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# MARKETING *Treasures*

Ideas and Insights into Promoting Library & Information Services

Volume 8, Number 6  
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## Market-driven Library & Information Services

Most management strategies hold that an organization's activities and reason for being spring essentially from the need to please customers. In other words, being market oriented. And if all information service life originates from and is sustained by getting and keeping customers, who among us can say they cannot afford a market orientation—or at the very least a well-planned marketing program—because the information service is too busy or low on funds?

In this issue of **Marketing Treasures** we address the concept of the market-driven organization: what a market orientation is, the capabilities a market-driven organization must master, and how to transform your information service into such an organization.

In an article in the October 1994 issue of the **Journal of Marketing**, George Day defines "market orientation" as "superior skills in understanding and satisfying customers" and summarizes its central characteristics as 1) "a set of beliefs that put the customer's interests first," 2) "the ability of the organization to generate, disseminate, and use superior information about customers and competitors," and 3) "the coordinated application of interfunctional resources to the creation of superior customer value."

Day then argues that organizations aiming to

*"who among us can say they cannot afford a market orientation... because the information service is too busy or low on funds?"*

become more market-oriented need to cultivate a handful of "distinctive capabilities." Distinctive capabilities are skills and common understandings entrenched in every level and sector of the organization that are also somewhat specific to that organization, in that they arise from and are supported by its unique culture. They reflect efficient interaction among the different functional areas of an organization and enable it to adapt rapidly and soundly to change. And because they foster efficiency, an organization's distinctive capabilities contribute strongly to the creation of "superior customer value," that is, they help make your services the best value that your customers can get, given the alternatives, as seen from the customer's perspective. You may now already know "distinctive capabilities" from the management literature as "core competencies." Every organization must have a few if it is to survive. Making the most of capabilities can enable an organization to excel.

Not just any capabilities will do, however. Achieving a true market orientation requires excellence in three particular capabilities: 1) market sensing, 2) customer linking, and 3) channel bonding.

### Market Sensing

Market-oriented organizations are those that seem to sense markets in their blood. They know not only about their customers, but also their competitors and their capabilities, and about their suppliers and other "channel members."

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## Pearls of Wisdom

**A**ttract business to the information center with do-it-yourself magnets that sport your logo, hours, and slogan. Magnets make good promotional items because they stay in front of clients' eyes, not filed away in a drawer or Rolodex. Now you can make your own with magnetic sheets from USI, a supplier of lamination equipment and products. Just create your design on a color printer or copier, affix it to the pressure-sensitive sheets, and cut with scissors, knife, die, or punch. To increase your chances of clients keeping your magnets in their line of sight, include helpful information such as a mini-calendar, or a condensed directory of organization phone extensions. Contact: 800/243-4565.

**W**hen planning exhibits and displays, put yourself in your customers' shoes. Envision yourself as a prospective customer approaching your booth. What benefits would you want to see offered? What message would you like to hear? What special offering would motivate you to buy an information product or service? Answering these questions will give you the proper focus to help you design your display for optimum impact.

**S**ay it with plastic! Do you have a message you want preserved? Do your database user cards need a longer lifespan? Print them on plastic and they'll outlast their paper counterparts. National Plastic Printing, Inc. prints calendars, charts, rulers, door signs, templates, Rolodex cards, and more—all on plastic. Make plastic cheat sheets or function key templates for your organization's computer system, add your library logo, and you'll supply clients with a promotional item they'll use every single day. For more information and idea-inspiring samples, contact: 800/842-4677.

**D**o you wish you were a cool cat when it comes time for you make a presentation? Silvana Clark, in **Taming the Marketing Jungle**, offers these helpful hints: First, learn about your audience in advance. How big is the group? How old? Find out if a microphone will be available. Next, use an interesting story, a unique fact, or a question both to begin and end your speech. Then, write the key points on note cards and practice your speech until you can maintain eye contact throughout your delivery. Finally, ask friends for a technical

*“A satisfied customer can be a repeat customer and an enthusiastic reference.”*



evaluation of your speech. They should alert you to verbal ticks such as “ums” and “likes” and physical crutches like repeatedly brushing your hair from your face. If you're ready to become an expert speechmaker, contact your local Toastmaster's group.

