
CAPTURE PLANNING PAVES THE

WAY

By Bob Woods

TO

WINNING

ACEC Member Firms
incorporate several
different approaches
to this best practice

By the time the RFP came out from the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority in 2013, requesting bids from design-build teams to lead the design and construction of a consolidated rental car center and automated people mover at Tampa International Airport, the team at Gresham, Smith & Partners (GS&P), Nashville, Tennessee, was prepared to submit its proposal.

The reason, says Al Pramuk, a GS&P principal and its chief strategy officer, was Way-2-Win, the firm's proprietary capture-planning process. >>

“We’ve been working with the airport authority on various projects for more than 12 years, so we have good, solid relationships as a trusted adviser,” Pramuk says. Several months before the RFP was issued for the 2.6-million-square-foot, \$730 million project, GS&P had already begun familiarizing themselves with the airport master plan “to understand the challenges to implementing the program,” he adds.

Simultaneously, GS&P was talking with several potential teaming partners who had the expertise it would take to successfully execute the large, complex program.

The team with GS&P won the work, and GS&P is the lead design manager for the multifirm design-build team, as well as the architect of record for the people-mover infrastructure and three transit stations. The project is on track for completion in October 2017.

Capture planning, which may go by different names at different engineering firms, initially gained popularity in the public sector in the 1990s. Over the past 20 years, it has emerged as a best practice

for both public and private sector business development. Essentially, it’s the process of proactively identifying or creating client and project opportunities, assessing the business environment and implementing strategies to win or “capture” business opportunities. Capture planning takes on various guises, but it’s all about leading to success.

Way-2-Win, implemented in 2010, is actually GS&P’s latest variation of the practice, says Pramuk, who’s been with the nearly 50-year-old firm for 26 years. “We wanted to have a more disciplined approach,” he says, comparing the most recent iteration with GS&P’s previous capture planning program.

“Way-2-Win includes a sales approach focused on listening and developing ideas, from the client’s mindset, and coming up with transformational solutions,” Pramuk adds. “If we listen to clients in the proper ways and gather the right information, that allows us to put together better proposals more aligned with our client’s needs.”

