MARKETING Treasures

™

Is Your Library Brand X?

(Based on recent presentations given by Chris Olson to several groups of librarians.)

In the good old days of the American West, cattle wore distinctive brands: unique, some-times whimsical designs to let people know who a cow or steer belonged to. In places where cattle rustling was a hanging offense, you can bet that brands were respected.

Though we don't hang too many cattle thieves these days, brands still play a ma-jor role in the marketplace. They are a key aspect of marketing strategy because brands distinguish an organization's products and services in the minds of consumers. You may be willing to buy a generic brand of aspirin or pick up a supermarket's in-house brand of frozen waffles, but some products are tied forever to their brand names. Only Volkswa-gen can bring back the Bug. Only Disney theme parks have photo opportunities with Mickey Mouse.

Many brands are so well-placed in our cul-ture and our memory that when we hear their names we automatically picture the product. For instance, what do you think of when you hear "McDonald's?" "Nike?" "Cadillac?" You probably think of hamburgers, athletic shoes, and cars – all tangible items – but the philosophy of branding applies equally well to products that are services. In fact, for people whose business is information, intelligent

"Ultimately, a brand is a contract. It becomes cred-ible through consistency, reliability, endurance, and repetition."

branding is more important than ever. Think about the word "library" for a moment. What comes to mind when you hear it or when you see the American Library As-sociation symbol? Long shelves of books? Friendly people? Quiet? The word "library" can be too broad, too bland, and too generic for today's sophisticated, streamlined infor-mation and media-rich knowledge centers. "Library" is the Brand X from those old tele-vision commercials. It's dull and vague and wrapped in white paper.

It's important to remember that a brand works because it evokes a history of expe-rience in us, both good and bad. It means different things to different people and, if you're trying to establish a specific identity – a brand – for your particular library and its services, relying solely on that broad term "library" can be a problem. Fortunately, there is a solution and it begins with a name.

What's in a Name?

A brand is a name – a unique identifier which suggests a known product. It is a set of familiar characteristics that fulfill consumer expectations. If you go to McDonald's and ask for a Big Mac, you expect "two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pick-les onions on a sesame seed bun." If you order a Coke, it had better not taste like a Pepsi. Brand is identity. It gives consumers confidence because they know the name and they know what to expect from the product or the service. Ultimately, a brand is a con-

Pearls of Wisdom

Outshine your competition by delivering documents in a metallic foil envelope. 10 x 13 envelopes of heavy, tear-proof foil are available in black, gold, silver or red. Just attach a mailing label and send them out to customers. These are guaranteed to add sparkle to the most routine correspondence and will assure that your mail gets quick attention. JAM Paper and Envelopes carry these attention-grabbers. Call them at 1-800-8010-JAM.

Don't leave an important sign out of your trade show display! Run it up a flagpole instead. USI's flagpole stands on an adhesive-backed base that you can put up anywhere. Slip your sign into the slot on the 12-inch flag pole and you have one more important reminder why people should do business with you. Between trade shows, the flag pole can hold important reminders at your reference desk or beside a computer terminal. Call USI for a catalog at 1-800-243-4565.

The right words can pack quite a punch when you're writing an ad. Researchers have found that certain words command attention, and they're among the easiest to use. If you want to alert your readers to something, use "compare," "now," "new," and "price." If you want to capture readers' interest, try "compare," "introduce," "now," "save," "easy," "price," or "new." If you're writing a headline and need to establish instant contact, "easy" and "new" pull readers right in. You'll want to write your own glowing description about your library's newest products and services, but judicious use of these "power words" can grab a reader who might have overlooked one more reference to "library" or "resources." Sprinkle your announcements with these words and see if you can get a few more readers.

How many people do you know who don't suffer from overcrowded desks. Most of us would love to get rid of a few desktop basics just to save a couple of extra inches of space. MJ Graphics, Inc., has a novel solution — paper mouse pads. These 7.5 x 8 inch pads hold 25 pages of high-quality paper with enough friction for a mouse, and enough paper for a long phone message. No more scrambling for a scrap of paper—and your customers will think of you whenever they see your logo on this desktop treasure. Color, graphic, and text imprints are available, so you can include your contact information right there above the mouse. Call MJ Graphics at 1-800-988-2685.

"Marketing Treasures will now be published electronically four times a year, and made available FREE at www.chrisolson.com/marketingtreasures."

At the end of our eleventh year of publishing **Marketing Treasures**, Chris Olson and Associates is pleased to announce that in 1999 we're taking this show on the web. **Marketing Treasures** will now be published electronically four times a year, and made available at www.chrisolson.com/marketingtreasures. Perhaps most importantly, the savings in production costs will now allow us to distribute our newsletter for **free.**

Of course, **Marketing Treasures** will continue to bring you stories and tips on every aspect of information service marketing. Though our medium may have changed, our philosophy remains the same. By not focusing exclusively on promotion, but on marketing as a means to optimize library resources, we've always sought to offer solutions to current problems while laying the groundwork for future success.

