
GOING TO MARKET

Marketing Concepts for Mentoring Programs

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What is Marketing?

When its concepts were first articulated, marketing was about how to sell tangible products like watches or bread. Soon after, service industries such as hotels and restaurants successfully applied marketing to their sales efforts. In the past couple of decades, marketing techniques have been applied to social change efforts with powerful results — like the successful anti-smoking campaign. Now, non-profit services

“Effective marketing makes things happen — funding increases, an empty hall fills with people, the phone rings like crazy, human needs are more powerfully met.”

GARY J. STERN, *Marketing Workbook For Nonprofit Organizations*

and government agencies are learning that marketing can also have powerful results for services that are not sold, but rather offered to the community as a public good. Mentoring is one such service that can benefit from a marketing approach.

Much of the language of marketing, however, is still the language of selling products. For this reason, nonprofit and social service managers often struggle to apply marketing's concepts and techniques to their work. Books on marketing services as opposed to products, such as *Marketing Your Services: For People Who Hate to Sell* by Rick Crandall, help frame marketing in terms that service providers can

understand. Even more helpful are books that are specifically designed to bridge the semantic divide between nonprofits and business, such as the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's *Marketing Workbook For Nonprofit Organizations* by Gary Stern.

What does marketing have to do with mentoring?

The challenge of applying marketing terminology to our work starts at the beginning: With the definition of marketing. Traditional definitions of marketing are “anything that you can do that might create business for you,” or “anything you do to get or keep a customer.” For us, these definitions raise important questions, such as: “Do we need to create business?” and “Who is our customer?” By contrast, in *Marketing Workbook For Nonprofit Organizations*, Gary Stern defines marketing as “a process that helps you exchange something of value for something of value. Marketing is about initiating, cultivating, and nurturing exchange relationships.” The concepts in this definition — “what is valuable” and “nurturing relationships” — are meaningful ones for mentoring programs, so this definition makes sense to us as a starting place.

The questions raised about our work by the traditional definition of marketing, however, remain interesting ones for us to answer. Answering these questions and applying the concepts of marketing will bring clarity to our outreach in our communities and to our ways of getting our program's needs met.

Why should a mentoring program plan and implement marketing strategies?

To achieve its mission, a mentoring program needs resources, support, and public understanding of the issues we address. Marketing can:

- ❑ ***Attract resources to our work*** — money, donated goods, donated services, mentors, board members, and other volunteers.
- ❑ ***Garner support for our work*** — from mentees, their families, public officials, the community at large, and the agencies, organizations and individuals providing us with resources or collaborating with us.
- ❑ ***Promote public understanding of the issues we address*** — youth development, community service, healthy families, success at school, alcohol and other drug prevention, violence prevention, and teen pregnancy prevention, for example.

In sum, marketing helps mentoring programs achieve recruitment, fund development and community awareness goals.

KEY CONCEPT #1: “The Customer is the Center of the Universe”

A marketing orientation starts with customers.

The “customer” is the center and focus of all marketing concepts. A marketing orientation starts with customers. Ken Blanchard in *Marketing Your Services: For People Who Hate to Sell* says: “You serve customers. Customers are the reason you are in business and thus customer input and customer preferences should shape almost all aspects of your [work].” For that reason, the first question that all nonprofit organizations have to answer in order to apply marketing concepts effectively is one that has already been raised: “Who are our customers?” Businesses do not face this dilemma: For them, the customer is one that buys the product. Are our customers those who pay for the services we provide? If so, our customers are our donors and our funders. Are our customers those who receive the services directly? If so, it is the mentees. Or perhaps our customers are everyone who benefits from the services, including mentors, mentees’ families, collaborating agencies, and the community as a whole?

