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MARKETING *Treasures*

TM

Ideas and Insights into Promoting Library & Information Services

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Creative Problem-Solving: A Key to Marketing Success

Editor's Note: Everywhere I turn I find librarians asking for ideas and samples for their promotion programs. Messages on the various Internet library listservs hold requests for open house themes, logo designs, brochures, and product brand names, especially for automated systems. And while most of these requests are met with a plethora of responses, I wonder what happens to those requests that meet with little or no worthwhile response. Maybe it's time to take a fresh approach to creating library promotion programs—time to stretch our creative wings, and let our innovative ideas soar. To that end, I have asked contributing writer, Connie Springer to synopsize an excellent book recently received for review.

101 Creative Problem Solving Techniques by James M. Higgins is a book for every marketing librarian's bookshelf. Not only is it packed with descriptions of creative thinking techniques, its written presentation of the 101 methodologies makes it a perfect resource for when your creative strategies need rejuvenation. Here, now, is an overview of some of the creative thinking techniques you will find in this valuable book. I trust you will be able to identify the technique best suited to your library marketing program to help you generate innovative ideas and original approaches to the challenges facing you.

In an increasingly tight and competitive market during tough economic times, libraries and information centers are being required to analyze themselves and their markets in order to justify their budgets and prove that they fulfill

"Studies have clearly shown that the key to success in marketing and public relations relies on a strong emphasis on creativity and innovation in finding solutions to the problems of organizations."

their mission. Failure to market and publicize the information center may lead the potential user to go elsewhere for information or to consider the center's functions as nonessential.

Research, planning, product and service development, understanding the wants and needs of target markets, and selling the product through advertising and promotion—a strategic combination of marketing and public relations—are all components of an active marketing plan in the library field. Studies have clearly shown that the key to success in marketing and public relations relies on a strong emphasis on creativity and innovation in finding solutions to the problems of organizations.

To help both individuals and groups activate their creative juices in the problem solving process, management professor James M. Higgins has assembled a compendium of motivating approaches aptly titled, *101 Creative Problem Solving Techniques: the Handbook of New Ideas for Business*.

Higgins defines creativity in the organizational world as the process of generating something new that has value. An innovation is the result of a firm or an individual making money from creativity.

Discouragingly, for most organizations and individuals, creativity has not been incorporated as a major part of the problem-solving process. People are not encouraged to be creative; in fact, in most spheres of life creativity is actually discouraged. Yet Higgins insists

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Pearls of Wisdom

Move over, Hallmark, and make room for Joy Winkler of the Professional Library of Immanuel Medical Center. Ms. Winkler designed her own National Library Week greeting card! The card, sketched on pale rose colored paper, depicts a sketch of a cardstand with the heading "National Library Week" and cards arranged under the headings of various types of libraries: children's, institutional, law, medical, special, school, public, general, and traditional. Inside, the text reads "So many libraries . . . so many reasons to celebrate!" The message "Happy National Library Week" stands above Joy's name and the name of her library. Great idea Joy!

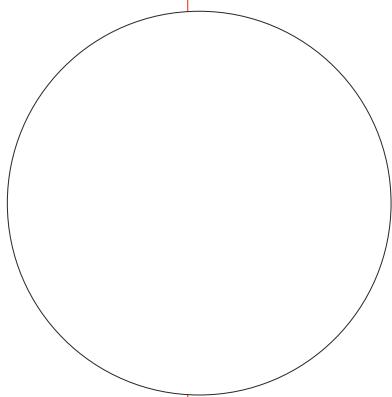
Looking for just the right touch to enliven envelopes, spruce up certificates, and perk up packages? Then call the Stephen Fossler Company, manufacturers of deluxe embossed foil seals, including the one affixed to this page. The seals are printed in vivid colors giving them eye-catching appeal. Use these seals to display your logo on presentation folders, cards, and bookmarks. For more information, call 800/762-0017.

A dash is a dash is a dash, you might say, but beware: an em dash is not an en dash, which in turn is not a hyphen. What's the difference?

Let's start with the em dash. The em dash (—) is the most commonly used dash. It is most frequently employed to signal a sudden break, such as "library clients—both corporate and legal—are invited to attend."