Doing things more efficiently is one

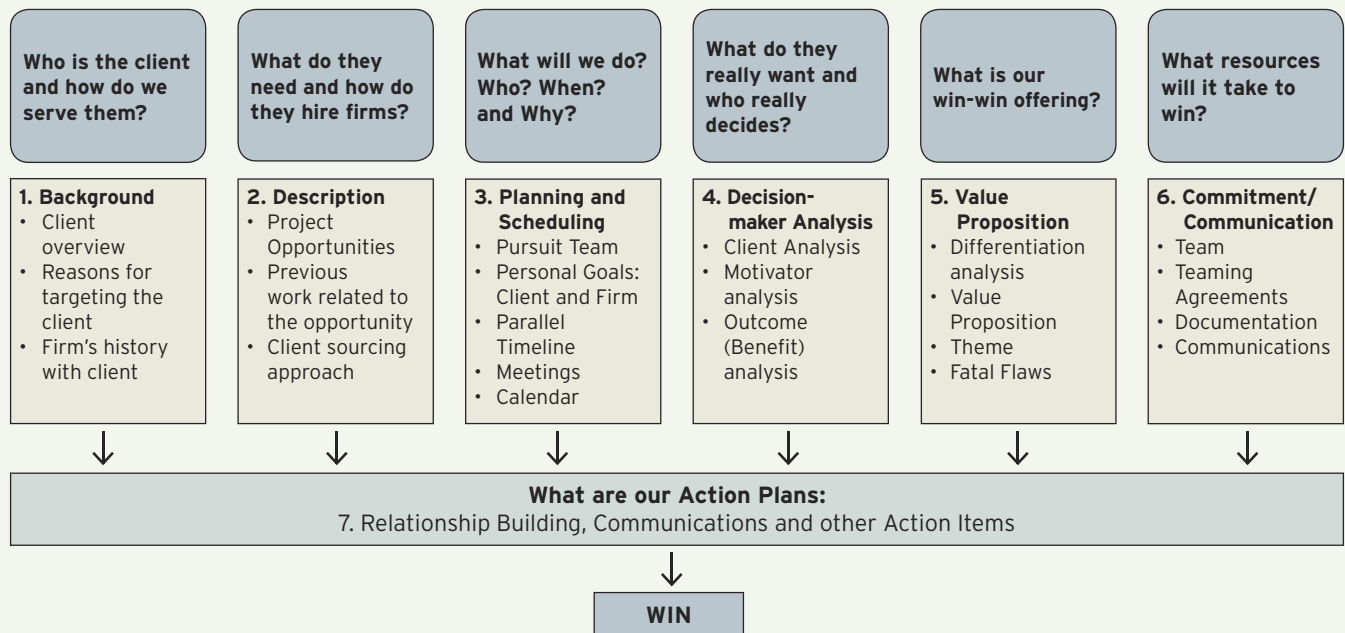


A rendering of the automated people mover at Tampa International Airport designed and constructed by GS&P.

of the strategic goals of capture planning at Detroit, Michigan-based Wade Trim, says Tom Brzezinski, chief development officer. Wade Trim formalized the practice nearly a decade ago—though, he adds, the firm did it informally before then—and updated the program last year.

“Coming out of the economic downturn, everybody is looking to be more efficient,” Brzezinski says. “You only want to spend so much to chase work, so the smarter you chase it, the cheaper it usually

Capture Planning is an Iterative Process



Capture Plan Implementation – Proactively builds relationships and communications to win work

ACEC Tools for Effective Capture Planning

ACEC’s recently published manual *Capture Planning for Private Client Practices* and the on-demand webinar “Capture Planning to Dramatically Increase Your Win Rate” provide Member Firms with proven practices for maximizing their MROI (marketing return on investment). Both resources advance a firm’s efforts to become a client’s preferred firm, and trusted to provide optimal solutions prior to formal or informal procurement. For more information on these business education resources and more, go to www.acec.org.

is, and your return on investment should increase.”

To ensure its aim is true, Wade Trim developed a training process focused on capture planning, and it expanded that process this year. “Business development doesn’t include just a handful of people. It includes everybody in the company,” Brzezinski says. “We’ve gone from training only the management team to now including some senior project managers.” The firm conducts monthly project manager training, shifting topics from project delivery to managing clients to business development, he adds.

Fostering relationships among a growing list of clients and meeting their needs have been the focus for Omaha, Nebraska-based HDR since it began using capture planning more than 18 years ago, says Nancy Gruwell, vice president of marketing. While HDR develops capture plans around specific projects—especially large, strategic pursuits—the firm generally looks at client organizations as a whole, plus the types of engineering design and consulting services they’re going to need five, 10, even 20 years down the road.

“Capture planning is really positioning ourselves for projects, so when we start with a client development plan, a capture plan might roll out of that,” Gruwell says. “It’s an ongoing mindset about what challenges our clients might be facing, such as new regulations they have to deal with. Many times, those discussions can happen without a particular project in mind, but knowing that eventually there’s going to be a need.”

A particular project demanded a capture plan when HDR pursued the contract to provide design and construction support



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NANCY GRUWELL
HDR

services for the 1,900-foot-long Mike O’Callaghan–Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge spanning the Colorado River, also known as the Hoover Dam Bypass, which rerouted traffic over the top of the Hoover Dam. HDR prepared its capture plan well in advance of the RFP, issued by a division of the Federal Highway Administration, and was ultimately named to lead an integrated group of firms collectively known as the Hoover Support Team.

Construction on the \$240 million project started in 2005, and it was completed in 2010.

