



THE BUSINESS OF GETTING BUSINESS:

Turning Reputation Into Revenue

By Louise Boulton-Lear, CPSM

In today's B2B landscape, smart growth is fueled by four critical drivers: people, profit, position and perception.

Firms who lead with marketing understand that their marketing practice is a vital development function, as well as a strategic business tool. By utilizing their marketing team holistically to win business and serve corporate goals the right way, these A/E/C firms continue to evolve.

Very much like a good Merchant Ivory film, there will invariably be surprises, tears, antiheroes, and layers of tradition to cut through in order to discover a brand-new world. Which brings us to the first point.

Smart? Yes. Easy? Not always. Essential? Absolutely.

As marketers, we live at the intersection of internal and external client service with access to all stakeholders. This unique perspective enables us to synthesize our firm's internal and external differentiators and value to solidify competitive advantage. More significantly, this position enables marketers to:

- Develop the strategy that drives the economic and financial marketing performance **for** the firm (See *Figure 1*.)
- Develop the integrated marketing plan and tactics that drive the marketing performance **of** the firm (See *Figure 2*.)

“Impressing people is utterly different from being truly impressive.”

—Ryan Holiday, *Ego Is the Enemy*

Figure 1. Marketing Strategy Pyramid. © L Boulton-Lear

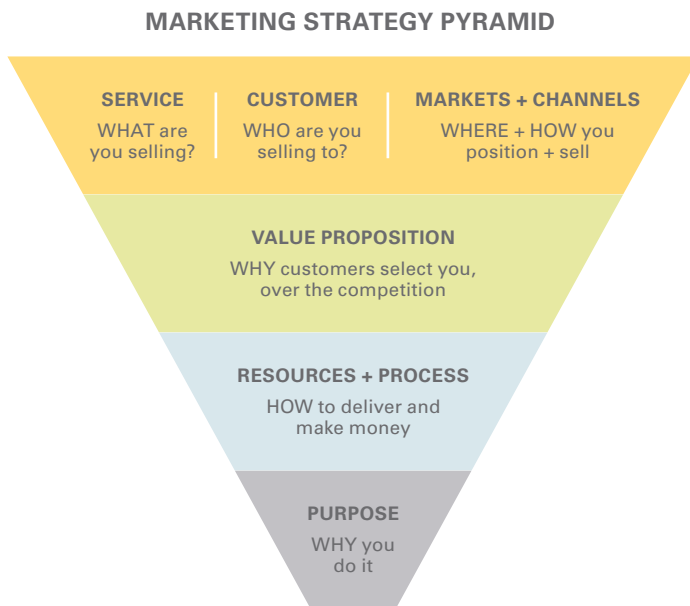


Figure 2. Integrated Marketing Mix. © L Boulton-Lear



Four Things Marketing-Led Firms Do

1. Understand how marketing supports the core strengths of the firm’s brand.

- Business integrity. Demonstrate what it means for clients to work with the firm
- Identity. Communicate the firm’s reputation, services, competitive advantage—clearly and authentically
- Relationships. Grow business through new and existing relationships. Always look to continue the conversation with clients, partners, vendors

2. Empower their marketing team to understand the dynamics of the client community holistically, and in the context of the firm’s enterprise

3. Frame and view the team as a strategic partner, positioning them to have a seat at the table

4. Invest in marketing resources (funds + staff). Budget for smart marketing tactics; from digital marketing and online presence, CRM, and content marketing, to internal engagement (industry + CSR programming). Structure the marketing team so it can do its best work; clarify roles and responsibilities, career ladders, and expertise requirements

Three Marketing Challenges Affecting Today’s Firms

1. Brand: Effective communication and connection

- Changing perceptions of the value your firm offers, and communicating this value effectively
- Differentiating your firm’s services in a compelling manner, continually identify and hit client touchpoints
- Accurately messaging “What This Means for You” to both internal employee clients and external clients

2. Culture: Effective communication and connection

- Driving consensus and accountability. It is critical to engage employees to participate in your firm’s development as an active ambassador, rather than a spectator
- Avoiding cultural drift, and facilitating a clear understanding of your corporate and financial goals, clearly showing how everyone has a role to play (multi-generational, at every stage of their career)
- Engaging internal stakeholders in marketing and BD professional development
- Extending the legacy through planning for second- and third-generation leaders; developing leaders who are fully rounded in all aspects of your business



Karl Miller Center, Portland State University, Portland, OR. Behnisch Architekten and SRG Partnership. ©Feinknopf Photography, feinknopf.com.

3. Resources: Effective Tools and Process

- Developing and implementing processes that ensure information integrity and critical/creative thinking
- Developing and implementing KPIs
- Utilizing the right technology, the right way, in order to provide real-time, agile, and accessible information
- Developing engaging marketing/sales programming, from behavior and tactics to tools and collateral—everything that enables your firm’s seller-doers to succeed

How Marketing Teams Solve These Challenges

Function as an agency. Be the ultimate ‘outsider insider’ and be smart from the inside out. Create strategy and integrated marketing plans that are scalable.

Own the marketing; make the process yours. Work vertically, integrate laterally, be your firm’s trusted advisor—part strategist/part creative. Demonstrate why you have a seat at the table.

Be your firm’s best provocateur. Don’t take the easy way out. Challenge yourself. Ask the hard questions. Examine everything with a critical eye. Interview clients, vendors, subcontractor partners and employees across all groups, market sectors, and levels. Ask what issues and challenges they see affecting the firm’s marketing and business development efforts.

Be intentional, but flexible and pragmatic. Model the behavior and partnership that you want, don’t demand. Partner. Listen. Educate. Execute.

Make sure internal partners feel the love. Everyone wants to be wanted. Recognize the value they bring through their expertise, market knowledge, and relationships.

Drive engagement to your firm’s culture; clarify what it means to be an employee. Partnering with your firm’s HR department is essential to create successful internal marketing programming.

Explore and apply the advice in this article to help strengthen your firm as a marketing-led firm. ■

CASE STUDY

DAVIS Construction

In 2009, while most of the A/E/C market looked to divest and downsize in the recession, Maryland-based general contractor DAVIS Construction held steady, using the economic change to invest internally and evolve the company’s market leadership, expertise, and revenue.

The corporate goal was smart growth; a key strategy to achieve this was to center the firm’s business model around market sectors, rather than client types. Guided by this goal, DAVIS focused on improving overall ability to win business. With direct partnership and support from the company’s C-suite, DAVIS’ marketing team engineered and led a comprehensive and successful brand update as a key part of these improvements.

ACTION: Robust brand update

Operating as an internal agency, the marketing team structured the brand update to serve the needs of two clear client-types: external clients (B2B) and, perhaps more significantly, internal employee clients (B2E).

To plan effectively, the team took an extensive audit of DAVIS’ existing marketing approach, BD process, and seller-doer behaviors. This covered everything from brand collateral and digital content, business development procurement cycle, and marketing team structure through to the company’s internal culture, communications tools, and external market brand equity.

RESULT: A firm that leads with marketing

The team successfully streamlined business procurement processes; identified, restructured, and developed internal expert resources to partner with each market sector to win work; and developed/improved the tools available to greet, meet, present, correspond, document, persuade, and explain “Why Select Us” internally and externally.

DAVIS came out of the recession stronger, with a 100 percent revenue increase that reinforced the firm’s position of leadership in the market. Today, these strategic changes continue to drive the firm’s success as a \$1 billion regional general contractor.