**W**hen creating your marketing plan, think of sales as a three-part process: before, during, and after. Before the sale, you must generate interest. For traditional products and services, you must let the prospect know you exist, and that your offerings will best fulfill wants and needs. But, for nontraditional products and services, such as information, generating interest also means establishing worth: documenting, demonstrating, and selling the value that the information will have for the customer. For this stage, think benefits. During the sale, your prospect will pay attention to the features you have to offer. Your sales pitch should be loaded with the facts and figures that support your benefits' claims. Provide prospects with sales materials to reinforce your pitch. The third part comes after the sale, and many consider it the most important part. A satisfied customer can be a repeat customer and an enthusiastic reference. The best after-sale strategy is to provide excellent products and services with first-rate support. Beyond that, conscientious marketers will begin a campaign of regular contact. Thank you notes, follow-up calls and letters, newsletters, and holiday cards or gifts let you keep in touch with your customers and remind them that you want their business. ■

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Missing issues must be reported within 3 months of issue date. Missing issues requested after this time will be supplied at the regular back-issue rate.

Clip art used in this issue:

**Market-driven...***continued from page 1*

Market-sensing begins with being well-versed and continuously updated in the “events and trends in present and prospective markets” as well as the long-term capabilities of competitors, understood broadly as any alternative customers have to using your services. It is vital to be both present- and future-oriented, because market-driven organizations need to predict events and trends in the market before competitors do so and before they encounter unpleasant surprises. The sign of a successful market-driven organization is its ability to anticipate and respond adequately to changes in the market.

**Customer Linking and Channel Bonding**

In many contemporary environments, there is a push to make relationships between product and service providers and their customers more “collaborative” than competitive. For information services, this applies to relationships with customers and suppliers. Book vendors, subscription services, and online services, may be seeking closer coordination with you in a bid to improve their own service quality, including reducing the time it takes them to respond to your needs.

Few information services have yet mastered closer communication and joint problem solving with their own service providers. Multifunctional teams are one way to institute a continuous exchange of data on “needs, problems, and emerging requirements” between you and your suppliers, and your customers, and within your organization. Teams work to harmonize systems and facilitate product movement, in turn reducing total costs while helping you improve service to your customers.

The same approach may be applicable with your customers. Anticipating their needs can help you identify coordination opportunities that will benefit them while demonstrating your responsiveness and credibility. Of course, not all customers may be interested in coordination activities, and others may not merit this type of investment. It is up to you to select the regular, long-term, and/or economically important customers that a collaborative, interdependent relationship with will yield a real advantage. As for the others, continue to serve their needs on their terms, anticipating what you are able to.

*“...all your decisions begin and end with improving your service to your market. If your policies and systems reflect that goal, explaining what you can do for customers should not be difficult.”*

*“You must anticipate future needs for capabilities, focusing on creating greater customer value.”*

The point is to serve the customer in the way best suited to that customer — whether collaboratively or at a greater distance.

Also remember that customers, even the ones you may develop interdependent systems with, will probably **not** be interested in the processes that yield superior value to them. **Resist** the temptation to proudly explain your article-ordering process to those who just want their articles as soon as they can have them. However, you must make sure that superior value is perceived. And that means that in both your management strategy and your promotion plan, **select** which of your capabilities to emphasize to customers. With a market orientation, all your decisions begin and end with improving your service to your market. If your policies and systems reflect that goal, explaining what you can do for customers should not be difficult.

**Your Capabilities and Your Customers**

The key capabilities of market sensing, customer linking, and channel bonding are, then, directly related to the overall goal of creating superior customer value. Most of us have been at least somewhat market oriented for years. Yet it is easy to be ignorant of one’s own advantages, and failings. Take the time to identify your current capabilities, find out which are “distinctive,” and think about the capabilities you need to improve. “Mapping” some of your processes is a productive way to find out what you can already do while it also pinpointing bottlenecks.

Next identify what you need to do, remembering that current insufficiencies can only be resolved with an informed understanding of what you want for the future. You must anticipate **future** needs for capabilities, focusing on creating greater customer value. No matter how under funded or well-funded your organization, as an information service provider, you cannot afford to neglect planning for future market needs. This can mean anticipating what your current customers will require in the coming months, and it can mean identifying important new customers — most essentially, those with the clout and funding power to keep you in business. Therefore the first part of improving your capabilities is figuring out who your customers are, and who you would like them to be.

