The Business of Architecture
You Need a Loan and Your Bank Wants a Business Plan: What Do You Do? By David G. Copton

Your practice has been growing steadily, you’ve been adding employees, and now you are at the point where you want to open a second office in a nearby city. You need to borrow money to make it all happen, and your accountant and lawyer have each encouraged you to prepare a business plan to show the bankers. How do you go about getting started? Before plungeing into to write a 30-page opus, I suggest you step back for a moment, and think about what is going on. The notion of entrepreneurs writing a business plan has become extremely popular over the last few years. Popularity aside, the key question is whether investing 100 or more hours writing a business plan is the best use of your time.

Many of the banks you visit for loans likely have their own forms for you to fill out requesting information about your company, financial history and the specifics you print. Still, it’s often impressive in bankers to walk in with some kind of document that summarizes your business strategy. It conveys the message that you are serious about your business, and thus helps them see the way you’ll handle your money. In that situation, I suggest a summary business plan of one page or two to five pages. In it, you should answer these questions as succinctly as possible:

What is the opportunity? Another way of asking this question is this: What is the problem you are solving? And if it’s a new problem in opportunity, bankers will usually wonder: Why has no one tried to fix this problem before? Or if they did, why didn’t it work?

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David G. Copton is a syndicated columnist who is author of How to Really Start Your Own Business (4th Edition) and How to Really Create a Successful Business Plan (4th Edition). Questions can be directed to him at david@davidcopton.com. David presented a program based on this material on March 10, 2006, www.davidcopton.com

Are people in your firm contributing as much as they could to your organization? For Project Architects, the overarching goal is to build a firm that operates effectively without requiring extensive involvement in day-to-day operations. Specifically, Principals must help Project Managers develop their management, delegation, and client development skills. Are people in your firm contributing as much as they could to your organization?

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Clients are People First.

This means that each of your Clients, like everyone else, wants to feel important. It is a natural human desire to be acknowledged and to feel that your contributions are valued. Acknowledging someone, whether by saying “Thank you for being here” or “We really appreciate your input,” can make that person feel valued and respected.

In the realm of business, acknowledging clients can be even more critical. When clients feel valued, they are more likely to stay with you, refer others to you, and pay attention to what you have to say. It can also help build a strong, trusting relationship that can last for years to come.

As a professional, it is important to remember that your clients are people, not just clients. They have feelings, needs, and desires just like you do. By acknowledging them and treating them with respect, you can help to create a positive and productive working relationship.

In conclusion, acknowledging clients is not just good business—it is good for your personal well-being, too. So next time you work with a client, take a moment to acknowledge their efforts and contributions. It might just make all the difference in the world.
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AIA National Grassroots Conference
Washington, DC

AIA National Awards Component Scholarship Grant
The Architects League of Northern New Jersey was awarded the Component Scholarship Grant in the amount of $4,000 by AIA National. The award will be evenly disbursed to Robert Leventhal and Mariana Mayhew, our 2005 scholarship award recipients. This award is given by AIA National to local components in order to help them support our profession’s emerging leaders. This grant is in addition to the scholarship amount already given by ALNNJ. For more information on scholarships please contact Frank Cunha at scholarships@alnnj.org or (201) 894-1000.

Trade Show at the Marriott Glenpointe
The 2006 Trade Show will be held May 11 at the Marriott at Glenpointe, Teaneck, NJ. The exhibit will be open to the public at no charge. The Trade Show is the League’s major fund raiser. It is very important to the vendors that many architects visit the show and the booths. It is very important to the vendors that many architects visit the show and the booths. It is very important to the vendors that many architects visit the show and the booths. It is very important to the vendors that many architects visit the show and the booths. It is very important to the vendors that many architects visit the show and the booths.

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