



The electronic newsletter
with marketing ideas for
information professionals.

compliments of...
Chris Olson & Associates

A Note From Chris

We begin this issue with a look at library mission and vision statements. It's time to refresh vision statements that are over 5 years old. Has your library realized the vision you foresaw x years ago? Be honest.

We are currently in the process of moving to a new home and office, and selling our current house has taken us into the world of real estate agents and unabashed promotion. Competition among agents is keen and their promotion strategies yield ideas for librarians which I note in the [Promotion Gems](#) column.

I was the guest author for the February issue of the Informed Librarian. I elected to write down some of my thoughts about the findings from the [OCLC Perceptions of Libraries](#) study. You may be interested in reading what prompted one person to comment, "Really! If it ain't broke, don't fix it! People think of a library as a place to get information. It works! I think librarians need to spend less time worrying about what other people think of them." Aahhh. Reading tea leaves gets me into trouble every time. To be fair, there were plenty of readers who "got it," and a couple who were motivated to initiate changes at their libraries.

<http://www.informedlibrarian.com/guestForum.cfm?FILE=gf0602.html>

Happy reading!

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

Chris Olson
Publisher

Casting New Light on Missions and Visions

About 15 years ago libraries adopted the corporate communications strategy of creating and publicizing mission and vision statements. Professionals in all types of information service settings got together and crafted statements to tell others why their information service existed and what the future held for it. A decade later some of those statements haven't been updated or revised, or some libraries still haven't gotten around to developing their statements. Having current statements is even more important if your library communications strategies include elements of branding. Your library's brand promise, brand image, indeed its entire branding strategy, is influenced by the ideas and concepts expressed in its mission and vision statements. Library administrators considering and undergoing reinvention or repositioning endeavors in response to the shifting sands of information services and the perception that libraries=books, are sure to be evaluating their statements. The following points are glimpses into how mission and vision statements can guide and shape a library, and convey its business and aspirations.

Mission

Simply put, the mission statement proclaims your library's fundamental purpose. It's why your information service exists; it's your sole reason for being. A mission statement should say who your library is, what it does, and what it stands for.

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Please forward this newsletter to anyone you know who is looking for ideas and resources for marketing their library. (See "[Forward to a Friend](#)" at end of newsletter.)

Having said that, we hasten to advise not to get bogged down with details or compose a statement that reads like answers to 20 questions. The statement needs to be carefully wordsmithed. Each word needs to add substance, not fluff. The statement needs to be short and buzz-word free. Three or four concise, clearly written sentences should do it. This is harder than it sounds. Consider this statements: (these are actual statements with the name of the library omitted)

"Our mission is to serve the people of ABC by delivering the vision of ABC Libraries and Information Service through the development and maintenance of a coherent range of policies and services, understood and valued by the community."

Huh? Now read this statement.

"The mission of the ABC Library is to promote the development of independent, self-confident, and literate citizens through the provision of open access to cultural, intellectual, and informational resources."

We personally like the statement to begin using the word "mission", or constructing the first sentence in such a way that the word is easily implied. We think its easier for a library organization to be built around and to embody its mission when it's clear what that mission is. Starting the statement with a lead-in such as "ABC is dedicated to..." or "ABC is committed to..." can help set up the statement to be focused on the mission.

Revising a mission statement can mean changing the words or phrasing to emphasize a concept or adding words to reflect a new objective. For instance, a few years ago the mission statement for the United Way was "to improve people's lives by empowering and equipping the community to meet needs." Today their mission statement reads, "To improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities."

Vision

"Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion." Jack Welch, Former Chairman of General Electric

The vision statement presents your view for the future. It tells people where you want the library to be and what you want it to become. It is a long-range goal and what you are working towards. A vision should be inspiring. It should motivate and guide the library staff, stakeholders, and information consumers.

Most of the library vision statements we read were either ambiguous or about as future-forward and motivating as a wet towel. We reviewed more than 30 different library vision statements before we found the following, which we think is a good example.

"We will be the primary information and resource destination for citizens of all ages in ABC County. Through our inviting community-centered branches and innovative technology, programming, services, and collaboration, we will satisfy the community's needs and exceed its expectations. Our staff will reflect the diversity of our communities and promote an accessible, friendly environment. We will be the most convenient public library in the nation and be known for our excellence in service."

One library vision statement we saw was actually a tagline. Would you like to help this library achieve its vision of "Linking leisure and learning." Interestingly, under the mission statement, this same library refers to itself as being a center "where those in search of knowledge and self development interact and continually create new culture." Now that's a vision!

Here's a statement identified as a mission but borders on being a vision because of the way it's written.

