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MARKETING *Treasures*

Ideas and Insights into Promoting Library & Information Services

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Let Your Customers Tell Your Story

When you present your promotional message, you tell a story to your customers: a story about problems and solutions, challenge and success. As you explore your options for telling this story, bear in mind that your message will sound stronger and its impact will be felt longer if the story is told by your customers.

In this article, we'll discuss four methods marketers use to let customers tell their story: testimonials, case histories, customer profiles, and customer news. Testimonials are appropriate almost anywhere, from flyers to ads to memo pads. Case histories are appropriate for brochures and sales letters. All four methods will work in newsletters. Consider using them as regular features in every issue. You might also consider using all four methods in your annual report.

Letting customers tell your story is a particularly effective promotion technique because, first and foremost, it establishes credibility. Customers know that you must have done something valuable to make people speak well of you. Second, letting customers tell your story is effective because prospective clients relate to your customers. When you announce that they will save money by using your library, they might not be sure you understand their needs and resources. But when someone from their industry says that

you've saved them money, the prospective client is able to relate to their story. The third reason that these methods are effective is because they present the most benefits-oriented viewpoint. Satisfied clients' stories are almost completely comprised of benefits; they relate just what the clients have received from the relationship.

Four Levels of Directness

An important distinction between the four methods is how directly they deliver your message. The testimonial, clear in its purpose and meaning, is the most direct. Testimonials don't demand that prospective clients read between the lines. However, because they focus on you rather than on your client, you must work to keep them sounding like messages from current to prospective clients, rather than ads.

A level of directness away from the testimonial is the case history. Though it doesn't come out and say "we're fans of this library," clients respond when they learn how someone in their position used your information services to solve a problem. The less direct nature of a case history requires that readers draw their own conclusions about the library's worth. This active involvement in the story creates a strong impression with clients, for they arrive at their own conclusions through their own thought process, rather than through something they merely read.

The next level of directness away is the cus-

"Satisfied clients' stories are almost completely comprised of benefits; they relate just what the clients have received from the relationship."

Pearls of Wisdom

Set up billboards in your clients' file drawers with custom printed folders in bold colors that sport your logo on the tab. Use these folders when you hand out promotional materials, and your library's name will jump out at clients every time they open their files. File and forget it? That's not so easy when you use folders from the Folder Factory, manufacturers of custom printed presentation folders. Call 800/296-4321 for a catalog and price quotes.

The artificial climate of an exhibition floor can make prospects parched—like they're in a desert. Dimension Strategic Marketing Tools suggests a giveaway that will help prospective clients keep laryngitis at bay, while creating a steady stream of traffic for your booth. To turn your booth into a welcoming oasis, hand out private label spring water, graced by your library's name, logo, and message. For more information, call 703/521-4843.

Looking for a unique promotion idea for National Library Week? How about postage stamps? When the Photo Stamp envelope came across our desk, a flood of ideas raced into our minds. For starters, you could get a photo of your library made into a stamp and use it on fundraising promotion mailings. Or how about a group photo of the library staff to personalize your library notepaper? Don't have a decent photograph? Why not use a colored version of a clip art image? Obviously the advantage of the stamps is that you can add color images to your promotion materials very inexpensively—two sheets (72 stamps) is only \$19.95, with additional sheets costing \$5.00 apiece. While PhotoStamp asks for photographs, we bet you could create a color image by hand or a color photocopy. For information, contact Pamela Blecker at Photo Stamp, Inc., 55 West Red Oak Lane, Suite 100, White Plains, NY 10604, 800/644-STAMP.

"Singing the PR Blues: Hit the Right Note" is the theme for the Swap & Shop at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. Sponsored by the Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) Public Relations Section, the Swap & Shop will offer mini-sessions on creating a John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award winner and quick tips on public relations problems from public relations experts. John Cotton Dana 1995 award-winning scrapbooks will also be exhibited. Your materials must be received by June 15. Send

100 – 300 copies of posters, newsletters, service brochures, materials lists, annual reports, library guides, and other publicity materials to: "Swap and Shop 1995," c/o Olivia Chen, Chicago Public Library, Room 2 S-10, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, IL 60605. Those interested in competing for "Best of Show" Awards must submit entries by May 1. For more information and entry forms, contact Paula Banks at 216/725-0588.

