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EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE

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WHAT ELSE YOU GOT?
THE TRUTH ON COMPETITIVE
DIFFERENTIATION

SALT AT WORK

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

WINNING MARKETING STRATEGIES

ABC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:
SUCCESS BY MERIT
PAGE 5


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ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

WINNING MARKETING STRATEGIES

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Website: abcwi.org
ABC National: abc.org



Merit Shop Contractor Wisconsin is published six times annually by Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, Inc. (ISSN# 10642978) 5330 Wall St., Madison, WI 53718. Periodicals Postage Paid, Madison, WI and other additional mailing offices. (UPS 340-650). Subscription price is \$50 per year.

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ABC of Wisconsin, 5330 Wall St.,
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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Success by Merit



I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED CONNECTING WITH ABC MEMBERS AT SUPERCON. Hearing the business updates and stories from our member companies energizes me and reminds me of the important work we do to champion the Merit Shops of Wisconsin. Our shared work isn't always easy, but it is successful when we work together.

We've had a few members go through attempts to unionize their workforce, but thanks to ABC's One Call for Legal Help line, they were able to get the resources needed to respond, and ultimately, their employees chose to remain merit shop. You'll see one of their stories in this issue.

We aim to share the success of the contractors who choose to work based on their merit, and not on a union affiliation. ABC's latest analysis shows that nationally, 90% of the construction workforce is currently choosing to work without union affiliation. In Wisconsin, we know at least 7 out of every 10 construction workers are merit shop, and that number is likely higher. It's reasonable to assume companies and workers choose this because they understand the benefits.

It is our job to share the benefits of the merit shop with the policy makers who affect our industry. That is why we're planning a Day at the Wisconsin Capitol for April 23 in Madison. I encourage all of our members to participate and share with legislators why you choose to be a merit organization. Our individual stories are compelling.

For example: We have a member who began as an ABC apprentice, later became a business owner, and rose to Chair the ABC of Wisconsin Board of Directors. Her story champions the success she earned by her own work and determination.

Another member chose to be merit shop because he could cross train his employees. When one trade's work was slowing down, he was able to reassign those employees to assist another trade in their work. This allowed for business efficiency AND it allowed him to keep everyone employed.

A third member values the family culture of his business. He wants to be actively engaged in the lives of his employees and help them meet their personal and professional goals. Being merit shop means he can communicate with them directly, work alongside them to improve their situations, and build a company together. As a merit shop, he can negotiate directly with his employees.

Few legislators are exposed to the work we do and, without our stories, they don't understand why we see problems with prevailing wage, project labor agreements, and other policies they consider. In this issue, you'll note several marketing focused articles aimed at helping you differentiate your business. The same work can be done to fine tune your stories and prepare you to explain the benefits of your merit shop affiliation.

We aim to share our stories at our April 23 Day at the Wisconsin Capitol. Register now on our website. It's free to attend. I promise we will make certain you are comfortable, well-prepared, and ready to have these discussions. You have impactful stories to tell! [meritshopwi.com](https://www.meritshopwi.com)



**90% OF THE
CONSTRUCTION
WORKFORCE IS
CURRENTLY
CHOOSING TO
WORK WITHOUT
UNION AFFILIATION.**

— Kelly Tourdot, President

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The term "salting" refers to union organizers applying for jobs with non-union employers with the aim of organizing the employers' workforce or triggering an unfair labor practice charge. Several ABC members have faced this situation and successfully overcome the threat to their business model. This is the story of one member.

SALTING

AT WORK

By an ABC member company, who will remain anonymous,
due to the nature of the topic.



AN ABC MEMBER RELAYS HIS EXPERIENCE OF A FAILED SALT ATTEMPT

A little about myself. I am a 3rd generation tradesman. My entire family; grandparents, parents, uncle, aunt, cousins and my sister are/were in the skilled construction trades. One of my children is working for the business now. She will be 4th generation. My family chose to pride ourselves on being "Merit" based shops where employees have chosen that they don't need an outsider to represent them in the workplace. We work hard to foster an environment of open communication where employees and management can work through problems and issues together.

We are all looking for great trades people, right? It's a breath of fresh air when you reach out to a candidate that

applied to one of your positions and your conversation goes great. So great in fact that you bring the candidate in for an interview. The candidate wows you with their early arrival, clear communication, clean driving record, clean criminal background, skill level, current certifications/licenses and follow up after the interview. So naturally you hire the candidate.

Recently this exact situation happened to my company. As a great new hire would do, he built relationships with everyone in our department. He communicated well, delivered 5-star service to our customers, and seemed to be an asset to our team. It turned out that person was a union salt.

TYPES OF SALTING

OVERT: EVERYONE IS CLEAR FROM THE START OF THE HIRING PROCESS

*(THAT THE CANDIDATE IS PART OF THE UNION AND
WHAT THEIR INTENTIONS ARE).*

COVERT: THEY WILL NOT OPENLY DISCUSS WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND IT WILL BE KEPT SECRET FROM YOU

After a few short months of him being employed, our manager was told that discussions about union activity were occurring. We reached out to ABC the same day we found out, to inquire about how we should manage the situation. ABC provided us with important information about unions and referred us to legal representation with strong urgency to get on the phone with a lawyer ASAP.

