

BRANDING AND Marketing YOUR LIBRARY



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James is reading *From Awareness to Funding: A Study of Library Support in America* by OCLC.

The necessity of marketing a library is certainly not a new concept. The value of the Royal Library of Alexandria was probably spread by satisfied customers across the Mediterranean. No, marketing libraries is not new, but how it's done is changing dramatically, driven by shifting circumstances.

If you're unsure whether marketing your library really makes a difference, consider the success of Queens (N.Y.) Library's (QL) branding and marketing campaign. QL is now the highest-circulating public library in the country. With nearly twenty-three million in circulated materials, it was the first public library in the country to reach that record of circulation. In the most recent fiscal year (2007), QL issued more than 100,000 library cards, another record breaker. Nearly half a million people attended almost 22,000 programs over the last year. And the year that QL developed its strategic marketing plan, the library became the first public library system in the country to exceed twenty million items circulated in a single fiscal year. For QL, a targeted branding and marketing plan has been an unqualified success.

In order to develop a successful branding and marketing campaign for your library, you should ask this question: Are libraries, in fact, relevant in the twenty-first century? The answer, I submit, is most emphatically *yes*—now more than ever. Consider these statistics: Forty-four million adults cannot read well enough to fill out an application, read a food label, or read a story to a child (and we all know the importance of reading aloud to kids).¹ Here in Queens, many households speak a language other than English at home. The population of new Americans is continuing to increase, with growing disorientation and even alienation. And nearly 70 percent of recent college graduates perform merely at a basic or intermediate level of literacy, with just 31 percent demonstrating high-level skills such as reading lengthy, complex English texts.²

According to the 2003 New York State Assessment of Adult Literacy, the latest assessment available, an astonishing 50 percent of adults were either at or below a basic level of prose literacy, with about the same percentage at or below a basic level of document literacy.³ An even higher number (59 percent) were either at or below a basic level of quantitative literacy (able to balance a checkbook or understand a bank statement).⁴

Couple these dismal statistics with the following: The growth of Amazon and mega-booksellers, such as Borders and Barnes and Noble, has obviated the need to go to the library. The expansion of companies such as Netflix gives nearly instant access to popular films, concerts, and television series, and people never even have to leave their own homes for books or entertainment.

Even with this reality, people still long for community: witness the surge in online social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. Everyone, not just teenagers, is looking for stronger connections with other people all the time, and the library gives that sense of community. It attracts an incredible variety of users: individuals, couples, families, kids, teens, adults, and seniors. Perhaps the last and best true democracy, the library not only strives to alleviate the problems of illiteracy described previously, it also brings people of all religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and backgrounds together.

Promote the Library

If we want our libraries to be relevant, what actions do we need to take? Happily, in many cases, libraries have adapted to the changing times. They are providing more Internet connections, programs and services, and materials. They are involved in Web 2.0, and more and more library websites boast blogs and podcasts. Some libraries even have profiles on social networking sites. So why is it that libraries are generally forgotten? Why is it so difficult to get sufficient funding? Why is it a challenge to attract the next generation of librarians?

The answer is twofold. First, our target audiences have forgotten about libraries as they try to navigate increasingly complex lives. More important, though, is this: libraries have made the grave mistake of assuming everyone knows how important and relevant they are. Administrators and librarians have failed to realize that they truly need to *promote* what they have to offer. But how is that done? The first step, long before you develop a plan for branding and marketing your library, is to find out who your stakeholders are.

Identify Your Stakeholders

The primary stakeholder you need to consider is the group (or groups) that provide your library with its annual operating budget; often, a government agency. Once you identify your key stakeholder group, you need to know who makes the actual funding decisions. If you have merely filled out the appropriate forms and accepted the approved budget, you are not marketing to your stakeholders. You need to develop relationships with these funders so they know who you are. You also need to find out what your key stakeholders expect from the library. If they have no expectations, it is your responsibility to create those expectations in tandem with your branding and marketing efforts.

How do you develop that relationship? E-mail or snail mail your regular library mailing, if you have one, to your stakeholders. Whenever there is positive news about the library, send that along too. Share your calendar of events, brochures, or pamphlets with stakeholders, and invite them to the library to meet your customers. Think about quarterly meetings to build a stronger identity, awareness, and relationship. This will make the entire budget process more manageable and create the positive results you want.

