



PUBLISHED 03/04.2020 // BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICES SERIES

BUSINESS NOT AS USUAL

Navigating Business Development During COVID-19

If you are like the thousands of BD folks in the A/E/C industry right now, you are struggling to find ways to stay relevant and connected to your clients and project management teams. Depending on the state you live in and the day of week, your situation varies. For example, on March 17th, the City of Boston shut down selected non-essential sites for at least two weeks, San Francisco imposed the strictest shutdown regulations in the country along with a shelter-in-place order and on March 27th, New York has halted most construction statewide excluding some crucial work, including infrastructure, hospitals, and affordable housing, along with emergency repairs.

In a Google search for best Business Development quotes, it was amazing at how many apply to our current situation. For example:

"Out of your vulnerabilities will come your strength."
Sigmund Freud

"Every problem is a gift — without problems we would not grow." Anthony Robbins

"All progress takes place outside the comfort zone." Michael John Bobak

We are certainly outside of our comfort zones right now, so how do we conduct business NOT as usual?

Sourcing the 2016 *Society of Marketing Professional Services (SMPS), Domain 3, Client and Business Development*, we learn that business development has a nine-stage process from the client's point of view. The [AGC of America BD Forum](#) Steering Committee has collaborated on a few of the most critical steps to formulate ways your BD approach can still follow these guidelines even at your most vulnerable times, or as we now call it, "social distancing."

Awareness: This is the very first step (and most logical). Your client has recognized the need/demand for the next project and will be looking for a solution provider. In typical times, you would be staying top-of-mind via networking events, coffee meetings and other face-to-face opportunities. In today's climate, there are still ways to maintain your credibility and visibility:

- **Strategize:** Be sure to come right out of the gate as an industry thought-leader. Show a solid understanding of the situation and prepare your messaging accordingly. Don't become tone-deaf to your clients' (and everyone's) situation.
- **Leverage digital formats:** Schedule weekly posts that provide relevant information and value targeted to the client. Reach out and invite clients, industry experts and association executives to group platform meetings and coffee hours.
- **Snail mail:** Send fun and interesting articles and images focusing on the clients' interests—cooking, crafts, sports

and animals are all great topics that can lift spirits. Don't be afraid to incorporate a little appropriate humor every once in a while—we all need the relief!

Knowledge: Whether your client or potential client is familiar with your firm or not, they will need to be updated on the entirety of the services you provide. Take the opportunity to conduct in-depth research of the type of work they have done in the past and tailor your message to align with their goals.

- **Get creative:** Work with your marketing team to capture your clients' attention with a dynamic 2-minute video highlighting your organization's services and culture.
- **Social proof:** Share social media posts that thank and recommend your industry partners and suppliers highlighting the work you have accomplished together (be sure to tag them!).
- **Ask for a referral:** Reach out to those industry partners and suppliers and ask for referrals and recommendations based on successful project examples.

Association with the entity: As a result of your hard work, the client begins to see the link between hiring your construction firm and achieving their goal. It is particularly critical to stay sensitive with the current environment. Realistic conversations on deliverables and timelines need to be addressed up front.

- **Keep it real:** Humanize the situation. Showcase how your solution is feasible given the situation at hand.
- **Relate:** Don't be afraid to share what you are doing and the impact it has on you, but also take the added step of asking the client what new challenges they are facing and how it has impacted their world.
- **Be proactive:** Ask for it - do you consider us an option? If it's a yes, go even further by asking what specifically more is needed from you to seal the deal. Follow up!

Stay safe, stay home.

"No matter what has transpired over the past weeks, our goal hasn't changed; the goal has always been to help solve our clients' problems. Now we must find new ways to be of assistance, to help solve the problems of today and be prepared for tomorrow." Julie Brown, Founder JB | BD

Resource: 2016 Society of Marketing Professional Services (SMPS), Domain 3, Client and Business Development, p. 15

AGC of America is committed to providing members with valuable resources and updates during these challenging times. To find the latest resources and information on impacts of COVID-19 on the construction industry, please visit <https://www.agc.org/coronavirus>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Frisbie



With more than 20 years in the communications arena, Lisa's experience includes spearheading internal and external communications via a balance of online and offline channels, engaging clients and members, driving awareness and analyzing efforts through qualitative and quantitative methods.

Lisa's role at AGC MA is to increase engagement with member CMs, GCs, Subcontractors, and Service Providers by implementing and overseeing innovative new communications and social media strategies and tools. She oversees multiple committees and their respective programming including; Building Women in Construction (BWIC) and the public relations and marketing efforts of all Chapter news, events, programs and activities.

Lisa holds a BS in Visual Communications/ Business & Marketing from the University of Phoenix and an MS in International Marketing from Boston University. She currently sits on the SMPS Board of Directors Boston Chapter as Vice President and serves as an Advisory Committee Member with the AGC of America Business Development Forum Steering Committee, the Policy Group for Tradeswomen Issues (PGTI) and the Greater Boston American Apprenticeship Initiative (GBAAI).