Leagueline 3Q 2007

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Architects League of Northern New Jersey

www.aia150.org
www.alnnj.org

Developing Professional Marketing Skills

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As I reflect back on the first half of my year as President I remember the sense of limitless possibilities and how daunting the broad duties and responsibilities seemed to be. I am pleased with how things are shaping up and the great interaction and collaboration I have had with my fellow members. I feel grateful and enjoy the reward of seeing our League’s plans come to fruition.

This quarterly issue of Leagueline explores Marketing Architectural Services, a topic too often glossed over in our schooling, and never given enough ‘push-down’ to interns in our practice. The League’s June meeting featured Marketing Architectural Services.

March – AIA 150

By all accounts our celebration of the 150th anniversary of the AIA was a success. Many of us spent a wonderful day with sixth graders planning their ideal community. Giving back to our communities should be one of the foundation blocks of our profession. All of us had a teacher or professor that inspired us; look for opportunities in your daily lives to pay-it-forward and be a person who inspires and leads the future generation who follow close at our heels.

May – AIA National Convention and Design Exposition

I encourage all of our members to attend the annual AIA Convention. This year’s convention was a great opportunity to mingle with colleagues from across the county sharing experiences and knowledge; to explore the great buildings and restaurants pedestrian friendly San Antonio has to offer. The host chapter was very friendly and did a terrific job making us all feel welcome.

Vendor booths were very informative, showcasing the latest products and materials on display; the training sessions were well attended, and interesting professional tours took AIA members to places often not accessible to the general public.

Keynote speeches were inspiring, culminating in the overcapacity address by former Vice President Al Gore with a message that Architects are uniquely placed to make a big difference by championing sustainable design was well received.

League Programs to date included:

Our March Membership Meeting at the Westside Presbyterian Church in Ridgewood featured McCarrn Systems LLC, who presented a session on new design opportunities in Audio/Video systems.

In April we held the annual Joint ALNNJ/ N&S Trade Show at the Marriott Glenpointe in Teaneck. The turnout was great even though we had to schedule the trade show earlier than usual this year. Both attendee and vendor feedback was very positive. Members who attended the training sessions said they were informative, and vendors were happy with the crowd of eager specifying Architects visiting their booths. It was a chance for many of us to see new products before the AIA National convention and to catch up with the many vendors who have supported us over the years.

Our May Membership Meeting was held at the Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club. The National Fire Sprinkler Association gave a chilling demonstration of the speed of a fire with their portable Burn Room trailer followed by a poignant video and presentation.

US Green Building Council member Philip C. Dordai, AIA, LEEDap, gave a very good presentation and Overview of LEED with a focus on new developments all Architects should be aware of.

In May, I improved my swing in one short lesson at our Annual Golf Clinic at The Willowbrook Golf Range in Wayne.

Upcoming events

Monday, July 23 – AIA-ALNNJ Eighth annual Golf outing – High Mountain Golf Club, Franklin Lakes, NJ

Saturday July 28 – A Special Member Event: Philip Johnson’s Glass House and Yale University tour – A unique opportunity to explore some of the best and diverse Architecture in one place.

September 12 to 17 – A Special Member Event: The 2007 OPEN HOUSE LONDON WEEKEND offers a rare chance to get behind closed doors and see buildings throughout London that would otherwise remain off limits.

Kevin C. Gore, AIA

AIA-ALNNJ President 2007

The Architects League of Northern New Jersey

Eighth Annual Golf Outing

Monday, July 23, 2007

High Mountain Golf Club, Franklin Lakes, NJ

Contact: Kim V. Vierheilig, AIA

201.447.6400

Join us!

The Architects League

of Northern New Jersey

Eighth Annual Golf Outing

Monday, July 23, 2007

High Mountain Golf Club,
Franklin Lakes, NJ

Contact:
Kim V. Vierheilig, AIA
201.447.6400

Help make a difference, and have fun at the same time! The proceeds from this annual event will help support the Architects League College Scholarship Fund.

The Architects League of Northern New Jersey

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You Are More Than An Architect; You Are A Marketer.

In this edition we focus on Marketing Architectural Services. The lead article by Donna Taylor, Marketing Coordinator of Di Cara Rubino Architects in Wayne, which offers us insight on “Cross Selling” as a way of increasing your business with existing clients. The second article is by Terry-Ann Zander, and Jill Alexander of Zander Consulting, LLC which provides us with tips on how to improve marketing our services.

