



## What's your BizDev purpose? How to identify the hidden business developer in every person, every role.

By Anne Scarlett, printed in *The Zweig Letter* and the *AE Marketing Letter*

Business developers and senior leadership often profess “everyone markets!” We say it, we know it to be true, but do our actions really match our words? Here are three steps to make the statement “everyone markets” a reality in your firm.

**Provide guidance and specific direction:** Supervisors must work with each direct report individually to reach mutual agreement on how they can best impact the firm’s marketing efforts. While the marketing contribution of some roles is quite obvious, there are other roles where you may think it’s a stretch. Whoa, stop right there! Here are some examples of where the marketing contributions of staff are not so far-fetched after all:

**The receptionist:** As the first impression when entering your firm lobby or calling on the phone, the receptionist role is of great import. In this technology age — when so many phone calls reach electronic voices, get placed on hold, or require navigation through a grueling series of menus — we are grateful for a human voice that instantly greets us! But when that live voice turns out to be unpleasant or unresponsive, then some of us wonder which is worse: the electronic system or the unpleasant receptionist? Perhaps you think ‘duh, everyone knows the receptionist needs to be pleasant’. If so, think again.... don’t even get me started with the downright appalling experiences we’ve had with A/E firm receptionists firsthand.

Make sure that your receptionist understands the value s/he adds to the overall firm marketing effort: know the names of existing clients and treat them with familiarity; have a clear understanding of project team members and the status of current projects (keep an updated cheat-sheet handy); be hospitable — hang a coat, offer a drink, direct to the restroom. If your lobby is designed in a ‘gallery’ format where project drawings, models, and books are displayed for view, then your receptionist is in a great position (if she has backup support or the phones are quiet) to introduce the guest to some of the firm’s work. This is only possible, of course, if s/he has the proper skills to offer an overview presentation.

**The office manager:** From niche, specialty firms to mammoth top 100 giants, someone is responsible for ordering office stuff — stationary, notepads, pens, and ‘branded’ giveaways with your company name such as golf balls, t-shirts, mugs. Office managers can keep the storeroom shelves stocked and organized for easy access. They can scan catalogs on occasion to suggest cool, new branding items for consideration. They can make sure each professional has plenty of company note cards on which to write personal notes to clients and prospects. And maybe it is the office manager that works in tandem with the marketing department, rallying professionals to make the office an evolving showroom: keep in-progress work pinned up, maintain project/war rooms in some semblance of organization, freshen-up project displays on an annual basis. Perhaps the office manager is the one that places the welcome sign in the lobby to personally greet expected visitors by name. (It’s fun to enter a company lobby and see a sign with your name, your company, and perhaps the reason for your visit. Such a simple gesture, yet who takes the time to do it?)

**The accountant(s):** Finance departments are charged with sending out accurate, timely invoices, and then following up (relentlessly) until the firm gets paid. The accountant’s role can impact the external perception of your firm. For example, sending out invoices too early is as bad as sending them out late. I recently heard of a CFO within a 40-person subconsultant firm that consistently sent out invoices before the work had begun. It’s no surprise that this became an

irritant for the primes! And as for the highly sensitive role of serving as the 'collection agency' when a client is late on payments, the finance department can work with the project manager to form a plan of action appropriate to each problem client. With the proper internal communication, your firm can get the payment it deserves while maintaining a professional, workable client relationship.

**Make it official; put it in writing:** Most AE firms conduct some sort of performance appraisal on a scheduled basis. Once you've provided the proper guidance on how each individual can contribute to marketing, then measure success through performance appraisals. For the first year, in the section entitled 'Goals for Next Year' (you *do* have that section, don't you?), write the specific areas in which that person can contribute to marketing. In future years, make sure that your performance evaluation includes a section specific to marketing contributions, so that it can be measured alongside the other criteria.

**Give 'em the right tools through training:** So now you've identified how they can contribute, and you've made it real and measurable through performance appraisals. The only thing missing: your firm's support. You must equip your staff with the proper business tools to succeed. Take full advantage of training opportunities for various aspects of the marketing process. From business development/sales to presentation skills to proposal writing to branding — there is abundant opportunity (offered by ZweigWhite among others) to provide your staff with what they need to feel confident of their abilities to contribute to marketing. Make the commitment — include marketing training as a line item in your annual continuing education budget. After all, continuing education is not just about receiving credits towards keeping a technical license; it actually encompasses any form of education that elevates the skill sets and careers of your staff.

I challenge you to name a role for which you cannot seem to find a suitable way for s/he to contribute — in some form — to the marketing effort. We are a creative industry; I assure you we can come up with creative ways for everyone, at all levels, to be a part of the marketing solution.