

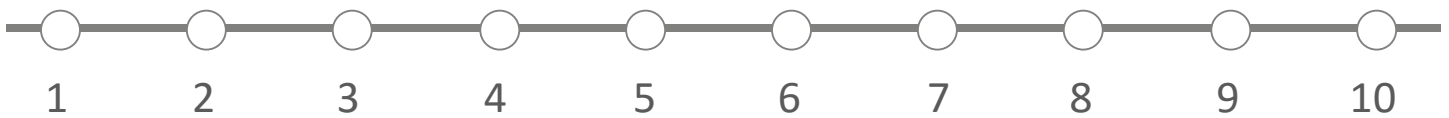
# BUILDING A BRAND-DRIVEN CONSULTING FIRM

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What works in B2C marketing isn't necessarily effective in the B2B world. At the same time, we live in a dynamic business world and many practices that were thought to have been ineffective in B2B industries are now proving to be very successful. In this eBook, we go over the guiding principles for driving B2B business growth, but leveraging many of the best practices traditionally considered to be unique to B2C.

*In this eBook, we provide the latest guiding principles for how small consulting firms can drive growth by defining and creating a strong brand and bringing it to life operationally. Brand positioning will help consulting firms more easily execute practices such as thought leadership, expertise marketing, human capital, and knowledge management. Branding is often seen as a necessity for only large organizations or highly visible firms. The benefits of a strong brand play an enormous role in growing the business and even improve the quality of services overall.*

### **To what extent would you say your firm has a brand?**



We don't really have a brand. It's basically our company name

We have a brand. It has meaning beyond merely the name of our company

We have a very strong brand. It differentiates us in the marketplace

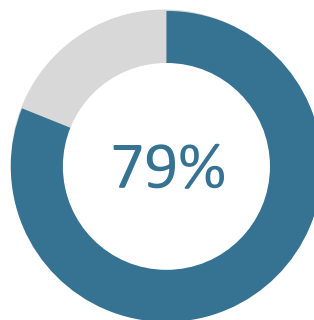
There tends to be philosophies and beliefs in the brand management world that are simply not true today, much like with marketing. Throughout this eBook, we will look to debunk the following myths:

- Brands are just for the big guys (like McKinsey, BCG, Accenture)
- Branding is all about communication (logos, taglines, visual identity)
- Building strong brands costs millions of dollars and takes many years
- Being highly specialized is suicide for small consulting firms
- If we are a small organization, the personal brands are much more important—not the firm's brand
- Social media is ineffective and irrelevant for professional services

We believe a strong brand is a powerful way to differentiate your consulting firm. So, how would you rate your company's current brand-building capabilities?



Compared to your competitors, how would you rate your company's brand-building capabilities?



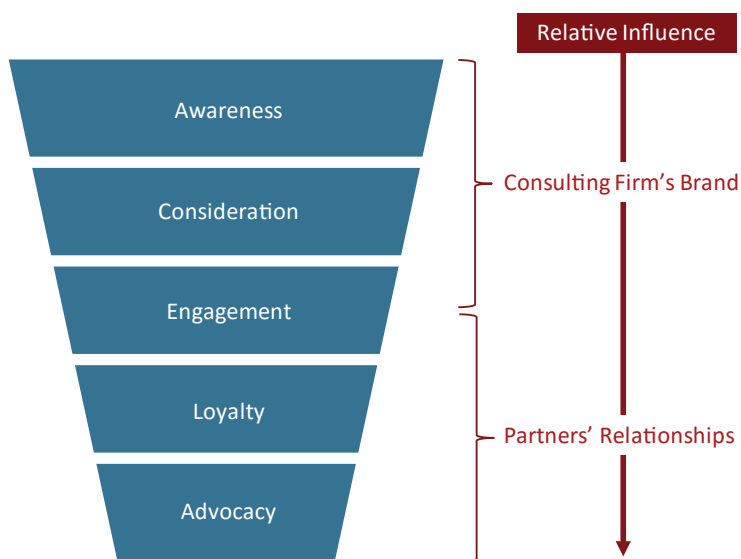
B2B companies with 3-year CAGR of +15% believe their brand building capabilities are a great deal stronger than their competitors\*

## WHAT IS A BRAND?

The first step to creating a powerful brand is to understand what a brand exactly is and what it does. A brand is much more than a name, a logo, a tagline, or an ad.

