

# Engineering Marketing Strategies, Part I

By: Joe Alvin Haun, PE, MSE

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## Congratulations!!

Welcome to *Engineering Marketing Strategies, Part I*, your do-it-yourself guide to creating a Marketing Plan that works for your engineering firm.

Once you've been through this guide, you'll know precisely what it takes to write an effective Engineering Marketing Plan and supporting documentation. More importantly, you'll have a sample of a powerful Marketing Plan to get you started.

This is the next step in your business story. From this point on, you won't have to stab in the dark – you'll have clear direction. You'll start to see some real results for your efforts.

Once completing the on-line course at our web-site [www.engineeringbusinesspubs.com](http://www.engineeringbusinesspubs.com), you will be awarded with 2 PDH. The on-line seminar includes reading this guide and passing the 10 question test on our web-site.

Currently 30 U.S States require licensed engineers to obtain continuing education credits (CEU) or professional development hours (PDH) in order to renew their license. The PDH awarded by our seminar will be accepted by your state licensing board. **I personally guarantee it.** If your state board rejects our on-line seminar PDH, please forward us a copy of the board's letter and we will refund to you the cost of the on-line seminar.

## How to Use this Guide

Each step covers an important aspect of your Marketing Plan – these are things that you must give special consideration to before implementing your Marketing Plan.

You will be surprised how much this guide will reveal about your business marketing efforts. It will get you to think about important issues that may have never crossed your mind in the past. It may also uncover new issues. But it is never a better time to put together or update your Engineering Marketing Plan than now.

While reading please go ahead and jot down some notes in the spaces provided. It will help to improve your Engineering Marketing Plan.

Later sections will go into greater depth describing how to develop a Unique Selling Proposition, and Engineering Attire.

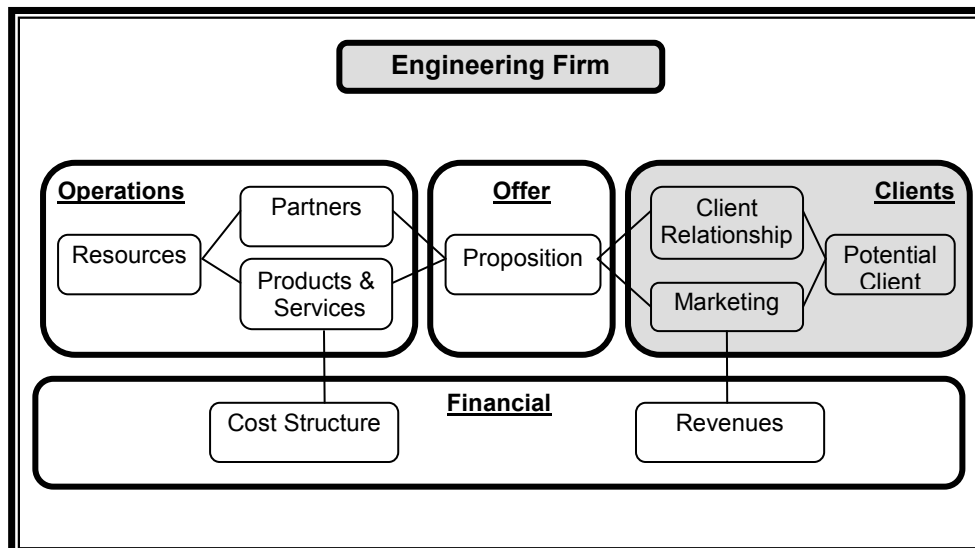
Now, it's time to get started.

## Marketing Engineering Clients

It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it.  
Benjamin Franklin

The Civil Engineering Business can be described as four components consisting of Operations, Financials, Clients, and the Offer. A diagram of the connection between these individual components was further discussed in the *Engineering Business Plan* guide. The guide can be found on our website [www.engineeringbusinesspubs.com](http://www.engineeringbusinesspubs.com). That diagram is redrawn in the Figure below.

Figure 1 – Engineering Business Model with Categories

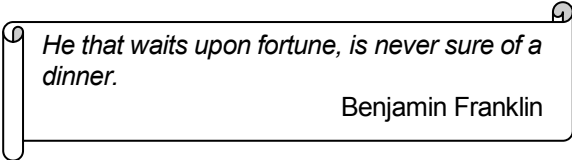


This guide discusses the Client Component which consists of building the Client Relationship, determining the Potential Client, and Marketing your existing and potential clients.

