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Chicago

Winter/Spring 2019 Newsletter



BUSINESS TRANSFORMED THROUGH MARKETING LEADERSHIP.



SMPS Chicago's 2018 Summer Outing was at Rizzo's Bar & Inn before a Cubs game at Wrigley Field.

Thank you to Bob Elmore Photography for photographing our events and for the photos in this newsletter.



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Dawn Jones
SMPS Chicago
President

Greetings!

I am honored to be the president of the Chicago Chapter of SMPS at such a pivotal time for the organization. In 2018, we celebrated the 45th anniversary of the SMPS' founding and during our national conference, SMPS headquarters also published a strategic plan, a new brand image, and a new vision statement, "Business Transformed Through Marketing Leadership."

This is a bold vision and one that aligns with the goals the 2018-2019 board laid out at the Annual Meeting in Fall 2018. Marketing should drive the strategic vision to deliver top-line growth through research, knowledge, resources and community. The importance of marketing within the A/E/C industry continues to grow, and SMPS' new vision, brand and strategic plan outline how the organization will support our industry and continue to advance the importance of our role within the industry. Your knowledge and skills are vital to fulfilling this vision.

With more than 7,000 members across the United States and Canada, SMPS is indeed growing and remains relevant. We are committed to helping you reach your professional goals through efforts undertaken by SMPS headquarters and more specifically with our plans locally. We are halfway through the 2018-2019 program year and have already hosted programs and continuing education that seek to help each one of you grow in your career, and help your firm realize the value of SMPS and your importance to their overall success.

To round out the year, we will continue to provide you with programs and events that will educate and allow for networking opportunities that will help your firm gain a better position within the industry and improve your connections. We hope that you will invite your colleagues and leadership within your firm to these events so that they can gain a better understanding of SMPS and the value the organization provides. Through our professional development committee we will continue to provide top-level continuing education that will help you grow as a professional. And we are actively seeking co-learning opportunities with our fellow continuing education organizations, including the American Institute of Architects, American Society of Landscape Architects and American Council of Engineering Companies.

We are also reaching out to local universities and colleges to make marketing students and others aware of the A/E/C industry and our need for their specialized skills. Our goal for this is to help equip and educate the next generation of marketers to make sure our profession continues. This is a big vision, but in Chicago, we make no small plans and we invite you to join us in bringing this vision to life. If you aren't a member of SMPS, consider joining the organization as we hope the direction we are moving in aligns with you and your firm's goals. If you have questions or comments, please contact us. We are here to serve you!

On a personal note, I would like to thank each of the presidents and all of the directors who I have served with during my time on the board, first as treasurer and now as president. I have grown in many ways through my interactions with each of you and your support through every step of my path to the presidency, and my term as president has been more than greatly appreciated. Also, a special thanks to Nikki (Dvorak) Jeffers because I never would have run for treasurer if she hadn't asked me that most important question, "Do you like numbers?"

Best regards,

Dawn R. Jones
President, SMPS Chicago, 2018-19
president@smpschicago.org



We're going digital!

This will be the last print copy of SMPS Chicago's newsletter. Expect future communications from our President, members, and sponsors in you inbox and on our website.

HAVE A QUESTION?

WE ARE HERE TO HELP.

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Professional Development:
professionaldevelopment@smpschicago.org

Programs: programs@smpschicago.org

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MAKING YOUR CASE

Incorporating Client Case Studies into Your Content Strategy



Jon Davis, Marketing and Content Manager at Cushing

Ever ponder how powerful words can be? Consider this passage:

“Words are the colors of the paints we use to illustrate our pictures of life. Isn’t choosing the proper colors (words) a beautiful and exciting way to do exactly what we are trying to do – paint vivid word pictures?”

Could be an aspiring author contemplating his or her craft, right? It’s from Chapter Six of Zig Ziglar On Selling. He was a famous motivational speaker, salesperson and author. By the way, techniques he shares are great for professional and personal growth – not just selling.

Ziglar considered salespeople to be “word merchants” and encouraged those choosing the field to create visuals for prospects. How can we as marketers help them? One way is storytelling and helping potential customers imagine the possibilities. Case studies do more than showcase your work. They are great for content marketing because they can be shared with potential clients and inbound prospects. They also can excite your co-workers and enhance social media efforts.

