THE INFLUENCE OF A MARKETING PLAN ON THE
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF SMALL
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FIRMS

By
LYNNE M CARPENTER

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE TEXAS AT ARLINGTON
MAY 2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my husband, Jack, who never once complained about my undertaking the commitment of working toward a master’s degree. Without his patience and good nature I would not have been able to finish this undertaking so strongly.

Thank you to my seven children who have wondered at their mother – both that I would undertake this challenge of a masters degree, and why? I taught them once upon a time, and now they see me as a student. Thank you, Tricia, Melinda, Richard, Dorothy, Mary, Jaclynn, and Barrett. Thank you to my mother, Patricia, who taught me to work and save so that I could pay for this education free and clear; my father, Louis, who taught me to take risks which brings me to this point where I am today – the mother of seven children, a business owner, and the proud finisher of a masters degree in landscape architecture. Thank you to Matthew Snow, owner of City Wide Landscape, who gave me the first chance to express myself in the landscape as his designer. His trust in me opened up a whole new world of business and study. Thank you to the professors in the Horticulture Program at Richland College, Dallas, Texas who shared their expertise and love of the land and plants that first started me toward the attainment of this master’s degree: Bart Blaydes, Joe Feather, Gail Donaldson, Patrick Haig, Gail Kahle, Matt Grubisich, and Lorri Dennis. Thank you to the thesis committee from the Program in Landscape Architecture, UT Arlington: Dr. Pat D. Taylor, Dr. Taner R. Ozdil, and Professor David D. Hopman and to committee member from the School of Business, UT Arlington: Dr. Michael Richarme. Thank you to my fellow students in the Program in Landscape Architecture who readily shared, particularly their technological expertise, as I was such a fledgling in that arena. Without their help and encouragement, I would not have made it through the program at the pace I’ve kept. Particular thanks to Hong Mang, Nhasala Manandhar, Zoha Niazi, Leonelle D’souza, and Jason Lackey.

April 17, 2012
ABSTRACT

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Lynne M Carpenter, MLA

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2012

Supervising Professor: Pat D. Taylor

This thesis examines the marketing practices of small landscape architecture firms to
determine whether a marketing plan enables small firms to focus their practice and thereby gain
business opportunities in North Texas. A firm’s business growth is evaluated according to the
development, implementation, and regular review of goals set forth. The results of the study address
the professional practice of landscape architecture by identifying recent small firm marketing
practices for use as a guide.

The literature review details the development of a marketing plan for three main purposes: to
review a firm's strengths and weaknesses, to focus its vision and mission, and to target clients with
the needs and wants that the firm aims to satisfy (Crane 1999; Lamb, Hair, McDaniel 2012; Marshall
1981). Having a singular focus aids a firm to direct its expertise toward distinct client wants and
needs.

Qualitative research is informed through a literature review of business marketing with a
particular focus on the marketing of professional service businesses. Following this, personal
interviews were conducted by the researcher with small landscape architecture firm owners or their
marketing department directors. The responses are evaluated as to how marketing affects a firm’s
professional practice. The data show that the respondents interviewed equate a marketing plan with marketing activity. Though some of the firm principals have made a conscious decision that they have no need for a written marketing plan, each of the firms in the study speak of a focus that aims them toward business targets. Details of the foci of the interviewed firm leaders are evaluated in the thesis.

In conclusion, this thesis’ data show that small landscape architecture firms determine to market without using a formal marketing plan. A marketing plan has significance in that it integrates marketing activity with the vision, goals, and objectives of the firm. Because a marketing plan provides guidance to the marketing activity and acts as an evaluative and monitoring device it can help keep a firm on a secure business track (Koren 2005; Littlefield 2005).
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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Stating the research objectives in three main questions focuses the research of this thesis. The compelling reason for this thesis centers its study on how a marketing plan and/or a marketing activity are accomplished by small landscape architecture firms. The research follows a procedure of study that gathers qualitative evidence supporting the thesis intent of purpose. Understanding of the study group, small landscape architecture firms in North Texas, and its dynamics benefits appreciation of the data found and synthesized. Clarifying the terms, such as marketing, marketing plan, business plan and other key terms increases awareness of the study’s subject. Recognition of the significance and the limitations of the study are valuable for future study of the subject.

1.2 Research Purpose, Objectives, and Questions

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the use of a marketing plan and other marketing methods used by small landscape architecture firms in North Texas. The study considers whether a marketing plan is a necessary and useful key component to the business practice of this kind of professional service, landscape architecture. By way of interview key personnel of small landscape architecture firms dialogue about their marketing efforts and the benefits these have on their professional practice.

Objectives of this study are:

- To gain understanding of the making and use of a marketing plan
- To collect data about the marketing plans of small landscape architecture firms in North Texas
- To synthesize the collected data to aid understanding of the marketing practices employed and their effect on a small landscape architecture firm’s practice.
This study investigates small landscape architecture firms concentrating research on the following questions:

1. What are the main foci of a marketing plan?
2. What changes are made to a marketing plan?
3. How does a marketing plan affect a firm’s loss or gain of business opportunity?

1.3 Reason for this Study

The impetus of this study is the concern for finding business once the skills and ethical credentials of the beginning landscape architect are met and the firm begins its practice. In a perfect scenario a firm begins its business plan as well as sets up a marketing plan at the establishment of its business arrangement. Though these decisions do not always occur at the time of business start-up, recommended business practices advocate that this procedure does take place as part of doing strategic planning for sustainable competitive advantage (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel 2012, iv). More clearly, marketing planning can lead to more business opportunities. A firm’s leaders and personnel meet to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the firm’s skills which lead to making a marketing plan, setting the direction of the firm and getting word out about their expertise. Knowing and understanding the procedure, the benefits, and the possible results from making and using marketing plan may assist a newly established firm as well as one that is already walking a business path.

1.4 Procedure

A literature review within this document details the basic procedure of making a marketing plan. The literature review shows that a marketing plan can help a small landscape architecture firm identify a particular client type to focus on by “understanding current clients and recognizing potential markets and opportunities” (Koren, 2005, 196).

Within the general literature covering the subject of marketing plans the difference between a business plan and a marketing plan is clarified. Also, the difference between product marketing and professional service marketing is explained. Additionally, light is shed on the difference between a firm involved in ‘marketing activity’ versus making and using ‘a marketing plan.’ Because
professional services meet obstacles in planning, these are pointed out. One of the first obstacles met by a small landscape architecture firm when making a marketing plan is dealing with the constraints of the dynamics that occur within a small group.

Data accumulated through qualitative research of interviewed firms follows the literature review and shows different ideas of what a ‘marketing plan’ and ‘marketing’ are thought to be by the firm respondents interviewed and how it affects their firm’s business. The information found through the interviews is organized into detailed tables and lists for easy view, comparison, and deduction. An expanded understanding of recent marketing planning and practice is gained.

Specific interview questions were formulated and then applied during personal on-site or telephone meetings between the researcher and a key person of each firm located in the Dallas/Ft Worth, Texas area over a two week period. Eighteen firms volunteered to participate in an interview process from a possible pool of sixty-seven firms.

1.5 The Study Group

A small landscape architecture firm, according to the Small Business Administration, is composed of fewer than twenty people and whose annual total receipts are seven million dollars or less (Federal Register, 7493). The SBA’s data also show that 80% of all landscape architecture firms have under ten employees. For this study, the study groups’ size is limited to firms having ten or fewer employees. This size was decided on due to the usual size of a small start-up firm of one decision maker, or a small group of decision makers, but stays under ten people in number for either its entirety or at a minimum of a few years.

Because small firms strive for at least enough growth to stay in business they are prime candidates for evaluating whether a marketing plan aids their business development. A marketing plan sets parameters for reaching and influencing the external client as well as invigorates and sets goals for a firm’s internal personnel. This study endeavors to consider and evaluate the contribution both groups’ make concerning the development of a marketing plan.
1.6 Clarifying What a Marketing Plan Is

The difference between ‘marketing’ and a ‘marketing plan’ begins this discussion. Marketing is the group of activities designed and used to obtain business projects whereas a marketing plan is a written document acting as a guidebook that focuses on vision and goals to be achieved within a set space of time. Also, the difference between a ‘business plan’ and a ‘marketing plan’ needs clarification. A business plan identifies the goals and missions of the business whereas a marketing plan explains how the business will achieve if not exceed those goals and missions. The business plan and marketing plan are interdependent and should be consistent with one another. When a business thinks of marketing as only a peripheral activity of the firm then it doesn’t receive the attention it should. It is not integrated properly into the business planning (Koren 2005, 17).

This study reviews both the internal communication within a firm combined with the external communication with the client. According to the breadth of literature reviewed, each of these parts is essential for developing an effective marketing plan and is detailed in the following pages. Vision, mission, business planning, branding, positioning, and communication each play their part in the marketing plan’s strategy detailed further in this literature review.

1.7 Definition of a Marketing Plan

This study bases its definition of a marketing plan on the American Marketing Association’s (2007) definition: “A document composed of an analysis of the current marketing situation, opportunities and threats analysis, marketing objectives, marketing strategy, action programs, and projected or pro-forma income (and other financial) statements.” Other variations of this definition which add to an understanding are: “A written document that acts as a guidebook of marketing activities for the marketing manager” (Lamb et al 2012, 16); “A marketing plan is designed to answer where and how to use the resources of money, time, and human capital in order to cope with the pressures of demand, competition, legal restrictions and changes, and the availability of human and financial capital” (Forsythe 1999, 18). “Marketing is simply the process of keeping a firm’s present clients happy and attracting new clients” (Koren 2005, 1). Landscape architect Marshall (1981, 108) points out that a marketing plan answers the questions: Where are we going? How are we going to
get there? These questions act as a catalyst to begin assessment of both the internal and external environments of a firm to begin the development of a marketing plan.

1.8 Key Terms

**Brand**: A name, term, symbol, design, or combination thereof that identifies a seller's products and differentiates them from competitor's products or services (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, 2012, 162).

**Cannibalization**: A situation that occurs when sales of a new product or service cut into sales of a firm's existing product or service (Lamb et al 2012, 134).

**Collateral**: visual media used to tell customers what a company offers, whether product and/or service (MKTG 2012).

**Entrepreneur**: One who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise (Merriam Webster).

**Impression management**: Management of all the contact points with the client (Crane 1993, 43).

**Internal marketing**: Viewing employees as internal clients (Berry, 1980, 26).

**Market**: People or organizations with needs or wants and the ability and willingness to buy (Lamb et al 2012, 121).

**Marketing**: The activities set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. (American Marketing Association, 2007); simply the process of keeping a firm's present clients happy and attracting new clients (Koren 2005, 1).

**Marketing mix**: A unique blend of product, place, promotion, and pricing strategies designed to produce mutually satisfying exchanges with a target market (Lamb et al 2012, 25); for professional service organizations people, physical evidence, and process are added to product marketing mix (Crane 1993, 15).

**Market segmentation**: A subgroup of people or organizations who share one or more characteristics that cause them to have similar product or service needs (Lamb et al 2012, 122).

Mission statement: A statement of a firm’s business based on a careful analysis of benefits sought by present and potential clients and an analysis of existing and anticipated environmental condition (Lamb et al 2012, chapter review 2); a summary of the plan of attack (Koren 2005, 33).

Niche: One segment of a market, such as women and the landscape improvements they seek (Lamb et al 2012, 133).

Professional Service: Qualified, advisory, and problem-solving assignments for a client by a professional who is regulated by traditions and codes of ethics (Crane 1993).

Psychographics: An expansion of demographics that includes variables like personality, motives, and lifestyles (Lamb et al 2012, 127; Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 12, No. 2 1975).

Positioning: Developing a specific marketing mix to influence potential clients’ overall perception of a brand, product line, or an organization in general (Lamb et al 2012, 135).

Relationship marketing: Attracting, maintaining and enhancing client relationships (Berry 1983, 25).

Small landscape architecture firm: According to Small Business Administration: a firm of under twenty employees and $7 million dollar threshold (Federal Register, March, 2012, 7493). In this study, a firm having under ten employees.

Synchromarketing: Adjusting supply and demand (Crane 1993, 54).

Tactics: Tools used and actions taken to implement the marketing strategy (Littlefield2005, 22).

Target market: A group of people or organizations for which an organization designs, implements, and maintains a marketing mix intended to meet the needs of that group, resulting in mutually satisfying exchanges (Lamb et al 2012, 131).

Usage-rate segmentation: Dividing a market according to the amount of product (or service) bought or consumed (Lamb et al 2012, 129).
Vision statement: A statement of what a firm aspires to be (Koren 2005, 33).

1.9 Significance and Limitations of the Study

There are significant ideas that can come from this study. First is a better understanding of the use and influence of a marketing plan within a small landscape architecture firm. Another contribution is the useful information about general marketing practices used by this type of professional service. The detailed tables developed from the study contain useful information to stimulate similar firms as they endeavor to better organize and manage their own businesses.

The limitations to the study are: There is limited information available about this particular subject, making and using a marketing plan, within the literature of landscape architecture. For this reason the literature was expanded to include literature from the profession of architecture and from general professional service literature.

Another limitation to this study is the pool size limited to ten employees and less. The study points to the next level of size firm, between ten and twenty employees, to possibly produce data specifically applicable to marketing plans and their benefit to landscape architecture firms. The very small size firm in the study pool may be too limiting.

The geographic range for this study is limited to small firms within Dallas and Ft. Worth, Texas. The number of firm interviews is within a pool of eighteen firms. The landscape architecture firms contacted are listed in the American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA) 2012 Member Directory.

The questions posed to the interviewees are open ended inviting a broad range of responses. Hence, the answers do not include comparisons that may have benefited the study. Additional questions to be considered for inclusion:

1. Do you feel that your firm is accomplishing the right kind of business projects for its interests and skill sets?
2. Would having a marketing plan enable having a better fit for your firm’s interests and skill sets?
1.10 Thesis Chapter Summary

Chapter one sets the tone and direction of this study through a general introduction clarifying the terms that are often misunderstood. Chapter two, The Literature Review, reviews the why and how of a marketing plan, common obstacles to making a marketing plan, applying the SWOT analysis to a landscape architecture firm, understanding communication methods, and the importance of the client to professional services. Chapter three reviews the research methodology employed in the study while Chapter four analyzes the findings. Finally, Chapter five concludes the thesis and suggests recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review deals with the main concepts of what defines a marketing plan. Its focus is on the creation of a marketing plan and proposes its application to small landscape architecture firms. The sources show that the combination of formulating and utilizing a marketing plan are vital to finding business opportunities (Lamb et al. 2012, 132).

The difference between selling a product and selling a service, particularly a professional service such as landscape architecture, is clarified here in Chapter Two. Also, ‘small group theory’ is introduced in order to recognize the ‘small group’ that a ‘small firm’ is and how this affects planning. Marketing and its history are explained as is the important factor of the client’s influence in professional service industries. Understanding how various markets become target markets is fundamental to making a marketing plan.

2.2 Key Literature Reviewed

Beginning the search for appropriate literature on the subject of marketing plans begins with the key label, ‘marketing plan.’ The literature found includes the general literature of marketing. The realization that obtaining business for a ‘service’ is different from that of an inanimate ‘product’ leads to the literature of professional services, such as medicine and architecture. Architecture, of course, was a good fit with landscape architecture. The noteworthy source specifically written for landscape architecture, Landscape Architecture Guidelines to Professional Practice by Lane L. Marshall written in 1981, is indeed helpful and directive. Even though the marketing communication methods have certainly advanced since 1981 via the internet this source is valuable due to its emphasis on business planning of which a marketing plan is a key component. Architect, David Koren, in his book, Architect’s Essentials of Marketing, 2005, evokes the simpler definition of using a marketing plan for the purpose of ‘keeping client’s happy.’
The professional service literature valuable to this study is *Professional Services Marketing, Strategy and Tactics* by F.G. Crane, 1993 which presents detailed information about serving the client, a key player in a professional service like landscape architecture. Patrick Forsythe in his book, *Marketing Professional Services, Practical Approaches to Practice Development*, 1999, highlights the distinction between marketing a product and marketing a professional service as well as the importance of the client’s contribution to a professional service project. *The Architect’s Guide to Running a Practice* by David Littlefield, 2005, has pertinent information pointing out the need to go beyond the skills and credentials of landscape architecture in order to obtain work opportunity. This author points out the usefulness of a marketing plan as a business evaluation and monitoring tool.

The marketing literature broad and effective in its scope to the review is *MKTG* by Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, 2012. Concise definitions and thorough explanations of both marketing and a marketing plan that can be applied to landscape architecture are available in this resource.

### 2.3 Professional Service

Landscape architecture is a professional service industry. The term ‘professional service’ marketing is delineated from ‘product’ marketing. A product-oriented business has a particular product or group of products to market and sell, its chief assets based on money and inventory. On the other hand a professional service firm promotes expertise, ideas, advice, and recommendations (Forsythe 1999) with its chief asset based on people. Professional service-oriented businesses differentiate themselves from product-oriented enterprises in four ways:

1. Professional service companies sell knowledge and human talent
2. Because the ‘product’ is knowledge, professional service enterprises have unique opportunities for different types of selling methods in contrast to selling merchandise by offering differentiation through individual choices affecting service augmentation and pricing policy.
3. Professional service enterprises often serve a small geographic range but have a high level of client participation in the decisions surrounding the provision of the service.
4. Professional service enterprises are usually subject to special ethical codes of practice and regulatory governance, different from product-oriented organizations (Marshall 1981, 94).

Professional services, in addition to selling knowledge, offer a high degree of confidence to the client (Marshall 1981, 95). The typical client has no proof of the quality of the service being offered by a professional service enterprise before the service is filled. The client cannot 'try out' a service as he/she can with goods, as he/she must purchase all of the service or none at all. This is an underlying difference between product oriented and professional service oriented businesses and significantly affects business policy, approach, and management. For example, a product oriented business sells an appliance based on styling since its basic functions are the same throughout the industry. However, a professional service oriented business depends on human abilities which are unique to each person in a firm plus differences in each professional organization's interests, enthusiasm, and concentration. The highly creative nature of the design profession of landscape architecture adds further to the potential differentiation of services from one firm to another (Marshall 1981, 95).

The essential operational component for a landscape architecture firm is the successful use of its human resources, the principal asset of any professional service enterprise. This key element can be compared to the financial assets and the inventory of a product-oriented business (Marshall 1981, 94). A professional service’s chief asset is its people; a product oriented business chief assets are money and inventory. The high requirement of human capital in a professional service enterprise sometimes prevents a newly established firm from adequately planning ahead in order to prepare the monetary needs to carry a firm through a dry business season when their chief asset, employees, still needs to be paid.

2.4 Small Group Theory Influences the Study Group

In this study the making of a marketing plan fits into the systems theory of small groups (Beebe, Masterson 2000) because of the interdependent elements that exist within a landscape architecture firm. In composing a marketing plan, the small group, in this study a firm composed of
from one to ten skilled people, receives input from clients outside the firm, but also from the 'internal client,' the personnel of the firm. Processing the input through small group discussion the firm determines whether it has the expertise, or the desire to develop the expertise, to solve the particular client’s needs and wants. The group then yields an output, a proposal for landscape solutions the firm can provide. Both group processes and group dynamics influence all groups of people and direct their relationships within the group. In landscape architecture firms the group dynamic of ‘task interaction’ can be seen as including ‘all group behaviour that is focussed principally on the group’s work, projects, plans and goals’ (Forsyth 2006, 10). Size of the firm, roles of the participants within the firm, as well as hidden agendas will all play their part in how much planning can be accomplished and then implemented. This small group dynamic when affecting a small firm in a negative way can be the reason why a firm does not make a marketing plan. The effort required for planning may be thwarted by small group dynamics causing a lack of connection in the communication between leadership and employees. The fact that the firms studied are small groups may be an obstacle in the accomplishment of a marketing plan.

2.5 What Is Marketing?

The most succinct definition of marketing states that “Marketing is simply the process of keeping a firm’s present clients happy and attracting new clients” (Koren 2005, 1). With more detail “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2007). Marketing is more than ‘PR.’ The term marketing is superficially equated with promotion or public relations. Design professionals are obliged to see beyond the outward trappings of brochures and public relations to gain a deeper understanding of the marketing concept and its management (Marshall 1981, 105). The 80/20 Principle says that 20% of all clients generate 80% of the demand. Marketing aims at the 20%, particularly the heavy user in the 20% (Lamb et al 2012, 129).

The history of marketing finds its beginning in the 1920s. Earlier than this, when goods were scarce, buyers were willing to accept any goods produced, a time when production created demand.
Emphasis was placed on production assuming products would sell themselves. By the 1920s, at the end of the Industrial Revolution, more goods were being produced than could be consumed. As competition increased, buyers had more choices, and business entered the sales era. Sales people were employed to find buyers. This lasted until 1960, the production of goods with the hope to sell them.

In 1960, the marketing era began. With awareness of and emphasis on the consumer along with achieving business objectives, companies changed from a sales emphasis to a marketing focus. Instead of producing products and attempting to sell them, firms considered what the market needed before production began (Crane 1993, 1). The whole reason for marketing is to recognize a need or want, form a concept, and then implement a procedure to bring benefit to the client (Forsythe 1999, 2). Yet professional service organizations according to their governance were forbidden to advertise in any way before 1974 (Marshall 1981, 4). Then, the restriction was lifted opening the opportunity for professional services to seek business through marketing objectives. Implementation of these goals was based on finding the needs and the fulfilling them (Forsythe, 1999, xi) by means of landscape architects' professional expertise.

The best marketing tool is the landscape architecture company's expertise, the 'knowledge' attribute of its employees (Tailor, 2000). A professional service enterprise, such as a landscape architecture firm, includes any organization that renders the knowledge of its people (Marshall 1981, 94). The firm must show evidence of their knowledge, educating the public about this valuable asset. A landscape architecture firm's marketing plan should characterize this distinguishing difference from the marketing plan of a product-oriented enterprise. Overriding this, however, is the leading idea that marketing is not about providing products or services, but rather it is about providing changing benefits to the changing needs and demands of the client.

Marketing is commonly equated with promotion or public relations. Thinking of marketing one's services or skills as merely a selling job causes a disregard for the chief aim of marketing, having the focus on the client, meeting the client's needs and wants. Just 'selling' results in the belief that there is no need to 'market' a service, but rather 'just get out and find the work.' “Rather, the
function of marketing is to study and interpret user needs and behavior and to guide all business activity to the attainment of client satisfaction” (Marshall 1981, 106).

2.6 Plan or No Plan

Starting and running a landscape architecture firm involves business organization that includes how to obtain business opportunities, the reason for a marketing plan. This business tool carves a path for a firm to walk out its vision by accomplishing its goals of serving clients needs and wants. This thesis endeavors to clear the way of understanding of what a marketing plan is and how it provides organization for a firm to continually find business opportunity.

Koren (2005, 267) cites Handley’s study (Marketing Partnership, 2003) that found only fifty percent of professional service firms have a marketing plan. A marketing plan aids a firm of any size to better evaluate their marketing success and prepare for more marketing achievement in the firm’s future. If at the annual review a company recognizes that the marketing plan did not result in increased business and profit then the company knows to revise its marketing strategy. The firm moves closer to success through continuing its planning efforts.

Marketing requires a plan that addresses and organizes the vision, mission, and objectives communicated to the firm’s chosen market. Without a plan, a company can probably win some work, and temporarily sustain current client relationships, but it is difficult to penetrate new markets or increase market share (Koren 2005, 68).

Illustration 2.1: Deployment of Time (Source: Forsythe 1999, 16)
Figure 1 illustrates that a client’s project requires its own set of demands in addition to the regular day-to-day activities of running a business: Administration, selling, promotion, and planning. Making a marketing plan falls under the general heading of ‘Planning.’ Seeing the division of demands that a business must balance helps to conceptualize why making a marketing plan may get squeezed out of the business to-do list. The reasons that firms avoid making a marketing plan are many. From the simple fact that it is just no fun to focus on the why or the how, to the cost of time, money, and effort required to make a plan and put it into action. Planning means there will be a need for more meetings than already attended, as well as the purposeful limitation of project choices to pursue. According to Forsythe (1999) however, good planning frees up more time for client work.

Some firms lack understanding of the importance of having a marketing plan (Koren 2005, 68). The thought, ‘Just get out there and win jobs!’ seems to be a simpler requirement of staff than temporarily halting business activity to get down to the business of planning the marketing strategy. The time it takes to make a plan, and then to implement and monitor it, can seem like a waste of staff time. In the midst of organizing the marketing plan for general business development the plan can act as a coordinator and catalyst for meeting the firm’s goals and aspirations for the personal growth of both leaders and staff.

Without a marketing plan, the firm lacks essential business controls. Decisions tend to be made by an unguided, inconsistent approach rather than a directed one. Without a marketing plan, the company staff lacks understanding of company goals, targets, or budget to accomplish the firm’s business objectives. Also, the void of a measuring stick for success will negatively affect progress and growth (Koren 2005, 68). Clear directives gained through a marketing plan will be missing from the day-to-day activities; the accomplishment of the firm’s long range strategies will remain unreached (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel 2012, 132).

### 2.7 Why a Formal Plan?

A ‘formal’ marketing plan provides a distinct difference between thinking and action, dreaming and follow-through. Seeing the firm’s objectives in print, meeting to discuss them, and formulating ideas into structured activities accomplishes the intent of a marketing plan. An official
plan provides motivating, monitoring, and follow-up procedures. Acting as a clear guide a marketing plan is a barometer gauging whether the firm is staying on its business course or not. The plan sets forth a method of measurement and also uncovers areas of needed improvement (Forsythe 1999, 19).

Illustration 2.2: Business Growth/Strategic Growth Barometer (Source: Koren, 2005).

The firm’s expertise in its professionally trained employees is paramount, but it is a myth for a company to think ‘the quality of their work is their best marketing tool’ (Littlefield 2005, 21). The portfolio of previous work exposes a firm’s skills and establishes credibility that the firm has done this kind of work before, that it is convincing and capable (Fuller 2011). From there, the client will make a personal decision to work with a particular firm or with one of its competitors (Koren 2005, 7). The client is looking for the landscape architect who can best handle the project requirements. Once a firm’s credibility is established, the client chooses whom they like and trust. However, if the word is not out about what the company does, no one knows about the firm’s expertise, leaving the relationship between the firm and client untried and unproven.
2.8 Obstacles to Making a Marketing Plan

Two obstacles that professional service businesses must face and deal with on an on-going basis are resistance to change and the inability of most design professionals to predict change (Marshall 1981, 95; Hussy 1999, pp. 92-119). As an example of resistance to change landscape architects, artistically trained to use pencil and scale as their drawing aids, have been reticent to learn to use computer skills over their long-time familiar drawing instruments. This technological addition within landscape architecture was resisted due to the high learning curve required in adopting its use, as well as equipment expense. Gradually, landscape architects got involved in the learning process and found that the computer is a successful communication tool. As essential instruments used to convey the breadth of the firm’s knowledge, their chief marketing asset, computer-based design programs are now common in most firms.

Another hurdle is the difficulty to predict trends in the industry, a skill that landscape architects should develop to aid their planning. Keeping up with news events, both within the local geographic region as well as the world, is an indispensable part of fostering the recognition of trends. Awareness of what landscape architects are doing throughout the world is facilitated today through technological connectivity. On the lookout for opportunities, firms are noting the broad social and economic movement of people into and out of cities, people requiring assisted living facilities, and government spending programs. Awareness of legal issues that competitors are facing may open up markets to a firm previously unable to enter a specialty arena. Any broad social or political trends that may affect business negatively, as well as some markets shrinking or drying up, can open new business opportunities for the firm that is attentive to these events. Informing clients of everything the professional service firm is already doing for them can lead to both the customer’s and the firm’s greatest return (Connor 1985, 52). Keeping track of clients’ history, services performed, fees, personnel involved, as well as regular marketing plan evaluations will positively affect project procurement.
A professional service like landscape architecture is managed and marketed differently than a packaged good. Obstacles to success to be thwarted are the Four I’s: Intangibility, Inventory, Inconsistency, and Inseparability (Crane 1993, 13-14).

