

Presenting for a New Client? Have Outstanding Client Knowledge!

I was part of a team presenting for a new opportunity this past week—new client and new type of agency. It was a state agency in my home state. We have never had an opportunity with them before. We responded to the proposal solicitation, and were selected (short-listed) for an interview. What an opportunity!

What happened? We almost totally missed the boat on two counts.

1. Know exactly where you are going. We knew the street address for the presentation. It was listed on the invitation-to-interview letter. But it listed the street address and building number only. We arrived at the site, only to find that it was a labyrinth (campus) of buildings and side streets, none labeled, and with building numbers only sporadically located on the buildings. And the building numbers did not seem to be logical. Could we go in and ask a location? No! Half of the buildings were unoccupied on this campus! As the clock ticked onward, we hurried to find the location.

2. Know as much about the client and project as possible. We knew some things about the client, but not a lot. My colleague, who was spearheading the presentation, had done the “due diligence” level of internet research. So, we knew that this agency has facilities in most counties in our state. Could we identify a particular facility by name? NO!

Lessons to be learned:

- **If you haven't been there, go early.** I would rather be one hour early than one minute late.
- **Know the client!** We knew the following: State agency, lots of facilities, environmental work on the agenda. We didn't know the individual facilities of this agency. How do we find out? See below.
- **Know the client's buzzwords.** I went online and found (on the fifth page of the internet search) an energy management plan for this agency that listed most of the agency's facilities in the various counties in our state, and each facility's energy status. Would this specific information have been useful in our interview? No. But it would have been good for us to pepper the conversation with names of their facilities... showing a level of knowledge and interest!

The bottom line: Show the prospective client that you know a lot about their agency and their needs. If you do, you will appear stronger and more tuned in to their needs. ■

Public-Private Partnerships (P3s): Part 1—Anatomy of a P3

by Karen Compton, PSMJ Resources consultant

To a business development professional, the term “P3” really means “the pursuit of a precarious project.” But it doesn't have to be that way. In his book, *Reflections on Regionalism*, Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institution notes that, “Increasingly, political leaders on both sides turn to business leaders for ideas and management talent, not just for financing campaigns and they expect to work with business coalitions through public-private partnerships.”

What is a public-private partnership? And more importantly, how do P3 deals affect the manner in which your firm pursues these projects? We will address these matters in this series of three articles.

The National Council of Public Private Partnerships defines a P3 this way:

- **“A contractual agreement between a public agency (federal, state or local) and a private sector entity...[to] deliver a service or facility for the use of the general public.”**
- **“These facilities can, and do, include highways, toll bridges, libraries, convention centers, hotels, and courthouses—to name a few.”**
- **“In addition to the sharing of resources, each party shares in the risks and rewards potential in the delivery of the service and/or facility.”**

We are all familiar with design-build or even design-build-operate. But, P3s can take other shapes:

- **Design-build-finance-operate-maintain,**
- **Design-build-finance- maintain,**
- **Developer finance, or**
- **Any one of a dozen other structures.**

In these configurations, the commonality is finance, and hence, the reason why P3 pursuits can pose challenges to business development professionals.

In Part 2 of this series we will focus on understanding how a P3 project comes about.

Karen Compton is principal of A3K Consulting (Glendale, CA), a business development and strategic planning firm specializing in the architecture, engineering and construction industries. Ms. Compton is a national speaker and published author on the subjects of business strategy and business development. Contact her at kcompton@a3kconsulting.com