

LEVERAGE YOUR PROJECT PORTFOLIO TO BUILD ONLINE VISIBILITY

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You're only as good as your last project. But many A/E/C firms' website and portfolio updates lag far behind their media placement efforts around their most current projects. Updating portfolios is hard work, but the payoff is becoming more immediate and measurable as A/E/C companies embrace the concepts of content marketing.

In 2012, only one in six recently completed projects was likely to appear on a company's website within three months of completion. This low success rate suggested that reducing this delay could quickly create a competitive advantage. But there were several hurdles to overcome.

Method

In the spring of 2012, Design-product Systems researched 132 project mentions published in a local AIA chapter newsletter, which was printed bimonthly and distributed to 5,000 members. Projects were reported over a two-month interval, and the website survey was conducted over 1.5 months following a one-month publication schedule.

Design-product Systems noted the completion status of each project, and whether it appeared on the reporting firm's website. Completion statuses were grouped into three categories: "Completed" (projects completed within the two-month reporting period since the previous edition); "Other" (previously-completed projects recently mentioned or honored); and, "Not Completed" (all other projects).

Results

Not Completed projects made up 5/8 of all mentions, and Newly Completed Projects accounted for 1/4 of the total: Architecture firms reported more newly completed projects than firms of other disciplines, and posted more of them online. 17% of all reported projects made it online; 7 of the 42 firms posted at least one Completed project to their sites.

Discussion

This low success rate indicates that getting newly completed projects online quickly could be a clear competitive advantage. But firms needed to overcome several obstacles.

• **website content management**—platforms that make adding new content easier for firms to do in-house gives marketers more immediate access, so updates can be done in almost real time. The increase of website content management systems at all price points put firms of all sizes on an even footing.

• **content development**—developing a good portfolio piece always takes time. It involves bringing together knowledge of the project and the target audience, with the ability to find the most compelling project story that sells the firm.

• **brute force public relations**—PR placements once made up for a static and unwieldy website. Now, PR can be more fine-tuned to build website and stimulate audience engagement.

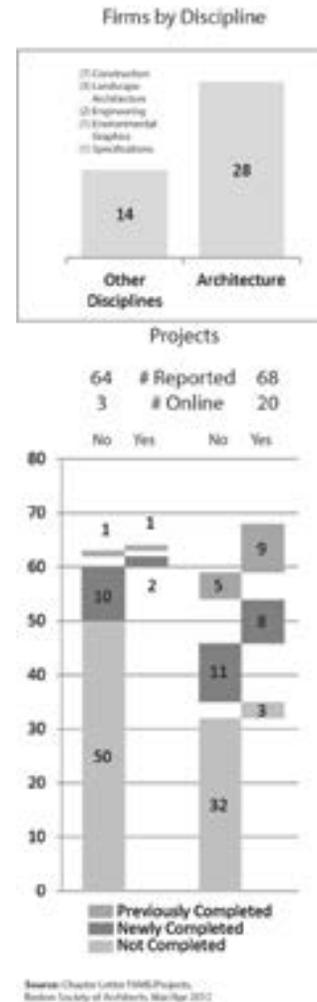
• **process development**—getting a newly completed project online involves many different activities in addition to public relations: photography, graphics, etc. Firms that compartmentalize or outsource these functions are less able to integrate them into a process for accelerated website-first publishing.

Looking Ahead

Since this research was conducted, this publication discontinued its print edition, and is now published online. We anticipate that more A/E/C firms will post more of their completed projects online, and will use online media outlets to create backlinks directly to their newer project pages.

Summary

Adding a project page to your website creates an opportunity to capture interest and drive traffic to your site once curiosity has been piqued in the media.



Very few A/E/C firms are taking this opportunity. Without a content strategy to organize resources, the contributing functions are all muscle and no coordination. An isolated news item without a follow-up online is a fragmented waste of effort.

Your newly completed work is key to raising your visibility to peers and clients.

Orchestrate your resources to maximize their ROI, and quickly integrate your current work into your overall brand and story. As making frequent website updates becomes easier, an internally-led content development process should drive traditional public relations and SEO to determine which project stories can best promote your firm.

End Notes

A complete research report is available at blog.designproductsystems.com/report. The 2015 Survey will be published in the spring.