What is the overall impression of the estimate/proposal/presentation?

interest, but also delivers the insights needed to help win. Ask about the following:

1. Is the estimate/proposal/presentation demonstrating that the firm has the time to create a cost advantage. Allocate time to dig into major cost components to convert to knowledge. By leveraging this knowledge, a firm can create bid strategies that are evidence-driven rather than mere guesswork.

2. Did the estimate/proposal/presentation demonstrate an interest in the project?
   - Did the estimate/proposal/presentation hit your hot buttons?
   - Was the approach unique?

3. How can we be of better service for you moving forward (intentionally vague)?

4. Then, if there is anything unique, add project specific questions.

Finding pennies starts with project selection. By developing selection criteria that quickly serves to prioritize project opportunities, estimators can reduce the amount of time wasted on projects that have no realistic chance for the firm to successfully bid or execute. Staffing effective bid teams also helps you find pennies. Each department needs a chief estimator that spends far more time leading and managing than estimating.

In addition, the project team should have a good mix of skills and experience, as well as a designated “project manager.” Junior, less skilled estimators can then have an opportunity to contribute accordingly while learning from the more experienced colleagues. Get the team into a meeting where it can brainstorm potential alternatives and approaches that will deliver the project the customer wants for a price that works for everyone. However, never bid below cost.

Establishing a Win Strategy

Customers are the ultimate decision makers. They determine who wins and who loses. So why do contractors build their get-work approach preferences? Instead, a contractor should build systems around delivering what the customer wants, in the way he or she wants it. It is a shortcut to success.

Use the team’s time and effort to find ways to build smarter and more “wants and expects” for reasonable costs. Figure out how to build on the company’s core competencies and real costs to deliver a project that sets the firm apart from the competition. This is a win strategy. Win strategies marry the customer’s hot buttons and requirements with a firm’s capability, approach and pricing to create an advantage for the firm on the project. Can this be done on every job? Probably not. But what if a company could win 5 or 10 percent more of the right projects?

Win strategies change the competitive landscape. Win strategies give the customer something, in addition to a competitive price, that is profitable and increase the value derived from estimating.

In short, using process mapping, as well as identifying and standardizing best practices will lead to improved performance.

It is not wise to spend time and money chasing jobs that the firm has no chance of winning or cannot perform effectively. Link business development, marketing, and operations with estimating to make sure that the firm is targeting the right work, increasing the hit rate, and creating a reason to be chosen.

Be proactive in determining who and what to chase. It will take time to create an unfair advantage on a project. Create a competitive advantage before estimating the project. If an advantage cannot be created, do not estimate it. Move on to another project where the firm has a chance to build a compelling approach that will get the customer’s attention.

Creating a Cost Advantage

If the estimators are busy pushing out more and more estimates, they will not have the time to create a cost advantage. Allocate time to dig into major cost components to find an advantage. Identify three to five top cost items on the project and see if one or two of these key cost drivers can be pushed down a bit. If they are part of a subcontractor’s scope, reach out to trusted subcontractor allies for innovative approaches. As an example, time is always money. Are there ways to save a subcontractor time through careful phasing and management? If leverage cannot be found in these areas, make the choice not to compete.

In addition, use business development and market intelligence to uncover the firm’s core competencies and real costs to deliver a project that sets the “wants and expects” for reasonable costs. Figure out how to build on the employee’s unspoken hot buttons. Ask good questions. Capture market insights and knowledge. Since most projects are won or lost based on 1 or 2 percent of the cost, reinventing the get-work function is all about “finding pennies.” Incremental improvement in estimating and business development can help land more work that is profitable and increase the value derived from estimating.

Many contractors are sitting on a gold mine of information without knowing it. Bid files, completed cost data, bid tabulations – all of these are data that, through analysis, can be converted to knowledge. By leveraging this knowledge, a firm can create bid strategies that are evidence-driven rather than mere guesswork.

In addition, bid postmortems can provide insight into opportunities to improve estimating. Asking the customer about a submitted project not only demonstrates interest, but also delivers the insights needed to help win. Ask about the following:

1. What is the overall impression of the estimate/proposal/presentation?
   - What was done well?
   - Where can improvements be made?
   - What did you like best?

2. Did the estimate/proposal/presentation hit your hot buttons?
   - Did the estimate/proposal/presentation demonstrate an interest in the project?
   - What was the approach unique?

3. How can we be of better service for you moving forward (intentionally vague)?

4. Then, if there is anything unique, add project specific questions.

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Win strategies change the competitive landscape. Win strategies give the customer something, in addition to a competitive price, on which to evaluate contractors. It should not be a fair fight with competitors; what is needed is an unfair advantage. If an advantage cannot be created, the only option is cutting the price to win the work, and that is a poor long-term strategy.
New Advisory Board Member

When Melville disbanded in the mid 1990s, Tureff went to work for Walden Books, becoming Director of Construction after a few years. When Walden Books merged with Borders, he became Director of Construction, Store Planning, and Facilities, a position he held for 14 years. After Borders shut its doors, he worked as Director of Construction for Hancock Fabrics, developing their roll out construction and facilities program. In late 2010, he went to Ulta Beauty as Director of Construction, overseeing a very aggressive new store growth program.

