

Owners and developers can benefit from creative application of services to solve business issues

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Design professionals search for creative ways to solve design problems for their clients. In these trying times, however, clients need more than this. They need business solutions to get them through the economic downturn. How can design professionals help clients develop the sound business solutions they need? By applying the same problem-solving thinking and analysis to business issues that they apply to design issues on a daily basis.

Design professionals possess the skills necessary to help clients solve business problems. If they examine the services they routinely perform for their clients, they can separate out certain services that are actually geared to solving business problems. When identified, these services can be "bundled" and marketed in a way that demonstrates how design that addresses business concerns can improve the client's bottom line.

Sound complicated? Consider the following. In the corporate office market, architects and interior designers routinely prepare calculations to determine usable and rentable square footage for tenant spaces. To do this, they normally use the industry standard formula supplied by the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA). This base line of information can be the foundation for an analysis that provides the client with an understanding of how to increase the competitive positioning of a particular property in a particular market. With this base line, designers can assist clients that have underperforming buildings to understand why it costs more to rent one square foot in their building than it does in their competitor's buildings. The "business issue" is that, without an understanding of why, they are losing potential tenants to other buildings. The extended analysis of the BOMA numbers includes current revenues for the building, rentable square footage, lease rates, and total yearly revenues. Because a knowledgeable design professional will understand how the BOMA formula works, and the various interpretations that can affect the resulting rentable factors, suggestions can be offered that allow clients to make informed business decisions that are based on modified calculations and models that show results in real dollars when compared to the current bottom line.

While real dollar discussions are something clients are comfortable with, BOMA formulas, in most instances, are not. Most often, these modified calculations and models increase both the current bottom line as well as the competitive positioning of the building. Sometimes, there is a reduction in the current bottom line, but an increase in the competitive positioning of the building, thus accelerating the occupancy of vacant space. Any way you look at it, creative thinking, and analysis of routinely developed information, can be used to transform a client's building that is underperforming to become more competitive.

There are numerous examples of similarly crafted "Bundled Services" that can be provided for corporate office, health care, education, hospitality, and other industry segments. Building owners,

developers, and real estate brokers can benefit from our creative application of professional services to solve business issues. Clients that are successful in this economy are already utilizing these services. We, as design professionals, need to understand how to provide them if we are to survive and be relevant. Designing business solutions is... the business of design.

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