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Section 8: Marketing and Public Relations

8.1 – Marketing Defined

Marketing is an ongoing communications exchange with customers in a way that educates, informs and builds a relationship over time. The over-time part is important because only over time can trust be created. With trust, a community builds organically around products and services and those customers become as excited about the products as you are — they become advocates, loyal evangelists, repeat customers and often, friends.

Marketing requires your library's awareness of its customers and their needs, with an eye to responding to those needs. Board members need to be aware that marketing is the natural prelude to any public relations effort. Marketing is also the basis of customer service; it allows staff to measure, and thus close, the gap between what the library offers and what the customers want. Thus, marketing needs to be a continuous process.

The cornerstone of library marketing is telling your library's "story." Putting your key messages and news in the context of a story helps people pay attention, understand, and REMEMBER it. Think beyond simply posting updates and promoting events. The key to marketing is reinforcing your brand. Once you've developed your library's bigger story, it's important to identify and fully utilize your marketing vehicles. These may include: your library's website, advertising via print and online media, social media, blogging, email and direct mail campaigns, events, and traditional print materials such as brochures, flyers, posters, etc.

Marketing can be done by the library staff. It is not necessary to hire a firm and spend a lot of money; it can be kept quite simple. Staff can talk to people in the stacks, do a quick survey on barriers to using certain collections, or do a simple random telephone survey. One example of basic marketing: a librarian went to a meeting at the senior center next door and said, "I'm from the library. We see people from your center in the library all the time. What can the library do for them?" The senior center director gave that small library money to support the information needs of the seniors.

Before your library embarks on an intensive public relations/advertising campaign, make sure the staff has "done its homework" so that the campaign can be directed effectively.

For more information on marketing the library, go to http://www.njstatelib.org/services_for_libraries/consulting_services/library_trustees/advocacy_and_outreach/. Also, you can contact Tiffany McClary, the State Library's Director of Communications, Marketing & Outreach at tmclary@njstatelib.org or by telephone at 609-278-2640 x122.

8.2 - Responsibilities for Public Relations

Public Relations is the profession or practice of creating and maintaining goodwill of an organization's various publics (customers, employees, investors, suppliers, etc.), usually through publicity and other nonpaid forms of communication. These efforts may also include support of arts, charitable causes, education, sporting events, and other civic engagements.

Public relations can help your library:

- Increase public awareness about your programs and offerings, and attract and increase involvement and engagement.
- Create, change, build, or enhance your public image and public perceptions.
- Win or build support.
- Reach new or never before approached audiences.
- Clarify misunderstandings and misinformation.
- Communicate its value.

Representing the library to the public is a responsibility of the library trustee. The board, in conjunction with the staff, needs to develop a marketing & public relations plan, which will publicize the library's programs and services.

Larger libraries are likely to have staff members who have a public relations assignment: news releases, newsletters, off-site displays and exhibits, special events, speaking engagements, radio and TV appearances. The staff member in this job will provide the community with information that will add to the public's awareness of the library.

Smaller libraries with limited funds may not have a staff person assigned exclusively to public relations. They may rely on the trustees, the Friends of the Library or volunteers to carry on an information program.

Board members contribute at a different level. They have standing in the community, move about in many organizations, and have a wide field of acquaintances and opportunities to speak for the library. Being alert to those opportunities is a trustee's job. Public relations activities will involve the trustees in speaking dates, radio and TV appearances, program presentations and special assignments to call on people who can be helpful to the library.

8.3 - Finding Opportunities to Promote the Library

Marketing is a tool that expands people's ideas of what is possible or what is an easy solution for their needs. The outreach part of the equation is where marketing gets its legs—it is the actual deliverable and is the heart of real library service. Once you partner with someone outside of your organization, you begin to care about something outside of your library's walls, and you become a part of the greater community.

Your library cannot remain relevant if it solely focuses on being a repository for books and resources. So much of what libraries do now has to do with programming for the public, anticipation of and provision for community needs, and involvement in the life of the community.

Trustees who follow their local newspapers and social media outlets will find opportunities in many venues.

- ◆ Service clubs are always looking for speakers or programs from local organizations.

- ◆ Communities hold parades and festivals.
- ◆ New companies moving into the area.
- ◆ People are appointed or elected to offices. (They should be made aware of what the library offers).
- ◆ Service organizations, including but not limited to, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, literacy volunteers, State Departments of Labor, Education and Archives, Community Colleges, Humanities and Arts Councils, and Historical Societies. (All of these can help you expand your library's reach and maximize your impact).

