

MARKETER

THE JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR MARKETING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

VOLUME 37, ISSUE 5, OCTOBER 2018

AWARDS ISSUE

- 14 THE SMPS REBRAND REVEAL
- 18 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
IN A POST-BREXIT WORLD
- 29 2018 SMPS AWARDS

8

The Secret Value-Add to Your Project Team: You!



SCOTT D. BUTCHER, FSMPS, CPSM, is vice president of JDB Engineering, Inc., in York, PA. Butcher was a Society director from 2016–18 and SMPS Foundation president from 2014–15. Contact him at 717.434.1543 or sbutcher@jdbe.com.

10

Can an Introvert Succeed at BD? (Yes, Here's How)



RICH FRIEDMAN is president of Friedman & Partners, a marketing and management consultancy in Wayland, MA, that crafts and implements growth strategies for A/E/C firms. Contact him at 508.276.1101 or rich@friedmanpartners.com.

14

The SMPS Rebrand Reveal



MICHAEL V. GEARY, CAE, is chief executive officer of the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) and the SMPS Foundation. Contact him at 703.549.6117, x221, or michael@smps.org.

18

International Business Development in a Post-Brexit World



RICHARD NELSON is managing director and owner of Abyss Global Ltd., a U.K.-based management consultancy. An SMPS member since 1991, he won two MCAs, spoke at two Society conferences, and served on the SMPS New York board. Contact him at +44.7730.680976 or richard.nelson@abyssglobal.com.

22

Employing Guerrilla Marketing To Energize Promotional Activities



CHRISTOPHER PRIEST is a communications and marketing professional from Seattle, WA. Currently with OAC Services, he's worked in the A/E/C industries for nearly 20 years. Contact him at 206.436.9711 or cpriest@oacsvcs.com.

26

Proposal Writing: Stop Doing This



MATT HANDAL is author of *Proposal Development Secrets*, contributing editor of *Marketer*, and business development manager at Trauner Consulting Services, Inc., in Philadelphia, PA. Contact him at 215.814.6431 or matt.handal@traunerconsulting.com.

48

Complaints Welcome: How You Can Use Negative Feedback To Become a Better Leader



JEN MCGOVERN, CPSM, is mid-Atlantic regional marketing manager for VHB in Tysons, VA. She serves as director of the Career Advancement Committee for SMPS Washington, D.C. Contact her at 571.389.8171 or jmcgovern@vhb.com.

52

Creating an Agile-Inspired Proposal Process



CHAZ ROSS-MUNRO, CPSM, CF APMP, is an implementation specialist with Cosential, based in Austin, TX. She has been working in A/E/C for nearly 15 years. Contact her at 800.505.7089, x8012, or crossmunro@cosential.com.

International Business Development

in a Post-Brexit World

By Richard Nelson

When is the best time to expand internationally? It's a question I wrote about several years ago in my article of the same title that was published in the October 2015 issue of *Marketer*. I am contemplating it again as the United Kingdom (U.K.)—where I live and work—hurtles toward the abyss of an existence outside the European Union, having been a member for over four decades.

My question is not just limited to A/E/C firms operating in the U.K. There are political, economic, social, technological, and environmental challenges happening all around the world. These challenges are making firms question whether they should stay focused on their domestic market or diversify internationally to spread their risk and take advantage of exciting new opportunities.

Using my adopted home as the case study for A/E/C firms operating in the U.K., I know that many firms are grappling with this question right now, with the potential threat of a “no deal” or a “bad deal” Brexit looming—and even the distant hint of a possibility of a second referendum.

What does the research tell us? Construction order books in the U.K. are likely to decline in the immediate few years after Brexit Day (March 29, 2019). The question is by how much—five percent, 10 percent? I've even heard speculation of a 30 percent drop. One thing is for sure, until there is more certainty over financial markets, international trade,

and movement of labor, companies and investors will inevitably decide not to deploy precious capital on new bricks and mortar—it's happening already.

Whether this is only due to Brexit is the subject of some debate, as we seem to be nearing, if not already past, a natural peak in the property cycle—certainly in London that seems to be the case. Thankfully, the U.K. government is pressing on with much-needed infrastructure projects to prime the pumps, but that will only go so far and only reach certain firms' order books.

