MARKETING Treasures™

Ideas and Insights into Promoting Library & Information Services

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The Reference Interview as a Marketing Tool

Traditionally, the reference interview has been seen as an opportunity to perform magic. The client gives you the question and, abracadabra, you provide answers. It's often a black-box operation, with no information for the client about what was actually going on on your end—just put in the question, and out comes the answer. No garbage in, no garbage out. Library magic miraculously does the job right. You know how much work that involves. It's time to let the clients in on the secret.

The ideal librarian has been traditionally portrayed as modest and quiet. In today's climate of downsizing, this image has to change. When you're providing a service, do you flaunt your skills? Parade your resources? Trumpet your knowledge? Brandish your intelligence? If not, it's time to let your clients know exactly what you're worth. You're an INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL, empowered, knowledgeable, committed to the organization's mission, aware of the bottom line, able to leap tall databases with a single bound. And if you're not all those things, it's time you were, or risk being downsized right out of a job.

It's been said of Beethoven that one great characteristic of his music is that you can hear him roll up his sleeves and work. That is, part of the brilliance of Beethoven's music is that it doesn't sound effortless—rather, the master lets you hear the toil that goes into producing the masterpiece. Information professionals, too, need to reveal the hard work that lies behind their virtuosity. And the reference interview is the best place to demonstrate your art.

"The reference interview is a miniature relationship. There's a kind of intimacy involved—that of truly understanding another person."

Begin Before the Begiinning

Even before you get a reference request, some preparations should be in the works. We're assuming, for the moment, that your library is well stocked with electronic and paper media and well staffed with enough knowledgeable people to calmly and competently handle the barrage of requests facing you each day. OK, so we're being overly optimistic—but a good reference interview can compensate for a lot of shortcomings.

The reference interview is a miniature relationship. There's a kind of intimacy involved—that of truly understanding another person. Anyone in direct sales knows how to do this. When you go to buy a car, the sales person quickly "befriends" you, getting to know your first name, something about your lifestyle, information about your relationships, where you live. All of this is directed towards one goal: making a sale. Car dealers, direct marketers, even retail chains have complex profiles about their customers, so they can quickly identify the kind you are and sell you what you're likely to want or need. They know that if you live in Mountain View Acres, your family income is probably $10,000 higher than someone who lives in Laurel Glen. They have a profile for single yuppie women, families

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Pearls of Wisdom

If you think Post-it® notes are just for quick handwritten messages, guess again. From coupons to reminder lists to advertising inserts, these handy sticky notes are being used in all aspects of promotion activities. We like the 3M notes best—the adhesive doesn't fail to stick in humid conditions. A good source for the original 3M Post-it notes is Guerrilla Mail. Not only do they offer every conceivable version of a Post-it note, but they include a great Idea Starter booklet with their sales order information kit. The booklet shows all types of notes for promotional, operational, and personal uses. To receive the complete Guerrilla Mail Idea Kit, contact Mike Cohen at Guerrilla Mail, 2427 Derbyshire Road, Cleveland, OH 44106. 216/371-6281 (voice), 216/371-4940 (fax).

Being able to locate advertising and marketing information sources throughout the world is becoming increasingly important as organizations and their information services establish international networks. The Advertising and Marketing Division of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) has published **International Advertising & Marketing Information Sources**, a handy directory of major marketing organizations located throughout the world. Organized by country, this is a good place to start researching advertising and marketing resources outside your normal stomping grounds. Ordering information may be obtained through SLA. Contact Sandy Won, Manager of Nonserial Publications, at 202/234-4700.

Ever hear of the "5/25" Rule? This often-quoted communications rule states that if you do something good for someone, he'll let five people know. Do something bad, and he'll tell 25 people. There are a couple of morals here. First, try not to do something bad that someone can talk about. Secondly, just in case you can't be perfect all the time, make sure every day you tell at least 20 people about the good things you do!