After public entities, private donations are the largest source of funding for libraries—foundation/corporate grants, large individual donations, and individuals (who can be reached by direct mail, special events, and other vehicles). Donors are vital stakeholders, and marketing to them must be considered in any strategic branding effort.

Mail information about your library to these corporate and foundation contacts, as you do to your budgetary stakeholders. This lets your donors know that the library serves the community in a dynamic way. Another good way of getting your branding message out there is to plan invitation-only director's talks.

You need to know who the affluent donors in your library's area are. Your past and present significant donors should be among the first to be told about your library's branding and marketing initiatives, and may even provide additional support. The more you can engage donors in your branding and marketing campaign, the better the chances are that they will become financially involved.

Beyond these two main stakeholders, the population that makes up your remaining stakeholders includes educational and community organizations, media, staff and volunteers, and customers. Make sure that each one of these populations has a vested interest in your library, whether it's a senior center, public high school, or radio station. Also, your staff and volunteers represent your library to the public, and the success of any strategic marketing campaign largely depends on them.

Understand Your Target Audience

Before you begin any kind of marketing and branding campaign, you also need to have a thorough understanding of who your audience is. Whom are you trying to serve? There are straightforward methods for identifying your audience. Your library needs to focus on who it serves best and most often, and then address the needs of that population.

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A terrific and free resource for gathering information of this type is the U.S. Census Bureau. You can go to www.factfinder.census.gov to look up the most recent information in the 2004 profile. From there, you can find a wealth of statistics on sex and age demographics, household relationships and types, and housing. There is also plenty of social information: school enrollment, educational degrees, marital status, and other categories. For economic questions, the Census Bureau yields statistics on employment status, occupations, classes of workers, income, and a variety of economic measures.

After you gather hard data about your library's population, you will need to review your materials, programs, and services and assess whether your library truly is serving the people who live nearby. Do you have many senior citizens? If so, does your collection reflect this? Does a significant portion of your service population speak a language other than English at home? Is there a large population of school-age children in your area? These factors have a major impact on how you might most appropriately position or brand your library for maximum effectiveness or success.

Ask Your Audience

An ideal way to learn more about your audience is by developing a customer survey, which can be as simple or complex as you wish. It can cover any one or all aspects of the library, such as staff, materials, programs, services, and hours. It can also include a request for demographic information about your user base, and can be passed along when a customer checks out materials or uses a computer.

Remember: These surveys are not representative of your total service population, only of your current user base. If you have a high percentage of cardholders or library users, one survey is sufficient. However, if you have low usage, a separate study may be necessary to find out why more people are not using the library. Hand these questionnaires out at high-traffic locations such as shopping malls or supermarkets. Often, retailers will be happy to set up a table and

space for your staff or volunteers. Be sure to ask! After you collect all the information you need, a thorough analysis of the data should help you develop your branding or positioning statement. It will also assist you in determining who your primary audience should be.

Most libraries do not have the budgets, staffing, or resources to be successful at serving everyone. For instance, it may not be wise to devote your library resources to research if there is a major public university in your area that has an excellent reference library. Alternatively, if there are many primary and secondary schools in your service area, but the school libraries are inadequate, focusing on school/homework assistance can be a positive use of the library. If there is a large new American or immigrant population, offering English-language and job-assistance programs may be the most helpful. To reiterate: Determining how your library can be most relevant to your service communities will streamline your efforts to brand and market your library.

Create a Strategic Positioning Statement

Once you have a firm grasp of who your target audience is and the best way to serve that audience, you should be ready to write your strategic positioning statement. The strategic positioning statement has two parts. The first is the statement itself, which should be no longer than one concise and clear sentence. The second is the supporting paragraph, also known as the "permission to believe." It provides the rationale, or support, for the positioning statement. The strategic positioning statement is something that every staff member, volunteer, and board member should know. It sets the tone for the library, guiding all marketing and communications for the institution. This is Queens Library's strategic positioning statement:

Queens Library is the best community resource for all of your informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs.

