

THE IMAGE OF YOUR ORGANISATION

It is important to understand your organisation fully before attempting to convince others that any project is worth funding or sponsoring.

What do people really feel about your organisation? How do others see you?

- As a proactive focussed service organisation
- As a comfortable secure organisation
- As a staid service provider
- As an organisation providing a service without any competition and therefore not concerned about public image - take it or leave it
- As a clone of Government
- Is there any conflict within your organisation?
- Are you particularly controversial?
- Who are your clients?

All these factors need to be known before you can start developing a successful marketing plan.

LOOKING IN FROM THE OUTSIDE

What is the perceived vision/purpose of your organisation?

What ratings on the organisational vision barometer do other people give your organisation?

How do other people perceive that you might access your board or committee to discuss an important issue?

Is your organisation perceived to be owned (captured) by any one group of people? If so who?

What are other people's impressions about your organisation's decision-making processes and capabilities?

How outward or inward focused is your organisation? (The perception of getting on with the job, versus the perception of debating internal organisational, power or other non primary issues - in other words "navel-gazing").

How simple and useful is your organisation's structure perceived to be? (e.g. a responsive network versus a bureaucracy).

How motivated are other people to want to join or support your organisation in its endeavours?

(The above questions have been adapted from material prepared by James Datson Management Services)

It is important that you ask your clients, your funders, your sponsors, your volunteers your employees and anyone else who has contact with your organisation, to answer the questions above. This will give you factual information as a foundation for building your marketing plan. **Your organisation needs a personality and people need to relate to that personality.** By seeking answers to the questions you will quickly ascertain what that personality is. Very few organisations have such an irresistible product or privileged role in society that they can afford not to bother about their image.

Once the personality of your organisation has been established (and maybe changed to suit the environment you wish to work in) then the next step is public relations.

Non verbal messages are as important as verbal messages. Negative vibes do not communicate positive messages.

SOME SIMPLE BUT OFTEN OVERLOOKED POINTS:

- Do your premises always look tidy and clean?
- Are their scruffy pictures on the wall?
- Do people find it difficult to find you?
- Are people made to feel welcome when they visit?
- Do staff members always use lack of resources as an excuse for inefficiencies?
- Do you return messages on the answerphone promptly?
- Is your receptionist friendly and helpful?
- Are your staff aware of cultural protocols?
- Do you have happy staff and volunteers?
- Do you send badly typed letters on outdated letterhead.

Whatever we do we send messages to others and these messages make up the personality of the organisation. The "face" of the organisation at any one time may be your volunteer, your receptionist, the fax or letter received, the message on the answerphone and these must always be professional and helpful so that people form positive opinions of your organisation. Goodwill has to be earned, cultivated and safeguarded.

COMMUNICATION

The main barriers to communication are:

- Badly expressed messages, those which are not clear or concise
- Faulty translations
- Loss by transmission
- Inattention and poor retention
- Unclarified assumptions

- Insufficient adjustment period
- Distrust
- Premature evaluation, jumping to conclusions
- Fear
- Failure to communicate, usually due to lack of respect and distrust
- Limited knowledge of language used.

In simple terms the sender has a message he or she wants to communicate to another person or group. The communicator must be able to present the message in a form which the receiver will understand and to choose a medium which will effectively deliver the message.

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE OUR MESSAGES?

The EIGHT C's of communication:

- Credibility** The receiver must have confidence in the sender
- Context** The sender must provide for participation and feedback.
The receiver must confirm, not contradict
- Content** The content must have meaning to the receiver
The content must be relevant
- Clarity** The message must be put in simple terms
Words must mean the same thing to the receiver as they do the sender.
- Continuity** Repetition achieves penetration.
- Consistency** The message must be consistent
- Channels of Capability** The sender must use channels that the receiver uses and respects.
The sender must be aware of the receiver's capabilities. The least effort required to understand the message, the more effective it will be.

COMMUNICATION MIX

It is important that we learn to communicate appropriately with all our staff, stakeholders whether they be our clients, funders, Civic Leaders, sponsors etc. Each group of stakeholders will require different information presented in a different way but they must all receive the same messages. An example of this would be the funders possibly want a lot of statistical information about your diverse services, the client will want the same information but is more interested in the benefits so they can choose whether they wish to use those services, but the Civic Leaders are possibly only interested in the overall service and its benefits to a City/town.

INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

We have talked about formal communication but community groups are very good at informal communication. The networks you develop within community groups are equally important. These networks often provide information to funders, clients and others so whatever messages you communicate they should be positive. Often the phrase “It’s a small world” is used to describe connections to others through an intricate network of informal communications. More and more funders and clients are relying on this type of communication to help them make decisions, therefore it is very important that your organisation, staff, volunteers and committee send positive messages.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The Australian and New Zealand Public Relations Manual - Tymson, C Sherman

If you would like a list of our other community resources, or to be put on our mailing list, contact us at:



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