

my turn

How to Gain (and Retain) a Competitive Edge

BY MICHAEL J. HOLLERAN II, PCM, CPSM

In today's marketplace, the line between success and failure is razor thin. Marketers are always on the lookout for new ways to capture new business. One way for a firm to increase its competitive advantage is through the implementation of technology.

As marketers, we always stress the importance of marketing to our technical staff along with becoming more involved in the marketing process. We stress to them how important their role is in relation to the success of the firm. There are many ways to integrate your technical staff into the marketing process, but one perhaps overlooked way is to get involved in their processes.

To truly get your technical staff involved in the marketing process, you must first show an active interest in their



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processes. We sometimes forget or do not understand the amount of effort our technical staff endures to ensure the work we sell is of a satisfactory quality for the client. I've run across quite a few marketers and business developers who truly don't understand their own firm's technical capabilities. Yet, they are trying to sell to clients new cutting-edge processes their firm cannot offer through its current technology.

Take an active interest in what your technical staff does to truly understand your firm's capabilities and promote them better.

According to marketing consultant, author, and SMPS leader Sally Handley, "The game never changes, only the technology does."

In the book *A/E/C Marketing Fundamentals* (recommended reading in the CPSM program), the second chapter is devoted to virtual construction. This is a great overview emphasizing the importance of understanding how the building process works. According to authors Kubal, Miller, and Worth, "CAD files will become the nucleus of the virtual construction organization. All planning, purchasing, scheduling, and communication will grow from the project's CAD files." Many of the technologies described in that book are available now. As marketers, we are always on the lookout for a "leg up" on the competition. Could it be that the "leg up" might be right down the hall?

Following are resources to tap into and educate yourself on building industry technologies:

Architectural

Autodesk: www.autodesk.com

Bentley: www.bentley.com

Graphisoft: www.graphisoft.com

Civil/GIS

Autodesk: www.autodesk.com

Bentley: www.bentley.com

Eaglepoint: www.eaglepoint.com

ESRI: www.esri.com

Within the architectural and engineering community, there is an extremely big push for *building information modeling* (BIM). While the true definition of BIM is open for interpretation, I would encourage you to research your firm's own capabilities and the future requirements for your particular business segment.

Autodesk's **REVIT Building 9**, for example, is one product leading the way in the BIM arena. Autodesk has numerous complementary products such as **REVIT Structure 3** and **REVIT**

Systems. These products are part of Autodesk's Structural and MEP solutions, respectively. Parametric technology within Autodesk's REVIT products enables changes made in one section of the model to be updated throughout the model.

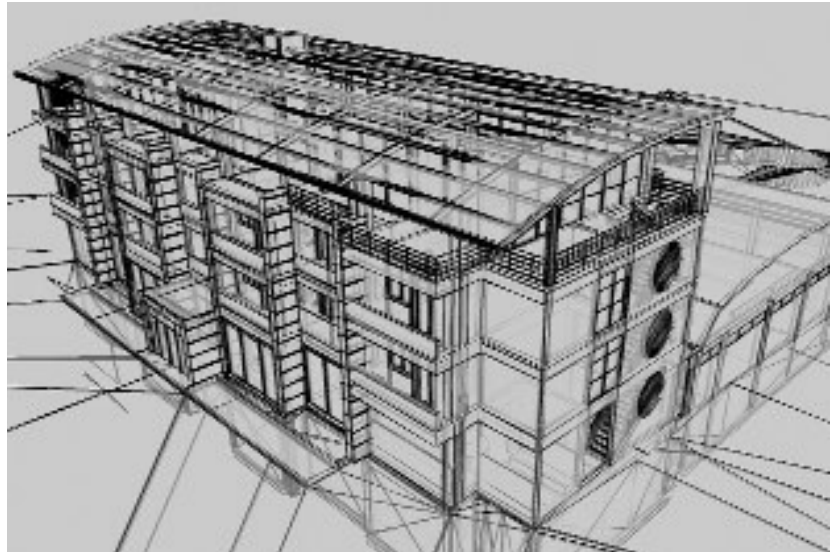
For example, if you add an additional door, your schedule will automatically reflect those changes. Another distinct advantage is your architect can send the model of the building to his or her structural/MEP engineer, who can work directly on the model and then send the changes back to the architect, who can accept or deny them. This process reduces time and energy and avoids reproducing the same set of drawings for the same project (let alone saving trees).

Another resource is the growing number of technology user groups such as **REVITcity** in the architectural industry that provide users a forum to share information and post technical questions to colleagues around the globe. Participation in these groups is usually free and open to the public.

Graphisoft's 3D modeling solution is **Archicad**. This is a very popular choice among architects, especially in Europe. Graphisoft has many distinct features but particularly notable is that the software can run on two platforms, Microsoft Windows and Apple Macintosh. Graphisoft also offers a discussion forum on its Web site as well as a monthly newsletter.

Each company mentioned above has its own twist on BIM or parametric technology, providing a perfect opening to consult with your technical staff and show an interest in their work. Ask, "How does our current software relate to this?" or "Would upgrading to XYZ make us more competitive against W competitor?" This may also give you a little insight into your competitors and what they are doing.

In addition, most of the companies listed above broadcast Webcasts to educate the industry on their products. These are typically free of charge and open to the public. To learn more or sign up, go directly to each company's Web site or contact your local reseller.



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Having your technical staff on board the marketing effort is critical to the success of any firm in the 21st century. I believe marketers must become involved in the technology if they wish to lead their firms. You do not have to become an expert to talk intelligently about any new technology. However, the future of most firms will depend on how they embrace new technology. In a complex world where the margins are tighter and competition is stiff, can you afford not to embrace change? [M](#)



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