

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about standing out and, particularly, standing out to your customers. We're entering what seems to be a slow period in construction, and we're already seeing pursuits for jobs getting more competitive. I've had some people tell me, "Gosh, I've been in the hunt, but I've now lost 11 straight times or come in second 11 straight times." I thought, well, that's terrible because 11 seconds is zero first, and that doesn't get you any work.

What came to mind in these situations is somehow or other, we're just not standing out enough. Maybe you're showing that you cover all the bases. Some of these are the small guys competing against the big guys, and it's hard to break through sometimes on those larger projects or with those larger buyers of construction. But the key is certainly standing out. How can you stand out? How do you stand out?

To do that, you really got to somehow answer the question, why you? Why you versus them? Why not them, if they're the safe choice? I think the bigger guy is always the safe choice, right? I heard an expression once that nobody ever got fired for hiring Turner. I think that, that's probably true, because they can take that safe choice. But why you, not them? What differentiates you? Differentiation's is a big, big word in this discussion.

It's hard sometimes as a company in a field where really what we're delivering is mostly been commoditized. It really is hard to differentiate. But on any individual job and for any individual pursuit, you can find that differentiation that can make the difference. Sometimes it's just your brand, who you are. In communicating a single, compelling idea of maybe it's that you're going to care more about your project, that their project is more important to you than it is to them. Then perhaps, in getting that compelling idea across, whatever it is, you've got to demonstrate that several times through your presentation or proposal, and you've got to make sure that you keep repeating that and getting it to the forefront.

Go the extra mile. Think about that on your next presentation or pursuit. How can I go the extra mile and truly stand out to my customer? How can I do that? Is there a way to know their job better? Is there a way to know the needs and desires of the customer better than anybody else will know that? In thinking about that, I've had some clients that make sure they go as far as to know, what is the mission of the company I'm working for? How can I tie our differentiation to their mission, to get our message across to them?

One of the things I thought about as I was putting together this blog was, what is their biggest fear? Oftentimes that's a very important question. Let's say I'm talking to a new customer and I ask him, "What's important about this project to you?" He might tell me, or she might tell me, "Oh, well, finishing on time is really the key, because we've got to get people in on such and such a date. So, my biggest fear is that we don't finish on time and then we lose our customers." Like, "Oh, wow. I understand that." Maybe I dig a little bit deeper on that subject. "Wow. So, if that happened to you, what happens to your company? If we were a month late, what would happen?" They go, "Oh, my. I'd have to relocate all these people somewhere else for that month. We'd have to find a place. I might lose employees. I might lose customers. It might cost me a million dollars." Well, find out what is that fear, what is the worst thing that can happen. Then make sure you alleviate that fear. Figure out what you can do in your proposal, in your presentation, to alleviate their biggest fear and use that to stand out. Use your brand to alleviate that fear.

Again, more competitive world, got to stand out to your customers. Make sure that you go the extra mile and figure out how you can solve your customer's problem and alleviate their biggest fear.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning.