

## *Marketing in the New Millennium:*

# Be Bullish About Your Marketing!

*A woman was astonished when I told her I did marketing for an engineering firm. She didn't think engineering firms needed marketing. Now, it was my turn to be surprised! Since firms have become more diversified and clients more discriminating, I explained, savvy marketing has become essential to "sell" design services and maintain a competitive edge.*

As many public clients are faced with dwindling resources, staff cutbacks, and increasing workloads, consultants are in even greater demand. To stand out from the flock of competing consultants, firms are expanding/diversifying to become full-service firms or develop niche markets, including design-build. However, whatever the course our firms choose, it is up to marketers to provide client-focused strategies. The industry is fraught with innumerable trends, and we will all need a far better understanding of the electronic media to make it work for us and our clients. In so doing, we also will have to be ruthlessly creative to stand out from our competitors as we drive through marketing traffic along the Information Superhighway.

How can we be more successful? 1. Think outside of the box (e.g., branding, cross-selling). 2. Develop marketable projects and niches. 3. Manipulate the electronic media to counter the industry trends and empower the client virtually.

**We need to think outside of the box, or—better yet—ditch the box in which we have been conditioned to operate.**

Before we look at how we can attain these successes, let's examine the current trends that will affect our marketing as we enter the new millennium.

### **Firm Expansion**

In a recent *Fast Company*-Roper Starch Worldwide survey, people were asked what they envisioned for the early 21st century. The survey revealed the expectation that society and business will, in the next five years, "fragment further into niches—personalized, customized, and technologized"—and this was an evaluation of the product industry.

To survive, companies need the resources, financial stability, diversity, and creativity to undertake the challenges of complex design projects that demand innovation. The end product: full-service firms that provide one-stop shopping to our clients. To further meet the need for personalized, customized service, the trend toward very large commodity firms and very small boutique firms will force medium-sized firms to either create a unique niche or acquire niche firms. This often helps to improve their appeal and reputation (some acquire experienced ex-agency employees), focus on niche markets, and eliminate the non-core businesses that impact overhead to remain financially secure and competitive.

### **Design-Build**

Of the firms in *ENR*'s Top 20 Transportation Companies, 80% have acquired/merged with others and/or have design-build capabilities. The design-build revolution also has been a significant impetus to some firms' expansion. With TEA-21 allocating \$1.3 billion on intelligent highway systems and authorizing design-build on projects exceeding

\$50 million, design-build is making forays into the public sector (FHWA TEA-21 Summary, May 29, 1998, [www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/summary.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/summary.htm)). Design-build has gained momentum as a form of project delivery used by federal, state, and some local agencies, such as the General Services Administration and state Departments of Transportation. Florida already has begun to allow qualifications-based selections of design-build teams on selected state projects. As smaller and medium-sized projects crop up, it is expected that more design firms will team with contractors or acquire contracting capabilities themselves.

## How These Trends Impact Marketers

As firms acquire new expertise, marketers have to repackage and resell the new corporate identity to clients and teaming partners. We will necessarily have to adapt the jargon for the newly acquired firm's technical disciplines, incorporate them into our working business plan, and determine where the new clients are and who to partner with for success. We make the jargon of this discipline part of our marketing vernacular, develop new promotional materials, and hit the road selling. We will use the opportunity to cross-sell our firm's newly acquired skills to our existing clients. To be truly effective, we will need to educate our internal staff, since every employee is a marketer.

But none of this is new to any of us. So how do we stand out from everyone? We need to think outside of the box, or—better yet—ditch the box in which we have been conditioned to operate.

## Ditching the Box

When was the last time any of us did something out of the realm of traditional marketing services? If your...

- proposals include the words “utilize,” “ensure,” or “intimate” or sentences like “We will ensure that the firm utilizes individuals who are intimately familiar...”
- marketing is the traditional production and dissemination of company brochures and materials for trade shows ...then you are locked into that box.

In marketing services, we have a set structure within which we market. We share it with each other at networking events or in articles like these. While the relevance of the methods is immeasurable, we have to develop fresh methods that will not only rejuvenate our marketing processes but add value to our firm's image. Do not be afraid of infusing your marketing with colorful, exciting language that jumps out at your audience and sells your firm!

