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CLIENT SERVICE AWARDS

Definition of 'Service' Gets New Scrutiny

by **MARK AREND**

Like members of the Polar Bear Club – those people who meet annually at a lake in January to jump into frigid water – an intrepid set of service providers has recently been through Site Selection's annual client-service awards challenge. Now in their fifth year, the Site Selection/William Dorsey Service Provider Awards recognize those organizations that expand the definition of client service by exceeding client expectations and achieving best-of-brand status in the eyes of their clients. But getting there is no small feat.

The Winners' Circle



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As those who have been through the process can attest, a fairly daunting course has been designed by the editors to bring the cream of the crop to the surface. Representatives of companies deciding to take the plunge respond to a lengthy questionnaire seeking definitions of client service, client-service satisfaction quantification, anecdotal evidence of exceeding service expectations, client contact information for verification and other criteria. Judges rate responses relative to other contestants using a point system; such factors as clarity and thoroughness also are evaluated.

As in years past, winning organizations run the gamut in terms of size, demonstrating that large companies are just as capable of delivering quality service as boutique firms, if the culture of the company demands it.

How Service Will Evolve

Among the most intriguing parts of the questionnaire is a section asking respondents how they think the definition of client service will evolve in the future. One winning company holds the view that the service provider ultimately will be so integrated into the client organization that the service provider will anticipate and begin addressing the client's needs before they can even be communicated. The client will simply furnish



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Coverage of some of the factors and client service experiences that were part of this process will appear in the pages of Site Selection in the coming months. And a directory of national service providers appears following this report. Readers should encourage their service providers to participate in this exercise next year, if they did not do so this year. It's time well spent on their part – and they'll get used to the water. **SITE**

information not at the service provider's disposal by virtue of his not being an employee. The result, in effect, is the appearance of the client supporting the service provider.

Another predicts "enhancement of accountability, responsibility and validation of the site selection process." Still another puts it this way: "New technology applications powered by the Web will become the crux of doing business in real estate, and the inherent, long-standing friction in traditional approaches to real estate projects will become less and less tolerated by clients, who will demand more accountability and the best-of-the-best in service. Customer service will encompass the integration of all facets affecting a company's bottom line, including real estate, technology and human resources."



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