

1-2011

A Review of Bite-Sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for the Overworked Librarian and Building a Buzz: Libraries and Word-of-Mouth Marketing

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Publication Info

Preprint version *Collection Management*, Volume 36, Issue 1, 2011, pages 73-75.

<http://www.informaworld.com/>

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This year brought two new books on marketing in libraries published by the American Library Association. The title of the first book, *Bite-Sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for the Overworked Librarian*, will immediately resonate with many in the library profession today. The authors of this book recognize that the idea of marketing may seem an overwhelming concept to many librarians who imagine the “M word” entails launching large scale campaigns that are costly and time-consuming. The authors instead offer practical marketing strategies in “bite-sized chunks” aimed at getting your feet wet and seeing what works for your organization. The authors include Nancy Dowd, Director of Marketing for New Jersey State Library, Mary Evangeliste, Director of User Services and Outreach at Gettysburg College and Cofounder of Fearless Future, a marketing consulting firm, and Jonathan Silberman, cofounder of Fearless Future and graphic designer.

The book is divided into ten chapters each describing a different type or facet of marketing. The first chapter deals with Word-of-Mouth Marketing (WOMM) and provides tips on how to identify and recruit influencers who are excited about your library and can spread your message to people they know through in-person and online forums. The authors include a checklist for creating a WOMM buzz which should prove very useful. Chapter two is on storytelling, a topic familiar to many librarians, but in this case it refers to telling a story that illustrates your library’s impact on the lives of your patrons. The authors contend that stories will resonate with your audience more than comments or testimonials because they engage the listener and are easier to remember. The authors describe the components of an effective story and pepper the chapter with real life examples of how libraries create and use story banks.

Chapter three specifically addresses marketing electronic resources. The authors suggest using language that resonates with the user, and not the librarian, in describing electronic resources which is a great example of a bite-sized change that could make a huge difference. Chapter four is a primer on writing news releases, using proper AP style, and creating PSAs. The authors suggest communication strategies geared toward getting results with the media. The advice provided in Chapter five on successful outreach strategies could be brushed off as common sense but rather serves as a valuable reminder that planning is essential when reaching out to the community. The worksheet provided will prove helpful in setting goals, developing key messages, and designing a presence that is attractive to the audience you are targeting.

Chapter six takes a quick look at Advocacy and briefly outlines creating a call to action utilizing many of the marketing strategies discussed in previous chapters. Chapter seven covers web 2.0 strategies including blogging, Twitter, wikis, mobile phones, Flickr, tagging, videos and podcasting. The authors address why libraries should be using these new marketing tools and point out specific strategies for each media and how to maximize their use. Chapter eight provides the reader with tips on how to work with a designer, where to secure quality stock

images, and basic information on color and resolution in print design. This is followed by a very short chapter on creating a brand. The final chapter briefly addresses assessment, usability testing, advisory groups, corporate sponsorship and creating an internal marketing culture.

This book delivers what it promises, realistic marketing strategies for time-strapped librarians. Most of the examples in this book come from public libraries and the text seems geared toward a public librarian audience. That being said, much of the advice can be translated into any library setting. The contemporary design, concise chapters and “bite-sized” sections attract the reader. Overall the authors have created a very useful reference providing the reader with practical strategies for achieving success.

The second book, *Building a Buzz: Libraries & Word-of-Mouth Marketing*, is written by two marketing professionals formerly employed by the American Library Association who now own a consulting business called Library Communication Strategies. With funding from an LSTA grant, two regional library systems in Illinois hired them to provide training and support on WOMM. This book details their training program and provides descriptions of how fifteen of the libraries involved in the grant used WOMM in their organizations. The Buzz Grant marketing project, as it was called, was implemented in thirty-five libraries in Illinois, the majority of those were public libraries.

In Chapter one the authors define marketing and list the steps to conducting a communication audit and creating a marketing communication plan. Chapter two defines WOMM and why it works. Chapter three describes the “must-haves” for successful WOMM: a good product and excellent customer service; a plan; a clear, consistent message; a prepared and committed sales force; and people willing to testify about the value of your organization. The authors contend that creating a culture of excellent customer service is the key to a successful WOMM initiative. Staff must also be willing and able to sell the message of the library at every opportunity. The chapter includes an agenda for training staff and a section on inspiring and motivating staff to become involved in the project.

In Chapter 4, “When and Where to Buzz”, the authors advice is to create a buzz anywhere you can and to try something unexpected. This chapter also provides tips on how to appear approachable when delivering your message. There is a short section on using e-media to create a buzz but the authors caution that “face-to-face” communication is the most successful and e-media should only compliment “real live conversations”. Most of their advice on e-media is cautionary at best.

Chapter 5 provides detailed descriptions of how fifteen of the libraries involved in the Buzz Grant marketing project used WOMM. For each library it lists the objectives, audiences,

message, strategies, tools, budget, impact and lessons learned. This section is particularly useful for seeing the work that went into the project and the impact it had on the organization.

The final chapter entitled “Power Pack” provides useful resources like a sample communication plan developed by one of the participating libraries, a sample agenda for a staff workshop on building a buzz, and sample scripts on how to “sell” the library in various situations including at the gym, to your neighbors, and in dealing with an irate patron at the library.

WOMM, as described in this book, entails creating a culture of marketing in your institution. The positive comments collected from participating libraries suggest that the planning and time commitment involved in this type of venture is worth it in the end. I would have liked to have seen more on the use of social media in creating a buzz. The cautionary tone seems to conflict with the prevalence of online word-of-mouth communication that exists today. The examples provided by the libraries involved in this project are very useful and show that a little planning goes a long way. This book is highly recommended for librarians with marketing responsibilities who are ready to create a buzz.