The en dash (–), which is half the length of an em dash, is used between numbers and dates such as 1965–1972 and pp.16–28. The en dash is also used between capitalized names as a substitute for the word "to" as in "ancient–modern history."

The hyphen (-), which is shorter than the en dash, is used to divide a word that runs past the end of a line of text. It also links the parts of compound words like t-shirt and e-mail, and



has many technical functions such as breaking up letters to achieve a stuttering effect, showing that a word is a prefix or suffix, and turning individually pronounced letters into verbs, as in the sentence "the graduate student was T.A.-ing for the professor."

Attention medical librarians! Looking for promotional materials? Check out Highsmith's line of t-shirts, bookmarks, posters, buttons, post-it notes, mugs, invitations, computer papers, and even balloons. Slogans for these products include "The Healing Team: Physicians and Librarians Working Together," and "Knowledge: The Prescription for Achievement." To request a catalog, call 800/558-2110.

You can't be everywhere at once, but your knowledge, wisdom, and helpful counsel can. How? By posting notices, instructions, and helpful hints throughout the library in handy peel and stick pockets. These see-through pockets are backed with a clear adhesive that affixes to almost any surface. Insert your reminders, advice, and words of wisdom into the pockets and there you are—everywhere you want to be. Do your clients need a computer cheat sheet? Attach a pocket to the edge of the monitor. Hang one by the phone for quick reference. Stick them on file cabinets, bookshelves, bulletin boards, doors—anywhere you need to transmit information and answer questions. For more information,

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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.

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Creativity...

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that skills in creativity and in creative problem solving can be learned. Innate intuitive abilities can be tapped, thus initiating the kind of innovative thinking that leads to new products and services and more effective organizational processes. Ultimately, however, the organization's culture must support and even require innovation in order for innovation to occur.

Higgins divides the creative problem-solving process into eight definable stages:

1. analyzing the environment (gathering information)
2. recognizing a problem
3. identifying the problem
4. making assumptions
5. generating alternatives
6. choosing among alternatives
7. implementing the chosen solution
8. control (evaluating results)

Creative processes are applicable to all eight stages. However, Higgins devotes the bulk of his discussion of creative problem-solving techniques (70 out of 101) to the fifth stage, generating alternatives.

The following is a brief sampling of some of the techniques suggested by Higgins. For a comprehensive discussion, consult the handbook directly.

Analyzing the environment (Stage 1)

■ Benchmarking (variation: Best Practices)
A tool created by Xerox Corporation to identify potential problems, benchmarking occurs when a firm compares its practices with those of the firm that is considered the best in its industry. In GE's version, "best practices," an organization compares itself with another organization that is considered the best in certain practices, regardless of the industry in which it operates. The results of these comparisons are used as goals for improvement and for motivating change.

Recognizing a Problem (Stage 2)

■ Camelot
Create an idealized situation, a Camelot. Now compare it to the existing situation. What are the differences and why do they exist? What problems or opportunities do the differences suggest?



■ Inverse Brainstorming

Take what appears to be a satisfactory situation and see what potential problems you can find with it.

■ Listing Complaints

To uncover problems, ask employees, customers, or other constituents to brainstorm a list of complaints, either individually or in groups.

■ Role Playing

To give yourself new insights into a situation, put yourself in someone else's shoes, for example, a customer's. It may allow you to solve potential problems before they become real.

■ Suggestion Programs

Sony insists that all its employees contribute thoughts and ideas, not just manual effort. The company gets an average of eight suggestions a year from each employee. Most of the ideas are taken seriously.

Identifying Problems (Stage 3)

■ Bouncing It Off Someone Else

Talk to someone else about a problem. Suggest what you think the problem is and elicit the other person's reaction. Two heads are often better than one when it comes to problem-solving.

Generating Alternatives (Stage 5)

■ Free Association

Say whatever comes to your mind relative to a word you just wrote or to a one-or two-word definition of a problem. Don't expect to find solutions per se, but look for a trail of thoughts that might lead to a solution. This technique was used by Campbell Soup Company, with product developers randomly selecting the word "handle" from a dictionary. Through free association the word "utensil" was suggested, followed by "fork." A participant joked about a soup that could be eaten with a fork, and Campbell's Chunky Soups was born.

