



Advice: How to win projects in competitive dogfight

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By **Michael Tomberlin** -- **The Birmingham News**



Steve Sewell of the EDPA moderated the panel discussion.

Institutions and companies that hire construction, engineering and design firms outlined what works and what doesn't work in today's highly competitive world when it comes to winning projects.

The Alabama chapter of the **Society for Marketing Professional Services** held its annual "The Clients Talk Back" luncheon at the Vestavia Hills Country Club today.

Representatives from universities, commercial real estate firms and developers said e-mail blasts, large e-mail attachments, circumventing the process to try to gain an edge, and failing to have a minority firm as a partner are often ways to get cut from the list.

What helps win work is the ability to show a specialty in a particular area, initiative in solving problems expected with the project and bringing in the team that will actually do the work instead of the CEO to the interviewing process.

The University of Alabama, Auburn University, UAB and Samford University were represented on the panel, as were officials from USS Real Estate, EGS Commercial Real Estate Inc., Daniel Corp., the Barber Companies and Children's Health System. **Steve Sewell**, executive vice president of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, moderated the discussion.

Hearing from the universities could be important for those firms. They all have major construction projects in the works for this year or on tap for 2012. The commercial developers said the emphasis in the near term is going to be on renovating existing properties with companies unwilling to invest in much new construction in the current economic climate.

While price is still important, panelists said more important is often the relationship, expertise and responsiveness of firms to do things correctly and timely.

"I want a team player that's going to give our company the best opportunity to win a project," said **Deborah McGill**, an industrial broker with EGS. "We have a saying in our office that 'time kills all deals' so the firms

that work with us need to be responsive."

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