*continued on page 4*

## Market-Driven... *continued from page 3*

### Putting it into effect: The definitive role of information

Knowing the customer well is key to your success. As the discussion on market sensing suggests, one definition of a market orientation might be “the organization-wide generation of market intelligence, dissemination of its intelligence across departments, and organization-wide responsiveness to it.”

The first crucial step is to systematize information gathering about your market. Frontline employees must have regular channels for getting firsthand market-contact information to directors, whether it concerns customers, suppliers, or competing alternatives to your services. Competitors' products and services should be analyzed regularly. Figure out **why** their innovations are succeeding, then identify any faults they may have, and you will be on your way to turning out the next generation of that product or service with your first try.

Within your own organization, encourage continuous innovation through openness to experimentation. It is surprising how often organizations in effect pay only lip service to experimentation with new ideas, whether the impetus comes from “below” or “above” in the hierarchy, by failing to systematically observe their outcomes and analyze the results. Be prepared to identify precisely what worked and what did not and why.

### Being a Market-oriented Library and Information Service

A market-oriented library or information service knows its customers' needs and expects to fill those needs. To do that, the organization:

- Puts the customer first;
- Analyzes its customers and competitors; and
- Gets the entire organization to focus on customer service.

### Putting the customer first.

- With a market orientation, all decisions begin and end with the goal of improving service to your market. If your library's policies and systems reflect that goal, explaining what you can do for customers, and doing it, should not be difficult.

*“Competitors' products and services should be analyzed regularly.”*

- Areas for organizational focus to ensure customer service include:
  - >Operational excellence: requires internal processes that minimize overhead and internal transaction costs and close relations with the customer and suppliers;
  - >Customer intimacy: enables forecasting of and immediate response to customer needs via tailoring of products and services; and
  - >Product/service leadership: entails continuous experimentation with innovative ideas.

### Analyzing customers and competitors.

- Create an efficient system for information gathering—information about customers, suppliers, alternative services, etc.
- Analyze this data regularly, and ensure communication organization wide—from frontline employees to decision-makers.
- Use the information gathered; be innovative; experiment.
- Monitor your progress.
- It is vital to be both present- and future-oriented, because market-driven organizations need to predict events and trends in the market before competitors.

### Getting the entire organization to focus on customer service.

- Create interdepartmental teams.
- Employ the skills of information technology experts. Information technology permits: decentralization of internal decisions – collaborative systems with suppliers for ordering;
  - >savings through reduced time in paperwork between you and your suppliers and customers;
  - >monitoring of distribution processes; and
  - >direct marketing.
- Identify and develop your organization's “distinctive capabilities.”
  - >determine areas in which your library excels and identify areas that can easily become distinctive.



Being market-oriented takes planning, courage, teamwork, and tenacity. But it's worth the effort. After all, it's your job to operate an information business. ■



## Promotion Gems

**H**umor — even self-deprecating humor — can play a positive role in marketing. Granted, you don't want to run a big splashy ad parodying your library or even a small newsletter article poking fun at its weak points. But **Marketing Treasures** recently came across a survey that used exaggerated self-deprecation to entice readers and draw a 100% response rate.

In a survey aimed at updating directory information, writer Julia Skalka paired each of her requests for information with a putdown of her mental abilities. The result was first laughter, then a good-natured desire on the part of the survey recipients to help someone who had cast herself as an incompetent bungler.

Among her requests, each accompanied by space for the correct information, were:

- Julia, you idiot, you've misspelled my name. Please correct it immediately.
- Julia, well, I see you are still non compos mentis. I switched departments six years ago.
- Julia, I see you've done your usual fine job of messing things up. Please correct my home phone number.
- Julia, where have you been? You should know by now that my job title has been changed.
- Julia, here is the list of our office's personnel and extensions. This is absolutely the last time we are going to tell you, so get it right.

If you work in a staid, conservative environment, this is obviously the wrong approach. But if your corporate climate allows for humor, consider this technique the next time you design a survey. If you're drawn to this idea and your organization is open to it, you should still apply caution when associating your name, department, or organization with bumbling incompetence. In general, this works best for informal, internal surveys. Give it a first try for something non-business related, like a library picnic or staff luncheon.

