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# A/E

# Rainmaker

The Guide to Attracting and Keeping Great Clients

## THE NEEDLE IN THE HAYSTACK: FINDING WORK IN THE NEW ECONOMY

by Karen Compton

The new business bus in today's economic environment is very crowded. In fact, for some, it may appear that we're stuck on the bus while there are several cars zooming by. But, that isn't the case. Today, everyone is working hard to find the one job that will make the difference for their firm. In fact, one RFQ recently issued had more than 50 responses.

While it's no secret that new work is hard to find, it's not impossible; and there are options. In a tough economy, opportunities don't always show up on your doorstep and knock. In fact, waiting for the RFQ may be the wrong strategy. That's not to say that we all don't respond to RFQs. We do. But, the question becomes how well are we able to stay ahead of the curve?

### Finding Work

While the headline sounds simple, in truth, it's not. It requires research, development and a little bit of analysis. The days of picking and choosing the job are gone. But, with the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), money is slowly beginning to trickle back into the public sector. But, ARRA is a policy. How do policies become projects? While it is a little overly simplified, money will flow from the federal government to the state coffers through a

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## PUSHING THE HOT BUTTON

When responding to an RFP, put yourself in the position of your prospect. Very specific needs have triggered the request. Your biggest challenge is to understand exactly what those needs are. We call these the hot buttons.

Your chances of winning the work are directly related to how accurately you can identify and respond to the client's hot buttons. A/E firms too often rely on intuition to inform their proposal response. They align their determination of what the client needs with their own values

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## SELL YOUR ENTIRE FIRM

*Break out of the specific experience you have or service area you work in, and sell the complete portfolio of your company.*

Most customers have no idea of the breadth of your projects and services. The goal of selling your entire firm, or positioning your company in a broader manner, is to generate leads for new work. In order to do this, you need to gain a comprehensive understanding of everything your company does. If you work for a large firm, this translates into knowing all of your services. If you work for a smaller firm, this means learning about your projects. Knowledge is king; but how do you get it?

**Raise your awareness.** There are a few easy ways to increase your awareness. When visiting other offices, make it a point to meet with principals and technical professionals, not just your marketing counterparts. Talk to project staff about the work they are currently doing, and pursuing. Don't stop at the superficial sound bites of project title, client, and location; dig into the details. It won't take much more time to learn about costs (design fees, value of subcontracts, change orders, and total construction cost), schedule, successes, and challenges. Take notes, and put them in a file for future use when you return to your office.

When you interface with other marketing staff, get copies of the proposals and collateral they prepare for their offices or practices. Read these materials, cover to cover and word for word, to broaden your knowledge.

**Engage your curiosity.** While you are reading proposals, reviewing presentations, and listening to interview practice sessions, put yourself in the customer's seat to determine if the descriptions provided would satisfy his or her appetite for details. If not, dig for the missing information by asking questions. Build on the details you obtained while talking to staff during your office visit by asking "Why this project, done in this manner?" "Why this timing or technology?"

One of the most valuable things I've learned over time that has improved my dialog with customers is to be interested, not interesting. To

be interested, you must ask questions. Apply this technique while you interface with internal staff to help build your knowledge base.

**Walk your project sites.** The best way to learn is by doing—experiencing. I got a great education on power plants and pipe manufacturing at my former company by spending a day crawling through turbine enclosures, and a morning watching a heat induction machine do amazing things to a length of stainless steel pipe. It didn't matter that I wasn't personally responsible for selling power and pipe. This hands-on learning enabled me to sell my firm better.

You can do the same thing very easily and cost effectively. During your next visit to an office or client, schedule a stopover at one of your project sites. Talk to the project manager, the client, subcontractors, and others. Explore the details of how the project is progressing; is everything going as planned? If not, why, and what is your team learning? If the project is complete and the building is occupied, ask tenants how it is functioning. This first-hand experience, unfiltered by writing and revising for a dozen proposals, will allow you to more accurately and completely represent your firm's work. So grab a hard hat and take a road trip.

