

Many firms in our industry have a one-person marketing department. Whether they are called a marketing director, manager, coordinator or assistant, they do a little (or a lot) of everything! So please don't take offense; this is aimed specifically at marketing directors with staff, although I hope it has some value for everyone.

In early November, I mentioned that it seemed all I did was go to meetings, and I didn't feel I was getting any "real" work done. I'd said this often before, but this time there was a quiet epiphany – no trumpets, no lightning flashes – just a sudden awareness that meetings **are** my job!

My marketing and graphics coordinators are all about production. My marketing manager is often about production, some weeks more, some weeks less. As director, my job is meetings – strategy, policy, direction, training, client relationships, tracking systems, tactics for client and project pursuit – and making decisions based on what I learn in those meetings.

Does that sound like a full week? It is. Does that sound like **your** week? If you're a marketing director, it should . . . it better! Because if you're still writing SOQs and proposals, designing brochures, or coordinating trade shows and conferences, you're wearing at least one hat that really belongs to someone else.

If you are still doing production work when you have staff for that, when do you have time or energy to direct the effort? Are you really bringing value to your firm, or are you just the highest paid coordinator in town? Think of the United States Constitution: what is granted to the states is not the job of the federal government. Similarly, the activities in a marketing coordinator's job description are not the highest and best use of the director's time.

As a marketing director, you need to lead the effort to develop strategic and marketing plans for your firm and its major divisions. If not, how will your staff understand and support the firm's priorities? Who will help the technical staff develop tactical plans for the pursuit of clients and/or projects? Many of the technical staff don't come by this skill set naturally, but they still have an important contribution to make to the firm's marketing effort and, therefore, its growth.

Finally, if you don't get out of the way and let your staff do the jobs for which they were hired, how will you demonstrate that they are valued? How will they feel empowered to add skills and undertake new responsibilities for their positions? How will they know they have the authority needed to complete their assigned tasks? How will they increase their value and sense of worth to the company, and stick around to grow along with the company?

Think of your staff. If you do their production work, the less talented staff will remain as long as you let them, because you offer them an easier paycheck than some other employer might. However, the more talented staff may leave because you make it harder for them to shine and do work of which they can be proud. What are you left with? And how often do you want to rehire for the same position?

Think of your firm and its overall marketing effort. Think of it as a wonderful oil painting of an 18th century sailing vessel riding out a big storm. Men are on deck working frantically to tie down loose cargo and stow gear; others are way up in the rigging adjusting sails. Now look at the stern of the vessel – is there anyone at the helm? No? Then who is steering the ship? That's where YOU should be!

Now think of your individual staff members. Are you really being fair to them? If you made a poor hiring decision, you don't help anyone by doing their work. Offer training – if it works, your decision was actually good, even if the benefit was somewhat delayed; if not, you have metrics

upon which to base a fix. If you made a good decision, why are you doing that person's work in the first place? Don't you have enough work of your own to keep you busy?

Here's a sobering question: if nobody on your staff can write brochures, technical proposals or website copy as well as you, does it really reflect the high quality of your production work or the poor quality of your staffing skills?

Finally, think of yourself. As a director, you probably have enough work and enough stress – even if you're only doing your own job. Do you really think the extra hats are worth the heart attack? Been there, done that – I promise you, the answer is NO!

Bernie Siben, CPSM, is corporate marketing director with **Quad Knopf** (Visalia, CA). Contact him at (559) 733-0440 or at BernieS@quadknopf.com