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# MARKETING Treasures

Ideas and Insights into Promoting Library & Information Services

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## Promote Your Library Through Your Newsletter

You're all ready to go with that newsletter—you have a handsome template, elegant backgrounds or paper, a versatile web site, all the necessities—except the contents.

There you are, staring at a blank page, and wondering what to write. Start with what you know. What are other newsletters covering in your organization, in other libraries, or in commercial settings?

You probably receive a pile of vendor newsletters through the mail or browse a few on the web. What catches your eye? What do you find interesting? What do you always read first (even if it is the daily political joke)? Where do you go for problem-solving information?

Now look at your newsletter from the point of view of your readers' needs. What are they interested in knowing? If you're not sure, ask them. What do you get the most questions about? This holds the key to content ideas. If people are consistently curious about your sources of information, or how to access your library services from remote locations, or what your staff members really do, then the newsletter is the place to give the answers. Follow your instincts and come up with a preliminary list of broad-based topics.

*"...look at your newsletter from the point of view of your readers' needs."*

## Marketing in the News

Now, add in the other focus of your newsletter: marketing. What do you have to promote? People who won't read junk mail (snail or electronic) will read an attractive newsletter which offers sound, practical, and interesting information along with your marketing message.

What are you trying to accomplish with your newsletter? You should be trying to get new customers and retain the ones you already have. But above all, your newsletter should be reinforcing the message that your library and staff contribute to the bottomline of the organization, and how that is accomplished.

Divide your reader base into specific groups: regular library customers, infrequent customers, noncustomers, stakeholders, colleagues, and upper management. Define the message you want to send each of these groups in your newsletter.

Infrequent customers, for example, need to be given a reason to increase their use of the library. You can accomplish that by informing them of services only you can provide, such as your clipping service, periodic demographic and marketing forecasts, or competitive intelligence reports. Regular library customers should be verbally rewarded for their wisdom in relying on your services.

Profile some of your "best customers" and let them sing your praises and tell others how library resources and services help them do

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## Pearls of Wisdom

**G**ive extra attention to your display at an exhibit —add a colorful banner. LSI's banner accessories include a magnetic clamp set for the top and bottom of paper banners to keep them taut and curl-free. Ceiling hooks snap into standard ceiling grids and chains or wires support your banner. The banner doesn't have to be put away when you come back from the show. Use it in your library to point the way to a new resource or to identify computer work stations. Banners have been a popular home accessory for years, why not bring them into the office as well? Call 1-800-243-4565 for a catalog.

**W**e're forever clipping things to send to a colleague or friend—it's the way we work. Why send these gems in an anonymous folder when you can personalize it? Hallmark's FYI folder is a 5x7 card with plenty of space to add that personal touch. The card features a brightly colored "FYI" sticker and goldfoil paper clip which will jump out at anyone going through a stack of mail, assuring that your clipping gets noticed. 1-800-404-0081 is Hallmark's toll-free catalog number.

**L**aminate your business card? If it's going to end up in someone's phone file, a laminated card will last longer than plain paper. And that's only one of the uses of lamination. Teachers have long known that laminated handouts resist wear and tear, are easy to handle, and change an ephemeral piece of paper into a long-lasting resource. The downside to lamination has been the high heat of laminating machines, which can melt your graphics and crack ink. DigiSeal offers low-temperature laminating machines and accessories for less than the price of a laser printer. The machine will process letter-sized pages, business cards and luggage tags. Now's the time to call DigiSeal at 800-243-4565 or visit their web site at <[www.usi-laminate.com](http://www.usi-laminate.com)>.

**I**f you're teaching that 25th class on the new database and want to add a little pizzazz to the handouts, try colored staples. Match staple colors to your library's logo or contrast with booklet covers. JAM Paper and Envelopes stocks staples in red, blue, green, yellow and magenta in boxes of 5000. The cheery colors will brighten the most routine handouts and reports. Call for a catalog at 800-8010-JAM.



**N**eed to emphasize a point in your newsletter or on a web site? Make it graphically, with a triangle or arrow aimed right at the important words. Go outside the margins, use a bright color and dare the reader to ignore your important message.