1. Intangibility is an obstacle because professional services “cannot be seen, felt, tasted, or touched” as goods can be; professional services “cannot be displayed, physically demonstrated, or illustrated” (Crane 1993, 13).

2. Inventory is an obstacle because professional services “cannot be stored or saved.” There is an unknown amount of how much service will be needed. For example, a landscape architecture project requires many visits to a site until the design project is finished. The number of site visit hours is difficult to inventory ahead of time, nor can they be reused on another project. There is idle capacity when no work is being done versus strained capacity when the work requires more attention than available (Crane 1993, 14).

3. Inconsistency is an obstacle because the quality of a professional service is dependent on people who provide it. The quality varies greatly even in one individual service provider’s job performance from one day to the next. Performance also depends on demand. In a period of high demand the service provider cannot, so does not, spend as much time as in a period of low demand. Reduction of this inconsistency can be tied to implementing a client management program of regularly scheduled visits to the client’s property (Crane 1993, 14).

4. Inseparability is an obstacle because goods are produced, sold, and consumed all in separate order whereas a professional service is sold, produced, and consumed simultaneously. “…the consumer must be present in the service system to receive the service” (Crane 1993, 14). The client is an active participant in the consultation time in order for the professional service to be uniquely designed and delivered. This activity affects the quality of the final service.

**2.9 Developing Marketing Plan Begins with Assessment**

To begin creating a marketing plan, some simple questions must first be addressed. “Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How are we going to get there (Koren 2005, 69)?” “Who are
our clients? What are our strengths? How do we best communicate our message (Littlefield 2005, 23)?” Clear answers to these critical questions give vision to everyone in the firm, and can take a considerable amount of time when well thought through.

A ‘Situation Analysis’ versus a ‘SWOT Analysis,’ shown in Table 2.1, demonstrates the different foci of a professional service-oriented business compared to a product-oriented business when assessing present conditions and future hopes to be addressed in a marketing plan. The main differences are due to a professional service business’ contact with human clients versus a product oriented business contact with inanimate objects. There is more variability to be considered in a professional service business than a product oriented business.

Table 2.1 Situation Analysis versus SWOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATION ANALYSIS – Service-oriented</th>
<th>SWOT - Product-oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are the client's demands for skills and services? Who is the contact person that makes purchasing decisions?</td>
<td>• Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The number of competitors, skill resources, strengths, weaknesses and strategies</td>
<td>• S – Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The business climate based on influences by economic, social, and technological forces.</td>
<td>• W - Weaknesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Data adapted from Marshall 1981, 108.)

A Situation Analysis for a landscape architecture firm is applied to the SWOT Analysis and shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 An Example of a SWOT Analysis for a Professional Service Firm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality knowledge and skills</td>
<td>No clear strategic direction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected image</td>
<td>High overhead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stability</td>
<td>High staff turnover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location convenience</td>
<td>High level of receivables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the analysis is complete marketing objectives are discussed and documented. These objectives are achievable goals by which a firm can eventually evaluate its business performance answering the question, ‘Have we accomplished the goals stated in our marketing plan?’ Objectives clearly spell out the way to accomplish the desired result for the firm which is profit. Objectives are the basis of both the mission and vision statements. When objectives are not met economic profit is not gained.

### 2.10 Vision and Mission Statements

During the situation analysis the essential development of the vision and the mission statements is accomplished. Based on the business objectives of the company, these essential objectives come from sessions of brainstorming and discussion in open staff meetings. If these crucial questions have not been answered and spelled out earlier in the firm’s formation they can be created at this point. Even if they have been addressed at a previous time, answers to these questions need review in the current situation and business climate (Marshall 1981, 97).

A marketing plan starts with vision because this key element gives the main thrust in a forward direction. When there is a vision for where a firm wants to go, that vision results in bringing in new, exciting projects and building the firm’s portfolio (Koren 2005, 3).

This is also a time for answering, ‘What is the vision for the firm? What does the firm truly want to be?’ Thinking big, stating it as concisely as possible, eliminating words that are not critical, using active verbs, and applying inspirational words, are all essential considerations in forming the vision statement. The vision statement sets the aim followed by the mission statement that proposes broad yet succinct goals to be accomplished.
The main questions to answer in order to clarify the mission statement are simply, “What does the firm want to accomplish? What does the firm want to change?” The mission statement should be limited to how the leaders and staff “plan to change the company, not the world … Where does the firm want to go now (Koren 2005, 35)?” The mission is based on looking at an area of the practice to improve, based on the weaknesses noted in the SWOT analysis. It also analyzes the benefits sought by present and potential clients as well as the economic climate. The vision statement, which leads both the internal and external firm environments, together with the mission statement, an internal-only guide for use within the company, outline goals aimed at what the firm wants to be both internally and externally. Finally, an action plan proposes how to meet both the vision and the mission goals.

2.11 A Marketing Plan Should Be Concise

Mistakenly, a marketing plan is often thought to be a mammoth undertaking. It should be disseminated into a one page document in order to keep the marketing plan succinct, easily reviewed, and easily updated as needed. This does not imply that it takes no time at all, but that it can be made into a simpler activity than often thought. It sounds like a mystery, that it needs a marketing professional to supervise. This can be the case, but definitely not always the situation. However, a marketing plan does require the basic understanding reviewed here.

Five specifications for formalizing the objectives in the marketing plan are that they be the following:

1. A single topic
2. Relate to a result, not an activity to be performed
3. Measureable
4. Accomplished by a deadline
5. Challenging but achievable (Crane 1993, 28)

The marketing plan should briefly include statements addressing specific subject areas shown in Table 2:3.
Table 2.3: Subject Areas Included in a Marketing Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Market</td>
<td>Positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size and Trends</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Positions</td>
<td>Budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Data adapted from Koren 2005, 70)

The plan should be formal in that it should be written down and kept manageable in length in order to easily review and act upon promptly. Its purpose is to clearly set out business objectives, to lead staff to concentrate its actions in an orderly manner, and to measure business progress.

The emphasis of marketing is not about the firm searching for recognition or planning its attack but it is about the client, their needs, their dreams, their requests for proposals. The difference in focus between a marketing orientation versus a sales orientation is the focus on the client rather than on a product (Lamb et al, 2012, 6-7). "One of the first rules of marketing is to carefully consider what the client is interested in buying and then position what the firm is selling in response to the client’s needs (Koren 2005, 5)." The best marketing advice is to keep the existing clients happy and to build on relationships already formed. A professional service firm must satisfy, hold, and develop relationships with existing clients over the long term (Forsythe 1999, xi). From the client's point of view, he first hires people he likes and trusts, and often whom he knows best. The firm that best manages the firm/client relationship wins the business opportunity.

2.12 Client Management Considered in the Marketing Plan

According to Crane (1993) client management is the essence of professional service marketing as it is both a survival and a growth tool for a firm. There is a high amount of client involvement in the professional service industry. Tempering the difference between what is technically or aesthetically correct and what is most appropriate or wanted by the client must be carefully considered by a firm and creative and appropriate recommendations made.
coordination of client involvement is critical to project success. A firm’s project management includes developing a level of trust, concern and support for the client’s needs, timely action, kept commitments and appointments, and the insurance of on-going follow-up activity that demonstrate progress recognized by the client (Marshall 1981, 96).

Client management provides solution to overcoming difficulties caused by the Four I's of professional services:

1. Impression management
2. Internal marketing
3. Relationship marketing
4. Synchromarketing

Both identification of the clients’ needs and evaluation of the service provider’s performance are vital to furthering relationships with clients. Client leveraging can be done by continuing to cultivate relationships with them. Former clients are a captive market as the right has already been earned to discuss additional need situations with them.

1. Impression management identifies the contact points where the professional service connects with the client. The client’s impression of the firm’s space, both exterior and interior color, signage, and furnishings influence their assessment of service quality. The staff’s, the professional and the support personnel, attitude, dress, and etiquette impact the client. Other impressions are created by the business card, stationary, website, and other collateral materials.

2. Internal marketing views employees as internal clients and jobs as internal products (Berry 1980, 26). The combination of these affects the client’s perception of the firm when visiting the firm’s location. The office environment’s colors, temperature, and the organization climate in general, affect employees’ work demeanor and attitudes. The accomplishment of the best work can only be obtained from well treated employees. By satisfying the needs of the internal clients the firm raises its ability to fulfill the needs and wants of its external clients. It is helpful for a firm’s management team to survey employees’ perceptions and attitudes in order to make any needed improvements in the
office environment. The time taken to build and encourage the internal environment will automatically affect contact with the external client. If problems are uncovered, the firm should be willing to take action with remedies contributed by employees. Participation of staff in the decision-making process will ensure commitment to any new initiative further creating a better working environment. Internal marketing to employees is needed because a job with pay alone will not be enough to keep personnel motivated. Internal marketing encourages employees to be client focused. Management that is caring inspires staff to see their job as rewarding and secure (Crane 1993, 50).

3. Relationship marketing is a cultivation process with the hope of repeat business (Crane 1993, 51) from the same client. Good service is necessary to retain client relationships and good relationship marketing is necessary to enhance it (Berry 1983, 25). The purpose of relationship marketing is to create loyalty. There are four relationship marketing strategies:

3.1 Core service strategy
3.2 Relationship customization
3.3 Service augmentation
3.4 Relationship pricing (Crane 1993, 41)

3.1 The core service strategy establishes a basic service that attracts prospective client interest. Once attracted, the firm discloses additional services to the client for new and repeat business from that client.

3.2 Relationship customization involves customizing the service to the client’s special characteristics. The goal is not to ‘sell’ additional services, but to assist clients in utilizing the firm’s available resources. This made to order servicing adds value to the client/firm relationship causing the client to be a loyal one. More involved relationships can be developed by planting ‘seeds of need’ that the client may realize they have. This realization then leads the client to recognize the benchmarks that the firm is known to meet within the larger industry (Connor 1985, 50-51).
3.3 Service augmentation involves adding extras to the basic service that are not easily available from the competition. If these extra services benefit the client value will be developed from the client’s perception leading to loyalty to the professional service firm.

3.4 A better price for better clients forms the base for relationship pricing. A price incentive causes the client to fuse their solutions with a single professional service firm.

The common element in relationship marketing strategies is the incentive that the professional service firm gives to its client. With these incentives, the client is given more reason to remain with this professional service company rather than change or try out another.

4. Synchromarketing deals with adjusting supply to meet demand and adjusting demand to meet supply. In a professional service company the ‘product’ is the people who meet demand. There are some solutions to this problem:

- Marketing similar services to target markets with different demand patterns
- Marketing service extras or price reductions during nonpeak times.
- Training personnel to perform multiple tasks
- Hiring part-time employees during peak times
- Educating consumers to use services during nonpeak times (Crane 1993, 54).

Communication plays a key role in synchromarketing. The firm suggests that clients use the service during a non-peak time. Stopping promotion when demand has surpassed the service’s capacity will reduce demand, leaving time for the firm to fulfill the current customer load.

2.13 Reaching the Target Market

A target market is a “group of people or organizations for which an organization designs, implements, and maintains a marketing mix intended to meet the needs of that group, resulting in mutually satisfying exchanges” (Lamb et al 2012, 131). Because a firm cannot satisfy all consumers it is more profitable to direct marketing efforts to a selected group of people. Two key factors that characterize the strategy carried out to accomplish the marketing plan objectives are a specified target market and a marketing program to reach the selected market (Crane 1993, 28). Having a strategy to reach a target market aims the company and keeps it on the path toward the goal it wants.
to reach. The marketing program, referred to as the marketing mix, is used to reach the target market, one of many possible market segments. Potential buyers within one segment are different from buyers in another segment. Importantly, the market segment is seen as having potential for bringing profit to the firm.

Targeting a market begins with market segmentation. A market segment, a subgroup of people or organizations sharing one or more characteristics that cause them to have similar service needs, is identified. The size of a subgroup is somewhere between the entire world and one individual. Tailoring the marketing mix to meet the needs of one or more specific population segments is the purpose of market segmentation. To achieve success a segmentation scheme recognizes segments that meet four basic

1. Substantiability is needed for a market segment because it must be large enough to justify developing and maintaining a particular marketing mix. Even if the segment is customized to individuals, a segment usually needs many possible clients to be a substantial segment.

2. Identifiability and measurability are needed for a market segment in order to recognize the group of people in the segment and to know the size of the potential market group. This knowledge justifies setting up the service to reach prospective clients.

3. Accessibility is concerned with the ability to reach the identified market segment with a customized marketing mix.

4. Responsiveness of a market segment gauges their expected reaction to the marketing mix. For example, if all clients are equally price conscious, there is no need to offer high, medium, and low-priced versions, as only the low cost model will be bought by all of the market segments (Lamb et al 2012, 122).

Market segmentation plays a key role in the marketing strategy of almost all successful organizations by helping to define the wants and needs of the client more precisely. Knowing this helps the service organization to more accurately define marketing objectives and allocate resources.
Their performance, mapped out by a marketing plan, can be better evaluated when a firm has more precise objectives.

Market segmentation is a prerequisite to developing the marketing mix which is based on the Four Ps of Product (service), Place, Promotion, and Price (Lamb et al 2012) PLUS People, Physical Evidence, and Process (Booms and Bitner 1981) added for professional service marketing. The first Four Ps is a distinct blend of important focus points to ignite client interest and final purchase. Professional services involve three additional Ps: People, process, and physical evidence. Due to the fact that a professional service is not seen, felt, or sensed in the same ways as a product can be, these additional Ps further assist client understanding of the service being offered. A market is segmented for the following reasons:

- To distinguish groups of people with similar needs and to analyze buying behavior
- To provide a firm with information to design a marketing mix matched to the characteristics and desires of one or more segments
- To be consistent with the marketing concept of satisfying client wants and needs while meeting the organization's objectives (Lamb et al, 2012, 122).