Permission to believe the above statement is based on Queens Library's extensive collection of materials, programs, and services, as well as open access to the Internet and friendly, supportive, and professional staff. Queens Library provides a free, comfortable, and welcoming place for the people of our diverse neighborhoods.

There are many ways to develop a positioning statement. You should always get as much input as you can from key staffers, volunteers, donors, trustees, and other players. However, keep in mind that the statement should not be an amalgam of different points of view. Send a survey to your constituents. It can be as simple as these two questions: (1) What word or phrase most aptly describes what the library currently is? and (2) What word or phrase most aptly describes what the library hopes to be?

Once you have collected these surveys, a picture will evolve of current perceptions of the library and how it might be improved, providing you with a basis for the positioning statement. After that, it is simply a matter of wordsmithing to get it right. Once you have a prototype statement, go back and check with key stakeholders to make sure they buy in to your statement. Remember, it needs to be single-minded and believable.

Develop a Marketing Plan

Now that you have your strategic positioning statement, you can develop your marketing plan. At its simplest (and best), a marketing plan is a road map to guide your library's branding and marketing efforts. It can also be the basis for setting future objectives for your library, helping with fund-raising and capital development, and serving as a form of communication for your board and funding authorities. If it is done well the first time, your marketing plan can be updated over time, evolving into a valuable document for your library in the future.

The methods for writing a marketing plan range from basic to complex. Your method should depend on your individual library's needs and wants. Below is a basic, seven-section outline for a good marketing plan. You can adapt the format to your own unique situation. Remember: Any marketing plan you write is better than no marketing plan at all!

I. Executive Summary—The Executive Summary is a brief overview of the marketing plan. It reviews the past fiscal year and highlights any important initiatives or events. It also prepares for the

coming fiscal year. The executive summary outlines key objectives for the next year, as well as strategies that have been developed and an explanation of how those strategies will be implemented. The summary should be no longer than three or four pages at most. As you write the summary, think about your audience. Anticipate their reactions, comments, and questions, and try to answer them within the document.

II. Statistical Review—Most libraries have some quantitative means for measuring their performance over the span of a year. This might be by circulation numbers, gate count of visitors, new card registrations, reference inquiries, number of programs or other services, or additions to the collection. Reviewing the past fiscal year quantitatively sets the baseline for future goals and achievements. If your library has multiple locations, these numbers can show where you have had the greatest successes or can highlight where there may be problems or concerns.

The statistical review is not a simple collection of numerical charts. You can put those in the appendix at the end of the plan document. Rather, it is a narrative that highlights what happened during the previous fiscal year and should show what you will try to achieve in the coming fiscal year. Making comparisons from year to year is important. If you have the time and resources to compare the most recent fiscal year to past years, that is helpful. Sometimes it's simply a matter of comparing computer printouts. You can also compare your results against similar library systems by using the *Public Library Data Service Statistical Report*, published annually by the Public Library Association.

III. Strategic Brand Positioning—As reviewed previously, the strategic positioning statement states what the library is (or would like to be) or how the library would like to be viewed. It is the *personality* of the library. It differs from the library's mission statement, which communicates what the library tries to do. Make sure the strategic brand positioning statement is embedded in the marketing plan, to keep the overarching document focused.

IV. Fiscal Year Objectives—The fiscal year objectives are a blueprint, or design, of everything you hope to accomplish in the coming year. They can be limited to marketing initiatives, or can reflect all areas of the library. Whichever the case, the

objectives must be quantifiable, not qualitative or anecdotal.

Here are some examples of good objectives: "The library will increase circulation of materials by 10 percent over the previous year." "The library will increase the number of programs for children and young adults by 20 percent." "The library will increase the percentage of school-age children owning library cards to 80 percent." And here are some examples of bad ones: "The library will create a more pleasant environment for users." "The library will increase the size of its collection." "The library will increase the number of people with library cards."

In the fiscal-year objective section of the marketing plan, provide a rationale and support for each objective. For example, look at this objective: "The library will increase the percentage of school-age children owning library cards to 80 percent." The rationale and support for this objective might be that the key to future and sustained growth for the library is based on the constant development of new users, particularly the young.