Within 24 hours of first learning about the activity, we received an NLRB petition from Local 75 asking the Labor Board to conduct an election among this department to decide if they wanted the union to represent them. This meant that there was going to be a vote among this department within about a month! We needed to learn very quickly, and it was like drinking from a fire hose. ABC was instrumental in helping us learn about what was occurring. We learned that the most important thing was to act fast. To be clear, when I say fast, I mean within hours.

As we learned more about the complex world of labor issues, we were reminded that salting is legal and that salts have the same protected rights as all other employees. We were also reminded that an employer may not discriminate against any employee or applicant

due to union activity. These were important reminders that helped us along the way.

We also learned there are two types of salting – overt or covert. Overt means that the salt makes it clear from the start of the hiring process that the candidate is part of the union. In many cases, overt salts openly tell the interviewer that they are planning to try organize a union with the hope of receiving a negative reaction from management. By contrast, a covert salt is an undercover organizer who may even be employed by a union. When I first learned about this, I didn't think that salting could actually be legal. But it is.

After the election petition was filed, we learned that getting our message out to employees in the next few weeks would be imperative because the union is allowed to wine and dine employees and take employees to events in order to try to get them to vote for the union. We learned that the union could make all kinds of promises to employees without ever having to deliver on those promises. We also learned that we were legally prohibited from making any promises.

But that did not mean that we were silenced. Instead, we learned how we could lawfully communicate with employees about the benefits of remaining merit shop.

Fast forward to election week – it was a very stressful week. It has taken 18 years, many 18-hour days, financial sacrifice, relationship loss, and nights/weekends away from my family to grow the business to where it is now. I'm not proud of taking time from my family but I saw an opportunity to make our lives better. I also wanted to create a company where people want to work and where we could help many families' financial needs and help people get to the next level of their careers (I love teaching people and watching people rise).

There's a lot at stake in one of these elections. On election day my team prevailed. We won the election due to my team's unwavering commitment to our business and our history of treating our people well.

On the same day as the election, the employee who began the whole process did not go to his last appointment of the day. We called and messaged him, but he quit without further notice. Through public records research, we learned that the salt was employed by the union with an annual salary higher than 125K and had a union-provided vehicle!

Once the election was over, I started to piece the puzzle together. For the last couple years, I have had at least 25 occurrences of

union organizers or union business agents following my trucks around town. They put business cards, benefit information, flyers, etc. under windshield wipers, in door jams, inserted information into cracked windows, etc. They've stopped employees at gas stations to talk about the union. Of course, that's their right. These contacts are going to occur. Our job as an employer has been to foster an employment relationship where people love directly working with our company and don't have any need to have an outsider speak for them. That's what wins the day.

My recommendation is to teach your entire management team about these things so they can properly react when any issues arise. This is important because many people may break the law simply because they don't know any better. And that is often exactly what

“
***I'LL NEVER FORGET
THE AMOUNT OF
STRESS, ANXIETY,
DISRUPTION, LOSS
OF WORK AND
FINANCIAL IMPACT
THIS HAD ON US.***

salts are looking for. They're professionally trained and use that special knowledge to their advantage. Understanding what unfair labor practices are, knowing the laws, and understanding how salting works are key. If you are not educated on some of the things I have shared above please take some time to protect your business.

One of the promises that is often made by salts to employees is the promise of a union pension if they just vote for a union or if leave the company to move to a union shop. But it is important to help people think critically about whether those old pension plans are really sustainable. By 2030 all the boomers will be older than 65. With that said the only way for the unions to right side themselves is to get more people to join their union to help pay for the others retiring. [abc Wisconsin](#)

EVENT REMINDERS



- **NETWORKING SOCIAL**
March 6, Franklin
- **LEAN CONSTRUCTION**
March 11-12, Madison
- **COMMUNICATION SKILLS – FOR YOU AND YOUR CREW**
March 14, Madison
- **PROJECT COORDINATOR 2025 (6 PART SERIES)**
Beginning March 18, Madison
- **NETWORKING SOCIAL**
March 19, Madison
- **10-HOUR OSHA TRAINING**
March 28, Milwaukee
- **QUALIFIED RIGGER & CRANE SIGNAL PERSON**
March 31, Wausau
- **NETWORKING SOCIAL**
April 3, Slinger
- **FOREMAN FUNDAMENTALS**
April 4, Madison
- **10-HOUR OSHA TRAINING**
April 4, Wausau
- **BIM 101**
April 9, Live-Online
- **TRANSITION TO TRAINER**
April 11, Madison
- **CONSTRUCTION ESTIMATING PRINCIPLES & APPLICATION**
April 11, Live-Online
- **READING CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS**
April 16, Live-Online
- **NETWORKING SOCIAL**
April 17, Appleton
- **ACI COURSE & CERTIFICATION EXAM**
April 18, Madison
- **BLUEBEAM BASELINE BASICS**
April 21, Live-Online, April 22, Live-Online
- **CREW LEADERSHIP: THE GOOD, THE BAD, & THE UNCOMFORTABLE**
April 22, Madison
- **DAY AT THE WISCONSIN CAPITOL**
April 23, Madison
- **BLUEBEAM BASICS MATERIALS TAKEOFFS & ESTIMATES**
April 23, Live-Online
- **10-HOUR OSHA TRAINING**
April 24, La Crosse
- **BLUEBEAM ADVANCED MATERIALS TAKEOFFS & ESTIMATES**
April 24, Live-Online
- **FIRST AID & CPR TRAINING**
April 25, Green Bay
- **FOREMAN FUNDAMENTALS**
April 25, Madison
- **BUSINESS TRANSITIONS**
April 29, Madison
- **BLUEBEAM FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS**
April 29, Live-Online
- **CREW DYNAMICS: BUILDING BETTER TEAMS**
Beginning April 29, Live-Online
- **BIM 201**
April 30, Live-Online



abcwi.org



FIND

WHY

STARTING WITH
“WHY?” MAKES
MARKETING MORE
EFFICIENT AND
EFFECTIVE

By Anthony Birch,
Executive Vice President of Marketing and Digital Strategy at Platform Communications

As business leaders and marketers, it can feel impossible to figure out which tactics to focus on when trying market and grow your business. This becomes even more challenging when the person (or people) responsible for marketing are also responsible for HR, sales, or some other function.

