



Marketing 2022: A Glimpse Into Our Future

By Scott D. Butcher, FSMPS, CPSM

What will the future hold for professional services marketers? This question was top of mind earlier this year when SMPS launched a research initiative to attempt to answer that question. More than 330 members participated in the research, which sought to gain insight into current marketing practices and predictions as to how these practices will evolve over the next three years.

One of the primary drivers for the research was to look at current business-to-consumer (B2C) practices, and to shine a light into how they are being incorporated into the business-to-business (B2B) market space, specifically in the A/E/C industries.

Survey participants were asked about their firm's use of myriad approaches—what are they currently doing and how likely are they to incorporate these approaches over the course of the next three years?

A trend is defined as a general direction in which something is changing. The predicted trends over the next three years demonstrate

that SMPS members believe they will increasingly incorporate marketing techniques being heavily utilized in the B2C sector today.

For instance, consumer-oriented marketers, like Amazon, are heavily focused on elevating the customer experience, incorporating a continual stream of data to customize their offerings and keep their customers coming back again and again.

Research Highlights

The SMPS research revealed the growing role of the customer experience—typically referred to as client experience in the professional services vernacular; however, A/E/C firms are a long way from fully integrating this approach. Survey respondents believe that client experience will become the single most important marketing and business development approach by 2022, overtaking networking, the current top approach. And yet only 18% of survey respondents indicated that their firms currently have a client-experience program in place.

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A SURVEY EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF
A/E/C MARKETING PRACTICES

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The research also addressed many other approaches, like account-based marketing, personalized marketing, influencer marketing, video, content marketing, and others.

Respondents were also queried about the competitive environment, marketing leadership, and opportunities for marketers and business developers to become owners at their firms.

When asked about the current competitive environment, the majority of participants (68%) defined the competitive environment as high. Roughly the same number believe that competition will only increase over the next three years, creating a major challenge for all A/E/C firms to elevate their marketing.

Forty-six percent of respondents believe their companies are currently marketing-led, and of those who didn't believe their firms currently fell into this category, 39% believe that their company will become marketing-led over the next three years. This demonstrates the increasing influence of marketing in the industry, but also confirms that there's more work to be done!

The growing role of marketing is further evidenced by firm ownership, with 23% of survey participants indicating that they're currently shareholders in their firms. Of those not currently holding ownership, 23% believe they will become shareholders in the next three years.

What Does This Mean?

Marketing in the A/E/C industries is evolving at an increasingly rapid pace. Our clients see the sophistication of marketing in their personal lives (the Amazon effect), and now expect that level of sophistication on the business side. It's imperative that we keep up with the marketing disruption taking place, and the SMPS *Marketing 2022* report provides a great foundation to begin elevating your knowledge base. ■

Download a complimentary copy of the full report, *Marketing 2022: A Survey Exploring the Future of A/E/C Marketing Practices*, at smps.org/marketing2022.



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