Try this clever way to get your audience involved in your presentation: Jim Cockrum, in **Communications Briefings**, suggests that before giving a presentation you write questions you'd like asked on file cards which you then tape under audience members' chairs. After your talk, ask the audience to reach under their chairs and read the questions aloud. The audience becomes awake, involved, and invested in your message. Cockrum notes, "Responses from the presenter like 'good question' and 'I'm glad you asked that,' keep the air light and prompt other questions."

Is your commitment to excellence rock solid? Do you provide "rock solid information services?" Then you'll want to see the engraved marble paperweights offered by Successories. The paperweights, with engraved quotations such as "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity," will work well as staff recognition awards. For promotion give-aways you'll want to add your own words, which you can do if you order in large quantities. Call: 800/235-4217. ■

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Back issues and samples are available. Contact our office for latest prices. Additional binders available at \$4.50 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: Page 1 is from Vol 1 of *Olson's Book of Library Clip Art*; page 4 is from the *Assistant Editor*, Spring 1994; pages 5 & 6 are from this issue of *Marketing Treasures Cut & Paste* art sheet.

Customers ...continued from page 1

customer profile. This says less than the case history about the library, but it gives prospective clients a chance to think "I see myself in this" or "I'd like to be like this."

The least direct message is delivered through customer news. Customer news is usually presented in a newsletter column, but could fit in the annual report or even in a brochure, as an interesting substitute for a client list. The implied message of customer news states simply but strongly, "our customers are successful."

Testimonials

An organized program of soliciting testimonials should be instituted, even if customers regularly volunteer them. Your library should seek to collect testimonials from a range of satisfied customers. Take a thorough approach, aim for a representative sample of clients, and look for comments about each of your products and services. Seek out those comments that address your strengths, and perhaps most important, those that address the most common points of sales resistance.

While this sounds like a lot of testimonials, remember that this is an ongoing project. Once you develop a system, getting a testimonial should take about twenty minutes. A staff member with good interpersonal skills and a clean writing style can be responsible for gathering them.

To get the testimonial, call clients to ask if they would answer a few questions. Tell them you will write up their responses and submit them for approval for use as testimonials. If you have an answering machine, simply record the call, after requesting permission. This way, clients can speak spontaneously and you won't have to worry about writing fast enough to keep up with them, or asking them to repeat themselves. If your answering system does not have a recording function, but you are a fast typist, type their answers into your computer while you're on the phone. If not, take notes as well as you can and transcribe them immediately after the call, while they're still fresh in your mind.

Questions to ask include: What need, problem, or question brought you to the library? How did we help you meet your need, solve your problem, or answer your question? What advantage did you derive from our services? Why would you recommend us?

"The implied message of customer news states simply but strongly, 'our customers are successful.'"

"When you set out to write a case history, it might be tempting to start with a long interview and piece the story together from the client's comments. Don't succumb to this temptation."

Upon transcribing the interview, turn the answers into a few paragraphs reflecting what was said. Write clearly and accurately, but don't worry about structure. Your goal is to have clients sign off on accuracy so that they will feel comfortable when their words reach their final form. Ask them to review their testimonial at this stage, make whatever corrections they request, then resubmit them for final approval.

Some side benefits from testimonials: You benefit because clients that give testimonials feel an increased sense of investment in the library. Clients benefit from the public relations advantage of having their name and work making the rounds. And, of course, if you're in an organizational library, a benefit to the library is a benefit to everyone in the organization.

Case Histories

Although you need fewer case histories than testimonials, you should still pick subjects that address your range of clients, products, strong points, and obstacles to sales.

When you set out to write a case history, it might be tempting to start with a long interview and piece the story together from the client's comments. Don't succumb to this temptation. This method is unwieldy and time intensive. The shorter, simpler approach is to write the history first. This will focus the story and set the agenda. Only after you write it should you conduct a short interview to confirm facts, add compelling details, and provide colorful quotes.

