



Expanding Your Field Of Contacts:

An imminent need to develop new business could mean it's time to outsource.

The need to generate new leads and relationships is especially acute in a soft economy. The problem is, for most companies, it's next to impossible to sustain a consistent business development effort. It requires already-busy staffers to make connections with similarly time-pressed decision-makers. And the thought of making cold calls can send chills up the spines of otherwise confident associates.

Geller Associates, a 35-person firm specializing in landscape architecture and civil engineering, decided it was time to call in pros — in the form of Rhode Island-based Marshall Consultants.

"We've only been utilizing Marshall Consultants since mid-March," says Joe Geller, partner-in-charge. "What I found incredible was how fast we saw the benefits of their work. It took a week for Bob Marshall to understand who we were. And then he started setting up some great meetings for us. For one healthcare industry client, we've done four proposals already, which led to two project awards. Plus, Bob got us into a number of colleges and universities we probably wouldn't have called on our own."

A cost-effective way to tap into knowledge and new markets.

In a typical arrangement, Marshall Consultants works for a client one day a week, for a reasonable flat fee.

"At Geller, for instance, we're an active ingredient in their overall business development strategy," Bob Marshall, president, explains. "We're not a

replacement for the Marketing Director or the Business Development people. Our niche is to help culminate these efforts by making appointments with the right people at the target organization.”

In the case of Geller Associates — and its subsidiary Geller Sport, which specializes in services for recreational and athletic facilities — one defined goal is to expand its geographical reach throughout New England. Another is to isolate highly-profitable opportunities to serve as prime consultant and/or the direct contact with the owner.

"Our overall focus is to get a good balance of client types and generate a steady stream of bid opportunities," says Sue Burt, marketing director at Geller. "This includes proposals made as part of an architect's team, along with direct proposals to developers and building owners.

The advantage of existing networks.

With a business development resource like Marshall Consultants, clients actually buy more than a day's work every week. They get the benefits of a pre-existing network of relationships that is continually growing and evolving.

"Bob's base network includes people he's known for years in the architecture and construction fields," Geller remarks, "along with a stream of current clients with overlapping marketplaces. It's an opportunity to take advantage of a much larger and more expansive database than we could develop on our own."

Avoiding the onus of the telemarketer.

At a point in time where prototypical telemarketers are lucky to get past their first scripted sentence, Marshall is able to provide clients with appointment-to-contact ratios up to 70%. One of the keys is a phone approach that is more supportive and consultative in nature — instead of the usual in-your-face kind of spiel.

“What scared us initially about this outsourcing concept, was the thought of someone harassing people into meeting with us,” says Geller. “Bob’s style not only makes people feel comfortable with what he’s doing, it saves us from establishing the initial contact. So we’re coming in as a fresh face, so to speak, when it’s time to make a presentation.”

“It’s amazing how he’s able to connect with people in a short conversation, get right to the source, and accomplish the mission,” Burt concludes. “Bob has a healthy respect for the value of time. Both for the prospect and for his clients.”