President, Business Development Director  
Nodarse & Associates Inc.  
1030 North Orlando Avenue, Suite A  
Winter Park, FL 32789  
Phone: (407) 740-6110  
Fax: (407) 740-6112

## Marketing Coordinator, Irvine, CA

Immediate opening for a highly organized individual to join our Marketing Team. This is a full-service department responding to the needs of our southern California clients.

Position requires qualified applicant to:

- Coordinate and prepare proposal/presentation materials
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- Experience with A/E firms is a plus
- Be an individual able to handle multiple tasks and work independently
- Be computer literate with PageMaker, MS Office Suite, and Adobe Photoshop (preferred).

Interested candidates should submit resume and salary requirements. You may e-mail your resume and letter of interest as a MS Word attachment to hr@harris-assoc.com or fax to 925-671-8935.

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## Marketing Coordinator/Executive Assistant, New York, NY

EverGreene Painting Studios, Inc., a leading decorative arts studio, seeks well-organized person to handle multiple projects in fast-paced entrepreneurial environment. Database, promotional materials, proposals, technical reports. Reports to CEO and Director of Marketing. EEO.

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E-mail: [info@evergreene.com](mailto:info@evergreene.com) or fax (212) 244-6204

# Classifieds cont.

## Work With The Best

### Marketing Manager

**Clough, Harbour & Associates LLP**, a rapidly growing, top-notch engineering firm with offices throughout the East Coast, continues to grow at a very strong pace. As a result of our growth, we have an immediate need for a Marketing Manager in Rochester, NY to add to our Central & western New York staff. **Responsibilities include:** Assisting the Director of Business Development w/ and aiding in the preparation of documents to support new business opportunities & existing clients. Overseeing the

marketing coordinator & marketing secretarial support. Assisting w/special events, attending fundraisers/conferences. **Qualifications include:** BA/MS in Communications, Marketing, Public Relations or related field, 4-6 yrs exp. in a Consulting A/E firm. Management exp. required. Exc. wage & benefit pkg. including tuition reimbursement, interest-free computer loan program, 401-k Plan & paid sick/personal leave.



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Send resume to: **Richard J. Catanise, Director of Business Development, CLOUGH, HARBOUR & ASSOCIATES, LLP, (Req.02-005)** to 13 S. Fitzhugh Street, Rochester, NY 14614, or e-mail resume to [CHA-HR@CHA-LLP.COM](mailto:CHA-HR@CHA-LLP.COM). Visit our web-site at [www.cha-llp.com](http://www.cha-llp.com). AA/EOE,M/F/V/D.

#### ■ **Opinion & Outlook**, continued from page 13

ever, future growth is dependent upon reopening of the capital markets to the telecommunications sector. Significant opportunities exist to retrofit and upgrade the communication infrastructures of commercial office buildings. Current estimates are that less than 10% of commercial office buildings in the United States are broadband-enabled. Likewise, it is estimated that fewer than 10% of homes have high-speed Internet access—a digital subscriber line, cable modem, or two-way direct broadcast satellite.

#### **Residential Construction**

Multifamily construction value put in place was \$32.2 billion in 2000 compared to \$26.4 billion in 1999. This 7%

increase probably should have been greater given the increasing number of homebuyers suited to this market. We expect the projected \$28 billion multifamily value put in place in 2001 to steadily grow through 2006. ■

#### **About the Authors**

FMI Corporation ([www.fminet.com](http://www.fminet.com)) provides management consulting, training, and capital services for the worldwide construction industry from offices in Raleigh, NC; Tampa; and Denver. For information about the *2001–2001 U.S. Markets Construction Update*, contact FMI at 919-787-8400.

#### ■ **Flying with Eagles**, continued from page 8

**KD:** Denis, your husband, joined KH five years after you founded it, and is now managing principal. How do you balance working together with being spouses and parents together?

**SK:** Denis is as active in the firm's growth as I am. My focus is external, and I like to explore; he has extensive networks from which he feeds me new business leads. We made a deliberate effort to put "fire walls" between us, such as making sure we don't work on the same project and trying not to discuss business outside of work. We make a good partnership, both in business and in our private lives.