Moving to the web allows us to offer several key improvements to our readers, including a reference archives and immediate access to other resources through embedded hot links. With electronic publishing we can use the ease and immediacy of e-mail to get closer to you, our readers, and help all of you to get closer to one another. We hope the new **Marketing Treasures** format will create a virtual community of information service providers who can share questions, solutions, information, and experiences.

Thank you for your continuing interest in **Marketing Treasures—and your patience while we sort through the logistics of making the change.** Look for our first electronic edition at www.chrisolson.com/marketingtreasures.

Publisher

tract between the product and the consumer. It becomes credible through consistency, reliability, endurance, dependability, and repetition.

By branding your library and actively crafting its identity, you begin to establish that contract. You help your customers understand your products and services. If you define your library and its functions, you eliminate confusion and misunderstanding in the minds of current and potential users. When you brand and then promote your new computer database system or your in-depth research services by name, you give your clients a frame of reference. You give them a product to call by name and a service to become familiar with and depend upon. And familiarity and trust are the roots of loyalty.

Brand Loyalty

Marketers love it when you actively prefer a particular brand. In the business, that's known as brand loyalty and it is very valuable. On the customer side, brand loyalty grows – remember the contract – from experience. When you commit to a brand, you usually do so for good reasons: it meets your criteria; it works; it lives up to its promises; it has proven itself over time; it has real value – in price and in quality; it is easy to purchase because you can ask for it by name.

As a marketing device, a brand contains the genetic material for generations of products. As long as it is consistently promoted and as long as it stands for a dependable known quantity, it can live through product changes and can produce dedicated, long-term customers. There are plenty of people who use the same toothpaste their parents do and buy the same brand of cars.

Libraries, being service providers, can develop brand loyalty, too; and in today's competitive marketplace, they have to. Even though your library might not compete with outsiders, it still has to contend for budget dollars and it's easier to persuade decision-makers of your value if they clearly understand your products and your services. To cultivate brand loyalty, create an identity for yourself, establish it, and promote it. The objective is to build a brand that your customers love and depend upon.

When you create a library brand, you can benefit from brand loyalty, but there's a catch. The generic "library" brand, the Brand X brand, may not evoke the responses you're looking for and it probably won't help people understand what your library does. You'll need a powerful brand identity to announce and convey your message. You may even need to start to see yourself in a new way: as a business manager set on establishing a brand for your products and services.

Who Are You, Really?

Before you can define your brand, you must define your library and the business you are in. "But," you may say, "everyone knows what our library does." Not too long ago, there was a trend to replace the term "library" with more accurately descriptive words. Suddenly, people attended Colleges of Information Services, got jobs in School Media Centers, and phoned the Corporate Resource Center with a few questions. But the term "library" refused to go away because it's a brand and has a broad, associated image.

Librarians often complain about their lack of support, visibility, and funding. They can't get attention because they're trapped within the generic library brand, Brand X. The "good old library" isn't a compelling cause, and renaming it the "Corporate Research Center" has probably neither raised customer consciousness and understanding nor garnered respect and attention from other managers. It's too vague and fuzzy. So how do you determine what your brand will be? By the library brand. Look at the things you bring to the marketplace and analyze what will stand behind your brand.

Intangibles such as quality services and products, leadership, and value can be analyzed specifically. What are the characteristics of your products? What are the benefits? Quality service is helpful, accurate, and timely. Your leadership in using technology to deliver services is an important part of your identity.

Keep in mind that your library has a personality: rational, friendly, efficient, knowledgeable. Your personality is often the foundation of your brand and is a characteristic you

can affirm. If your library serves as a major corporate research resource, "Facts R Us" may not be the appropriate brand for you. Likewise, a public library which is known for fast, friendly service and a contemporary collection probably won't want to be known as "The Knowledge Management Consortium."

Remember the contract. Value is determined by what your customers want and what price they're willing to pay. All your library's assets and services have to be considered as part of the brand identity. Tangible resources such as your staff, your collection, and your physical location are also part of your identity. Dress for success with a brand that suits your library's personality and style.

Know Your Customers –

And Your Competition

Satisfied customers are repeat customers. Make sure you know what they want and make sure they get it every time they come to you. Rely on marketing research to determine what your customers want, expect, and need from your library. You may want to use surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups to really understand your customers' needs.

You may discover that you have several groups of customers whose needs differ significantly. This doesn't mean you must offer separate brands. Car makers feature many varieties of models under one brand umbrella. Depending on your personality and needs, for instance, Dodge offers the Caravan, the Neon, or the Viper. Your library's brand can also cover a variety of services and products to various customers.

