



## Give 'em something to talk about: Identifying value propositions so they will listen, and buy!

By Anne Scarlett, first printed in *PSMJ's AE Rainmaker*

In any economic climate, it's important to offer value propositions that will both intrigue---and 'stick' within the minds of---your prospective clients. But in an economy where more competitors are flocking to the same sources for far less new business opportunities, it's even more imperative to have something that stands out and makes your firm different---and quantifiably valuable.

Barton Malow, an 85-year old construction firm offering an array of project delivery formats, has such a value proposition: *Integrated Project Delivery*.

For several years, I've run across professionals that are involved in *Lean Project Management/Construction\**. I've understood the basics, but was even more intrigued when I heard the details of workflow and results from an Integrated Project Delivery approach.

According to AIA, "*Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) is a project delivery approach that integrates people, systems, business structures, and practices into a process that collaboratively harnesses talents and insights of all participants to optimize project results, increase value to owner, reduce waste, and maximize efficiency through all phases of design, fabrication, and construction. IPD principles can be applied to a variety of contractual arrangements... teams can include members well beyond basic triad of owner, architect, and contractor. In all cases, integrated projects are uniquely distinguished by highly effective collaboration among the owner, prime designer, and prime constructor, commencing at early design and continuing through to project handover.*"

Compared to design-build, there are some similarities in terms of collaboration, but the workflow, reach of participants, and outcomes exceed those of a design-build delivery system.

And relative to *Public-Private Partnerships\*\* (PPP)*, IPD is different, but still holds the spirit of what the PPP is trying to accomplish: Through a contractual agreement between a public agency and a private sector entity, skills and assets of each sector (public and private) are shared in delivering a facility for general public use. In addition to the sharing of resources, each party shares in risks and rewards potential during project delivery.

Circling around to my main point---it's great to have something fairly 'new' and 'proven' to talk about with clients and prospective clients. Since the beginning of this decade, Barton Malow has teamed with other forward-thinking professionals to approach a series of projects with a few large clients. The results were measured, documented, and acknowledged as successful by all parties.

Now, when I was the Director of Business Development at various firms, I was always jazzed by the opportunity to share value with prospective clients. But of course, I had to curb my enthusiasm in the sense that that same value (project delivery system, in the Barton Malow case) was not universally beneficial; it was rarely a one-size-fits-all deal. Some clients would be appropriate for such an approach; other would not.

In identifying the 'right' audience, Barton Malow has pinpointed criteria for clients that would be a great fit and beneficiary of IPD. That's the easy part.

Simultaneously---while Barton Malow continues to create strategic partnerships with key A/E firms to approach---they will also consider ways to reshape the IPD message so that the lessons, methodologies, tools, etc, can be retrofit to other project types that will not be appropriate for the official Integrated Project Delivery approach.

**In short, these are the steps one should take when in this situation:**

**DIRECT PURSUITS OF THE NEW SELLING POINT:**

1. Identify the ultimate, 'perfectly suited' client for the new service, approach, discipline, etc. Discuss if the selling point is more germane to a particular client type (industry) or a building type. This will help narrow and finely tune the field of prospects.
2. Identify the 'almost suited' clients using the same approach.

**INDIRECT APPLICATIONS OF THE NEW SELLING POINT:**

1. Examine your firm's current market focuses beyond those identified above. For each, what are their decision-making criteria when selecting a service provider? Verify your assumes of their criteria with trusted clients in those markets.
2. Based on those criteria, are there elements of your new selling point that could be modified, borrowed, or otherwise have a positive impact on other clients and prospects?
3. If so, might your firm be willing to do some lower cost 'trial runs' with favorite clients to see if they see benefit, and if so, you'll surely get testimonials to support any future claims that the new selling point is valuable, even if that particular client opts to buy a different service/approach/etc. from your firm.

**For additional information about IPD, please reference the following articles:**

**Small Steps Toward IPD**

***Barton Malow and EYP Team Together for project using IPD***

September 2009

<http://www.architectmagazine.com/business/small-steps-toward-ipd.aspx>

**Realizing the Promise of Lean Project Delivery**

***With Owners Leading the Charge, the Collaborative Approach Can Generate a 20% Savings***

Published August 13 2008

<http://www.tradelineinc.com/reports/A4570F9E-2B3B-B525-8354BAFDE8D9F1BE>

\* <http://www.leanconstruction.org/>

\*\* <http://www.ncppp.org/howpart/ppptypes.shtml>