**C**atlovers should be happy with this issue of **Marketing Treasures** since it features the clip art from the Cool Cats collection of Dynamic Graphics Artwork Masterworks Series. The collection features some rather radical, hip cats doing various and sundry activities. All the graphics are in full color, ready to be printed on your color laser printer. Not only does the collection include 2 versions of each graphic, but you also get a GIF formatted file done in web browser safe colors ready to place on your web pages. You can check out the cat graphics, as well as other images, on the Dynamic Graphics web site at [www.dgusa.com](http://www.dgusa.com)



Our dark color in this issue is Pantone 2756. Here are two screens of our color, along with a solid color block for comparison. If you're a new reader of **Marketing Treasures**, go to the Nov/Dec 97 Treasure Tips article to learn about our dark color demonstration.



100%



70% screen



30% screen

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Back issues and samples are available. Contact our office for latest prices. Additional binders available at \$5.00 each. Promotional copies available for conferences & meetings. Call for details.

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: Cool Cats from Dynamic Graphics Artworks Collection.

*Library Newsletter...continued from page 1*

their job. Upper management needs to know how hard you work and how your services make those exciting products coming out of R&D possible.

You may not be able to communicate with every reader group in every newsletter, but try the old James Carville trick: post a sign where you can see it from your desk which says, "It's the customers, stupid." List each of the customer groups and look at the sign before you send out the newsletter. If you've been neglecting one group for a while, make a special effort to focus on them for the next issue.

Once you have that, it's time to take pen (or keyboard) in hand and write that masterpiece. Step outside the library when you write and view it as an interesting, newsworthy, and valuable organizational asset. Blend what your customers want to know with what you want to say to them. If you've been listening to your customers carefully, they've told you what's important to them. Add your promotion message to the mix, and you have an approach to the content of your newsletter columns.

### **All the News That Fits**

What's really newsworthy in your library? Surely there are important new resources, services or entire areas of information that will put your customers on top—tell them, with bold headlines and enthusiastic writing. Don't drown them with statistics and lists of facts. And above all, don't just list all your new acquisitions. Instead, highlight a title or two. Write a synopsis. Show why the title was acquired by telling how its subject contributes to an organizational effort. The newsletter is your best public relations tool. Be smart and demonstrate why you and your library are invaluable. Remember too that the newsletter can convey information through graphs, charts, and photographs. Use clever and pertinent graphics to convey "1000 words" visually.

Features are the longer stories which give background on the news. Here's your chance for a profile of a new staff member, a discussion of important information issues, or a focus on a particular body of knowledge critical to your organization—such as a review of a competitor's new product.

Current awareness can also be a part of your newsletter. Not everyone has time to follow

*We recommend establishing regular columns with defined topic coverage for your newsletter. This makes it easier to hand out writing assignments and to maintain editorial calendars. As the newsletter editor you'll appreciate the organized approach and time-savings a regular column treatment lends to the process.*

all the news on a particular topic that affects your organization—and you'll be doing them a great service to highlight the news stories, latest statistical reports, or quotations from the market in general about your organization's product. The electronic format is especially suited to daily updates. Be the CNN of your organization with headlines and brief summaries of important news which affects your organization and link to longer stories or refer people to the library for the full text.

A review article is another kind of news story—one which gives background, pulls in recent ideas from a number of sources, and digests the information for the reader.

The calendar is another part of the news. Highlight upcoming open houses, seminars, brown-bag lunches, guest speakers, and training on information systems. Depending on the frequency and quality of company communications, you can also use your calendar to highlight organization-wide events, like industry trade shows, appearances of company executives on news shows, health insurance open season, etc.

### **Not Just the FAQs**

Newsletters can be first aid for information problems. Ask your reference staff what are the top 10 or 20 recurring questions, and use your newsletter to provide the answers to the FAQs. These need not only be reference questions. Short answers on use of library resources, like how to save a search on that one tricky database, would be appreciated by many readers.

"How-To" can be a big component of your newsletter. The more high-tech the organization, the greater the need for simple, coherent explanations. This is the space for whatever company technology is bugging everyone. From the simplest points (how to download email attachments) to complex issues (Boolean searching on databases), write it to the naive user and he or she will thank you.