With the limited time resources for these professionals, it can be hard to figure out what to execute next. Do I post a TikTok or do another Facebook post? Do I blog another case study? Did I forget to email our client list with our new case study? Why aren't my emails delivering?

Starting with one question – “Why?” – helps in one key way. It makes planning, creating, and

Option A: At our company, we work to build the future of contracting through innovation, enhanced quality standards, and a lifetime commitment to our customers.


Option B: We build things at a competitive price.

I would think all would agree that Option A tells a clearer story, but how does that make it easier for marketers?

Think about all of the types of content and stories you can generate using Option A. You could do a workforce attraction campaign that includes interviews with employees about the latest innovation being worked on at your company. Then, you could create a lead generation campaign that talks about the enhanced quality standards to which your company adheres. Finally, you could institute branding on all sales documents that lists all the ways your company shows a lifetime commitment to your customers – with testimonials from previous customers or by sharing how your lifetime work warranty has been used by previous customers to build trust in your company.

With Option B, a marketer might feel limited to just comparing pricing with competitors, which we all know decreases margins and starts a race to the bottom of pricing.

At Platform Communications, we went through this process of asking “Why?” by sending a survey out to our entire staff asking “Why do you work at Platform Communications?” We then looked at all of the answers and found a common theme – people work at our company because they like telling powerful stories and achieving real results.

My challenge to companies is to embark on a journey to become clear, as an organization, about WHY you exist. This process will make your marketing more efficient and effective. 

Anthony Birch is the Executive Vice President of Marketing and Digital Strategy at Platform Communications – a full-service Communications, Public Affairs and Marketing and Digital Firm with locations in Madison and Milwaukee that does work in Wisconsin, the Midwest and with a growing footprint across the country. He can be reached at ab@platform-communications.com and you can learn more about Platform Communications at www.platform-communications.com.

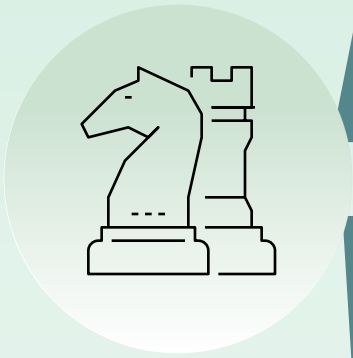
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executing the content easier because, if you know the answer to that one question, you have a clear message that can be translated throughout your day-to-day execution of tactics.

This idea comes from author and speaker Simon Sinek who explored why some companies succeed and so many others fail. He alleges, in this book and subsequent speech and content, that “Very few people or companies can clearly articulate WHY they do what they do.” Companies know and talk about WHAT they do, and some even talk about HOW they do it. Very few, though, know clearly WHY they do what they do. The “WHY” is the inspiration – no matter the position at the company – employees get up every day and go to work to execute a function.

How this translates into helping marketers do their job may seem confusing, but here is an example. Which of these is more compelling, whether for a brand awareness campaign or lead generation campaign or even a sales pitch?



YEAH.

YEAH.

YEAH.

WHAT ELSE YOU GOT?

THE PAINFUL TRUTH ON COMPETITIVE
DIFFERENTIATION AMONGST TOP
CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES.

Coty Fournier

Senior Consultant Well Built Construction Consulting

Ambitious construction management and general contracting professionals, who are promoted into the executive ranks and held directly responsible for business development, learn one of the most sobering truths about the industry. However, in the big scheme of things, very few people get that promotion, so they never learn this truth, or they learn it too late. To offer everyone a heads up, it goes something like this:

You can take virtually any contractor's marketing materials and sales presentation content and swap it out with the same from their closest direct competitors . . . and no one will know the difference.

What! Really? Yes. No matter how much time and agonizing effort most companies spend on these critically important activities – in the end – the resulting sales pitches all sound pretty much identical to the listening ear. Everyone claims to have the exact same five or six bragging rights, floating amidst a sea of well-intended polish and decoration. But when you boil it all down, here's what is essentially left:

We deliver award-winning (1) top quality construction projects, (2) on time and (3) on budget, with (4) excellent safety outcomes. To prove it, here are several (5) client testimonials from some of our most recent projects that are similar to your project. How do we do it? We have the (6) best people.