As a final note, this will be my last edition as Editor of the Leagueline. I pass the baton to the capable hands of our new Editor, Frank Cunha, AIA, as well as our seasoned Editors Anthony Iovino, AIA and Fay Logan, AIA. I remain on the committee and hope to continue to contribute further to the success of the Leagueline. Have a great summer!

Joyce Raspa-Gore, AIA, Esq. Editor

One of the biggest marketing mistakes some architectural firms make is working with blinders on. The firm wins a project, the firm provides quality services and keeps the client happy, the project is a success, and then the project manager simply closes out the job. What’s the next step? Most architects or project managers tend to move on to the next project. But, back up a minute, did you really just close out that project, or did you close out that client too?

A common statistic is that 80% of business comes from existing clients. This supports a well-known business adage stating, “your best client is your current client.” It simply costs less to grow business from your current clients than it does to seek out new ones. Clearly, as a professional architect you want to devote the lion share of your time to architecture; however, you have the client contact, you have the face time; it is easiest for you to continue to develop that client. Great client service, in many cases, is not enough to hold on to that client; it is simply the “price of admission.”

What is cross-selling?

Cross-selling is the strategy of promoting your services to a client who has already “purchased.” Most architects read the “selling” part of that term and have already put down this article, but cross-selling can actually be an effective and valuable service to your clients. If you do not cross-sell your clients, two things may happen: first, you will leave money on the table that could quite conceivably go to your firm, and secondly it allows your competitors to get their feet in your clients’ doors. Cross-selling is your opportunity to increase your client’s reliance on your firm and decrease the likelihood of the client switching to a competitor.

While as an architect you may not feel ready to “sell,” other firms are recognizing it as a vital component for improving both client retention and revenue growth. If your firm is unsure whether or not to get on board with this strategy, consider this: cross-selling is one of the most profitable and least risky endeavors a company can undertake. One of the best advantages of implementing a cross-selling strategy in your firm is that when you cross-sell to existing clients, you no longer have to compete for their attention.

It’s not selling, it’s customer service.

Much of the success of cross-selling is based upon trust and convenience. People hire people, so that makes building relationships crucial. Successful cross-selling focuses on the clients. Cross-selling helps you to not think of your clients simply as a “job” and scheduled meetings, but as people and organizations that have complexities and many potential needs. You, as the client’s main contact, have the ability to foster an honest, loyal, and probably most importantly, a mutually beneficial relationship with that client.

Through cross-selling you will become more of a partner with your client and you will become more in tune with their continuously evolving needs and requirements. It takes that personal contact to earn the trust required for the client to assign its next project to you as well. As an architect, you are in the business of solving problems, generating solutions and satisfying clients. Since you, as their professional consultant, understand the situations of your clients, you are ideally suited to provide solutions and recommendations. Any time you can fulfill more needs, address more issues, or solve more problems for your clients, you are making their lives easier. After all, your clients already trust you, like you, and are doing business with you.

Maybe they don’t know what they need

While a client might not need certain services now in the scope of the current project, that client may have a different need in the future. Ask questions and have conversations with your clients using open-ended questions that require more than a simple yes or no answer. Many times the cross-selling opportunities will come naturally in the course of a conversation. As you become more familiar with your client through the design and construction process, you should consult them on other building issues they should keep in mind. Better yet, you may see a potential problem and you can tell them how you and your firm can help them deal with that specific issue now and head off more costly problems in the future.
Getting Your Whole Self in the Door

This type of client education creates a perception of need and you never know the opportunity that could arise from a client turning to you and saying “I did not know you could do that for me.” To withhold the other services you could offer to your clients would actually be poor service and a reason for your clients to turn to another firm.

I’m in…where do I start?

Next time you are working with a client, try not to be so focused on the here and now. Be proactive and look ahead in this client’s plan. What, as a professional, can you anticipate they will need further down the road? Talk to them now about the future. Successful cross-selling does not need to be aggressive. Remember, you have already drawn this client into your fold and provided fantastic professional services. But even though your client has liked and appreciated your services, there are no guarantees they will “buy” again.

So if you are ready to try cross-selling, try it the old fashioned way…simply ask, “What else can I do for you?”

Marketing mantra is that it is “five times easier to obtain new business from an existing client than from a new one.”