A promotion display product catalog from Do-It Corporation recently caught our eye with a couple of interesting products. First, if you are looking for a way to neatly and conveniently hang library products around your stacks, you should look at Do-It Hang Tabs. These tabs make it easy to display just about anything. The tabs have adhesive on them so they can be attached to signs, book covers, posters, video tapes, CDs—almost anything you might want to display that needs a tab to hang it from. The product catalog also features Shelf Wobblers, crazy small sign holders that literally "wiggle" at the slightest air movement. Perched on the edge of a shelf, the movement catches the attention of anyone walking by. These would be perfect for pointing out new acquisitions entered into a library collection. For a copy of the Do-It Hang Tab, Inc. product catalog, along with samples of tabs, contact Debbie Freestone at 800/776-7799 or 616/637-1121. Or you can write to Debbie at Do-It Corporation, P.O. Box 592, South Haven, MI 49090.

Please mention Marketing Treasures *when requesting samples and product information.*

Bookmark our Web site!
www.chrisolson.com

There's a whole page on Marketing Treasures — back issues, upcoming topics, clip art... and more. Check it out!

Have you recently sat down to produce a flyer or brochure and wished you had a unique typeface to use in the headline? Now you can preview headline typefaces and try them out on the World Wide Web. Point your browser to <http://www.letraset.com>, the site of the Letraset Fontek type catalog. Here you can peruse their complete line of typefaces. Select a face or two and then go to their <.../ripper/index.html> page where you can enter your headline words, select the typeface, and presto, the page displays your words in the chosen typeface. Unless you have a vivid imagination, it can be difficult to visualize words in a particular typeface. This is a great site to bookmark for your promotion projects.

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Reference Interview… *continued from page 1*

with small children, retirees. They know, for their purposes, who you are.

How well do you know your customers? Do you keep a profile of your regular clients? Do you know, for example, that Sarah Smith prefers the hard data and facts behind the response to her question, while John Jones is looking for short, concise, to-the-point answers? Do the product development people want you to keep a sharp eye on particular competitors, alerting them to any new ideas out there? Does the human resources department have any special concerns related to the demographics of the company?

And, let's be honest, are there any really tough cases among your clients—maddeningly capricious about their requests and never satisfied with your work, the curmudgeons we all have to deal with from time to time, who can ruin your day just by identifying themselves on the phone? There's a temptation to write them off as impossible to please, but there are tactics you can apply to all your client profiles that might even smooth things over with Mr. or Ms. Impossible.

"Doing your job on time, completely, and competently is a powerful sales statement…But when you add value to the product, you have a chance to shine and let your client know your true worth."

Set up a file with as much information as you have on each client or department. Organize information in the files into categories like:

FAQ's (Frequently Asked . . .)—Does the client ask for the same information over and over again? About different topics, or the same topic again and again?

Target Companies or Industries—Is your client especially interested in particular competitors or suppliers, or on keeping an eye on an industry as a whole?

People in the News—Are there names that the client likes to track? Is there a special expert whose wisdom your client prefers? Keep an eye on these folks and know how to access them when that client calls in.

Format—Is there a particular form of output your client prefers, such as citations or full articles? Does the client prefer that information be presented in a certain order? Does your client have a preference for graphical representations over tables, or vice versa? Is your client a visual, auditory, or hands-on learner? That mattered in elementary school and it matters today—people take in data best when it's delivered in the form they prefer.

In-Depth Analysis—What analytical projects have you done in the past for this client? How well were they received? Is your client only requesting raw data but would benefit from some analytical work done by an information professional?

Resources—Where have you found the best information in the past for this client? What are the databases, reference sources, experts, or news sources that have worked well in the past?

Complaints—What doesn't this client like? Uncomfortable as this is, it's a vital category. Knowing what hasn't worked in the past is a good guide to what will work in the future.

Compliments—What has your client especially liked about your work? If you know what works, do it again.

Cross-referencing—Do you get very similar requests from several people? Flag those requests and responses and have them ready to be updated and repackaged when a corresponding question comes in.

The Interview

Once you have such a profile in hand, you're ready when your client contacts you with a request. You know that your client may not have identified the true information needed behind the request, and you know how to dig for real need behind the stated need. But what will turn this encounter into a marketing opportunity?

