

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Don't Panic—Get Strategic, Marketing Experts Say

A disconnect between marketing and business development can always make it challenging for AEC firms to get work. But the problem can be acute during difficult economic times, said marketing experts at a think tank in New York City on Nov. 13. The event was organized by the SMPS Foundation, a nonprofit that promotes research and education.

"The most vexing question" is why marketing and business-development professionals are not working well together, said panelist Suzanne C. Lowe, president of Expertise Marketing LLC, Concord, Mass. "A huge part of it" is because roles are not clearly defined and responsibility and accountability may be split, she explained. Lowe's recently published book, "The Integration Im-

perative," cites a study that found no one person is in charge of "demand creation" in almost a third of professional-services firms. One attendee noted that, in hard times, firms try to hire a "combo package," but employees are not always trained to do multiple jobs.

Symptoms of the disconnect include a lack of belief in a "cohesive client-relationship philosophy," said William Viehman, chief marketing officer in the Atlanta office of Perkins + Will. Sheryl Maibach, CMO for Barton Mallow, Southfield,

Mich., sees "value metrics" as being the key. She said the disconnect shows when people "start questioning value—whether it is social media and the tie to business success or chasing a new market."

"It all gets down to what is the strategy of the firm and what is your client-acquisition strategy?" said David Harkleroad, CMO for brand-strategy consultant Hay Group, Philadelphia. Everyone can argue about "what is marketing, what is sales, and what is business development, but I do not know that you can separate them," he said.

For marketers who feel they are "stuck and they cannot get the attention of their managers because there is too much panic going on, the best thing to get everyone to calm down is to start out with real facts," Lowe said. "You need facts to make the point that there is merit to targeting and segmentation and to figuring out who are your best clients."

Viehman agreed, adding, "The steroid that enhances panic is lack of information. The antidote for that is to go out and talk to targeted clients. There is an old adage: If you go out and ask for a job, you may get advice; but if you ask for advice, you may get a job." ■

By Janice L. Tuchman

MANAGING DEMAND CREATION: WHO IS IN CHARGE?



SOURCE: ROBERT BUDAY, "INTEGRATING MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FIRMS: FINDINGS FROM A 2007 BLOOM GROUP SURVEY," RESEARCH REPORT, BLOOM GROUP LLC, DEC. 2007.

MATERIALS

Report Links Chinese-Made Drywall to Corroded Metal

A federally funded study has found "a strong association" between imported wallboard made in China and metal corrosion in U.S. homes in which the drywall has been installed, the Consumer Product Safety Commission says.

Preliminary studies of corrosion in electrical and fire-safety equipment also support that finding, says CPSC, which commissioned the studies. But no definitive tie has been found yet between the drywall and health problems that home owners have reported, which

include asthma attacks, headaches and bloody noses.

CPSC, which released the findings on Nov. 23, has received 2,091 reports from 32 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico of possible health and corrosion problems home owners say may be linked to Chinese drywall.

Reports from Florida account for 68% of the total CPSC has received. Another 18% came from people in Louisiana. The commission says most of the reports deal with houses constructed in 2006 to 2007, during a burst of building

that took place after 2004 and 2005 hurricanes.

The study, by Environmental Health & Engineering Inc., Needham, Mass., included 41 resi-

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dences whose owners had filed complaints with CPSC as well as 10 other houses in the same areas and constructed at about the same time.

A federal interagency team will draw on that report and other data to design a screening protocol to identify other residences with the same problem, CPSC says.

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) said, "I am very disappointed with the whole process and especially that [federal agencies] can't say whether drywall is harmful to people's health. Common sense says otherwise, but we still lack definitive answers." ■

By Tom Ichniowski