**KD:** What do you do to sustain your personal pace?

**SK:** I had a regimen of personal training twice a week, which I temporarily abandoned when I accepted the chamber chairmanship. Because I can compartmentalize so easily, I can spontaneously shift from my hyper state to one of full relaxation; I stay focused on office matters when I'm there,

and when I'm home I'm totally absorbed by my family and personal life.

**KD:** Any closing thoughts?

**SK:** I've been thinking that for the first 10 years I was in business, my mother would often ask me when I'd get a "real" job. She doesn't ask me that any more. ■



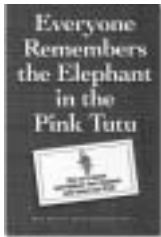
#### **About the Interviewer**

A senior business development associate, **Karin M. Doucette** guides the marketing and business development efforts in the San Francisco office of Parsons Brinckerhoff, one of the nation's leading transportation planning, engineering, and design firms ([www.pbworld.com](http://www.pbworld.com)). Karin can be reached by e-mail at [doucette@pbworld.com](mailto:doucette@pbworld.com) or telephone at 415-243-4619.

**SMPS Northeast Conference**

## Bookshelf:

# Everyone Remembers the Elephant in the Pink Tutu



***Everyone Remembers the Elephant in the Pink Tutu: How to Promote and Publicize Your Business with Impact and Style***

by Mary Maloney with Suzanne Caplan  
Published by Career Press, 1998.  
Available from Barnes and Noble, \$15.99.

A power-packed PR campaign can make a small business a huge success. But many small business owners feel that they are not interesting enough and don't have the time, money, or knowledge to execute an effective publicity campaign—and maintain it. What every business owner needs to get their business growing by leaps and bounds is a little creativity, a little motivation, and an elephant in a pink tutu.

Elephant? Pink tutu?? What???

Not just any elephant in a pink tutu will do, of course. We suggest a copy of *Everyone Remembers the Elephant in the Pink Tutu: How to Promote and Publicize Your Business with Impact and Style*. This book clearly, concisely, and entertainingly explains one of the most valuable tools in a small business marketing arsenal: publicity.

Written in an engaging, lively tone, *Everyone Remembers the Elephant in the Pink Tutu* provides readers with step-by-step information that will motivate them to get started promoting their business, including:

- What color is your tutu? (Making your company sound unique.)
- Is the bearded lady really your friend? (How to approach the media.)
- Packaging the elephant in a press kit. (Capitalizing on your uniqueness.)
- Tearing your tutu at the last minute. (Handling crises.)
- Pink tutu ideas that work for any business. (Keep the momentum going.)
- When to hire a tutu expert. (Hiring a PR consultant.)

*Everyone Remembers the Elephant in the Pink Tutu* is filled with hundreds of unique ways to quickly and effectively promote

a business—without spending a fortune—using stories from actual small business owners who have both succeeded and failed in their PR efforts.

This book is an excellent way for a professional service marketer to get up to speed on how to:

- produce and plan PR campaigns
- establish valuable relationships with the correct media contacts
- write press releases that get your firm attention
- say the right things during interviews
- measure the success of each PR piece.

What makes the book even more valuable is that it not only tells you how to do all of these wonderful things, it provides easy-to-understand examples!

I found this book to be very insightful into the often murky, touchy-feely world of public relations. In an energetic and concise writing style *Everyone Remembers the Elephant in the Pink Tutu* provides beginners with the basics of how to plan and implement a successful PR campaign. At the same time, it offers relevant examples that can be applied by all marketers to enhance the image of their respective companies. The chapter of the book that pushed it over the top for me, and made it one that sits within arms length of my desk, is "Great Ideas for Any Business." This chapter can be used as a checklist for PR projects that can be done "right now" or anytime to kick-start your PR program or keep it running smoothly. ■



### About the Reviewer

David W. Fisher is manager of project development for Desmone & Associates ([www.desmone.com](http://www.desmone.com)), Pittsburgh-based architects.

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