Let's get started with the Marketing Plan.

## What is a Marketing Plan

The company can only be sustained by marketing. Every task depends on the marketing efforts of each individual. When the economy is humming along quite well and the demand for engineering is great, marketing is quite easy; hang your placard, make a few phone calls, and attend a few functions. When the demand is high it's difficult to handle the work load, and you have the ability to pick and choose the jobs you want to take on. But when the economy slows and there is very little demand for engineering work, a well established marketing program is all the more important and may very well be the difference between survival or not.



*He that waits upon fortune, is never sure of a dinner.*

Benjamin Franklin

What is marketing? Some think it is selling. Some think it is mailing brochures. Some think it is networking. But in reality marketing is all of this and much more. Marketing is basically getting your potential clients to think of your company when they need the services and products your engineering firm provides. Marketing is telling people what you do over and over again; never stopping. A well established Marketing Plan that is followed takes time to create and then to maintain. In this course we will discuss how to create and how to follow a well thought out plan.

There are many marketing books in the bookstores and libraries, but most of them are not specific to the professional service or consulting business; especially engineering. Due to the rise in online businesses there are vast amounts of information available on the internet for professional services, but almost none of this is engineering. Most of the professional service information is about how to increase traffic to a website, obtaining a higher placement on the search engines (Search Engine Optimization; SEO), which maybe important to an engineering business online presence but not to its overall marketing efforts.

There are many ways to market, some methods cost more then others and some reach more prospects then others. The marketing methods of a professional firm are completely different from a retail business. Ninety percent of the marketing books you find in your favorite book store or online have nothing to do with professional businesses; especially engineering. Having sales on holidays and advertising in your local newspaper is a complete waste of time and money for an engineering company. Marketing a professional service firm is about developing trust and networking. The marketing of any engineering firm is unique and follows a different set of rules.

Unlike marketing for any other business engineering services are performed in person, in writing, through conferences, luncheons, on the web, by the phone or any other way

we can think of. Ask any successful engineering firm manager what the secret is and they will say something like “Referrals”, “Word of Mouth”, “Networking”, “Doing Follow-ups” and so on. This sounds so easy so why don’t we have abundant clients wanting our services beating down the doors and demanding our time? Well there are several reasons why engineers don’t market like they should:

- *Don’t know where to begin* - Being overwhelmed by all of the possible marketing strategies can be daunting. Some seem to be a better option than others but you are not sure. Not sure what to do can make you stop or stall, or just give up.
- *Not sure how to put a plan together* – Once you have decided on which strategies you want to implement, you are not sure of the process or steps to take to ensure the plan will be a success. You may find yourself doing cold-calling but wondering if you should also be doing mailings.
- *Motivation* – If you don’t get any results quickly it is hard to keep on following the plan. Why should you keep working on sending out fliers even though you have not received any responses?

It’s easy to blame the economy for not having any leads, but a simple solution is as easy as establishing a marketing campaign. You may wonder when it is a good time to start a new campaign. The answer is that the campaign starts the first day of the business and is then on-going and never ending. When the marketing stops or slows down the number of clients in your pipeline will begin to decrease. The two are directly related to one another.

There are some companies who hire marketing managers and expect that all marketing efforts are done by that department manager. Marketing is not something that can be assigned to an individual or department it is done by everyone in the company. The people represent the firm. The way they speak, dress, behave, and even smell all reflects the attitudes and direction of the company. This also extends to the correspondence, reports and plans that are produced by the staff. The appearance of the plans including the neatness, orderliness, sharpness of the reproduction all reflect on the firm. The technical reports produced reflect the firm’s image. Even the results at the construction sites which are built according to your plans reflect on the business’s technical expertise. Was it easy for the developer to build the proposed project without any inordinate amount of change orders due to unclear plans? Where the plans are inaccurate on the location of existing improvements? The public representations given by the company reflect the company’s reputation as a leader in the industry. Whether you are knowingly in the act of marketing or not you are doing just that.

## **Engineering Marketing Strategies**

Have you every try to find a book specifically on marketing for an engineering firm at the book store or library. Well, if you are like most other engineers who have tried, you found no

such book. There are several books available on the market that are especially written for the professional service business, but often these books cover the professional service business in general. Real estate agents do not market the same way as accountants, or as doctors, or as architects, or as engineers. This is because the engineering client base is different. Real Estate agents tend to market to the general public who are in the market for a new home or property, while an accountant generally markets to other businesses. There are similarities in the marketing strategies shared by all of the professional services businesses.