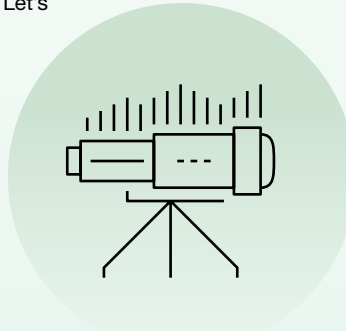
Some companies use few words that are short and to the point. Some use lots of words, case studies, cool graphics and other eye-catchers. But for all intents and purposes, the only differences in the marketing and positioning messages between one contractor and another are found in their logos, project photos, styling choices, and varying degrees of creative skills with Canva or PowerPoint. But if you study everything produced very closely and dispassionately, you will find that each company is essentially saying "Pick us! Pick us! We're the best!" while defending that claim in much the same manner as the next company. And so on and so on.

Nobody likes to hear this. It can be seriously deflating and frustrating, especially if you have ever served in a formal seller-doer or business development or marketing role and therefore know from first-hand experience just how hard it is to differentiate your company's qualifications from your closest direct competitors and render it believable. But if you accept the painful truth – that much (or even all) of what you believe to be your company's competitive differentiators may not be effectively differentiating you at all – instead of arguing against the premise and wishing it weren't true, you can capitalize on it. And that's exactly what today's most business development savvy firms are doing. Let's break it down and see why.

The odds are bad for your minimum ante.

To jumpstart the mind-shift, it's wise to re-language things. Let's start by calling those five or six most common bragging rights what they actually are – your qualifications to do the work. Moreover, in most circumstances, they are simply your basic qualifications. They are basic because they've become a common denominator amongst all highly successful construction companies who obtain any significant percentage of their work outside of competitive bidding. Those five or six incredibly difficult-to-achieve qualifications, the very things that most contractors have given their lives and careers to accomplish, are now largely perceived to be the minimum ante required to stay in the game. For the most part, these basic qualifications are now expected to even make the shortlist for consideration and therefore no longer play much of a role in the decision-making process during negotiated contractor selection.

This expectation leaves project owners and their representatives sifting through nearly every contractor's RFQ or RFP



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WITH NEARLY IDENTICAL QUALIFICATIONS, IT WOULD HELP US TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WAYS IN WHICH **YOUR COMPANY IS DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT (OR BETTER)** THAN THE OTHERS. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE NEED TO KNOW?

submissions wondering, “Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. What else you got?” and sitting through their formal and informal sales presentations feeling like they’re watching a movie they’ve seen several times before. When all companies are pushing the same basic qualifications, it gets repetitive. More to the point, it isn’t helpful, because the minimum ante works fairly well when comparing apples-to-oranges, but it fails when comparing apples-to-apples. Decision makers need one of those apples to stand out, to help guide and justify their decision, particularly when they are open to making that decision based on something other than price. They are often in desperate search for tangible differences between the presenting companies, something that rings both logically and emotionally true, applicable and valuable to the project at hand – all of which is becoming hard to find these days in the minimum ante, leaving project owners left wondering which contractor can bring something else to the table.

A handful of companies are rising to the challenge, becoming increasingly successful at the differentiation game. Most companies, however, are not, as it is difficult to develop and sustain true competitive differentiators, as well as the ability to articulate the value proposition for each differentiator they are claiming to have. Worse yet, some companies don’t have any differentiators at all, as they are perpetually following the leaders who do.

Bet on your answers to the “What else you got?” question.

If you are willing to accept the challenge, it’s time to do the work of honest self-assessment in the following thought experiment. You are having a productive “get to know one another” conversation with an excellent prospective client who is actively researching and interviewing several highly reputable and appropriately experienced construction companies (including yours) to potentially build their next project. During the conversation, you receive validation from the prospective client that your company, along with one or two of your closest legitimate competitors, remain under serious consideration for selection. Near the end of the conversation, the prospective client offers the following true statement: “Your company is one of two (or three) that meets all of our qualifications to do the work. Everything checks out in terms of your relevant experience, and track records on safety, budget, and schedule, and your

references are excellent. With nearly identical qualifications, it would help us to learn more about the ways in which your company is distinctly different (or better) than the others. Is there anything else we need to know? Go ahead and tell us why we should choose you.”

If you are left feeling off guard or uncomfortable answering the above question – it may be time to take a good long look in the mirror and ask yourself, “What else do we really have?” Rock solid, beautifully articulated answers are critical elements of an effective business development strategy and sales process designed to establish reliable competitive differentiation in the marketplace. Companies who focus on developing high-value differentiators, coupled with the ability to convey them to prospective clients through powerful story-selling, are well-positioned to increase their percentage of work obtained through direct negotiations and minimize their reliance upon selection through competitive bidding. And one more thing . . . some of the best answers have very little to do with construction. [Bec Wisconsin](#)



Coty Fournier is a Senior Consultant with Well Built Construction Consulting, leading the firm’s Midwest Operations based in Davenport, Iowa. She is a dynamic, inspirational

leader with 30+ years of complex design-build management, and business development experience, as both a corporate executive and entrepreneur in the commercial construction industry and related tech spaces. She leads by example with passion and optimistic vision to consistently challenge the status quo, foster requisite change, and inspire high-performance cultures. As a proven industry leader and motivational change agent, she is often tapped by construction companies and industry organizations for her exceptional training and talent development skills, seller-doer fundamentals, revenue generation, executive readiness, and Owner-leadership advisory. As an insightful, thought-provoking management consultant, speaker and best-selling author, Coty is leaving a well-marked trail of differentiating strategies along the fast-track to success at the top of the construction management industry.