Illustration 2.3 The Marketing Mix Target (Source: A combination of data from Lamb et al 2012, 242, and Boom and Bitner 1981).
Figure 2.3 demonstrates that each facet of the marketing mix impacts the target market.

2.14 The Marketing Mix Helps a Firm Reach Their Target

To reach different segments a firm uses unique marketing mixes (Lamb et al 2012, 131). A marketing mix, made up of a blend of the following ‘Four Ps,’ (McCarthy 1964) plus three additional Ps associated particularly with professional services, is designed to produce a positive exchange between the firm and the client.

•Product (or service)  •Place  •Promotion  •Pricing strategies

In professional services, three additional Ps are added to the above ‘product’ marketing mix (Booms and Bitner 1981) in order to fully consider the uniqueness of professional services.

• People  •Physical evidence  •Process

Because landscape architects offer a knowledge-based service rather than a disposable product, the marketing mix has a different focus from a solely product-oriented business:

• Product is the knowledge, the expertise of the profession.

• Place is both the client’s property and the firm’s office location.

• Promotion is the group of collateral materials such as brochures, etcetera.

• Pricing strategy considers all the facets involved in the service

• People include the entire personnel from the telephone answering person to the design team to the construction group, all who are involved in producing the service.

• Physical evidence includes all the clues that can be examined by the client in order to have some understanding of what the final service product will look like.

• Process is the actual procedures and activities that are delivered by the service (Crane 1993, 15).

Because the service is a living entity, rather than an unchanging product, the opportunities to differentiate the professional services are many. The marketing mix can be combined or separated according to the client’s individual needs and promoted accordingly. Making changes in the marketing process of a service oriented business is streamlined compared to a product oriented
business. Less time and cost is required so that the firm can adjust its focus with more ease (Marshall 1981, 96) and more quickly get to the business of solving the client’s problem.

A unique characteristic of a service oriented business is the high degree of client involvement. The successful bridging that a company offers between itself and its client spells success or the lack of it. Listening carefully to the client’s side of the story is the first attribute employed to gain entry to any potential client opportunity. Participation by the client gives professional services more occasions for continued work opportunities. Professional service marketing is aimed at clients for repeat service, extension of service, and referrals to new clients (Forsythe 1999, 2).

Bases are selected variables or characteristics of individuals, groups, or organizations used to divide the total market into segments. Variables used to segment a market can be divided into two basic categories. The first category is made up of client characteristics. Based on geographic location, demographics, or psychographics, these unifying characteristics group clients together. The second category is made up of buying situations that include benefits sought by clients. How often clients buy a product or service, also referred to as usage rate, is incorporated in this second category (Crane 1993, 7). Markets can be segmented by a single one of these variables or a combination of variables. For example a single variable could be a demographic such as ‘age.’ A combination of variables could be age, gender, and education. Combining characteristics makes a segment more complex yet more precise (Lamb et al, 2012, 121-122).

The variables suggest the four bases from which to establish segmentation.

Base 1: Geographic segmentation is based on a region of the country or world, climate, and/or population density. Clients’ interests in products depend on their particular geographic location. In landscape architecture plants such as pines and palms depend on climate and soil conditions of the geographic location. Three reasons for a regional marketing approach: To stimulate sales in a sluggish economy, to offer suitable brands intended for local preferences, and to react to competition (Lamb et al 2012, 123).
Demographic segmentation is most commonly done with age, gender, income, ethnic background, and family life style (Lamb et al 2012, 124-127).

- Age: Newborn, Infant, Young children, Tweens (8-12), Gen Y (1979-94), Gen X (1965-1978), Baby Boomers (1946-64), Seniors (before 1946)
- Gender
- Income: Higher income earners want outstanding customer service; lower income earners want lower priced items.
- Ethnic: Large ethnic groups in US: Hispanic Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans
- Family life cycle: Combination of age, marital status, presence or absence of children

Psychographics segmentation influences market segmentation.

- Personality: traits, attitudes, habits
- Motives
- Lifestyles: the way time is spent, beliefs, income, education

Benefits sought segmentation groups clients based on the benefits they seek rooted in needs and wants. As an example in landscape architecture, the choice of plants can be based on any of these benefits that clients seek.

- Curb appeal
- Ease of care
- Outdoor or indoor enjoyment and beauty
- Heating or cooling effect indoors or outdoors

User rate segmentation divides the market by the amount of product or service bought (Lamb et al 2012, 129):

- Former users
- Potential users
- First time users
- Light or irregular users
- Medium users
- Heavy users
Combining both the customer characteristics and buying situations, a possible profile of a professional service client could fit into specific parameters.

- Geographic: City Center, Dallas, Texas
- Demographic: Male/female, 30-50 yr of age, single or married, earning $80,000 or more, college graduate
- Psychographic: Aggressive wage earner, values time, internet user
- Benefits sought: Seeks high quality, personal service, not price sensitive
- Usage rate: Moderate to heavy user (Crane 1993, 8)

Developing a strategy to reach a target market focuses effort. Coordinating action and exploiting identified strengths avoids waste of resources, distractions, and unproductive activities (Forsythe 1999, 30). By developing a marketing strategy within a firm, success and profitability in the chosen target market are achieved Selecting a target market helps a firm to define its clients’ needs and wants more accurately while meeting its own business growth objectives indicated in Illustration 2.15 Business Growth/Strategic Growth Barometer.

In the area of landscape architecture, the target market is often based on an individual client’s needs rather than the needs of a large group of clients. Still, there are general characteristics to recognize and act upon even when considering a small target market of just one or a few individuals. The larger target market can be segmented geographically, demographically, psychographically, according to benefit orientation and usage-rate. When using a concentrated targeting strategy, a firm selects a niche for targeting its marketing efforts.

A narrow niche market segment is often more profitable than spreading resources over several different market segments (Lamb et al 2012, 133). For landscape architecture projects niche client targeting is highly conducive to the industry since the project price tag is high, indicating that the individual customer needs to be in an upper income demographic.

One-to-one marketing is an individualized marketing method applied to a narrow niche that personalizes the approach according to the individual client’s unique set of needs and wants. Clients want to be treated as the individuals they are. There is a time saving element to this method, where
the client gains trust in the firm due to the firm’s willingness to address his or her particular needs and wants. This attention then tends to cause the client to hand over more and more decisions to the professional service firm. Loyalty, too, develops as the firm focuses on its best clients, rewarding them for their constancy, thanking them for their business. With the technologic advantage of database tools, one-to-one marketers can track their clients as individuals whether they number in the hundreds, thousands, or millions (Lamb et al 2012, 134-35).

Three types of targeting are used to select clients in a target market.

1. Undifferentiated targeting
2. Concentrated targeting
3. Multi-segment targeting

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of the segment targeting types.

1. Undifferentiated targeting is a mass marketing philosophy.
   - Advantages: Savings on marketing costs and production cost
   - Disadvantages: Less creative products, more susceptible to competition

2. Concentrated targeting selects a market niche.
   - Advantages: Concentration of resources
   - Better able to meet needs of a narrowly defined segment
   - Allows some small firms to better compete with large firms
   - Disadvantages: Segments are too small
   - Large companies may more effectively market to a niche

3. Multi-segment targeting uses a different marketing mix for each segment.
   - Advantages: Greater financial success
   - Economics of scale in production and in marketing
   - Disadvantages: High costs, cannibalization (Lamb et al 2012, 132)

A service firm’s marketing plan evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of various target marketing strategies, deciding which marketing mix to use. However, markets are dynamic,
changing over time (Lamb et al 2012, 131). For example if a firm chooses a segment based on age it needs to change its way of approaching this market as the segment grows older.

2.16 Branding and Positioning

The terms ‘branding’ and ‘positioning’ aid a company in packaging their expertise in a manner that differentiates their firm in the marketplace. Both terms are linked with strategy; the key difference between branding and positioning being scale and focus (Koren 2005, 55).

Branding works best when its message stems directly from the company’s vision statement. A brand makes a promise of certainty, acts as a badge of origin, and implies a promise of performance (Forsythe 1999, 32-33). A brand relates to the firm itself, a plumb line to be adhered to by enhancing the firm’s message. Consistency is important with branding. The consistency of follow-through shows that the promise implied is the promise kept. The brand combines identity, vision, and the desired market profile to create an original market presence (Haupt and Kubitza 2002, 22). Attaching the brand to print or digital media communicates the strengths of the company in specially created tools such as stationary, website, uniforms, and other items that help clients see and recognize a company’s brand.

Positioning, on the other hand, focuses on a particular market. The firm must package and offer its expertise to this one market segment, but at the same time distinguish itself in the midst of its competitors vying for the same position. Positioning is used to position a company against its competitor in consumers’ minds (Lamb et al 2012, 137) and is particularly helpful in a slow market.

Positioning influences potential clients’ overall opinion of the brand, service, or the organization in general. Positioning presumes that consumers compare services on the basis of relevant features. Marketing that emphasizes irrelevant features are therefore likely to misfire (Lamb et al 2012, 135). Choosing a position in the market where the organization’s marketing efforts will have the greatest impact leads to effective positioning.

Often, a company must reposition itself, particularly in a slow market. Clients need to be nudged by new informative messages for the company to receive attention again. A firm that has
several different brands can position itself in different markets in order to expand its presence. Repositioning changes clients’ perceptions of a brand in relation to competing brands.

Applied to landscape architecture, a company could brand itself as both a horticultural focused enterprise as well as a design/build firm, reaching different markets. Positioning is a key to targeting a client segment in the market. A landscape architecture firm may consider this element when making its marketing plan.

2.17 Communication

The communication side of the marketing plan is executed by a host of forms from printed brochures to industry events, from community involvement to networking with similar and dissimilar businesses. Each of these methods of communication presents a venue for promoting the firm’s expertise. Historically, architects were denied the use of employing these communication tools until 1972 because it was thought that using them discredited the professionalism of the architect’s work (Koren 2005; Crane 1999). In the past, learning the skills and hanging out a sign were the only way for clients to find a professional service firm. But in 1972, the American Institute of Architects, AIA, cleared the ethical path for architectural firms to begin to market their expertise (Koren 2005, 3). The term ‘marketing,’ sometimes used to refer to the collateral materials that a firm uses to disclose its credibility, uses communication tactics to make its expertise and capabilities known to the public. Communication tactics come under the broader umbrella of marketing.

Communication tools include a broad array of tactics used for the impression side of marketing. Such tactics answers part of the question, “How does the firm want to get there (Littlefield 2005, 22)?” The tactics are the tools employed to carry out the marketing strategy under the larger umbrella called marketing. Various tactics come under the headings of printed material, live events, and the internet and are detailed in Table 2.4.
Table 2.4 Communication Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Material</th>
<th>Live Events</th>
<th>Internet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business card</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday card</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct mail</td>
<td>Trade show</td>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>Radio, TV</td>
<td>Social Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td></td>
<td>Podcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure</td>
<td></td>
<td>Webinar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper/Magazine article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.18 The Effective Marketing Plan

An effective marketing plan is based on observation and study of the client’s wants and needs in the existing economic climate and answers the six simplified business questions.

- Where are we now and how did we get here?
- Where do we want to go?
- What is the best way to get there?
- What actions are required to get there, by whom, and when?
- What is it going to cost and what will be the return on investment?
- What will be measured in order to control and evaluate the plan?

As Crane (1993, 39) points out an effective marketing plan for a professional service is the result of a manager with good judgment and common sense. In addition to the plan addressing the six foregoing questions, an effective marketing plan for a professional service firm should be based on sound facts and valid assumptions gained from researching the market and the competition. A plan having specific marketing objectives will sustain a sound marketing strategy with a simple, clear,
and specific marketing program. A firm can move forward with sure steps having a marketing plan in place that has controls and evaluation measures.

2.19 Business Growth through Market Understanding

The marketing plan sets the stage for company growth and provides a basis for on-going evaluation which may lead to changes to the plan. Growth is often spurred by what the competition is offering. Review of the marketing plan considers growth options and the way to arrive at achieving them. There are four basic scenarios for growth.

1. Market penetration
2. Market development
3. Service development
4. Service diversification

The straightforward approach is to further penetrate the market by implementing superior service, better pricing, improved distribution, and/or aggressive promotion. After exhausting this first step, firms further develop and expand their market by taking the existing service into a new geographic or demographic market. The third option is further service development, either through offering a new service or modifying the existing service. This step is employed when the competition is already offering it. Finally, diversification of the service by offering new services, sometimes completely unrelated to the other services, aims at a new market (Crane 1993, 30-34)

2.20 Summary of the Literature Review

The literature reviews the basics of a marketing plan, its parts and its influence on finding business. It points out the differences between product-oriented marketing and service-oriented marketing. This clarification aids the recognition that landscape architecture firms are professional service enterprises. The professional service classification of landscape architecture, as pointed out by both Marshall (1981) and Koren (2006) is due to the knowledge-base and service orientation of the profession. Specific landscape architecture literature addressing the marketing of landscape architecture firms is limited, but general professional service industry literature is available and
applicable. The literature reveals that ignoring the option of making a marketing plan may lead to shortsightedness and a lack of business development.

Marshall (1981), in his report of the landscape architecture profession in the 1980’s, points out the problem of the resistance of employing new design tools and other changes in the business climate. The authors recommend that the development of this attitude be watched for and addressed quickly so as not to cause a firm to lose ground in the industry's ever-growing expertise. Marshall also indicates the need to identify trends in the general business environment. When landscape architects only keep their focus toward the pressing design problem in front of them, they miss opportunities that are recognized by another firm. Detection of where the next opportunity will arise is a leading catalyst for recognizing a target market and meeting its particular needs. Besides finding new business a marketing plan helps a firm stay focused on the ‘right kind of business’ to obtain, meaning the ‘right’ kind for them according to their strengths, interests, and profitability.