How do you get started? Here are a few ways to gather content for your case studies:

Consider a questionnaire

In my experience the best way to gather details is a questionnaire. At Cushing we have one about 20 questions long. Some questions are softballs: How was your client

experience? While others are designed to help understand if challenges needed troubleshooting. Don’t shy away from sharing issues you solved. Providing a due date, in a friendly manner, is helpful. For example:

“Think you can complete this by next Wednesday?” I always offer the option of scheduling a phone interview. We’re all well-intentioned, clients want marketing, and 99 percent of customers think this is a good idea. The reality is people are busy – and sometimes the phone interview makes it much easier for your subject to participate. It’s about 50/50 in my experience whether people want to answer questions during a phone call or complete the questionnaire. During the calls, type their answers. I usually keep a Word document open or type these into an Outlook email (and then save drafts and send to myself).

Now that you have your questionnaire ready, who are you going to write about?

Internal referrals

Has a client recently submitted unsolicited positive feedback? That’s a golden goose, wrapped in a four-leaf clover, tied to a ... you get the picture. Just completed a unique installation or project that solved a problem? Tap your business development team for a contact. Do you have a longstanding customer who would appreciate being highlighted? Do you have an order system where you can view recent work and get contact names? These are all opportunities.



Outreach

Now that you have your possible story and contact name – reach out. I start with an email introduction with links to client stories. If you don't have those yet – no worries. Tell him or her your content goals. Play up the fact he or she will be the inaugural client story. Share case studies you think would help him or her get a visual. Stay away from competitors, but send your ideal website layout.

If I don't hear back, I follow up at the latest in five days by phone. If there is interest, I send the questionnaire and ask for permission to follow up in a week. Two voicemails. That's how many I leave for follow up. If I don't hear back – I send a final email with a note that I'll check back in two to three months.

My suggestion is to have a couple opportunities lined up. Think of them as leads in a funnel. There's no money exchanged, but you are selling an idea and hopefully closing a deal (your customer spotlight).

Content count

Case studies tend to fall anywhere from 500 to 750 words. We normally open with a client description that we have asked for in the questionnaire. Are there photos of the project you can include? Hopefully you received positive feedback about their customer experience. If you did, be sure to use that in the case study. Ask if you can use his or her headshot in the story. If they have one on their LinkedIn page, there is a chance it could work well for your website. Not everyone has a professional headshot, but it never hurts to ask.

Make it a win-win

Once you have your content drafted (or website preview page built), share with your client for final changes and an approval. Side note, at Cushing we do both – we send a word document for proofing, and a password-protected link only the client can access. Once active: Link back to your client website. Promote the case study in your newsletter. Share and tag the client on social media. Ask the client to share on social media channels. Let your sales team know a new client story has been published. Get the word out there.

Social proof

One other item I am pulling back in here is social proof. Much has been made about using social proof in marketing efforts. And for good reason - smiling customers, happy

faces, real names and titles can drive new customer conversions. The term is bandied about often – and to be fair, there are hundreds of articles and examples on the web. One of my favorites is from Andy Crestodina, chief marketing officer and co-founder at Orbit Media Studios. (Full disclosure: They helped us with a website migration and update about five years ago.)

“Social proof is evidence of legitimacy,” Crestodina said. “Simply show that others have chosen your product or service. The goal of social proof is to make any choice other than buying from you seem abnormal. It would be weird for visitors not to choose your brand.”

And this one:

When you say it, it's marketing.

When they say it, it's social proof.

One of the other nice benefits of developing case studies is you are sure to generate at least one or two testimonials. This valuable “social proof” can be used in marketing materials such as banner stands. Be sure to pepper them on product and service pages on your website.

Case studies are just one tactic in a larger marketing plan. However, it is lasting. Once the page is on your website, it is a permanent piece that can be referenced, linked to, shared and UPDATED. If you end up working with the same customer in future years, continue to share this story – and use the same case study page.

I'd love to hear your thoughts, strategies, ideas – and how you are turning customer projects into stories. Feel free to email me at marketing@cushingco.com. Or give me a call at 312.799.8331. •

Jon Davis is in the marketing department at Cushing, a display graphics firm in River North. Business-to-business professionals count on Cushing for print services that increase sales and enhance brand awareness. Cushing celebrates 90 years as a family-owned and Chicago-based business this year, and invites you to visit their website and meet the faces behind the fonts at cushingco.com. Connect with Jon at marketing@cushingco.com or on LinkedIn.

Member Spotlight

Kimberly Bruce, Director of Marketing and Public Relations at Larson & Darby Group

and

Anna Derocher, Marketing Manager, Fehr Graham Engineering & Environmental



Kimberly Bruce



Anna Derocher

How did you get into the industry?

