

The Employee's Role in the Library Marketing Program

Library managers can find hundreds of books and articles about marketing. They can find hundreds more about management-employee concerns. But rarely will they discover any information evaluating the relationship between management-employee concerns and the employee's marketing role. In this issue, *Marketing Treasures* fills this gap for librarians and information service providers by examining key management-employee concerns and crucial employee marketing roles.

The Road to Marketing Success: Management-Employee Concerns

On paper, the plan seems simple: Inform employees of the effect of their actions on marketing, provide guidelines for proper conduct, and demand adherence to these guidelines. But as veteran librarians know, a host of management-employee concerns block the path to full employee participation in marketing. These concerns include work facilitation, empowerment, management support, recognition and reward, and monitoring and evaluation.

Work Facilitation—Work facilitation encompasses all areas that enable employees to perform the job they were hired to perform. Of greater importance for nonprofessional than professional staff, work facilitation includes training, skill development, and management clarity on regulations and priorities. Proper attention to these needs helps employees fulfill their marketing roles.

Training for nonprofessional staff often starts and stops with what workers need to know to perform their daily tasks. This should be just the beginning. Training should include basic knowledge such as library address and telephone number, hours, layout, and the names and titles of fellow employees. Cross-training enables staff to help each other during high traffic periods. And don't forget to train downward. No researcher should have to stall a client while waiting for someone else to change the copy machine toner.

Skill development brings training to the next level. For non-

professionals, skill development can include writing workshops, computer literacy training, and library education. Even for employees who will never have the credentials to answer a reference question, the more they know, the better they will be able to steer clients toward the right professional on your staff.

Management clarity on regulations and priorities, far from obstructing the liberty of workers, gives them the freedom to do their best work. Without this clarity, insecurity runs rampant as workers labor in uncertainty, always expecting a dressing down for transgressions made in ignorance. Their safest course becomes the slavish following of instructions. Library managers must realize that they might be the only member of the information center staff who understands the big picture. Even if priorities are obvious to you, take the time to spell them out for everyone else.

Empowerment—The freedom of employees to alter library procedures on behalf of a client constitutes their empowerment. Empowerment goes hand in hand with clarifying priorities and regulations. Knowledge of priorities serves to promote a smooth operation, make employees comfortable in carrying out their everyday jobs, and enable the library to carry out its mission. But rigidly applied beyond these important tasks, regulations and priorities can interfere with customer service.

The empowerment principle takes over when a customer has a need beyond the normal functioning of the library. Empowering staff means giving them the right to make changes in priorities when needed. The empowering library manager says to their staff, "Okay. You know the guidelines and you work within them, but satisfying this client requires a change in normal work procedures." Empowering employees gives them the power to put the customer first. It also promotes a sense of membership in the library team and pride in one's work.

Management Support—Management support forms the foundation on which good service rests. Without this

Pearls of Wisdom

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tic, bottles, cardboard, newspapers and junk mail, and many other recycling concepts and recyclable items. To request the latest mailing (printed, of course, on recycled paper) call 201/746-9620.

Are you a born Rembrandt, or do your most careful efforts make you think of Jackson Pollack on a particularly sloppy day? Either way, your attempts to create attractive and helpful signs, bulletin boards, and displays can only be helped by the use of proper tools. One source for artists' tools is the Visual Systems catalog. You'll find cutting and mounting aids, easels, binding systems, glue guns, even an electric eraser. Call 301/470-4300 or 800/697-0001.

Black can be a successful choice for promotional materials if you're on a budget. Black conveys elegance, sophistication, seriousness, and drama. But if you choose black, be aware of the possible psychological side effects of this color. Aside from its association with death, black is also associated with aggression. According to a study published by the American Psychological Association, football and ice hockey teams uniformed in black led their leagues in penalties. Experimenters attributed this not only to a self-perception of greater aggressiveness, but also a social perception, indicating partiality on the part of the referees. Don't let this stop you, however. Perceived aggressiveness is not all bad, especially when you want to be seen as fighting on behalf of a client. But, as with any color choice, it's best to know, before you make a statement, just what that statement says!

If you're tired of trying to remember where you saw a certain library item advertised or tracking down suppliers, or worse yet, if you've recently made a purchase only to find out later that what you "really" wanted was offered by another company, then you need *The Librarian's Yellow Pages*. Finally, a reliable source for library suppliers of all types—book jobbers, automation specialists, furniture, consultants—it's like having the exhibit hall of the American Library Association annual conference at your fingertips (instead of your feet!) The paperback book is published every year and looks just like the yellow pages of the telephone book. It includes mail-back request cards and indexes. And best of all it is free for the asking. Call 800/235-9723. Fax 914/833-3053.

