



The electronic newsletter
with marketing ideas for
information professionals.

compliments of...
Chris Olson & Associates

A Note From Chris

Preparing a marketing plan can be such a chore. You know it's good for you, but oh, the agony and time it takes to prepare...and besides, it keeps you from doing your "real" work. In our lead article, Marketing Plan Essentials, we give you pointers for reining in the marketing plan monster and jumpstarting your 2005 marketing plans. (No, it's not too late!)

We commend OCLC for developing an advocacy and awareness campaign aimed at library budget decision-makers. Complete with professionally developed advertisements and resources, the campaign is sure to raise the visibility and value perceptions of academic and public libraries. [Join the campaign](#) by downloading a poster and customizing it with your library name and logo.

When was the last time you "shopped" your own library information service? Pick up shopping pointers in this month's [Promo Gems](#) column, "Think Like A Library Customer: Shop Your Own Services."

Look for our next issue March 16th, when our lead article will review a sampling of National Library Week celebrations being planned by colleagues.

Enjoy this issue of Marketing Treasures!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chris Olson'.

Chris Olson
Publisher

Marketing Plan Essentials

It's time to throw away the traditional marketing plan! The marketplace changes too quickly now for the classic, complicated, labor-intensive plan.

While good planning continues to shape an organization's goals and identify activities for achieving them, simplicity is now essential for creating nimble plans which can easily be adapted to changing market conditions. Think of your plan as a blueprint or a roadmap that can drive action and point the way. Here are seven steps for setting your compass.

1. Call your plan something other than "Marketing Plan." We call our plans Marketing Digests or Blueprints. Use a name that conveys the brevity of the plan that you're about to create. Don't laugh. Labels are everything these days, so a plan that is called a Marketing

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2. Identify your target markets. These are the primary groups of people you want to reach with your marketing activities. Called market segments, these are prospective and current customers you want to know thoroughly: Their information seeking and usage habits, and what they value most. How you describe your target market will depend on your library service environment-public, special, medical, legal, academic, etc.

3. Study the competition. Take a careful look at five of your nearest direct and indirect competitors. Every information service has competitors, both electronic and "brick and mortar," so make sure you know their strengths and weaknesses. You may want to start a file containing their advertising and promotion materials as well as their pricing strategies. Reviewing these items frequently will give you an idea of how often they advertise and sponsor promotions, how they are positioning their products, and where they are getting exposure to their brand name. An assessment of how competing businesses are doing will reveal surprising ways to help you keep your library's information business ahead of the game.

4. Lay out your game plan. Let the "5 Ps" of marketing be your guide.

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Product

Make sure you have the right products and services for your target markets - what they require, not what you "think" they need. Be sure to define your product including its special features and benefits so you can manage them as tangible assets.

Price

Are you selling your product or service at a price that makes your target market feel it's a good deal? Remember, a product doesn't have to have a monetary value or price tag for it to be perceived as being valuable.

Promotion

In recent years we've seen a blurring of the lines between marketing and promotion. Promotion activities, such as advertising, aim to "make the sale." Keep in mind that promotion is a component of a marketing plan, not the focus. We recommend that you outline the approach for your promotion strategy, and let your campaign plans get into the specifics of promotion endeavors designed to get people to purchase or use your products or service.

Place

Distributing your product to locations where your target customers can find it is critical. You might use a web site, a bookmobile, or a mall storefront to distribute your information services. How you deliver "the right product at the right time at the right place" is a marketing strategy.

Public relations

In some circles, public relations is combined with promotion to form a "4 Ps" approach to the marketing mix. We believe this approach confuses selling with communications activities aimed at informing and increasing brand visibility. We prefer to separate promotion and public relations so they can be managed on their own terms with different objectives, strategies and messages. The objective of public relations is to make people feel good about your information service. You want them to have positive recollections of your library, pleasant memories which will not only help bring them back, but also reinforce perceptions of high value.

5. Draft your plan of action. Now that you have a snapshot of your customers, an overview of market conditions with an eye trained on your competition, and a logical approach for your marketing efforts, it's time to prepare a plan of action. As we said earlier, your plan doesn't need to be a formal, lengthy document. A well-written outline or brief can help you keep things on track, giving you a concise overview to share with colleagues and decision-makers, while providing a reference point for taking advantage of changing marketplace conditions and opportunities.

6. Establish the budget. These are the expected expenses over the duration of the plan. Make sure you include both staffing and material resources you'll need and allocations. As you activate your plans you'll want to track actual expenses against projected budget figures so you can refine your estimating skills.