One unexpected by-product of this survey was increased contact. Over 40% of survey recipients called the writer to laugh with her about it. If you judge marketing efforts by their effectiveness, this survey, though unorthodox, was surely a winner. ■



## Worth Its Weight In Gold

*Editor's Note: Marketing Treasures originally came with sheets of library clip art and this column provided ideas on how to use the graphics. The clip art images from Marketing Treasures are now available from [www.LibraryClipArt.com](http://www.LibraryClipArt.com)*

**T**his issue of **Marketing Treasures** includes your new Clip Art sheet. The sheet provides original artwork in camera-ready form. These graphics are also available as EPS graphic files on 3.5" PC and MAC computer disks.

**Book Sale.** Everyone loves a bargain and can relate to yard sales, flea markets, or swap meets. Use this artwork to spark interest in your library's book sale.

**Garden Variety.** As varied and unique as gardens are, so are the services and media available at a library. This graphic lends itself to being a multicolored poster. Other themes for this image could be: Increase your growth through knowledge; cultivate, bloom/blossom.

**Bullish.** Take the bull by the horns. Our library has the information you need to take "charge."

**At the Beach.** What's missing from this scene? Don't forget to stock up on your reading material before heading to your summer getaway.

**Running Clock.** Get the information now — time is running short. In a hurry? We have evening drop-off receptacles for your book returns. Other themes: For people on the go..., Catch up on...

**Footsteps.** All trails lead to us — follow the path to the place with the information you need. Make tracks to your local library. Run, don't walk, to the nearest library. Don't be out of step; catch up on what's new at your library.

**Hungry.** Everything to satisfy your information hunger. We even have carry-out! Other themes: Get all the knowledge you can digest; We have something to please your pallet.

**Hammock .** Let your body relax while your mind goes adventuring. Books — your companions on the journey. Other themes: Take a break; Vacation through books; Armchair traveller; Find your own oasis. Get away from it all in a book.

**Girl & Dog.** Let us provide the information you need and you'll stay out in front of the pack. Books will never lead you astray. ■

## Sparkling Reviews

**Managing the Economics of Owning, Leasing and Contracting Out Information Services.** Anne Woodsworth and James F. Williams, II. Ashgate Publishing, Brookfield, VT. 1993 ISBN: 1-85742-018-7 \$49.95.

The law library community recently awoke one morning to find a major Chicago law firm information service and its staff literally wiped off the face of the earth, replaced with a contracted-out information services and an in-house do-it-yourself approach. Whoa!

While the ensuing finger pointing has brought marketing management to the front burner, it's been mostly in the form of promotion and increased visibility suggestions. That certainly seems to have been part of the problem. But there is a bigger issue here. Management thought that outsourcing would be more effective than maintaining the in-house staff.

So that you won't get caught short one day, **Marketing Treasures** thought it would be valuable to bring this book to your attention. Authors Woodsworth and Williams have attempted to identify and describe the most important issues to be considered about providing access to information.

The book offers a solid foundation of deciding factors and their implications. Starting with actual in-house information services, the authors move their reviews and discussions to information workers to resources, services and delivery to information technologies. This neat breakdown of information services permits the definitions and factors pointed out by the authors to be easily applied to a wide variety of settings. In other words, there's something here for everyone.

Typical of other Ashgate books, the page layout of this book is daunting. Page after page of text, with little or no visual breaks. Brace yourself with a strong cup of coffee to give you the fortitude you'll need to find the nuggets of useful information and points worth noting. Thrown into the mix are sometimes wordy comments from notable names in the library profession. There's a fairly decent bibliography in the back that looks like it could round out any research you might pursue on outsourcing. ■

## Treasure Tips

In our time-oriented society, we all depend on our watches. Recently watches have become trendy, with wild designs and personalized messages on the faces. If you think a promotional watch like this is too expensive for your library, think again! They are as close as your laser printer.

Chuck Green, author of **The Desktop Publishers Idea Book** suggests using desktop clocks to communicate marketing messages, give as awards, gifts or signs. He suggests designing your message, printing it on your laser, trimming it to fit the face of the watch, cutting a small hole for the clock stem and using spray glue to attach your design to the face of the watch.