Kimberly: For as long as I can remember, I've been enamored with words. I remember watching my first Superman movie and once I saw Lois Lane, I knew I wanted to be a journalist. As I was entering the career field my hometown newspaper in Milwaukee consolidated from two papers a day to one, and, being the risk-averse person I am, I pivoted from journalism to joining a PR department at an ad agency. One of my favorite clients at the ad agency was an architecture firm, a client I enjoyed so much, I jumped ship and have been primarily in the A/E/C industry ever since. In fact, when I moved to Rockford in 2011, I repeated the exact same history – worked at an agency where Larson & Darby Group was my client, and now I'm an employee. Kismet.

Anna: I never intended to be a marketer, let alone a marketer for professional services. In May 2017, my boss told me my job was eliminated. I spent nearly 19 years in the news business, and I was sure I was going to ride out the tough times and retire a journalist. But that news (pun intended) caused me to consider other paths. To stay in journalism, I would have to leave Rockford, a city I adopted as my hometown. I didn't want to leave. Knowing my journalism career was officially over, I began thinking about careers that would complement what I learned all those years as a journalist. Marketing or public relations seemed like a good fit. Working at Fehr Graham turned out to be the best fit.

Why did you join SMPS?

Kimberly: I believe it's critically important to have an opportunity to learn from industry peers and make connections with people with whom Larson & Darby Group will partner and work with on various projects.

Anna: Fehr Graham values staff involvement in professional organizations for many reasons. I personally enjoy bouncing ideas off those who understand what I do every day. Those collaborations also benefit my firm. When I joined Fehr Graham, it was important I join SMPS.

What's your favorite tip or piece of advice for someone working in our industry?

Kimberly: Ask questions. Listen. Our industry constantly changes, and we must adapt with it – asking questions and listening to what's going on around us helps us continuously grow.



Anna: Don't be afraid to take risks and fail. Here's a great quote by Maya Angelou: "It may be necessary to encounter the defeats so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."

How do you two know each other?

Kimberly: I've known of Anna since about two weeks after I moved to Rockford (because she's a rockstar journalism legend in Rockford), though I didn't get to meet and work with her until I joined a local communications firm in town, and then again when I joined the City of Rockford. Anna explains it more below - the only thing I'll add is that I wish I had known her sooner.

Anna: When I left the Rockford Register Star, Kimberly was still working for the City of Rockford. Shortly after I started at Fehr Graham, Kimberly told me she was going to Larson & Darby. I was so excited because we would be able to collaborate again. Our firms work together on projects, but more importantly, Kimberly is a great sounding board for me because our roles are similar at our firms. Sometimes you just need "a person" in your professional life. Kimberly is my person.

Kimberly: Anna, that made me tear up. You're my person, too.

Anna: One random fact: Kimberly and I went at the same time to rival high schools north of Milwaukee. While we didn't know each other then, we had mutual friends. It's amazing our paths didn't cross sooner.

What are your biggest pet peeves?

Anna: Most of my pet peeves are related to incorrect grammar. Of those pet peeves, one of my biggest is when people use apostrophes incorrectly. You see it a lot at Christmas time when you'll get a card from the "Smith's." Nope, it's the Smiths. I complete a lot of SOQ's. No. I completed a lot of SOQs. It's important to know the difference between possessive and plural words.

Kimberly: Ditto everything Anna said. I'll also add in random capitalizations and oxford commas. Argh.

Anna: Oh, I am with you, Kimberly. I dislike oxford commas. They're the worst.

If you weren't a marketer, what would you be and why?

Kimberly: A writer or singer. Words are so powerful - whether spoken, written or sung. I can't imagine a world where I didn't have the opportunity to impact people through words.

Anna: This is a tough question. Before I pursued journalism, I wanted to be a veterinarian. But my math and science scores on the ACT weren't strong enough to stay on that path. So, if I could wave a magic wand and be good enough at math and science, I would be a vet. If magic is not an option, I would try my hand at being a vet tech. •

Sponsor Highlight

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Sloan Watson, Marketing Director at Bulley & Andrews

Tell us about Bulley & Andrews and what makes your firm special.

Bulley & Andrews is a general contracting and construction management firm that focuses on projects which grow organizations and improve lives in measurable and meaningful ways. Our work represents a balancing act between product and service. While the projects we deliver are distinctly tangible (think Wintrust Arena and DePaul University's School of Music), the less tangible but equally valuable hallmarks of our work include our keen attention to detail, problem-solving mentality, strong communication and sense of stewardship. Delivering on this balance and our commitment to continuous improvement are the backbone of our reputation.