The literature points out that the main focus of marketing is the client, often referred to as ‘client focused marketing.’ The marketing methods for professional service firms described by the cited authors are valuable tools used to find landscape architecture projects. The purpose of using marketing tools is to gain recognition and credibility to aid the client in his decision of selecting one landscape architecture firm over another. Beyond the application of marketing tools is the one-to-one meeting between firm and client that takes the client’s decision one step closer to the finish line - a completed project and a satisfaction with the process to reach it.

Understanding the main considerations gleaned through the literature review heightens understanding of the making of a marketing plan. The areas of client management, market segmentation, target markets, and communication methods lay the groundwork for understanding how to more knowledgeably approach landscape architecture professionals through the research based on in-person interviews.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology for this study is divided into three parts: Requirements of the University of Texas Arlington Institutional Review Board, qualitative interviews with small landscape architecture firms listed in table form, firm selection procedure, and the interview process conducted with eighteen firm respondents. Adherence to university protocol came first before any concrete research began. Observance of the research protocol permitted the study to commence in order to gain pertinent information to apply to the investigation. Once this requirement hurdle was crossed, specific questions posed by the researcher lead to a wealth of information of how local firms find business opportunity.

3.2 Qualitative Research

The research conducted in this thesis seeks qualitative data defined as “research that produces descriptive data based on people’s spoken words and observable behavior” (Taylor and Bogdan 1998, 7); “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (Shank 2002, 5). The thesis research was done in an orderly manner following the rules of IRB, Institutional Review Board, at University of Texas, Arlington. The bulk of the research was experienced first-hand, recorded, and then transcribed word for word. In two of the eighteen instances, the research was accomplished by means of telephone interview. The researcher experienced positive responses from the interviewed respondents of each firm. They did not appear to hold back information but talked freely of their marketing experiences about their years in business.

The qualitative research interview process enabled the researcher to note more than the oral recording of answers to posed questions. The body language and facial expression told additional information. Particularly, facial expression showed a brief sheepishness on some of the respondents’ faces about the fact that their firm did not have a marketing plan. Even though they continue in
business they appear to admit that their business acumen suffers some lack of organization. As one respondent answered, “Does your marketing plan adapt to various clients?” Respondent 13: “Yeah, I guess. We need a better marketing plan, to tell you the truth. We would like to actively market somehow.”

3.3 Institutional Review Board: IRB

Before the actual research began, the researcher applied through the proper channels of the Institutional Review Board, IRB, at University of Texas, Arlington. After participating in the training exercises, the proper protocol was followed with required forms filled out, signed, and re-submitted with pertinent information such as the name of the thesis, research emphasis, and questions to pose to interviewees. The protocol additionally required one revision in order to include two supplementary questions designed to better accommodate the pool of participants. However, a distraction that impeded setting up interview appointments for an earlier date was the annual landscape architecture event happening in the general local at the same time, the 2012 Texas ASLA Convention in Grapevine, Texas. This presented a conflict in scheduling thesis interviews because the firms in the area had a full appointment schedule at the convention. But, once this event passed, the interviews were held. Two of the interviews were able to be conducted at the Texas ASLA event.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Search for Firm Selection

Landscape architecture firms were selected from the American Society of Landscape Architecture directory, retrieved from the society’s internet source, January, 2012. Based on the firms’ location in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area the research firm size was limited to ten or fewer employees. This pool was defined further by reviewing firm websites, many of which introduce the firm’s employed landscape architects and support personnel. The number of employees in the firms interviewed included office support staff but did not incorporate other business associates hired on a per project consulting or installation basis. According to the Small Business Administration, eighty percent of architectural firms have fewer than twenty employees (Small Business Administration 2012, 7493). The research conducted for this thesis based the size firm on ten and fewer people because the research focus is on ‘small’ firms.
3.4.2 Firms Found for Interviews

Sixty-seven small firms were found in the ASLA Member Directory that fit the location parameter of being located in the Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas area. From the original sixty-seven firms found in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, thirty-five firms, appearing to be small firms of possibly having ten and fewer employees, were emailed requesting their participation in the study. An example of the email message appears in Appendix A.

From these thirty-five firm contacts, reply emails were received with explanations from prospective participants who agreed to be interviewed. However, they made it clear that they did not have a marketing plan. They asked, ‘Are you still interested in my participation in the research?’

Eighteen firms then confirmed their commitment to participate in an interview, a 51% response rate of the original thirty-five firms first contacted.

Each firm was contacted either by a reply email or by phone to set up an interview appointment (see Appendix C). Interviewees are listed in the interviews in Appendix E as ‘Respondent # ___’ or ‘R#.’ Two of the firm respondents were asked in person if they would agree to an on-site interview at that time and they each agreed.

The interviews of key personnel of the firms, either the principal or the marketing director, were conducted to evaluate the impact of implementing a marketing plan and/or marketing techniques.

- Twelve out of eighteen firm participants were interviewed at their firm.
- Two firm participants were interviewed at the Texas ASLA Conference, 2012.
- Two firm participants were interviewed by phone.
- One firm participant was interviewed at a coffee shop.
- One firm participant was interviewed at the researcher’s home office.

During the process of emailing prospective interview candidates responses indicated that many of the prospective participants did not have a marketing plan in place. The researcher decided, under the direction of the thesis chair, to add some pertinent questions to the interview question list that would specifically apply to firms with no marketing plan in order to not halt the discussion if the firm did not use a marketing plan. In order to facilitate this change, IRB was contacted and the
protocol was revised. Formerly scheduled interviews proceeded during this additional IRB approval waiting time as it was found that respondents easily adapted whatever form of marketing they used to fit the original five questions submitted to IRB.

Each interview was recorded using Olympus Digital Voice Recorder VN-701PC purchased for $49.99 from Radio Shack. The phone interviews were conducted on a speaker phone so that the interview could be recorded. The recorder, having a PC USB connector, enabled downloading the audio files onto a computer in order to save them for transcribing later. This procedure facilitated making room on the recorder for additional recordings and prevented accidental loss of any recordings before they were transcribed. The recordings were saved only for the duration of the completion of this thesis. According to university protocol the recordings of the interviews were destroyed at the final submittal of this thesis. The interviews were also transcribed by the researcher taking notes by hand. This was particularly useful in the event when Respondent 5’s audio recording was inadvertently erased before transcription occurred.

All interviews were conducted in a two week period from March 30, 2012 to April 11, 2012. The interview appointments were kept promptly and progressed in a comfortable manner. All respondents in the interviews signed consent forms issued by IRB. Sixteen of the eighteen respondents were willing to share their name and company name, but two respondents preferred that their names not be used. The researcher made the decision to not include any respondent’s name in this thesis. All names were coded in numerical order in which they took place. Each respondent appeared to reply willingly and truthfully to the questions asked and offered supplemental information about their marketing practices.

All of the landscape architecture professionals participated without hesitation to all questions posed. Their openness to each of the questions asked was beneficial to this thesis producing a rich pool of research information that can be taken beyond this particular research purpose.
3.4.3 Interview Questions

Questions to small landscape architecture firms regarding the influence of a marketing plan on their firms:

• Tell me about your marketing plan.
• How does your marketing plan benefit your firm?
• How often do you make changes to your marketing plan?
• Does your marketing plan target a particular prospective client base?
• Does your marketing plan adapt to various prospective clients?

Two additional questions were added that could be asked of firms who during the interview session would answer that they did not have a marketing plan:

• What are your firm’s primary ways of finding business?
• Have you considered making a marketing plan?

Once the interview started, some additional questions were asked to qualify the respondent as to size of firm, as well as where they studied to obtain their Masters of Landscape Architecture degree, and other questions pertinent to the way the interview progressed.

All original five questions plus the two additional questions were asked to each respondent because even though they responded that they did not use a marketing plan, they proceeded to tell how they ‘market’ to obtain business opportunities. The question would be asked using the exact wording recorded in the IRB forms, and then asked again. When necessary, the words were adjusted slightly from ‘marketing plan’ to ‘marketing activity’ to facilitate the conversation and to fit more comfortably with the respondent. At times the wording did not need adjustment as the respondent was comfortable talking about a ‘marketing plan’ as meaning the general term ‘marketing.’

The interview would then readily proceed from approximately twenty to forty-five minutes in length.
3.5 Methodological Significance and Limitations

Open-ended questions are used in interviews in order to learn from the respondent’s point of view (Kahn 1957, p.132). As open-ended questions intend, the respondents often offered more than the questions asked which opens up new questions to pose to the respondents as well as for future research.

The interview questions asked were formed with influence and direction from the thesis chairperson. The study focused on the influence of a marketing plan for small landscape architecture firms to find work projects. The questions lead to this finding and more.

The usefulness of qualitative research done through interview is keen in that it invites the researcher into the lives of the subjects more than a question/answer survey can do. This is due to the way people interact with one another, how conversation develops and more subjects are introduced by the natural progression of the dialogue. The prepared questions introduce the topic and coral the discussion but there is ample room for sub-topics to be covered. It is the extension of talk that the sub-topics introduce that gives a fuller picture of than the researcher expects.

Limitations to the methods used in the study were formed by the participants’ responses to the interview questions, though the questions were sufficient to gain much of the data searched for. The greatest limitation was the assumption that in general is obtained by the use a marketing plan. However, this fact did not limit the research, but broadened it because the respondents were eager to share how they find business though they do not use a marketing plan.

3.6 Summary of Research Methods

Once IRB approval was obtained and all requirements met, qualitative research was conducted through mostly on-site interviews. These consultations produced noteworthy answers and comments that are compiled into tables and text directly related to the questions posed. The commentary gained through the interview process brought additional information to the surface. This information is usable for consideration by anyone running a business who deals with the significance of marketing efforts whether organized into a formal plan or used for general marketing activity.

Finding the firms to interview was not difficult owing to the accessibility of the ASLA member directory to the researcher who is a member of the society. However, the time frame was short and
the interviews were conducted in close time proximity. This was found to be beneficial as the interviews were conducted in similar fashion since time passing did not cause much variation in the researcher’s methodology. The short time period facilitated the similarity of interview methodology. Finding members willing to set a date for an appointment was difficult at first because of the statewide conference taking place at the same time. Also, being the spring season made it challenging for landscape architects to commit to another appointment in their already full schedules. Spring awakens potential clients for landscape architecture needs and wants so that firms are busier at this time of year more than other times. Making time to discuss their marketing plan with a student adds yet another constraint to their already crowded schedule. But, graciously some landscape architects remembered their own educational training and allotted time for the interview.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The research based on the examination of a ‘marketing plan’ in Chapter Two, Literature Review provides a foundation upon which to understand the collected data. From the list of definitions in the thesis introduction the difference between a ‘marketing plan’ and ‘marketing’ is clarified. From the interviews conducted it appears that to the usual business owner the two terms are synonymous with each other. The rich dialogue between the researcher and the interviewed firm respondents supplies a wealth of themes upon which to build a long list of useful marketing methods for other small landscape architecture firms to use and build upon.

When replies to the researcher’s first emails to prospective research candidates produced sample responses such as: I would be happy to help out. I must tell you, though, that I don't really do any marketing. All of my work comes by referrals from past or current clients and other design professionals. It's pretty much all word of mouth. Let me know if you still want to visit ....This caused two additional questions to be developed and added to the interview questions (see Appendix D). This addition was submitted to the Institutional Review Board.

Two of the eighteen interviewed firm respondents preferred that their name or company name not be included in this thesis. For this reason the firms are listed without recognizable reference other than a chronological number that delineates one from another, for example: Respondent 1 (R1), Respondent 2 (R2), and so on.

Limiting the study pool to firms of ten and fewer employees was attainable as over 50% of the interviewed firm respondents were from firms of fewer than two persons. Table 4.1 displays the number of employees per firm interviewed.
4.2 Number of Employees in Firms Interviewed

Table 4.1: Number of Employees in Firms Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of employees</td>
<td>88*1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10*2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 Firm Respondent worked over twenty years prior as marketing director for approximately one and a half years. This interview is used as a basis for examining the marketing efforts of landscape architecture firms.

The size of the landscape architecture department for this multi-division firm is not known but is believed to be fewer than ten people.

*2 This firm has a number of departments, such as engineering, architecture, etc. Its landscape architecture department has ten employees.

Table 4.1 shows:

- Six of eighteen firms interviewed – 33% – are composed of one person.
- Ten of eighteen firms interviewed – 55% – are composed of two persons.
- Fourteen of eighteen firms interviewed – 77% – are composed of fewer than five persons.

This last percentage, 77%, figured from Table 4.1 comes very close to the statistic from the Small Business Administration that states that 80% of landscape architecture firms have fewer than ten employees.

4.3 Years in Business and Landscape Architecture Program Attended

‘How long has your firm been in business? What landscape architecture program did you graduate from?’ These questions were asked to obtain general information about the pool of interview participants. The pool of respondents was composed of landscape architects from universities in Texas, Louisiana, Kansas, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Nine of the eighteen interviews, 50%, were with respondents from University of Texas Arlington. This percentage suggests that the state University of Texas Arlington is educating half of the future landscape architects who remain in the Dallas/Ft Worth area to practice the expertise gained via their education.

Nine of eighteen interviewed respondents, 50%, were educated from University of Texas Arlington graduate program in landscape architecture and have remained in business for an average of fifteen years. All of the interviewed firms remained in business through the recent economic recession, though some of them did mention in the interviews that they had to let some of their former employees go. Two respondents, Respondent 9 and Respondent 16, started their firms during the
recent economic downturn. Respondent 9 was let go from her former firm; Respondent 16 had a particular opportunity come her way during the recession causing her to leave a firm and begin her own landscape architecture firm.