Wisconsin 2024 Excellence in Construction® Projects of Distinction

Recognizing Excellence in Merit Construction

The Projects of Distinction (POD) Excellence in Construction Awards Ceremony was held at Glacier Canyon Conference Center at Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells on January 16, 2025. There were 43 distinct projects recognized. These can be found in the Projects of Distinction Awards magazine that was sent to all members (contact ABC of Wisconsin if you would like a copy).

Among the highlights of the awards program was the Project of the Year awarded to Consolidated Construction Co. for the Enerbase Cooperative Cenex C-Store with Amazon's Just Walk Out Technology in Minot, North Dakota. The Project of the Year is the project that receives the highest average of scores from the judges.



Built on Merit Award



The "Built on Merit" award was presented to Kraemer Brothers for utilizing the largest number of fellow ABC members on the Usona Institute Campus in Fitchburg, Wisconsin. Kraemer Brothers used 23 contractor and supplier members on the project. Congratulations and thanks to Kraemer Brothers for their dedication to merit construction!

Wes Meilahn Award



Wes Meilahn

ABC of Wisconsin's most prestigious individual award goes to Nick May who was awarded the 2025 Wes Meilahn Award for outstanding dedication, leadership, and service to the chapter and the merit shop construction industry. The award is named after chapter founding father Wes Meilahn, known for his unwavering commitment to ABC's mission.



Nick May (right) is presented with the Wes Meilahn Award by 2024 recipient Bill Monfre.

BUILDING SUCCESS:

CRAFTING A WINNING MARKETING STRATEGY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

At SuperCon, I had the privilege of leading a marketing workshop for ABC of Wisconsin, helping construction leaders navigate the complexities of modern marketing strategy. The core message? **Before diving into individual tactics and channel strategies, you need to build your marketing on a strong foundation.**

Marketing isn't just about choosing between Google Ads or LinkedIn, SEO or trade shows—it's about ensuring that every decision is rooted in a clear strategy that aligns with your business goals.

In this article, I'll walk through the fundamental pillars that any construction company should structure its marketing efforts around, sharing some key insights that emerged from our discussions at SuperCon.

■ Set Clear, Measurable Goals Before Anything Else *Why It Matters*

Too often, companies start spending on marketing without defining success. A great



marketing strategy starts with clear, measurable objectives tied to business outcomes—not vague goals like "get more leads". In our workshop, we walked through each component of the SMART goal framework and applied it to building marketing goals.

Before choosing channels, campaigns, or creative messaging, you should answer a few key questions:

What business goal are we supporting?

(Revenue growth? Customer retention? Market expansion?)

What **specific** metrics will define success? (*Leads per month? Website traffic growth? Higher close rates?*)

What's the **timeline** for measuring progress?

Key Insight: If you can't measure it, you can't improve it. Marketing should be treated like an **investment with a return**, not just an expense.

■ Know Your Audience Before You

Build the Strategy

Why It Matters

Before diving into channels, ad spend, or content strategy, the first step is defining who you're actually trying to reach.

In the workshop, we identified a few key elements of a strong audience persona:

- Clear Demographics
- Pain Points
- Buying Motivations
- Research & Communication Preferences
- Decision Making Process
- Common Objections

We also stressed that not all buyers think or search the same way—so messaging needs to be tailored accordingly:

- General Contractors & Developers might rely on LinkedIn, referrals, and industry events for hiring subcontractors.
- Facility Managers & Procurement Officers might research on Google and care about cost efficiency & timelines.
- Homeowners (for residential firms) might check Google Reviews & social media before even picking up the phone or filling out a contact form.

Key Insight: If you try to market to everyone, you'll resonate with no one. Deeply understanding your ideal customer helps you craft messaging and choose channels that actually drive results.

■ Competitive Analysis: Win by Positioning, Not Just Price

Why It Matters

Some construction firms may assume price is the deciding factor—but that's rarely the case. Decision-makers are often looking for reliability, trust, and expertise.

At SuperCon, we walked through a number of key tactical approaches to analyzing and assessing the competition. We discussed leveraging digital platforms from Google, social media and online reviews to digital tools like Ahrefs and SEMRush to build a complete picture of the competitive landscape.

We took those learnings and applied them to the SWOT analysis framework to help companies identify:

What their biggest competitive advantage is (Faster turnaround? Better safety compliance? Specialized expertise?)

Where competitors are weak (Are they slow? Lacking customer service? Struggling with digital presence?)



How to position their business uniquely, so it's not just a price war.

Key Insight: Competitive analysis isn't about copying, it's about finding your true areas of differentiation. The companies that stand out are the ones that actively shape their reputation and differentiation.

■ Messaging & USP:

Own Your Value Proposition

Why It Matters

If you can't clearly communicate why a client should choose you over a competitor quickly and memorably, your messaging is weak.

We built Unique Selling Propositions (USPs) during the workshop using this simple but effective formula:

We help [target audience] achieve [desired result] by [unique approach] better than anyone else.

Bad Example: We're a full-service construction company serving Wisconsin. (Too generic—doesn't differentiate!)

Great Example: We help commercial developers complete projects 30% faster using prefabrication technology, reducing delays and costs.

From those USPs, we built a full key messaging framework including persona specific value propositions, supporting messaging, and proof points.

Key Insight: Your messaging should speak directly to your customers and their painpoints, delivering a powerful and memorable argument why you are the best option to solve their problems.

■ Channel Selection: Meet Your Customer Where They're At

Why It Matters

Not all marketing channels deliver the same quality of leads. Before investing in ads, SEO, or social media, you need to match the right channel with the right audience.

