



Pointers

Presentation

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THE OPTIMUM PRESENTATION APPROACH ACHIEVES EFFECTIVE DIFFERENTIATION

Clients often ask: "How can I favorably differentiate myself from competition?" It seems they are looking for a gimmic, a technique or a method by which they can be remembered. The assumption goes like this: The short-listed firms are more or less equally qualified. How can we do something to stand out, look different, be remembered enough to be selected?

My answer is simple: Effective differentiation does not happen with a gimmic created by you! Effective differentiation is accomplished by a reflecting understanding of that which is important to the clients and their decision makers. In other words: Clients buy needs satisfaction. Whichever team can prove that they understand their client's institutional and personal needs and prove that they can satisfy these needs will be selected.

The table explains the optimum presentation approach and compares it to the classical (poor) approach.

CLIENT'S INSTITUTIONAL NEEDS are, or are attempted to be, described in the RFQ/RFP. These needs represent the job to be done. For example renovation of a school, designing a building, modifying a treatment plant—whatever. Typically, all short-listed firms are

(perceived to be) capable of satisfying the needs of the project.

How effective you are in meeting the decision makers' personal job-related needs will dictate who will win. Personal needs are not listed anywhere. Your knowledge of the people involved—their relationships to each other or to the project, their fears, their goals, their visions and their dreams comes from face-to-face contacts. This knowledge forms the basis for determining how to satisfy their personal needs.

Three examples provide explanations:

1. A county was interviewing for a county-wide solid waste management study. Selection panel consisted of elected officials. Each official feared negative reaction from the voters regardless of which waste management solution they would select. The team who ultimately won recognized these fears and created an

approach that got the elected officials off the hook: The public would make the decision, not the elected officials. It was clearly a win-win situation for the elected officials, the public, and the consultant who won the job despite a fee and delivery time that exceeded that of the other proposals. This winner created a customized approach. They satisfied the requirements for the project and satisfied key personal position related needs.

PRESENTATION APPROACHES		
	POOR	OPTIMUM
Content Focus	Your qualifications	Client's institutional needs
Differentiation technique	Gimmic by which to be remembered	Individual decision makers' personal needs
		Prove how your approach meets all needs by... 1. Offering a customized approach 2. Using innovative design ideas 3. Using creative presentation methods

2. A client wanted a new head-quarters building. The site had been purchased. Through personal visits, the winning team learned of unhappiness and fears regarding the site. One concern was that staff could not see how a new building could accommodate their needs for safe parking and access to the main building. They thought that they had to park several blocks away. The winning team, realizing this, showed them how the building could be built to include on-site, safe parking. The losing teams talked about their building experiences. The winning team demonstrated their design skills and also showed a solution that negated client's fears.

3. A water utility expected visitors from all over the world to their new state-of-the-art treatment plant. Design consultants were interviewed for the job of designing an appropriate automation system. The winner recognized the personal motivation that drove the decision: The need to have visitors recognize that the automation system represented state-of-the-art. Their interview presentation addressed these personal needs by showing a physical model of the control room. The selection panel members could look through a window in the model and saw what the visitors would see when the building was completed: What they saw was an impressive expansive graphic control panel and color graphic computer terminals, exactly what they wanted.

The optimum presentation is characterized by a focus on the client's institutional and personal needs. In addition, the differentiation is achieved by establishing a customized approach to doing the work, utilizing innovative design ideas and using creative presentation methods.

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