

Marketing mavens melding

New local group unites pros in the building trades

Operating within a business realm that knows the power of marketing and advertising, especially in a tough economy like this one, a nationally known organization has just started up in the islands that is specifically geared toward those working in the building trades. The Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) is a relatively new professional organization in Hawaii focused on providing professional development, educational and networking opportunities for marketing and business development individuals within what it deems the “built environment.”

In a question-and-answer session with *Progress* magazine, Mark Tawara, the director of marketing for Belt Collins Hawaii Ltd. and 2008-09 president of SMPS in Hawaii, explains how the organization’s new local chapter was built from scratch into what he hopes will be a formidable support network for construction marketing professionals.



Q: What is SMPS and how was it started in the U.S.?

A: SMPS was created in 1973 by leaders from several professional services firms who recognized the need to sharpen skills, pool resources and work together to create business opportunities. Today, it represents a dynamic network of more than 6,900 marketing and business development professionals from architectural, engineering, planning, interior design, construction and specialty consulting firms located throughout the United States and Canada. SMPS and its 53 chapters benefit from the support of 3,250 design and building firms, encompassing 80 percent of the Engineering News-Record Top 500 Design Firms and Top 400 Contractors.

Q: When did SMPS come to Hawaii?

A: The local chapter was chartered in August 2007 at the

national SMPS conference in Washington, DC. Prior to that, in 1989, Howard Wolff was the first SMPS member in Hawaii when he moved here to join WATG as director of marketing. I became Hawaii’s second member in 1996 and, for a number of years that followed, there were only a few other members here in Hawaii who participated in national events. We did not have enough of a local presence to form our own chapter. Then last year, Cathy Handen of Rider Levett Bucknall and Michelle Skupin, formerly with Peter Vincent Architects, took the initiative to start up a Hawaii chapter. Cathy and Michelle established an organizing committee that included myself, Gail Atwater of R.M. Towill Corp., Marcie Farias of Architects Hawaii, and Scott Gossett, formerly with Durrant Media Five. The six of us helped launch our chapter.

Q: How were you able to launch SMPS in the islands?

A: We were fortunate to have four local companies support our startup efforts and contribute seed money. These founding members included Belt Collins, Peter Vincent Architects, Rider Levett Bucknall and R.M. Towill Corp. Without their support, our chapter could not have been established. We

Continued on page 12



SMPS HAWAII CHAPTER PHOTO

Michael T. Buell — a CPSM (Certified Professional Services Marketer) and the business development director of URS Corp. in Columbus, Ohio — leads a SMPS Hawaii workshop titled “The Basics of Business Development in the A/E/C Marketplace” at the Pacific Club earlier this year.

Multitude of goals, benefits

Continued from page 11

used their contributions to create a new chapter Web site, www.smpshawaii.org, contract with an e-mail service provider, and apply it toward other startup costs associated with forming a new non-profit 501(c)(6) corporation in Hawaii.

Q: What is the purpose of SMPS Hawaii, and what are some of its goals over the coming year?

A: Our mission is to advocate for, educate and connect leaders in the Hawaii design and construction industry. Our goals include growing our membership, providing more educational and networking opportunities for our members, and increasing our exposure to the design and construction industry through partnerships and affiliations with other professional organizations, such as BIA, GCA, AIA, ACECH and other groups. On the mainland, most design and building professionals know about SMPS, yet here in Hawaii, we're virtually unknown.

Q: What are some of your local chapter's programs in the past year?

A: We've had a variety of lunch pro-



Mark Tawara

grams that included client panels on how owners and developers select A/E/C firms, case studies on how to better build your brand, how to get more media exposure for your firm, and a national workshop on business development.

Q: How can SMPS Hawaii benefit the building industry?

A: Some of the benefits of being an SMPS member include being able to network with other professionals in the design and construction industry, participating in local and national programs, webinars and educational workshops that are geared specifically toward the building industry, and gaining access to various publications and other resources that highlight the latest trends and best practices in marketing and business development for our trade.

See www.smpshawaii.org for more information on the local chapter. **P**

SMPS local leadership

PRESIDENT

Mark Tawara of Belt Collins

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Julie Chen of Earth Tech | AECOM

TREASURER

Gail Atwater of R.M. Towill Corp.

SECRETARY

Marcie Farias of Architects Hawaii Ltd.

PAST PRESIDENT

Cathy Handen of Rider Levett Bucknall

DIRECTOR AT LARGE

Michelle Skupin of Fibrebond

DIRECTOR AT LARGE

Howard Wolff, FSMPS, of WATG

PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

Kathryn Acorda of Kiewit Building Group Inc.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Eamonn Kinsella of American Electric Co.