Further, you can use different strategies to “get the word out” about your firm, without writing it. Take this consulting firm, for example, whose name is emblazoned annually on the minds of all its clients' employees thanks to a really cool client maintenance program: Instead of sending “staying in touch” notes/postcards to the primary client contacts, the firm sends a Haagen Daaz ice cream cart to supply ice cream to everyone in that organization. This company's name is not only on the tip of the tongue (so to speak) of their primary contacts, but also on everyone else's. So, essentially, this firm is no longer just one project manager's secret.

## Packaging Our Services: Branding

Here's an innovative approach that another engineering consulting firm used to brand a service.

Radio frequency (RF) emissions compliance is a very large issue for telecommunications clients. Since this firm offers

■ continued on page 10


**AV WASHINGTON**

**Solutions for the A-V Environment**

*Visit our new showrooms near Dulles Airport:*

- Sales and Rentals
- Design-Build
- Installation
- Service and Support

**1 Export Drive  
Sterling, Virginia  
703.404.8900**



**The new  
Sony VPL-X1000 LCD Projector.**

- True XGA resolution
- 1100 ANSI lumens
- Durable magnesium body
- Remote mouse and laser pointer
- Three-year warranty
- Outstanding video

**SONY**

[www.avwashington.com](http://www.avwashington.com)

## ■ **Marketing in the New Millennium**, continued from page 9

an entire suite of RF exposure compliance services, it was decided to give these services a unique identity. The logo and branding developed is "Rex," which is the technical prescription for RF compliance, and its configuration closely resembles the "Rx" symbol used for prescriptions. In fact, "Rex" is an acronym for "RF Emissions Experts." A comprehensive marketing program was developed around the Rex brand, including stationery, direct mail, brochures, a trade show exhibit, pre- and post-show mailings that featured bottles of pills (candy mints, of course), and even a lab coat bearing the Rex logo to be worn at trade shows.

Out of the box? Absolutely—and memorable because the firm effectively created a product identity for a service and it worked. Moral of the story? Branding gives you leverage over your competitors—and I encourage you to be bold. Embrace ideas outside of our scope of services and massage them to suit your needs. We all have new avenues to explore, but we have to change our way of thinking to be successful.

## **Developing Projects or Niches**

Lead your firm to change. Firms are often reluctant to carve out new projects. It may take some time (courage too), but develop these projects on your own. Review the local papers and industry publications, identify items that could be potential projects, find a reputable developer with whom you can or have developed a relationship, and get a team together. By the time the project is advertised, you not only have assembled the best team but probably the best researched and armed team.

Some of the projects researched haven't even been conceptualized by the clients. Don't be afraid to pitch this along with your innovative solutions (once they've bought in—

they have to pay for something). I have found it pretty surprising that too few firms are doing this kind of proactive marketing. If you have identified an expertise within your firm that is worth selling, package it, get the experts/principals on board, and sell it as a product/niche. But make sure you do your research to feel confident that you are truly offering something unique and client-focused. If more marketers would pursue these strategies, it certainly would make for more innovative marketing and greater marketing career opportunities within the service industry.

## **The Information Superhighway**

Nearly 320 million users are expected to access the Internet by the end of the year 2000, and we can predict that figure will double to nearly 720 million by the year 2005. In the last year alone, there has been a 50% increase in Internet-based business procurement.

As they recognize these facts, public agencies are experiencing a renaissance in electronic communications, with federal and state agencies leading the pack as they take advantage of technologies and resources smaller agencies don't have. These agencies have not only begun procurement notification online but also the submission process. For instance, the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) has leaped onto the superhighway with procurements in the online Contract Reporter ([www.nyscr.com](http://www.nyscr.com)) and its soon-to-be-released electronic inventory selection program. The Florida DOT is a step ahead—it now requires electronic submissions. The Internet Starter Kit compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Statistics ([www.bts.gov](http://www.bts.gov)) is one of the most useful guides for locating web addresses of other transportation-related government agencies, picking up hints on the most effective key word search, and finding mailing lists. Mandated by ISTEA, the bureau

compiles and analyzes transportation information and makes it accessible.

Other useful online resources: Commerce Business Daily ([www.cbdweb.com](http://www.cbdweb.com)), Texas DOT ([www.dot.state.tx.us](http://www.dot.state.tx.us)), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)), United States DOT ([www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)). Incidentally, USDOT has a web site for small and medium-sized firms who wish to conduct business electronically ([www.ecrc.ctc.com](http://www.ecrc.ctc.com)).

## **Electronic Marketing**

Our electronic marketing responsibilities will have to include advertising in electronic media, publishing brochures and newsletters with our newfound HTML capabilities, designing web sites, tapping our client databases, developing intra/extranets, and capitalizing on the convenience of e-mail.

