

Do you have 20/10 vision for 2010?

BY ROSS ALLBRITTON

One important step in planning ahead is to ask yourself some strategic questions.

20/20 HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED perfect vision. Now, through advanced lens technology, laser surgery and the like, we are able to obtain 20/10 vision. Ted M. Montgomery, an optometric physician, wrote, "It even is possible, although not too common, for someone to have 20/10 visual acuity. Let's say a person with 20/20 vision can just detect a ship which is 25 miles away out on the ocean. A person with 20/10 acuity could be 50 miles away from the ship and still be able to just detect it."

When I was a kid, 20/10 was a bottle of fluid that my Dad reached out the driver's window and squirted on the windshield while flying down the highway in hopes of removing bugs and mud. The objective was still the same—hopes of clear vision.

As we look to the year 2010, how clear is your vision? Do you know what you want your business to look like at the end of the year? Revenues? Staff? Capital improvements? Customers?

It's Planning Time Again...

2009 was a rough year for our economy. As the pundits raise a hopeful cry of recovery for 2010, we know that the construction industry will likely lag the general population by around nine months. It is going to take similar discipline and creativity to push through the next 12 months as it did the past 12. With a clear vision of what you want your business to be at the start of this new decade, I suggest that you can not only survive, but thrive.

Strategic marketing planning can be as complicated or as simple as you want to make it. Below are some simple steps to get you started:

- Identify the kind of work you want (and do best)
- Identify the people who need to have that kind of work done
- Identify what those people need the most, and tailor your message to solve it for them
- Identify how to get your message to reach them—consistently
- Make yourself the logical choice
- Perform
- Follow up

To help gain 20/10 vision for 2010, I offer you some strategic questions:

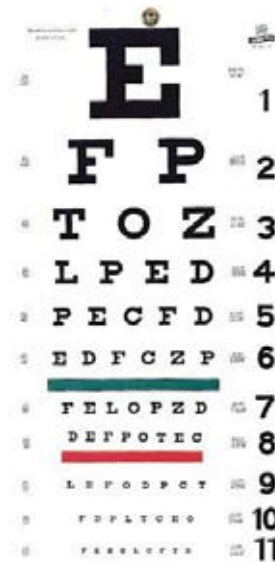
What did you learn in 2009? Odds are that you are running leaner now than ever before. What can you do to maintain your efficiencies when you have the opportunity to staff up? Are you managing inventories and suppliers more effectively? Take a moment to congratulate yourself on these improved practices and decide how they will best serve you as the growth opportunities come back.

How will you seek new business in 2010? Is your marketing working? Are you marketing? Can you clearly articulate to an owner why they risk making a mistake if they do not partner with your firm? Is your website engaging? Do you even need a website? Should you generate leads, or just respond to bids? Do you have a formal program in place to generate referrals? Are your presentations just informational, or compelling? Are you focused on building relationships with top decision makers, or do you spend more time further down the chain? Have you identified your "Dream 15" (the top 15 clients you wish to do business with)? Do you have a strategy for romancing your Dream 15?

Many of us have built our business on one or two methods of getting customers. We respond to public bid notices, or maybe have a person who makes cold calls on our behalf. I subscribe to the theory of the Parthenon. Each of the numerous pillars is a method for generating the business that holds our operations intact. If one pillar is in need of repair, the others will keep our business stable. Some of the pillars we can employ are: emails, website, direct mail, print media, tele-contact, blogging, personal visits, trade shows, articles, educational seminars, referrals, joint ventures, and the list goes on.

Marketing always has been my first love. I probably could (and perhaps should) dedicate a complete column to each of the points listed above.

Great results begin with a great vision. How's your vision? **MSC**



Dutch ophthalmologist Herman Snellen in 1862 introduced a chart with ten letters of various sizes designed to test a person's visual acuity.

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