

## GIBO GROEP FINALIZES GROUNDBREAKING MERGER

It's official! **Gibo Groep Accountants en Adviseurs B.V.** (Arnhem) has joined forces with Dutch accounting firm **Flynth adviseurs en accountants BV/Flynth Special Services**. As a result of this merger, the firm is now the largest national organization of accountancy and consultancy services, with €186 million in turnover, 80 offices, 2,300 employees, and approximately 35,000 clients.

On Tuesday, March 29, the management of both organizations signed the necessary documents, making the merger effective as of January 1. Although Gibo Groep has absorbed its new counterpart, the now-unified firm will change its name to Flynth in the near future.

Through this merger, the firm will be able to improve upon the many

services it offers to its clients. It now provides nationwide coverage, while maintaining its focus on the individual. Clients will all have their own contact person.

It is because of this specialized service that GIBO Groep and Flynth were voted number one in a client attitude survey (in the accountancy and consultancy sectors) by the readers of a leading Dutch business magazine in 2009 and 2010, respectively.



**Gibo Groep has officially announced its merger, making it the largest accounting firm in The Netherlands.**

## 2011 SOUTH AFRICAN MEETING (Continued)

*Continued from page 3*

hope went some way to bridging the gap between our South African member firms and the rest of the region. We fully appreciate South Africa is geographically a long way from most of our firms in Europe, but Africa is indeed a vital, significant, and growing continent, and we hope BKR can grow, too, in this region. We look forward to many more meetings like this.

To better track referrals, please let the Executive Office know if you have sent or received a referral to or from another BKR member, the type of client, and the engagement fee.

## PLEASURE AND PAIN: MARKETING AND SALES IN THE NEW ECONOMY

By Wendy Nemitz (Ingenuity Marketing Group)

Last year, BKR Alliance Partner Ingenuity Marketing spoke to professionals in every region of the country and in Europe. We asked professionals about their responses to the recession. Most of their stories were variants on at least one of three themes.

### **Commodity Price Pressure**

With many more responders to every RFP, the bidding war is intense. Winners are often bidding so low that others wonder how the work can get done.

Even your great clients are asking for price concessions, not only because they are

cutting costs but because your competitors are promising lower prices than yours.

Prospects are eyeing every dollar decision and making sure they shop around. It is much harder to make new sales.

### **Stagnant Growth**

Flat is the new up. Firms that formerly grew upwards of 10 percent per year are scratching to grow 2 percent. Firms that had more modest growth during the boom are losing market share.

Firms that put in aggressive sales systems, have strong niche marketing, and know

their competitive differentiation are holding their own. Those that depended on referrals and word-of-mouth are finding it really tough out there as the low hanging fruit dries up.

Competitors are calling your best clients and offering some very aggressive pricing, especially on specific services like audits.

### **Die Here?**

With growth so hard to achieve, senior partners are wondering how their buy-outs will be funded.

Firms that depend on a few senior rain-

*Continued on page 6*

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### SUBMISSIONS

BKR welcomes news and articles from member firms, committees, and task forces, which can be submitted via e-mail, fax, or mail to BKR's Executive Office.

# NICHE NEWS

*All Firms Should Have Several Partners Participating in BKR's Practice Groups!*

All members are invited to join any practice group! The more participation, the more information and best practices that can be shared among members. E-mail the Executive Office today to put your name on the practice group e-mail list!

### Firm Administrators

On February 23, Guest Speaker David Bergstein, director of Strategic Relationships at CCH, gave an update on CCH initiatives and provided the group with a list of CCH contacts who can provide technical support with CCH's software. In addition, he provided information and URLs for useful CCH websites. Members also discussed confidentiality agreements and credit card merchants and rates. The group's next telemeeting will be held on June 1.

### Human Resources

On March 9, Tim Godzich, a representative from Liazon Benefits Solutions, provided an overview of Liazon's Bright Choices Benefits Exchange, an online benefits store focusing on consumer choices for health and other benefits. Members also discussed internship and on-boarding programs as well as performance evaluations. The group's next telemeeting will be held on June 29.