We were founded in 1891 and are in our fourth generation of family ownership. Our roots are in client services and high-quality craftsmanship, but I like that we are also committed to leveraging best practices and the latest innovations to best serve our clients. Honoring these values keeps our team focused and energized.

One of the special things about B&A is that many of our projects present opportunities for staff to apply their professional skills toward things they find personally rewarding. There are only so many hours in the day, right? And many of us wish there was more we could do to contribute to our communities or a special interest.

B&A's portfolio is wide and deep. It includes healthcare, social service, corporate, sacred spaces, historical restoration and educational work. So, whether it's a community health clinic, new school, renovation of lab space for research and development or restoration of a historical landmark, our people relish the chance for their skills to benefit important places that serve a greater good.

Lastly, we make a concerted effort to finish projects as strong as we start. This might seem like "low-hanging fruit," but when a complex project requires 18 months of preconstruction and three-plus years of construction, it's imperative to cultivate a team that not only maintains focus and enthusiasm, but gains it along the way.

Tell us about your position. What does a typical day look like? Which marketing tasks do you enjoy most?

Any given day has a curve ball or two, but the weeks typically follow a certain rhythm. As marketing director, I'm most often dedicating time to managing production schedules and overseeing the submittal process, researching and evaluating opportunities for brand positioning and awareness, coordinating final photography, executing special events and preparing teams for interview opportunities. The work I enjoy most is that which gives me the chance to interact with our larger team. I'm particularly proud of our

“If we support continuing education and networking among peers, the results strengthen the reputation of the industry as a whole. If the A/E/C industry has a positive reputation, then we have a better opportunity to position ourselves and connect with clients on a deeper level.”

marketing team’s dynamic. I am always impressed by their creative ideas, responsiveness, positive energy, resiliency (think last-minute requests!) and ability to thrive in a landscape that is often accommodating changing priorities.

Bulley & Andrews has been a platinum sponsor of SMPS for many years. What do you find most valuable about being an SMPS sponsor?

The brand exposure associated with our sponsorship is prized. There is such a great range of people who attend and present at chapter functions that being recognized as a supporter of the organization is a resolute value. It’s also business builder in that sense that if we support continuing education and networking among peers, the results strengthen the reputation of the industry as a whole. If the A/E/C industry has a positive reputation, then we have a better opportunity to position ourselves and connect with clients on a deeper level.

Who from your team are members of SMPS? How long have they been members?

B&A’s marketing manager, Sarah Hill-Matthiesen, and marketing coordinator, Lauren Moeller, and I are all members of SMPS Chicago. I encourage our marketing team to attend events as often as schedules allow. The confluence of networking, industry awareness and educational opportunities makes our involvement readily supported by executive management. Though B&A has significant career development opportunities within the firm, I consider much of SMPS’ programming as an auxiliary asset to the professional development opportunities we offer.

Do you have a memorable SMPS moment from the past year?

Any event I attend where I cross paths with Caroline Mandelin tends to be memorable ... and, typically, in more ways than one.

In your opinion, what are the most interesting projects Bulley & Andrews is working on right now?

We just broke ground for Marriott TownePlace Suites in Nashville. This is our third hotel project in Music City and one of four current hospitality projects that span the nation. We are completing a plaza restoration for the Westin Boston Waterfront in Massachusetts and interior renovations of the Milwaukee Athletic Club and the Ritz Carlton in Santa Barbara, California.

What is your favorite part of working at Bulley & Andrews?

By far it’s the level of comradery, candor and creativity in the marketing department. The comradery and creativity gives us the latitude to do the kind of work we’re most proud of and the candor has helped us learn and evolve. There’s no doubt we are “wired” differently than the engineering-centric staff here, but that difference is valued. That isn’t to say there aren’t some eyes that roll every once and awhile (I promise you, there WAS a great way to leverage that Ron Swanson quote in the internal training flier!), but the open environment lends itself to new ideas, which have resulted in some of our most successful deliverables and memorable events. So, while genius is always welcome, management places more emphasis on encouraging staff to be brave enough to share new ideas, explore different approaches and entertain other perspectives so we can continue to innovate and grow as an organization. It’s also fun to have such long-standing relationships with people within the firm. Getting a chance to share a “back in the day” story with new hires or being able to play a well-informed practical joke based on a shared history is priceless. •

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