The structure of the story has three main parts:

Part One—The story begins with a problem: "John Doe, purchaser at X Corporation, faced the following problem . . ." The problem leads to a question, and the question, of course, leads to the library.

Part Two—The action moves to the library: "At the library, we did the following things . . . to achieve the following result . . ." This is your chance to parade your features.

Part Three—The case history reaches its satisfying conclusion: "So our client had

continued on page 4

Customers ...continued from page 3

this result . . . , which enabled him to do the following . . . which led to his ultimate and overwhelming success.”

After writing the case history, call clients to confirm facts. Again, ask if you can record the conversation. Read your story but say little else. Hearing what you've written can be like a trip down memory lane for your clients. If you're quiet, they'll add the details that will make the case history more compelling. When you read Part One they might say, "I sure remember that. If I didn't come up with the right market breakdown I knew we'd lose the account." When you read Part Three, they might relive the excitement they felt and say "When I walked in with that report in my briefcase, I didn't care how much the customer scowled. I knew I'd win the account." Insert the lively quotes and the winning details, and the case history will deliver your message.

Customer Profiles

The customer profile starts with an interview. The best are tape recorded over the phone and need only last ten minutes. Over-interviewing is unnecessary. If you miss something important, you can always call back.

These stories are about your clients: their careers, current projects, and plans for the future. The library will appear only in terms of its relationship to the client. You might combine a client's history with her relationship to the library by saying, "when Jane Doe first came to us, she only needed our ready reference service. But as her department grew, she found herself relying on our in-depth analyses."

While testimonials and the case histories speak about the value you add to your clients, profiles, by appearing as a regular column in your newsletter, relate the value your clients have added to your library.

Customer News

Customer news gives you the chance to spread good news while drawing readers into your newsletter. An item might read, "Congratulations to John Doe for being selected a keynote speaker for his industry conference this year." The formula is simple, but the message connects the library, by implication, to the success of its clients. Promotions, accounts won, increased productivity, awards

and honors, successful presentations, indeed, any good news has its place on the pages of your newsletter—especially if you can tie the library's delivery of services or products to the success.

They're Playing Your Song

A librarian's first responsibility is to deliver work that is good enough to speak for itself. But in today's competitive world, information providers know they must assume the responsibility of talking up their services. So while you're spreading your message, always remember that your own words about your work, no matter how persuasive, are never as powerful as when you let your customers sing your praises. ■

"Hearing what you've written can be like a trip down memory lane for your clients. If you're quiet, they'll add the details that will make the case history more compelling."

National Library Week

This year National Library Week (NLW) will be observed April 9-15. We've tried to give you some promotion ideas in this issue of **Marketing Treasures** that we think will be simple to ex-



National Library Week

April 9 - 15

ecute, inexpensive to produce, and yield positive visibility for your library. As in previous years, the various library associations are offering promotion materials that you can purchase to make your NLW celebrations festive. We've also noticed a surge of idea-trading over the various internet library listservs, so you may want to check around if you're stuck for ideas.

So just how did National Library Week get started? First observed in 1958, NLW was the result of growing concern among publishers and librarians that Americans were reading less. At first, the event was sponsored by the National Book Committee, a nonprofit citizens group formed by the American Book Publishers, the American Library Association, and other organizations. When the National Book Committee disbanded in 1974, ALA assumed full sponsorship. The first year's slogan was "Wake up and Read." Other slogans have kept in step with the changing times. The 1995 slogan, "Libraries Change Lives," has been used for the third year in a row. ■

Worth It's Weight In Gold

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

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

Information Bridge. Help your clients when they "get in too deep" by bridging the information gap. Use this graphic to promote new employee orientations, workshops, seminars and any activity that showcases the library and its products and services

Stopwatch. Let clients know that when the clock is ticking, the library has the tools to save them time. This graphic is ideal for ads, bookmarks, and library logos. If your organization has yearly cycles, spread it around during crunch times.

