

Construction Signs as a Marketing Tool

Contributed by David C. Hughes, AIA, Columbus, Ohio, AIA Small Project Practitioners

Revised December 2006

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

Carefully crafted construction site signs create effective marketing tools for architecture firms.

THREE DEADLY SINS

How many times have you approached a construction site by car, eagerly looking for a construction sign, only to discover

- There is no sign
- The text is too small to read from a moving vehicle
- Essential contact information is missing

General contractors never fail to erect a construction sign on a job site. Many are very simple, with the name of the company and a telephone number (and, lately, their Web site URL) in black or dark type on a white or light background. The message is simple: "This is who we are, this what we are doing, this is how you can reach us."

LEAVE NO PROJECT BEHIND

An attractive, readable, appealing construction sign can be a very cost-effective marketing tool for architecture firms as well. When we began our practice 20 years ago, I vowed that all of our projects, particularly residential and small commercial projects, would have a job sign. The design would be the hallmark of simplicity, quickly and effectively announcing the role of our firm in the project.

DESIGN FOR IMPACT

If at all possible, position your construction sign to face oncoming traffic. Use double-sided signs or multiple signs where possible and appropriate. If only half the people who pass your project see the sign, you are only getting half the possible marketing benefit.

Your firm logo should be simple enough to be recognized easily, and large enough in relation to the text on the sign to be recognizable at a glance. Color, or more precisely contrast, is very important.

BECOME A STUDENT OF SIGNS

Take the time to study roadside signs that catch your eye—whether the design appeals to you or not. Commonly seen types include realtor "for sale" signs or political campaign signs. Is there anyone who cannot immediately visualize a typical Century 21 sign? The graphic design is simple and memorable, and the yellow on brown color scheme is visible and pleasing to look at in many lighting conditions.

Make note of the most effective features of signs, and reinterpret them in a design that both pleases you and effectively communicates your message. If you will be planting a lot of signs around town, you can create visual interest and variety by using the reverse colors on half of your signs—black on white and white on black, for example.

THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE

The message must always be clear, consistent, recognizable, and readable. The purpose of a sign is for potential customers to see your firm name, remember it, and call you. Do not crowd the sign. Other than your logo, limit the sign to your firm name, telephone number, and Web address if you have one.

Piled high on the top shelf of a storage closet in our office are the remains of many past print advertising and promotional efforts. Our best and most successful marketing tools stand in front of each of our projects, beckoning to each and every passerby.



Above, the author offers an example of a sign.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

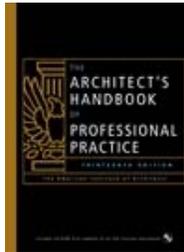
The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 05.01.03 Measuring Your marketing ROI
- 05.01.07 Make the Most of Your Marketing Materials
- 05.05.03 Developing Winning Proposals: The Final Check

For More Information on This Topic

See also “Marketing Planning and Strategies” by Roger L. Pickar, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 7, page 143.

See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at bookstore@aia.org.



Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Keywords

- Practice
- Marketing
- Marketing plans