Many of us face marketing on the Internet with some trepidation—it is still the great unknown. We don't know enough about it to control and manipulate it the way we have learned to manipulate and control other forms of media. Some effects, admittedly, will evolve over time, but we can already see some of the positive impacts. On the proposal end, it will lower our preparation costs and save us a bundle on overnight shipping as many of our clients migrate to electronic procurements and submittals. With hard marketing, it has included evolutions to electronic marketing materials on the web in Adobe Acrobat PDF format or on CDs.

Once you have your web site up and running, what do you think will happen next? The playing ground will be pretty even, since large and small companies alike can now advertise their services through web sites. Marketers will be challenged to formulate creative ways of standing out, which will include developing interactive project web sites that

■ continued on page 15

### 3. Speak first of the other person's most current, pressing interest.

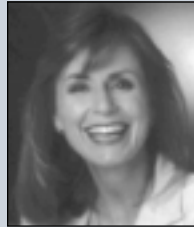
Just as those in the market for new cars are most likely to hear car ads on the radio, all people listen sooner when you first speak about what is most on their mind at that moment. Sadly, in fewer than 5% of interactions when we want something from someone else do we first speak about what matters most to them. We are more likely to speak about our own interests first.

### 4. Speak in vivid, specific details that have a high emotional value for the listener.

The good news? If you practice speaking first about the other person's interests, then about what

you share in common, and only then about how that commonality relates to your interests, four amazingly powerful changes occur in how that other person relates to you. The

person listens sooner, listens longer, remembers more, and assumes you have a higher IQ than if you first speak about your own interests. ■



#### About the Author

**Kare Anderson** is a behavioral futurist who speaks and writes about thoughtful communication, conflict resolution and outreach, and multisensory techniques to create more memorable experiences. An Emmy-winning former TV commentator and *Wall Street Journal* reporter, she's a national columnist in 98 monthly magazines, a nine-time author, and publisher of the *Say*

*It Better* online newsletter (available when you sign the guest book at her web site at [www.sayitbetter.com](http://www.sayitbetter.com)). Co-founder of The Compelling Communications Group based in Sausalito, CA, she can be reached at 415-331-6336 or by e-mail at [kareand@aol.com](mailto:kareand@aol.com). ■

#### ■ Marketing in the New Millennium, continued from page 10

involve their clients. This web site design will offer a direct link among team members for expedient document exchange and, ultimately, ease of access by the client.

### Empowering Clients

Webster's defines millennium as a period of human perfection. So it is no coincidence that we are striving for that perfection through the Information Superhighway. This perfection will engender speed and increased accessibility to information. The key to perfecting access will be to maintain and not replace basic human contact through inventive tools. Instead, as John McCann, a professor at Duke University's School of Business, emphasizes, "[We] must be able to understand technology and apply it to support human interactions."

Where does that leave us? Teaming marketing and computer professionals to effectively tap electronic and Internet media so that our clients feel empowered and not intimidated. For example, we can make customized firm project/consultant information

available via the web in real time or give clients something to which they can subscribe, such as special interest stories, links to other data sources, and periodic e-mails on state-of-the-art firm information.

### The Marketing Budget

As we navigate new marketing arenas for our respective firms and ourselves, the most basic foundation to our success will always be a well-thought-out, strategic marketing budget. To those firms burying their heads in the sand, thinking they don't need a budget for marketing: Look out for the eight ball because you are behind it. The most successful firms in the A/E industry maintain a detailed marketing budget. If your marketing spending is buried under some all-encompassing overhead number that

doesn't detail your weak areas, how can you really profess to be thriving and profitable? This is a bullish market, so make sure your budget isn't as inflated as the stock market. I think you know what happens when that crashes. Start tracking your marketing spending and defining areas of strength and weakness.

### Conclusion

To be bullish about your marketing, you have to change some of the ways you think and market, then apply your innovations to the marketing budget, carving niches, empowering clients, manipulating the electronic media, and leading your firm into the new millennium. The list of competitors will continue to grow and the differences become subtle, so don't be afraid of being a bullish marketer! ■

#### About the Author

**Nadine N.T. Roper** is marketing manager for STV Inc. ([www.stvinc.com](http://www.stvinc.com)) in NY, a leading international consulting engineering, architectural, planning, construction management, and management consulting firm. She can be reached at 212-614-3310 or via e-mail at [RoperN@STVINC.COM](mailto:RoperN@STVINC.COM).