With this newfound knowledge you will be better able to position your company in the eyes of current and prospective customers. In the future, don't settle for responding to an inquiry by saying "we can do that." Resist the temptation to talk like a brochure, providing a bullet point listing of services and projects. Instead, give an example, complete with details, of when and how your firm completed a similar project. This will not only enhance your credibility and confidence, it will also improve your ability to generate leads for new work.

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## The Needle in the Haystack: Finding Work in the New Economy (cont. from page 1)

series of funding formulas that will be used to calculate everything from highway funds to state stabilization. The state will then distribute the money to the cities, towns, and agencies. But, the real question centers on finding the money that funds the projects your firm is interested in.

Here are some suggestions:

- **Read city, county and municipal plans.** Most agencies develop planning documents built upon changes in demographics or the life cycles of various facilities or infrastructure. Whether those plans are fully funded, we will explore later, but in general, the priorities of an agency are determined months, if not years, prior to the actual funding request. So, check with the planning or public works department of your local agency to find out what's on the docket.
- **Read urban plans.** Every city has an urban plan it is working on. There is always a new phase, a different section that must be completed. The best way to find out what's next is to request the plan from the department of planning, development, or redevelopment. Then, read it. For most cities, the plan is developed every five years; but it identifies future growth areas, service demands, and facilities requirements. Cities and agencies often fund portions of their urban or development effort in the capital improvements or discretionary funding sections of the budget. More on that later.
- **Explore campus/master plans:** They are another excellent way of finding out 'what's next.' They can be requested through the college or university's department of planning or budget office. Remember, it outlines the future campus needs and facilities requirements, which in essence gives you a road map to their future. In general, campus plans or master plans are developed based on something called an Educational Master Plan. While that plan does not specifically call out facilities needs, it does outline changes in campus mission, curriculum, or programs that could impact facilities needs, renovations, modernizations, or adaptive re-uses.

### Where's the Money?

Planning documents are the harbinger of capital projects. So, like the old saying goes, follow the money. And, it applies to the A/E/C industry, just like any other. State, city, county, and municipal

agencies fund their capital projects in the form of budgets. They are available through web sites; or you can request them from the entity's department of finance (management and budget). Remember, most state, city, and county budgets cover the funding period July 1 of the present year through June 30 of the following year. Some municipalities follow a federal budget year. Federal budgets cover the period October 1 of the current year through September 30 of the following year. You don't need to wait for the budget to be adopted to find out what's in it. Most draft budgets are available two or three months in advance and are available for public comment.

Capital projects are often funded in a separate section (or document) and are part of a class of funds called discretionary. Discretionary funds are just that— funds that are used at the discretion of the governing authority. As a result, many capital improvement projects stop and start. No money... no start...no brainer! Once you've found the correct section of the budget, now you have to discern what all those phrases really mean.

- **Appropriated funds:** Appropriated funds are those moneys that have been authorized towards a specific use and are generally available. If you shopped at Kmart in the 1970s, it's the equivalent of the Blue Light Special. It means the governing agency has approved money for a specific project/program.
- **Encumbered funds:** Now, this gets tricky because not all agencies and municipalities are the same. But, in general, encumbered funds are those that have been allocated for a particular firm or use, but not spent. It's the equivalent of, "ready...set...can't go yet."

Why am I telling you all this? Because finding opportunities is much like prospecting. You look for small clues that lead you to which projects are being funded, by what source, and when. Only then can you have an informed and effective pursuit of a project opportunity. Now that's business development in the new economy.

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## SUPERIOR SERVICE: MAINTAINING GOOD CLIENT COMMUNICATION

by Mel Lester

"I almost hate to hear from Dan," the client told me, "because the only time he calls is when there's a problem." Dan is symptomatic of many project managers in our industry who only communicate with their clients on a need-to-know basis. Clients notice. According to the folks at PSMJ, 67 percent of clients who defect do so because of perceived indifference. What causes clients to think their consultant or design firm is indifferent? There's little doubt that inadequate communication is at the top of the list.