Trustees can personalize the library to the community and township officials by sharing information about the role of the library in their family's personal and professional lives. This kind of testimonial leverages the trustee's reputation and standing in the community and helps to promote the library. Library users should be invited to meetings where board members can share success stories, learn more about user expectations, and discuss advocacy efforts.

Consider that...

- The public library is uniquely positioned to foster collaborative efforts and create alliances that transform the community.
- The library belongs to the community and the more the public feels that sense of ownership, the more they will want know about library programming and services.
- Building community partnerships is not a new concept for libraries, which have long been active community hubs reaching out to all sectors in their service areas. However, in this age of library transformation, it is time to escalate the scale of community engagement. On one level, it is survival; it is also the natural progression of a trusted, local institution of long standing.
- Establishing relationships with the decision makers, thought leaders, politicians, "movers & shakers" etc. of your communities will maximize your reach throughout the community.
- And remember that outreach should happen all year long, not just when it is "budget season."

8.4 - Marketing Resources for Libraries

[New Jersey State Library Direct \(http://njsldirect.org/\)](http://njsldirect.org/) is a marketing resource for libraries. It offers a variety of resources including articles, webinars, videos, and tutorials along with a weekly newsletter of NJ library community news.

8.5 - Working with Elected Officials

Library trustees in New Jersey have a great deal of autonomy and authority in managing their libraries. N.J.S.A. 40:54-1 et seq. vests library boards with many powers. Other statutes govern the library's financial affairs.

Trustees must maintain good relations with local government officials if libraries are to receive adequate funds at budget time.

Mayors or executive officials and superintendents of schools or others in the school structure are ex officio members of library boards in New Jersey. Their attendance, participation and advice are an asset and should be cultivated. Their influence is an excellent base when trustees are called upon to request the funds that libraries need.

Library trustees need to map out a plan to keep in touch with members of the governing body, sharing information, preparing them to make decisions important to the library and the community it serves. The objective is to have them share a vision of the library that sets up goals and finds ways to implement them.

Honesty is important in relating to government officials. Information shared should be fully explained and related to the goals the community has for its library.

Trustees need to advocate for appropriate levels and the legally required amount of funding for the library. This includes working with the library director to justify the library's budget requests. It also includes working with officials to assure increased, rather than decreased funding for the library. Those who establish the appropriation for the public library must understand why the library needs money and what it can do with adequate funds. They also need to understand what the ramifications of underfunding might be.

This is advocacy in the finest sense – that of providing information – when library trustees make the case for the library in planned ways. This includes giving timely updates, attending meetings of funding bodies, understanding and being able to explain the budget, and never wavering in support of the library's plans.

Boards will find many ways to relate to members of other boards (for example, recreation boards, school boards, YM/YWCAs, etc). Invitations to library events, regular newsletters or updates, personal calls on members, involvement of other boards in planning sessions, and casual meetings between individuals, all offer opportunities to increase awareness of the importance of the library in the community.

8.6 – The Kind of Advocacy Trustees Should Do

Library trustees can be effective spokespersons for public libraries with the state legislature and other official bodies. Trustees can coordinate efforts with other advocates by contacting the Public Policy Committee of the New Jersey Library Association (www.njla.org). The Committee will help you by discussing proposed legislation and coordinating lobbying efforts at the correct time and place with the people who can help – from elected officials to staff members of representative committees.

The New Jersey Library Trustee Association also coordinates advocacy efforts. NJLTA provides a newsletter, a website, and a listserv that give updates on advocacy efforts. NJLTA is assisting local libraries to develop local advocacy plans and campaigns to strengthen NJ libraries. For more information on NJLTA, visit www.njlibrarytrustees.org

The American Library Association has a Washington office which tracks legislation affecting libraries and librarians and alerts its members when to contact politicians regarding

proposed legislation. Coordinated efforts are best; legislation and appropriations should address the situation in general, rather than favor an individual library.

Trustees should have access to publications from the New Jersey Library Association and to continued advice from the director.

8.7 - United for Libraries

United for Libraries is another resource with excellent advocacy kits and resources. Visit <http://www.ala.org/united/> for materials on developing local advocacy campaigns.

Trustees can be effective advocates because they:

- ◆ Are knowledgeable representatives about the library and the community
- ◆ Have credibility because they voluntarily provide service to the library and community
- ◆ See the library from a citizen's or community member's viewpoint
- ◆ Have a perspective on a range of public services
- ◆ Represent a broad base of the community
- ◆ Vote.

For more information, contact: United
for Libraries

50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
(800) 545-2433, ex. 2161.

<http://www.ala.org/united/>