Doing your job on time, completely, and competently is a powerful sales statement in itself, of course. But when you add value to the product, you have a chance to shine and let your client know your true worth. Offer the client some added value via one of these techniques, which, not incidentally, indicate your own skills and knowledge.

Format: Show your clients output options. Let them select what best suits their present needs, and mention options for presentations and publications. This lets your clients know that you care how their work is received—that you're thinking of them as well as yourself.

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Reference Interview... *continued from page 3*

Annotate: If your client is looking for a straight list of sources, rank those sources by relevance, and then add comments about other possible sources, including experts who could be contacted, and/or provide background on the sources mentioned.

Abstract: Busy clients may well appreciate your abstracting abilities if they are to receive a huge amount of material. Ask them precisely what they're looking for and whether they would like abstracts.

Introduce: If you have new resources available to the library, and they are relevant to the client's interests, inform the client about them—not in a long-winded way, but enough to make known what the new database or journal might offer. This tells your clients that you are on top of the latest information in the area and aren't just going to the same old sources all the time.

Tie in: If a reference source, such as a database vendor or publisher, provides promotional materials, display them and be prepared to tell your clients about how you utilize the resource for the clients' benefit. Big database vendors provide promotional material to inform their clients about new content and access. Use those materials in your own promotion, showing off how you've cleverly budgeted scarce resources to best serve your own clients.

Interact: Ask your clients where they are getting their information, then incorporate their sources into your library, or at least keep an eye on the trends in the areas your clients are interested in.

Once you have a clear idea of the client's information needs, ask if there is anything else the client can tell you about this request. Perhaps the original request relates to a special project, or maybe it needs different output than usual. Clients don't always volunteer that kind of information, but if you know some background to the request, you can do a better job of fulfilling it. This is definitely on the relationship side of reference work, the art behind the science. Cultivate the art, and you'll reap the rewards.

Stating Your Worth

Once you've put together a package for a client, put a price tag on it. Let the client know how many hours it took, how much online time was spent, and how much time and money you saved by your efficient and knowledgeable research abilities.

Managers running scared in the downsizing environment make sure the higher echelons know just how valuable they have been, in terms of work performed and money saved. It's time information professionals did this as well. Try to let management know the worth of everything you do, whether it is retrieving and analyzing data, upgrading to more efficient software, accessing the most comprehensive and most cost-effective databases, or reviewing all these decisions and capabilities from time to time to see where improvements can be made.

In the good old days, efficiency experts stood around in the workplace clocking the time various tasks required and suggesting tiny time-saving changes in the name of total efficiency. Now, it's the bean-counters who are scrutinizing the bottom line of the organizational spreadsheet. Be sure they know exactly how much your work is worth. It's not just your clients who need to know your worth, it's also the folks who make downsizing decisions and can save or doom an information resources center.

And a final note: Don't make your work look too easy. Database vendors are aggressively going after the end-user market with intuitive interfaces and powerful search tools. But information professionals know that all the bells and whistles can't compensate for a thorough knowledge of research media, precise and complex search statements, analytical ability, and good reference interview skills.Your clients need you. Make sure they know your true worth every time they talk with you. ■

Inside Treasure

Designing Your Own Information Products

Information overload, information anxiety, traffic jams on the infobahn, data avalanches. These days we're overwhelmed with the amount of incoming information, and we're the information professionals. Just imagine how it looks to the end users!

How do we go about making sense of this chaos? Create your own information products. So much information comes already packaged that creating more may seem superfluous, but customized presentations work in marketing and they work in information management.

Once again as in any marketing effort, look at your customers and their needs. You are not trying to create an idealized information access system. You are trying to quickly and efficiently fix real-world predicaments. This is where your special skills at problem-solving and organizing information can shine.

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Roadmaps and Library Access Guides

If your library is occasionally understaffed or not staffed, and end users or novice library staffers need to find their way around, library roadmaps (we were taught to call them pathfinders) are worth their weight in gold.

These are targeted indexes, listing the library's holdings on a particular subject. Public libraries often do a wonderful job with this, creating pathfinders for important issues like local regulations, specific health problems, or even for light reading. They take the library patrons to the books, of course, but also to the audio and video holdings, magazines, reference materials and databases. These days, you might find web sites as well, as the virtual library grows to accommodate the internet.