Don't talk down to your audience but provide practical, time-tested solutions that work in the real world. It may take additional research, but don't be surprised if there are people in the organization who would be intensely grateful to know what an "Error type 394" really

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## Inside Treasure

### Customer Service With A Smile

Your marketing is up to par. You have new customers coming out of the woodwork and the old ones are showing new interest in your library. People are appearing at your door, calling you on the phone, filling your email box, and wearing out your fax machine. Now what?

Now is when the rubber meets the road. All the enthusiastic promotion and PR in the world won't help you if you don't deliver good customer service. Do you know if your customer service meets your customers' needs and expectations? If not, it's time for a customer service checkup.

#### Your Mission...

How do you define good customer service? What are your goals? What are your benchmarks? The place to start is with your library's mission statement. As a service provider, you should have a mission statement which clearly states whom you plan to serve and what you plan to do for your customers. If you haven't defined your customer base, it's difficult to know what serves your customers' needs. Make sure you have a clear understanding of whose needs you serve and how you plan to take care of them.

Your planning should go beyond the mission statement. Do you have written policies and procedures for customer service? These policies need to define each product and service your library provides—and how quickly it will provide them. If your services include weekly financial updates on competitors' sales, your customers should be able to rely on those reports being delivered the same day each week. If you promise daily news headlines on your intranet, make sure they're posted first thing in the morning. If you offer in-depth background reports on some aspect of your organization's industry, state when you will deliver the reports.

Develop benchmarks against which you can measure your library customer service. Benchmarks can meet two needs: defining good customer service and showing upper management how well you meet (or exceed) the benchmarks. It never hurts to let management know what you're doing well.

*“Everything your mother told you about first impressions was right.”*

*“All the enthusiastic promotion and PR in the world won't help you if you don't deliver good customer service.”*

Of course, all the mission statements and policies and procedures in the world won't do you any good if they're gathering dust on a shelf or residing on a neglected floppy disk. Appoint a staff member to periodically (and by that we mean at least annually) review your performance. Don't leave the reviews to your organization's upper management. For one thing, upper management has its own definition of what is cost-effective work on your part. For another, librarians should review librarians, because we're the folks who know what the job entails.

#### Welcoming your customers

Everything your mother told you about first impressions was right. A customer's first contact with any service business can immediately win or lose that customer's business and loyalty. What first impression does your library make?

- For people who want to walk in, how easy is the library to find?
- Are your signs easy to spot?
- Is the library identified on maps of the building?
- Are new employees given an orientation which includes a tour of the library?
- If your hours are different from those of your parent organization, is that information readily available at the library door, in your newsletter, and on your web site?

Once inside, how are customers greeted? If there are a number of people who come in to look through the materials or to use a specific database or book, it's still important to greet them. Greeters at Wal-Mart are there to welcome shoppers and they also make sure that the immediate needs—a shopping cart, a basket, directions to the shoe department—are met. If you can't greet all customers, at least take note of the ones walking around uncertainly, as if they can't find what they need. They will appreciate an offer of assistance.

Your “virtual customers,” the ones who contact you by phone, fax, or email, are just as important as the ones who show up in person. Some of the same service standards apply:

- How easy is it to get the library's fax number or email address?
- Is full contact information provided on every communication that goes out of the library?

- Is your web site easy to find?
- Is it linked to other company web sites or to outside organizations whose customers might benefit from your services?
- How is the library listed in the corporate telephone and/or email directory?
- Are your listings cross-referenced to “information” or “reference”—or to “library” if you are using a different designation such as “knowledge management center”?

### Reference Triage

Perhaps you've known people who walk out of a business and then telephone it because they get a quicker response on the phone than in person. Speedy response is one of the most important aspects of customer service. Take a look at whose questions and requests are answered first, and then work on policies which will give both phone customers and walk-ins good, prompt service. This may mean reallocating staff so one person is mainly responsible for phones and another deals with people at the reference desk.