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foundation, true empowerment cannot take place. If an employee works overtime on a client project, but in the process leaves paperwork stacked up, management must support that extra effort. Support can take the form of working out a time frame to finish the paperwork, calling on other staff members to help, or rolling up your sleeves and finishing it yourself. True management support makes customer service a pleasure—even an honor. Its absence makes customer service a cruel joke played only on those foolish enough to participate.

Monitoring and Evaluation—Monitoring and evaluation lead to better service through reward and punishment. In the past, management trends emphasized punishment. Managers evaluated employee work for errors and transgressions. Today's managers emphasize reward. When employees pull through for a client, they know that their work benefits not just the client and the library, but also themselves.

Although this focus on rewards is healthy, constructive criticism remains important. No employee should unwittingly continue to make the same mistakes. Managers who frequently praise will have an easier time criticizing. Employees listen more readily to criticism from managers who are also free with their praise.

Recognition and Reward—Recognition and reward grow naturally from monitoring and evaluation. Most managers heed the advise to criticize in private, but few remember to praise in public.

Formal recognition can occur at an award banquet, complete with plaques and certificates, speeches and applause. Public recognition can include announcements in library and organization newsletters. Informal recognition has tremendous value. A thank you in front of coworkers, or a tale of success enthusiastically related to a colleague, yields great positive effect for employee morale.

Reward is the partner of recognition. If you repeatedly thank employees for contributions, but fail to give appropriate raises or promotions, the praise can begin to sound hollow. Yet rewards needn't all be monetary. Christmas gifts, chances to attend seminars, a dozen doughnuts, or a bouquet of flowers all have their places as valuable rewards.

Better Than Ads, Smarter Than Promotions: The Employee at Work

In the best of all worlds, employees play a positive role in the library marketing plan. All employees—professional and nonprofessional—remember at every client encounter that their conscientiousness, presentation, and professionalism reflect on the library. These utopian employees not only present themselves well at every opportunity, but also seize the chance to create opportunities to showcase the library. In addition, they form an advance-warning system that alerts library management to the needs, impressions, and expectations of current and prospective library clients.

Image Projector—We all know the stereotypical bad images—cold, reserved staff with more important things to do than answer client questions; disorganized, unprofessional trainees with one eye on a magazine and the other on the clock. But even good libraries can lapse into image problems. Professional staff can seem distant when overworked. Nonprofessional staff can project indifference through ignorance of a few basic library facts. Careful attention to work facilitation will help your staff project professionalism, responsiveness, and courtesy. Monitoring and evaluation ensure that proper attention will be paid to image. Recognition and reward guarantee that employees will have something personal at stake in their role as image projectors.

Public Relations Agent—Employees serve two public relations roles: fan of the library, and citizen of the larger community.

As fans of the library, employees know about library public relations campaigns, support them actively, and speak of them enthusiastically. They participate in National Library Week celebrations. When a visitor's pen runs dry, they rush to offer a library pen. When a client sees them discard papers into a recycling bin, employees mention the highlights of the library's new recycling program. Work facilitation helps employees become knowledgeable library fans.

As citizens of the larger community, employees might teach for a literacy program or volunteer for park cleanup on Earth Day. Some companies promote good citizenship by offering employees the opportunity to volunteer on company time. Organizations that cannot afford this luxury should alert employees to the benefits of sharing their community service experiences through the organization's

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public relations tools, such as library or organizational newsletters. These reports cast a positive light on their workplace. Plus, they constitute a powerful type of recognition and reward.

Service Deliverer—Employees deliver a service when they strive to understand the needs and meet the expectations of clients. Whether employees perform top-level research and analysis or staff the circulation desk during lunch, they should understand their role as service deliverer.

Professional staff must understand that their work will be judged on the client's *perception* of its quality. Client expectations determine these perceptions. If a client expects fast delivery, a slowdown, even if the work demands careful work, counts against the library. Nonprofessional employees also play a role in service delivery. Whether they answer the phone or process paperwork, they must remember that they are links in the service delivery chain. Putting work facilitation and empowerment principles into play helps employees fulfill this marketing role.

Trouble Shooter—When library employees spot danger on their own, they become trouble shooters. Trouble shooting takes two forms: resolving client problems as they arise, and alerting management to troubles endemic to its systems. Resolving client problems requires alert, involved employees empowered to step in and offer the help they deem necessary. Trouble shooting within your systems requires management support.

Visit any employee lunchroom in any industry, and you'll hear employees gripe about the major client complaints. If clients complain about waiting time, employees will complain about unreasonable demands for quick service. Listen carefully and you'll find that employees not only analyze these problems with a great deal of insight, they also have concrete ideas of what management could do to improve matters. But these solutions rarely reach management. A good library team brings these gripe sessions out of the lunchroom and turns them into productive meetings that result in conditions that enable employees to serve clients better. Converting employees into attentive, active trouble shooters demands that empowerment, recognition and reward, and management support are part of the workplace culture.