### A brand is...

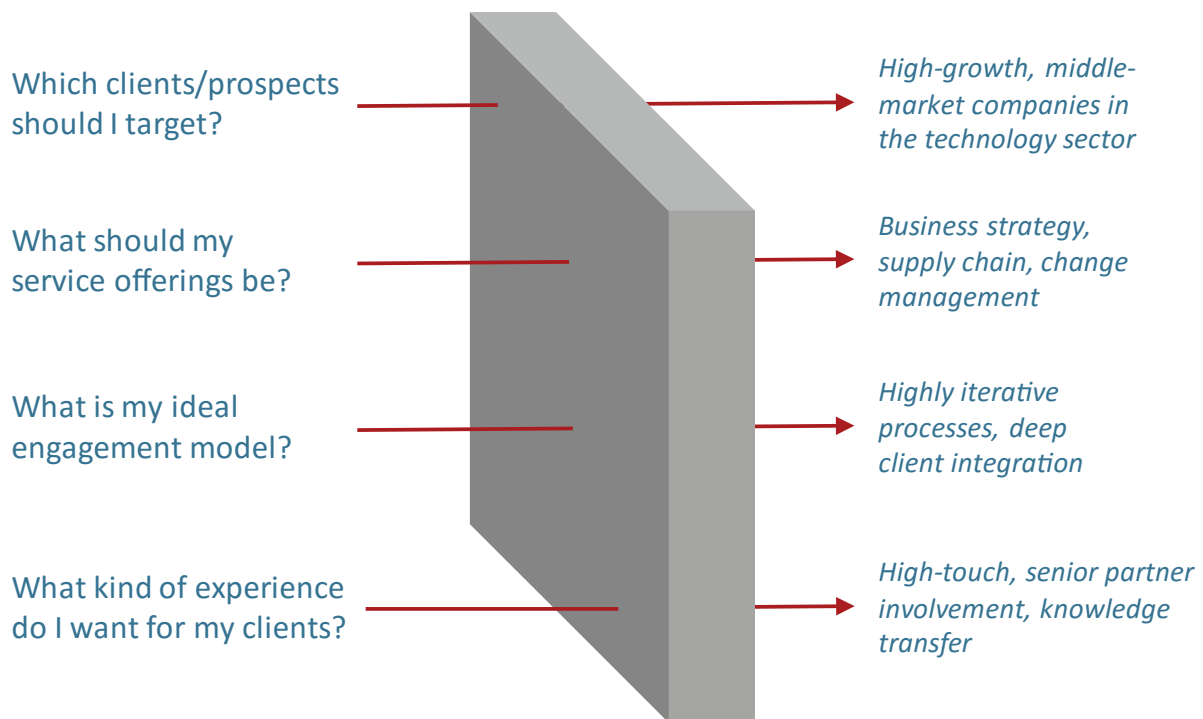
...your client's strongest initial reason to believe that your firm is the right fit within all the possible candidates. Many, if not all, of your potential clients will start their evaluation process from some previous knowledge and initial, high-level research. Once they gather a list of possible consulting firms, a strong brand will differentiate you from the rest of the pack.



If your consulting firm has a well-developed and strong brand, your services will immediately shine compared to the competition during the Awareness and Consideration stage of the customer journey. A strong brand makes clients feel comfortable and they will be easily inclined to believe that you truly are the best at what you do.

## A brand is...

...a filter for your firm's own decision making and long-term strategizing. When you go through the steps to create a framework to develop your firm's brand into a clear, powerful one it causes a ripple effect that naturally forces your partners to focus on what matters most.



Once you have created a strong brand, you will be able to easily answer difficult questions like which clients to focus on or what kind of customer experience is best for your clients. A strong brand depends on creating focused operational goals and processes, which results in easier and more consistent decision making for the firm's partners.