If possible, have a person, not voice mail, answering the phone during regular business hours, and answer within just a few rings. Service businesses are learning that a high-tech image requires “high-touch” service. People prefer to deal with a human being, not a machine. Of course, if your phone goes unanswered for long periods of time or people have to be put on hold every time they call, the voice mail option may be preferable. Your individual library's practices and customer base should determine how you solve the live answer/voice mail question.

Not all your customers contact you in person or on the telephone. Look at the priorities given to faxes and email requests. At a minimum, you should have procedures in place for regularly checking faxes and email. Your customers will let you know their perception of the fastest way to get your attention and your service. Look at the way most customers contact you, then improve the other access points so that the burden is shared among several staffers.

Occasionally, an “information emergency” will arise. It's best to be prepared for a deluge of requests and have a plan for reassigning staff as needed to cope with the situation. Your staff are only human and will occasionally

need vacations or sick-leave. Have a plan in place to cover that contingency as well. Not only do you need to have staff designated to cover jobs other than their own, but they should be trained to do so as well.

There is one more triage issue: occasionally you'll have to say “no” if a request is outside of the scope of your library. (This is where having a mission statement and a clear understanding of what business your library is in becomes valuable—you can not be all things to all people!) In that case, soften the “no” with a referral to someone who can help. Knowing how to access and deliver information builds trust, but so does knowing where to refer customers if you can't help.

*“Your customers will let you know their perception of the fastest way to get your attention and your service.”*

### Checking It Out

The customer service checkup should be part of your marketing plan and needs to be periodically reviewed. The review can be carried out in several different ways, and it might be a good idea to rotate assignments among staff members. For instance, a staff member can be assigned to review the customer service procedures and make sure that they are followed and that no problems are developing. If your staff is running into difficulties delivering the customer service you promise, a brainstorming session may be what you need to help clarify the problems and generate some creative solutions.

One of the best ways to assess customer service is to ask the customers themselves. Closing a conversation with “is there anything else we can do for you?” or “does this answer your question?” may give you extra information. Put a mail-back postcard survey in library products and review the responses. Post a brief survey on your web site. Set up a real or virtual suggestion box and read the responses.

Networking with other libraries can help you review your own service. If you're having problems meeting customer needs, ask for suggestions from colleagues.

The bottom line is that libraries are service-driven businesses. Good customer service keeps the customers coming back. And return business is much more cost-effective than having to drum up new business all the time—not to mention the loyal supporters it

*Library Newsletter....continued from page 3*

means and why it comes up every time they try to export a file. If your readers have desktop access to news or technical sources, you may very well be THE best person to teach people how to use them efficiently. All those years of training and experience in online searching make it second nature to us, but it may well still be a mystery to others.

“How-To’s” should not be used to give an exhaustive course in all aspects of a new online resource. That’s what training classes are for. Instead, use the “how-to’s” to help with specific roadblocks or individual tasks, like exporting information from one application into another, or sending distributed email.

### Let There Be Light

Everyone needs an occasional laugh. It’s fine to include a spot for trivia, quizzes, cartoons and jokes. A little humor goes a long way in lightening the work load, but don’t stop with the daily funnies or in-jokes.

Use sidebars to convey small bits of important information such as pointers to useful sources. Librarians are always coming across bits of information and saying to themselves, “That would help out our R&D department or our human resources staff....” and they usually send it along. You can hardly avoid being helpful—if you doubt this, monitor any librarians’ listserv and then look at one run by “civilians.” But rather than just emailing those folks at human resources about the neat site you found, post the URL in your newsletter for all to see. You never know when a marketing manager could use pointers in conflict resolution.

Never forget to identify who you are and how to contact you. It’s impressive to listen to NPR list its phone, email and snail mail addresses and then go on to credit all the folks, including the librarians, who contributed to the news show. Do the same for your staff. Let your readers know how to respond with comments, questions, or breaking news. There may be a budding journalist out there with an interesting feature to share or an idea for additional library services.

Our “Pearls of Wisdom” are there to help you find the supplies and devices you need to do your job. Are there similar gems you can share with your readership—sources for specialty reports, critical statistics, or even the

best places for business lunches?

