

# Marketing Is Leadership

By Tim Klabunde, CPSM, Timmons Group





Think about this: The modern-day diamond engagement ring wasn't valued until a 1938 marketing campaign invented the engagement ring and eventually coined the phrase "diamonds are forever." Santa's suit was green until it became red during a 1931 Coca-Cola marketing campaign. Sliced bread was a terrible idea until a 1920s marketing campaign promoted it as a time-saving necessity.

These stories show that marketing is leadership; it's about changing mindsets and setting a direction for others to follow. In the design and construction industries, our role as leaders is telling a story about products that will literally shape the face of the Earth for the next hundred years or more. That's why I fell in love with A/E/C marketing.

I love that, every day, we do something exceptional and permanent—two qualities that marketers of widgets, software, and just about anything else you can think of only dream about. As marketers, we also have a mutual responsibility that goes far beyond the industries we serve. Our collective voice will shape what the future will look like for the built environment, and it's a future that we need to work together to create. We have a choice: We

can promote what has always been, or we can focus on leveraging our positions of leadership to promote projects and project approaches that make a difference.

I propose, together, we can shape three key ideas that will have a long-lasting and positive impact around the world:

**We can promote a more sustainable built environment.** This goes far beyond reducing, reusing, and recycling because of the enormity of the end product our industries design and build. Buildings and infrastructure are man-made creations with the largest and longest-lasting impact on Earth. Together, we can move the needle if we continually reinforce the benefits of sustainability in our brochures, proposals, websites, etc. This goes beyond just using buzzwords and instead identifies the benefits of and promotes a culture of sustainability.

**We need to promote connectedness and community instead of elitism and isolation.** Anyone who has ever lived near train tracks can tell you what the phrase "the other side of the tracks" means. This idea is equally important whether designing roads or mixed-use developments. In both cases, connectivity can be used to spur a sense of community that brings us together. This is also crucial when opportunities exist to promote open community spaces such as parks. As marketers, we can promote the benefits of these ideas to

facility owners and clients by appealing to their project goals. An example would be showing how increased pedestrian flow to a local park would increase revenues to businesses along the route.

**We can promote projects that possess flexibility for the future.** Just as during the Industrial Revolution, the built environment continues to struggle with meeting the needs of our changing world. Collectively we need to focus on creating buildings, infrastructure, and spaces that can adapt to the future. The key to accomplishing this is to ensure that teams of various design professionals are included as early as possible in the process. This collaboration is critical to developing the most effective solutions for creating spaces that meet the needs of this generation and the next.

These are just a handful of ways that we can provide true marketing leadership, but they are each important. Collectively, we have a great opportunity as professional services marketers to help shape the face of the Earth for the next hundred years. It's true that we will probably not replace the diamond engagement ring, change the color of Santa's suit, or invent the next sliced bread, but I'm confident that what we will accomplish will be much more important. ■

Sonos, Boston, MA. IA Interior Architects.  
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