The important thing here is to make sure your pathfinder lists all the relevant resources, in all forms, and tells your client explicitly where to find them. What you don't want is some poor soul wandering around clutching a useless piece of paper, unable to find the right computerized index or oversized reference. Aim for something as useful as the color-coded maps in malls. They are there to draw you to all the jewelry stores or fast food outlets or sports shops in the mall. There are marketing tools to get the most out of your consumer dollar. Use them to get full value out of your library.

Another important guide for your own library is a good online catalog. Look for innovative ways to make your holdings accessible or at least identifiable over the company's intranet. Add pointers to the usual cross reference system, to help your library users find all possible information sources, not just the reference books.

Canned searches are another boon to the harried end-users. If you get the same questions frequently, have the search statements already prepared and stored and teach some of your end users how to access them quickly. You don't want to turn clients into end-users, and eliminate your own job, but if the choice is between being unable to fill all the information requests and promoting some end-user searching, supply the tools to your clients.

You are probably already developing your own informal thesaurus. Even if you are working in a field which has an established, commercially available thesaurus, terminology changes. In addition, you may have to stay on top of foreign- language terminology, popular expressions in the general press, and terms in related fields, not covered by your favorite thesaurus. Brainstorming with your staff and other librarians can help you produce your own expanded list of search terms. Formalize this, and make it accessible to your entire staff, to improve your efficiency and thoroughness in searching.

Contents, Indexes, and Abstracts

Your clients' interests are focussed on their jobs and the need for quick access to the most relevant information. An in- house index and contents guide to the most important professional publications can keep your clients immediately up to date on the latest news. You don't have to duplicate major commercial indexing services, with detailed indexes of each publication. Rather, produce a monthly flier or intranet posting, listing the contents of the latest journals, a selected index, and abstracts of the most important items. And don't stop with professional journals. Scan the general news and business magazines, the database services, the internet, govern-

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Information Products… *continued from page 5*

ment publications, and even the newspapers. You know what your organization is most interested in - help your clients find that information quickly and establish your reputation as a pro-active information specialist, not just a reference service.

Watch the Competition—and the Regulators

All organizations have to keep a weather eye on the competition. And in this complex world, you need to be aware of news from a tremendous variety of sources. Establishing special clipping services and FYI files on a variety of sources may be one of the most valuable services you perform.

The competition is the obvious place to start. You'll want to use commercial clipping services, your own careful review of current news in your field, and any informal sources you may have, to monitor any rivals to your organization. While you're watching current competitors, keep an eye out for developing upstarts. Set up a system of alerts, so that when you inform product development or R & D or marketing about a competitor's news, they know the importance and the relevance of your communication. Don't flood them with trivia; use your alerts for serious breaking news.

Organizations have to keep an eye on more than just the competition. Do you have overseas operations or contacts? Keep a political and economic watch on those countries. That can be a very complex problem. There are commercial services which do thorough country watches, and they may be your best resource. However, if your clients' needs are highly specialized, designing your own international reports, focussed directly on your clients' concerns, can fill a vital need.

Regulations change constantly. It is critical to know what the latest requirements are which affect your organization. You know which regulatory agencies monitor what you do. Set up a system for quickly flagging any changes or proposed revisions which affect how your organization does business, and get the news out to your clients immediately.

Politics also affects your organization. Set up a system to watch political trends affecting your clients and keep your clients informed about any changes on the horizon. In addition to tracking the news, it may help to keep in touch with lobbying organizations which represent your interests. They are most sensitive to political change and can be your first warning about pending legislation or appointments.

Perhaps the stickiest threat to organizations these days comes from the legal world. Lawsuits appear from nowhere, and lobbying doesn't change the decision of the court. Take a careful look at all your information resources and see if you need to supplement them with legal sources. Your organization's legal department is monitoring the news as well, so work with them, not against them. Divide up the task and offer to provide them with regular reports from sources they may not be using or even know about.

