

SHINE Hazel Williamson Award

Course title: Marketing Planning for Library and Information Units.

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Trainer: Terry Kendrick

'Marketing is a dialogue over time with specific groups of customers whose needs you understand in depth and for whom you develop an offer with a differential advantage over the offer of competitors.'

Professor Malcolm McDonald 'Marketing Plans'

Programme

- Marketing planning for libraries and information services: a review of current practice
- Developing the 'winning offer' : translating the market for our library and information services into something meaningful for users and non-users
- Marketing objectives and strategies: tools, techniques, advice
- Integrated marketing communications to roll out strategy
- Implementing the plan

Marketing Planning

Marketing planning is a process of assessing marketing opportunities and resources, determining marketing objectives and developing a plan for implementation and control. The plan must balance the needs of the stakeholders and at the same time exceed their performance measures and expectations. The process of market planning begins with establishing an ambition and follows through to the tactical programmes where the whole process will begin again.

Segmentation

In order to market to the library users we first must break the users up into different groups and market to each separately. The reason for creating segments within the user group enables us to make choices and see which groups will be most profitable to us or which segments are inadequately serviced by the competitors. First identify the value which each of the user groups expect to receive from the library and then create an offer specifically for them. The criteria for effective user segmentation are;

- Segments must have a common property.
- Segment must be large enough for potential.
- Library must be able to effectively promote and serve the segment.

When the segments have been identified the service must start researching them so strategies can then be developed and implemented. When users have been divided up in to their relative segments the library must choose one group to market to. If an attempt is made to market to many different segments it will fail. Once this is done the next step is to carry out a SWOT analysis (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) by segment.

Stakeholders

Library stakeholders can vary from strongly supportive of the service to viewing it as a burden and are listed as the Saviour, Friend, Saboteur, Irritant, Sleeping Giant, Acquaintance, Time Bomb or Trip Wire. To market the service to the most supportive and unsupportive stakeholders the library must look at what they are aiming to achieve in their day to day jobs and then look at how the library and

information service can help them achieve these goals. It was stated the most positive stakeholders to have are the Saviour and the Sleeping Giant. The Saviour is described as powerful, high interest and an active backer who will support the library so it is necessary to keep this group on side. The Sleeping Giant is also powerful but has a low interest as they don't feel that the service offers them anything. These groups are the most beneficial because once engaged they are champions of the service and good to have on side.

User Knowledge

User knowledge will help creating a marketing strategy so the questions that should be asked are how much do we know about our users and non-users?

- Why do/don't they come to us?
- What are their other options?
- What will they need in the next 3-5 years?
- What do they think of us in the areas that matter to them?

For example speculating that potential users don't use the library because they are unaware of the service could be a false statement, it may be the fact that the service does not cater to their needs.

The key sources of user information should come from transactional data, surveys, focus groups and staff. By building up this picture of our current and potential users we can create offers that will encourage use of the service.

Strategies

Various strategies must be thought out such as service and site strategies and user and non-user strategies in order to provide services for all current users but also non-users. Firstly communication strategies must be in thought out so that what we are going to say and how we're going to say has the highest impact. Marketing communications should first of all inform groups on the type of services on offer, then persuading them to use them. The promotional strategy will think about the reach and frequency of the offers as well as the pricing, methods of contact and relationship contact.

Implementation

Aspects of implementation that can be problematic are commitment, change management, leadership and having the nerve to implement the changes. Each of these have to be addressed and in order to move on from these it's important to have a marketing plan checklist.

- Is the plan well communicated to the right people in the right way at the right time?
- Is the information well understood?
- Is it fully believed? (through testimonials, previous experience)
- Do the library staff have the skills, knowledge and motivation to carry out the tasks required?
- Evaluation of these factors and how successful each stage of the plan is going ensures that the strategies can be measured.

For the plans to continue to move forward bear in mind some of the following questions 'can I see a clear recognition of value in the user's mind' and 'will this plan develop our place in the stakeholder mindsets?' Constantly reevaluating current procedures will mean that the service will always be appealing to the target groups.

This ensures that the planners don't lose sight of who they are planning for and means that the best plans are presented to the correct groups.

Conclusion

I found the course beneficial in that it allowed me to work out marketing strategies step by step which meant I found it a much more manageable task. Terry emphasised that the main skill of producing successful marketing strategies is to engage in a dialogue with users and potential users and begin a dialogue that will help us provide a service that people will use. Breaking down users and non-users of the service into segments will help to assess what each group expects from the service and enables us to market the right offer to the right groups. Finally the implementation of the plan and ensuring that all library staff are engaged is crucial to the plan's success.