### Leading Edge Technology

The Leading Edge Technology Practice Group held a telemeeting on March 2. Members discussed Skype video conferencing, tablets, Windows 7 Implementation, Verizon's 4G MiFi wireless router, Windows 7 user access

control, GoSystems and Engagement CS, GoFileRoom's new portal, ProSystem Scan, electronic newsletters, and ProSystem Tax. The next Leading Edge Technology Practice Group Telemeeting is scheduled for June 6.

## 2011 BIG MEETING (Continued)

*Continued from page 2*

matter of our region's Statistical Analysis Survey.

After a delicious finger buffet courtesy of Blick Rothenberg, the afternoon continued with each member firm presenting a review of the past 12 months, resulting in further open discussions.

The day was deemed to have been of great value to all, providing the opportunity to discuss experiences amongst practitioners and how they were coping in recent times as the economy tries to recover. Practice development ideas, including staffing issues, current service offerings, and marketing initiatives proved to be most useful.

Delegates from the BIG firms walked away with a number of interesting thoughts to pursue for their individual practices. Thanks again to Bob Rothenberg for his firm's hospitality and for the continuous refreshments throughout the day.

## About BKR's Practice Groups:

**Firms that offer (or are developing) specialty services have formed groups to share resources and expertise.**

**Groups hold quarterly telemeetings and/or annual meetings, and develop seminars, brochures, and more.**

**For more information, including meeting summaries, supporting documents, and contact information, visit [www.BKR.com](http://www.BKR.com) > Member Services > Practice Groups/Committees.**

# PLEASURE AND PAIN: MARKETING AND SALES IN THE NEW ECONOMY (Continued)

*Continued from page 4*

makers to bring in new work are taking a serious look at the younger generation and wondering where the rainmakers are.

Mergers are happening within middle-size firms as small groups of professionals split off to form boutique firms and the rest of the firm merges – the original succession plan scrapped.

\* \* \* \*

## **What Sells Now**

As we have worked through this recession at Ingenuity, we learned that what worked well in 2005 does not cut it anymore. We felt the pain of scaling back, but we also invested in sales training boot camp ([www.slatterlysales.com](http://www.slatterlysales.com)) and hired a Director of Growth. We learned a common language and processes that moved us from trying to sell pleasure to selling pain.

## **Pleasure**

What worked in the boom was to sell pleasure: outstanding service, consistent teams, beautiful offices and a pretty website, a fun team with office parties featured on FaceBook, giving back to the community, etc.

Selling pleasure takes the form of lunches, small gifts, and information about your company with gentle persistence. You can talk no more than 50 percent of the time during this type of sales conversation. It is about building rapport with the client, but also about you and your services, and the happiness that the client will experience with you. It is a conversation that requires a medium level of skill.

In marketing, pleasure looks like “happy client” testimonials, an upscale-looking brand and key messages focusing on the talents and service ethic of your people. You can use a lot of advertising because the message is more you-focused. You need lots of sales support materials to hand out at trade shows. You respond to most RFPs that look good because competition is low and you land a fair number

of them.

## **Pain**

What works better in a recession is to sell pain. You have to be able to deeply dig into your clients’ or prospects’ psyches and help them identify what REALLY keeps them up at

night, their background fears, and challenges in this economy. You have to make it safe for them to tell you everything, including how much it might be costing them to keep their current provider. You have to help them feel unsafe with keeping their pain, but safe in  
*Continued on page 7*

## CHAIRMAN’S LETTER (Continued)

*Continued from page 1*

2011 South African Meeting at Blaauwklippen Estate in Stellenbosch on March 8 and 9, and the subregional BIG group held their annual meeting at the offices of **Blick Rothenberg Chartered Accountants** (London) on March 18, both with great success. See the articles on pages 2-5 for more details about each.

I am looking forward to the upcoming EMEA Regional Meeting in Barcelona from May 7-9 and the Americas Regional Meeting in Québec City from May 20-24. I hope that each member firm is sending at least one representative to their respective region’s meeting.

Also, it is never too early to begin making plans for this year’s flagship event, the 2011 Annual Worldwide Meeting, to be held in Sydney from November 5-8. The agenda will include the international results and conclusions of the security survey we co-sponsored with MWR InfoSecurity, as well as a variety of timely technical and management topics. Visit [www.bkr.com](http://www.bkr.com) for more information about all

upcoming meetings.