■ Deadlines

Since many creative individuals work best under pressure, deadlines are effective in generating alternatives and inspiring creative work. A deadline increases pressure and stimulates more right-brain activity.

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Creativity...

...continued from page 3

■ Fresh Eye

Bring in someone from the outside who doesn't know anything about the problem, perhaps someone from another department or company. Or bring in a consultant, someone who is an expert on creativity but not an expert in your particular field. Such a person may see the problem with a fresh eye. Higgins even suggests getting a six-year old to look at the problem—not having been socialized to be uncreative, a child will say what he/she thinks.

■ Name Possible Uses

Naming the possible uses for an item helps find new uses for a product. For instance, Velcro is a component of over 5000 patented products, with uses as diverse as holding together the chambers of the Jarvik-7 artificial heart, attaching parts of the rocket in the space shuttle, and holding stamps to a letter carrier's mailbag. The same approach can be used to find solutions to other problems. For instance, when looking for a name for a product, try listing possible uses for it to suggest a good name.

■ Organized Random Search

Pick a page of a dictionary at random and use the words on that page to generate ideas. Sometimes you pick a word on the page and begin to make associations. This technique is often used by artists, writers, and others who depend on creativity for a living.

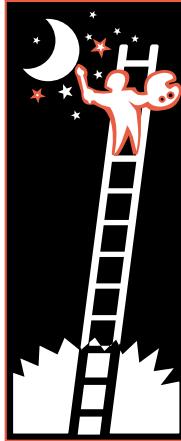
■ Personal Analogies

Try to see yourself personally involved in the situation, perhaps through role playing. In a personal analogy session at Gillette, the managers saw themselves as human hairs, imaging how a strand of hair would observe life (eg. feeling lifeless, hating to be blown dry, etc.). The result was Silkience, a shampoo adapting itself to the different needs of different kinds of hair.

■ Rolling in the Grass of Ideas

Collect as much material as you can about the problem at hand in an easily readable form, eg. ideas that others have given you, summaries of related articles. Read through this material as rapidly as possible in one sitting. Then ask yourself what it all means. Are there any patterns? If so, what do they suggest? What solutions pop into your head?

"In today's competitive world, innovation impedes stagnation. Allow yourself and your staff to think intuitively in solving your library's marketing concerns, and your information center will not only survive, it will thrive."



■ Sleeping/Dreaming On It

Think rationally, very hard and long about a problem just before going to bed. Put it out of your mind and then go to sleep. While you are asleep your subconscious continues working on the problem. When you wake up in the morning, you may have an interesting alternative for solving the problem. Robert Louis Stevenson, for example, literally dreamed up his characters of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

■ What If...?

Ask yourself, "What if something happens, what would the consequences be? What actions should you take?" According to Higgins, about 80% of astronaut training is responding to "What if" situations.

Group Techniques

■ Brainstorming

Created over 60 years ago by Alex Osborn, an advertising executive, this widely used technique involves having the participants offer alternative solutions in spontaneous fashion as they think of them. Wild and crazy ideas are encouraged.

■ Japanese Creativity Techniques

The group-oriented Japanese tend to use problem-solving creativity techniques derived from brainstorming. Participants present their ideas to a circle, usually anonymously in writing. The ideas are then analyzed for their potential use in solving the problem at hand.

■ Scenario Writing

The group thinks and writes about scenarios dealing with the organization's potential future. Problems and opportunities possibly resulting from any of the scenarios are envisioned, and the problems are solved or the opportunities taken advantage of. Creating scenarios may lead to suggested solutions.

In today's competitive world, innovation impedes stagnation. Allow yourself and your staff to think intuitively in solving your library's marketing concerns, and your information center will not only survive, it will thrive.

101 Creative Problem Solving Techniques: the Handbook of New Ideas for Business. James M. Higgins. The New Management Publishing Company, Winter Park, FL, (407-647-5344) 1994. ISBN: 1-883629-00-4. \$17.95. ■

Inside Treasure

Business Information Services with a Smile

by Maxine Bleiweis, Director
Lucy Robbins Welles Library
Newington, Connecticut

Maxine Bleiweis is the library director for the public library in Newington, CT, a suburb of Hartford. She has delivered presentations at the Public Library Association and the Library Public Relations Council on economic development and the public library. President of the Connecticut Library Association, Maxine is currently writing a book on the topic of economic development and the public library to be published by Neal-Schuman by the end of the year. The insights she shares in this article are universal for public and special libraries seeking to serve a specific target market.