Customer Service Representative—Top employees switch into this role whenever they discover that clients aren't getting the help they want. This task can prove tricky, particularly when employees can clearly see what

prevents a client from getting the help she needs. The best employees learn to switch off their understanding of the library's limitations while turning on their understanding of what the client wants in order to find a solution. Empowerment and management support make customer service a positive experience for employees as well as for clients.

Library Information Dispenser—As library information dispensers, employees become human advertisements. Professionals should be able to report on the library's resources, products, skills, and client options. Nonprofessionals need a baseline knowledge of library hours, phone numbers, and address. No part-time employee, caught in the cafeteria and asked about library hours, should have to say, "Well, I only work mornings so I'm not sure what time we close." Not only does the library lose a chance to inform the client about its hours, but it makes the library seem less professional and the workers appear unaware of the needs of clients and potential clients. Work facilitation is the key issue here.

Needs Identifier—The needs identifier serves as an informal market researcher. Library professionals acting in this capacity advise the library in resource investment. Nonprofessionals can help with their knowledge of library layout by indicating when a frequently consulted resource lies in an out-of-the-way place. Circulation clerks can keep records of client demands. All staff members can focus on client and organization needs by reading as much intraorganizational correspondence as they can, by attending meetings, and by maintaining good communication with clients and prospective clients.

Whether they know it or not, employees play these marketing roles, for better or for worse, every work day. Discussing management-employee concerns with your staff will help them perform for the better.

Addressing these concerns is never easy. Egos clog the way, the most generous programs meet with resistance, and some employees deem it their responsibility to work against authority. But management-employee concerns usually lie at the root of a vast range of service problems. Effort expended confronting these concerns rarely goes unrewarded. An investment of time, energy, and careful thought goes a long way towards solving these problems, creating a better work environment, and furthering your marketing plan.

Worth Its Weight in Gold

If you're looking for a challenging and fascinating publicity campaign to increase library traffic, consider this unusual idea:

The Ultimate Noah's Ark, a beautiful coffee table book by Mike Wilks, contains a contest, a puzzle, and a lot of education. The book begins with an introduction to biological theories, from the Big Bang through creationism, and continues into modern taxonomy. But the heart of the book is on a pair of facing pages. One shows a magnificent panoply of creatures, a busy poster teeming with life. The text facing the poster announces the book's challenge to the reader: "The carnival commences and 707 animals have gathered to celebrate," it begins. "There are 353 different animals each accompanied by their mate, but one among them came alone. Name this lonely creature and you could win the prize." The \$10,000 prize will be awarded to the winner who not only discovers the identity of the missing creature, but also best describes (in 30 words or less) "Why the Earth is the Ultimate Noah's Ark."

Alas, this task is not just a matter of scanning the drawing for a single, awkward, animal standing sullenly to the side. The animals in this book, like good guests at a cocktail party, have mixed well, and finding the unique species is no easy task. Luckily for the reader, the drawing is broken up into sixteen enlarged sections. Between the drawings are brief bios of each species, which can serve for the participating public as a mark-off list where they can record the location of one species or another. Promotion-hungry libraries can cut up two copies of the book and reassemble them on a wall display to form a brilliant, impressive poster for library visitors to examine in their search for the species gone stag.

Posted in the library, or used as a travelling exhibit throughout your organization, this display promises excellent drawing power. Library customers who enjoy the challenge of puzzles won't be able to resist studying the panels for the identities of the various creatures. As the search takes shape, the library can sponsor an in-house contest for the best essay to submit with its entry.

Entries are due by February 1, 1995. For more information, contact Sally Anne McCartin at 518/789-4747. The book is published by Henry Holt & Company; ISBN: 0-8050-2802-1; \$24.95.

If your library wins, you get to turn a promotion into an extraordinary \$10,000 fund-raiser—making this book worth its weight in gold!

Promotion Gems

The American Library Association's teleseminar "Achieving Breakthrough Service in Libraries" took place on Thursday afternoon, May 12. Over 11,500 people attended the seminar at 445 sites, including some in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Bermuda, and Canada.

Complete with case studies, breakout exercises, and live discussions, this seminar covered four main topics: creating the customer-driven library, expanding library reach and service, using teamwork for better service, and measuring service excellence. The program concluded with a question-and-answer session led by professors James L. Heskett and W. Earl Sasser, Jr., of Harvard Business School.

The first part introduced customer-driven service as the key to "breakthrough service." Traditional service models entail providing services and evaluating success based on how satisfied customers are with those services. Customer-driven breakthrough service entails discovering client needs and then designing services and systems to satisfy those needs.

