

The Skinny on Consultant Relationships (summary edition)

A Presentation of the



Rationale

- ▶ Communities and regions spend an extraordinary amount of time and money trying to garner positive attention of site selection consultants
- ▶ SEDC asked, point blank, what was working, what wasn't, and who was doing it the best
- ▶ Why Important?
 - Reputation
 - Repeat business
 - Viable and vetted projects
 - Sophisticated eye and feedback

Methodology

- ▶ State and SEDC leaders contributed to a list of the “top” site selection consultants
- ▶ Kristin R. Williams of KRW Strategies retained to:
 - Conduct personal phone interviews with 20 of the highest scored “top” consultants
 - Create and deploy on-line survey, based on phone survey results, which was received by 476 consultants resulting in a 15% response rate
 - Prepare the presentation

Today's Presentation

- ▶ When you see an answer reported as a percentage – those came from the broader electronic survey
- ▶ In-depth comments were collected in the phone surveys
- ▶ Communities/regions listed on “Best practices slides” were mentioned multiple times unless otherwise noted. Many communities were cited only once.

Phone Interviewees

Site Location Consultants	
Angelos Angelou	Ed McCallum
Del Boyette	Mike Mullis
Darin Buelow	Brent Pollina
Buzz Canup	John Rhodes
Dennis Donovan	Jonathan Sangster
Jay Garner	Don Schjeldahl
Jeanette Goldsmith	Dick Sheey
Bob Hess	Frank Spano
Derith Jarvis	Mark Sweeney
Bob Leak	Jerry Szatan

What are the Best Ways to Get Your (Consultant's) Attention?

- ▶ Developing a personal relationship
- ▶ Having all parts of your marketing effort coordinated
- ▶ Sending occasional, relevant, SHORT, emails with good subject lines from someone the consultant knows
- ▶ Following-up after meeting, touching base
- ▶ Conducting QUALITY FAM tours

What are the Best Ways to Get Your Attention?

%	Response
62%	Conduct a quality FAM Tour
55%	Schedule appointment or meal at a conference we both attend
47%	Schedule a meeting in my office
44%	Host a meal for consultants in my area
39%	Participate in a “Meet the Consultants” event
39%	Send <i>QUARTERLY</i> newsletter or email
33%	Send <i>MONTHLY</i> newsletter or email
31%	Hire me for community speaking engagement
31%	Schedule phone call to introduce yourself
31%	Share clever gifts that relate to one’s community
27%	Send postcards with relevant information
13%	Send marketing materials

What are the WORST Ways to Get Your Attention?

- ▶ “Worst is print advertising and blast emails with no content.”
- ▶ “Don’t send me information in the mail unless I ask for it.”
- ▶ “Unless it is an invoice or a check, I toss it.”
- ▶ “I have never looked at a promotional CD or DVD I’ve received.”
- ▶ “Not having an existing relationship – don’t get some name off of a list and start blasting emails.”

FAM Tours

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FAM Tours

- ▶ How many FAM Tours do you have time for in a given year?

%	Number per Year
31%	2
21%	3
17%	1
13%	4
8%	0
4%	5
0%	6 or more

- ▶ Most of the “top 20” reported being able to attend 1-2 a year out of 25-30 invitations

FAM Tours

- ▶ Showcase what makes your area **UNIQUE**
- ▶ Invite spouses/guest
- ▶ No more than two days
- ▶ Must be “first class the way”
- ▶ Make sure there is some fun; not all work.
- ▶ Vet your guest list: “*many take advantage of these and are not the right consultants to have.*”
- ▶ Know the consultants’ areas of expertise

FAM Tours

- ▶ Name one community or region that puts on a great FAM Tour.
 - Boise, ID
 - Florida's Great Northwest
 - Nashville ED Partnership
 - Upstate Alliance (SC)

Marketing

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Marketing

- What differentiates a great marketing program?
 - “Tenacity beyond the norm”
 - “Cover all your bases”
 - “Consistency of contact and quality of the information”
 - “Define a strategy and stick to it”
 - “Consistent theme”
 - “Play upon assets and reinforce with marketing to share what is unique and distinctive”

What Local Area Marketing has Knocked Your Socks Off Lately?

- ▶ Asked of the Top 20 – most referenced
 - Charlotte Regional Partnership
 - Cleveland Plus/Team NEO
 - St. Louis Region
 - Hampton Roads, VA
 - Florida's Great NW

What local area strategy has knocked your socks off lately?