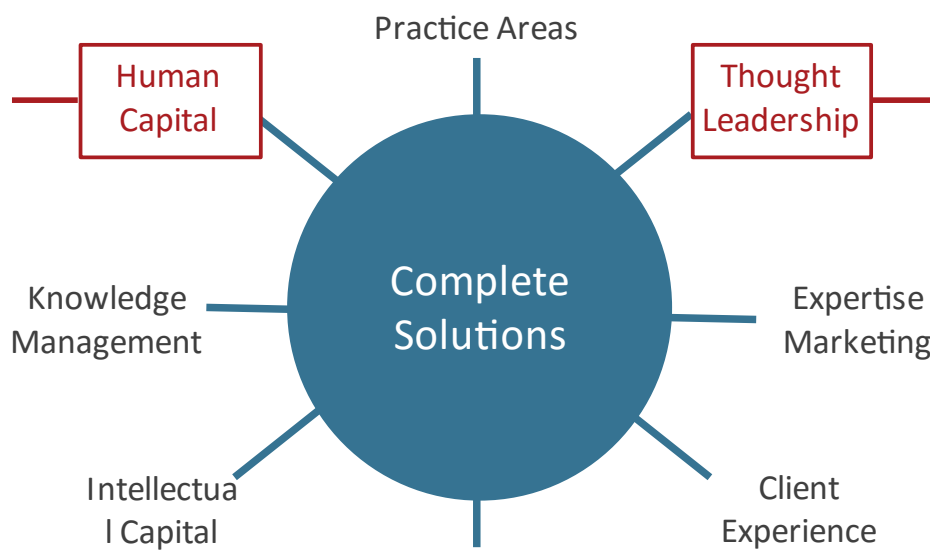
## A brand is...

...the basis for organizing and operationalizing your overall strategy. A crucial part of creating a strong brand is developing a clear, thorough brand strategy.



The different facets of your brand strategy will play a role in many aspects of strategizing and running your firm. Once you create your brand strategy, it will carry the guiding principles that organize many other crucial pieces of your business.

Take a look at the example below. Once a firm's brand strategy is carefully thought out, other important questions and organizational behaviors easily fall into place:



The journey small consulting firms have is not an easy one, but we often see clear brand strategies greatly impact the entire organizational process. A strong brand strategy produces really positive results after going to market and plays a pivotal role in continuing business growth.



So, now that we understand the overall purpose and operational benefits of a brand let's look through the necessary steps and processes needed to create an effective, strong brand for your firm.

## TARGET SELECTION

One of the most important aspects of developing your firm's brand into a strong, powerful one is clearly understanding the voice of your clients. If you are able to really know how your clients think and where they see value, you can craft a value proposition and brand strategy that effectively grows the business. In order to do this, though, the first step is to thoughtfully and strategically target your ideal market.

## How would you describe your approach to targeting clients?

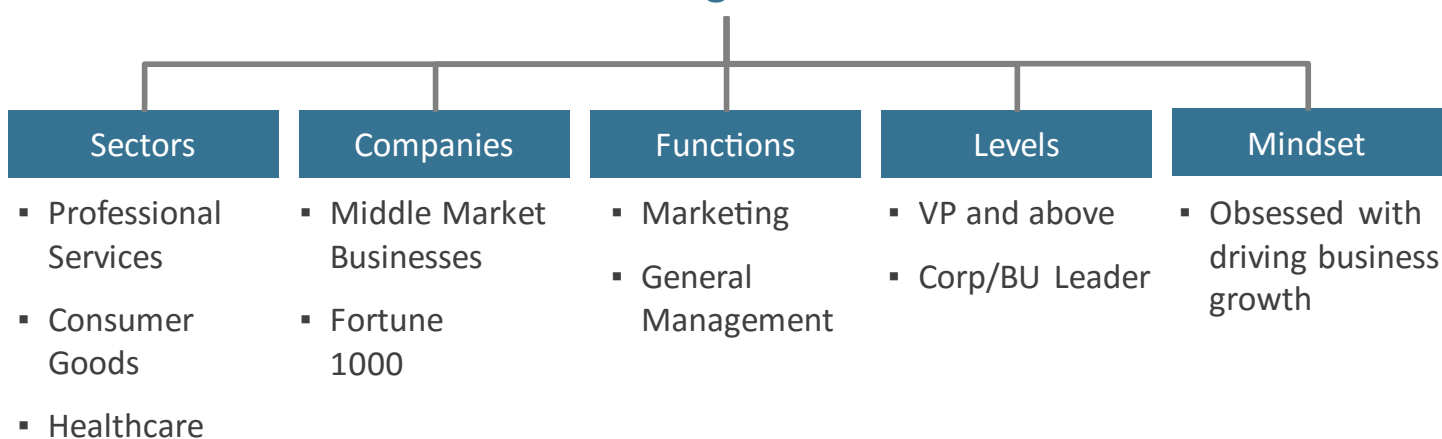


It's broad—we sell to pretty much anyone willing/able to buy

So-so...we target companies, but not individual buyers (or vice-versa)