Who's your competition? Have you looked into the Borders bookstore around the corner? What about the local Internet provider? Information brokers and research services abound – and advertise their services relentlessly on all those handy Internet search engines. If you manage an in-house library in a large organization, don't relax and think you have a captive audience. You still have competitors: news services, professional journals, and that one person in every department who has all the answers – even

"...match your library's strengths against your competitors' threats."

"Your brand name becomes your signature..."

the wrong ones. As you consider how to establish your brand, list your competitors. Outline what they offer and then match your library's strengths against the competitor's threats.

Building the Image –

Brainstorming the Brand Name

Once you've considered your identity, your customers and their needs, your strengths, and your competitors and their threats, it's time to develop your brand. The first step is to recognize that this is a long-term commitment. If car manufacturers changed their corporate brand names as frequently as they change the names of car models, they would destroy the marketing power of their image. Likewise, once your brand name is established, you shouldn't change it – it will confuse your customers and destroy the identity you worked so hard to build. Think of a brand image as a well-made stool supported by three legs: brand name, brand symbol, brand slogan.

Brainstorm about the brand name. Research other library brand names. Bring in marketing consultants who have worked with information businesses. Draw up lists of strong, positive terms that suggest what you do. Try to stay away from straight, purely descriptive terms. Be creative. Be catchy. Find an easy to remember, expressive name that you can commit to for the long term. There's no magic formula for a great library brand name. It depends on the type of library, the customer base, the growth directions, and the competition. But the name is the most critical part of the brand selection process. Your brand name becomes your signature – and you stand behind it for better or for worse.

A brand needs a unified look. Spread all of your library's products on a table: annual reports, bookmarks, fact sheets, report folders, everything. Do they look like they came from the same brand? Are they easily identifiable as part of the same family of products? Just as Nike's swoosh, tells you which brand of athletic wear you're buying, your library's identifiable "look" should tell customers where the information came from. You should be easily recognized through your brand name, logos, and slogans.

A symbol is a good way to support your brand name and image. The symbol's look can change over time, but its essence should not. It needs to evoke associations with your brand name. Think of Nike's swoosh. It's streamlined and sporty and evokes a sense of movement. Whether it's an abstract or realistic design, the symbol is irrevocably wedded to the brand and your library's symbol should evoke the essence of what your library is and what it does.

A slogan completes your brand image by communicating additional points about your products and services. Some slogans become so ingrained that they enter the general lexicon. People often talk about a "Kodak moment" when there isn't a camera in sight.

Bring the Brand On Board

Always remember: your customer decodes your symbol and your brand name and believes in them. You can position your brand and market until the cows come home, but if your customer doesn't trust your message, you won't successfully establish your brand identity. This is where market research can be very helpful. Be sure your customers can understand what your brand and your symbol mean. If they can't decipher it, you may make a costly mistake.

Once your library's brand is set, bring it into every part of your library's professional life. Everything your library promotes and accomplishes is part of your branding program. Make sure:

■ All library products and services come under the brand's umbrella. They should all carry your brand identity. Make sure:

■ Your investors and stakeholders need to recognize and support your branding program.

■ Your customers, whether they're corporate, academic, or public, must learn to recognize your library's brand.

■ All sales and communications material must carry the brand identity front and center.

■ Your staff members represent your brand in

"Never forget that it is your customer who decodes your symbol and brand name and believes in them."

Worth Its Weight in Gold

Lighten up your materials with our original library clip art images — included in this issue as camera-ready form. These images are also available as EPS graphics files on 3.5" PC and Macintosh computer disks.

The Dog Days of Summer. Lift yourself and your clients out of the summer doldrums with our library-loving black lab. On signage or adorning a postcard, this cute pooch will remind your users that they can beat the heat with the library.

Stand Out from the Bunch. Our top banana is sure to keep your library services standing apart from the competition with superior resources and service. Or use the theme to promote how your customers will be the top banana when they use your information services.

Crown Jewels. Introduce a new service or informational tool with our crown of jewels. Just as the gems in our crown sparkle and complement each other, your new program will be the centerpiece in a dazzling array of resources.

Muscle Arm. Put some muscle behind your reports, your programs, and your promotion materials. Remind your clients the strength of the library is there to back them up with the information they need when they need it.

Atlas Supporting a CD World. In this age of exploding technology and information services, the classical training of the librarian provides a solid foundation for our journeys into cyberspace.

Crack the Competition. Whether you're chipping away or reducing the competition to rubble with a single blow, our rock and sledge hammer will spur your associates to action on memos, reports, and promotion agendas.

Resource Icons. Bring your publications to life with our resource icons. From traditional books and journals to technological CDs and computer mice, our collection covers your resource needs. Make your materials visually interesting with these whimsical icons. ■

person so they must see it and use it consistently in newsletters and training materials.