NOTE A well written book about professional service marketing is written by C.J. Hayden, "Get Clients Now." This book is specifically written for the professional service industry. She breaks marketing down to five general categories; Direct Contact and Follow-up; Networking and Referral Building; Public Speaking, Writing and Publicity; Promotional Events; and Advertising. These categories can then be applied to the four major stages of marketing; Filling the Pipeline, Following-up, Getting Presentations, and Closing Sales. This list is organized by the most to the least effective types of marketing for professional services.

Marketing strategies addresses certain needs of the company's Marketing Plan. The company finds weakness in it marketing campaigns and addresses those areas in the plan with strategies to improve the company's results.

An example would be the company is finding it difficult to find leads. The company reviews its marketing efforts and finds during the leading Generation Phase the staff does not ask the current and past clients for additional work. The marketing team adds to the Marketing Plan a section that discusses that the cheapest and best clients are their existing and past clients. All they require is periodic contact and follow-up.

The marketing team also finds that their company has been spending a large sum of money on advertisements in the newspaper and phone book. These advertisements have lead to poor quality and expensive leads. The team decides to revise the Marketing Plan to reduce the advertising campaign to a more manageable budget, and redirect the advertising to attending networking events.

### ***10 Keys to Specific Marketing Strategies***



For the most part professionals are really good at their chosen profession, and are really good at working with their existing clients, but not as good at marketing. An engineer must realize that the typical marketing strategies that most companies employ do not apply to engineering. The marketing strategies that apply to the engineering profession are fairly inexpensive, but do require time to develop. The most effective to least effective tactics to

gaining new clients are personal contact; networking; building referrals; public speaking; writing; and publicity. Also note that these tactics are relatively inexpensive, and work in all of four stages of marketing. Below is brief description of some of those strategies.

### *Key 1: Business Cards*

The smallest business brochure is the business card. Business cards are a form of marketing, but the purpose is merely for starting communication. This communication can begin with introductions during a meeting at a City conference room meeting, or it begins when an individual is looking through his stack of cards to find a Civil Engineer. He finds your card which he received a year ago at a seminar. The simple rule for business cards is to keep it simple but descriptive enough. There are a lot of styles of business cards. Most of them are collected and added to someone's electronic contact list.

Cheap business cards printed on your printer does not market well. These types of cards make a statement that you are not very successful and don't think very much about your appearance. A hastily put together business card can also be interrupted as a company that may not be here very long. It is all about building trust. It would be a shame to loss trust by a business card.

The engineering profession generates fairly large contracts. The company's billboard, your business, should be on the same level. The business card should include at a minimum Your Name, Title or Function, Company Name, Address, Phone and Fax Numbers, E-Mail Address, and Web-Site.

Of course the prospective client will want to know what services your firm provides. Imagine working for an Engineering Firm that issued new business cards to the staff to hand out in a new market segment. The business name did not reference Civil Engineering nor did it state what services they provided. When asked the company's principles said they like the cards this way. If anyone wanted to know what services the company provided, they need only to ask the staff. An international civil engineering firm in Las Vegas actually issued these business cards to their staff. These cards were handed out to prospects during luncheon, socials, conventions, and where ever else they were meeting people. Yes, they received a lot of interest; a lot of interest from the wrong prospects. Most people would accept the card and then asked what they did. After the engineers stated their marketing line the individual would just stuff the cards in their shirt pocket. Most of the staff ended up writing on the cards that they were a Civil Engineering firm providing Land Development services.

Having a short, concise description of the services your company provides printed and distributed to your prospects is marketing. Be prepared to state what services your firm provides by creating a 10-second introduction and to use it as often as possible.

“Hello, my name is Fred Coaster and I provide Portland, Oregon with Land Development designs that develop our community with environmentally friendly, sustainable and economical growth. I’m a Civil Engineer.”

Remember to keep it simple but memorable.

### *Key 2: Personal Contact*

The best marketing is simply speaking to someone. You receive a lead on someone who may need your services through your contact list. You decide to contact this individual. In engineering this can be accomplished by using the phone, meetings, sending mailers, and emailing.

Phone Call – Your first contact maybe through a phone call. If the person you are calling has been referred to you by someone you know, then this is a *warm call*. If you are calling this person out of the blue then he is a *cold call*. Typically the warmer the call the more likely they will want to talk to you.