4.4 No Marketing Plan Marketing

The following table, Table 4:2, shows that though there is no formal marketing plan, marketing is indeed occurring. Table 4.2, made up of key responses from the transcriptions of eighteen recorded interviews, was developed from the interviews for the purpose of more clearly viewing the results of the development and use of marketing techniques. The table spans three pages: 45-47. ‘R’ stands for ‘respondent’ interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>R 1</th>
<th>R 2</th>
<th>R 3</th>
<th>R 4</th>
<th>R 5</th>
<th>R 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your marketing plan</td>
<td>Made a marketing plan, but it was not followed. “I had no authority to implement the plan.”</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does your marketing plan benefit your firm?</td>
<td>Gives focus</td>
<td>Brings business</td>
<td>Brings business</td>
<td>Gives focus; makes us stay with enjoyable work</td>
<td>Brings Business</td>
<td>Gives direction to suitable projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you make changes to your marketing plan?</td>
<td>Minimum 3x/year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I reinvented myself many times</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only marketed one time. It was so successful, never had to do it again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your marketing plan target a particular prospective client base?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Native plants; residential; ranches; municipalities</td>
<td>Modern landscape</td>
<td>City concepts</td>
<td>Country clubs; golf courses</td>
<td>City ordinances for permitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your marketing plan adapt to various prospective clients?</td>
<td>Firm was unable to adapt</td>
<td>Open to a variety of projects</td>
<td>Open to a variety of projects</td>
<td>Open to a variety of projects</td>
<td>Open to a variety of projects</td>
<td>Adapted one time; not needed again</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>R 7</th>
<th>R 8</th>
<th>R 9</th>
<th>R 10</th>
<th>R 11</th>
<th>R 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your marketing plan</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
<td>No marketing plan; word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does your marketing plan benefit your firm?</td>
<td>Builds relationships</td>
<td>Provides help to older clients</td>
<td>Clients are able to find me</td>
<td>Allows us to keep the clients we have</td>
<td>Gives focus</td>
<td>Pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you make changes to your marketing plan?</td>
<td>Annually; sometimes more often</td>
<td>Turn away work when workload gets heavy</td>
<td>(Still a brand new business – under a year old)</td>
<td>Not often enough</td>
<td>Negative experience causes need for change</td>
<td>Every three or four years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your marketing plan target a particular prospective client base?</td>
<td>Wealthy clients</td>
<td>Older home owners</td>
<td>Residential Just beginning to build business</td>
<td>Large architecture firms</td>
<td>Municipalities as MWBE</td>
<td>Sustainable gardens; institutional mission landscape statement; botanical gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your marketing plan adapt to various prospective clients?</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>When work gets heavy I stop taking business</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Mostly focus on existing clients</td>
<td>When a new need is recognized in the market place</td>
<td>According to the economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 4:2, none of the interviewed respondents have a marketing plan yet they willingly responded to Question 1: ‘Tell me about your marketing Plan.’ The most cogent response is that ‘word of mouth’ is the source of business.

A possible reason that none of the respondents’ firms have a marketing plan may be based on the fact that over 50% of the interviewed firms are made up of fewer than four employees led by an entrepreneurial leader. According to the definition an entrepreneur is a person who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise (Merriam Webster). Entrepreneurs, in their energetic manner rush ahead at times without planning their business route. As Stasiowski (1994) writes, ‘An entrepreneur is, by nature, a risk taker. The entrepreneur sees the benefits and the
possibilities.... However, entrepreneurs and good leadership do not automatically go hand in hand.’

Caught up in the pursuit of business, busy with the day-to-day business necessities a planning element such as a marketing plan may be pushed aside. Also, when business is booming as in the years prior to the economic downturn the need for a marketing plan appears unnecessary.

4.5 Have You Considered Making a Marketing Plan?

The question, ‘Have you ever considered making a marketing plan?’ was asked the interviewed respondents after answering that they had no marketing plan. However, this question was not asked of all participants as it didn’t always fit in with the flow of conversation. The interviews in which the question was asked it was used to uncover past consideration regarding the making of a marketing plan, the decision to not make one, and to ignite the idea of making and implementing a marketing plan.

All of the respondents seemed to equate a marketing plan with marketing activity. Respondent 2: “No, I rarely get any calls from the phone book.” This respondent continues to use an old marketing method, a listing in the phone book. He didn’t mention a website. But, he answered the question with an answer that he thought fit the question from his frame of running his small landscape architecture business.

Even when a firm partner had a bachelor’s degree in business marketing, the firm doesn’t apply his acumen to their present business in any formal way. Respondent 3: “We discussed what we wanted to do and made an outline.” In this case, an outline is basically the ‘one page’ marketing plan recommended in Chapter Two. This outline may just be an activity list rather than broad achievable goals to be accomplished through various marketing efforts.

Marketing plans are used by larger firms as mentioned by Respondent 4 in his former career: “I would do a marketing plan. It was more to scale me back than to do anything else, because you always had a limited amount of the budget for marketing and Ok, you’ve got x thousands of dollars. ... How are you going to use them most effectively? You can do this, this, and this. I’d love to do this… but we don’t have the money for that, so I’m going to target these specific areas. And, that really worked pretty well. Much, much better to really exhaust
all those possibilities within a limited budget and not blow the budget and not be able to pay bonuses at the end of the year...

Respondent 4 also remarked in reference to the purpose of a marketing plan: “No, we don't want to have to take things we aren't good at in order to make payroll.” Since his goal is to focus on 'soul work,' the kind of work that is meaningful to him, a stand he has taken in running his business, a marketing plan doesn't seem to be needed, particularly since he is already focused on his target client.

The desire to run a business on a more casual basis was mentioned by Respondent 12: “No, I proceed on a casual basis. I guess I'll continue that way.” As stated in Chapter Two, “Without a plan, a company can probably win some work, and temporarily sustain current client relationships, but it is difficult to penetrate new markets or increase market share (Koren 2005, 68). As a sole proprietor, a firm such as the one represented by Respondent 12 can probably continue in business without much growth, a characteristic some firms prefer.

Guilt over not having a marketing plan is experienced by people running their firms, knowing that they could be running their businesses in a more organized manner, possibly more smoothly and more profitably. As expressed by Respondent 13 in reference to having a marketing plan: “I guess we really should have one.” His facial expression when making this statement indicated a measure of failure in his own businessman eyes.

According to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, a marketing plan's purpose is not only to achieve business opportunities but also to evaluate and monitor the business opportunities that are coming a firm’s way (Koren 2005). The responses listed show that the respondents have not accomplished making a marketing plan, an aid in monitoring and evaluating whether their marketing activity has been productive.
4.6 Most Common Ways Firms Find Business

The most common responses to ‘Tell me about your marketing plan:’

“We get most of our business via: Word of mouth; repeat clients; speaking engagements; our firm’s website.”

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As each interview progressed, other questions were posed fitting the developing conversation. Each time question one: ‘Tell me about your marketing plan,’ was posed, the universal answer was, ‘We don’t have one, but we ...’ It was evident at the beginning of each interview that the respondent associated a marketing plan with the general concept of marketing and/or answered the question as best he/she could. Question one assumes the role of the general concept of marketing rather than only pertaining to a marketing plan. Also, all respondents first response to question one was, ‘We get our business primarily through word of mouth passed on by satisfied clients as shown in Table 4.6.

4.7 Work Obtained through Architects

61% of the firms interviewed do not work for the end user, but for other service professionals including architects, engineers, private developers, and individual landscape contractors who all serve the end user. 29% of work is done directly for the end user. The answer most often given to “Tell me about your marketing plan’ was, “We get our business through architects.” From the data analysis 88% of the participants obtain work under this heading of ‘Work via Architects.’

4.8 Four Variations of the Definition of a Marketing Plan

Variations of the definition of a ‘marketing plan’ apply to the respondents accordingly.

First the definition variations:

Definition 1: A written document that acts as a guidebook of marketing activities for the marketing manager (Lamb et al 2012, 16) elicited the following responses from the interviews:

Respondent 3: “I guess we’ve never formally written a marketing plan, but we have sat down and discussed what we wanted to do, and made an outline. But, we haven’t typed up a formal plan. But, I guess in a way, we have created a marketing plan and executed it.”

Respondent 16: “…not a formal marketing plan. We have written up some goals, who our target client is, and try to establish who we do want to do, and who we don’t. But that’s a

Respondent 8: “I’ve been thinking about this. Here…” Respondent 8 showed a brief plan written on the back of a napkin that he prepared and brought to the interview.
Definition 2: A document composed of an analysis of the current marketing situation, opportunities and threats analysis, marketing objectives, marketing strategy, action programs, and projected or pro-forma income (and other financial) statements (American Marketing Association, 2007). This definition initiates the following responses from the respondents interviewed:

  Respondent 1: “When I was director of marketing at (company name), in Dallas. I came here ... as Director of Marketing, and I prepared a marketing plan for them at that time. I was specifically concerned about where they were and where they were going.”

  Respondent 15: “So, for us we first identify what our strengths are. And even before a marketing plan we’ll do a SWOT analysis. I’m surprised how many firms don’t know to do this. It’s just a quick strengths/weaknesses/threats/opportunities, but that helps shake out where you can establish targets because you know automatically where your weak, where your strong, where the opportunities area. And if there are threats – what you need to overcome. So that really does help. This helps establish targets.”

  Respondent 17: “...make a presentation regarding your qualifications. So the marketing department helps the landscape architecture group put the presentation together in a way that is compelling and informative, putting our best foot forward and complies with the request about timeframe, how many people they want to hear. So the marketing department supports them in that effort. But I’d say the biggest components for the marketing program and the marketing plan are the database, the targeted clients, and then the marketing department’s support of the pursued effort.”

Definition 3: A marketing plan is designed to answer where and how to use the resources of money, time, and human capital in order to cope with the pressures of demand, competition, legal restrictions and changes, and the availability of human and financial capital” (Forsythe 1999, 18).

  Responding to resources of change and human capital:

  Respondent 13: His firm cut staff from 7 people to 2 people:

  “I had another partner. The largest number of employees I think we had was seven.”
Respondent 11: Firm obtained MWBE certification

“...when I first started out, my marketing plan was knocking on as many doors as I could. And, once you start getting a client base and returned clients it’s not so much marketing as responding to requests. Right now the challenge we’re trying to address is being on cities bid lists for design services.”

Definition 4: Marketing is simply the process of keeping a firm’s present clients happy and attracting new clients (Koren 2005, 1) initiates the following responses from the interviews:

Respondents 1,2,4,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,17: Our work comes from existing satisfied clients.

Respondent 1: “One way is you generate business from existing customers, so you need to stay in good contact, top to bottom within a firm.”

Respondent 2: “If a client is satisfied, they’ll let the work be known and so that’s how most of it comes about.”

Respondent 4: “…the people who call us generally know us, and the people who call us and don’t know who we are aren’t usually a good fit.”

Respondent 6: “From then on it’s just been word of mouth. I’ve maintained those specific clients then and they referred me to others and so on and everything was built up from sending that out one time.”

Respondent 8: “Word of mouth from existing clients”

Respondent 10: “We have almost subconsciously or consciously, I feel that our marketing plan is taking care of the existing clients that we have. We do almost no chasing of projects.”

Respondent 11: “Because when I first started out, my marketing plan was knocking on as many doors as I could. And, once you start getting a client base and returned clients it’s not so much marketing as responding to requests.”

Respondent 12: “I also got referrals on institutional properties. Because I had been on staff at (public garden) so I had some connections with the public gardens community and some of the education institutions around Dallas, so I got some referrals directly on that work, too.”

Respondent 13: “Satisfied customers pass the work along, and the development community is kind of close knit.”
Respondent 14: “Probably our biggest source of contacts is word of mouth. Other professionals, manufacturers, suppliers, as well as contractors, so all those people know you, know your reputation, so they pass your name along.”

Respondent 17: “The marketing is pretty loose. We do have some repeat clients (whose work) we go after.”

The above responses show that ‘keeping existing clients happy’ is valued by the respondents. Keeping clients happy is built upon relationship marketing reviewed in Chapter Two that highlights the value of client management for repeat business opportunity. According to Crane (1993) client management is the essence of professional service marketing as it is both a survival and a growth tool for a firm. There is a high amount of client involvement in the professional service industry. The respondents interviewed agree with Crane’s assessment.

4.9 The Respondents Consider a Marketing Plan Synonymous with Marketing

Many of the respondents answered the question, ‘Tell me about your marketing plan,’ with information as to how they gain business opportunities, the main result of a marketing plan, rather than talking about the planning part of the business procurement process. None of the firms had a marketing plan, but all respondents appeared comfortable talking about the general idea of marketing. They readily talked about how they find their business opportunities.

Respondent 1: “I think that talking about getting out and lecturing to group about the Texas landscape and the unique characteristics of Texas landscape is really important. And it’s something that generates business and people don’t realize that. They think that… well, you need to look at how business is generated. One way is you generate business from existing customers, so you need to stay in good contact, top to bottom within a firm. Sometimes, it may be the people at the bottom of a firm a ways who are hearing about projects upcoming. And you need to step in and offer to help (them). And, offer to speak to the clients about landscape development. And that is a thing that many times only the top of the firm does with the marketing. Marketing needs to be a top to bottom activity within the firm. Everybody needs to be putting out ideas.”
Respondent 4: "... your business is an outgrowth of your soul, and what is uniquely yours, your vein of gold, you won’t have any competition because nobody can be you as well as you can. I’ve kind of used that as a rudder, trying not to get sucked into things that I’m not good at. And my partner and I decided years ago, that we were not going to grow because we didn’t want to be in a position where we would have to take things we weren’t good at just to make payroll.”

As Respondent 18: "We do marketing in several ways. First of all I am the one who does the marketing; I do not employ an outside person. I have a lot of contacts in Dallas having grown up in Dallas. So my marketing consists of, so to say it’s not a running advertisement, sending out postcards, and that type of thing. It’s basically a reputation built marketing model."

Often, during the interviews, the principal would mention that they do the firm’s marketing themselves and they also handle some of the design, as much as possible.

Respondent 7: "...and I got as much out of the design build experience that I think anyone could get. It's a 24/7 job. We owned a nursery, had 20 to 25 employees, and multiple vehicles. The amount of time that I got to spend on design was insignificant.... Hopefully I'll get a little bit of time to spend on design work and then pay for overhead and my wife is full time and does the accounting. To me it's just ridiculous what it costs and what it takes to keep a small business open from a paper standpoint and keep the government happy. It's mind boggling to me. And that's something, as a designer and an architect student that I thought we were ill prepared for what it takes on the business side."