■ Identity systems link the brand to your library. The brand logo should appear at all library locations and on all products and services. From business cards to signs, the brand should always convey the same message and the same identity. All advertising materials should display your brand. Promotional items such as bookmarks, t-shirts, print ads, posters, exhibits, web sites, and direct mail are all screens onto which you can project your library's identity.

■ Library communications should speak with one voice. Your annual reports, brochures, fundraising materials, book lists, and fact sheets should bear your library's logo and carry its identity to your current and potential customers.

One Message. One Brand.

Everything your library says and does defines it as a brand. Once you've done the hard work to create and establish a brand, its vital-

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For additional readings about brands and brand management, here are three excellent books to have on hand.
■ **Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term** by Jean-Noel Kapferer. (see Sparkling Reviews,March/April, page 6)
■ **Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity** by Kevin Lane Keller.

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Tip... We all know how tough it is to locate "good" information on the Internet, and yet sitting down to create and then maintain lists of useful web site URLs is time-consuming work. You could hire a freelance librarian to do the task for you, or you could call Grapevine Publications and order their **Web Pocket Directory** for $4.95. This pocket-sized directory lists more than 2,000 web sites in 130 categories, selected for their importance, popularity, or utility. This directory is a perfect candidate for a public relations campaign. Get a discount on multiple copies, put your library label on the front cover, and send copies out to favored customers or as a reward for completing a library survey. For more information visit their web site at www.read-gpi.com..

Sparkling Reviews

The Complete Intranet Source for Information Professionals: Resource Guide and Workbook. Jane K. Starnes, MSLS; John Graves, CPA; Jacqueline Justice, PhD. Special Libraries Association. 1997.

So, you're considering building an intranet and need to start researching? The Special Libraries Association (SLA) released **The Complete Intranet Source for Information Professionals** good for 1.6 CEUs. Having recently brought a corporate Intranet to life, we thought we'd compare the material to our experience.

The Complete Intranet Source is useful as a broad overview of the steps needed, but falls short in guiding the reader through an actual installation. For example, the recommended cost estimate strategy is addressed in the course before you have enough information to complete it. And the installation checklist is better used as a tool for planning issues during the early definition of your intranet project, for it is not complete—trust us on that.

A major weakness is the reference section itself. There is no index to the course material. Your best bet if you need to look up a point quickly is to scan the table of contents. The "Intranet Resources" and "Further Reading" list look extensive at first glance, but contain nothing newer than 1996, long before the material's final publication [the reader is referred to the course web-site for updated information]. There is an extensive list of case studies which may be of value.

Probably the greatest shortcoming, though, is the material's failure to address web site maintenance. Information professionals are bombarded with new and timely information daily, sometimes even hourly. Coordinating maintenance and growth is a much larger task than the project design and implementation phases, but you don't get any insights to those issues from the authors.

If you are looking for a broad introduction to intranet management before getting to the nitty-gritty details of planning, implementing, and maintaining your site, then this is the course for you. It touches on most aspects you will need to consider. But if you need a serious in-depth guide to developing your intranet—keep looking. ■

Treasure Tips

Graphic Identity Is the Foundation of Brand Image

Golden arches, primary-colored squares, an abstract swoosh—McDonald's, Microsoft, and Nike each rely on a single graphic element to cut through the cacophony that bombards us daily and bring their names instantly to mind. Graphic identity is a tool you can use to boost awareness of your library.

From signage to stationery, each time clients see your logo, they are reminded of the services you offer. And each reminder increases library traffic, either in person, by phone, or over the Internet. Give careful consideration to the elements that make a visual system effective.

To create a graphic identity that captures the attention of its audience, your design strategy must meet several criteria. Design elements such as color usage, balance, and the artistic rendering of your logo elements must work together to create a strong presence, even when reduced to small sizes for use on everything from library identification cards to web site icons.

The logo should spark the viewer's imagination, inviting him to participate in the decoding of your message. A vibrant logo gives the viewer more of a message than what is actually shown in the graphic elements. Design elements that suggest movement within the logo project the dynamic growth and the cutting-edge vitality of your institution.

The most effective logo relies on its simplicity. Remember that graphic identities must translate well between print, electronic, and multimedia applications plus they must maintain the strength of their message whether used in color or black and white. Base it in metaphoric visual language and you will engage the viewer, welcoming him into partnership with your library.

The excitement of producing a dazzling, comprehensive graphic identity system will breathe new life into your library. The process will help you to redefine your mission and refocus on your clients' needs. In this age of information overload, the way you present yourself will make you shine bright in the memories of the people who need your services most. ■

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DOG of **DAYS** **SUMMER**

TOP BANANA

STAND OUT FROM THE BUNCH !

cRACK The Competition

Put Some Muscle Behind Your Reports

Editor's Note: Many of the images on the clip art sheets are now available on www.LibraryClipArt.com.