KEY CONCEPT #2: “Market Segmentation”

Fortunately, among the other concepts of marketing is an answer to our dilemma: market segmentation. The concept of market segmentation is based on the understanding that there are often wide differences between one customer or customer group and another in terms of needs, behavior patterns, relationship to the organiza-

Market segmentation means singling out certain subgroups or market segments and focusing on understanding them in order to develop effective marketing strategies designed specifically for each.

tion, and other characteristics. Applying this concept, we can answer the question “who is our customer” with the answer “all of the above” without compromising our ability to identify and understand each in order to meet their needs. Market segmentation means singling out certain subgroups or market segments and focusing on understanding them in order to develop effective marketing strategies designed spe-

cifically for each. Christopher H. Lovelock and Charles B. Weinberg in their book *Public & Nonprofit Marketing* write that to develop this understanding of each segment, “[m]anagers cannot rely on casual encounters, gut feel, or anecdotal information to guide development of marketing strategy. Segmentation . . . must be based on detailed, specific information gathered in an objective manner.” How different kinds of customers make choices, what benefits they are looking for, what problems they seek to avoid, and what factors or individuals influence their decisions are among the questions to be answered about each segment. Therefore, knowing who is the center of your program’s marketing universe is just the start. Then you need to figure out their unique needs, influences, and behavior patterns.

KEY CONCEPT #3: “Exchange”

Marketing is about how exchanges are stimulated, created, facilitated and valued. In a successful exchange, your organization offers something of value and receives something it needs in return. Both parties to the exchange benefit from it. Exchanges like this rarely happen by coincidence or happenstance; it takes the planning and initiative on the part of your organization to make its exchange relationships work. The importance of this concept is that it focuses our attention on what the other party to the exchange — the volunteer, the donor, or the mentee, for example — seeks to get out of it and what costs that person is prepared to incur to get those benefits. By working on making exchanges that are mutually satisfying, we are able to get our organization’s needs met on an ongoing basis. Here are examples of three mentoring program exchanges.*

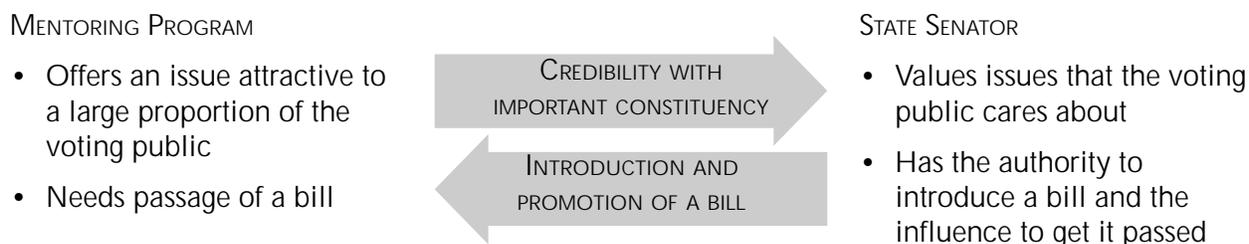
1. *A mentoring program wants teachers to make referrals of students to become mentees.*



2. *A mentoring program wants a local corporation to sponsor its annual fundraising event.*



3. *A mentoring coalition wants the state to pass a bill increasing the priority and expediting the completion of criminal background checks for volunteers serving children and youth.*



* Adapted from the *Marketing Workbook For Nonprofit Organizations*.

KEY CONCEPT #4: “The Mix”

The “marketing mix” is shorthand for saying marketing is not just promotion (as it is commonly misunderstood), but rather a broad range of techniques. In fact, not every marketing plan calls for promotion. The *Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations* points out that marketing goals can sometimes be achieved through internal changes alone – adding new program elements, improving customer service, or other such adjustments. The range of techniques can be categorized into several broad strategies: Product, price, place, production and promotion.

What do the terms “product, price, place, production and promotion” mean in the context of a mentoring program’s marketing goals?