It's very specific—we pursue certain buyers w/in select companies

### Our Target Client



It's easy to think that narrowing down your focus and shrinking your target market will make growing business harder. This can be true in some cases, but the reality is that if you do the proper research and thoroughly think through who your best audience is then growing the business will actually become more efficient. You will have to sacrifice reaching some possible customers in order to better connect with the one's that will help grow your business in the long run. It is a difficult business concept to execute, but the results will be well worth it.

**“The essence of strategy is sacrifice”**

**—Michael Porter**

# BRAND POSITIONING

Brand positioning is similar to target selection in that it will sharpen the overall focus of your firm and drive better results. In order to find the optimal brand positioning for your firm's brand, you will go through a series of processes highlighted below that, in the end, sharpen the overall focus of your organization.

<b>Target</b>	Growth driven brand and marketing executives			
<b>Frame of Reference</b>	A strategic consultancy			
<b>Benefit</b>	Helps clients achieve <b>enduring business growth</b> through brand-building, marketing and innovation			
<b>Reasons To Believe</b>	<b>Strategy-first Philosophy on Brand</b>  <i>View brand as a lens for business strategy</i>	<b>Zero-in on Issues that Matter Most</b>  <i>Relentless focus on only core business issues</i>	<b>Dedicated, Senior-Partner Teams</b>  <i>Highly experienced and engaged delivery team</i>	<b>Flexible Business Model</b>  <i>Adaptable to clients' organizational realities</i>

## Organize Service Offerings

In order to decide what the best way to position your brand so your target audience is more easily compelled and driven to buy, you need to clearly organize and explain your services. This is key to eventually crafting a powerful brand positioning, and will also help your firm stay focused on where it adds the most value for clients.

For example, this is how we at FullSurge have decided to best offer our services and organize them within our organization:





## Curate an Engagement Model

As a small consulting firm, it is also very important to decide what your optimal engagement model is. Properly positioning your brand will depend highly on the way your engagement model comes together. So, how will you offer services in a way that differentiates you from the competition and adds the value your clients need?

For example, a small consulting firm can have the following engagement model:

### Project Approach

- Voice of Customer (VOC) orientation
- Iterative processes

### Staffing Configuration

- Small teams of highly experienced and deeply engaged senior partners

### Client Integration

- High degree of client integration (vs. “black box”)
- Senior-level sponsor and ongoing involvement
- 25-50% dedicated core team member

## Create a Pricing Structure

Small consulting firms often struggle to decide the best way to price their services. There are many different models, and they can all work very well. What's crucial to creating a proper pricing structure, though, is carefully thinking through these three aspects of pricing:

### Philosophy

- Price based on value of work to client (as opposed to cost of work to FullSurge)

### Special Cases

- Consider contingency-based fee structure
- Based on pre-determined in-market metrics
- Accounts for downside and upside potentials

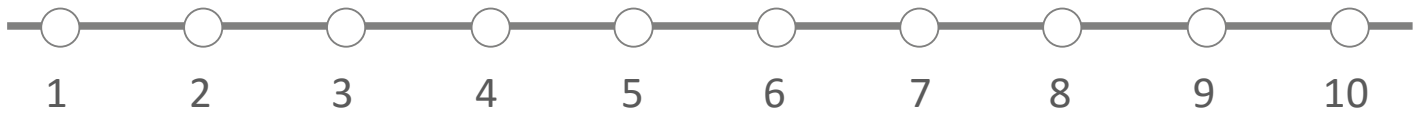
### Terms

- Fixed Fees based on agreed-upon SOW (as opposed to Hourly Rates)

## GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGY

How well does your firm market itself today? It's one of the most important questions to honestly ask yourself.

