

MARKETING

Insight and intelligence for architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting firms

RIGHT | NOW

Creating a buzz by adding a marketing business line

Firm branches out from its engineering, planning and design roots to try something new. So far, so good.

It's probably not your first inclination to hire a 30-person civil engineering, transportation design, and urban planning firm to do your marketing, but maybe it should be. At least in the case of **Shea Carr Jewell** (Olympia, WA), the new offering is already bearing fruit, attracting clients and getting people talking about a new way to do business.



Perry Shea, Principal, Shea Carr Jewell

Launched late last year, the marketing business line came about when Shea Carr Jewell hired Cathy McKay, a new marketing strategist who had worked at an architecture firm before joining the company. She had a relationship with smaller A/E firms that didn't have enough money to have their own full-time marketing director or department.

"When we thought about it, we realized there might be an opportunity for us to leverage that," says Principal Perry Shea. Shea and other firm leaders approached mechanical, electrical, general contracting, HVAC and other firms, with which it doesn't compete, with an offer to help them ramp up

"It gets down to your relationship with your clients, and the trust we have with them. The way I look at this is, it helps smaller firms that need the help with their marketing, and it makes the industry stronger as a whole."

their marketing efforts.

"A lot of times, they don't even know where to start when it comes to proposals," he says. "Things are so competitive out there, you need to have a polished proposal, something that's very readable." Shea Carr Jewell's strength in editing helps that become a reality, Shea says.

In its infancy

Shea Carr Jewell's first client is Engenuity Systems, a Tacoma, Washington-based mechanical engineering firm that heard about Shea Carr Jewell's new business line through McKay, who brought the idea to Shea and his partners.

"I just followed her over," says Engenuity President Bruce Gustafson.

In the early stages of his work with Shea Carr Jewell, Gustafson says the focus has been on "planning for what I see as market opportunities." He expects the relationship, which is only about a month old, to grow and for Shea Carr Jewell to do more to spread the word about Engenuity and what it can offer potential clients.

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Happy anniversary to us!

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Marketing

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Shea Carr Jewell is on retainer with Engenuity to handle the firm's customer database and marketing collateral. The firms will also work together to create a marketing budget and scope of work for projects as they come up, Shea says.

In addition, Shea Carr Jewell is working with Tacoma-based general contracting firm Pease and Sons on procurement contracts for Department of Defense work. Firm leaders are also in discussions with at least two other companies to do retainer or project-based marketing work, Shea says.

Shea Carr Jewell is developing its business plan, Shea says, but the retainer it's getting is paying for most of the marketing costs, which are usually overhead for the firm. While the marketing business line is a small percentage of the company's revenue so far, Shea envisions it becoming as much as 5% to 10% in the next several years.

The firm provides its marketing clients weekly status reports, and looks ahead to how much time it will have for marketing work in the coming weeks and months. That helps everyone understand what's

happening now and what to expect in the future.

"Right now, we're developing our business model," he says. "We want to make sure that, if the demand grows for this, we have the support staff to deal with it. We know we have to be responsive, but we have our own work we're pursuing on top of this."



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It hasn't been too tough of a sell so far to get clients interested in having Shea Carr Jewell do its marketing work for them, Shea says.

"Usually the first thing they want to know is how we thought of doing this and how we get started with it," he says. "We're thinking it might be a pretty good market since there are so many firms right now that don't have the resources to have their own marketing staff."

Shea Carr Jewell even finds itself teaming with some of its marketing clients on additional projects, such as its plan to work with a local architect and general

contractor on a small business set-aside at Fort Lewis, Washington. For that project, Shea Carr Jewell is not only on the team, but it's also being paid to put the proposal together, Shea says.

Looking ahead

By the end of the year, Shea Carr Jewell could have a team of employees dedicated to its marketing business line, Shea says.

"This is an emerging opportunity for us, so we're looking to expand it," he says.

Shea isn't worried about other firms following his company's lead and adding their own marketing business line.

"There's nothing wrong with competition," he says. "It gets down to your relationship with your clients, and the trust we have with them. The way I look at this is, it helps smaller firms that need the help with their marketing, and it makes the industry stronger as a whole."

Shea doesn't see the new marketing business line as taking away from the firm's other core services, he says.

"We're looking outside the box and trying to position ourselves in markets we're not already in," Shea says. "It just makes financial sense to do this." **E**

RESOURCES

HANDBOOK FOR SELLING: The Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS), in partnership with *Building News Inc. (BNI)*, recently assembled five experts to develop a new book, *Design-Build Services: A Marketing and Business Development Handbook*, to help the AEC industry succeed in design-build. According to the Design-Build Institute of America, the percentage of the non-residential market using design-build has increased by 200% in the past 10 years and is expected to overtake traditional design-bid-build as a preferred project delivery system as early as next year.

The first part of the handbook takes the reader

through the process of developing a successful design-build marketing and sales program. Using examples from successful companies around the country, it shows how to create targeted marketing plans; market services for private, public, and federal projects; research new design-build projects; create a market-driven sales force; and write successful proposals.

The second half of the handbook focuses on how to run a successful design-build practice once a project has been awarded, presenting the reader with tools for scheduling, quality control, and ensuring client satisfaction.

Topics covered include:

- How to develop a successful design-build marketing and sales program
- How to target specific marketing efforts to private, public, and federal projects
- How to meet all the special requirements for responding to a design-build RFQ/RFP

Increasing demands for speed, quality, and cost control ensure that design-build will become more and more predominant in the years ahead. For today's A/E company, this handbook opens a door to the future and provides a blueprint for getting started.

For more information or to order a copy, call 1-800-896-0793 or log on to www.smpsbooks.com.

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