"The ABC Library is the learning center of our community and the place people turn to for the discovery of ideas, the joy of reading and the power of information. Community needs drive our services and we take a personal interest in ensuring that they are delivered in a welcoming, convenient and responsive manner."

In crafting a vision statement we recommend first identifying opportunities for an information service. Not in technical terms, but in general, easy-to-understand, big picture terms. The vision statement should be short, with every word carefully chosen to project the desired future image. How the vision will be accomplished or

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what will be needed to achieve it should not be included. If you are a painter of BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals) then the vision statement is your canvas.

What Comes First: Mission or Vision?

We are asked this question frequently and each time the answer is slightly different. Depending on a library's business strategy and what it wants to accomplish, a vision statement might come first, or the mission statement might need to be developed first. We think that if your goal is to reinvent your library and reshape perceptions and the brand image, then you will be better off starting with the vision. This is because developing a vision requires outside-of-the-box thinking. Identifying a vision is a creative exercise using imagination grounded with a dose of reality. The vision for a library being transformed into a new information service model is best served by not being tethered to a mission based on the old model. After the vision for the new service has been developed, then the mission statement can be crafted so that it reflects the new model.

In instances where a library wants to update their vision and mission statements, working on the mission statement first makes sense, since it defines the library business. The vision work would follow, envisioning the future based on the library's mission parameters.

Resources

There are many resources available to help a library staff through the process of developing mission and vision statements. In the end it takes perseverance, a thesaurus, and time--lots of time--to craft meaningful statements. It can be an arduous process that tests everyone's patience, but we have always found it to be well worth the effort. Many people begin the process with collecting other library statements, but as we have discovered, library statements aren't necessarily the best examples. We recommend that you include statements from organizations outside of the information services industry. The Man On a Mission blog has compiled a number of corporate mission and vision statements. You'll find a variety of approaches and concepts that can help you get the ball rolling. <http://manonamission.blogspot.com/>

Treasure Tips

What Is Customer Relationship Management (CRM)?

Sometimes they are called "patrons" or "users." Other times they are referred to as "customers" and "clients." More recently, they've been called "information consumers." Regardless of the name tag, these are people who utilize the products and services of libraries and information services. From a marketing perspective, they are known primarily as "customers," and the focus of all the attention a marketing department can muster. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a marketing strategy that deploys activities directed toward establishing, developing, and sustaining successful relationships with customers. Relationship marketing focuses on developing long-term relationships and helping an organization achieve its business goals and objectives through customer loyalty and customer retention strategies.

In marketing circles it is a known fact that acquiring a new customer and having them commit to a product or service requires more resources than to generate that same action with an established customer. Repeat customers know what to expect, how to use the product, and have already been through the process of evaluating the product against competitors. It behooves an organization to retain customers, whether it be for increased profits or enhanced service usage. For a library, pursuing a relationship marketing program helps to ensure that they continually understand the customer's needs and wants through the information product lifecycle, which in turn helps the library provide a targeted and appropriate range of products and services.

Examples of CRM are easy to find. At the grocery store checkout the clerk hands you a receipt with a set of discount coupons for items you typically purchase. Many hotel chains now retain profiles of their frequent customers noting room location, bed size and pillow preferences. Large scale CRM programs utilize databases to manage customer profiles. In some organizations where a customer interacts with numerous different divisions of a company, the database tracks the progress of those interactions to ensure that nothing is overlooked and that the experience is seamless--to the point that a large organization can be perceived as giving highly personalized service to each individual customer.

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Articles to use in library newsletters. Available from the Emerald Library Link web site.

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But what about libraries and information services? What customer loyalty and customer retention strategies do they employ? The promotion campaigns designed to have people sign up for library cards is a customer acquisition strategy. How does your library build a relationship with customers and maintain it? When you announce your library blog or a news alert service, how does your information service go about establishing and managing a long-lasting relationship with the customers who sign up?

These aren't rhetorical questions. I really would like to know how you and your information service builds and maintains relationships with your customers. I will be making a presentation at the Special Libraries Association conference this June about CRM, and my co-presenter, Amelia Kassel, and I are looking for examples of customer-centric information services and CRM strategies. We'll share our collective wisdom and examples in an article in Marketing Treasures later this summer. Send along your CRM examples and descriptions to us at CRM@chrisolson.com.

Promotion Gems

Undaunted Promotion

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A few months ago our lead article talked about gleaning promotion ideas from service organizations outside of the library and information service world (Marketing Treasures, vol 14, No. 10, October 2005 <http://tinyurl.com/9qvdlg>). I overlooked real estate services and have since then watched real estate agents in action, experiencing their promotion techniques first hand. As a marketing consultant I find it fascinating to study promotion techniques of other service industries. A real estate agent has a very small window of time to make an impression, so their promotion activities are concentrated and intense. Here are some observations that may be helpful for your library promotion plans.