In the second part of the program, on expanding library reach and service, Professor Heskett spoke of the changing constituencies for neighboring libraries when budget cuts force the closing of a public library. The analogous event in corporate, legal, and medical libraries occurs when other departments close down or lose staff. The library can take this opportunity to expand its duties, performing greater service for the organization and at the same time increasing customer satisfaction.

The teleseminar's third section, "Using Teamwork for Better Service," built on the principle that "employee satisfaction is related to the capability of the employee to solve customer problems." Professors Heskett and Sasser advocated restructuring job descriptions and eliminating traditional barriers to teamwork.

The fourth section, a self-audit, required participants to rank their library in eight different areas, including "providing inspired leadership," "creating listening posts," "rethinking human resources," and "giving employees latitude to deliver results."

You can order the two-hour videotape of the teleseminar from ALA. Call 800/545-2433 and press 1 to order. *Marketing Treasures* will present a fuller exploration of the principles of breakthrough service in a future issue.

Sparkling Reviews

Turning Lost Customers Into Gold . . . and the Art of Achieving Zero Defections. Joan Koob Cannie. Amacom, New York, NY 1994. ISBN: 0-8144-5110-1 \$19.95.

“Achieving zero defections,” that is, losing no customers, is a worthy goal for any business. But it is essential for an organization library with a finite client base. An unsatisfied client can poison the limited well of an organization library. Even if you have the chance to drum up additional business, winning the attention and patronage of new clients costs far more than maintaining the loyalty of current customers. And libraries committed to finding new business benefit from existent customer loyalty. Marketing is a simpler task with word of mouth and the easy persuasion of testimonials on your side.

Cannie’s book is divided into two parts: Regaining Lost Customers and Keeping Customers Loyal. Few marketers relish the prospect of confronting lost customers, and surely some will be tempted to skip Part 1. But the wise reader will resist that temptation. Confronting lost customers and working to regain them provides the groundwork for keeping customers loyal as well. The research you’ll do, even the simple fact that you’ve approached them, scores points in your favor before you take a single step to remedy the situation that lost their patronage.

Cannie’s steps to customer recovery include establishing an information system, benchmarking, collecting and using data, and getting feedback from defectors. Steps for keeping customers loyal include listening effectively to customers, breaking down barriers to customer loyalty,

using teamwork to keep customers, and building the “zero defections culture.” Throughout the book, readers find questions, exercises, and worksheets to guide them toward the zero defections culture. The book is most helpful when it analyzes case studies. The questions on a sample telephone survey, for example, are reviewed in terms of the principles of the book. At another point, Cannie discusses the results of a noncustomer survey and an ex-customer survey for the same bank. The discussion leads to an understanding of perceived strengths and weaknesses and a list of actions to take based on the survey information.

Turning Lost Customers Into Gold is a cut above many of the service books currently popular. Its advice is focused, clear, and accessible. Its argument is well thought out and persuasive. Helpful strategies are explained and poor strategies exposed. Librarians on the road to zero defections will find this a book that speeds them along their course.

Coming this fall—*Marketing Treasures* clip art on computer disk! Details will be published in the July/August issue.

SLA Conferees: Don’t forget to stop by the Chris Olson & Associates booth at the conference—booth #409 Hilton. Talk to Chris about *Marketing Treasures*, and your library promotion activities. While you’re there, enter the drawing to win the new Chris Olson & Associates t-shirt!

The Crystal Ball

June 10-11 “Marketing & Public Relations.” Middle Management Seminar at the Special Libraries Association conference in Atlanta. Contact: 202/234-4700.

June 13 “Marketing Swap & Shop.” 1:30 - 5:00 at the Special Libraries Association conference in Atlanta. Stop by and see the winners of the Best of Show & soak up ideas.

June 14 “Marketing Swap & Shop Secrets.” 10:30 - 11:45. Chris Olson will be joined by other judges of the Swap & Shop to point out and explain what made a winning entry in this year’s Best of Show.

June 13-15 “Managing Superior Customer Service.” A three-day course offered by the American Management Association in San Francisco, CA. Contact: 518/891-0065.

June 16-17 “Low-Cost Multimedia.” A two-day seminar offered by Seminars in Usable Design in Denver, CO. Also given August 4-5 in Boston, MA. Contact: 303/234-0123.

June 27 “Producing, Designing, Editing, & Writing Newsletters.” A one-day seminar offered by The Newsletter Factory in Richmond, VA. Also July 11 in Harrisburg and July 14 in Pittsburgh. Contact: 404/955-2002.

July 9 “The Information Broker’s Seminar.” A one-day seminar given by The Information Professionals Institute in Seattle, WA. Contact: 713/537-8344.

July 11-14 “Fundamentals of Marketing: Modern Concepts and Practices.” A four-day course offered by the American Management Association in Boston, MA. Also offered July 26-29 in New York, NY and August 8-11 in Chicago, IL. Contact: 518/891-0065.