As my first year as chairman draws to a close, I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to BKR members around the world for their hard work and continued support of our organization. With your help, I believe BKR will remain ahead of the curve and maintain the same level of quality service it has provided for more than 20 years now. I am honored to be part of such an extraordinary association, and I look forward to the enduring success of BKR, as well as all of our members firms, for many years to come.

As always, should you have suggestions for improvements in our service to members and/or how we can add even more value to your membership, I would be happy to hear from you.

**Regards,**



**Don Timmins**

## REMINDER!

Submissions for the July/August 2011 issue of the  
BKR International Worldwide Bulletin are due  
by Monday, June 6, 2011.

# PLEASURE AND PAIN: MARKETING AND SALES IN THE NEW ECONOMY

(Continued)

*Continued from page 6*

handing it over to you. It is a conversation that requires a high level of skill.

In sales, getting at pain takes the form of questions. You have to create intelligent questions that will allow your prospects to think through their issues and fears and then share them with you. If you thought keeping your mouth shut was hard before, pain selling means that you talk for about 10 percent of the conversation, much less than you could when selling pleasure! It is a complete overhaul of most sales systems. The questions have to be non-threatening, but help people open up. If you give them pain statements, i.e., "You must have low sales due to the recession," you can easily make people feel defensive, which means you do not get the sale.

Marketing also takes a shift in a pain economy. Instead of focusing on how nice your people are or their outside interests, it is time to differentiate your firm for being the "best place to turn to" for specific needs. You do this through expertise and niche marketing.

Professional service marketing has always been different from other marketing because you are selling what's in your head and who you are. In a pain sales process, you want to be visible to the markets you serve – a familiar provider – but also credible. Nothing says you know what you are talking about more than authoring an article or being featured in the media about your subject of expertise. This kind of public relations lives on beyond a project press release or firm news because your articles show up on Google and reinforce your knowledge and expert status.

Speaking is another classic way to build your status as an expert. Make sure all your speaking engagements are mentioned somewhere on the web. If your prospect is looking for a new employment attorney and finds that you have authored 12 articles and given six speeches in this area, your credibility meter rises exponentially. It shows that you are in demand and trusted to provide the right infor-

mation.

Virtually all prospects now spend some time looking up their next vendors on Google. You cannot afford a dusty website! All those articles and speaking engagements should be featured on your site as well as strong expert-based bios and excellent practice area pages. This is the time to shine on all fronts – your reputation, your personal appearance, your website, your social media, your Google search results. When people are afraid to spend money, you have to prove you're worth it.

## **Niche Marketing**

The other tool that is fueling firm growth right now is owning a niche market. Not showing up at a trade show meeting here and there, but owning the whole arena. It is easier to build up credibility in certain niche markets than in your whole geographic area because there are usually trade associations, publications, and meetings that define the marketing space. It can take years to own a niche, but there are some great shortcuts that include individual marketing plans for your team members (strength in numbers!), niche public relations, and a sales pipeline coaching process specific to that niche.

The economy is definitely taking an uptick in many areas, and we are busy at something besides sales again! It might look like the worst is over, but don't forget the lessons from 2008 through 2010: When the economy is tough or booming, focus on your sales and marketing. Spend money on it; get new training, fresh ideas, and more systems. Hone in on the customer base that needs you the most. Step up your game. Contact Ingenuity Marketing if you would like to learn how.

We've also heard good news in the CPA industry worldwide:

- CPA firms did not get the summer consulting work they wanted, but more than 36 percent of CPA firm clients report that they will make a move\* in 2011. There is

room for firms with good marketing and sales outreach to pick up new work.

- While M&A and commercial attorneys are not as busy as they would like to be, bankruptcy and, lately, family law practices are booming.
- Engineers are beginning to see more private projects. Architects, who were hardest hit in the recession, are hearing the phone begin to ring with new project ideas.

*\*A recent survey from CCH*

## **BKR TESTIMONIAL**

I wanted you to know that we got great service from the Singapore office.

We have a client who may take a three-year assignment in Singapore and wanted to know about the tax consequences in that country.

I sent an e-mail to Lim Boon Cheng asking several questions. He forwarded the request to his tax manager, who sent us a very prompt and thorough reply. His response was well laid-out and addressed all of our issues, as well as a few we had not asked.

We will have a very happy client later this morning when we review this e-mail with him.

*~ Howard Rosen  
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