In our workshop we discussed the importance of a strong website as the hub of all your marketing channels. We walked through a few must have items:

- Establish a Strong First Impression
- Fast Load Times & Good User Experience
- Mobile Friendly Design
- High Performing SEO Content
- Strong Key Messaging & Storytelling
- Trust Signals / Proof Points
- Easy, Intuitive Calls to Action

We discussed the power of SEM (SEO and Paid Search) in capturing high intent audiences for both B2B and B2C businesses. We covered the strengths of organic SEO and paid search campaigns as separate efforts but also how, ultimately, they're much stronger together. Leveraging both tactics means covering search results more completely, balancing long and short term growth, and using data from your paid search campaigns to inform and validate your SEO efforts.

We also talked about the strengths of specific channels for specific types of businesses.

■ For B2B (Commercial, Industrial, GC & Subcontractors):

- ☑ LinkedIn & SEO – Decision-makers research online before hiring.

A GREAT MARKETING STRATEGY STARTS WITH CLEAR, MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES TIED TO BUSINESS OUTCOMES.

- ☑ Google Ads (PPC) – Captures high-intent searches.
- ☑ Trade Shows & Networking – Relationships still matter in big contracts.

For B2C (Homeowners, Remodeling, Roofing, HVAC):

- ☑ Google My Business & Reviews – First thing homeowners check.
- ☑ Facebook & Instagram Ads – Great for visual, local marketing.
- ☑ SEO & Local Content Marketing – People search “best contractor near me.”

In the end, the key to successful channel selection really comes down to having a clear metric for success, then having a commitment to regularly tracking and adapting against those metrics.

Key Insight: You don’t need to be everywhere—you need to be where your best customers are. Test, optimize, and double down on what works.

■ Budget Allocation: Invest in What Works, Cut What Doesn’t *Why It Matters*

Many companies overspend on ineffective marketing or underinvest in high-performing channels. The key to success is balancing short-term and long-term marketing investments.

Short-Term Wins (Paid Ads, Retargeting, Direct Outreach) – Brings in immediate leads.

Long-Term Growth (SEO, Content Marketing, Referrals) – Builds sustainable lead generation over time.

Budget Review Every 90 Days – Shift dollars based on what’s actually converting.

Key Insight: Marketing isn’t a cost—it’s a revenue driver. If your marketing isn’t making money, adjust the strategy until it does.

■ Measuring Success: What Gets Measured, Gets Improved *Why It Matters*

TOOL	BEST FOR
Google Analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Website traffic ■ User Behavior ■ Overall Performance
Google Ads Dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ PPC Performance, ■ Conversion Rates, ■ Cost-Per-Click
CRM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lead Tracking, ■ Sales Funnel Analytics
Audience Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identifies some visitors for valuable sales followup insights
Call Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connects phone leads to campaigns
Google Search Console	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SEO Performance, ■ Organic Landing ■ Page Visibility

Marketing isn’t just about generating leads—it’s about closing deals and making money. In our workshop we covered what metrics to track for different tactics and also discussed a few helpful tools to use.

We also worked through tying metrics to marketing and overall business goals.

Track lead sources & conversion rates (not just website traffic).

Focus on Cost Per Lead (CPL) & Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) to gauge efficiency.

Adjust strategy every quarter based on data, not assumptions.

Key Insight: If you’re not tracking marketing performance, you’re guessing. Data-driven decisions always win.

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Final Thoughts: Build Your Strategy on These Pillars

Marketing about much more than a collection of tactics—it’s about strategy, positioning, and execution. Before getting lost in the weeds of ad platforms, hashtags, or SEO tricks, make sure your strategy is built on these six pillars:

- ❶ Set SMART goals
- ❷ Know your audience deeply
- ❸ Position yourself strategically against the competition
- ❹ Communicate a clear USP
- ❺ Choose the right marketing channels
- ❻ Allocate budget strategically & measure everything

The companies that dominate their markets aren’t necessarily the biggest—they’re the ones with the strongest marketing strategy and execution. 

Tax Cuts and Job Act Gains at Risk

By Congressman Tom Tiffany

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017 was more than just tax reform – it was a lifeline for small businesses, families, and industries like construction. It put more money back into the pockets of American families, allowed businesses to grow, and strengthened our economy. In just the first two years after its passage, businesses increased capital investment by 17% and reduced their debt by 35%.

However, if Congress allows these tax cuts to expire, all of this progress is at risk. For small businesses in states like Wisconsin, it could be devastating. The Tax Foundation estimates that over 14,000 jobs could be lost in Wisconsin alone, with small businesses facing an average tax increase of \$911. American workers will bear the brunt of Washington's inaction, but Republicans and President Trump are committed to preventing that from happening.

Let's look at a few key provisions of the TCJA that have benefited Wisconsin businesses, families, and workers.

TCJA strengthens family-owned businesses

One of the most important provisions of the TCJA was its increase in the estate tax exemption, which has helped family-owned businesses thrive across generations. These businesses are the backbone of our local communities, but they face an uphill battle against excessive tax burdens. Without the relief provided by TCJA, many would be forced to sell their businesses or close their doors altogether. The ability to pass a business down from one generation to the next should not be determined by tax policies that fail to account for rising costs. Extending the TCJA will ensure that family-owned businesses remain the heart and soul of our communities.

