

CPA MARKETING REPORT

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Track Marketing ROI

SC&G produces monthly analysis.

A monthly "return-on-investment" report justifies **Sherrie Mitchell's** existence by showing partners and other staff at **Saltmarsh, Cleaveland & Gund/Pensacola, Fla.** (17 partners, 140 total staff; four offices) how the marketing director and her two coordinators boost the bottom line.

The report lists the proposals either won that month or pending a decision, along with the estimated fees of each engagement. SC&G won one proposal in June worth \$385,000, and five others were pending.

Another section recounts the marketing department's billable engagements. The three marketers brought in \$1,200 in June.

At the top of the report, Mitchell lists the articles mentioning SC&G, along with the date the article ran and the person featured in the article. She calculates the column inches and what it would cost to advertise in that space, then uses that number to represent the

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★ Call for Nominations ★

Nominations are being accepted for

CPA Marketing Report's Accounting Marketer Of The Year

See page 4 for details on how to obtain a nomination form.

Mergers Drive Growth At Top 100 Firms

Marketing merits some credit.

Carlin Charron & Rosen/Worcester, Mass. (18 partners, 160 total staff; five offices) grew faster than all but two firms in *Public Accounting Report's* Top 100 for 2000, and MP **Bruce Carlin** gives his marketing department credit for much of that growth.

Other MPs at the Top 100's fastest-growing firms are more reserved with their praise. Instead of attributing strong revenue growth to a formal marketing effort, they point to aggressive merger strategies. But MPs do recognize the importance of cross-selling and publicity to maintain their growth, and marketers at fast-growing firms are focusing their efforts in those areas.

Placing articles in general business and industry publications is the most successful marketing tactic at CC&R, Carlin says.

"We're getting published everywhere," he says. CC&R's marketing di-

rector, **Lynn Miner-Flynn**, works with PR agency MCB Communications/Needham, Mass., which the firm hired in May to smoke out opportunities for quotes and articles. Recent pieces include a bylined article in *Massachusetts High Tech* on the accounting implications of e-commerce, an executive profile of Carlin in the *Boston Business Journal* and quotes from a CC&R partner in a *Forbes* article on executive compensation.

Rachlin Cohen & Holtz/Miami (21 partners, 160 total staff; four offices) is seeing new business result from publicity. A name partner, **Laurie Holtz**, is a nationally recognized expert in forensic accounting, says marketing coordinator **Pedro del Valle**.

At least two attorneys in the past year engaged RC&H after reading about

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Marketers Rally Around Mission Statements

Step back from branding to define what firm stands for.

Trista Wallace came back from the 1999 **Association for Accounting Marketing** conference fired up to establish a brand at **Presser, Lahnen & Edelman/Jacksonville, Fla.** (seven partners, 40 total staff). But more than a year later, the marketing manager is realizing the firm skipped a step: PL&E has no mission statement.

To establish a brand, prospects and referral sources need to hear and read the same message repeatedly, not just from your marketing materials but from every employee and owner. A mission statement is based on the core values of the firm, which are defined "in a heart-to-heart intense meeting of the owners and key up-and-coming, soon-to-be partners," says **Michelle Golden**,

owner of **Golden Marketing Resources/St. Louis**.

A fun and motivating workplace is a core value for two of the firms where Golden is currently consulting, "because they know their employees won't be good customer service providers if they are not truly excited," she says. "But a lot of firms just give that goal lip service."

Firms tend to copycat their missions, Golden says. Most accounting firms' mission statements are some combination of the following elements: quality service, timely delivery, accuracy, professionalism and value-added service. But modeling your statement on an

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Mission Statements

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other firm's is counterproductive, because it doesn't tell employees and prospects what is unique about your firm.

"Don't just adopt someone else's values. You have to truly believe them," Golden says.

Use an outside facilitator to help keep your mission real. Some firms have the marketer facilitate the mission-writing session, but "unless the marketer is extremely well-respected, it is unlikely he or she will have the guts to challenge partners," Golden says. If partners are claiming that their firm is a fun and motivating workplace, and it isn't true, an outside facilitator will have the objectivity to speak up.

Define Vague Terms

A mission statement is more than a list of what a firm stands for. It should tell the reader or listener exactly what the firm wants to achieve — such as market dominance — and how.

You don't have to express your mission in one sentence. Clayton & McKervey/Southfield, Mich., has a mission statement that is only 27 words long, but an accompanying list of definitions elaborates on each of the terms. (See sample, this page.)

Plenty of firms profess to serve only "quality clients," but C&M (seven partners, 50 total staff) defines the desirable client as one that "maintains a strong financial position, is receptive to new ideas and is highly regarded in the business community."

A strategic planning document, called the Vision 2005, refines C&M's definitions even further. It says that clients must be privately owned, for-profit domestic and international businesses that are growth-oriented and will pay promptly for services. They can be \$5 million to \$75 million companies that require audit, accounting and tax services, or they can be companies with more than \$75 million that require specialized business consulting services.

Two partners must sign off on any new client, and they stick to the criteria spelled out in the mission and vision statements, says MP Don Clayton.

Clayton & McKervey's Mission Statement Defines Terms

"To provide world class professional services to quality clients by utilizing a team of dynamic individuals and advanced technology to achieve success for our clients and ourselves."

World class: establishing and maintaining the highest standards of integrity and service.

Professional services: providing accurate and timely accounting, tax and consulting services to improve client profitability, solve client problems and achieve client goals.

Quality client: a client who maintains a strong financial position, is receptive to new ideas and is highly regarded in the business community.

Team: a group of professionals dedicated to providing the highest level of service by focusing, interacting and contributing to a common goal.

Dynamic individuals: dedicated, energetic people who are committed to maximizing their potential and always giving their best effort.

Advanced technology: an efficient, computer-literate firm of professionals utilizing state-of-the-art equipment while providing creative services with a personal touch.

Success: providing value-added services which help our clients be more profitable and efficient, and thereby more successful. ■

Source: Clayton & McKervey/Southfield, Mich.

Partners fire clients that aren't measuring up, he says.

That consistency is essential to maintaining the firm's brand. If C&M publicized those client criteria but then accepted clients that don't meet them, employees and prospects would doubt what the firm stands for, says Marketing Director Mary Pezet.

Saturate Employees With Mission

Employees at C&M are "indoctrinated into the importance of the mission statement" from the time of their first contact with the firm, Clayton says. The HR director talks about the mission statement with job candidates, and she only makes offers to those who display the firm's core values, he says. "She'll say, 'During our discussions, I noticed these things are prevalent in your personality, and that's why I'm making an offer.'"

New staff members hear what the mission statement means during orientation, and it is posted on a screen and included in handout materials at firm

retreats and annual state-of-the-firm addresses.

Other firms print their statements on the backs of business cards and put framed copies at each employee's desk. Each new employee at The Videre Group/Parsippany, N.J., receives a desk paperweight with the firm's mission engraved on it.

But paperweights and business cards don't carry as much clout as a partner who walks the talk. If all partners are not buying into the mission statement as it's being developed, stop the process, Golden urges. "It is the marketer's job to step forward and say that," she says. "You were not hired to be a 'yes' person." A mission statement that partners and staff don't live by every day is a waste of time and can hurt your image with clients.

"If you're looking for a mission statement just because you want something to use as a tag line, don't do it," says Sue Williams, marketing director at Swaim Brown Elliot/Spartanburg, S.C. (six partners, 40 total staff; three offices). "We are too trusted by our clients to be about smoke and mirrors." ■