- “Almost Nashville, KY”
- Bowling Green, KY
- Colorado Springs, CO
- Danville, VA
- Duke Power
- El Paso, TX
- Greenville, SC
- Jacksonville, FL
- Knoxville-Oak Ridge
- NE Indiana
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Orlando, FL
- Paducah, KY
- Piedmont Triad, NC
- Richmond, VA
- South Central, KY
- TVA
- Upstate Alliances, SC
- Power folks in SE, in general

Others mentioned by the “top 20”

What do Communities Waste Money on?

- ▶ “Trade magazines coerce them.” “Zero effectiveness and frivolous waste.”
- ▶ “Print advertising. Banner ads websites are probably wiser investments.”
- ▶ “Bad websites.”
- ▶ “Without a doubt, mailing glossy brochures or annual reports to site consultants.”
- ▶ “Untargeted advertising. Touting a Quality of Life.”
- ▶ “Travel – feels like EDs don’t make business decisions about trips but instead choose where they want to go.”

What do Local Communities UNDER Spend on, Annually?

▶ GETTING OUT THERE

- “Face-to-face marketing”
- “I think there is a bigger bang for your buck in establishing relationships.”
- “This is a relationship business. Get face-to-face with clients and consultants.”

Name One Community or Region that Consistently Sustains an Impressive **MARKETING STRATEGY**

- ▶ Bowling Green, KY
- ▶ Charlotte, NC
- ▶ Cleveland, OH/Team NEO
- ▶ Hampton Roads, VA
- ▶ Kansas City, MO
- ▶ Nashville, TN

Name One Community or Region that Makes a Great Case for their TARGET INDUSTRIES

- ▶ Charlotte, NC
- ▶ Florida's Great NW
- ▶ Kansas City
- ▶ Oklahoma City, OK
- ▶ Pittsburgh Regional Alliance

Target Markets

- ▶ “Truly quantify your target industries. Publish very precise reasons and rationale for why your targets should be successful in your community.”
- ▶ “Make sure your marketing is aligned with your targets. Those communities that are not strategic are really missing the boat.”

Websites

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Websites

What frustrates you the most about community or regional economic development organization's WEBSITES?

57%	NOT PROVIDING RELEVANT, CURRENT INFORMATION
16%	Finding contact information
11%	Ease of navigation
3%	Determining the area's location – No state ID, county name vs. city name, etc.
3%	Not being able to download PDFs or information files

Name One Community or Region that has an Outstanding WEBSITE

- ▶ Metro Atlanta
- ▶ Charlotte Regional Partnership
- ▶ Kansas City Area Development Council
- ▶ Longview, TX
- ▶ Nashville, TN
- ▶ Pittsburg Regional Alliance
- ▶ Team NEO/Cleveland Plus
- ▶ TVA

Emails

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Emails

- ▶ Approximately how many emails do you receive a day from ED organizations not related to ongoing projects?

%	Number of Emails
41%	0 – 5
39%	6 – 10
8%	16 – 20
7%	11 – 15
3%	21 – 30
1%	41 or more

- ▶ Top 20 reported 25+ daily

Emails – Desired Content

- ▶ Newsworthy announcements
- ▶ New company locations
- ▶ Company closures
- ▶ Important legislation
- ▶ New incentives
- ▶ Leadership changes
- ▶ Business-oriented stories
 - Demonstrate how your community can carry a project through to completion –why a company chose you.
 - “Balance your message of success with what’s left for the next company.”

Emails – UNdesired Content

- ▶ Unemployment rates or any other statistic that changes frequently.
- ▶ Annual reports
- ▶ Long stories
- ▶ “Blast emails with no content”
- ▶ Attachments = big no-no

Emails – Desired Format

- ▶ 30-second scan. Short!
- ▶ “If you are going to send me an email, make sure it is from the ED person I know and not the technical person assigned to blast emails.”
- ▶ NO attachments
- ▶ **ATTENTION GRABBING SUBJECT LINES**
- ▶ Bullet points or headlines with hyperlinks to more information or longer stories
- ▶ Consider customizing email “notes” rather than blast e-newsletters; tailor for specific consultants

Emails - Frequency

- ▶ “Once a month **AT THE MOST**. Some places send daily.”
- ▶ “These people are hounding me on a weekly basis. I get something from them every 14 minutes. Don’t blow me away with quantity of communication.”
- ▶ “Monthly or quarterly; but only when you have something important to say.”
- ▶ “I hate emails.” (*know your consultants’ preferences*)

Meetings

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Meetings

- ▶ In consultants' offices'
 - “What works well is a 30-minute meeting then go to lunch.”
- ▶ Event in a consultant's city
 - “If you are going to an area ripe with consultants and host an event, make sure the venue is “hot.” I am more likely to go to someplace I haven't tried before.”
- ▶ At tradeshow or professional meetings
 - “I will take invitations at those events – first come, first served.”
 - “Call ahead to carve 15 minutes out during a *Meet the Consultants* event.”