RECRUITMENT	FUND DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNITY AWARENESS
<i>Marketing to potential and current mentees, mentors, board members and other volunteers</i>	<i>Marketing to potential and current donors, grant funders, business sponsors, public who attend events</i>	<i>Marketing to the public, public officials, the media, related organizations and agencies</i>
PRODUCT: What do you offer that meets people’s needs?		
Personal growth, community involvement, an opportunity to make a difference.	Positive outcomes from quality services or programs that respond effectively to a community need.	Knowledge about important issues that impact the community, families, and individuals.
PRICE: What costs are incurred and what can you do to ensure the price is neither too high nor too low?		
Personal costs of volunteering as a mentor, becoming a mentee, joining the board of directors or volunteering in another capacity. Costs of volunteering may include time spent, expenses not reimbursed, and emotional investment with no guarantee of a positive emotional return on the investment.	Amount of dollars contributed or value of donated goods. Also: Time and expenses related to giving.	Admission price for public education events, speaker’s fees for presentations to civic groups, cost of subscription to publications.

RECRUITMENT	FUND DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNITY AWARENESS
PLACE OR DISTRIBUTION: <i>Where is the service of fered and how accessible is it?</i>		
<p>Accessibility to training, to the place where services are provided, and to resources that can help (such as staff).</p>	<p>Making it easy for people to donate by accepting credit cards, including a reply envelope with every newsletter, holding events where it is convenient for your target audience to attend.</p>	<p>Articles in small neighborhood and community newspapers in addition to major dailies, public education events held throughout the county — not just in the county seat.</p>
PRODUCTION: <i>How efficiently and ef fectively does you program respond to demand (from the viewpoint of your “customer”)?</i>		
<p>Is every expression of interest followed up on quickly? Is there a long wait between applying, being trained, and/or being matched? Do you have enough mentors to assign to mentees and vice versa? Is supervision sufficient to adequately monitor matches?</p>	<p>Do you have the capacity to thank every single donor within two days after receiving a donation? Do you have a tracking system so you know who gave how much, when, and how often? Do you have a fund development plan with activities spanning the whole year and including a diversity of sources and methods?</p>	<p>When a reporter calls needing a quote from an expert on youth, is someone from your program prepared to respond? Are several people trained and ready to respond to requests for public speakers? Are key messages, presentation headlines, and handout materials prepared in advance for consistency and quick turnaround?</p>
PROMOTION: <i>What you do to get the word out and motivate people to respond?</i>		
<p>Promoting opportunities for involvement through news releases, public service announcements, website, brochures, flyers, public speaking engagements, giveaways, and booths at recruitment fairs.</p>	<p>Promoting opportunities to contribute through direct mail, brochures, newsletters, web site, public speaking, face-to-face solicitation, grant proposals, telephone or door-to-door canvassing, giveaways, and special events.</p>	<p>Promoting learning about the issues through newspaper, newsletter and website articles and op ed columns, talk shows, public speaking, public awareness events, publications, videos, testifying at public hearings, and meetings with policy makers.</p>

KEY CONCEPT #5: “The Plan”

A plan is essential to effective marketing. It prevents haphazard, reactive, and incomplete marketing, keeps you focused on the important concepts of marketing, and gives you a means to assess your progress. The elements of any good plan include measurable objectives, tasks, timelines, assignment of responsibility and mechanisms to evaluate degree of implementation. The forms on pages 9 and 10 may help you to frame your marketing plan.

RESOURCES

Marketing Your Services: For People Who Hate to Sell
by Rick Crandall, Ph.D. (Contemporary Books), 1996.

Marketing Workbook For Nonprofit Organizations
by Gary Stern (Amherst H. Wilder Foundation), 1990.

Public & Nonprofit Marketing by Christopher H.
Lovelock and Charles B. Weinberg.

Developing Your Marketing Plan

PRODUCT

What is the service, program, product or event we are offering?

What are the major features of it that meet the target audience's needs?

TARGET AUDIENCE ("CUSTOMER")

This service, program, product or event is being marketed to whom and what are the benefits valued by each audience?

PRICE

What are the costs to the "customer" and what can we do to ensure the price is neither too high nor too low?

PLACE OR DISTRIBUTION

Where will we offer the service, program, product or event and how will we make it accessible?

PRODUCTION

In order to ensure we can efficiently and effectively meet demand, we will do what?

PROMOTION

What actions will we take to get the word out and motivate people to respond?

(Word these as measurable objectives.

Example: "Three news releases sent to 10 newspapers and resulting in five news stories in fiscal year 2002.")