When the economy is on a downturn, and there's a chance of library services being cut—whether it be in a community or a organization—it's critical for librarians to demonstrate how information services are an essential ingredient to success.

Smart business decisions are based on good instincts and good information. Yet many business people are unsure where to turn for that information. The public library in Newington, CT (pop. 30,000), decided to explore serving the business community in a more direct fashion. Using focus groups as a primary method for gathering information, we heard participants say over and over that their most often used sources of information were salespeople, others in their industry (i.e. the competition), and their family. They also said that from their perspective the library was a place that did not have up-to-date information, was a place for children, and where good novels could be found.

From the focus group interviews it was clear that participants needed information from an impartial, reliable source, and yet the library didn't fit into that picture. Our challenge was to turn that perception around in order to deliver much needed information and to be perceived as an essential service to the community and its organizations.



“If your staff expects anything from the customer other than knowing what their question is, they’re expecting too much.”

Our Approach

Based on our experience, here are some steps we recommend you take when introducing information services to your business community or organization.

Assess your resources. Do you have the staff expertise to answer questions? Do you have the budget to support the materials

you need to answer those questions? Do you have alliances with other organizations such as government agencies, other librarians, and Chambers of Commerce where you might need to refer the questioner? Do you have a library facility that will impress the customer who may need to come in?

If you're lacking in any one of those areas, change what you can. Rethink hiring with an emphasis on customer service, technological skills for on-line searching, and self-esteem and a sense of adventure.

Rethink the service you provide. Special librarians have long known that they don't hand a book or a periodical to someone who asks a specific question. They hand them the answer. The librarian should be prepared to do all the legwork required to answer the question. They make copies of whatever materials are needed, highlight important passages, and realize they may not get the materials back. If your staff expects anything from the customer other than knowing what their question is, they're expecting too much.

Be responsive to telephone inquiries. Where and how is the telephone answered? People like to know with whom they are dealing. Saying your name conveys the feeling that you are taking responsibility for the transaction.

Are you prepared to answer the telephone when they call? Business questions usually come early in the morning, so be sure to be ready. It's often not feasible or necessary for a business person to physically come to the library, so examine your policy regarding faxing materials to requestors.

Listen to the customer. Hold focus groups with segments of your targeted population

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Business...*...continued from page 5*

to determine their needs and interests. One important tidbit we learned was that most busy people don't have time to read all their mail, never mind the four-page newsletter we labored over. "Quick" is the key word. Customers have to know it's worth their time to read, so you have to establish a reputation for meeting their needs before you can expect them to read anything you write.

Experiment! We paired three different librarians with three different companies before promoting our services to businesses. For a two-month period, each business agreed to ask questions and evaluate the answers based on quickness of response, accuracy, and to assign a value of the answer to their business. The result was surprising. We were underwhelmed with the amount and the type of questions and our customers were overwhelmed with the quick, accurate, and useful service. One customer valued the two answers he received at \$1800. That was a significant percentage of his tax dollar and something concrete to point out when the library's budget came up for review. The experiment gave three reference librarians the confidence to continue with marketing the program.

Repackage what you already have. If you already produce a newsletter for the general reader, try modifying it to be of interest to the business person. Offer programs aimed at the busy entrepreneur. Offer space for networking. Sponsor a trade show. Show off the Internet. Bring in someone who can talk about marketing. And don't forget to stress how the library's resources can assist in each of these circumstances. Most important, let the business people know that the most important resource in the library goes home every night!

Take yourself out of your comfortable space and go where your customers are. Know the restaurants, coffee shops, and sections of the cafeteria to frequent. Network! Take a class with business people so you can understand what they're dealing with. Go to business meetings that you normally would not attend and sit with people you've never met before. Or better yet, find someone who will introduce you to others. Get yourself invited to speak at business meetings. If you can't do that, ask questions or make statements from the audience at such meetings, to let others know about you and your services.

"We were underwhelmed with the amount and the type of questions and our customers were overwhelmed with the quick, accurate, and useful service."