### Advertising Pays

Advertising may not exactly spring to mind in an internal organizational newspaper which is paid for by your regular budget, but you can use the advertising concept creatively to get across vital information in an unusual way. First of all, if there are several organizational newsletters, advertise in each other’s publications. Carry a notice about “R&D News” or the parent organization newsletter’s current contents. This communicates that you care about what the rest of the organization is doing and that you’re well-informed. If you have a new library product or resource, introduce it through a graphically interesting ad instead of just an article. In advertising, link a benefit to each feature of the product you’re describing. This is a good exercise in reminding yourself of what your readers think is important.

Advertise special company events—the annual shareholders meeting, a new product launch, the opening of a new facility. Again, using the ad format allows you to pull in photographs and graphics, and really sets the announcement apart from the more routine communications in your newsletter. Don’t forget to advertise in other organization publications. A banner on another division’s web page, an ad for one of your new products, an announcement of an award written in a promotion, upbeat style will get faster attention than a paragraph on page (or screen) called “Library Updates.”

### Put the Paper to Bed



Now you’ve filled all those newsletter columns and gotten organized, it’s time to hand the newsletter over to a designer. Unless you are a graphic designer yourself, chances are your layout skills leave something to be desired, and besides, you’re not getting paid to do graphics. So let an expert work out the best layouts, fonts, and colors for your newsletter. Get your newsletter printed or uploaded as a PDF file on your intranet web site and start a clipping file for the next issue. Remember to collect comments about your latest issue and ideas for topics. And always keep sight of your newsletter goal—it’s a marketing opportunity—take advantage of it! ■

## Worth Its Weight in Gold

### Sizing Up the Competition

One of the most important tasks in marketing is really knowing your competition. Companies pay a lot of money to get current reports on what their competitors are doing. With end-user information sources popping up everyday, you may feel like a lone voice in the wilderness trying to win your customers back from the glitzy, go-go excitement of the Internet, in-house newsfeeds, and personalized current awareness services. Before you lose your grip on reality, step back for a moment and size up the competition. Maybe Moby Dick is really just Charlie the Tuna.

First of all, are you sure you have correctly identified your competition? Most companies in the same industry compete with each other in the same market with similar products. For example, GM competes with Chrysler and Toyota. But did you realize that for a car company the competition extends to other modes of transportation. Car companies with customers living in big cities like New York are also competing with taxis, subways, commuter trains and the Staten Island Ferry. This scenario doubles the marketing task, because first people have to be convinced that they need a car, and then they have to be convinced to buy GM cars.

Libraries face a similar problem when competing with end-user information sources. End-users love to play on the net and fish for information through databases and newsfeeds. You may hear them say, "Why do I need the library when I can get the information right off the Internet?" Certainly, some end-user sources are wonderful, well-designed, easy to use, and simple to learn. In that case, help train the end-users, and assist with troubleshooting, introducing enhancements, and monitoring quality of information the end-users find.

Some end-users, however, are in over their heads and don't know it. They're swamped by the sheer volume of available information, and don't know how to evaluate and sort what they retrieve. It's a case of information overload.

Now's the time to position yourself as the hero. First show the end-users they need

assistance, and then tell them you're the one who can help. Demonstrate your skill at finding current and targeted information. Explain that your specialized training allows you to locate the essential information more efficiently than they can. Point out that there is an economic advantage in paying you to surf the net and dig in the databases, while their time is better spent doing their primary jobs.

Another step you should take if you're not already is to add value to the information you find. Use your training in organizing information to deliver exactly what the customers need. Find the information, abstract it, sort it by relevance, analyze it, enhance it with background reports, and put it all in an attractive package. Pitting your expertise against amateur web hunters can win them back as your loyal customers.

If you can identify a particular company, information vendor or library as your competitor, get well-acquainted. If possible, become a customer yourself, as Sam Walton did when he wanted to know what other stores were selling. Shop the competition's services to see how well they do what they promise. Use competing information resources and centers to see what they can and cannot deliver. Buy a share of stock in your competitor (Microsoft, Netscape, Dow Jones, etc.) They have to send you an annual report—a great way to have your competition do competitive intelligence research for you!

