

THE 7 REASONS WHY YOUR TEAM ISN'T SELLING AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

These days, the level of success of every AEC firm is directly related to the amount its team members are participating in the business development process. There's a tremendous amount of opportunity, but your team members aren't making the most of that opportunity. Why is that? What's getting in their way? And what can you do about it?

After working with many firms experiencing this same struggle, we've determined that there are seven reasons teams aren't contributing to the business development process as much or as well as leadership wants. And more important than that, we've identified specific courses of action to address each one.

1 It's not on their radar.

They're not thinking about it. It's not part of their job description.

What to do about it:

We recommend communicating about sales loudly and often, starting in the first conversation you have when you're hiring. But if this is a new idea—if you need to put a full initiative in place to change the mindset—then organize a meeting and present the concept. Tell them all about the business development plan, how they fit into it, and how their participation will make the difference for your firm.

2 They don't understand your expectations.

They don't know what you want them to do exactly. They believe they aren't "the selling kind." They don't believe in themselves.

What to do about it:

All too often, we give vague marching orders such as "everyone needs to sell." This can be interpreted many different ways. When you design your business development plan, get really clear on what exactly you want your team members to do. Do you want them to hunt for prospects? To build relationships with prospects and clients? Do you want them to "own" specific clients and actively follow up with them? To present your value proposition everywhere they go? What do you want them to say? Do you want them to proactively start conversations with clients about future projects, or listen for hints about future projects? What hints should they be listening for? What do you want them to do when they hear a clue?

You might have different things in mind for different members of your team. Make sure you get very clear on what you want each one of them to do. And then spell those specific activities out to each individual. Ask questions to make sure they understand what you're asking for.

3 They don't want to "sell."

It's not fun for them. They're not aware that there's anything in it for them. They don't have any reason to be concerned about not selling.

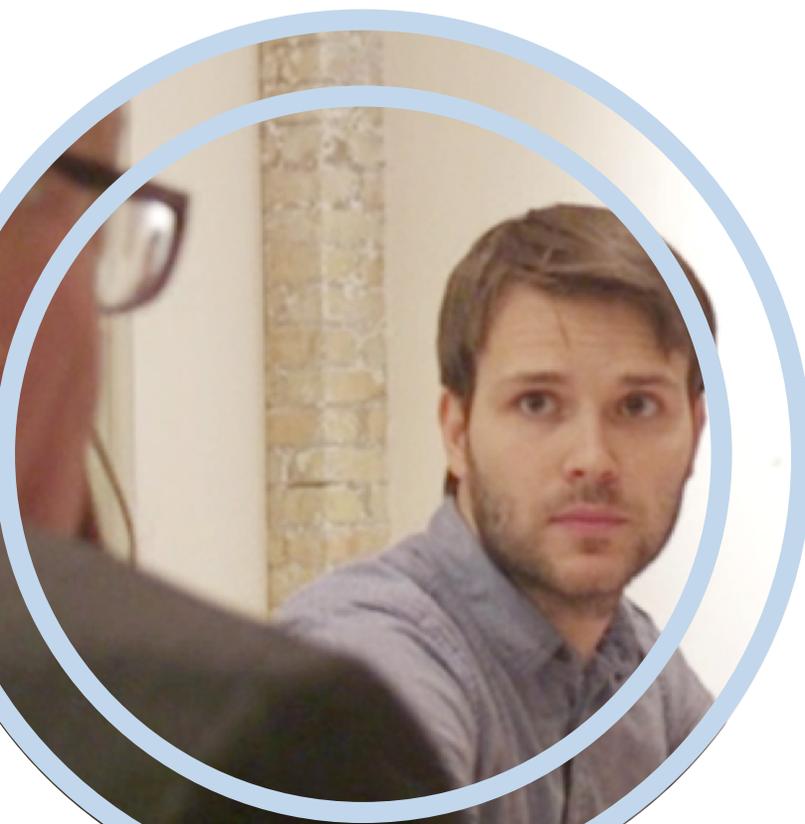
What to do about it:

It's your turn to do some selling. Sell the *idea of selling* to them. Make it personal. Sit down and *really communicate* what selling means for each member of your team.

It's not just telling, it's also asking. Really getting to know who they are, and what drives them. What their challenges are, and what their goals are. Getting their story so that you can connect selling to something meaningful for them, and so that the activity of selling fits with who they are and what they're after, and makes it worth getting past their individual obstacles.

4 They're scared.

They have problematic ideas of what selling is. They're daunted by what they don't understand, and believe they will fail.



What to do about it:

Many members of your team have a simplistic and inaccurate sense of selling. And when they're asked to do it, they think of the worst possible scenario: The used car salesman. They imagine they're being asked to misrepresent, to manipulate, to apply pressure.

You need to clarify what it means to sell. Create a new definition that your team can relate to. You need to set them straight, to let them know that selling isn't pushing, it's *helping*. It's caring about prospects and clients. Being curious. Asking questions. Looking to provide value, regardless of the situation. Ultimately, it's being a *consultative service provider*. Which is what they already are.

5 They don't know how.

They don't have the skills. They don't have a roadmap. They doubt their ability. They feel shaky.

What to do about it:

You need to build their skills. We recommend working with them, or if you don't have the ability to build their skills (and don't be embarrassed if you don't; not every leader knows how to train), bring in an outside resource.

Regardless of who delivers the training, recognize that you will play an important role in the process of building their skills. Your team is going to have questions. Answer these questions constructively. Set up periodic opportunities to practice with you and the rest of the team.

Have them learn from each other.



6 They're too busy.

They don't want to sacrifice billable hours. They don't have a process. They don't know how to fit it into their schedule. They don't know how to track and manage information. There are logistical complications.

What to do about it:

Make it as easy as possible for them. Put a structure in place to make the specific tasks as simple and efficient as possible.

We recommend installing an infrastructure and being a role model for them in terms of time management. CRM and project management software can help them get organized.

Also, crucially, look at yourself and your leadership peers. How is your team presenting to your board of directors? How are you interacting with each other? How are you presenting and communicating with your individual team members? You can role model the mindset, approach, and patterns of selling in your daily conversations and presentations.

7 There's nothing keeping them on task.

They don't experience any support around the activity. They feel they need for guidance. They don't believe that they would be recognized by the firm for their participation. They don't believe that their participation could really make a difference.

What to do about it:

You need to build a maintenance and accountability structure around the tasks related to business development. Provide consequences for choosing to opt out of the process, or better yet, evidence of tangible rewards for participating in the process.

Maintaining behaviors and activities is an ongoing task for leadership. Set up periodic meetings for everyone involved to get a sense of how each person is doing. They can air their challenges and learn from each other. Then, together you can set goals and compare reality to those goals.

Understanding these seven reasons and implementing corrective action is the key to changing your team's mindset and shifting your corporate culture to better recognize and respond to business development opportunities. As you resolve these issues and implement more solutions, you will engage your team members and transform them into consistently productive front-line ambassadors for your business.



Partnering for Success

After 15 years of helping architectural, engineering, and construction firms increase their team's engagement in the business development process and helping teams improve the quality of that engagement, we understand how challenging these recommendations can be to independently implement. Sometimes a little outside assistance and expertise can help you lead your initiative to success.

That's what we at SagePresence do. We have created tools and established best practices to support your implementation—from gaining buy-in to changing mindsets to building sales and presentation skills to helping you keep the ball rolling. Get in touch. We'd love to talk with you!



333 Washington Avenue N, Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55401
info@sagepresence.com
612.384.0763