Communication is the crucial ingredient of effective working relationships, or relationships of any kind. Communication is what links people together in the pursuit of common goals. It enables collaboration, promotes understanding, builds affinity. Not surprisingly then, wherever we find problems between people— whether couples or organizations— poor communication is almost always a culprit. It's the most common complaint I've heard from A/E firm clients in doing client surveys over the years.

So what does good communication look like? One of the trick questions I ask at conferences or workshops is: "To maintain good communication with your client, how often should you be communicating?" Most in the audience fall into my trap. "At least once a week" is the most common reply. Wrong! Good communication is whatever the client says it is.

In my previous article in this series, "Meeting Client Expectations," I wrote of the importance of clarifying client expectations about the working relationship at the start of every project, a step I call "service benchmarking." (I'm amazed that so few firms do this.) Foremost in this process is determining what the client considers good communication. Key questions include:

- How often should we routinely update you?
- What are the best means and times to reach you?
- What are your preferences regarding phone vs. e-mail?

- Who are the points of contact in your organization and what issues will they handle?
- Do you want verbal or written status reports? At what intervals?
- Do you have any other preferences or concerns regarding communication?

That conversation should also include clarification of how the client can best communicate with your firm. For larger, more complex projects, I strongly advocate preparing a written communications plan that addresses these same issues. When I have facilitated partnering sessions for design-build teams, I've routinely found that confusion about communication roles and responsibilities exist, even among teams that have worked together before. Of course, those problems persist with other kinds of projects as well. Planning for good communication is vital.

Here are some strategies for maintaining communication with your clients:

- **Make an appointment for all routine client communications.** Don't leave it to something you do when you find time in your busy schedule.
- **Call the client proactively about anticipated changes or problems.** As much as possible, give the client the opportunity to take preventive action or be part of the discussion before trouble happens.
- **Regularly forward helpful information and insights.** This is part of becoming a trusted advisor, going beyond contract or on-call expertise to taking the initiative in being a helpful resource to the client.
- **Be readily available to the client.** I'll deal with the subject of accessibility in next month's issue. Good communication involves both initiating regular contact with the client and being generally accessible when the client seeks to talk with you.

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## POSITIVITY STILL AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT TO POST-STIMULUS AND NEW ECONOMY SUCCESS

by Greg M. Goodwin

Do you feel a bit “over-stimulated” by all of the news and daily chatter of the stimulus program and minute-by-minute economic reporting? You’re not alone. Like a moving target of both hope and despair, the information and hence “market intelligence” can quickly add up to a sizable avalanche. In our current technological society raining with blogs, text-chat, online sources ad nausea and the barrage of marketing material, the “noise” is deafening and it gets in the way of real intelligence. Through this unending sea of information and projection, we have to stay positive and change some of our ways to market, promote and sell our services.

Let’s focus on some things that we do know from these past months:

- There is a stimulus program that has been written into law that provides billions of dollars of many items, and believe it or not, some even include infrastructure, energy, and education program funding.
- State governments, some teetering on the verge of financial collapse and/or unprecedented shortfalls, will receive a huge infusion of dollars and thus be healthier than they would have been without stimulus. Healthier state governments are better for our economic recovery than sick ones as they work hand-in-hand with local governments and economies.
- The nation will change more from this recessionary period than perhaps at any time in our history. Financial and banking epicenters will shift and move, access to money will remain as

tight as ever in the foreseeable future, and new industries and companies will emerge as we rise through this slow ramp to recovery. However, there is still opportunity to identify and capture across the country with some regions and sectors still actually growing.

### Five Point Plan of Action for a Rainmaker:

- 1. Play this new economy to win, including the stimulus program.**
- 2. Stay ahead of the curve with intelligence, client targets, and promotional material that “productizes” and re-packages your strong differentiators for the stimulus program.**
- 3. Offer your clients information relative to the funding and financial routing of this new money.** Know the stimulus money trail from the federal levels, including agencies, all the way to the local shovels.
- 4. Love your clients like you never have or others will.**
- 5. Stay positive about the economy, the country, and our industry.** Negativism will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you think the stimulus program won’t help your firm, it won’t. If you think there is not enough money in the package to boost your firm, you won’t get boosted. Play to win, and you will.

