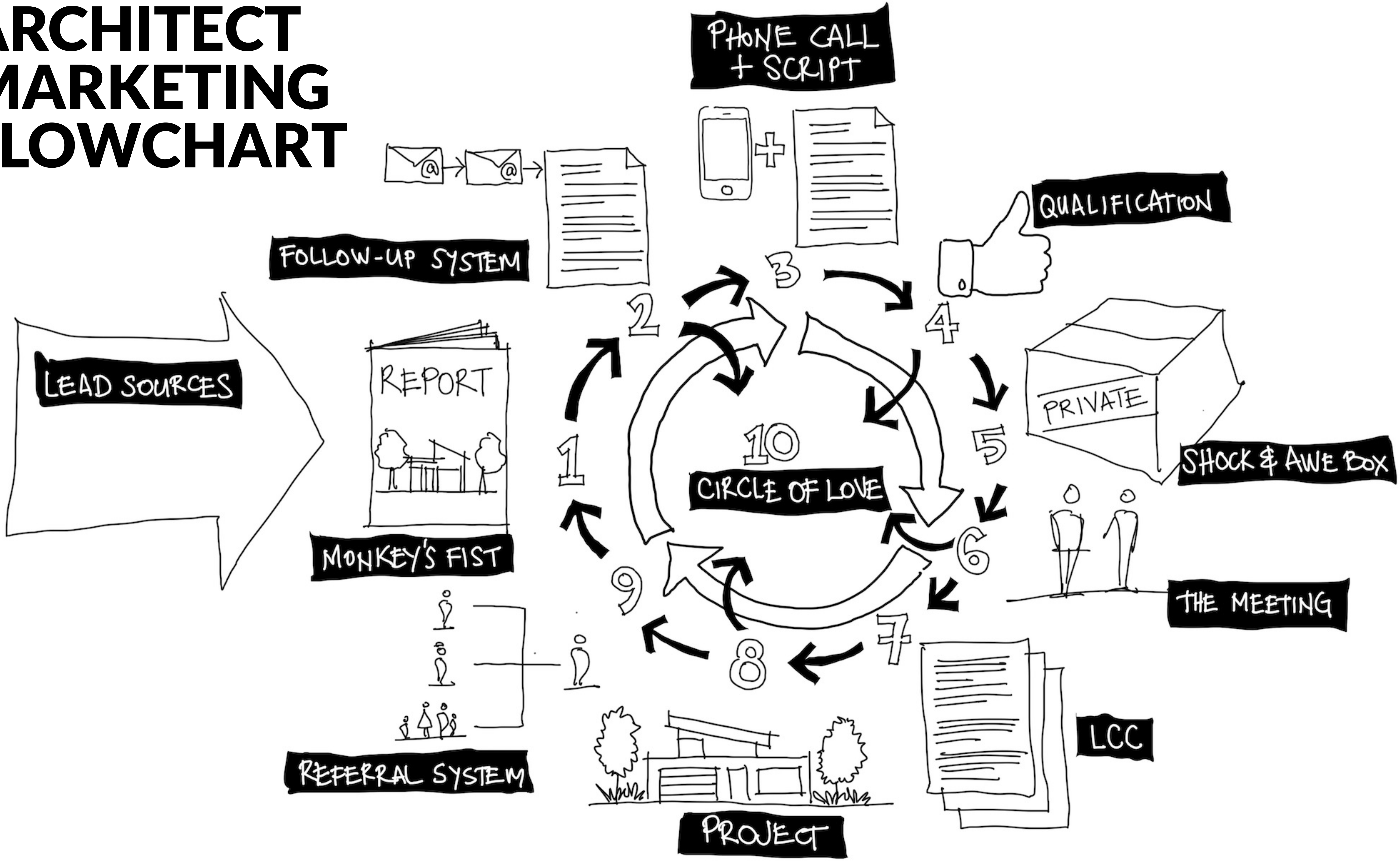
ARCHITECT MARKETING FLOWCHART



THE ARCHITECT
MARKETING INSTITUTE

Architect Marketing Flowchart Overview:

This flowchart shows the entire system that an architect can install for maximum effectiveness. It is the system we teach at the Architect Marketing Institute and the same system our clients use. This is the system we recommend for residential architects (for commercial architects we recommend a slight variation).

This document will walk you step-by-step through the flowchart, explaining each part of the architect marketing process in detail.

Lead Sources:

On the far left-hand side you have your potential lead sources. These are the places where people first hear about you. This may be from past clients, referrals from other contacts, the 'Dirty 30' strategy (more on this later), tradeshows, magazine articles, etc.

Most architects have only one lead source: word of mouth referrals. We recommend having 12!

Whoa! Sounds like a lot! It is...and it isn't.

I don't know of one place to get 30 clients, but I do know 30 places to get one client!

Step 1: The Monkey's Fist:

This is an educational, non-salesy brochure that solves a specific problem or answers a question your prospect has (example: the marketing flowchart is OUR Monkey's Fist - pretty meta, huh?).