Thumbs Up. Use this icon for reviews in your newsletter, to indicate helpful hints, and to signal congratulations to staff members or clients on jobs well done.

Rabbit Bookends. This graphic, perfect for bookmarks, would work well as the logo for the book section of your Spring newsletter.

Readers in Profile. Computers are excellent tools, but paper will never go out of style. Celebrate the timelessness of printed materials during National Library Week with this graphic.

Computer Mailbox. This graphic uses the familiar US Post Office mailbox to show clients they can reach you by e-mail.

Microphone. Announcing a new product or service? What better way to broadcast your message than with this graphic?

Info Surfer. The second in our occasional series of information highway riders (we introduced our info character in the clip art of July/August 1994 **Marketing Treasures**), this time it's "surfin' the net" and catching waves of information. This graphic should help illustrate your staff's skills at gleaning information from the world's online databases. ■

"Exhibit staffers, must be people-oriented and good listeners. And they must be knowledgeable and positive about your library's products and services."



Promotion Gems

Information brokers and librarians who sell outside of their organizations often exhibit at tradeshows. But even organizational librarians whose focus remains strictly in-house find that the techniques of tradeshow exhibiting are worth learning, even if their only opportunity to use these techniques comes during their annual National Library Week celebration.

Whatever category of information provider you belong to, consider the following tips:

- **Creating Traffic**—There are five primary methods for bringing prospects to your exhibit display: invitations, telemarketing, direct mail, advertising, and public relations. These methods work for both tradeshows and in-house exhibit displays.

- **Giveaways**—While offering a bowl of Hershey Kisses seems to be standard lure, a well thought out giveaway can help you distinguish true prospects from idle browsers. Anyone with a sweet tooth will reach for a chocolate, but a discount coupon or gift certificate will attract those who are thinking of buying. Make sure you develop a giveaway that collects business cards and addresses, so you'll be able to follow-up after the exhibit.

- **Staffing Your Exhibit Display**—The people staffing the booth are the most important element of the exhibit, yet most exhibitors spend little time training their staff. Many times the ill effects of no training are compounded by sending "dispensable" employees to trade shows. Staffers must be people-oriented and good listeners. And they must be knowledgeable and positive about your library's products and services.

- **Stay Strong for Success**—Don't rely on cues of fatigue or hunger to force staffers to request a break. Put together a duty schedule beforehand, giving everyone the chance to know when they will be getting a break. Remind staff to pay attention to their health, this includes drinking plenty of water, eating well-balanced meals, getting sufficient sleep, and wearing supportive, comfortable shoes. And remember to emphasize that eating and drinking openly in the exhibit is taboo.

The above tips were adapted from Exhibiting At Tradeshows by Susan A Friedmann, Crisp Publications, Los Altos, CA, 1992. ISBN:1-56052-137-6. This is an excellent book to have on hand when planning exhibit displays. ■

Sparkling Reviews

Activity-Based Management for Service Industries, Government Entities, and Nonprofit Organizations. James A. Brimson and John Antos. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, NY, 1994. ISBN: 0-471-01351-X. \$65.00

Calling all Library Directors and Administrative and Department Heads—this impeccably organized and articulate management primer offers step-by-step techniques applicable to the cost effective yet humane management of a library, its services, and its personnel.

Authors Brimson and Antos are gurus in activity-based management (ABM), a progressive management technique which they insist meets the demands of this technological age far better than traditional cost management methods. ABM has had proven success in manufacturing industries in improving quality and promoting efficiency. The authors now apply this innovative management approach to service, non-profit, and governmental sectors.

Instead of eliminating the worker but not the work through traditional cost reduction methods (hiring and salary freezes, service cut-backs, etc.), ABM is more worker-friendly: it helps an organization eliminate non-productive costs and reduce the workload instead of just the workforce. This process is accomplished through specifying the “activities” of work (i.e., the tasks of an organization) and then integrating these in a cost-effective manner to “continuously improve” the delivery of services.

