

IT IS ALWAYS ABOUT THE MISSION & MESSAGE!

During this age of economic volatility you are under the gun to show that your organization is accountable to your clients and stakeholders and that your operation is effective and efficient. With the growth in the number of nonprofits you may find your organization competing within the same audiences.

Viewing your nonprofit through a marketing lens is key to your success!

Marketing creates, communicates and delivers value to customers and manages relationships so that they benefit the organization and its stakeholders. Your organization serves four categories of customers: clients, those to whom you deliver services, constituents, who represent the public, volunteers and donors, sometimes referred to as supporters and/or stakeholders. Although they are distinct, in the world of nonprofits, there is often overlap within the groups.

How do you know what the customer wants? You must ask. If your organization has a strategic plan you're ahead of the game. The situational analysis will provide a wealth of information on your organizational goals and objectives as well as your target audiences.

To begin, target your current and prospective customers, discover their needs, and to what type of messages they will respond. Analyze your competition, how you can position your services, and, if this is an opportunity for a fee-based service, what are your price points and how do you position the service. Develop your brand and core messages to convey your nonprofit's mission. After research and analysis, create your communications plan, implement the plan and evaluate the results.

Your plan must be dynamic, flexible, focused on target markets, combine strategy & tactics and be doable. It becomes one of the most important investments your organization makes to advance your mission, make your customer's aware of your value and ultimately support you. And, if board members or staff try to pull you off message – always go back to the plan.

Here are some principles for guiding your nonprofit communications through that strategic marketing lens:

- ❖ Always market your mission, not your current services.
- ❖ Communicate regularly and consistently. Do not assume that the market knows who you are and what you are doing.



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- ❖ Make sure your communications takes advantage of all tactics and opportunities, i.e., media, internal newsletters, websites, blogs, trade shows, events, etc.
- ❖ Don't communicate by chance. Create a strategic communications plan and work it!
- ❖ Know your audiences. Each is a target market with different needs and response styles.
- ❖ Communicate in terms of your ROI, return on investment. Quantify your economic and quality of life effect on your community. Be proactive.
- ❖ Celebrate your successes – don't keep them to yourself.
- ❖ Know your organizational elevator speech. You need to be able to explain your organization's mission, vision and value in 30-60 seconds so you can compete in this tight market.
- ❖ Develop a Unique Service Proposition (UPS) and firmly stand behind it. Mission ↔ Vision ↔ Values ↔ Service ↔ Image ↔ Communication
- ❖ Research, research, research to ensure that your message resonates with your target audiences.
- ❖ Keep "a face" on your marketing initiatives to show how the issues touch your community. Communicate close to your donors' hearts.
- ❖ Evaluate often and be prepared to refocus your efforts.

The above Communications Plan framework proved very successful for a senior services organization that provides affordable housing to low-income seniors. The main goal was to capitalize on the organization's brand awareness and position in the community in order to increase funding. The implementation of the plan lead to better relations with the local government, stronger media relations, a 45% increase in the number of active volunteers and an increase in fundraising that surpassed the stated goal by 25% the first year.

If you're interested in more information, please contact deborah@creative-si.com



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