There is a general mindset of wanting to be a part of the whole business process and an unwillingness to let go of some of the control and delegate responsibility. Designers enjoy design and try their best to keep their hand in it.

Respondent 7: "The amount of time that I got to spend on design was insignificant ... Hopefully I'll get a little bit of time to spend on design work.”

Respondent 18: "... but I still draw everything myself by hand to design, and then it is handed over” to be finished digitally.
Of course, if they are a sole proprietor there is no one else to turn the reins over to. A sole proprietor wears all the hats, design and marketing included. But, even when they have three and more employees most of the principals insist on continuing an active role in the firm’s design activities. It is evident that design is their preference. From the interview data, landscape architects prefer the artistic side of running a landscape architecture firm over the business side.

4.10 Interview Responses to Key Elements of a Marketing Plan

4.10.1 SWOT Analysis

Only one respondent interviewed mentions the ‘SWOT Analysis, a process of assessment to recognize the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the firm.

**Respondent 15:**

“And even before a marketing plan we’ll do a SWOT analysis. I’m surprised how many firms don’t know to do this. It’s just a quick strengths/weaknesses/threats/opportunities, but that helps shake out where you can establish targets because you know automatically where you’re weak, where you’re strong, where the opportunities area. And if there are threats – what you need to overcome. So that really does help. This helps establish targets. But we do set up targets based on project types, and then geographies.’ (Geographies are mentioned because of the importance of the client’s location. Is the client reachable by the firm?)

4.10.2 Focus

The word ‘focus’ comes up in the interviews. Although none of the interviewed respondents have a marketing plan, they recognize that the acquisition of business is tied to their focus. A firm’s focus enables the firm to go after a particular market.

A focus may come about after working on many projects until the firm discovers its preferred client.

**Respondent 3:** “I would say we’ve narrowed our focus. We’re not - not marketing to anyone we haven’t marketed to before, but we’ve narrowed our focus and we’ve defined and decided what we want to be as a company…”

A focus may change at different times in firm’s career. Each focus enables the development of expertise in a particular area.
Respondent 4: I asked myself, ‘What could I do from a landscape architect standpoint that’s not taking me out on sites all the time, and I always loved cities, so I decided to **focus** on urban design…. Well, we (partners) talked about it for three or four months forming a very fortuitous partnership. So that kind of changed my **focus** on open space, and greenways and **public realm** to downtowns, and transit-oriented developments.’

A change in focus, can limit a firm’s practice, for example from the broader design/build to only design.

Respondent 7: ‘... so essentially that’s what made us have the confidence to sell the business I had previously, which was the design/build company, and just **focus** on design in my current business.’

The priority of keeping present clients happy is a main focus for every professional service business.

Respondent 8: ‘I **focus** on three things:

1. I do quality work, and keep on working at it until I’m proud of the work the client is proud of it.
2. I resolve problems. If something doesn’t turn out right I work at making it right.
3. I try to get to know my clients for repeat business.’

The focus on other design professionals who eventually share their work is a key for professional services.

Respondent 11: ‘So mainly we just **focus** on the architects and engineers we’re really fortunate to work with and just continue to strive and do an excellent job for them and they keep bringing us in on projects. And that’s the bulk of our work, probably 95% of our work.’

A change in focus is often dictated by the economy. The recognition of trends helps a firm to be able to change focus when necessary. Identifying a trend quickly is key.

Respondent 14: ‘One of the benefits of practicing nationally is we’re able to see what areas are doing better than others, and then that’s where we’ll try to **focus** more energy. Unfortunately the last three years the whole country has been down so we’ve had to be a little more selective.’
A firm’s foci on relationships, on project location, and on the economy are often the main driving forces of developing a target client.

*Respondent 15:* “So, that’s what we really **focus** on – finding new architectural relationships – in Texas or nationally.”

A marketing plan helps keep a firm within a boundary that is beneficial. Undertaking every project is not necessarily in the firm’s best interest.

*Respondent 16:* “I think it (the benefit of a marketing plan) keeps us **focused** so that we don’t just find ourselves responding to every RFP that comes along. It helps us to know who to set up meetings with. What it is that we are able to do for them? We like to be able to explain what it is we do.”

New employees’ expertise can help to change the focus for an expanding firm. New skills help to open up new opportunity for a firm.

*Respondent 17:* “Well, the main reason that we would change our **focus** is that we’ve hired new people who bring expertise that we haven’t had before.”

A firm’s focus changes over the years based on new trends that occur in the economy.

*Respondent 18:* “Well our **focus** is ‘What kind of projects are we pursuing?’ And if you look, like I mention, at what we had ten years ago, at what type of projects we did, its constantly evolving.”

### 4.10.3 Niches

A noteworthy element that the data show is the ‘niche markets’ that the respondents target in their landscape architecture businesses. As Lamb’s (2012) definition simply explains a niche market is one segment of a market. A niche can be created by clients’ needs, wants, or preferences. The respondents interviewed for this thesis have each developed a particular creative strength in the arena of landscape architecture by way of their own skill sets and projects that continued to come their way over time. More than half of the respondents say that marketing gave their business a particular ‘focus.’ As Respondent 3 stated in the interview: “**What we have done is we have kind of created a niche for ourselves because the stores (we own) are organic and focus on native and well adapted plants and sustainable gardening.** That’s what we try to do as far as our landscape design.”
The old adage, ‘Don’t put all your eggs in one basket,’ may be the reason why landscape architects usually don’t stick to only one narrow niche market. The firm respondents interviewed recognize their niche. Some of the respondents bring this point up readily. It is the type work they prefer to do. But it isn’t usually the work they aimed to do from the time they opened their practice. They fell into it. Out of the many different type projects that each firm does, their niche is their favorite modus operandi.

Respondent 1: Many project areas were targeted dependent on the expertise of the employees in the firm.

“Well, in our marketing plan we targeted about 8 or 10 different areas of work...we said there were opportunities, varying opportunities because of our experience in doing various aspects or types of markets... And so that was a means by which we were able to market in effect by using the people in the firm who were really knowledgeable in each area.”

Respondent 2: City parks; Educational gardens:
“My work is primarily city parks, botanical gardens, specialty gardens, educational gardens.”

Respondent 3: Sustainable native planting design:
“... We have kind of created a niche for ourselves because the stores are organic and focus on native and well adapted plants and sustainable gardening.”

Respondent 3: Modern landscape design:
“...we found this niche of modern landscape design which is what we really like to do.”

Respondent 4: City and other large project concept planning:
“I’ve developed a niche in the public realm at the citywide scale when I was at (firm) and won them three national awards with that work in two years. So, with that work, with those projects all over the country, really developed a nationwide network of architects and planners and who were clients...And I have used those opportunities to position my company to be a niche player nationally. We want big firms to call us as creative consultants when they get ready to do a city plan.”

Respondent 5: Country club artistic rendering:
Researcher: I noticed your beautiful paintings on your website, and noted that you’ve painted some country club properties. How did you decide on that client base?
Respondent 5: “I love to play golf.”

Respondent 6: City ordinance permits:

“...fifteen years ago was right at sort of the cusp when some cities had already started, some were implementing them, but city landscape ordinances. And, Arlington was one of the first, and Colleyville, and several others. And I’d been doing contract design work for a design-build construction company and occasionally they’d have a project down near Houston or somewhere and they’d say, ‘Well, it’s got to have a landscape plan.’ They didn’t market landscape design but they would design a building and part of the site plan approval was a landscape plan. And they’d give me the landscape ordinance and I’d read through it and design the landscape based on the requirements. And then would do something in another city. And I saw these larger cities: Austin, San Antonio had landscape ordinances. They weren’t available on the internet or anything but they were out there. So, when I moved into this office I thought the best way to succeed for myself would be to market to companies that had to have a landscape plan to get a building permit or whatever. So, I contacted every major city and a lot of smaller cities in Texas.”

Respondent 7: Wealthy clients:

“We work for a very wealthy clientele, for the most part... The recession: I don’t think it’s really hit our clients. And so, it’s a niche that I think a lot of people wish they were in. I think a lot of people have tried to get in it. So, it just happened to be what I really enjoyed doing. It happened to work out. It wasn’t scientific to get into this because we knew these people were going to be recession-free. It's kind of my passion to do detailed design work and work directly with clients.”

Respondent 8: Older residential home owners:

“The majority of my clients is older and is retired; or both husband/wife are working.”

Respondent 9: Residential home owners:

“... just a plant website. ... People are just googling ‘plants’ and our site come up all the time.”

Respondent 10: Large architecture firms:
“Probably 90% of our work is through architects. We don’t do much that’s straight to the owner.”

Respondent 11: Municipal projects through MWBE.

“I heard that I could get more work if I was registered as a woman-owned firm. I guess that was a marketing decision, a domino that’s made a lot of other dominoes fall. And that took me out of the bulk of my work being private residential to it being more municipal and governmental.”

Respondent 12: Residential sustainable gardens; Institutional mission landscape statements:

“. . . There are actually two main client bases. One is residential clients who want sustainable design, and the other is there’s no easy term for this niche, but its institutional clients who want specialized landscapes to fit the mission of their organization. And that has varied a lot with the types of organizations. I did a multi-year project for an organization that provides foster care for neglected and abused children. So, that falls into the therapeutic and healing landscape category. I recently completed a project for a hospice or homecare organization and that was the same kind of thing. I work for a lot of non-profit organizations.”

Respondent 13: Private developers:

“We do some work with architectural firms, mostly private developers... private development work. For a while we were doing high end single family subdivisions, designing the additions. Land-use planning development and civil engineering... And, now we’re more commercial because there’s more of that being done. And industrial, we’ve done cell towers, gas well sites. We’ve done what’s called Advocacy Planning representing groups to not necessarily kill the gas well site, but to make it better in their neighborhood and be a safer well. Because you’ve got to have them, so make them look better, make them electric so they’re not polluting so much.”

Respondent 14: Water and theme parks:

“Well the nature of our firm is we work with water parks and theme parks, family entertainment centers, recreation type projects. So we work nationally not just locally, so we
will write articles and publications, we do speaking engagements, a website and use of Facebook.”

Respondent 15: Higher Education, healthcare, land development:

“We do several. We target municipal clients; we target landscape architecture within several private sectors including higher education, healthcare, and land development. And, basically that’s it, the public and the private side.”

Respondent 16: High-end residential and neighborhood master plans:

“Right now we are primarily working in the higher end custom market. So, our clients are architects and custom home builders. It’s not that we don’t work for individuals, because we do, but it’s not who we really market to. They just found us through some others who we already work with. We do some other kinds of work. In Louisiana and in (state) we have some commercial work. We have a developer who’s doing a large neighborhood so we’re doing the park and open spaces, pools, and ball parks. But again that’s kind of come to us through our people we’ve know, contacts we’ve had, and our efforts to find developers and architects.”

Respondent 17: Municipal; higher education, healthcare, land development:

“We do several. We target municipal clients; we target landscape architecture within several private sectors including higher education, healthcare, and land development. And, basically that’s it, the public and the private side.”

Respondent 18: Life style centers, high rise, in-fills:

“We have three segments to our practice. University work, so we did ten different college campus jobs in 2009 and 2010. Private residential work, very high end. And then everything else is lumped into what I call commercial, but actually its urban infill, high rise residential, retail, mixed use office so by having those three streams we’re protected in the economy, in other words we’re not landscape architects that specialize only in doing apartments, nor are we landscape architects that specialize only in doing fine homes. We have those three segments, but we also exclude from our marketing efforts and from our goals to try and get things that are beyond the capability of the size of our firm, those things that go you know to
large AE firms and that type of thing so we’re not doing a park system for a new city, we’re not doing an extensive street and infrastructure for a planning for a subdivision for example, they’re kinds of things that we don’t even try to get..... I mean I’m doing Alzheimer care units, I just did some work on the new wing of a hospital, we just did a cool dog park for the city, a lot of cool stuff we’re doing just weren’t there ten years ago.”

The niche, or niches, that firms target bring them the most enjoyable business opportunities. Whether a firm seeks to provide a particular expertise or it is built over time as they perform design work, niches develop either way.

4.11 Communication Methods

When the conversation leads into discussing communication methods, the one most mentioned is ‘public speaking.’ The one least recommended is the use of communication materials such as ‘brochures.’ Brochures are only endorsed as photos of previous work that are gathered together to showcase past successful projects. These pictures are sent to the ‘partner’ architect for his use in marketing for a particular project that will eventually include work for the landscape architect. As a rule, a general brochure is not advised.

Some of the respondents interviewed had opinions about using brochures, both positive and negative. The use of brochures is most advocated for competitions, specific marketing ideas, and as invitations, but not for a ‘general’ marketing tool.

Respondent 2: “When I’m in competition for winning a project. Then I will put together a packet that is suited to that project. A generic brochure doesn’t work.”

Respondent 6: “Back in 1998, when I tried to establish my own business for the third time, this was my little marketing brochure. I sent it to every architect and engineering firm in Fort Worth and Dallas. I sent out four hundred of them and I got responses, phone calls back, from ten of them within a couple of weeks, and I got four definite projects from them a week later. And that’s all the marketing I ever did. From then on it’s just been word of mouth. I’ve maintained those specific clients then and they referred me to others and so on and everything was built up from sending that out one time.”
Respondent 7: “We’re giving a garden tour tomorrow and we made and printed a brochure for that” (to give to the attendees.)

Print advertisements are questionable marketing materials as well.

Respondent 12: ‘I tried print ads and early when I started up it was almost all referrals - virtually 100%. And for a long time that was it, that’s all I did. When I tried marketing all I got was people calling me asking me to mow their lawns. So, it was completely useless.’

4.12 Data Analysis Summary

Eighteen firm respondents, either principals of firms or their marketing directors, were interviewed and gave responses that are helpful in understanding the influence of a marketing plan and marketing activity in small landscape architecture firms. Those respondents interviewed gave marketing information openly. They did not appear frustrated with the essential part of running a business - finding the work project opportunities. After all, they are still successfully in business.