The biggest political issue in two generations takes center stage as the culprit of the U.K.'s impending economic woes, and it is making many design and construction firm boards ask the unanswerable question: Where will we be working in five years?

For many firms, the answer lies in revisiting past plans and ambitions to work internationally, exporting that world-beating U.K. creativity and innovation that has been the envy of much of the globe for many years.

Preparation Is Key

Whether you are in the United Kingdom, United States, or anywhere else in the world, there is no right or wrong time to enact your international expansion strategy, but it is wholly dependent on your mindset, vision, ambition, and level of preparedness.

If I could suggest three pieces of advice as a starting point:

Start simple. Don't expect to take on the entire world from day one. Focus your energies on just one of the following as an initial objective:

- Client-intimacy approach: Leverage a relationship with an existing key client who has business interests in other countries, thereby traveling with them overseas.
- Expertise approach: Leverage your firm's expertise in a particular project type or service in which you excel and stand out from the crowd, and which your research confirms is in demand overseas.
- Market-focus approach. Leverage close business or personal connections in one location in which your services are generally in high demand, and seek to penetrate that market.

Be flexible and opportunistic. Plans are just that—plans. They are not commandments or binding contracts.



Final Advice

In the U.K., I would plan for the pessimistic—or rather realistic—forecast, but I would love to be happily surprised if things don't decline as much as expected. However, that's a huge risk to take, so I would advise planning for that occurrence. My money is on a minimum 10 percent decline, and as much as the 30 percent predicted by others. I have no data to back that, it's just my unscientific analysis and gut feeling (I've been more right than wrong in over 25 years of practice) based on conversations with colleagues and their view of their new business pipelines for 2019–20.

Firms must always plan for right-sizing their business to reflect external challenges, including figuring out where they can win enough new work to avoid letting people go, or, for the more ambitious, pursuing growth. There is also a flipside if you are working in expanding markets—will you be able to service your growing workload with your existing team, and, if not, where will you find more qualified and competent people?

My ultimate piece of advice is that **you must have a plan**, no matter what—hope is not a strategy.

Plans are not right or wrong, and yours could be anything from winding up the business to doubling your turnover within two years, but you should still have one either way. Keeping your plan clear and simple, being flexible and opportunistic, and being able to sense and react to changing market dynamics will give you confidence in leading your business into unknown waters and successfully dealing with the challenges you encounter along the way. ■

Note: If you need some help getting started with your plan, you can refer to my October 2015 *Marketer* article for a simple outline or check out some of the other documents in the MySMPS Marketing Resource Center.

We all know things change, so you have to allow for flexibility in your endeavors, especially when working internationally.

You can't control when a client will decide to spend their money on a project; after all, they are working to their business plan, not yours. All you can do is focus on executing your plan, position yourselves to win the work, and adjust as things become more real. When working internationally, the time it takes to secure a new project always seems to take twice as long as you expect, so allow for this. Then extend your forecast again, as undoubtedly there will be even further revelations that stretch things out.

Also keep your eyes and mind open to something unexpected that might come out of left field. I can't tell you how many times I've been involved in business development campaigns overseas, focusing on a group of clients and projects, and then one of the contacts we made along the way comes back with a completely different opportunity that we never knew about and never had any intention of pursuing, but presto, it's via referral so there's no competition, only a negotiation, and off we go. Strange things can happen when working internationally, so be flexible and take advantage of those unforeseen opportunities, as long as they make sense.

Sense and react. This is similar to the flexible and opportunistic advice, although sense and react really relates to making more meaningful adjustment to your overall plan.

For example, say your plan was to penetrate the Netherlands market for student housing. You start your campaign, making contacts, holding local events and exhibitions, speaking at conferences, doing competitions, and so forth. But you begin to see after six months that the market is slowing down, and you hear from investors that student housing is not very high on their agenda anymore, but hotels will be the new flavor of the month.

You must react to this change in the market. Otherwise, you will simply be pouring money down the drain. Your choices become either halt your campaign and retreat back home, or, if you happen to have an expertise in hotels, you could leverage the contacts and brand awareness you've built in the Netherlands to date to shift gears and pursue the hotel sector. Either way, standing still is not the best option.

Firms in the U.K. (and worldwide) have some serious work to do post-Brexit (or post-whatever-major-external challenges you are facing where you are). Every firm must decide whether they believe the pessimistic or optimistic forecasts and plan accordingly.