Once you've identified your competitor, take a long, hard look at your capabilities and theirs. Are there some things they are better equipped to do than you are? If so, make the competition work to your advantage. Encourage your customers to use a personalized newsfeed, and then build up your own business in analytical reports and background studies which aren't available from your competitor. Help your customers become proficient at using databases accessible from the desktop, and then tell them about all the other related information sources you have available to flesh out the facts they find.

Competition is always out there and the best way to compete successfully is to know your enemy—and know yourself. ■

*"Once you've identified your competitor, take a long, hard look at your capabilities and theirs."*

## Sparkling Reviews

*Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing.* Harry Beckwith. Time-Warner AudioBooks. 1997. Jeffrey Jones, narrator.

*This is Marketing Treasures' first review of an audio book. Librarians rarely have time to keep up with their own professional reading, so it was worth taking a look at an audio version of a marketing book to see how it holds up. Audio books are usually condensed and frequently lose a lot in the translation to tape, but in this case the audio version is a stripped-down, no-nonsense, well-organized guide to the topic of selling services. Beckwith defines services as invisible products. "Selling a service is a promise that someone will do something," he contends. Services are not things you can pick up, examine, taste, or smell. Since you cannot show examples of your services, the marketing of your "invisible products" has to start with establishing trust. At a minimum, customers have to believe that you are competent to deliver the service they expect.*

Breakthrough companies forever changed our expectations about services: Disney showed us that family entertainment could be clean, reliable, very well-organized, and fun. Federal Express made everyone work harder to deliver goods on time, raised shipping logistics to an art form, and revolutionized catalog shopping. McDonalds developed the standard for fast-food restaurants.

And what is the secret ingredient? Marketing. Like breakthrough companies, cutting-edge libraries have the challenge and opportunity of redefining "information services." When you review the stories of successful companies you become aware of the underlying marketing theme. Be it a unique targeting and positioning strategy, an original well-defined product, or a savvy promotion mix, marketing has played a significant role in making breakthrough companies successful.

**Selling the Invisible** is packed with practical marketing information and critical advice for service providers. The tape reviews many of the basics of marketing: surveys, identifying what you do best, finding out what customers really want, fostering relationships and trust as well as explaining how to market your services. We recommend this tape for your next cross-country flight or daily commuter rides. ■

*Serifs are the little tails that come off of the letter form*

**T**

*A sans serif typeface has no tails*

**T**

*"At a minimum, customers have to believe that you are competent to deliver the service they expect."*

## Treasure Tips

### The Right Typefaces For Your Image

Typefaces are an important part of your library image. When you're designing a newsletter, a business card, a brochure or a web site, keep in mind that the appearance of the typeface sends a message even before your customers read a word of the copy. Select a typeface that shows who you are, then use the words to sell your library's products and services.

Serif typefaces like Times Roman, Caslon, Cheltenham, and Palatino have a serious, conservative look. You'll see them used extensively in newspapers, books, and advertisements for products which want to highlight their reliability. **Forbes** and **Parenting** magazines use serif fonts for their logotypes—saying "you can trust the information in here."

Sans serif typefaces, like Folio (which we use in **Marketing Treasures**), Univers, Arial, and Helvetica, have a clean, contemporary look. Sans serifs say, "hip, up-to-date, unpretentious." **Publish** and **Redbook** use sans serif logotypes, implying, "no old fogies here—we're on the cutting edge."

When selecting your typeface, keep in mind text needs to be easy-to-read, especially for the over 40-something eyes. Headlines should be attractive and catch the reader's eye. Once you have selected the typeface for your body copy and headlines, select one other typeface to highlight new topics or special messages. Be judicious—more is not necessarily better.

It worked for medieval copyists and it works today—the fancy initial capital letter grabs interest and compels attention. Italics, calligraphic, or script typefaces can all be used for initial capital letter treatments leading into a new page or topic.

Take time to experiment with the typefaces that came on your computer to learn their particular characteristics. Some typefaces are naturally more condensed than others. Some have round letter forms, others have square shapes. Be sure to match the typeface to the medium and message. A serif typeface that looks great on paper will need to be changed to a sans serif typeface when it gets translated into electronic format for a web site or a computer slide presentation. ■