Meetings

▶ Content

- “Charlotte, NC came by today and introduced new end-of-year results that were tied to a target marketing strategy. I learned a few new things this morning.”
- “I like the face-to-face meetings where there is no ‘pitch’ but Q&A. Impressed with communities that ask questions first rather than lecture.”
- “What is new?”

Gifts

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Where do you Come Down on Gifts?

- ▶ MUST RELATE TO THE COMMUNITY IN SOME WAY TO HAVE THE DESIRED IMPACT
 - “Ones that tie back to the community brand image.”
“I like music or food best.”
 - “After all the years, only seven gifts sit on my desk because they are inordinately cool and speak to the location.”
 - “I don’t need anymore USB flash drives!” (heard repeatedly)

Doing Deals

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Community Responsiveness

- ▶ How frequently do you receive responses to RFPs from communities/regions by the date requested?

%	Response
4%	100% of the time
41%	90% of the time
30%	80% of the time
11%	70% of the time
3%	60% of the time
4%	50% of the time
2%	Less than 50% of the time

Community Responsiveness

- ▶ How frequently do you receive responses to RFPs from communities/regions completed with all of the information requested?

%	Response
0%	100% of the time
27%	90% of the time
20%	80% of the time
13%	70% of the time
14%	60% of the time
6%	50% of the time
18%	Less than 50% of the time

RFPs

- ▶ Name one community or region that is outstanding in completing and submitting RFPs.
 - Albuquerque, NM
 - Atlanta, GA
 - Bowling Green, KY
 - Charlotte, NC
 - Columbus, GA
 - El Paso, TX

Incentives

- ▶ What is the ONE attribute you wish would find more often in LOCAL incentive programs?

%	Response
35%	Flexibility in incentives provided
19%	Local incentive above and beyond state offerings
18%	Incentive criteria published on website
9%	Community cost/benefit analysis of incentives
7%	Written incentive criteria and application process
6%	Locals more up front about incentives provided
4%	Incentives targeted to specific industries

What are the Ways Communities Mess Up?

- ▶ “If the site and package aren’t exactly right, address the topics and tell how you are correcting.”
- ▶ “Clients from larger areas are generally nervous about small communities...Be especially attune to stereotypes that could be reinforced – diversity, education, etc.”
- ▶ “How well organized speaks volumes.”
- ▶ “I am very anal about the itinerary – don’t spring new sites on me.”

What are the Ways Communities Mess Up?

- ▶ Well-prepped, effective volunteers are crucial
 - “Communities that only have staff speaking for them. No volunteer involvement.”
 - “Having the wrong kinds of people involved. Politicians in the fray will dominate the conversation and scare a project away.”
 - “Hate to walk into a meeting and hear ‘*tell me about your project.*’ Educate everyone before the meeting on what you know. Don’t waste time re-telling the deal.”

What are the Ways Communities Mess Up?

- ▶ “Starting and stopping on time, with the right people, everyone saying the same thing, consistency. Show how they can get company into production sooner. Impressions of competency of the community come through.”
- ▶ “Leadership at the community level differentiates. Closes the deal. Make a personal connection, business strategy connection, and credibility connection. Seen real deals close sitting at the conference table with more communities to visit because of chemistry.”

What are the Ways Communities Mess Up?

- ▶ “If we don’t close in your community, don’t get defensive or put head in sand. Find out what didn’t work. Richmond, VA and Kansas City have effective programs to get feedback on deals. Maybe 5% ask for feedback. Get it and improve! Tremendous amount of mediocrity out there.”
- ▶ “Impression that “they don’t have it together.” Didn’t like the style or personalities. I’ve been kept waiting an hour with a client. Venues for sales pitches not quiet, not glamorous.”

Summary

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General recommendations

- There is no “Cookie Cutter” approach to marketing to consultants; it’s relationships
- “Consistency is what brings economic development groups to the forefront”
- Economic developers are hiding behind technology
- Messages are not getting through or, worse, irritating your target audience
- Communities **MUST** figure out how to differentiate to rise to the top of the pile

Summary

- ▶ It's a relationship business. Get to know the consultants. Be attuned to providing consultants information they want, how they want it.
 - Differentiate by getting all the information in before the RFP deadline.
- ▶ Focus on a consistent marketing theme and become experts in your targets. Don't waste money on frivolous items or trips.
- ▶ Volunteers – you need to be coachable. Be on the same page, take the lead from your ED. **You can make or break the deal.**

THANK YOU

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