



**Finding out how to set themselves apart—without lowering prices—
WAS KEY FOR THIS CONSULTING ENGINEERS GROUP**

HOW DO YOU DIFFERENTIATE YOUR COMPANY AND ATTRACT CUSTOMERS when your competition spans multiple pages in the phone book? In the competitive construction industry, quality and reputation are key differentiators, says Anthony Scovazzo, founder and president of AJS Consulting Engineers P.C. Tony gets points for both, with nearly 40 years in the industry and a focus on quality over price.

LOCATED IN BUSTLING ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA,

AJS specializes in the design of HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems for commercial and institutional buildings. The firm's clients are architects, building owners and contractors who are looking to reduce operational costs by implementing more energy efficient systems.

"We have three inseparable goals—reducing energy use and costs, occupant comfort and health and sustainable design," Tony explains.

"Building owners nowadays look at energy conservation to reduce total cost of ownership." Targeting strong markets like restaurants, medical clinics and multifamily buildings has helped AJS grow revenues by 20 percent each of the last two years.



DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES; SIMILAR CHALLENGES.

Tony is capitalizing on an increased interest in energy efficient systems, but he says competition remains fierce. When he joined TAB in 2009, he knew reducing his price to win bids wasn't a smart plan. "When you're looking at your long-term strategy," he says, "you can focus on price, differentiation or specialization. Trying to focus on all three doesn't work."



As it turned out, the other Members of his TAB Board had the same dilemma. "Our Board is pretty diverse," says Tony. "We've got building engineering, home healthcare services, online real estate forms, a repair service, Internet marketing and even a zoo. Yet we all have similar challenges regardless of our industry."

When it comes to differentiation, he admits it requires constant focus. "You have to be very consistent," he says. "You're always marketing, whether you know it or not. You may be doing negative marketing and not know it."

A BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Tony's TAB Board and Facilitator serve as a welcome sounding board for new ideas. They also keep him focused. "TAB has helped me realize that I can be as effective without working 60 hours a week," he admits. "I've surrounded myself with skilled people that confidently accomplish delegated tasks. Now, I spend more time running the business than doing engineering."

"The firefighting aspect of running a business will steal your attention," he continues. "The value of TAB is that it keeps me on track. Twice a month you have a meeting or coaching that is going to bring your attention back to the big picture."

As a seasoned business owner, Tony recommends TAB to other entrepreneurs because it helps them develop as leaders. "Most people start a business related to their passion or core competency, but you need to become a manager in order to be successful. TAB helps with that."