The authors outline concepts and catchwords using pedagogic methods that include chapters that begin with enumerated objectives and end with summaries, clear tables and diagrams, a comprehensive glossary, and an appendix of case studies. The authors’ broad range of organizations includes hospitals, banks, insurance agencies, and transportation companies, but unfortunately no mention of libraries.

Nevertheless, a library manager seeking concrete techniques for achieving a quality and streamlined operation will find this volume handy. It promotes a management method successful, not only with improving the organization to benefit the customer, but with consideration for the needs of the employee. The library management world can learn a lot

“ABM is more worker-friendly: it helps an organization eliminate non-productive costs and reduce the workload instead of just the workforce.”

Design Tips

Message Note Promotions

Of all the paper crossing your desk, what jumps out at you every time? If you recalled those little pink or yellow phone message notes, you are right! If those little notes can grab your attention, why not try using a full page **While You Were Out** to surprise your client with a personalized message.

As they are designed exactly like a message note, you have the ability to customize your message to this familiar format. For example, because National Library Week is coming up, you may want to remind clients of the events you are planning to have in your library during this special week. It’s easy to adapt the message note format to your communication needs. In the message section you can remind clients of your services, tell them about upcoming NLW events and, how they can avoid missing any of the library’s information tips and pointers.

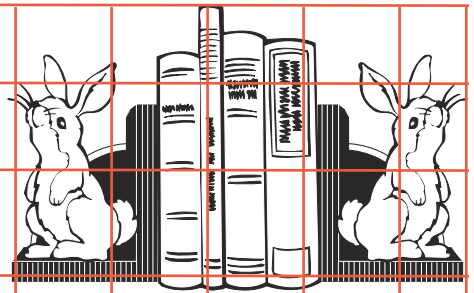
Don’t limit your customization of the message note to just the message. Consider customizing the check-off boxes too. For example, **Set-up Appointment Today, Received Latest WestLaw CD, or Have The Research Services You Need** would make fine categories.

If you’re really good, you’ll create message notes that target different groups of clients with specific needs. Secretaries, middle managers, project leaders, legal associates, and new employees are all candidates for customized message note communications. Of course you can also recycle your message note creations—maybe sending them out once every six weeks with different messages. To prevent them from getting stale, use different colored paper each time.

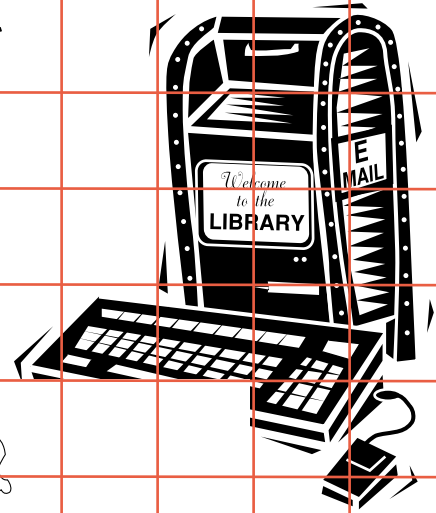
Full page messages are inexpensive to produce. You can design your note with a word processor or use the clip art image included on this month’s art sheet. You can handwrite your message to give it an authentic look, or use an italic or script typeface to make it stand out, then photocopy it on colored paper.

Why not put an already good idea to work for you? With a small amount of effort and money you can catch a client’s attention. Surprise them with a full-page **Important Message** they are sure to read! ■

To _____			
Date _____			
IMPORTANT MESSAGE			
M _____			
of _____			
Phone _____			
AREA CODE	NUMBER	EXTENSION	
TELEPHONED		PLEASE CALL	
CALLED TO SEE YOU		WELL CALL AGAIN	
RETURNED YOUR CALL		URGENT	
Message _____			



Announcing...



To _____
Date _____

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

M _____
of _____
Phone _____
AREA CODE NUMBER EXTENSION

TELEPHONED	PLEASE CALL
CALLED TO SEE YOU	WILL CALL AGAIN
RETURNED YOUR CALL	URGENT

Message _____