TCJA protects small businesses and manufacturers

Another provision that must be protected is the Section 199A deduction. This allows small businesses and manufacturers to deduct up to 20% of their qualified business income. In 2022, nearly three-quarters of those benefiting from this deduction earned less than \$200,000 – proving that this tax cut is for Main Street, not Wall Street. Without it, pass-



Congressman Tom Tiffany visits with the team at PGA Inc.



Congressman Tom Tiffany visits with Kris Kontney and Melissa Kraft of KBK Services

through businesses, which make up over 80% of family-owned enterprises, could see their tax rate skyrocket to 43.4%. Therefore, small businesses would be forced to pay more than 20 points higher than what businesses pay in Communist China. This would cripple mom-and-pop business, limiting their ability to invest in employees, wages, and growth.

TCJA ensures American innovation

The TCJA also provided much-needed support for innovation through the expansion of the Research & Development (R&D) Tax Credit. This credit has been a major driver for businesses investing in new technologies. In

the construction industry, the R&D credit has helped companies develop cutting-edge building materials and safety measures. However, a 2022 change to the R&D tax rules now requires businesses to amortize these costs over five years, instead of deducting them upfront. This change stifles innovation, making it harder for American businesses to compete on the global stage. Congress must reverse this policy and restore full expensing of R&D costs in the TCJA to keep America competitive and innovative.

Similarly, Congress must also protect the 100% Bonus Depreciation. In sectors like construction, where equipment investments can be significant, this clause enables companies to instantly write off the entire cost of new equipment, machinery, and tools. However, this provision has been phasing out since 2022 and will disappear after 2026. Businesses will have to pay more if Congress doesn't extend it, which will deter investment and innovation. Now is the time to act and secure America's future prosperity.

These are just a few of the critical provisions, but without an extension of the TCJA, Main Street businesses will face devastating tax increases, making it harder to hire workers and jeopardizing their ability to stay afloat. Congress must extend the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provisions to ensure continued progress for the construction industry and beyond. The future of American innovation depends on it. [Wisconsin](#)

SIGNIFICANT TAX REFORM IS CRITICAL TO FUTURE PROSPERITY

By Rob Hutton State Senator, 5th District



Senator Rob Hutton
with the team at
Zignego Company, Inc.

If Wisconsin is to remain a welcoming place for families, seniors, young workers and businesses alike, it is critical that we lower our state's perennially high tax burden. This has been and will continue to be a focus of mine in the State Senate.

Calvin Coolidge is credited with saying, "Collecting more taxes than is absolutely necessary is legalized robbery."

Wisconsin has higher combined local and state taxes than 36 other states, according to the Tax Foundation's 2022 report. Our top individual income tax rate of 7.65%, the rate at which most small businesses pay taxes, is one of the ten highest in the country and second-highest in the Midwest. Our property tax burden as a percentage of owner-occupied home value is eighth-highest in the nation.

Last session, cutting taxes was a top priority for Republicans in the legislature. After several other tax reforms were vetoed, we sent a series of four bills to Governor Evers' desk that:

- Lowered income tax rates for the vast majority of citizens, saving the typical tax filer \$454 per year;
- Exempted from state income taxes up to \$75,000 (\$150,000 for married couples filing jointly) in retirement income, saving the average retiree \$1,582 per year;
- Expanded the child and dependent care tax credit to 100% of the corresponding federal tax credit, saving the average filer \$656 per year;
- Expanded the married couple credit to \$870 from the current \$480, saving married couples \$338 per year.

I was hopeful that the Governor would sign these bills because they were written to adhere to his definition of middle class—up to \$150,000 in income for a couple—while maintaining a balanced budget. However, he vetoed the middle-class income tax cut, tax cut for retirees and tax credit for married couples.

In addition, in his budget plan last session the Governor proposed a massive 14% spend-



Senator Rob Hutton joins Ashley Shumacher of Dave Jones to celebrate William Stephens joining their team.

ing increase for a total of \$104 billion over two years, including a \$1.5 billion tax increase on small businesses and farmers. The legislature pared that down to just under \$100 billion in the final budget and removed his tax hikes.

However, the Governor did find a creative way to all but ensure property tax increases at the local level. In a controversial line-item veto that's still being litigated in the courts, he re-wrote a section of the budget to allow public schools to increase spending by \$325 per student, per year until the year 2425—four centuries from now.

I am very concerned about the impact this will have on property taxpayers in the years to come, especially combined with a rush of referendum questions and the prospect of the state Supreme Court overturning Act 10 and significantly raising costs for local governments.

The next cycle of budget deliberations will be underway in the coming weeks and months, and the Republican legislature is certain to once again trim significant amounts of the new spending the Governor is likely to propose. Along with that, my colleagues and I remain committed to sending a significant portion of the state's \$4.3 billion surplus back to the taxpayers.

Those details are being worked out, but possibilities include another proposal for a middle-class income tax cut, a tax cut for retirees, and tax credits or tax rebates to directly assist overtaxed, cash-strapped families.

There were some victories for taxpayers in the 2023-25 session. The Governor did sign the legislature's bill expanding the child and dependent care tax credit. We also reached bipartisan agreement to modernize the EdVest program, an important part of which is allowing those savings to be used on apprenticeship expenses.

He also signed a repeal of the state's personal property tax, something I have long championed. That is needed for businesses, but as the rankings at the opening of this column suggest, our state needs transformative tax reform.