- V. **Fiscal Year Initiatives**—Once you outline past activity, objectives for the coming year, and a strategic positioning statement to guide efforts, the next step is to outline the strategies and specific tactics or initiatives that will be conducted to achieve or surpass objectives. The initiatives should be organized broadly, such as what you plan to achieve in the areas of promotional materials, advertising, website, and public relations. In developing initiatives, it is most important to be realistic. Do not try to do it all. It is better to succeed at five initiatives than only partially complete ten or fifteen. Try to determine which initiatives are the most important, or which will provide the greatest return on the time, cost, and staffing investments that you've made. And remember: Whatever initiatives you develop must be measurable.
- VI. **Fiscal Year Initiatives Budget**—All good things come at a price. Once your stakeholders are excited and enthusiastic about your initiatives, you have to give them the bill for these initiatives, which should be placed in priority order. Assume that the cost for each initiative will be greater than you are estimating; it's always better to finish a project under budget. If funding is limited, it is not always better to have many initiatives instead of one or two really important ones. Also, if projects can be funded from grants,

donations, or other underwriting, highlight that fact. It will keep the impact on your operating funds at a minimum.

- VII. **Appendixes**—These are not always necessary. An appendix is a good place for detailed quantitative charts, graphs, timetables, schedules, or research results. It is also a prime place for data or information you will refer to frequently.

Use Available Resources

It can be expensive to put your marketing plan into place and complete your initiatives, especially if your operating budget is slim. But there are many ways to develop and execute a marketing plan that can significantly reduce both manpower and resource costs.

For your marketing plan, a great place to start for help is your board of trustees. Your members should include a few local business people who have some knowledge of marketing and promotion. See if one of your trustees is willing to work with you to write a marketing plan or to chair a volunteer marketing committee to draft a plan.

If no board member is available or willing to help, contact a local college or university. A business professor or teacher might be willing to have his or her class execute a marketing plan as a semester homework assignment or project. The students can be divided into teams and make presentations to library staff "judges."

Virtually every area of the country has a local advertising agency, marketing services company, or communications company. Often, such companies are willing to provide pro bono services in exchange for being perceived as good corporate citizens. If you have any large corporate headquarters in your area, you could approach them to see if they might be willing to donate a marketing staffer to provide some assistance.

For creative development and creative services, there are plenty of resources to tap: volunteer students from local colleges (particularly art or advertising majors), local artists, advertising agencies, marketing services companies, or communications companies that are willing to take on pro bono work. Also, media companies themselves may be willing to provide creative services—newspapers, billboard companies, local television and radio stations, weekly coupon mailers, and other resources.

It is also useful to find resources in media placement and promotion. Many library staff members think that media advertising is expensive, and it can be—but it doesn't always need to be. All mainstream

media should have a rate card indicating what paid advertising might cost. The first thing to do when you look at the rate card is to throw it away. Often, media companies have special rates for nonprofit or community organizations. Again, once you receive that rate, disregard it.

Ask for a special library rate. At worst, the rate should be no more than 50 percent of the best rate the media company is offering. Once you negotiate a reasonable rate, see if you can get color added at no extra charge. This might seem like hard negotiating, especially if you don't think you have the leverage, but here's the reality: A newspaper is going to publish with or without advertising from the library, as will a television or radio station. Therefore, any media dollars that come in are found money. Don't be afraid to be bold.

Negotiations with billboard or transit companies are a little different, but you can still negotiate. How many times have you seen a billboard or bus or train advertisement that is out of date? That simply means there has been no paying advertiser to replace the previous one. If that is the case in your area, you can often pay just the printing or posting charge and get the media cost for free. Frequently, the company would rather run a current advertisement than have an out-of-date advertisement or worse, blank space.

If you absolutely have no money for advertising, you can always ask for some pro bono public service advertising. Virtually all media will provide free advertising as part of the licensing agreement. You might also have a local community cable television channel that can provide free media/air space and free production access. If you have a budding media star on your staff, you could produce a monthly or weekly television show about what's happening at the library. Other inexpensive media you can use to promote the library include coupon mailers and pensavers. Be creative.

Apart from paid mainstream media, you should develop a close and friendly relationship with all of the media in your area, particularly local media. That way, a regular press release about upcoming events, staff news, board of trustee meetings, and other library activities will invariably be published or mentioned on-air. If you do pay for media advertising, particularly print, you should be able to place feature stories about your library on a regular basis. As always, the press releases and stories should reflect the strategic marketing objectives of the library and support the library positioning.