Donna M. Taylor, Marketing Coordinator Di Cara / Rubino Architects, 30 Galesi Drive, West Wing, Wayne, NJ 07470 dTaylor@dicararubino.com, www.dicararubino.com

You have prepared and submitted your RFP. Now you have been notified that your firm has been short-listed and the potential client wants an interview presentation. Piece of cake — right? Not necessarily. Your firm will get the job if you are a cut above all the other firms that have been short-listed. But you don’t need bells and whistles, you don’t need a PowerPoint® that dazzles; what you need is a relationship with the prospect. They need to know that you not only know what they want, need, desire, etc., but that you also understand their quirks and idiosyncrasies. They need to know that you are flexible, can truly listen, and that you have taken the time to get to know them as individuals, not just a signature on the check.

Sound daunting? Not really. A little leg work, some research, strong communications skills, and a few well-placed questions will get your other foot in the door.

Step One: Know the Prospect

You need to find out the following information before you begin to develop that dazzling PowerPoint®.

1. Who will be attending the interview meeting? What are their names and titles? Who are the key decision makers?
2. Where is the project to be situated? During an interview I observed one team presenting projects that they had completed exclusively in urban areas to a suburban prospect. Needless to say, the prospect did not feel “special.” It was obvious the architect did not listen or “know them” at all. Do you think that firm was selected?
3. What concerns does the prospect have about the project? Everyone promises “on time, on budget,” but what challenges does the prospect care about? Is it the fees? Is it the deadline? Is it the budget? Is it a concern about the “unforeseen” such as having to deal with the EPA after discovering the very last nesting ground of the spotted purple turtle in the footprint of the new building? A phone call to the prospect will answer these questions.

4. Some online research is good too. Check out the prospect’s web site. Look at their competition. How will your project give them an edge in their market? You don’t want to compare them during your presentation, but having this information will support your position.

Step Two: Pick Your Team in Light of the Project You are Pitching

1. Do you have the person who made the original contact with the prospect on board? Seeing a familiar face will put your audience at ease and make them more receptive to your pitch.
2. Identify the most articulate member of your firm, it may not be a principal or senior associate, to facilitate or orchestrate the interview. This person will serve three main purposes: to field questions to the appropriate member of your team, to act as an interpreter if the technical jargon is confusing for the prospect, and to read and interpret body language and switch the direction of the presentation as needed. For example, if someone is making a face or crosses their arms after a statement is made, perhaps the team member can ask, “Did we answer your question Bob or do we need to take a moment to review it again?”
3. Look at the scope of the project and add specialists to your team. Do you need a landscape engineer? Do you need an MEP, a financial advisor? Research shows that having specialists on the team to answer questions is a good strategy. However, assuming that a team of 20 consultants at an interview is necessary without asking the prospect may be overkill. Again, ask the prospect which “experts” they would like to hear from.

4. Build the whole team into the presentation. Let them speak to their expertise. Allow them to answer content-specific questions.

Step Three: Create Your Presentation Materials

Before you even pull up the PowerPoint® program, find out the following: How large of a room will you be in? What is the lighting? (Slide shows do not work well in rooms with skylights unless they can be shaded.) What is the seating arrangement? Do you have adequate space for a slide show? Do you have all the working equipment for the slide show? And, most important, how much time do you have to present?

1. What is the message? This is information that you got through researching the needs of the prospect. Do they want to be the biggest, the best, the most efficient, the most cutting edge, or simply less crowded. Prepare your presentation based on the prospect’s message.

2. If you choose to go with the PowerPoint®, create slides that can be seen from a distance. Rule of thumb in creating slides: less is more. Assume that the folks in the back row do not have 20/20 vision. Prepare handouts so that the prospect can follow along and jot down notes and questions.

3. Another rule of thumb when creating the presentation: tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you just told them. In other words, introduce your team and give an overview; go into detail, then conclude with a wrap-up statement. Allow time for questions.

4. Using architectural and engineering jargon is appropriate when addressing architects and engineers. When speaking to a prospect, use terminology that you are sure they will understand. This does not mean “dumb it down.” It simply means that some terms may need to be explained in detail. If your prospect has never hired an architectural firm before, chances are they are not familiar with industry terminology.

5. Practice, review, practice, review, practice. You did the research about the prospect, now put yourself in their shoes and look at your presentation with a critical eye. Does the flow make sense? Are you comfortable with all the information? Bring your team in for a dry run. Time your presentation and again, allow for questions.

Step Four: Building the Relationship Through Your Presentation

1. You are ready to go. Your team is all there, your slide show is spectacular, and you are confident. Many a presentation has been blindsided by a lack of establishing the right feel with the prospect. You may have the best price, the best project, and the best reputation, but if the prospect does not feel comfortable with you, you will not get the job. Body language and tone of voice are very important. Look at each individual in the room as if you are speaking just to them. Refer to each individual by name. Move around. Check their attention level and adjust your style accordingly.

