



A Small Firm's Approach to Maximizing Business Development and Marketing Resources

Business Development Best Practices Series

Published August 2018

When budget allocations for business development and marketing are limited, a firm must choose wisely and allocate its funds where they will provide the most impact.

Many in the construction business have moved up through the career ranks with an operations background rather than business development and marketing. This seems more prevalent with many of the smaller firms. Below are a few tips and lessons learned during transition from being purely a member of operations to that of an executive participating in the success of several separate business units within a small firm.

Getting Your House in Order

First, it is imperative the leadership team clearly understand that business development and marketing are both essential to a firm's continuation. Builders are always working themselves out of a job. Building backlog is just as important as putting work in place.

All employees have some effect on business development and the ultimate success of any business. Employees that are happy and actively engaged in the firm's success are key to setting the tone for all aspects of business. Fully engaged employees will exhibit more pride in their place of employment and will represent better in business and in the community.

Second, develop an inventory of each employee's history of relationships and accomplishments from current and prior employment, participation in trade and philanthropic organizations, church, children's activities, etc. Use those connections and achievements to the company's advantage. You could be sitting on top of a gold mine of connections and just not know it. Encourage employees to share and utilize relationships with others.

Ensure all employees are aware of the ways their behavior can be perceived by those outside the firm. They represent the firm, even when management isn't watching.

Maximize the firm's social footprint by highlighting corporate events, project milestones, design partners and subcontractors. Responsible use and sharing of social media can exponentiate corporate branding and image.

Encourage employee participation on committees, board seats, and in non-profit events. Provide corporate swag and make sure

all employees represent well with company branded clothing, signage, vehicles, etc.

Developing Prospects

Once the company has its house in order, place focus on the development of prospects. The quickest way to get started is with the existing relationships that employees already have.

Often times the entertainment and the courting process of business development can be the most expensive part of the BD process, however, not every relationship needs to be developed on a golf course or with an extravagant dinner. With smart placement of resources and proper planning, relationships can be developed on a modest budget.

As a rule, we try to implement the following strategies:

1. Deepen relationships with existing clientele that are most likely to provide future work or positive references to new prospects.
2. Invest in development of new prospects that have the highest likelihood of return on investment, repeat business, and prospects that match with our core values.
3. Invest in sponsorships, trade shows, or other events where the company can benefit most out of brand exposure while targeting the right clientele.

Finding Balance

Significant investments can be made in marketing and business development efforts; however, the balance of the team must have the resources to deliver projects as promised to provide an experience which exceeds client expectations. As builders, providing safe and successful projects resulting in total client satisfaction is the desired goal. Finding the optimal balance and timing for making business development, marketing, operations and administrative expenditures is crucial to your success.

About the Author:



Keith Horn serves as Vice President and Location Manager for the Tulsa, Oklahoma Division of Rick Scott Construction, Inc., a vertical commercial builder established in 1996. With over twenty-two years in the commercial construction industry Keith has participated in many projects ranging from less than \$1M to high-profile projects valued at up to \$650M.