Tureff’s commitment to the RCA goes back to its inception. In 1990, RCA Founder David Weekes approached him at a conference, asking whether he would be supportive of a national group of contractors that would be a reference for retailers to create their bid lists. Tureff was supportive of the concept and worked with Weekes and other early Board members to establish the RCA.

Larry Tureff has been in the retail construction industry for 31 years. He has a degree in Architecture, but found it more interesting to be in the field and resolving onsite issues. His first position in Construction Management was at Rite Aid Corp., building Circus World Toy Stores. Rite Aid sold the chain to Melville Corporation, which provided construction management for a variety of chains, and was building about 400 stores a year: from 600 sq. ft. stores for This End Up to 40,000 sq. ft. stores for Linens & Things. At Melville, Tureff gained a wide range of experience in a very short time; he averaged 50 projects a year over a 6-year period.

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RCA's Advisory Board is comprised of representatives from retail markets including specialty, big box, department stores, developers, architecture/engineer, and restaurant retailers. Advisory Board members are appointed by the President and serve three year terms. During that time, they actively assist the RCA Board of Directors in identifying key industry issues and formulating policies and programs designed to positively impact those issues.

Meet RCA’s newest Advisory Board member.

Larry Tureff has been in the retail construction industry for 31 years. He has a degree in Architecture, but found it more interesting to be in the field and resolving onsite issues.

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President’s Message
Mike Wolff, President, Timberwolff Construction, Inc.

In my last column, I mentioned a new program, the Military Service Initiative, which was in the exploratory stage. In the short time since our last newsletter, our committee has made significant progress and I’m pleased to share that the program has now officially launched!

RCA’s Military Service Initiative was created to promote opportunities for employment for transitioning service members. RCA members are seeking construction superintendents, and in many cases, the skill sets of service members are in line with those of a superintendent. With some specific construction management training, the skill sets can be transitioned and service members can embark on a new and exciting career in retail construction.

The process for establishing our program started right after SPECS in March, when we were connected with Colonel Miguel Howe, USA, Ret., the Director of the Military Service Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute. Col. Howe oversees a program that unites the efforts of non-profits, businesses, universities, individual citizens, and communities to empower veterans to continue to serve as national assets after they take off the uniform. The committee presented Col. Howe with a general job description of a construction superintendent. He has been generous with his time and guidance on how to position these opportunities for veterans and potential partnership organizations for us.

The committee reached out to a few organizations to learn how RCA could partner with them and be an active resource for transitioning service members. We found the most success with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Hiring Our Heroes, which is hosting three Jobs Summits this fall, at Camp Pendleton (CA), Joint Base Lewis-McChord (WA), and Pittsburgh (PA). RCA will have a table at the career fair portion of each Summit. We have developed generic superintendent application, and will collect and distribute completed applications to members that indicate they want to receive them. As of this writing, we are a few days away from the first Summit, and I am excited to be the RCA representative there.

I would like to thank and recognize the committee members who have worked hard to make this program a reality. They are dedicated to providing opportunities for service members who are transitioning into civilian life. Committee chair Steve Bachman (Retail Construction Services, Inc.) has traveled at his own expense for meetings with potential partners. Committee members Mike Glaser (Sterling Jewelers Inc.), Carol Montoya (RCA’s Executive Director) have used their connections to explore opportunities and drafted and reviewed program materials.

I look forward to reporting on our program successes. Watch this newsletter, our email bulletin, and retailcontractors.org for the latest progress updates.

Mike — mike@timberwolff.com

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<td>Crane W.</td>
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<td>TDS Construction, Inc.</td>
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<td>Thomas-Grace Construction, Inc.</td>
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<td>Timberwolf Construction, Inc.</td>
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<td>Tom R. Construction Co., Inc.</td>
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<td>Trainer Commercial Construction, Inc.</td>
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<td>Triad Retail Construction</td>
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<td>Twin Tower Corporation</td>
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<td>Warwick Construction, Inc.</td>
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<td>Weiswood Contractors, Inc.</td>
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<td>Wilber Construction, Inc.</td>
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<td>Winkle Construction, Inc.</td>
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<td>Wolverine Building Group</td>
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<td>Woods Construction, Inc.</td>
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RCA members must meet and maintain a series of qualifications and are approved by the Board of Directors for membership. They have been in the retail construction business as general contractors for at least five years; agree to comply with the Association’s Code of Ethics and Bylaws; are properly insured and bonded; are licensed in the states in which they do business; and have submitted letters of recommendation.
Visit retailcontractors.org

View the profile of each RCA member company. Click on “Find a Contractor” from the home page to search the member list. Each profile includes relevant information, including the RCA programs in which the member participates. Look for these icons!