With the cost of living permanently higher and still rising, making government more efficient and reducing the tax burden is simply the right thing to do. It's also the practical course if we want to make certain our state is welcoming and prosperous for future generations of families and businesses.

If we want a prosperous Wisconsin, allowing



Senator Rob Hutton discusses high school opportunities for exposure to the trades with a teacher at ABC of Wisconsin's apprenticeship skills competition.

our government to tax and spend more is the wrong direction. Churchill summarized it well when he said, "I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle."

Let's reduce the tax burden in Wisconsin so our families and employers have a larger bucket of resources with which to invest and grow our economy. [abcwisconsin.org](https://www.abcwisconsin.org)

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Sponsor: Josh Levy, Husch

Blackwell, LLP

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• Carney Contracting LLC

John Carney

35905 52nd St.

Burlington, WI 53105

262-206-4736

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: JR Reesman, Reesman's

Excavating & Grading

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 39

• Clarity One Supply

Steven Erickson

1080 County Highway N

Stoughton, WI 53575

608-469-4581

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Jess Lawinger, United

Rentals

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 1

• Dodge Construction Network

Ashley Jaeger

4126 Gandy Dancer Road

DeForest, WI 53532

732-629-9734

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Dan Bertler, Supreme

Structures, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 72

• Electrical Connections, Inc.

Chris Schaefer

571 AJ Allen Circle

Wales, WI 53183

262-970-9170

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Bill Brink, Kettle Moraine

Electric & Solar

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 1

• Fredericksen Electric LLC

Charlie Fredericksen

1201 W Parkway Blvd.

Appleton, WI 54914

920-360-0151

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Steve Klessig, Keller, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 75

• GEN 2 Engineering

Adam Roder, PE, SE

W584 Townline Road

Oconomowoc, WI 53066

262-332-9243

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Jay Zahn, Hausmann

Group

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 70

• Graf Electric

Joel House

520 Kistler Drive

La Crescent, MN 55947

507-895-6156

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Jesse Adams, Adams

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• Imperial Surveillance, Inc.

Jason Ruggiero

9730 W. Bluemound Road

Wauwatosa, WI 53226

847-375-0300

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Jessica Cannizzaro,

Milestone Plumbing, Inc.

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• Menasha Joint School District

Dave Lillge

100 Main St., Suite 300

Menasha, WI 54952

920-470-6248

Description: Affiliate

Sponsor: Troy Carlson, Vizance, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 39

• Nelson Development LLC

Jordan Nelson

P.O. Box 161

Elm Grove, WI 53122

262-420-0652

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Josh Levy, Husch

Blackwell, LLP

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 4

• Northwestern Mutual

Jeff Wachs

720 E. Wisconsin Ave.

Milwaukee, WI 53202

414-665-5968

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Amber Anderson, Aerotek,

Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 14

• Palmer Johnson Power Systems

Matt Ellsworth

1835 Haynes Drive

Sun Prairie, WI 53590

608-280-1225

Description: Supplier Member

Sponsor: Jess Lawinger, United

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Roland Gutknecht

606 S. Hickory St.

Fond du Lac, WI 54935

920-907-0803

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Roland Gutknecht, Orly

Building Solutions, Inc. DBA Orly

Co., Inc.

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• Sheldon Plumbing, Inc.

Mike Sheldon

221 Industrial Drive

Verona, WI 53593

608-848-7460

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Kyle Kraemer, Kraemer

Brothers

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 12

• Transition Health Benefits

Ben Zang

17040 W. Greenfield Ave.

Brookfield, WI 53005

414-614-7854

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Dan Paulson, Invision

Development International, LLC

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Jake Merkel

W276 N807 Woodridge Lane

Waukesha, WI 53188

920-253-1453

Description: Contractor

Sponsor: Matt Karnick, Lake Ridge

Bank

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• ARKANCE

Mark Carpentier

18831 Bardeen Ave. #200

Irvine, CA 92612

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Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Amber Anderson, Aerotek,

Inc.

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Mike Ritt

375 Regency Court, Suite 201

Brookfield, WI 53045

262-789-8210

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Jerry Goodman

24820 Adams St.

Kansasville, WI 53139

262-939-8302

Description: Contractor

Sponsor: William Shenkenberg,

Mechanical Master, Inc.

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• HJC Law & Consulting, LLC

Jake Curtis

396 W Lilac Lane

Grafton, WI 53024

414-335-6338

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Nick May, Refrigeration

Design Consultants

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• Moraine Builders Inc.

David Last

W3329 Sunset Road

Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

920-467-6303

Description: Contractor

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Electrical Contractors

Beam Club Members-to-Date: 29

• Mullikin Construction Inc.

Dean Mullikin

W4558 Clearview Road

Waldo, WI 53093

920-564-2979

Description: Contractor

Sponsor: Gerry Krebsbach, K-W

Electric, Inc.

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• Saturn Lounge

Jim Kohlhardt

N8W222323 Johnson Drive

Waukesha, WI 53186

262-821-3999

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Solutions

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Charles Zidek

300 W. Edgerton Ave.

Milwaukee, WI 53207

414-489-0268

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Sponsor: Mike Christiansen, Wide

Effect Talent Solutions

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• The Plumbing Works

Dean Nau

22510 45th St.

Bristol, WI 53104

262-857-3924

Description: Contractor

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Excavating & Grading

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• Unitas Architects, LLC

Rafael Tudor

6101 Roselawn Ave.

Monona, WI 53716

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