Evaluate Your Efforts

As important as any marketing or branding program you may develop is, it is only successful if it has met or surpassed your goals. Therefore, evaluating your efforts is essential. As explained prior, fiscal-year objectives are key components of your marketing plan. Use the following criteria as a way to create objectives; most of these criteria consist of numbers, so you can keep your objectives quantifiable.

Circulation

This is certainly one of the easiest goals to set and evaluate, and an industry number that many professionals believe is the most important evaluation tool. Before you set any goals, you need to analyze past and current circulation trends for your particular library or libraries. You need to look for any event or seasonal factors that may skew a particular month or quarter.

If possible, it is best to evaluate several years of past data on a monthly or quarterly basis. Make note of any significant factors that may have happened: major storms or other events, important changes in days or hours of operation, or closings and openings of facilities. Create a three-year circulation chart by month, quarter, half, and full year with appropriate notations. Now, look at the branding and marketing program you have planned and determine appropriate goals. How long will the branding and marketing program last? Are immediate changes expected? For how long? What is a reasonable expectation of success? What about collection, staffing, operating hours, or loan policies? Do they help or detract from your objectives?

Visitors

Many people who come to the library have no intention of borrowing materials. They may want to do research for any variety of needs: employment, school, or vacation. They may want to use the library's computer and Internet services. They may be attending a program or viewing an exhibit. Do you have a means of counting all your visitors? Using the same caveats as have been suggested for circulation, do you have a historical base to compare intended effects?

Reference/Information Inquiries

One of the primary benefits of a library is that there is a professional who is experienced in helping people answer or find answers for their questions. Tracking this can be as simple as keeping a log at the reference desk. And again, once you know these numbers, you can set a percentage for increasing them.

Awareness

Many industry professionals assume that constituents are aware of their libraries' locations, hours, services, and materials. This is simply not the case. Research surveys can be very surprising. Awareness can vary by age group, ethnicity, location, or any number of different factors. Unfortunately, evaluating this area requires some investment in money, staff, and time. However, the information that's uncovered can help set the future of your library. Using available resources, as outlined earlier in this article, can help minimize your investment cost. A survey should be done on a regular basis—certainly at least once every few years and definitely before and after a major branding and marketing effort.

Satisfaction

Akin to awareness research is constituent satisfaction or "needs" research. Early in this article, I wrote about the importance of understanding your target audiences. If your library has a customer service focus, it is important to be able to evaluate how you are doing. New service initiatives, staffing, and other key topics need to be evaluated to ensure they are meeting the desired objectives.

Conclusion

Developing a branding and marketing plan is a key component of promoting your library, which is more

necessary than ever in today's competitive marketplace. And the best place to start developing your library's brand is with your key stakeholders. Reach out to them first in an effort to develop strong relationships. Next, after you identify your target audience and the best ways to serve them, you will be ready to write a strategic positioning statement and strong marketing plan. Outline your objectives and quantifiable initiatives. Use easily identifiable methods (circulation counts, for example) to keep track of your initiatives. Finally, when it comes to paying for your branding, marketing plan, and advertising, use all the free resources you can. Now go and promote your library! ■

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Targeted Marketing

Utilizing and Engaging Library Staff

By James Keller

Much has been written about branding and marketing to make potential patrons more aware of the relevancy and value of public libraries.¹ This is especially true in the challenging budgetary environment that we are all facing. However, in targeting customers, governmental authorities, voters, trustees, and donors, we often forget one of the most important and essential stakeholders: library staff. This view is not limited to public libraries or nonprofit organizations. The 2010 book, *Employees First, Customers Second: Turning Conventional Management Upside Down*,² underscores the importance of frontline employees to the success of any company.

After coming to Queens (N.Y.) Library (QL) from a successful career on Madison Avenue and in international marketing management, QL asked me to create a brand for the organization. An essential part of that development was the involvement of QL staffers at all stages of the project. The previous logo of the library had been around for more than fifty years, and the look and feel of the organization's communication efforts had become a bit old-fashioned and stodgy. But many of the library's employees had been with the organization for more than twenty years and were comfortable with the old way of portraying the system. Getting their "buy-in" and enthusiasm for a new look and direction were critical to the success of the initiative.