1. Real estate agents never give up. They are relentless. They are patient. They freely offer their time and expertise. They don't care if 6 other agents are ahead of them. They will proceed with promoting themselves and their services. If you are thinking that such "in your face" promotion is unwelcome and ineffective, think again. Agents who provided materials early in the process and who don't follow-up are soon forgotten in favor of the latest round of agent contacts.

2. Agents go out of their way to provide an extra measure of service which distinguishes them from other agents. Considering that there seems to be a real estate office on every corner, that's a tall order for a branding strategy. Agents use a number of characteristics to position themselves in the market. Some focus on new home sales while others specialize in certain neighborhoods. There are agents who deal with only waterfront properties while others define their services by price range. These positioning strategies allow them to quickly target segments of the market and easily match their knowledge and sales skills to customer needs.

3. Agents create opportunities to generate visibility. The recent snowstorm in our area gave real estate agents an excuse to come around with offerings of bird seed, pine cones with peanut butter, and tips about shoveling snow. We receive regular mailings from one agent with updates about local housing market conditions, while another sends us tips for reducing stress. Every contact from an agent includes their business card and a reminder statement of their capabilities and resources.

4. Agents package their resources to be convenient and attractive. With time being a precious commodity, smart agents assemble finance, inspection, moving, cleaning, and other resources to be on-call if their clients require any type of assistance during the sale or purchase of property. Their objective is to make the process of selling and buying a property as turnkey and painless as possible.

As you might expect, there's an entire industry devoted to supplying promotion products to real estate agents. A quick look found a couple of ideas which caught our eye. A cookie cutter with a "Bake a Sale" theme <<http://www.realestatepromoproducts.com/005018.htm>> and time change postcards <http://sparrowandjacobs.com/category.asp_Q_c_E_36>.

The next time you walk by a real estate office, put your marketing glasses on and take a few minutes to learn how they promote their services. You might pick up a couple of ideas for your library promotion plans.

The new ALA Graphics catalog arrived in the mail the other day. New releases include promotion materials for 2006 NLW with the theme "Change Your World @ Your Library", and a READ2 CD with digital graphics and resources to create your own posters, bookmarks, and other items. The entire catalog is online at http://www.alastore.ala.org/SiteSolution.taf?_pi=453

Tins and Bottles

Several years ago we wanted to use custom printed tins for a client promotion. At the time the only source for tins was overseas and the minimum order quantity was a lot more than what we needed. We recently revisited the promotion idea and found a wonderful source for not only tins, but also bottles used for packaging. The minimum quantities are reasonable, the selection is diverse, and lead time for orders is manageable. We're considering the tin for a promotion with custom printed M&M candies ([see the next entry](#)). Once the candy is gone, the tin can be used for paperclips or other items found on everyone's desk.

But wait. While exploring other pages on the [Specialty Bottle web site](#), we discovered message bottles--the bottles that you put a piece of paper into with a cork top. Perfect for delivering a message that is sure to be read. You can put all types of winning messages inside the bottles, perhaps use them for a contest. Or how about creating a deserted island fund-raising theme around the bottles? You're sure to garner attention when the invitation to the fund raiser arrives in the bottle! <http://www.specialtybottle.com>

Custom M&Ms

If your promotion plans include custom printed M&M candies, here's some news to factor into your schedule. As of today, (February 15th) the candy company is backlogged with custom print orders. It appears that you should allow 3 - 4 weeks for your order to arrive. The backlog is only for the custom printed candy -- that's right, you can have your library name, event, or anything printed on the flip side of each M&M. If you only need batches of the candy in pre-defined colors (maybe to match your logo?), there's no waiting. Get the details at <http://shop.m-ms.com/customprint/index.asp>

2006 John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Awards

Winners of the Awards were announced at the ALA midwinter conference.
<<http://www.ala.org/ala/pressreleases2006/january2006/JCD06.htm> >

Congratulations and roses to:

- Charleston County Public Library (Charleston, S.C.), for "Remembering the Cooper River Bridges," public relations effort.
- The James B. Duke Library--Furman University (Greenville, S.C.), for "ICU: Life in the Library" and "Year of the Library."
- The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Cincinnati), for their library card sign-up campaign.
- Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, N.C.), for "Bringing the Story to Life."
- Calgary Public Library (Calgary, Alberta, Canada), for "The Great Alberta Reading Challenge."
- Loudoun County Public Library (Leesburg, Va.), for their program "Hanging Out Rocks!"