Meeting – You may decide to meet a prospect over lunch or coffee. A lot of meetings are held in coffee shops. It’s a relax environment and you are distracted by the operations of the business. In some cases it may be better to meet in their office to go over the details of your services.

Sending Mailers – Sometimes the best way to make contact is to simply send a personal letter, not a boiler plate, to someone you think really needs your services. The letter needs to be tailored to their needs. You may want to attach something like related articles, conference invitations, or newsletters. You will want to follow this letter with a phone call. Instead of a letter, you may want to introduce yourself by sending a postcard with your web-site, and later follow-up with a phone call.

Emails – Instead of paying for postage you may want to send an email. Many people prefer emails over phone calls and mailers, because they can open the message when they want and they can save the message in an electronic folder. But the disadvantage is that you don’t know if they received the email or if they even opened the message. And some businesses receive so many emails that may not even notice yours. If you do decide to send an email, make it personal by providing links to articles, e-zines, conferences, invitations to meetings, conferences, training programs, and websites that you think may be of interest to them.

### *Key 3: Networking*

Networking is the best way for an engineering company to market its services. Networking is nothing more then finding and communicating with your prospective clients. An effective networking event creates a pool of contacts that you can exploit to find new clients, make

referrals, and gather information. This can be accomplished by attending professional meetings, visiting their online communities, having lunch with existing and former clients, volunteering and serving on committees, swapping contacts, and giving referrals. By effectively networking you will find a number of new clients that are looking for someone like you. Start talking to anyone and everyone you know and ask if they need your services or if they know of someone who might need your services.

*Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today.*

Benjamin Franklin

#### *Key 4: Referrals*

This also works when a job you completed for one of your referrals did not go so well. By sending them several new jobs will help to smooth out old wounds and reestablish a good relationship.

Another way to gain new clients is by giving referrals. The clients of engineers in Land Development are constantly asking for referrals for a Grading Contractor, Underground Contractor, General Contractor, Architect, Landscape Architect, Geotechnical Engineer, Structural Engineer, Traffic Engineer, Surveyors, Realtors, Commercial Bankers, Lawyers, and the list goes on. The same is true for all other fields of engineering. If you have a list of referrals for each category for your clients, and each of your referrals list you as one of their Civil Engineer referrals, the opportunity of new clients contacting you is greatly increased without spending a dime on advertising.

#### *Key 5: Website*

We are now in the internet age, and most clients will use the internet to research your company. Websites are your company's online marketing brochure. There are two types of web-sites for professional services; the online brochure and lead generator. The online brochure model describes your company; who are the principles, the services the company provides, significant projects the company has completed, client list, and contact information.

The majority of websites used by engineering companies is basically an online company brochure. They typically state who they are, their contact information, the projects they have completed, list of clients, contact information, and the services they provide. Anyone searching the internet for an engineering company in their local area will visit the site, look around and either contact them or move on. The flaw with these sites is that there is no reason for the visitor to return.

A site that can build credibility with the client is a site that also has information that the visitor can use. This type of website is a lead generator. Information on the site can be

in the form of articles, newsletter (e-zines), blogs, and freebies. You also want to gather information on your visitors. Ask them to sign-up to receive your newsletters. You may want to give freebies for just signing-up. You want your visitor to see your site as a resource.

The online lead generator web-site will need much more content than a standard company brochure website. The information gathered on the website acts as a resource for the reader. Information web-sites that are updated periodically are also more useful to your viewers. In addition, content rich sites tend to have a higher ranking on search engines.

Viewers, visiting your website for the first time, are known as cold prospects and usually do not buy anything. This is why you want to offer something free on the website like a newsletter or an e-book. This allows you to obtain their e-mail, and they will be waiting for the material. When the individual returns to the website they become a little warmer, and they are more interested in your articles and blogs and other newsletters. Each time they return they become warmer, and eventually they will contact you for services or purchase products. There are several very good books on how to create an informative website. This is a simple way of filling the pipeline and creating an additional income.

Some of the items that can be added to the informative website are:

- News articles about Engineering and the related fields
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Civil Engineering
- Links to other Resources; such as Government Offices, Professional Organizations, other Engineering Companies, and Architects
- How-To Guides for Processing Projects through Government Offices
- Local Trade Shows and contact information

Your site will also be reviewed by search engines. The higher your website ranking on a search the more likely someone will click to visit your site. In fact, if you are not on the first three pages of a search result they will not find you.