> *"You are the information professional. Your specialty includes creating order out of chaos and knowing which format most easily conveys the data and conclusions."*

Presentations

With presentation software, everyone can produce a good- looking end product out of the desktop computer. But not everyone knows how to organize the information between those fancy covers or in those colorful slides. You are the information professional. Your specialty includes creating order out of chaos and knowing which format most easily conveys the data and conclusions.

Sample reports may be just what your clients need to help them produce coherent presentations. If your organization does many similar presentations, create boilerplate reports and let your clients fill in the blanks. Take a look at what has worked well in the past and then design a way to duplicate the effect with clear data formats and logically designed reports.

Offer to train your clients on the newest presentation software and help them communicate the most important information in the clearest manner. Taking over this task tells your executives that you care not only about finding information, but about how your organization looks to its clients. When you show your commitment to making your organization look good, you are reminding people of your worth and importance.

Creating information products takes time, problem-solving ability, imagination and energy. But making that effort says that you are pro-active and seriously engaged in making your organization shine. Don't just react to information requests. Act to keep your clients fully informed and on the cutting edge of their field.

Worth Its Weight in Gold

Five Points to Remember for New Product Development

New product development can be an exhilarating growth opportunity for a library—as well as a survival issue, as pointed out in this month's Inside Treasure article. Just about any library runs the risk of losing clients if new products and services are not introduced to keep pace with changing needs, tastes, and technological advances. Here are five quick characteristics of successful products. Remember them to help you plan successful introductions of new library products and services.

1. **Desirability.** This may sound obvious, but begin your development efforts with making sure the planned products are perceived by your clients as having a high value. Focus groups, interviews, and "staying close to the customer" will reveal what you need to know.

2. **Profitability.** Even if you don't worry about your library's profit margin, you do have to worry about the bottom line. A successful new product introduction includes packaging in a way that makes it economically attractive in your library's unique market environment.

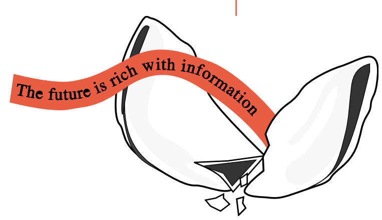
3. **Renewability.** Whenever possible, make your new product a continuing product. Because the costs of making one sale are so high today, it behooves the savvy marketer to be creative and develop products that have to be renewed. Book clubs, seminar series, updates—products that are time-sensitive and will automatically generate reorders.

4. **Duplicability**. Unless your library has staffers standing around looking for something to do, you should avoid making a new product highly customized. Leverage your time by designing products that take advantage of computer, duplicating, and electronic technologies.

5. **Reachability.** Make sure you can reach your target market through established distribution channels. Interoffice mail, Intranets, sales representatives, and direct mail are just a few of the methods you can use to distribute your new product. And while you can develop new channels, using existing routes will make your life easier and your new product introduction smoother.

Promotion Gems

Every year we get requests for fortune cookies to use as promotion items during National Library Week events. When we saw the following recipe and fortunes in an Internet message, we thought we would share it with our readers—and print it for prosperity. Obviously, if you need to have hundreds of cookies, it will be easier to order them through a specialty advertising company, But if you only need a few, here's the recipe and a few fortunes. (Recipe and fortunes courtesy of Sara Uehlein & Erika Howder of Epstein Becker & Green, P.C., Washington, D.C. who added, "Some of these were found at <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/I/humour/author.htm>. Others were found through Yahoo's humor library, fortune cookie section. We changed some of them to fit our needs and we apologize for any misquotes. We cannot provide proper citations as many were found without attribution.")