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*“Many people believe that you can find opportunities by identifying clients with the greatest needs. If that were true, we’d all be working on projects in Africa. To find good opportunities, seek out clients who have lots of money to spend.”*

— David Burstein, PSMJ Resources, Inc. consultant

**Pushing the Hot Button** (cont. from page 1)

and culture. For example, an architectural firm whose mission is “exceptional design” presents a proposal that is singularly focused on designing an award-winning building when the client’s driving need is the schedule – completing the building in time to capitalize on funding sources that will disappear if the timeline is missed.

Two prospects with seemingly similar projects inevitably have very different hot buttons. A prospect whose greatest concern is budget will demand a much different response than one whose biggest challenge is securing variances to meet their program objectives. Both are potentially great clients and projects, but your proposal must adjust for the differences. Never begin proposal planning by trying to find a past proposal that is similar in scope and believing you can cut and paste your way to a new proposal. Strategize each new proposal as if this is the first time you have ever responded to this type of request. This “blank canvas” approach will assure that your team is thinking strategically for this client and that your proposal gives insightful and complete consideration to the client’s hot button.

**Multiple Buttons**

While every project has one overarching client need, there are sure to be secondary “hot buttons” that must be addressed. Never lose sight of the number one issue. The secondary hot buttons are the way you are covering your bet. While it is crucial to make the number one button the foundation for your proposal’s presentation of approach and qualifications, there is always the chance that you’ll identify the wrong issue. If this happens, adequately discussing secondary issues can often save a proposal.

**How to Identify the Client’s Hot Buttons?**

**1. Start by dissecting the RFP.** Look for priorities in how the client describes the assignment. Study the project description for clues. Interpret the language to understand the client’s intent and expectations. Below are some examples of the type of language used in RFPs and what the prospect is really trying to say.

What the RFP Says	What the RFP Means
What is the time commitment and availability of personnel for their project ?	Will you disrupt the work with regular personnel changes?
Discuss your performance record and experience on schedule and budget.	How are you going to assure our project is on schedule and budget?
Describe your ability to estimate construction costs.	Will your solutions be responsible to our budget?
Describe your design and creative approach and sensitivity.	Will you listen to us, understand what we want, and give us relevant solutions?
What’s your experience with public work?	Do you have the skills and patience to schmooze with the people responsible for funding, approvals?
Tell us about relevant experience with our project type?	Show us proof that you have done projects with the same challenges as ours.
Provide qualifications for your key personnel.	Who will we be working with? Why is he/she right for this job and do they have the passion and skills we need?

**2. Revisit why you were asked to prepare a proposal.** What is your relationship with the prospect and what do you think they know about your firm’s capabilities that would lead them to believe your qualifications can solve their problem? These strengths can be the clue to their hot buttons.

**3. Ask.** If you haven’t established a close relationship with the prospect this is more difficult, but agreeing to assemble the proposal has earned you the right ask questions. Be direct. Come right out and ask, what is your number one concern? When the project is complete, what will determine whether the consultant has truly solved your problem?

**4. If the selection is being made by committee, understand who holds the power and influence.** Try to identify any politics of the committee. Look to the decisions on any past projects to see if you can understand how they were made.

**5. Talk to other firms that have worked for this client.** Those in the same profession may represent competition but allied professionals who have had experience with the client can offer great insight.

**6. Know the prospect's business.** Study their web site (if they have completed projects examine those, too) to understand their values and business approach.

### Acting on the Hot Buttons

The proposal cover letter is the first place to demonstrate that you understand the hot buttons. Start with the subject line. For example, "Re: How you can open Grand Middle School in time for the 2010 School Year" would surely get the attention of a client who's number one issue is schedule.

