

Removing the Roadblocks to Get to the Ask

by Jen Newman, FSMPS, CPSM & Doug Parker, FSMPS, CPSM

You've spent countless business development hours and dollars developing relationships. You've put in the time to know everything you can about the client and their project. What's stopping you from making the ask? Clients aren't mind readers. Unless you let a client know that you want to work with them, they may not automatically think of you for future projects. Making the ask is a hallmark of a confident, proactive, and professional business developer and it represents a pivotal moment in the client relationship.

Asking for a project shifts the ownership of the situation to the client and empowers them with the responsibility to say "yes" or give a good reason for saying "no." Either way, you'll gain valuable insight with a successful close or learn what else the client may need before making the final decision about a project. Making the ask establishes an open, honest tone of "you have a need, I have a solution. Let's do business together."

The following tips are essential to make a successful ask:

- **Be proactive.** Don't wait until an RFP has hit the street. As soon as you learn about a project, do the research, develop your project approach, formulate your team, and schedule a meeting with the client to discuss.
- **Choose the right time and place to talk to the client.** Instead of cornering someone at a social gathering with a hard sell, ask the client for their card and follow-up at a more appropriate time and place. The right time and place are about the client's right time and place, not what is convenient for you.
- **Personalize each relationship.** Treat every client separately and distinctly.
- **Always use "we" instead of "I" when making an ask.** "We" connotes that the ask is on behalf of the firm with the strength and backing of your organization.



JEN NEWMAN



DOUG PARKER

ABOUT ELEVATE MARKETING ADVISORS

Elevate Marketing Advisors develops marketing and business development campaigns to invigorate your brand, differentiate your firm, and drive business to your bottom line so you stay focused on design and delivery of your discipline.

We are driven to help people and firms realize their beyond through relationship, advocacy, and an elevated client experience.

Get to the Ask, continued

- **Phrase your request in terms of benefits to the client.** Speak to “what’s in it for them.” Why will the client benefit from awarding your firm the project? If you’ve done a good job explaining the benefits of your services, you have every right to ask the prospect/client if they’d like the opportunity to enjoy those benefits by awarding you the project.
- **Listing to the issues and concerns of the client.** Credible leaders are credible communicators. They use listening and probing skills to gain important information and to strengthen their bond with the client.
- **Give the client an appropriate amount of time to make an informed decision.** Don’t pressure, manipulate, or overwhelm the client in hopes of persuading them to say “yes.” This tactic often backfires.
- **Accept the client’s answer – yes or no!** If you truly believe in what you’re selling, you’ll want to successfully meet the needs of as many prospects and clients as possible. Making the ask helps you do this by encountering concerns or objections to overcome, or by giving the client the right to say “no” and letting you move on to the next potential client.
- **If a client says “no,” propose alternatives.** Probe a little with your client and offer a different approach like, “if we are willing to sub civil engineering to someone you currently work with, would you be able to give us a project?”
- **Stay positive.** If you’re met with rejection, focus on what you’ve learned about the client or their project. And consider that every ask you make is practice for the next.
- **Win or lose, thank the client.** The client took time to consider your firm for selection. Treating them with respect and care is a good step in building the relationship which may result in “yes” in the future.
- **Follow up.** If you lose a project, look for opportunities to build a stronger relationship with the client and learn more about their needs which will better position you for their next project.

Winning work in the A/E/C industry is all about relationships. It often takes time and patience to build new relationships and gain the trust and respect of potential clients. Just like building relationships in our personal lives takes practice (remember your first boyfriend/girlfriend and what all you learned from that relationship) so does building business relationships.

Use the techniques above to make the ask. Listen to the client and get educated about them and their needs. Communicate your experience and passion for the project. Ask the client for the work. And, show your appreciation when you are awarded the project.

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