### *How well does your firm market itself today?*



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10

Not well...we don't do very much in the way of marketing

So-so...we speak and write, but don't do much online (or vice-versa)


Extremely well...we're active in both traditional and online marketing

We consistently see the marketing strategies below strengthen many small consulting firm's brands and grow their reach. If done strategically, choosing the right partners and creating value for potential clients pre-engagement your firm will be in great position to grow the business:

## Professional Associations



**Marketing Advisory Council**



**President-Elect**  
**Mitch L Duckler**  
Managing Partner  
FullSurge

**AMA Strategic Plan**  
FY15 - FY20

October 20, 2014



Association's  
Marketing  
dom &  
Collide

Attend the  
marketing event  
of the year

Sept. 30 - Oct. 2  
New Orleans  
[AMA.org/annual2014](http://AMA.org/annual2014)

## Speaking Engagements

Keynotes, Presentations, Workshops, Tutorials, Webinars



# Proprietary Research

Target:

Brand and Marketing Executives

Research Objective:

How do Brand, Marketing and Innovation drive Growth?

Cost:

~\$7,500

541 Respondents

16 In-depth Interviews

**Growth Guru Survey - Full Surge**

19. Compared to your competitors, how would you rate your company's marketing capabilities (e.g., ability to reach target market, increase awareness, drive preference for your products/services, build loyalty, etc.)?

A great deal stronger than our competitors  
 Moderately stronger than our competitors  
 Slightly stronger than our competitors  
 About the same as our competitors  
 Slightly weaker than our competitors  
 Moderately weaker than our competitors  
 A great deal weaker than our competitors

20. How well would you say your company understands its customers in terms of their attitudes, needs, behaviors, etc.?

Understands a great deal  
 Understands quite a bit  
 Understands moderately  
 Understands slightly  
 Does not at all understand

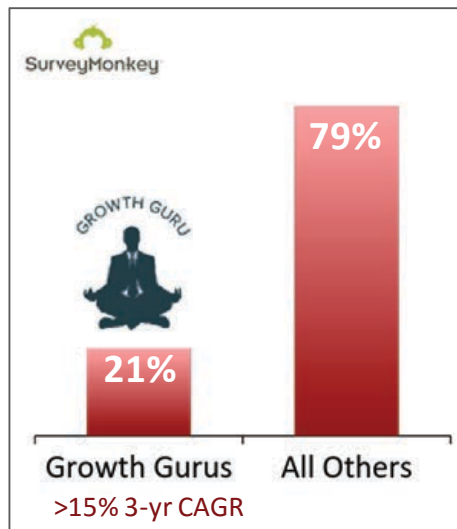
21. How important is customer segmentation/targeting in your company?

Extremely important - Customer segmentation serves as a foundation for much of our go-to-market strategy  
 Quite important  
 Moderately important - We have a customer segmentation framework and use it occasionally, but it's not as central to strategy development or decision-making  
 Slightly important  
 Not important at all - We don't have a customer segmentation, or we have one but don't use it

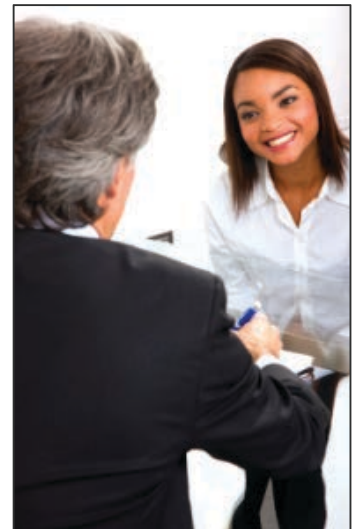
22. How does your company segment customers? (Select all that apply.)

Demographic (age, gender, ethnicity, income, industry, company size)  
 Needs (based on customer segments)  
 Behavior (purchase history, interests, spend habits)  
 Attitudes ("opinion leaders," "they're all the same," "sales and product")  
 We do not segment our customer markets

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**FullSurge**  
brand growth strategy

**The Anatomy of a Growth Guru**  
Best Practices in Driving Sustainable Business Growth

**Growth is not a new challenge for business executives, but in an increasingly hyper-competitive global environment it has never been more important than it is today.**

In a recent PwC Annual Global CEO Survey, CEOs were twice as likely to say they are "confident the global economy will improve in the coming year" (56%) than they were to indicate they are "confident in their own company's growth prospects" (28%). Clearly, maintaining status quo is no longer an option. Companies are either continually growing or rapidly moving toward irrelevance and extinction.

