

Book Review: *The Architecture of Image* by Scott D. Butcher, FSMPS, CPSM

If there is one item in the marketing toolkit that is most greatly misunderstood by professional services firms, and thus overlooked, it is most likely branding. Somewhere along the way, professionals began correlating branding and brands with corporate identity materials like logos and letterhead. In fairness, the same people probably thought that the Nike brand was a “swoosh” and the tagline “Just Do It.” Or that the McDonald’s brand was golden arches and a clown. And while a corporate or institutional brand can be visualized or captured in a slogan, those are not the brand itself.

In his latest book, *The Architecture of Image*, Craig Park, FSMPS, Assoc. AIA, tackles this common misperception in the introduction: “For the professional services firm, your brand is feeling. Your brand is impression. Your brand is perception. Your brand is a reflection—of your culture, how you collaborate, and how you communicate.”

He goes on to state that your brand is not a logo, color, tagline, brochure or website—even though far too many people think that is exactly what a brand is.

But why is brand and branding so important? According to Park, “If you do not have a known and recognizable brand, I predict your firm won’t be around in another decade.” That’s how significant professional services branding is to him.

The beginning of the book hooked me because I’ve personally been frustrated by the lack of understanding of brand in this industry. And the reality is that every firm has a brand, whether they’ve attempted to carefully craft it or not. Brand is perception. It is the expectation of what it is like to do business with you and your firm. It is, as noted by several interviewees in the book, personified by your firm’s culture.

But is that the brand you really want?

Whether you are new to the branding process, or looking to more formally develop your brand, *The Architecture of Image* is a worthwhile read. Craig Park believes in the power of three, and his nine-chapter book is divided into three parts, each with three chapters that walk one through the process of creating, refining, and leveraging brands.

Much of the book relies on insightful interviews from industry leaders representing firms like MulvannyG2 Architecture, Gilbane Building Company, HGA, RATIO Architects, and PSI, among others. Their quotes peppered throughout the book, coupled with case studies to conclude each chapter, help bring the somewhat enigmatic concept of branding to life and demonstrate its vital relevance to the A/E/C industry.

The 200-page book is very broad in scope, addressing everything from brand maturity, to branding implications of merger and acquisition, to incorporation of brand in collateral materials, to metrics for tracking brand effectiveness.

The author’s many years of experience in this industry are evident in the anecdotes he shares as well as the deep knowledge base on which he based the book. There are a few side trips in the narrative, but they always provide value to the reader.

One that I particularly enjoyed was his philosophy on assigning odds of winning to the proposals and leads your firm is chasing. After dispatching with the all-too-common “50/50 chance” or “four contenders, 25% chance of winning,” Park outlines his system for scoring probabilities of 10% through 95%. It’s one of those great nuggets of wisdom that I’ll definitely share with my colleagues—especially the 50/50 and 1 in 4 offenders!

The great accomplishment of this book is that Craig Park is providing new, relevant content to an increasingly cluttered field of advice for professional services marketing. I’ve read too many books in recent years that were self-published, printed book or ebook, and too basic to ever have been picked up by a legitimate publisher. Park is breaking new ground here, providing an important service and bushels of useful advice to A/E/C firms.

While this book is certainly recommended for marketers and business developers, the real value of this book will be achieved when CEOs, COOs, presidents, principals, HR directors, and project managers read it and understand the importance of branding professional services firms. Until all employees “live” a company’s brand, it can never be fully realized.

And once you read *The Architecture of Image*, you’ll understand that too. ●



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