



## Guest Speaker: Get your ducks in a row Learn the importance of motivating and coordinating the marketing efforts of others.

By Anne Scarlett, printed in *The Zweig A/E Marketing Letter*

When describing your marketing role, do any of these terms come to mind: cheerleader, mom, nanny, nag, coach, coddler, politician, disciplinarian, beggar, peacekeeper, spiritual leader? Marketing sometimes requires these sub-roles. Yet, some people view them as beyond the scope of their 'real' job which, in turn, can be frustrating.

Because this is a service-based industry, day-to-day marketing activities can become 'personal.' Sensitivities arise, egos flourish. When do you encounter resistance from the firm's staff and leadership? Is it when you propose holding consistent marketing meetings? When brainstorming new public relations activities to build your brand? When seeking approval to spend money on marketing? When coaching staff on presentation skills? When digging for project data? When seeking input on the strategic marketing plan?

Tackling resistance is indeed a part of the marketing professional's role. Big deal. Every position, in every firm, requires skillsets that were not referenced in the original job description. How can you — *marketing professional extraordinaire* — integrate these sub-roles within your own skillset to offer value, maintain your sanity, and enjoy career success? Try these five steps:

**Assign the right tasks to the right people.** Benjamin, managing partner, is a salt-of-the-earth industry veteran. He still goes to project interviews to 'commit the firm's resources.' You have worked hard to get the team to rehearse, and you feel undermined because this gentleman will not partake. Actually, if he is a natural presenter, with decades of experience, then you have two choices: Lose the momentum and benefit of practicing just because he's absent; or proceed to coach the less-senior team members, while maintaining a positive attitude. It's not ideal, but it does enable others to succeed despite the dissent of one person.

Another example: You are working with Sabine, head of architectural design, on a fee proposal. She is exceptional at creating design concepts, but her writing style is sub-par. Further, she has an unrealistic perception of project management — keeping on schedule and budget. Clearly, Sabine's proposal contribution should be limited to concepts that you will then shape into coherent written language. She should not be asked to write the final draft of her concepts, nor should she determine the project fee.

You will achieve greater output when each assignment is appropriate for the assignee.

**Provide clarity on expected benefits.** Sometimes people view a marketing professional as demanding. They may feel your requests impose upon their core responsibilities. Try outlining the benefits (obvious and subtle) that will result from the activity. Give project managers examples of how visiting prospective clients will prove fruitful. Share with project engineers how clients analyze fee proposals, and how the data they provide will strengthen the firm's selling position. Promise the leadership team that if they dedicate time to weekly marketing meetings, they will exponentially increase their odds of winning new business. Guide a principal through the proposal production process to ensure that he will no longer let an RFP sit in his inbox for days before sharing it.

In your deadline-oriented role, it's tough to take time to explain context and benefits. Yet, by doing so, you're more likely to elicit a timely response — as opposed to hounding people because they avoided something they didn't like, didn't understand, or didn't see as worthwhile.

**Be patient, yet firm.** You're in charge of running the newly created marketing meetings. Week after week, attendees arrive late, or not at all. While you should be patient with them as they get used to the new routine (regular meetings to discuss strategy and progress), you must also hold productive meetings where everyone's opinions — and time — are respected. In the future, start the meeting on time, even if there is only one person present. As late arrivals saunter in, firmly suggest that they catch up post-meeting. Believe me, after a few weeks of arriving late to an in-progress meeting, everyone will show up on time. Further, in order to make sure people show up at all, your meetings must be valuable. If you're not making progress in meetings, then restructure the agenda and preparation requirements until you attain the best 'formula' for your group.

**Recognize that we're all human.** Mistakes are part of life; it is imperative to offer feedback diplomatically. Critical issues are best shared in person, so make sure to match your delivery channel with the nature of the message. And once you've worked with someone, you can gauge if written or oral communication is their preference. Also, we all have unique barriers and filters; maintain a humanistic empathy for those whom are facing challenges, even if it impacts your own work.

**Maintain an upbeat, positive energy level.** The marketing team is often a source of motivation. Everyone expects you to maintain the workload to keep them employed! Even when you think no one will notice, people actually gauge their perception of the firm's marketing success on based on your attitude and outlook. When things get tough, it's ultra-important for marketing to keep it together and lead the positive charge.

We can't control others; all we can do is our very best. These suggested behaviors are within your control. They have worked in my own experiences as well as those of my clients. I welcome your additional ideas; undoubtedly, many readers of *The Zweig A/E Marketing Letter* have mastered techniques to organize their ducks — a.k.a. business colleagues — to walk the path of marketing success!