Rather than the gratuitous salutation found in most proposals ("We are delighted to have the opportunity to.....") your opening paragraph should explain in brief how you will meet the

deadline. Special staffing, project team on site, design build...identify the things that will allow you to meet their needs.

Stay focused on the hot buttons throughout the proposal. Link your qualifications, approach, scope and deliverables to the hot buttons. If you can't figure a way to relate your features to their issues leave them out. When representing the reasons that the prospect should select your firm, be sure and provide proof through examples of how you have solved similar problems.

### Follow Up

Win or lose, always follow up with the client to learn whether you were accurate in assessing their priorities. This will give you and your team valuable practice and feedback in identifying hot buttons.

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## WORK SMARTER AND HARDER

In this environment, you have to work much smarter to find opportunities.

Sounds like a no-brainer, but in a down economy, it's easy to lose sight of the basics. And PSMJ Resources, Inc., consultant Ken Tichacek says A/E firms must do that and more.

"You MUST win every opportunity you get, and you MUST keep your best clients loyal."

Echoing those sentiments is PSMJ Resources, Inc. consultant Eric Snider, who says that firms must ramp up their client touches. "You have to increase the number of times you touch each client. Never tell them you are calling them to sell them something. Instead, you are just checking in with them."

Adds PSMJ Resources, Inc. consultant Michael D'Alessandro, "Try to commiserate with them about the bad economy, their 401(k), etc."

PSMJ CEO and founder Frank Stasiowski says, "Ninety percent of the time, if you're doing this

correctly, there's nothing to report. Don't let the reporting overwhelm you. Don't make this an exercise in e-mails. Just call them and say hello to your clients. Don't sell. Before you call your clients, write out the words "don't sell" on a 3x5 card and remind yourself that when you make the call. The word is care, not sell. C-A-R-E."

PSMJ Resources, Inc., consultant David Burstein adds, "It has a lasting effect. It keeps your name in the top of their mind so when they need something, they think of you."

Stasiowski says, "Everybody in this country is in the mode of saving five dollars. Even profitable clients are in the mode of not spending money to remain profitable. They may not buy anything right now. Listen to your clients and figure out what they have to say. Listen to them when you get them on the phone and figure out if you are where they are."

## 2009 TO BE A YEAR OF HIGH ACTIVITY FOR FIRMS SERVING GOVERNMENT CLIENTS

by William Fanning, PSMJ Resources Consultant

This year is shaping up as a year of fairly dramatic changes for firms serving government clients (at all levels of government).

We now have the stimulus plan in place, with a large component for infrastructure, highways, transit, airports, and some education, as well as construction of federal facilities for many branches of the federal government. This increase in funding (and for local governments it is 100 percent federal funding, thus possibly changing how A/E services are procured.)

While this increase in projected volume of construction (and thus design and related services projects) is most welcome in our currently new project-starved markets, there are other changes in regulations and proposed laws that will affect how you interact with your government clients.

This year, we are going to be seeing (or at least proposals for):

- The multi-year Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) is due to be rewritten before the September expiration of the current law (but realistically, this will not get done on time)
- The already overdue airport funding legislation may finally get done

As with past legislation, both of these major funding acts can also be expected to contain policy changes.

On the regulation and policy issues, there is more activity than PSMJ has seen in a number of years.

- The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials is expected to update and expand its audit guide. Since this audit guide is being spearheaded from the federal level within US DOT, this can be expected to also impact mass transit and airport procurements.

- As a result of the revised state audit guide, several states that have been waiting for this update are expected to put forth their own new policies regarding A/E procurement.

- On the federal level we have seemingly ever changing rules regarding the use of E-verify by contractors, including A/Es.

- Also, the regulations regarding collection and accessibility on executive comp incorporated in the FAR last year are expected to be further developed for implementation.

- Also in an evolving status are last year's regulations to further define the requirements for formal firm ethics training (including all employees).

- The Office of Inspector General Report (see the special insert in the March issue of PSMJ) is expected to change the oversight practices of states on A/E contracts.