Please notify the RCA Office (800-847-5085 or info@retailcontractors.org) of any changes to your contact information.

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RCA Scholarships Recognize Future Industry Leaders

In its 16th year, RCA's scholarship program awarded $17,250 in scholarships to construction management students at universities across the United States. RCA awarded scholarships to the following students, all of whom are enrolled in qualified construction programs:

- **John Shreve**, Auburn University
- **Clinton Dowell**, Bowling Green State University
- **Jasmine Lomax**, California State Polytechnic University (SLO)
- **Coby Corliss**, Colorado State University
- **Barry Kooistra**, Ferris State University
- **Brian Witt**, Kansas State University
- **Colton Wilkerson-Theil**, Minnesota State University Mankato (Christian Elder Memorial Scholarship)
- **Shawn Falleur**, Northern Arizona University
- **Jessica Blankenship**, University of Oklahoma
- **Bradley N. Dewey**, Pratt Institute
- **Tim Criste**, Purdue University
- **Joshua W. Snarski**, Roger Williams University
- **Jon YI**, Texas A&M
- **Ryan Pullin**, University of Houston (Intern Scholarship Winner)
- **Sergio Ortega-Trujano**, University of Washington
- **Valerie Zapata**, Wentworth Institute of Technology

A scholarship was also awarded at Clemson University.

Northern Arizona’s recipient, **Shawn Falleur**, described his path to a career in construction management: “I chose the profession of construction management after 10 years in the trade of commercial construction. I started out as a union drywall member in 2001, specializing in carpentry in California, Nevada, and Arizona. I moved to Flagstaff in 2009, where I continued working hands-on construction for a local general contractor who showed me multiple layers in regards to the industry and how it works. It was there that I realized that the construction industry was who I am and where I needed to be. It was also there that I discovered the next move for would be to get in school and develop my industry skills with a degree in construction management.”

In 2008, RCA established the Christian Elder Memorial Scholarship. Christian Elder, who died in 2007 at the age of 38, was a project manager with Elder-Jones, Inc., a charter member of the RCA. The scholarship is awarded to a student at Minnesota State University Mankato. This year’s recipient was **Colton Wilkerson-Theil**, a junior majoring in Construction Management.

Additionally, an Internship Scholarship was awarded to **Ryan Pullin**, a Construction Management major student at the University of Houston. Pullin interned at Triad Retail Construction, Inc.

“With his current level of construction knowledge, coupled with his enthusiasm leadership, and construction management ability, Ryan is already demonstrating he has what it takes to become a first rate project manager,” wrote Jay Dorsey, on his nomination for Pullin.

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To make a contribution to the RCA Scholarship Fund, visit retailcontractors.org and click on Programs, then Scholarship Program.

In the past year, the Scholarship Committee has evaluated the program and made recommendations to the Board for some changes. Starting this fall, RCA will issue a nationwide call for scholarship applications, expanding the reach of the program to more schools, and drawing in what will be the top candidates from across the nation. In addition to the Internship Scholarship and Christian Elder Memorial Scholarship, 11 scholarships of $1,500 will be awarded to students studying in construction management and related programs. Stay tuned for more details!

The RCA Scholarship Fund depends on the support of generous contributions from our members. Many thanks to the RCA member companies who made a donation to the Scholarship Fund in FY14 (May 2013-April 2014):

- **$1,500**
  - Pinnacle Commercial Development, Inc.
  - Rectenwald Brothers Construction, Inc.
  - Tom Rectenwald Construction, Inc.

- **$1,000**
  - Elder-Jones, Inc.
  - Scheiner Commercial Group, Inc.
  - Westwood Contractors, Inc.

- **$750**
  - Healy Construction Services, Inc.

- **$500**
  - Crane Construction Company
  - Elan General Contracting
  - Fred Olevi Construction Company
  - Marco Contractors, Inc.
  - Royal Seal Construction, Inc.
  - Scheiner Commercial Group, Inc.
  - Schimenti Construction Company
  - Triad Retail Construction Inc.

- **Up to $499**
  - Commonwealth Building, Inc.
  - Crane Construction Company
  - Eckinger Construction Company
  - Sullivan Construction Company
  - Trainor Commercial Construction, Inc.

“I am honored to be receiving the Retail Contractors Association Scholarship. Your contribution will allow me to work less during my last semester of school so that I may focus on my studies.”

- Coby Corkle, Colorado State University

To make a contribution to the RCA Scholarship Fund, visit retailcontractors.org and click on Programs, then Scholarship Program.

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for these upcoming events. Visit retailcontractors.org for event details.

**Wednesday, December 3, 2014**
RCA Members Only & Retailers Reception
JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort, Phoenix, AZ

**Thursday, December 4, 2014**
Commercial Construction & Renovation People, sponsored by RCA
Location TBA; Scottsdale, AZ

**Friday, March 13-Sunday, March 15, 2015**
RCA’s 25th Annual Conference
Venetian/Palazzo, Las Vegas, NV
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