Get endorsements from key people. We allied with the local Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and the state business development center. We provided training for their respective staffs about library resources. We also provided counseling space within the library for their use. They now routinely refer their clients to the library.

Don't ignore those business contacts closest to you. We showed the Town Manager and his staff how librarians can be key resources. One success story involved an international company that wanted to settle in the central Connecticut region. The principals of the firm called the Town Manager and asked for an appointment that afternoon. The Manager called the library and asked for background information about the company. Our town was selected by the firm and the Manager credits the library with giving him the edge!

Learn how to sell your services. In our case, that meant going door-to-door and making sales calls. A typical sales call would begin with a referral from someone who knew a business might be in the information seeking mode, i.e. physically enlarging, expanding a product line, taking on new personnel. The librarian might send a letter of introduction or just call to set up an appointment.

The sales appointment was usually with the owner and the marketing person or the personnel manager and would consist of a tour of the facility, some questions about the business and some information about the services the library could provide. The librarian tried to anticipate some of the company's needs and took along appropriate information. The librarian always tried to leave with a question to answer. Once back at the library, the question would be turned into an answer within 24 hours.

Become indispensable

Marketing to the business community is like marketing to any other new market segment. You have to know what the message is, how to deliver it, and what you'll do when they want your product. Giving information is something librarians do—the word just needs to be spread more effectively to critical audiences in order for librarians to be considered essential.



Promotion Gems

Certificates

When you picture a certificate, you probably imagine a boring piece of paper that resembles your high school diploma and features a vaguely insincere sentiment to a "your name here" recipient. But with today's software programs, just about anyone can create attractive, original, meaningful certificates.

Certificates provide a concrete yet inexpensive way to recognize the achievements of employees, show your appreciation of customers, and celebrate library events and accomplishments.

Awarding certificates serves three promotional purposes. First, it creates a special occasion when you award the certificates. Second, these certificates, posted in the library or clients' offices, provide long-term reminders of the events (such as library contests and training program completion) that prompted these awards. Third, the commemoration of such events with awards increases their significance when they occur.

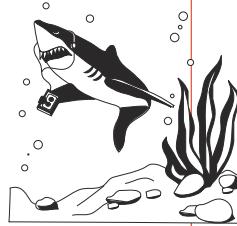
Although certificate design is open to creativity and innovation, Chuck Green, in the creative design newsletter, **Before & After**, suggests four rules to follow before your creative side takes over.

First, stick to a standard size. A certificate is longer remembered and best treasured when framed, and frames are far less expensive when they are bought ready-made in standard sizes. Next, remember that a certificate hanging on the wall will be seen from a distance. Text should be larger and bolder than it would be for a document you would hold in your hands to read. Third, make sure that your certificate has a readable title and a clear focus. Finally, special certificates deserve to be printed on special papers.

Experiment with the layout of your certificates. Abandon the traditional "diploma" look in favor of asymmetrical designs. Add interest to your certificate with award ribbons, metallic seals, laser foils, photographs, or clip art illustrations.

And don't forget to announce in your newsletter who received certificates and the occasion. Every bit of visibility helps! ■

"...recognize the achievements of employees, show your appreciation of customers, and celebrate library events and accomplishments."



Worth Its Weight in Gold

Audio Tape Listening Tips

Learning with audio tapes is an effective, timesaving way to train both yourself and your library staff. Follow these tips to make the most of motivational and instructional audio tapes.

Make listening a habit. Personal stereo systems are so inexpensive it may be well worth the investment to keep one in your office, briefcase, exercise bag, kitchen, and bedroom. Keep different tapes in each player so you don't have to carry them around.

Be an active listener. Before you press "play," take a minute to think about the tape's subject and its relevance to your life and work. Identify two or three problems the tape might help you solve or goals it might help you meet. Focus on them as you listen.

Don't make listening a marathon task. Break up listening sessions into small segments. You'll be able to digest what you learn, less likely to dread listening, and more willing to put that first tape into the player when you know you're not committing a huge chunk of time to the endeavor.

Take advantage of your downtime. Listening to tapes during downtime not only optimizes your use of time but also helps take your mind off of the task at hand. If, for example, you listen while commuting, you'll not only make good use of travel time, but with your mind occupied, commuting won't seem so arduous. The same goes for listening while cooking, cleaning, and exercising.