“The capture plan positioned us to make sure we

had the right teaming partners to respond to the client’s complex needs,” Gruwell says. The job involved not just the federal government but also the two states on either side of the river, Arizona and

Nevada. With such a complex project, funding issues and other factors caused several pauses during the project pursuit, so it was important to continually update the capture plan.

Firms consider most capture plans to be working documents that can be amended as new information becomes available. That’s the case with the Big Opps (as in opportunities) capture planning program at Omaha-based Lamp Rynearson & Associates (LRA). “We develop Big Opps documents for specific, larger projects,” says Leslie Peterson, LRA’s client development manager. “We access them at marketing meetings, so everyone has the ability to edit them.”

Big Opps makes LRA more proactive in today’s highly competitive environment, says firm President Mike McMeekin. “We’re not sitting back, playing the wait-and-see game. We’re actively creating plans to go after large projects, and Big Opps improves our chances of winning the work,” he adds.

To assist LRA’s engineers, surveyors, planners and other technical staff who are

HDR finalized its capture plan before the RFP was issued for the \$240 million Hoover Dam Bypass, winner of the 2011 EEA Grand Conceptor Award.



part of the Big Opps client-centric marketing strategy, the firm created an initiative called Got Client? “It gets people to buy into the notion that they are responsible for client relationships and sets the stage for asking solid questions from the beginning of client discussions,” Peterson says.

To prompt client interaction throughout each Big Opps project, Got Client? incorporates three components:

1. Check It Out encourages people to regularly communicate with their clients.

2. Kick It Off prompts project managers and their team members to keep the client’s vision and goals in mind by referring to a pre-printed, customizable worksheet.

3. Make It Right promotes problem solving by having frank conversations with clients.

Got Client? relates to capture planning “by helping our people approach projects from the client standpoint, from early on during the capture process and through the execution,” McMeekin says.

As much as LRA’s capture planning is buttoned up and methodical, Psomas, which is based in Santa Ana, California, has taken a less formal, yet disciplined approach to what it calls Pursuit Capture Planning.

“We developed Pursuit Capture Plan forms in 2008,” says Corporate Director of Marketing Julie Shepard. She admits that getting people from all four of the firm’s groups to use the forms has been challenging. However, Psomas made some executive changes in recent years that included an increased focus



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on business development.

The transformation began by promoting Ryan McLean to CEO and president and moving Steve Margaroni from director of construction management to the chief development officer position.

“It’s a morphing of the firm and really holding people accountable for business development,” Shepard says. Toward that end, the firm launched an initiative dubbed One Psomas. “It’s about people doing everything as teams and not just about yourself or your region,” Shepard adds.

Capture planning is a perfect way to implement One Psomas, Margaroni says. “On bigger projects, our teaming approach is very strategic.

There’s internal coordination

within the organization that needs to be done, [and] there’s politics that might need to be played. That’s where you need to sit down with your team and strategize.”

One example, the comprehensive 400-

page Pursuit Capture Plan Psomas developed and monitored over several years in order to win a major wastewater treatment project, is a testament to the firm’s new approach. “A lot of that success was because of how bad we wanted it and how hard the team worked,” Margaroni says. “You need people around who are passionate about the pursuit.”

Regardless of how a firm chooses to enact its capture planning program, making long-term, strategic business development a key part of the company culture is vital. “Culturally we’re still trying to get it more ingrained in the firm, but when we’re all doing this together, it’s less scary and more fun for the typically introverted engineer,” Shepard says.

At HDR, capture planning is definitely something everyone at the firm has bought into as part of the culture, Gruwell says. The reason, she adds, is because it works. “When we apply the processes and follow them, we are successful most of the time. I believe that’s because capture planning continues the focus on our clients and keeps that top of mind, day in and day out,” she says. ■

Bob Woods is a technology and business writer based in Madison, Connecticut.



Psomas incorporated its capture plan initiative—called One Psomas—to help land this rail and bridge project in North Stockton, California.