

Portfolio

McCloskey Group attracts new business by paying for magazine features

Read how one three-person firm increased its exposure and credibility by paying to appear in various "advertorial" magazines.

Any time a firm appears in a local or national publication, it provides tremendous exposure. But getting in those newspapers and magazines isn't always easy. Sometimes, you have to create your own opportunities.

That's exactly what three-person multidisciplinary architecture, interior design, and planning firm **Michael McCloskey Design Group** (Marblehead, MA) did. The firm increased its level of exposure by paying to be featured in local publications like *North Shore Magazine* and *Boston Magazine's Home and Garden* and national magazine *American Dream Homes*. Not only did the strategy help the firm gradually expand its service area, the magazines made a big impression on clients. "I get 50 to 100 copies of the magazines and bring them to client interviews," McCloskey says. Clients look at the firm's portfolio, but the magazines are even better, he says. "The magazines are usually deal-closers. People get excited seeing the projects featured in them."



Michael McCloskey,
Principal, Michael
McCloskey Design Group

You have to know the difference between using "advertorial" and editorial magazines, McCloskey says. "Advertorial" magazines contain advertising in the form of content. You may have to pay to appear in these magazines, which have less of an editorial focus, but those are the magazines that clients are reading, according to McCloskey. "And if you're not reading what clients are reading, you're not reading the right magazines," he says. McCloskey looked at what publications clients had lying on their coffee tables and decided the firm needed to get in them.

Gaining exposure and credibility

Choose which publications to be featured in, according to your firm's overall marketing plan. The McCloskey Group appeared in four "advertorial" magazines in 2003, each with a specific purpose. "We wanted to establish a local presence and then move on to regional," McCloskey says. Magazines like *North Shore Magazine* first gave the firm exposure in areas north of Boston. But others, like *Charles River Magazine*, are targeted at potential clients in areas closer to Boston. "We're beginning to move into the adjoining areas," he says.

Appearances in magazines also give firms third-party credibility, McCloskey says. "It's not coming from you. It's easy to say nice

things about yourself, but being featured in the magazines shows potential clients that the firm is on the same playing field as other nationally recognized firms." Clients call after reading about projects, he says. "And seeing the firm's projects in these publications lets potential clients know that they too can be featured in magazines."

Spending money to make money

It takes money to make money. But the amount you'll spend to appear in various publications is insignificant compared to what you'll gain from the exposure, McCloskey says.

The McCloskey Group paid between \$2,000 and \$4,500 for articles—\$4,500 for longer articles ranging from six to eight pages. And getting on the covers of the magazines is also extremely effective, he says. "I like to buy covers." The cost for covers was \$2,000 to \$3,000.

McCloskey also spent less than \$200 on computer software that allows him to post the magazines on the firm's web site (www.michaelmccloskey.com) in a reader-friendly format. It gives people the ability to view the magazines online and flip through them, as if reading a print magazine, he says. "The software is called, '3-D Page Author.' It came out 10 to 12 years ago, but was much more expensive then," McCloskey says. "I wanted to replicate the experience of flipping through a magazine. I just have to load the PDF and choose how I want the pages to turn." Clients receive an e-mail with a link to the web site every time a new magazine is posted.

The investment worked. The firm received numerous calls and is working on five leads and two active projects because of an article in one magazine. "Getting one job alone pays for the cost of an article, but it can turn into 10 jobs within a year," he says.— **BRIAN DRISCOLL** (bdriscoll@zweigwhite.com) ■

Tactical Toolbox

Learn from Michael McCloskey Design Group's success with paying to appear in client "advertorial" magazines and do the following:

Find the right publications. Don't waste money by paying to be featured in publications that clients aren't even reading. Take a look at what they have on their coffee tables.

Have a plan. Look for magazines that target a different audience or geographic area. Doing so will increase exposure.

Share with clients. Magazines featuring your firm's work can be more impressive than standard portfolios. Bring copies to client meetings and if possible, post the magazines on your firm's web site.

