

MARKETING THE PUBLIC SERVICE "BRAND"

Best Practices for Good Times and Bad

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Terms, Scope and Problem Definition:

1. If an organization doesn't define itself, some other entity does (and they are usually not our friends.)
2. Marketing and promotional "best practices" used by the business world have direct application to the public service sector.
3. Whether or not we define ourselves as "for-profit" or "not-for-profit", we should at least agree that in these challenging times, we should run ourselves like successful for-profit or not-for-profit businesses.

Best Practices:

1. On the structural level, high performing organizations do a better job of coordinating their internal and external communications activities (in other words, they communicate both internally and externally on a regular basis) and are thus more likely to develop proactive relationships.
2. At the strategic level, high performing organizations are typically adept at both managing and facilitating change and becoming what Peter Senge (author of "The Fifth Discipline") calls "a learning organization."

3. On the behavioral level, high performing organizations have focused mid level management that effectively supports the vision of executive management through their everyday actions. Training and branding here is key.

Communication Challenges:

1. Misunderstanding, both internal and external, is inevitable – yet an agency is responsible for its own message.
2. Your "brand" is the public perception of how you act in its best interests.

3. To be an effective communications entity, you must be sensitive to the

community's views/biases. One size doesn't fit all.

4. Most organizations "hear" rather than "listen" to their constituents.

5. Unless aggressively delivered, it's easy for an organization's message to get

drowned out or ignored.

6. Our publics don't expect us to be orators, but they do expect us to be honest,

believable, and genuine.

7. The greatest barrier to effective communication is the illusion that it has been achieved. There are always setbacks and the greatest potential setback of all is the disease known as 'complacency'.

Organizational Culture:

1. All marketing stems from an organization's true culture. Culture is best described as a complex and deep aspect of an organization that can strongly

affect organizational members. This includes core values, both real and perceived.

2. Cultural Strengths:

- a. Sense of fraternity.
- b. Pervasiveness.
- c. Widely recognized artifacts.
- d. General acceptance by public as a necessity.

3. Potential Vulnerabilities:

- a. Groupthink, (more prevalent the stronger and more closed the organization is.)
- b. Different cultures view us much differently than we view ourselves.
- c. Moral superiority. ("We're the good guys.")
- d. Values – espoused vs. practiced.

Branding from the Inside Out:

1. Synchronize your brand personality, values, and corporate culture to your desired image.

2. Get your people behind your brand.

3. Reinforce and repeatedly explain "brand values" and "brand behavior" until it becomes second nature.

4. Start with an in-depth organizational assessment, vividly reporting both strengths and weaknesses. Then develop a strategic plan to accomplish the vision. Your people should help provide and develop the plan.

5. The goal of the plan? "Brand Consistency"

Public Relations and Marketing - Functional Definitions:

1. Functional Definition of Public Relations – "The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between and organization and the public(s) on whom its success or failure depends." PRSA

2. Functional Definition of Marketing – The management function that identifies human needs and wants, offers products and services to satisfy those demands, and causes transactions that deliver products and services in exchange for something of value to the provider."PRSA

Marketing Basics:

1. No organization, whether business or public service, can gain a positive image

from marketing. It can only earn respect for its actions. A strong brand builds a

relationship with its customers in two ways; by having a unique brand identity

and a relevant brand utility (including functional benefits, emotional benefits,

and perceived value.)

2. Ideal goal of brand management? Form a lasting, positive emotional link with

your customers.

Key Points in Public Service Branding:

1. Branding is about getting your community to see you as the only solution to

their needs.

2. Advertising/marketing grabs minds, but branding captures hearts.

3. The agency's logo, uniform or badge isn't its brand. Those are merely symbols.

The public service brand is its "legitimacy" – the public's perception of how the

organization consistently treats them. And make no mistake, in this era of fiscal

uncertainty, these expectations are high.

4. The stronger and more credible the brand identity, the less susceptible the agency is to being defined and undermined by outside influences.

5. Build the brand from the agency's realistic strengths. The brand should reinforce what the agency does well.

6. The success of a brand most depends on "consistency" and "frequency."

7. If you can't articulate your own brand, neither can anyone else.

8. Just because you've heard about it, doesn't mean it's branded. Every agency

member is a potential spokesperson, salesperson, or representative and every

contact with the constituent public(s) adds or detracts from the brand.

9. The more you niche your brand, the better.

10. The smaller your budget, the stronger your brand must be.

11. If the branding is wrong, so is everything else.

Customer Satisfaction:

1. "To keep customers today, you can't be content to merely satisfy them; you have to give them legendary service and create 'raving fans' – customers who are so excited about the way you treat them that they tell stories about you." (Hutson and Willis, "The One Minute Entrepreneur")

2. Questions we need to answer:

a. What exactly should 'customer satisfaction' mean for us in our respective

public service communities?

b. How should we measure customer satisfaction?

3. Besides the obvious need for a quality 'product', the two biggest keys to growing

customer satisfaction are cultivating loyalty and developing 'word-of-mouth'

recognition.

4. The two main keys to institutionalizing customer service; Empathy and

Imagination.