FullSurge is continually focused on the topic of driving enduring business growth and uncovering clues that help companies outperform their competitors. In our quest to find these clues of growth, we conducted research with a broad spectrum of marketing executives, comparing top performers, who we call "Growth Gurus," to all others. This research, which included both a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews, was conducted to understand exactly how successful, high-growth companies achieve their impressive results and what they are doing differently. Our sample included over 550 business executives from large cap and middle market companies in both B2B and B2C businesses across virtually all industries and sectors. Our goal was to understand what high-performance growth companies (those with greater than 15% 3-year CAGR) do differently in areas of brand, marketing, and innovation.

**...The magnitude of variation in response between high growth companies -- Growth Gurus -- and all others is nothing short of astounding.**


While we expected to find differences, the magnitude of variation in response between high growth companies -- Growth Gurus -- and all others is nothing short of astounding. Growth Gurus, who represent ~19% of the total sample, view and approach the vital business functions of brand, marketing, and innovation in fundamentally different ways than their lower growth peers. The good news for us is that through their responses, Growth Gurus have given us the recipe for driving enduring business growth. What follows is a summary of exactly what they do differently to achieve their impressive results.

fullsurge.com

## 6-month Editorial Calendar



## Social Media



**Groups**

- CMO network
- B2B Branding
- MARKETING EXECUTIVES

**Content**

- pulse


**Analytics**

63 Other Sources, 19 Homepage, 40 LinkedIn Mobile App

Where viewers from

**Follower demographics**

Seniority	Percentage
Senior	33.0%
Director	20.0%
VP	13.1%
Manager	10.0%
Partner	9.7%



**Events**

FullSurge @FullSurge  
FullSurge managing partner @MitchDuckler to present at the @AMCForg 2014 Small Firms Leadership Retreat [ow.ly/DtZfV](http://ow.ly/DtZfV)

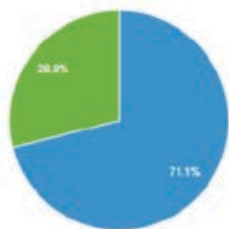
**Blog Posts**

FullSurge @FullSurge  
What's in a name? When it comes to a #brand, it's all about positioning. [ow.ly/DaAR9](http://ow.ly/DaAR9) by @MitchDuckler

**Content**

FullSurge @FullSurge  
In #branding, play the long game: [ow.ly/DLID4](http://ow.ly/DLID4) featuring @KarenLeland and @SageThury

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor



Online and social activity has driven NEW visitors

- **81% increase** in session traffic in September
- Total referring domains **improved 200%** in September and October
- Total referring pages **improved 150%** in September and October
- Backlink domain rank increased from **36 to 46** (30–70 = average)
- Domain rank is **equal to or greater than** competitive benchmarks
- Several high-potential, qualified client leads



Many consulting firms do not see branding as a worthwhile aspect of the business and don't spend time and resources on it. Many firms even go the route of developing strong personal brand's instead of focusing on the firm's own brand. Throughout the years, we have guided and watched consulting firms go through careful, strategic brand development projects with the goal of strengthening the firm's brand. The results are enormous. A strong brand has similar results for small consulting firms as it does for large organizations—valuable client's relate with the company much more efficiently and growing the brand becomes intrinsic to the overall organizational process.

There are many misconceptions when it comes to branding a smaller consulting firm. Throughout this eBook, we hope to have provided more clarity on how to best create a strong brand for your firm and have left you with these guiding principles:

- For a small consulting firm, your brand is your business. It should ultimately define and drive everything your team does.
- Voice of the Client (VOC) is critical. You need independent, objective, and unfiltered input from the market.
- You need to “sacrifice” to win by narrowly defining your expertise and dominating it consistently.
- Choose your agency/consulting partners carefully, and only work with those that really understand your business.
- You have to create a strong digital profile and presence. Although engagements aren't won online, they can easily be lost online.



brand growth strategy

**Feel free to reach out to us via email, phone or social media.**

1603 Orrington Avenue, Suite 600  
Evanston, IL 60201  
(312) 239-8985



**FSinfo@FullSurge.com**



**@FullSurge**



**FullSurge on LinkedIn**