2. Answer questions honestly. As prepared as you might be, there may be a question for which you or your team does not have an answer. Don’t make one up on the spot just to fill the void. Instead, write the question down and offer to have the information to them within the next 24 hours. Then follow through. This will help to establish trust by showing the prospect that you are honest, diligent, and responsive.

3. Answer the questions honestly, part two. Not all answers will be good news. Give the prospect the honest answer, not the one you think they might want to hear. Honesty establishes trust and protects the firm’s reputation, and in the long run, will maintain the firm’s integrity in the industry.

4. Don’t forget to say thank you. Simple, yet effective.

Step Five: The Follow-up

1. Find out the prospects schedule of interviewing. Give them a few days to get through their process, then give them a call and offer to answer any additional questions they may have. Thank them again for the opportunity.

Step Six: Win the Client!

Any good marketer/business developer will tell you that the key to securing the job is all about relationship building. The prospect wants to know that their project is the most important one on your plate. They want to be heard. They want to know that you are flexible to their thoughts. They want to trust you. They want to know that you are available to them. And they want to be assured that you will give them your very best efforts at all times. So before you dust off the bells and whistles, get to know the prospect and make sure your presentation gives them everything they are looking for—your whole self.

Terry-Ann Zander, CPSM is the Managing Member of Zander Consulting, LLC located in Sparta, NJ. Jill Alexander is the firm’s Senior Writer/Editor. Zander Consulting provides strategic marketing, communications, and public relations consulting services for A/E/C firms throughout New Jersey. www.zanderconsultingllc.com. You can reach Terry-Ann at terryann@zanderconsultingllc.com or 201-874-5871.
Call for submissions, our special year end issue...

WHAT WE DO: 2

The ALNNJ 4th quarter Leagueline will highlight our member’s work. This year we will once again feature our professional work, personal or our firms’. We would like to compose the year ending issue as a celebration: What We Do:2!

What are you currently working on or do you have a favorite past project you would like to share with your colleagues.

A high resolution jpg image and a brief description are required to present your work in this special FULL COLOR issue.

There will be an initial submission deadline of July 30th. We ask that you email your entries directly to aiawork@sns-arch-eng.com Thank you, Fay Logan, Editor L4Q

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This year at the AIA National Convention in San Antonio the underlying theme was Growing Beyond Green. There were over 21,000 registrants and more than 800 exhibitors present this year. The keynote speaker was former Vice President Al Gore urging Architects to take all necessary steps to help curtail climate change. According to Don Prowler, FAIA, buildings annually consume over 40% of the energy in the U.S., the vast majority of which primarily depend on energy produced from nonrenewable, fossil fuel sources (coal, oil, natural gas) extracted from the Earth and burned to produce electricity.

A solution to the process of successful sustainable design, offered by Lynn Simon and William Worthy is one of “Whole Building Design”. This approach consists of two components: integrated design approach and integrated team process. Whole Building Design asks all the members of the building stakeholder community, and the technical planning, design, and construction team to look at the project objectives, building materials systems and assemblies from many different perspectives.

During their seminar titled “LEED in the Trenches” Simon and Worthyen stated that the days of the individual designer making all decisions in seclusion are over; they cited the 3 E’s: dealing with Everyone and Everything Early. They went on to cite various examples of integrated design solutions implementing LEED criteria and stated that true integration process includes: shared understanding; input outside of expertise; mutual respect; co-solving of problems; defining expectations and make decisions; greater ownership; working hard and having fun.

It is vital to get the project stake holders to buy into the sustainable process early on. As the project moves from schematic design to design development into construction drawings changes become more costly and increasingly complex. The programming phase of a project is the best time to influence the outcome of a project.

As the term “BIM” becomes part of our every day language as Architects, it is interesting to see a correlation between green design and Building Information Modeling (BIM). Instead of creating traditional construction drawings, BIM will allow Architects to first build a virtual building before a shovel is ever dug into the earth. According to various speakers at the convention, BIM is becoming a tool that will aid in the process of integrating and encouraging the various design teams’ work offering real “Whole Building Design”.

It is an exciting time for us to be Architects. We are on the verge of a revolution. We can either sit back and wait for the codes to change mandating “green” design OR we can be instrumental as individuals, as companies and as an organization to make a positive contribution to this important cause. It is the responsible thing to do. The earth is ours to protect. Without it we will not be able to do what we love — create beautiful, functional spaces.