Hit "replay." Review sections of a tape as you listen. Replay an entire tape when it's been a while since you last heard it. These reviews provide the repetition necessary for true learning. As you and your library grow and change, you'll want to replay old favorites. What you barely heard when you had one set of goals might speak directly to the challenges of your current situation.

Listen to conference tapes. When you can't attend a conference, order the tapes. This saves both time and money: transportation costs, time away from work, and lodging and conference costs. ■

Sparkling Reviews

The Library Story, How to Market Your Library Through Story. Jim Fleck. FLC Publishing, Columbia City, Indiana, (800-578-0793) 1994. ISBN: 0-9643702-0-4 \$25

Sit down and prepare to be entertained. **The Library Story, How to Market Your Library Through Story** is fun to read and offers practical advice on marketing your library. Although the book seems to be targeted to library fund raising, its message is applicable to everyone interested in maintaining the viability of their library.

The book is divided into three sections. Section one provides a clear presentation of some basic marketing principles. Those with minimal marketing experience will find this an easy introduction to a difficult topic. More experienced readers are still likely to pick up some pearls, such as the reminder that image and perception are the hallmarks of marketing. Discussions include proactive marketing (as opposed to couch potato marketing), paradigm changes, and strategies to both internal and external customers.

Section two focuses on story telling. The importance of story telling as a marketing tool is highlighted by sample stories, both in the library world and in commercial business marketing. (Who can forget the very successful Timex "it takes a licking and keeps on ticking" stories?) The author discusses the how's and why's of using the Library Story as a marketing tool and he outlines in great detail exactly how to structure the Library Story and provides suggestions for an endless supply of story ideas.

The final section of the book combines concepts introduced in the first two sections to show you how to form a marketing plan for your library. Vision, values, and marketing audits are all described relative to formulating a workable marketing plan. Although this section is a bit difficult to follow in places, it is full of helpful hints and strategies.

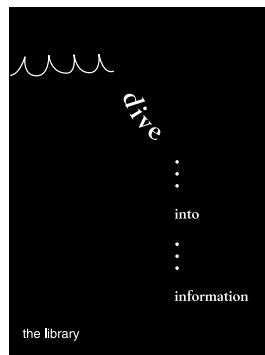
The Library Story is peppered with cute quotes, amusing graphics, and clear lists and charts. Unfortunately the quality of the print and binding leaves something to be desired (it didn't take long for pages to come loose from the perfect binding). But, despite that, it is an informative book that is sure to provide some new twists for your marketing strategies. ■

Treasure Tips

Black and White Design

Do you wish you possessed a powerful graphic tool that would help you design persuasive flyers and posters? Do you think this tool would deplete your budget? Well, think again. A well-designed black-and-white visual has the strength and beauty to draw readers in. By placing the text and graphics with care you can produce a successful visual image without color and photographs.

Start by simplifying your message. Pare the copy so you are only working with the essentials. A crowded page confuses your reader. Concentrate on who, what, and where.



"...image and perception are the hallmarks of marketing."

Using a generous amount of white space around text and graphics can create visual tension, drawing the reader to the ad. With this use of space, type draws attention to itself. Try overlapping or placing letters on a curve. Accomplish this by using a computer drawing program or by using the tried and true method of cutting and pasting to achieve the effect you want.

Bleeds (when the ink goes to the paper edge) can tease the eye. Easily accomplished in most layout programs, bleeds will not successfully print to the edge of the paper on most laser printers. Still, you can use this technique by using your computer and laser printer to create your chosen effect. Then, cut and paste an original together, placing the text or graphic you wish to bleed in the proper position. By reproducing your copies on a photocopier you can create an interesting design.

The effects of black type on a white sheet can be enhanced by varying the size of the type you use. Don't be afraid to mix up the sizes and styles to draw **attention**. Large type shouts, while smaller type whispers. Using white type on a black background, (reversing type out) is a sure way to draw attention to your ad. Be careful not to use a point size that is too small or to reverse out a large amount of copy.

Follow these guides, experiment with the placement of text and graphics and soon you'll be turning heads with your effective and inexpensive black and white flyer ads! ■