The range of years in business for the firm respondents interviewed is from eight months to thirty-five years. The average amount of years in business for the respondents is fifteen years. Some firms have considered making a marketing plan over the years of their operation but either have not gotten around to it or have decided it is not a necessary tool for them in order to attract business. Before the current recession, these firms experienced business coming their way without a great need to market for new clients. During the recent economic recession they recognize that business opportunity is less than it used to be. Some of the respondents cut back the size of their firm. For another respondent who lost a position in a firm the recession was a catalyst for beginning her own small landscape architecture firm. The reference, ‘keeps your name alive’ in Table 4.3 may be the only reason the interviewed firms participate in any marketing activity, since they don’t need to give much more attention to marketing for any other reason. In the present recession, ‘keeps your name alive’ has become an essential reason for marketing activity.

The significance of concentrated marketing within a niche (Lamb et al 2012) appears to be a valuable area of business for the interviewed firm respondents. The niches listed are quite varied running the gamut from senior home owners of a city parcel of land on a fixed income to wealthy home owners with extensive property boundaries, from residential native plant garden design to
healthcare hospital complexes, from country club artistic renderings to commercial water theme parks.

Finally, the limited use of collateral material, specifically brochures, in current day marketing activity has changed. Digital marketing has taken over Respondent 18’s firm’s marketing and business development. As Respondent 18 recommended the printed brochures have been transformed into photographic images on an IPad. “I do a presentation off of our IPad and that’s how we’ve changed. We don’t do drawings, we don’t do deliverables that aren’t digital.” The firms interviewed see value in using a brochure only when needed to obtain a specific project opportunity. The use of a generic brochure is not recommended but instead one that is geared to competing for a particular project with its unique requirements shown in either printed or digital format.

Seizing an opportunity to speak to public gatherings, for example garden clubs and community groups if such are prospective clients, gets the word out about a small firm’s expertise. Talking about all the varied skills that a firm can offer is valuable information to be passed between clients and their friends and associates.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The conclusion summarizes the connections made between the research data and the literature review. Highlighting key points of the literature and significant findings from the qualitative research shows the relevance of this study to the development of landscape architecture firms. Specifying suggestions for future study are proposed.

5.2 Summary

The thesis research began with the main focus of evaluating the influence of a marketing plan on small landscape architecture firms located in North Texas. The research, including eighteen interviews with the owners, registered landscape architects by the state of Texas, or with the marketing directors of small firms composed of ten or fewer employees produced evidence that a marketing plan is not required for obtaining business. However, marketing activity does help to garner business with a particular target client. More than half of the respondents mentioned that marketing helps them find business opportunity.

The participating landscape architects focus their business efforts on procuring projects through another professional service, architecture. The data suggest a relationship is fostered and a lasting client association is established with architects. Relationship marketing, attracting, maintaining, and enhancing client relationships (Berry 1983, 25) is recorded in the interviews that fifteen out of the eighteen firms interviewed mentioned this fact. By extrapolating the data it is probable that all eighteen of the interviewed firms, if asked specifically, ‘Do you obtain business through architects?’ would answer in the affirmative. The data clearly show that a probable client for landscape architects is ‘architects’ who need the expertise of landscape architects on their teams. According to the respondents studied, landscape architecture has been able to survive on the needs and wants finding their expertise rather than them seeking out the wants and needs. Once a
relationship is established with an architect work flows more regularly to the small landscape architecture firm.

The scope of work of the landscape architecture firm respondents highlighted by the interviews is varied which shows the wide expertise of landscape architecture firms and the breadth of project opportunity. Both of these facts contribute to slowing down the rate of progress in project completion. Offices that accept diverse projects have a lot of variance to deal with in their wide-range of project types. Only one respondent had such a narrow focus that he became bored with the work despite financial success. This respondent had limited his practice focus to too narrow of a proficiency. Looking at his business from this perspective his firm offering is not varied enough. But he is not interested in stopping what he started fifteen years ago as he continues to experience monetary accomplishment from his one successful marketing effort. He made the decision to focus on a single landscape architecture need and did not broaden it.

A marketing plan holds many keys used to open business doors, as well as a bar to keep its own door from opening too wide. An extensive opening is prone to allowing distractions inside the firm’s business foci door. The term marketing plan is often applied to ‘big business’ and more often not applied to the small firm. A marketing plan has directive and protective qualities that a plan can provide a budding business to keep it on track (Crane1993). Respondent 6 recognized a particular market need, addressed it with a brochure specifically aimed at a need, and aimed it at that target market. He only had to actively market one time. His business has been successful for fifteen years because of market recognition and client follow-up activity. His aim at a particular target market was accurate and continues to sustain his small landscape architecture firm. Such recognition refers back to the ‘marketing mix’ defined in chapter section 1:10. The marketing mix is ‘a unique blend of product, place, promotion, and pricing strategies designed to produce mutually satisfying exchanges with a target market (Lamb et al 2012, 25).

A higher degree of business acumen shown by business planning, including a marketing plan (Koren 2005), aids the independent office in both time management, project procurement, and their bottom line. The data show that during high volume times, one firm calls on the help of another. The industry appears to be supportive to other professional services: architecture, engineering, landscape
contracting, and land development. Landscape architects are dedicated and hard working and accept long hours when required in a small office with limited help. This high mark of work ethic works both positively and negatively for firms. It works positively shown by the dedication and high interest in accomplishing project goals; it works negatively a shown by the broadness of work projects and a lack of specificity of expertise per the firm.

In conclusion, a marketing plan as explained in the literature review section of the thesis helps to organize, direct, and simplify the marketing needs within the office of the landscape architect. Marketing implies obtaining business. Obtaining ‘any’ business can lead to some unwanted projects. But a marketing plan can keep a firm focused on obtaining the business it wants and the clients who want the firm’s expertise. A marketing plan helps a firm avoid unwanted projects and ones the firm is not as qualified to accomplish (Forsythe 1999). In all, a marketing plan is a useful monitoring device that when followed helps to keep a firm on a secure business track.

5.3 Relevance to Landscape Architecture

Landscape architecture firms’ expertise is varied, as big and wide as the outdoor environment on which they focus their interest and skill. The use of a marketing plan helps to keep the business’ firm on the particular track/s where it wants to gain business opportunity.

The landscape architects interviewed are the winners, so to speak, the ones still in business after a serious recession. Whatever form of marketing they are doing is giving them positive business results. As indicated from the interviews, the respondents find their target markets often through trial and error. Respondent 1 mentioned having many foci; Respondent 17 referred to this as well in that their business was as varied as their talented landscape architects’ diverse foci. The question left unknown is whether a marketing plan can help landscape architects do a better job finding projects that capitalize on their particular expertise within the field of landscape architecture. Research in the field of business marketing suggests that this result would occur. If so, this fact could have an impact on the way small landscape architecture firms manage their project attainment.
5.4 Future Research

There are many additional areas for study that this thesis introduces specifically and others that lie just under the surface of the discussion. Further study welcomes a more detailed look at how landscape architects run their business operations, the duties of additional staff, the location and decor of their work space.

• The Temperament of the Landscape Architect

The research shows that though the landscape architecture firms have not laid out a marketing plan ahead of time they have found a way to establish business via their skill sets and interests. Further study could examine the psychology of landscape architects. They deal in the creative realm and have developed many skills: artistic, scientific, team building, and other people skills, all of which are necessary components for doing the business of landscape architecture. From the interviews, most of the small firms are made up of a sole proprietor working for him or herself. Though they do call on peers and associates for help during busy times and for services outside their expertise, it is usually only the landscape architect and the client working on a project with a lot of alone, focused time. What kind of person becomes a landscape architect? What additions could he or she benefit from having in order to better run their business?

• Larger Population

Further research could be done on this same topic beyond the boundaries of Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas. Also, uncovering the firms who do use marketing plans would of course be an interesting contrast to the firms studied here. Enlarging the pool of small size firms to be the next step larger; fewer than fifteen employees may show more of a distinction concerning the making and use of a marketing plan.

• Case Study

The study of a firm that chooses to make a marketing plan and follow it, making regular changes to it over the years may be a goldmine of marketing information for the landscape architecture professional service industry. Examining the pros and cons of this process may aid landscape architects in their practices to see how to make and apply a guidebook like a marketing plan. The upfront time that a marketing plan requires as well as regular review may save time and
headaches for the firm in its future. The Literature Review within this thesis includes information on specific case studies (Littlefield 2005) that may give impetus to further development of case studies.

• **Branding**

Branding is significant in product identification; for this industry branding would be significant for service identification. Because branding ignites customer recognition it becomes a valuable avenue in marketing. More focused research into how landscape architecture firms brand themselves may reveal key points of recognition and understanding for industry professionals.
APPENDIX A

IRB TRAINING
Human Subjects Protection Training (HSP) Training Complete

This document certifies that Lynne M Carpenter completed the training entitled “Human Subjects Protection Training (HSP)” in its entirety on October 2nd, 2011.

Certificate ID 744946a277e3ee36e064d9b9833ee6 was generated by Electronic Research Administration on behalf of The University of Texas at Arlington.
UT Arlington
Informed Consent Document

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Lynne M Carpenter, Program in Landscape Architecture, lynne.carpenter@mavs.uta.edu

FACULTY ADVISOR
Dr. Pat Taylor, Program in Landscape Architecture, pdt@uta.edu

TITLE OF PROJECT
THE INFLUENCE OF A MARKETING PLAN ON THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF SMALL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FIRMS.

INTRODUCTION
You are being asked to participate in a research study about the influence of a marketing plan in your landscape architecture firm. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate or discontinuing your participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Please ask question if there is anything you do not understand.

PURPOSE
The specific purpose of this research study is to evaluate the influence of a marketing plan for the growth of a landscape architecture firm.

DURATION
Participation in this study will last approximately 45-90 minutes in an in-person or telephone interview

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
The number of anticipated participants in this research study is 60.

PROCEDURES
The procedures which will involve you as a research participant include:
1. In-person interviews
2. Or phone interview

The interview will be audio recorded. After the interview, the tape will be transcribed, which means they will be typed exactly as they were recorded, word-for-word, by the researcher. The tape will be destroyed after transcription.

IRB Approval Date: APR 06 2012

IRB Expiration Date: MAR 27 2013
POSSIBLE BENEFITS
A benefit for you as a participant is the opportunity to re-evaluate the influence and
effectiveness of your present marketing plan, or to consider making a marketing plan for
your firm.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS
Any information or comments regarding your company’s marketing plan will be kept
private for this study only and not be shared with any other landscape architecture firm or
persons employed by landscape architecture firms. You have the right to quit any study
procedures at any time at no consequence and may do so by informing the researcher.

There are no perceived risks or discomforts for participating in this research study.
Should you experience any discomfort please inform the researcher, you have the right to
quit any study procedures at any time at no consequence.

COMPENSATION
There is no compensation arranged for participation in this study.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES
There are no alternative procedures offered for this study. However, you can elect not to
participate in the study or quit at any time at no consequence.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to decline
participation in any or all study procedures or quit at any time at no consequence.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of
this signed consent form and all data collected [including transcriptions/tapes if
applicable] from this study will be stored in [specify location at UTA] for at least three
(3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or
presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Additional research studies
could evolve from the information you have provided, but your information will not be
linked to you in anyway; it will be anonymous. Although your rights and privacy will be
maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA
Institutional Review Board (IRB), and personnel particular to this research have access to
the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current
legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

IRB Approval Date: APR 06 2012

IRB Expiration Date: MAR 27 2013
UT Arlington
Informed Consent Document

Phone interview documentation:

This consent form will be read by the researcher to the interviewee who will consent/ not consent with continuing the interview. The researcher, Lynne M Carpenter, will fill in the particular blank below and sign and date this form.

____ YES - I agree to the above consent document and wish to continue with the interview by phone ____________________________ Date

____ NO - I do NOT agree to the above consent document and wish to continue with the interview by phone ____________________________ Date

IRB Approval Date: APR 06 2012
IRB Expiration Date: MAR 27 2013
APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO FIRMS TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT FOR AN INTERVIEW
Dear Mr. ...........

I am a MLA student in the Program in Landscape Architecture at UT Arlington completing a thesis on the professional practice in small landscape architecture firms. My research is specifically about marketing plans used by small firms. I would like to request an interview with you or the key member of your staff involved with your firm’s marketing plan. The interview requires approximately one hour and can be done by phone or face-to-face. I will be happy to contact you by phone to answer questions you may have, and to confirm a time for an interview. I would deeply appreciate your participation.

Feel free to call me at (phone) or email (university email address) should you need more information.

Thank you for your consideration,

(Researcher)
APPENDIX C

TELEPHONE CALL TO SET APPOINTMENT FOR INTERVIEW
Telephone Call to Set Appointment for Interview

Hello, may I speak to …………………………..?

Hello, this is (student name), MLA student in the Program in Landscape Architecture at UT Arlington. I emailed you recently about your participation in the interview portion of my thesis concerning the marketing plan used in your firm. Is there a day/time that you prefer? Would next ………………… at…………………… work for your schedule.
REFERENCES

American Marketing Association, “Marketing Power.”


Fuller, Mary L., MBA graduate, UT Arlington, 2009.


BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Lynne Marie Carpenter was born in Ankara, Turkey on November 25, 1950, the daughter of Louis John and Patricia Marie Menges. Lynne’s father was overseeing the construction project of a refrigeration plant in Ankara for his architect father, Louis John Menges, Sr. Lynne was the eldest and only daughter of five children. She grew up with keen interests in art, sports, and religion. She married Jack W Carpenter in 1970 in Evanston, Illinois when she was 20 years old, and completed her education degree at Northeastern Illinois State University in Chicago, Illinois in 1972. Over the next twenty years, Lynne became the mother of seven children whom she taught at home. All of her children have completed or are in the midst of completing their college education. Lynne’s interest in art and the outdoors ignited her interest in the landscape, compelling her to begin her own landscape design business in 2006. Returning to college in 2007, Lynne completed a degree in Horticulture at Richland College in 2010, and has now completed the master degree in landscape architecture at the University of Texas at Arlington, May 11, 2012. She looks forward to putting her skills to work in the wide field of landscape architecture.