Since most engineering companies actually do not have a web presence, to appear on the front few pages of a web search for engineering is not really all that difficult. Most of the engineering websites are poorly constructed and out of date.

An easy marketing tool is a good company web-site. If you are uneasy with building and maintaining your site, it might be better to hire someone to sit-up your site. A professional prepared website will keep visitors coming back to your site.

There are certain things you can do to improve your sites ranking on a web search. First, make sure to use key words like your community name, type of engineering,

“engineering,” and “engineer.” Search engines will also increase your ranking depending on the number of links to your website, updating your site with new content regularly, and the number of visitors. There is really no reason to pay anyone or company to reach the top rankings.

### *Key 6: Public Speaking*

Another important marketing strategy is public speaking, which does not always mean having to speak in front of a crowd. Hosting meetings, serving on panels, making presentations, speaking on the internet, and giving classes and seminars are all speaking venues. At a speaking event the audience has an impression that speaker is an authority on the subject; an expert. If you want to see the difference, attend a conference as only as an attendee - you are just a face in the crowd. You may make acquaintances with several individuals that you may or may not see again. If you work the crowd well, a few more may enter your pool of contacts which may lead to clients or information on possible clients. But now imagine yourself as a speaker at the conference. Everyone who attends your sessions is interested in your subject matter. Many may actually need your expertise in solving their particular situation or they may know of others who could not attend the conference but need your service. The individuals attending your presentation recognize you as an expert chosen by the conference committee to speak on an important subject. If you plan the conference well, your chance of obtaining referrals and future clients is greatly improved.

### *Key 7: Writing*

Authors are also seen as experts in their field. Writing and publicity adds credibility and visibility. This strategy includes writing articles or tips, reprinting previously written articles, writing a column, publishing a blog, and writing pamphlets, guides, manuals and books. Writing a 1500 word article is real not that difficult. Trade magazines are always looking for articles. In addition, webmasters, newsletter editors, local magazines and newspapers editors are always looking for articles. Booklets and guides that explain the design process can be given to prospective clients. In addition, in today’s world of the internet most people search peoples name to see what comes up. If your name results in a list of articles, pamphlets, and books, they will instantly know that you are a true expert in your field. When you walk into their office to give a presentation you will instant credibility.

### *Key 8: News Releases*

An easy way to get your company name in the media is by submitting News Release. They also call these Press Releases, but in reality you are telling the media news about your company. There is a lot of credibility to be gained if you are being quoted by the media, having stories written about you, and being interviewed on broadcast media. The idea is to get your clients to hear or read your name in the media. When they see your name and company popping-up monthly in articles, they will think of you when they need your service.

News (Press) Releases can be about anything. The best trick is to pick a topic about an event, news, information, or a story that is unique and doesn't happen every day. You may want to write about the upcoming E-Week and how engineers have benefited society. You may want to write about how engineers have assisted earthquake victims in Haiti and Chile. You may want to write about a new technology and how it will save home owners thousands of dollars. If you want to look at examples of Press Release take a look at the following link <http://www.prweb.com/pr/release-example/index.html>

### *Key 9: Promotions*

Even if you hold an event in your conference room, promotional events can be extremely expensive to sit-up and follow through. Make sure you have a good idea how much you stand to make versus the expense of the event. If you are not careful this single strategy can cause you to loose money. But if you are sure that you can make it work then there are several tactics you can follow.

Training seminars / Workshops – These can be done in a conference room at your office, another company's office, hotel, or convention center. The individuals attending these seminars are interested in the services you perform. You may put on a seminar on *How to Process a Success Zoning Applications*. Everyone who is attending is potential client, and they see you as an expert that can help them. Other professions like lawyers, accountants, and financial advisors using the tactic quite often.

Webinars – The promotions are the same thing as seminars and workshops except they are performed o the internet. Their main advantage is that they are much cheaper to for the event holder and the attendees, because no one has travel to the event site.

Trade Shows – These events can be very expensive, especially if they are out of town. There are some companies that do all of their marketing through trade shows. Engineering companies generally perform their work in the states that they hold a license. Sitting-up a display at trade show outside of these states may not provide the necessary results. Try to pick trade shows that will have a large audience and is searching for your services. You want to draw the attention of as many attendees as possible, obtain their contact information, and after the show follow-up with emails, phone, calls, and marketing kits.

Open House – This event works best for large companies that can afford a huge expense for catering service, entertainment, and the disruption in work performance.

