



Value: The A/E/C Industry's Biggest Blind Spot?

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Introduction

My Background

My Passion for this Topic



Value as Defined by the Client

- Do we know what our clients/prospects value?
How they define value?
 - ✓ Client-specific
 - ✓ Individual-specific
- Most basic: comparing fee charged vs. services/deliverables provided

Value *(cont.)*

- What can impact perceived value?

- ✓ Your fee
- ✓ Quality of work/deliverables
- ✓ Perception of “going the extra mile”
- ✓ Saving your client time and/or money
- ✓ Reducing/eliminating your clients’ risk
- ✓ Making your client look good
- ✓ Responsiveness and timeliness
- ✓ Overall client experience
- ✓ What else?



Value *(cont.)*

- Key metric: Net Promoter Score (NPS)
 - ✓ Measures client satisfaction and loyalty—the byproduct of value conveyed.
 - ✓ Using a 1 to 10 scale, NPS assesses how likely your client is to refer your firm to his/her peers.
 - Promoters: those who rate likelihood as 9 or 10
 - Neutral: those who rate likelihood as 7 or 8*
 - Detractors: those who rate likelihood as 6 or less

****Refer to Fred Reichheld's book, "The Ultimate Question: Driving Good Profits and True Growth"***

Value *(cont.)*

- Tools to communicate value:
 - ✓ Benefits (versus features)
 - Feature: an attribute of your firm
 - Benefit: How a particular feature meets your clients' needs.
 - ✓ Differentiators (often difficult to define)
- Is knowledge based on your subjective observations and inferences alone?
- Do you elicit specific feedback and incorporate independently-gathered data from clients and prospects?

Tools to Eliminate Value Blind Spots:



Tools *(cont.)*

Client-Prospect Studies:

- Conduct every 2-3 years
- Good precursor to strategic planning; marketing/BD planning

Ongoing Client Monitoring:

- Ongoing interviews with current clients
- Good tool to stay in touch, assess client satisfaction, value conveyed

Loss Debriefs:

- Target key prospects/projects
- Gather data on a number of key areas
- Greater efficacy if conducted by 3rd party

Win Debriefs:

- Client compelled to participate
- Numerous benefits

Client/Prospect Studies & Ongoing Client Monitoring

- Strategic relationship-building tool
- Sends clear messages to clients:
 - ✓ You don't take them for granted—you value their feedback
 - ✓ You value self-reflection and continuous improvement

CPS and OCM *(cont.)*

- Enables you to strategically target influencers/decision-makers
- Can feed data back to client leader and project team to immediately address weak spots
- Data also invaluable to marketing, BD, HR, finance and accounting staff

Debunking Myths

Clients will feel bothered (*messaging is so important!*)

Clients will feel “offended” if a third-party conducts the research

MYTH

Statistical significance is necessary

We already know what they’re going to say

Clients don't feel bothered...

Sample quotes from three different client studies:

“This (study) made me feel valued, and I appreciate it. We’ve realized here at (Organization Name) that this research they’re conducting makes them a more impressive company.”

Sample Interview Quotes *(cont.)*

“Undertaking these interviews demonstrates to me that (Firm A) wants to be poised to provide the services its clients need, and that they’re not sitting back on their laurels.”

Sample Interview Quotes *(cont.)*

“I think it’s great that they’re doing this type of study — they need to do this if they’re going to be successful. We don’t want to have to rely on just Company A.”

Most Common Mistakes

**Don't use skilled
and/or independent
interviewers**

**Process is
haphazard**

**Using a written
survey**

**Not leveraging
study for client
development**

Win/Loss Debriefs: Best Practices & Maximizing ROI

Win Debriefs



Why Debrief After a Win?

- Sends powerful message:
 - ✓ You don't take client for granted
 - ✓ You're a learning organization that values continuous improvement
- Provides an opportunity to gather valuable intel when client is compelled to answer your questions:
 - ✓ What you did well/areas for improvement in proposal, presentation, and other areas
 - ✓ Competitive intel: what your competitors did well
 - ✓ Bottom line: why they selected you

Why Debrief After a Win *(cont.)*

- Enables you to re-calibrate with project team the client's expectations and their measures for success
- Fosters positive dynamic for future project communications
- Provides great opportunity to practice the art of asking probing questions



Sample Questions

- What stood out about our firm that you liked—resulting in our selection?
- What could we have done better with respect to:
 - ✓ Pre-positioning
 - ✓ Our proposal
 - ✓ Our presentation
 - ✓ Other areas
- Which other firms most impressed you and why?

Sample Questions *(cont.)*

- How will you define success for this project?
 - ✓ Recognize nuance: individual's response may differ from client organization
 - ✓ Seek specific parameters
 - ✓ If necessary, reconfirm if measures of success have already been clearly communicated



What to Do with the Data

- Feed data back to the PM/project team ASAP
 - ✓ Identify areas for course corrections
 - ✓ Determine appropriate implementation strategies
- Share as case study in regularly scheduled BD meeting
- Enter synopsis of feedback into CRM or other appropriate knowledge-sharing tool

Win/Loss Debriefs: Best Practices & Maximizing ROI

Loss Debriefs



Why Debrief After a Loss?

Why loss debriefs
sometimes don't
happen

- Can be difficult, frustrating, and painful
- Human nature: due to lack of time, difficult tasks get put off
- Lack of skills/training
- Lack of accountability

Why Debrief After a Loss *(cont.)*

- The case for loss debriefs:
 - ✓ Pursuit costs (e.g., expenses, opportunity cost of tying up billable and non-billable time)
 - ✓ Sends strong message to prospect:
 - Continuous improvement
 - You want to win the next one



Why Debrief After a Loss *(cont.)*

Debrief data can
inform/improve
marketing/BD
processes:

- Gathering competitive intel
- Opportunity pre-positioning
- Proposals/RFQ responses
- Your presentation and its many components

Sample Questions



Remember: If you don't ask, you won't get!



Prioritize in light of interviewee time constraints



What were your most important criteria during the selection process?



How could our RFP response been improved? (e.g., Was it clear? Did it sufficiently address your questions and hot-button issues?).



(If your firm was shortlisted) Why were we selected to the short-list of firms to be interviewed?

Sample Questions *(cont.)*



What stood out about our firm that you liked?



What concerns did you have, if any?



How did we perform during the interview process? (Seek specific data regarding presenters; their content/style.)



Was our presentation compelling or did it miss the mark? Why/why not?

Sample Questions *(cont.)*



What stood out about the winning team that you liked?



How did our fee compare to our competitors?



What advice do you have for our firm as we pursue future opportunities?

Capturing ROI from Client Data

- Applications:
 - ✓ Strategic planning
 - ✓ Marketing/business development planning
 - ✓ Project management and delivery
 - ✓ Finance and accounting
 - ✓ Human resources
 - ✓ Other areas

Capturing ROI from Client Data *(cont.)*

- Key take-aways:

- ✓ Don't undertake if you're not ready to listen and act:
 - Firm culture is determinant: CYA or continuous improvement?
One client: "We treat problems as gold"
 - Client action plans shared with project team

Leveraging Data in Client Development

- Follow-up meetings to address:



Incorporating Data into Strategic Planning Process

**Trends/drivers
impacting clients**

**New service
offerings**

**Competitive
analysis**

**Strategic
positioning &
messaging**



The Straight Scoop...

- How can we command the fees deserved (*and avoid commoditization*) if we don't clearly understand what our clients value and how they measure it?



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