- The stimulus bill changed the 3 percent withholding by all governmental entities on all contracts for goods and services (including A/E contracts) by postponing it to 2012, but regulations are currently being developed that will impact your future contracts and how you get paid.

With Democrats firmly in control of Congress, the regulation pendulum has swung in the direction of highly stringent regulations. As we see the implosions on Wall Street and many other banks, plus the frauds of the Bernard Madoffs of the world, we can expect a relative explosion in regulations going forward.

The issue for A/Es, and in many instances for agency personnel, has been how to identify the applicable individual items from the torrent of information constantly streaming out of Washington and state capitals. While we may have 100 pages of new tax regulations, the vast majority do not apply to firms in our sector.

That is why PSMJ has established a new A/E contracting focus section on our A/E Contracting Alerts blog. We intend to sort through all of these regulations and focus only on those that relate to how we conduct our contracts and our practices. We will isolate those rules that do, or will affect your business and its operating practices.

PSMJ is uniquely qualified to know what is important to our users, both in the private sector and in the government procurement sector. And, since we regularly participate in this important aspect of successfully conducting your business, we can get you the information you need. Because this information changes frequently, we are using the electronic format of a blog to get this news to you as quickly as possible.

Also, if you have a specific question on dealings with an agency, we can find the answers for you. An e-mail question section is provided, and this goes directly to our experts.

So see what is going on in government contracting today. Log on to (<http://psmjgovernment.blogspot.com>). You may want to bookmark this site to check in regularly to see what new rules may affect your business.

**A/E Rainmaker thanks William Fanning, a PSMJ Resources, Inc., consultant, for this article. Bill can be reached at 770-971-7586. To visit PSMJ's A/E Contracting Alerts blog, visit <http://psmjgovernment.blogspot.com>.**

## WIN LATE-PHASE STIMULUS PROJECTS, TOO

For many of the targeted projects, the criteria being proposed is for 18 months to actually start digging dirt. These projects are in every stage of development and, with that timeline, there is a lot of work that engineering companies can do. If anything, planning and design work gets more intense as you get closer to bid. And even after the bid, there are design changes and engineers are retained to conduct reviews. It's a dynamic process and you need to keep on top of it.

During the development of the \$787 billion stimulus plan, the American Institute of Architects applied a full-court press to educate legislative leaders and policy-makers that the plan should fund not only projects that are "shovel-ready," but those that have the best chance of succeeding. The AIA's goal was to ensure that the economic stimulus reflected our priorities and principles emphasizing sustainable design and safe, healthy, livable communities.

As a result of the work of AIA, American Council of Engineering Companies, and other industry groups, billions of dollars for each of the following areas are included in the bill:

- Funding for school districts to modernize, renovate and repair schools

- Green affordable housing and help for millions of Americans to make their homes more energy efficient
- Requiring the federal government to make its buildings more energy efficient, saving taxpayers millions of dollars in energy costs
- Assistance to states and local governments to make energy efficient upgrades to buildings and communities
- Support for mass transit systems and the construction and renovation of intermodal transit facilities to relieve the congestion that is choking our communities

**Bottom line:** Don't write a lot of proposals, but be ready to write a lot. Have your network help you find out exactly when proposals are going to be needed because this is an extremely fluid situation. Look at ways that you can not only find out what kinds of projects are likely to get funded, but once you find out, figure out what you can do to help agencies that you work with to get their share of those funds. If you can get the agencies lined up to get their share of the funds, then you're going to be lined up to get your share of those projects.

## THE FIVE HABITS OF HIGHLY-EFFECTIVE ONLINE NETWORKERS

Let's be real, online networking is not real networking. I am not saying that it can't be a useful tool; I am simply stating that real networking is about a lot more than just 'linking' to other people. Let's forget the discussion on which online site is better for the moment, and focus on how we can leverage these online sites as an effective tool for expanding our networks. If we can't do this, then online networking is no better than collecting a stack of business cards.