Sponsorship – This is a relative inexpensive promotion compared to the other tactics. Sponsorship gets your name announced to the audience, printed in the event publications and website. Again the same is true for sponsoring charities, non-profits, little league sports, and other community groups. Sponsorship can be a good way to attract people with similar interest.

### *Key 10: Advertisement*

There are some relatively easy ways to advertise your engineering company; the internet, newsletters, trade magazines, and the phone book. Most advertising media is not worth the money for an engineering company.

Internet – On the internet you could pay a service to drive traffic to your site; pay-per-click is the most common. A well design engineering company web-site will attract plenty of traffic. A pay-per-click service is not necessary. Another method is to pay a website to place your advertisement on their site. But why would an engineering company want to do that? Make sure that your engineering company listed in their directories along with your website address. Most sites will include your business in the directory for free. Let your website be your advertisement.

Newsletters – There are a number of newsletters out there that are logical places for an engineering company advertisement and most will accept advertisements for a price. But many of these advertisements are nothing more than vanity, making a statement to other engineering companies that they are there. Does anyone really read these advertisements and say I have to contact these guys. Perhaps some advertisements do generate leads, but the better way to draw a potential client's eye is by having an article in that same publication.

Trade Magazines – Another tactic is to advertise in a trade magazine. Make sure to advertise in a magazine that your targeted audience reads. Trade magazines generally have a larger reader base than newsletters. One of the advantages of trade magazines is that they are kept and left in the waiting room for visitors to read. If your visitors are like most, they glance through the pictures, read some of the articles, and then move on the next magazine. Most do not stop and read the advertisements. If you have the time, try to get your article in the magazine.

Phone Book – Probably the least effective place for advertisement is the phone book. Phone book advertisements are expensive, and can not be revised until the next printing of the book. Most phone book companies will print your engineering company name; address; phone number; and possibly your website address for free. The phone companies will also offer you an opportunity to advertising in their book. These advertisements are usually very expensive and the returns are usually very low if any. The only recommended advertisement is to have your website address printed. If you have extra money for marketing and you have exhausted the other inexpensive marketing strategies, then go ahead and place an advertisement in the phone book.

ENGINEERING MARKETING STRATEGIES, PART 1

Which of these strategies do think you can implement in your Marketing Plan? Why?

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## About the Author

Joe Alvin Haun, PE, MSE

Joe Haun is a highly experienced Civil Engineer, author, public speaker, and business advisor who have worked in the engineering profession since 1983.

Mr. Haun's early career was in the United States Air Force as an Engineer Assistant. A Desert Storm veteran he has a unique perspective of the Middle East.

Mr. Haun graduated from the University of Las Vegas, Nevada in 1994 with a BS degree in Civil Engineering and in 1995 with a MSE in Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Mr. Haun worked with several engineering firms in the Las Vegas valley until February 2005 when open his own engineering company HAUNTEC, which has grown to a designing multi-million dollar projects in Nevada and Utah and in the countries of Iraq and Costa Rica. Review his growing company's website at [www.haunteceng.com](http://www.haunteceng.com) to see the firm's latest capabilities.

Mr. Haun has published articles in engineering magazines and has given speeches on water resources, and is currently working on several articles on permeable pavements.

In 2009, Mr. Haun started Engineering Business Seminars and Publications to. His first publication is the "Engineering Business Success." He has created many self-study engineering business seminars for Professional Development Hours credits. Visit the web-site [www.engineeringbusinesspubs.com](http://www.engineeringbusinesspubs.com) to review the latest seminars and publications.

## Recommended Reading List

Engineers are constantly learning about new techniques, products and design methods. Improving your skills as a business leader is no different. Reading books is one of the best ways to improve your skills. Below is a list of books we recommend.

- *Engineering Business Success* by Joe A Haun (book)
  - *Engineering Business Plan* by Joe A Haun (seminar)
  - *Engineering Marketing Strategies* by Joe A Haun (seminar)
  - *Engineering Operations Strategies* by Joe A Haun (seminar)
  - *Engineering Financial Strategies* by Joe A Haun (seminar)
  - *Engineering Proposal Strategies* by Joe A Haun (seminar)
  - *Engineering Joint Venture Strategies* by Joe A Haun (seminar)
  - *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Steven Covey
  - *First Things First* by Steven Covey
  - *Awaken the Giant Within* by Anthony Robbins
  - *Unlimited Power* by Anthony Robbins
  - *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael E. Gerber
  - *Get Clients Now* by C. J. Hayden
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