

# marketer

Volume 29, Issue 3, June 2010

The Journal of the Society for Marketing Professional Services

## on point

*Making It*  
How Marketers Can  
Increase Their Value  
by Mel Lester

## behind the lines

*"Build Business"*  
Keynoter Erik Wahl  
by Mike Reilly

## best practices

*Debriefing Misconceptions*  
by Richard Belle

## book excerpt

*Leading with Marketing*  
by Brian Gallagher and Kimberly Kayler

## business development

*Killer Cover Letters*  
by Robert Stempien

## research

*Looking Forward:  
A/E/C Trends to 2020*  
by Gina Bedoya and Michael McCann

## Sizing Up

*Do Marketers Make  
a Difference?*  
Tough Times,  
Tough Words

SMPS

Society for Marketing  
Professional Services

# THE ARCHITECTURE OF VISION

## Developing a Legacy of Leadership

BY CRAIG PARK, FSMPS, ASSOC. AIA

One of the most effective brand builders for an A/E/C firm is developing and promoting *leadership* within your practice. That leadership can manifest in several different ways, and it can be measured and promoted for the benefit of your firm and staff.

Leadership can be defined as *firm leadership*: establishing vision and management best practices that result in significant and sustained profitable growth. It can be *market leadership*: being “ranked” in the industry press for size, revenue, or results. It can also be *technical leadership*: being recognized for expertise and innovation. All have the capacity to provide *industry leadership*—the third-party validation of your efforts—that is one of the most powerful tools in creating engagement with new prospective clients.

### Four Facets of Leadership

- 1. Management leadership**—the ability to demonstrate unique, differentiating, and profitable operational methods that have helped your firm succeed—can be shared through press interviews, association awards programs, and other business-to-business roundtables. The willingness to reveal what you have tried, what has worked and what has not, to an audience of your clients and peers is usually viewed as strength of character, and by association, brand strength as well. A few may fear giving away “secrets” but in reality there are few secrets, only aspirations that have been tried, failed, and not re-tried for fear of failure. True leaders do not fear revealing the methods of their success.
- 2. Market leadership** is a function of metrics and measures. It requires discipline that documents results in ways that can be used to grade progress or decline, which should be fundamental to the practice. Metric barometers are part of a dashboard of data that, in the best case, provide forward-looking trend analysis to help leaders guide the firm. From that data, leaders know their market share and the potential for growth in their chosen markets.
- 3. Technical leadership** requires the development and positioning of outward-facing technical experts and is an excellent way to build sustainable firm leaders. By championing the benefit of industry expertise and innovation, you and your staff can express passion for the practice of the practice, at general to granular levels. Older staff can speak from wisdom and perspective, while younger staff can speak from opportunity and potential. Both speaking and publishing provide venues for expression of individual expertise through public forums that add credibility and validation to your ideas.
- 4. Industry leadership** leverages these same metrics that are judged by industry journals as a way to rank firm position nationally and, increasingly, globally. Whether annual revenue, sales, numbers of deals/projects or staff, these rankings provide a method of establishing preeminence in your field of practice. Local, regional, and national rankings can be used to promote “top” firms, and give lesser ranked firms a target for which to shoot.

“Developing a leadership program embedded with fundamental practices that focus on personal and professional enhancement allows emerging leaders to help create a truly enduring practice.”

The press is always seeking content. Cultivating relationships with editors and reporters can lead to greater visibility. Participation “on the podium” at industry and client associations, conferences, and seminars provides an outlet for persuasive demonstration of ideas and dialogue on issues facing your clients and your peers.

Each of these aspects of leadership builds confidence and credibility that can be promoted to existing and prospective clients. Each facet builds self-confidence and commitment to the practice, which is the foundation for sustainable leadership.

## Developing a Leadership Program

Recognizing the benefits of developing rather than recruiting leaders, top firms create programs to identify and mentor the firm’s up-and-comers for future senior roles. Developing existing staff rather than recruiting new staff is a superior approach to creating an enduring culture. Creating a comprehensive curriculum that helps mentor future leaders is the first step to developing a legacy of leadership. In parallel, executive teams must begin a transition program that identifies for key senior roles future leaders who would benefit from participation in leadership development programs.

A successful leadership program creates cultural changes that have a positive impact and establish the foundation for future success, including:

- searching out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate, and improve
- experimenting, taking risks, and learning from accompanying mistakes
- envisioning an uplifting and enabling future
- enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams
- fostering collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust
- strengthening people through empowerment, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support
- setting the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values
- achieving consistent progress and building commitments
- recognizing individual contributions to the success of every project
- celebrating team accomplishments regularly

## The Leadership Framework

Within the framework of a multi-session curriculum, the details of each class can be developed with your existing subject matter experts. In each case, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that participants use individual and team exercises to reinforce the material being presented.

The sessions should cover all aspects of your organizational structure and practice of your firm, including culture, vision, business, and people, with a consistent focus on leadership qualities and development as they relate to creating an enduring company.

The ideas, definitions, qualities, and characteristics of leadership can be defined by industry leaders and traditional assessment tools such as the Myers-Briggs, DISC, and Keirsey Q models to help students understand their strengths, communication preferences, and conflict resolution styles.

Sharing the strategic vision of the firm, how it was developed, and how it has evolved engages students in developing alternative views of the current vision, mission, and goals of the firm and the importance of reviewing metrics for analysis of results. Reviewing the fiscal year business plan offers additional insight into the efforts in place to achieve the firm’s goals.

Lessons covering the different aspects of the business, including strategic planning, marketing and business development, finance, contracts, ideation, information technology management, and human resources, show the interrelationship of support disciplines in the firm and the importance of all members of the company.

Sessions with a focus on leading people provide the students with the tools to complete a personal leadership plan. Encourage students to select mentors for their continued development and to make a commitment to each other to strengthen the bonds initiated from the program.

In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner state, “The opportunities for leadership are available to all of us every day. The question is: ‘Are we up to the task?’”

Developing a leadership program embedded with fundamental practices that focus on personal and professional enhancement—fostering change and dynamic growth, inspiring others to contribute, collaborating within groups, and envisioning a better and more profitable future—allows emerging leaders to contribute to the needs of your company at the highest level and helps create a truly enduring practice. ■

---

## About the Author



**Contributing Editor Craig Park, FSMPS, Assoc. AIA, is president of Craig Park Consulting (www.craigpark.com) based in Omaha, NE. A former SMPS National President and recipient of the 2007 Marketing Achievement Award, Craig can be reached at craig@craigpark.com.**