7. Track results to learn from successes and (gasp!) failures. There's no point in having a marketing strategy if you aren't going to stop and evaluate whether your efforts are paying off. Establish numerical targets and time limits in order to effectively measure the results of implementing your marketing plans. Regularly assess your progress and constantly adjust goals to reflect changes in market conditions. Evaluating your plan serves as a great guideline for what to do or not do in the next planning cycle.

Trust us. You need to put your marketing ideas and strategies on paper. But don't turn it into an enormous project, otherwise you may never do it. Instead, think "lite" and create a plan that addresses the important points, can achieve your marketing objectives, and is flexible enough to incorporate opportunities and changing marketplace conditions. Do that and you'll slay the marketing plan monster that is breathing down your neck.

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Treasure Tips

What is Drip Marketing?

Drip marketing is a strategy that involves sending out promotional items over a period of time to a set of prospective library users. The phrase drip marketing comes from the agriculture and gardening term, "drip irrigation." This is the process of watering plants or crops using small amounts of water over long periods of time.

Developed in response to the "Law of 29" - the belief that the average "prospect" will not turn into a client until they've viewed your marketing message at least 29 times, drip marketing campaigns can consist of electronic and paper postcards, newsletters, flyers, and brochures.

A well-executed drip marketing campaign can help avoid the "sell-produce curve". This is a situation where you're promoting your services until you find work to do, then find yourself so busy doing the work that you don't have time to promote. Then once the work is over, you start to promote again. If you find yourself in this cycle, you haven't done the necessary activities to keep a steady flow of customers coming to your library's information business.

Consistently doing something each month is the most effective way to use drip marketing to keep your name in front of your current and prospective library customers. A productive drip marketing campaign consists of a:

- Plan. You should have an activity planned for EVERY month.
- Strategy. Know how you will execute your plan.
- Target market. Which potential clients would you like to have as customers? Remember, part of your drip marketing campaign should always be aimed at current as well as potential clients.
- Consistent message. Using a slogan or phrase at every point you come in contact

with your target market is an effective and simple way to create a consistent message.

Start with the plan of action, using a calendar to develop a mix of promotion and publicity activities for the entire year. Then work in the details for each month. When you're busy, you'll appreciate that the upfront planning work is out the way and "drip marketing" is on an automatic timer, keeping your information services in front of your target markets.

Promotion Gems

Think Like A Library Customer: Shop Your Own Services

Many libraries employ traditional means such as surveys, marketing promotions, and relationship building to gain and retain customers. But are collecting statistics, questionnaires and shaking hands enough? We think Roy Tennant got it right in his November 15, 2004 *Library Journal* article, "[Five Easy Pieces](http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA479195?display=searchResults&stt=001&text=roy+tennant)" <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA479195?display=searchResults&stt=001&text=roy+tennant>. Roy suggests five activities for increasing the reader's "awareness of, and sensitivity to, user needs." Think like a customer. Now there's an idea that's so obvious you may have overlooked it as a marketing activity.

Imagine for a moment you aren't standing in the information center you know so well. Physically put yourself in your customer's shoes by getting away from your workstation and standing in the center of your library or in another location that will allow you to capture their viewpoint when they visit. What do you immediately see? Can you identify the reference counter within seconds? Is anyone there to greet you? How do the displays look? Are there hand-scrawled announcements cluttering tabletops? What you notice or don't notice may surprise you.

Another great way to get a firsthand glimpse into the library experience is to walk the path of a customer and the route they must travel to find the information they're looking for. Solicit assistance from one of the staff. Approach like a customer with a common information need and have your colleague take you through the process they'd follow to fulfill it. In other words, shop your own information service. Put on the hat of the mystery customer and ask typical questions. What will most likely result is a surprising lesson in customer service for both you and your colleague.

Now take this same view of your electronic environment. When you visit the library web site is it obvious where a customer would go to find contact information for reaching a live person? Step through several common information seeking patterns you've seen when watching a customer navigate your site and perform them as if you are an infrequent visitor to the site -- look for a report, search for a company profile, pull up information tidbits your customers often request. Are the results you get back easy to interpret? How much library jargon did you encounter?

Retail merchandisers hire professional shoppers to shop their stores to gain insight into the customer experience. Perhaps you and a colleague from a nearby library could shop each other's library and exchange observations. However you engage role-playing, we think this is an inexpensive method for discovering new ways to improve the customer experience in your library. Give it a try sometime!