You can find a variety of watch styles at your local office supply or hardware stores. Look for watches with easy to pop off faces and hands. Most are molded plastic and are battery powered.

Let your imagination carry you as you design your message. You can center your design around a piece of clip art or use all type. Include your logo to identify your library. Add color by outputting your design to a color printer. Clock numbers are placed 30 degrees apart. Find the placement easily by locating the center and drawing a line from it out to the edge and rotating in 30 degree increments.

Announce your hours by printing, Eastport Library, Open 9 till 9 Mon-Sat. Or if your library is assessable via online, you can say "Open Now, Librarians Are Standing By. Dial 888-8888."



If you are honoring library volunteers, print "Your Timing is Wonderful! The Eastport Library Staff Thanks You!" Or "It's Time We Thank You!" or "Your Time is Valuable to Us!"

Join the trend setters today and design your own personalized watch. The ideas are endless and your message will get noticed 24 hours a day! ■

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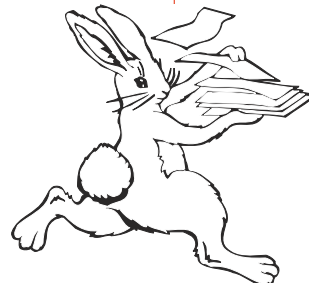
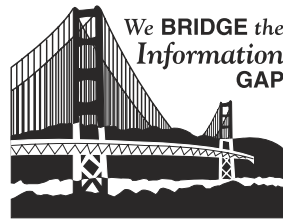
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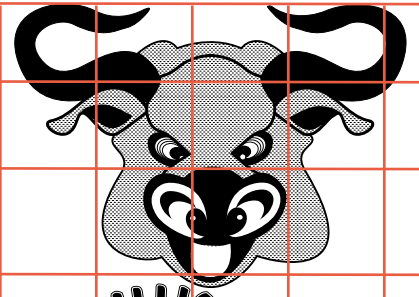
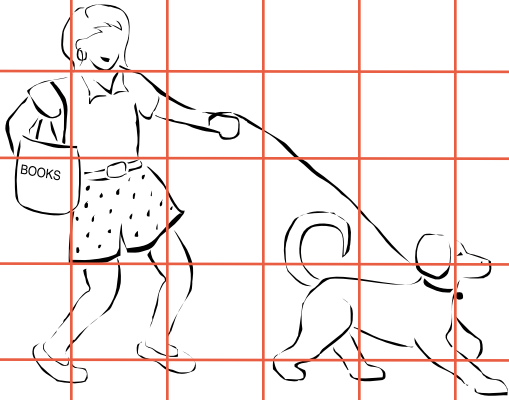
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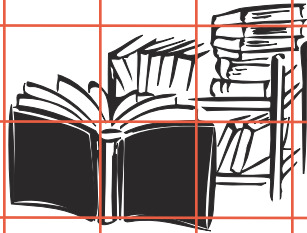
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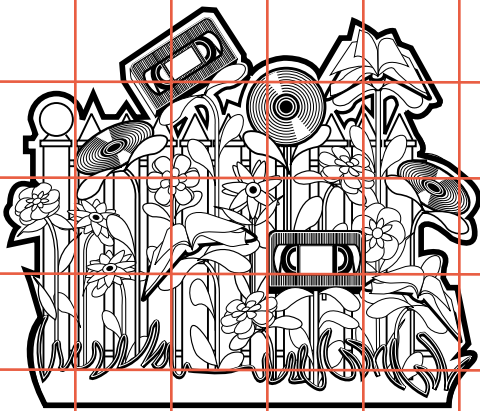




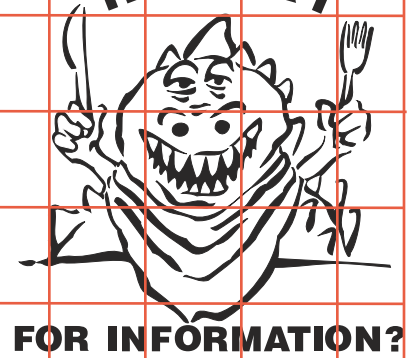
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