

Notes

Type of meeting:

October Brown Bag Session

Facilitator:

Jennifer Miranowicz

Attendees:

Pam Stalnaker, Hourigan Construction; Valerie West-Hill, Gilbane; Jesson Zafar, Terradon; Irene Centanni, S&ME; Emily Anderson, NXL

Please bring:

Firms Advertising plan and examples of good, bad and ugly ads.

Advertising Plan:

There was a lack of a clear advertising plan but at the same time was not a dramatic need for one either. It seems that an editorial plan would make more of an impact (obtaining editorial calendars of local industry publications so that Press Releases and story pitches could be done with greater success). If an advertising plan was established it should have a clear objective and a way of calculating ROI.



Where Advertising is done:

All attendees had limited situations where they desired to advertise. A point was made that this business is very much word of mouth and reputation. Most advertising was done as a part of goodwill (ex. Sponsorship, community outreach, event programs).

Budget:

A clear budget was not set aside. "If we want to advertise we'll find the money for it".

Designs:

All advertising that was done was done with an eye to maintain brand (image). Most was done in-house using design software or even PowerPoint.

Engineers and other professionals often review and personally change ads when they should leave that to the discretion of the marketing designer. Often times, this includes text-heavy advertising—which was an agreed “no-no”. If a principal MUST review the ad before it is published, a helpful idea is to create 3 options. Make them choose one. Before you submit, always have your reasoning ready to back up your designs.

An impact statement to grab the reader and a website for them to go to for additional information are MUST haves.

*Ads, Ads, Ads:
The Who, What, When, Where & How Much*

At the Tidewater Affiliate Brown Bag Discussion on October 28, 2008 we discussed whether or not having an advertising plan was important and who should prepare it. The consensus was that it is important to have an advertising plan, but that it varies by company as far as who's involved in the planning. For some companies a board of directors/designated principals are heavily involved and for others the marketing staff creates and monitors advertising activities.

During our roundtable discussion, we generally agreed that most of our companies consider online/website advertising to be the most current and financially beneficial form of advertising in today's market. Some of the firms mentioned that they do invest in and receive business from phone book advertisements, while others rely on word of mouth, a user-friendly and informative website, and/or on-site and vehicle logo displays.

Before we wrapped up our session, we talked about how each firm measures the results of these various forms of advertising. Some simply ask potential and current clients how they heard of the firm, some utilize a client survey, some use website tools to track potential clients, some put internal tracking codes on marketing/advertising materials, and some use a combination of methods. Overall, most firms at this Brown Bag Session felt it was important to invest money and time in creating an advertising plan while measuring the results of each effort to assist in revision of the plan on a yearly basis.

Ads, Ads, Ads: The Who, What, When, Where & How Much



The New Century Affiliate September Brown Bag Session took place at the Hurt & Proffitt, Inc. office in Lynchburg, Virginia. We had a total of 9 attendees from Lynchburg, Roanoke and Blacksburg locations. For this session, **Treva Carter of SFCS** and **Sandy Murray of Building Specialties** provided a joint presentation on advertising for the A/E/C industry. Both Treva and Sandy previously worked at advertising agencies for several years and now work as marketers for the A/E/C industry.

Treva and Sandy provided a handout and brought examples of advertisements. Some items discussed follow:

- **Branding: how your advertisement should reflect your brand**
 1. Ads should have consistent elements that reflect your brand and make your firm easily recognizable.
 2. Positioning line (slogan) should be in every ad.

- **Where to advertise: How to place your ad where it will reach your target audience**
 1. In the A/E/C industry, business to business advertising is more effective than consumer advertising. Narrow down your audience.
 2. TV or Radio – All consumers are not your target audience. Not the best way to advertise. NPR is a good choice. Most people listening to NPR are intellectual people who are between the ages of 35 and 60. Most are business people and decision makers.
 3. Newspaper advertising is good for construction companies. Would work for residential surveying too.
 4. Blue Ridge Business Journal is a great way to advertise and reach a select group of business people in our region.
 5. Community Journals, vertical journals, directories, conferences geared specifically for your work specialties, etc.

- **Advertising Rates**
 1. Signing a contract may give you better rates.

- **How often should you advertise: Are your advertisements effective? Are they eye-catching?**
 1. Ads should not be too busy.
 2. Do not attempt to advertise everything your company does.
 3. Ad design should be simple. Gear the ad towards your audience.
 4. Pictures always liven up an ad.

- **Ad agencies: Should you hire an ad agency to jumpstart your firm's effective advertising?**
 1. A firm must weigh the pros and cons of enlisting the help of an agency.
 2. An idea is to have the agency create a template for advertisements so that documents/ads may be created internally as well.
- **Direct Mail:**
 1. Very inexpensive compared to other advertising methods.
 2. Can reach selective audience.

- **Electronic Advertising:**
 1. Can reach a large, selective audience.
 2. Very Inexpensive.

- **Style Guides:**
 1. Firms may have a style guide that must be enforced in order to keep documents, advertisements, email signatures, etc. consistent.
 2. This may be updated every 3-4 years.

- **Professional Photography –**
 1. Worth having it done for completion of projects. Most engineering firms use the final product even though it is a building. It shows what the outcome is after the engineering phase. Engineering is a big part of the final project.
 2. Good photographs are eye-catching and most people look at the pictures not the wording. That is the first thing people see when looking at brochures, websites, ads, etc.

3. If using a photograph from a client, make sure you get a release from them in writing.
4. Teaming firms may share the expense of professional photography to cut back on expenses.

- **Website**

1. Should be looked over and updated every 2 years by a professional web designer to see how the formatting and look could be modernized.
2. Should be updated at least monthly with new information.
3. Most hire outside the firm to do routine maintenance and design.
4. Potential recruiting tool. Most job seekers search online (especially college students and professionals).
5. Resource for marketing partners showing projects and specific specialties.
 - a. (9 times out of 10 – people look to the internet to find a firm that specializes in something like medical facilities, dams, residential, etc.)
6. Always announce to clients, prospective clients, everyone...when you launch a brand new website design.
7. Updating the main page of your website will help bring it to the top of search engines. The more you update the more the search engine will advertise your webpage.