

PROMOTION PRINCIPLES

101

A Practitioner's View

Lesson 3: Supporting Technical Decision Makers

By Randell C. Riley, P.E.

In Lesson 1, we briefly discussed your immediate customer, the contractor's perceptions regarding promotion and his level of involvement in the process. In Lesson 2, we discussed government agency hierarchies and how to deal with them. Now we finally get to what you will need to persuade the second, third and fourth tier technical decision makers to your way of thinking and

concrete streets vs. asphalt streets, concrete foundations, poured walls, accelerators, the benefits of admixtures, the latest on fiber technology, colored or stamped concrete (I think you get the point now) unless that particular target individual has requested it.

Think of it this way. How many of you actually enjoy watching infomercials? You do not want to be one!

I offer this suggestion based on conversations I had with a former Director of Public Works (DPW) many years ago. I asked in particular, "What is the most effective means of communication with you and your peers?" The

"The most instructive piece of information I gleaned from my meeting with that former DPW was do not give him anything longer than four pages and preferably on no more than one or two subjects."

arriving at a "concrete decision" for recommendation to those higher up the ladder.

Let's examine the usual concrete industry strategy. Lacking information, we are often tempted to arrive in the engineers office with an armload of the latest glossy color technical pieces without a coherent focused objective. If you want to sell concrete overlays, do not dilute the message with literature on durability, flowable fill, self-consolidating concrete, patching,

one thing that made the biggest impression on me was that he repeatedly emphasized a principle with which we are all familiar, the KISS principle. Do not think that because these are technically trained individuals they have the desire to know everything there is to know initially about your products or processes. They may eventually wish to know, but generally do not have the time or desire to peruse all of the literature you are tempted to provide them in the initial meeting. Just like

a consumer watching television and seeing the latest information on that new decked out pickup truck, you first have to get their attention, and do so quickly.

The most instructive piece of information I gleaned from my meeting with that former DPW was do not give him anything longer than four pages and no more than one or two subjects. Further, as much of

you can illustrate with pictures and no more than one or two very simple charts or graphs, the better. If it is any longer than this, he probably does not have time to read it. Your problem or your idea is not the only issue before him on any given day and you do not want your goal to get lost in the myriad of other day-to-day actual problems with which the individual has to solve.

One of the reasons for the generation of the *Concrete Notes* series for Illinois Ready Mixed Concrete Association is to meet this particular objective. These pieces are structured around a two-page format with photos. The stories are typically project highlights with 35 to 40 percent of column space filled by pictures. On occasion, they

have been excerpted in part or in whole from the IRMCA Newsletter or other publications generated by Illinois Chapter, Inc. - American Concrete Pavement Association. These are pieces specifically designed to get the message across quickly for a particular target market. They are fresh and targeted pieces and if you feel that you need more of them in a particular area contact Bruce Grohne, John Reed or me to arrange generation of a piece.

Finally, once you have their interest, you can finally ask, "What else do you need to know?" That is the best time to provide the wealth of information available from the industry on a particular topic.

About Randell C. Riley, P.E.

Randell Riley is an Engineering Consultant for the Illinois Chapter - ACPA, Illinois Ready Mixed Concrete Association, and the Great Lakes Cement Promotion Association. He is actively involved in the day-to-day promotion of long-life quality concrete pavements. He can be reached at 217-793-4933