Pearls of Wisdom

Valuing Libraries

Numerous studies show it costs more to not have a library than to have one. Whether it exists in the society at large or in an organization, libraries contribute to the economic prosperity of the community they serve. We recommend reading "[Valuing Libraries](#)" by Ian Mc Callum and

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Sherrey Quinn for more about interesting ways libraries contribute to the economic well being of the communities they serve.

<http://www.alia.org.au/publishing/alj/53.1/full.text/mccallum.quinn.html>

Libraries and Retail Space

Those of you interested in last month's article about libraries and bookstores may be interested in following up with the article "[Retail Interior Layout for Libraries](#)" by Christie Koontz in the Jan/Feb 2005 issue of *MLS*. <http://www.infotoday.com/mls/jan05/koontz.shtml>

Law Librarians Take Notice

The 13th National Legal Research Teach-In, organized by the American Association of Law Libraries, Research Instruction & Patron Services SIS, offers the opportunity to improve the skills of library customers and showcase your skills as an instructor and information provider. Teach-In 2005 is scheduled in conjunction with National Library Week (April 10-16, 2005). As in previous years, West and LexisNexis are offering FREE instructional and promotional materials. The Teach-In is described at http://www.aallnet.org/sis/ripssis/teach_in_05.html

OCLC Advocacy Campaign

The folks at OCLC have introduced a visibility campaign for 2005 aimed at raising the awareness and visibility of libraries to their funding sources. Not only has OCLC created a professional ad campaign targeting nonlibrarians who influence budget decisions and technology purchasing for libraries, but they also are providing coordinated advertising and poster templates which can be tailored to local library needs along with public relations ideas for generating visibility with decision-makers. While the campaign is aimed at raising public and academic library visibility, other libraries, networks, and associations can glean ideas and follow the OCLC lead. <http://www.oclc.org/advocacy/default.htm>

Pens, Pens, and More Pens

One of the components of a promotion campaign is the give-away-the item that carries your brand name and visual identity in customer offices, desks, or briefcases. Pens are popular promotion items because they can be inexpensive. Here are two good resources for all types of writing instruments. But before you click that mouse, consider this: the pen is going to represent your information services in your absence. Do you want a pen that isn't comfortable to hold? Has patchy ink? Looks like the 15 cents you paid for it? We have a client who uses mid price pens as give-aways. As a result, the pens carrying their logo and name are used more, giving them visibility over an extended period of time because people don't trash the pens -- the pens are too nice. Our client doesn't purchase thousands of inexpensive pens. Instead they purchase small quantities of upscale pens and hand them out during personal meetings, small events, and other targeted promotions where they want to convert interested prospects into customers, or thank loyal customers for their continued business and support. <http://www.myron.com> <http://www.atlaspen.com>



Golden Opportunities

March 15. Services Strategy: How to Get the Right "Mix" of Services. Computers In Libraries Conference Workshop. This workshop focuses on developing a service strategy and portfolio that best serves clients, today and tomorrow, without draining financial or human resources and is driven by the library's mandate and goals.

<http://www.infotoday.com/cil2005/preconference.shtml>

March 15. Managing Your Brand: Personal PR for the Average Librarian or Info Pro.

Computers In Libraries Conference Workshop. Each librarian or information professional must develop a strategy for their individual development as well as for increasing the visibility and credibility of their department or library. This workshop provides tips, templates, and techniques for doing just that. <http://www.infotoday.com/cil2005/preconference.shtml>

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March 19. Creating Customized Marketing Plans to Target Your Customers. Computers In Libraries Conference Workshop. This course reviews the basic terms and definitions of marketing and focuses on the tools you'll need for success. Then, through instruction, group discussion, and brainstorming, you'll create a customized marketing plan to take back to work. <http://www.infotoday.com/cil2005/postconference.shtml>

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Chris Olson & Associates : 857 Twin Harbor Drive : Arnold : Maryland 21012 USA
www.ChrisOlson.com

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Chris Olson & Associates helps information professionals with their marketing and communications activities. Projects range from service make-overs and brand development, to product portfolio management and web site marketing strategies, to promotion campaigns and logo identity systems. Clients around the world benefit from the insights and more than 20 years experience Chris brings to projects. Marketing team coach, management partner, product developer, brand advocate, web site designer—these are just a few of the consulting assignments Chris undertakes with contagious energy and unlimited ideas. Chris Olson stands ready to be your personal marketing advisor. Chris@chrisolson.com