Recipe:
1 egg white
1/4 c sugar
1 T water
2 T butter, melted
1/4 t vanilla
1/3 c flour

Preheat oven to 350 f. Grease cookie sheets. Put egg white and sugar in small bowl, add water, butter and vanilla and mix. Add flour and stir. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto cookie sheets. Swirl the batter around with a spoon back until cookies are spread very thin and are almost transparent. Bake 3-5 mins.,until lightly browned on edges. Remove quickly and work FAST. Place a fortune in the cookie and fold cookie in half, then in half again, to shape like a fortune cookie. Let cool. Work with 4-6 cookies at a time. Serves 24.
(From S.Nemeth III)

Fortunes:
- Beware the man of one book.
- Dewey? You bet we do!
- Librarians are novel lovers.
- A few months in the laboratory can save you two or three hours in the library.
- Information $1—Information You Need $500
- Open books, open doors
- Rule of the great: When people you greatly admire appear to be thinking deep thought, they are probably thinking about lunch.
- Honesty is the best policy, but insanity is a better defense

Sparkling Reviews

The New Maxi-Marketing. By Stan Rapp and Thomas L. Collins. McGraw-Hill. 1996. ISBN 0-07-052033X

In the subtitle you'll read that **The New Maxi-Marketing** is "the classic guide to transforming your advertising, promotion, and marketing strategy for The Information Economy." Since this book covers general marketing for all kinds of businesses, there's plenty of meat for managers of libraries and information services. Some examples:

- In Chapter 6, "Maximizing Advertising Impact," Rapp and Collins compare right-brain and left-brain marketing techniques and make the intuitively logical suggestion that we aim for a whole-brain approach. A useful reminder that anyone can get mired in a single mode of thinking, and thus fail to catch the attention of folks who think differently.

- For libraries, the chapter "Maximized Target Selection: Finding Your Best Prospects and Customers" may be the most important in the book. The authors discuss fishing, mining, panning, and spelunking for prospects — useful metaphors and important techniques for finding and contacting potential clients.You can target your marketing effort in accordance with each of them.

- Follow-up advertising is vital to a marketing effort. The chapter "Maximized Prospect Involvement: Building a Bridge Between the Advertising and the Sale" is a treasury on this topic, covering as it does web pages, brochures, and other interactive and in-depth types of advertising piece. The authors also point out some very important features and possibilities of copywriting and advertising design, although you'll want to go to other sources for more informative coverage of these areas.

We're all short on time and have to carefully choose what to read.**The New Maxi-Marketing** thoughtfully leads you to the discussions you'll find most important. The table of contents lists both the informative main titles and substantive subtitles. Each chapter begins with an abstract and ends with a page of review. If you don't have time to read the whole book, let these aids lead you to the most useful sections.

Information providers who market their services will find real gems in this well-designed and informative book.

"As a word of caution in selecting color combinations, remember that approximately ten percent of the male population and almost .5 percent of the female population are color impaired and may have trouble distinguishing between colors such as red and green."

—from How to Create High Impact Business Presentations, *Pat Graves and Hoyce Kupsh, 1993, NTC Business Books, pp. 98-99.*

Treasure Tips

Getting the Most Out of Two Colors

With inexpensive, quick printing shops on almost every street corner, there's no excuse for limiting your next brochure or series of fact sheets to just one color. For most printing projects, printing in two colors costs close to the same as printing in one color. And you can make two colors look like more if you plan your project carefully.

First of all, as your editor has pointed out before, there's no rule that says one of your colors has to be black (Yes, black is considered a "color" by your printer. If it requires the printer to lay down an ink, then it's a "color."). There are plenty of other dark colors—blue, purple, maroon, green, brown—that can be used to print text copy and are still highly readable.

The benefit of selecting a dark base color is that when a screen is applied to it, the color will become a lighter tint, effectively adding another color to your design. A dark purple can become a light lavender, a dark green can turn into a teal. But be careful when working with maroon. A lighter tint of it could be pink, a difficult color to work with at best. Obviously, if you or your designer are going to work with tints, you should make sure all the colors that result work together. If you want to see examples of dark colors and their tints, ask your printer to show you a tint selector book. It will show you inks of various colors in different screened percentages, and what the tints for each one will look like.

To complement the dark color, select a lighter, brighter color for highlighting and adding "spots" of color throughout the piece. Don't be afraid to use the second color on economic grounds. Whether you use it in one word or all the graphics, you still pay the printer for running that ink during the printing process, so you might as well get your money's worth!

A word of caution: If you include photographs in your materials, select that dark color very carefully. Photographs printed in one color display the full range of tints of that color. A dark green may look great for text, but it might print people in a photograph a sickly green!