Respectfully,
Frank Cunha III, AIA
Senior Project Manager
cubellis ecoplan
Special Upcoming AIA Members Events in 2007

- Washington DC Day Trip to See Two Important Exhibitions
  Modernism at the Corcoran Museum
  The Green House at the National Building Museum
  Saturday June 9, 2007

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Fall 2007

AIA Launches new website, How Design Works

The AIA is pleased to announce the launch of a new web site—How Design Works—that extends the radio and magazine advertising messages to the Internet. Developed with guidance from the 2006 Advocacy Committee of the national AIA Board of Directors to test the effectiveness of the Internet as a communications platform, this new online component of our effort to educate the public about the experience and process of working with an AIA member and the value of good design is ready for all to see. I encourage you to browse and share the site widely with your colleagues, clients, prospects, friends, and family.

Copy or type this web address into your Internet browser: http://howdesignworks.aia.org/c/

The objective of How Design Works is to show how AIA architects are approachable, are good listeners, and that they welcome and respect the input of their clients. The site uses videos and case studies to show the interplay and the experience. How Design Works shows satisfied clients and their AIA architect describing in their own words how they worked together from start to successful finish.

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AIA 150 School Initiative... A Big Hit with Kids!

The School Initiative was developed by AIANJ150 for a statewide participation to celebrate the AIA 150. The program topic was “The AIA’s 10 Principles for Livable Communities”. The presentation was targeted for 6th graders throughout the State. The AIANJ150 Committee prepared the program information for the participants. The ALNNJ has approx. 20 participants. The volunteers made arrangements with their selected local school and presentations were made the week of March 28, 2007.

The presentation was an interactive program, where the students assisted in building a simulated community on a computer or manually by hand with various components of a community, to see if they are able to fulfill the 10 principles of a livable community.

You can go to the website and check out the computer version: http://www.nkarchitects.com/aia150/.

The kids were attentive and brainstormed some excellent ideas. Some of what they would like to see in their community is a water park, bike path, good restaurants and “a nail salon”.

Paul S. Bryan, AIA

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Architects League of Northern New Jersey

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Young Professionals Networking Mixer

On March 28, 2007 in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the Emerging Professionals Committee held its first Young Professionals Networking Mixer. It was well attended with professionals from all different organizations including Democrats 2000, Rutgers Young Alumni, and Cook College Young Alumni to name a few.

We would like to thank all league members who were able to join us. If you missed out in March, we plan on holding another mixer in October in the Montclair area. Details to follow.

Second Annual Golf Clinic

On May 24, 2007, the Emerging Professionals Committee held its Second Annual Golf Clinic at Willowbrook Golf Center in Wayne, N.J. Sixteen architects came out to the event to improve their golf skills. The clinic started with a brief talk on the fundamentals of the golf swing by certified PGA instructor, Walt Baker. Afterwards, everyone teamed up in groups of two per tee box to receive individual instruction from one of the instructors. The Committee would like to give a special thanks to the sponsor of the clinic, Concrete Edge. Concrete Edge manufactures unique custom pieces for virtually all types of spaces from countertops, tables, mirrors and sinks — their customization and design possibilities are endless. You can visit them at the web at www.concreteedge.net.

Membership Meeting in Ridgewood

There was a Membership Meeting on Thursday May 17, 2007 at the Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club in Ridgewood. Speakers from the National Fire Sprinkler Association, and Philip C. Dordai, AIA from The US Green Building Council - LEED.

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TRADE SHOW 2007 – One more great success!

This year’s Trade Show was attended by more than 200 Architects League and Newark and Suburban Members. There were 75 vendors for the sold-out 85 booths. Each section will have earned approximately $19,000, making the Trade Show the most important financial supporting event for both.

The seminars were well attended and we again received positive feedback for the additional late seminar at the end of the exhibition. The vendors reported great traffic and interest this year. The hall was abuzz with architects talking with the Reps. Their interest may have been abetted by our raffle for the Grand Prize, the Dell Laptop, available to members visiting 10 booths (per card) and as many cards as they could fill. Deborah Kander of Newark and Suburban Architects was the 2007 winner.

We thank the exhibitors, beverage sponsors, seminar sponsors, as well as all of the exhibitors who generously donated some very impressive door prizes. We also thank our members, whose attendance is the reason we attract the broad array of exhibitors.

Members who have any comments or suggestions for our operation of this annual event or suggested vendors for next year, please contact me at flogan@zms-arch-eng.com.

Fay William Logan, AIA
Trade Show Co-Chair

L3Q Calendar of Events
more at www.alnnj.org

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To:

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