The winning entries will be displayed at the John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award booth in the exhibit area during the 2006 ALA Annual Conference, June 22-28, in New Orleans.

Help This Marketeer

Marketing SOS Lifesavers

Last month Bonnie Saviers, Marketing Coordinator at the Washoe County Library System in Reno, Nevada asked for ideas for an employee recognition program.

Diane Madrigal with the New York State Library wrote, "A couple years ago the New York State Library



started a bookplate program for employees who received service awards (acknowledgment of 20, 25, 30, etc. years as an employee). The Library contacts appropriate employees to let them know it would like to put a bookplate that honors their years of service in one of the books in our collection. There's an online form where they can submit their name as they'd like it to appear in the bookplate, years of service, and up to three book choices (in case the first choice is unavailable -- already has a bookplate, is missing, is too fragile, etc.)

My involvement with the program has been peripheral, but from what I've seen of the responses, people seem to enjoy selecting an appropriate book -- something that fits their professional or personal interests, heritage or personality."

Thanks Diane for the idea! Here are two web sites offering other ideas. Penn State libraries (1999!). <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/rewards/default.html>. The Cornell University library web site offers a nice list of recognition ideas and resources. <http://www.library.cornell.edu/Adminops/libhumres/recognitionprogram.html>

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Need some help with a promotion program? Looking for advice? Want to know what others have done? Send your marketing challenge to "Help this Marketeer" at MarketeerSOS@chrisolson.com. We'll invite other readers of Marketing Treasures to share their experience and advice to help you.
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Golden Opportunities

March 6 - April 16 Testing Website Usability. An online course by Debra Shapiro through the Univ of Wisconsin, Madison School of Library and Information Studies.

<http://www.slis.wisc.edu/continueed/usability.html>

March 7 Planning Library Promotion Campaigns. A half day workshop by Chris Olson. Sponsored by OCLC CAPCON in Washington, DC. <http://www.oclc.org/capcon/training/courses/descriptions/M212.htm>

March 9 Survey Says! How to Conduct Surveys. A full day workshop by Lynda Idleman in Mississippi.

http://www.solinet.net/workshops/ws_details.cfm?doc_id=3322&WKSHPID=26SSHCS#

March 10 Writing Customer Focused E-Mail & Chat. A full day workshop by Leslie O'Flahavan. Sponsored by OCLC CAPCON in Washington, DC. <http://www.oclc.org/capcon/training/courses/descriptions/1175.htm>

March 11 How to Conduct Focus Groups. A half day workshop by Elaine R. Martin through Simmons College in Boston. <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/continuinged/workshops/simmons.shtml#focus>

March 21 Marketing Planning for the Academic Library sector. A one day workshop in London sponsored by CILIP. <http://www.cilip.org.uk/training/training/2006/mp/marketingplanning>

March 22 How to Ask for Money and Votes for Your Library, Even if You Suffer from Paralyzing Stage Fright. A full day workshop by Pat Wagner at the Solinet office in Atlanta.

http://www.solinet.net/workshops/ws_details.cfm?mode=preview&doc_id=3823&WKSHPID=26HT

March 25 Service Strategy: How to Get the Right "Mix" of Services. A morning workshop by Rebecca Jones at the Computers in Libraries conference in Washington, DC.

<http://www.infoday.com/cil2006/postconference.shtml>

March 29 Creating PR Materials with MS Publisher. A full day workshop by Julie Goyette in Birmingham, Alabama. <http://tinyurl.com/dqb9g>

April 13 Thinking Outside the Box: Principles and Practices of an Unconventional Library. A half day workshop by Karen Albury for the Greater Cincinnati Library Consortium. In Blue Ash, Ohio.

<http://www.gclc.org/ce/viewevent.php?id=718>

April 22 Out From Behind the Desk: Helping Librarians to Develop Their Public Voice. A full day workshop by Dale DeLetis through Simmons College in Boston.

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Are your marketing efforts stuck on the back burner? Time to call Chris Olson!

Whether you need help on a product make-over, logo design, brainstorming sessions, promotion campaign, web site design, communications plans or branding strategies, Chris and her associates are available to lend a helping hand. Call 410-647-6708 or send a note to Chris@chrisolson.com.

All inquiries and projects are held in complete confidence.
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If you want to peruse the newsletter in your browser, you can read it here:

<http://www.chrisolson.com/marketingtreasures/mtcurrent.html>

Questions? Comments? Ideas? Send your e-mail to MTComments@ChrisOlson.com or call (410) 647-6708.

Contact us for reprints/article use at marcom@ChrisOlson.com.

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