By offering something educational instead of something salesy you will generally get 10x more leads (you'll learn more about this on our upcoming webinar).

Step 2: The Follow Up System:

Do you know that if you follow up with prospective clients 5 times or more you will triple your chances of winning the project?

Yet most architects stop following up after 2-3 contacts with a potential client.

We think, ahh, they aren't interested...and we lose touch. What prevents this from happening is a systematic process.

Do you have a systematic process for following up with clients that includes phone, email and/or direct mail?

The key here is not to pester or annoy clients, but to follow up with more useful information (hopefully this email is a good example of this principle in action!).

Step 3: The Phone Call:

The first phone interaction is a critical moment with your potential client. It is here that you need to quickly qualify clients, demonstrate how you are different, and if appropriate, guide them to the next step.

Use a standard set of questions (read more in the next step).

Step 4: Qualification:

Do not overlook this step or you are in for misery!

Qualification questions fall into 5 general categories (see this article for additional information):

1. Need - how badly do they need this project done?
2. Money - what are the monetary constraints and budget?
3. Time - what is the desired project timeline?
4. Authority - who else, if anyone, is involved in the decision- making process?
5. Process - this is where you take control and outline your process for working.

You should set up the boundaries and expectations here. A word of warning: if you skip this step, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to regain control of the process.

Find out these things in a friendly manner that doesn't sound like you are 'grilling' the client (hint: use a questionnaire).

Just like the standard follow up, you should have a set number of questions that you ask potential clients.

Step 5: The 'Shock and Awe' Box:

This is your pre-meeting indoctrination package. It should set the stage for meeting with you and contain materials that explain why your firm is different than the competition. It should re-iterate your process.

Including this step moves you out of the commodity game and 'pre-sells' the client before you ever meet with them.

It's also a great idea to include a small gift in this box (who doesn't like a gift?).

This warms up your potential client (remember the follow up?) and gets them ready for the next step, the meeting.

Step 6: The Meeting:

Just like the 'phone call', the meeting needs to be clearly structured, and if the client isn't paying to meet with you, you shouldn't be giving out a lot of free advice.

I know this is counter-intuitive and against common practice, but please stop devaluing your expertise! (ok - end of rant)

Giving out a lot of free advice sets the stage that your expertise isn't valuable and can lead to false expectations.

Think about the doctor, does she let you come in just to 'pick her brain'?

Step 7: The LCC

'LCC' stands for 'Low Commitment Consultation'.

Before throwing a big design contract at someone, it's a good idea to offer them a limited-scope, low-cost consultation offer.

This could be a meeting, or some other type of needs analysis. Think of this as the doctor's diagnosis.

Doing this diagnosis for a small fee allows you to once again set the stage, and determine if this is a client you want to work with.

You'll also find that your clients will love this option (and they'll love to pay for it!).

Read this article here to learn more about the crucial steps to doing this properly: the Low Commitment Consultation.

Step 8: The Project (the most important part!)
This part needs no explanation because it is what you do best!

You should deliver great projects to keep your clients happy.

Remember that no amount of 'good marketing' can make up for poor client service, so this should be your first focus: to deliver quality projects and make your clients happy!

In the Architects Marketing Academy, we call this the "Remarkable Client Experience".

The question you should answer for yourself is: "How can I make working with my firm so remarkable that people can't help but share it?"

Creating a "Remarkable Client Experience" doesn't need to be fancy or complex, but it also doesn't happen by accident.

Please watch this simple, inspirational story about how a simple bag-boy created a remarkable experience for those he served.

Wow, we are almost getting to the end of the flowchart! Are you following me here?

Next up and perhaps most important is the "Ultimate Referral System".

Step 9: The Ultimate Referral System

Set up a systematic process for asking for referrals and testimonials. You can do this through a post-project questionnaire or during the final walk through.

Let people (associates, contacts, and your network) know that you are always looking for referrals. Bring this up with your clients throughout the project delivery phase.

If someone does refer a potential client, make sure you follow up with a thank you gift, or at least a note.

Most importantly, systematize this process - don't leave it to chance.

There is much more to this that I don't have time here to explain, but I've shared the basic concept.

The Ultimate Referral System is closely related to the 'Circle of Love'.

Step 10: The Circle Of Love

The Circle of Love is your catch-all group for long-term follow up.

You'll notice that in the flowchart certain people will fall out of the process.

Perhaps they weren't ready to move ahead with a project. Perhaps they were just in the 'information-gathering' stage.

Stay in touch with people through positive, occasional contact.

Landing a new client could take up to 18 months or longer - hang in there and be patient!

Remember, you need to build your pipeline today so you can reap the rewards for years to come.

I'm not a fan of clichés, but one seems appropriate here:

Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, getting your marketing system in place is more of a marathon than a sprint (that is the bad news if you wanted an instant pay-off)!

The good news is, if you start today you'll be light years ahead of your competitors, and you'll have an asset that will return dividends for years to come!

Whew! That's all for today. Questions? Comments? -Richard Petrie

REMEMBER: Be sure to attend our upcoming training on the Architects Marketing System.