

ning continuum, preceding and lending direction to the annual business and marketing plans.

Marketing Planning and Budgeting

A marketing plan is a written document that outlines specific performance goals related to marketing for a specific period of time, and which establishes a plan to meet those goals. You can write a marketing plan for the firm as a whole, for a specialty sector within the firm, for a service, or for a specific location. A marketing plan is a valuable communications tool, as it puts in writing the expectations and the rules for the marketing effort. It serves as a common road map, by assigning responsibilities in an understandable way. It makes people accountable, and enables designers to measure their marketing performance.

Marketing plans are doomed to fail unless the people who are responsible for their implementation are involved in creating them, and that means principals as well as marketing and business development staff. When designers participate in the planning, they feel a sense of ownership. It is important to include the firm's principal officers (who have access to financial data) in market planning so the marketing plan will make business sense. The plan must generate enough revenue from new sales to make good business sense, and the marketing budget must be affordable. A marketing plan should be written annually, and tied to the firm's fiscal year.

BASIC COMPONENTS OF A GOOD MARKETING PLAN:

1. **Audit:** "Where do you stand? What are you good at?"
2. **Outlook:** "What's out there? Where can you be effective?"
3. **Goals/objectives:** "What do you want to achieve?"
4. **Strategies:** "How are you going to do that?"
5. **Tools/resources:** "What do you need to do that?"
6. **Budget:** "What will it cost? Can you afford it?"
7. **Implementation:** "Who's actually doing what, and when?"

The Audit

In the audit, you assess your current situation. You can't figure out where you're going if you don't know where you stand. First, take a look at the sectors you serve. To protect yourself from a downturn in any one market, give some consideration to maintaining at least two (and preferably three) strong "core" sectors. Each core sector should generate at least 20 percent of your sales, but it should be no larger than 50 percent. If one market gets too big, you don't work to make it smaller, but you do invest more in some of the others to get back in balance. Examine your services. Evaluate the effectiveness of the ones you are currently providing, and determine if there are others you should add. Look to see where your projects are located, geographically. Look at the profitability of your sectors. Try to identify project types on which you consistently perform well. Examine your technical strengths and weaknesses. Strengths can include such things as innovative planning, specialty knowledge, award-winning design, and a strong record of repeat commissions. Examples of weaknesses include an inability to meet budgets or schedules, lousy references, overextended staff, and no depth of experience. Look at your competition, to ascertain what they are doing and how it could affect you.

In this phase, you can also analyze your marketing effectiveness. First, examine your sales in terms of fees. Look at what you sold this year and in previous years. Compare this to your goals. Look at your "hit rate." Note how many times your proposals got you to the interview, and how many times your interviews got you the job. This tells you where you have to improve. Look at what you spent on marketing. Compare it to what you sold, to see if you received good value.

The Outlook

In developing the outlook, try to determine what markets offer the best opportunities. This can be a project type, a geography, or a service. When you think you know where the opportunities lie, try to determine the best opportunities for you. Just because an area is strong does not mean you should be in it. You may not be capable of—or interested in—serving it.

To define the outlook properly, it may be necessary to do a little market research. Market research involves determining what kind of work you want