You would probably agree that networking is much more than contacts; it is what you do with those contacts that differentiate rain makers from everyone else. In his book *Rain Making*, Ford Harding identifies networking as 'helping people.' It is about providing others with assistance knowing that others in your network will do the same for you. If you were to check out many professionals' contact lists you would find that they are full of hundreds of contacts, but very few networking relationships. This is because, as Harding indicates, most people fail to understand that networking is about what you can do for others, not what they can do for you. Online networks are no different. Success is not intrinsic in simply making contact, success is found by what you make of every contact. Here are the five concepts that successful online networkers live by.

**1. Networking is more than contacts.** What this means is that online networking is not a successful tool unless you can use it to achieve the overarching objective of helping other people. The good news is that online networking can be a great asset to you in doing just this. Most sites are set up so that you can leverage your online network to provide others with referrals, connect others in your network, and keep your network contact information up to date.

**2. Online referrals.** Probably the most underutilized aspect of online networking is the ability to refer work and clients to others in your network. The area where we have seen the most success so far is the use of online networks to pass along job openings. If you are already linked in to an online network, I would recommend trying out this feature to see how you can leverage it. Also, most sites give you the

ability to block your contacts from others in your network. Carefully weigh this in light of helping other people. I have found it beneficial to allow others to see my contacts so that we can more effectively work together.

**3. Link others in your network.** How many times since you started using an online networking site have you used your network to connect your friends? Online networking creates an environment where passing along a relationship is easy and mutually appreciated. If you are already part of an online networking site, try connecting your friends to help them be more successful.

**4. Keeping your contacts up to date.** Online networking sites provide a great way to keep your contacts up to date. Since online networks are linked to individuals and not to their respective companies, you can effectively 'never lose touch' through job changes, promotions, and layoffs.

**5. Getting the most out of online networking.** Whether or not you use online networking tools such as LinkedIn.com or Facebook.com you need to consider your networking plan. Develop your objective and then determine the tools that work best for achieving your personal goals. For me, I find that using Microsoft *Outlook* linked to my Palm Treo is ideal; for others, there is nothing better than a full CRM. Whatever your method, remember to establish a follow-up plan that will ensure you are helping other people on a regular basis.

Establishing your plan for networking is essential to determining how you will use the online networking sites. Next time you get or send the e-mail "I'd like to add you to my professional network..." determine if you are simply doing it as an effort to stack business cards, or as a tool to strengthen your network.

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## 10 WAYS TO TREAT NETWORKING AS A BUSINESS

Networking must be treated as a business if you expect it to be effective. Consider these pointers on how to accomplish this:

- Remember that networking is just another method of prospecting; it has its own set of costs associated with it. Plan for them.
- Success or failure of the networking process depends on setting specific goals, a budget, and a time horizon.
- Networking also depends on knowing the market, adding value to buyers, understanding profitability, and being aware of the competition, just like any business.
- Practice an ethic of going to work to work the network.
- Be open and outgoing in networking situations; don't be shy.

- Understand that you must give something in a networking situation before you can receive benefits from networking.
- Learn to position yourself through giving of your time, your talents and your energy.
- Make an inventory of the best, most desirable clients/skills/abilities.
- Review all of your current affiliations.
- Be brutally candid about reviewing your own strengths and weaknesses.

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## FOUR TIPS ON GETTING MEDIA COVERAGE

- **Community newspapers love you.** Coverage here affects the public's mindset, influences politicians, and that in turn influences other media. It should be the beginning of your long-term, grass-roots approach and the entire industry will benefit, including your firm.
- **Put yourself in the position of the person you are pitching to.** Call media people to find out what they need then give it to them, when and how they want it.
- **Tell them the truth.** What media people really prize is someone who will, without any self-serving rhetoric, explain what is really going on and why. When they can find that person, their work is elevated to a much higher level.
- **Become sophisticated consumers of journalism, and know the kind of stories the publications print.** Most editors look for stories

that change something, even in the smallest way, or offer a new perspective.

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