Working with Staff to Develop a New Direction

The first step was involvement. I spent one day a week for the first four months visiting our sixty-two community library locations, meeting with and listening to our managing librarians and other staffers. The chats were wide-ranging and covered all aspects of the organization. I learned a great deal in a short time about public libraries, librarianship in general, and QL in particular. The meetings also allowed me to start laying the foundation for the need and importance of developing a new QL brand. While many staff members were enthusiastic, several others saw no reason for change. It sometimes felt like I was a missionary for marketing.

The second step was development of a strategic positioning statement. This differs from a mission statement, as it provides more of the personality or character of the organization. While we solicited input from a broader number of stakeholders (customers, trustees, government officials), of particular importance was how our staff described the library. Three simple questions were put to more than 150 employees and provided the basis for the development of the strategic positioning statement:

1. What is QL today?
2. What would you like to see QL become? and
3. What is the one thing you would like to keep about QL going forward?

The questions were purposely left open-ended. As you might expect, the answers covered a broad range of thoughts, ideas, aspirations, and emotions. But there were two common themes underlying a great number of the comments. Many staffers indicated

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James is currently reading *Dismantling America* by Thomas Sowell.

FIGURE 1. Flyer featuring Queens Library's new theme line.



Time and again, employees provided anecdotes of how the library and staff support helped people by assisting new Americans in a variety of ways to adapt to their new home country; working with the unemployed to craft a résumé or properly answer a want ad; teaching individuals to speak English or help illiterate individuals learn how to read; supporting children with after-school homework help; and so on. QL made an important difference in people's lives. This led to our succinct but highly meaningful theme line: *Queens Library. Enrich Your Life* (see figure 1).

Logo Development

In developing a new brand logo to go with our strategic positioning and theme line, we again went to our employees for inspiration. Our existing logo was a cold, blue, corporate-type seal. The new logo needed to reflect the welcoming nature of QL and its caring staff. Ultimately, we chose the warm colors of yellow, orange, and red. We also wanted to reflect the changing nature of the public library, especially from a technology and non-print collection standpoint. It was then that one of our staffers said: "One hundred years from now, public libraries will still be about books." She was right. We then worked to develop a more contemporary "book look" for our logo. So, with a positioning statement, a theme line, and a brand logo, we needed to introduce the new QL brand to our employees. How to make the staff feel more a part of the brand and embrace it?

Introducing the Brand

It happened that National Library Week was approaching. Normally, QL would provide some small gift of appreciation to each individual employee. Expanding on this, we developed a high-quality, branded T-shirt for each staffer. We even put together a small committee of employees to pick the T-shirt color. It was an immediate hit! And it was something personal for each employee reflecting the new brand. In subsequent years, we provided a branded baseball cap, folding umbrella, and zippered canvas book bag. Each of these brand items became so popular that we established an online store to sell

FIGURE 2. Queens Library's employee-based advertising campaign.



the merchandise, not only to employees, but to library patrons who kept asking to buy the items. We have sold thousands to date and have expanded the line of QL-branded merchandise.

Using Staff in Advertising

The next step in our marketing process was to develop an advertising campaign to introduce the new QL brand. As many of you may know, Queens County in New York is the most diverse county in the United States. Residents speak more than sixty different languages. With JFK and LaGuardia airports close by, it is also a major portal for immigrants. This is one of the reasons QL established its renowned New Americans Program nearly thirty-five years ago.

When you move to a foreign country (I lived in China for five years), everything seems strange. Often, there is some hesitancy to contact government officials for a variety of reasons. Many new Americans do not have a cultural heritage of public libraries in their home countries and are reluctant to enter an official-looking building flying United States, New York State, and New York City flags. How to entice these individuals and their families to avail themselves of the many benefits of the

public library? Again, our employees provided the answer.

As I traveled to our community library locations, it was striking to see how our employees reflected the diversity of Queens itself. Even our central library, where the marketing and communications department is based, looks more like the United Nations than an administrative office. Therein was the creative solution: We developed an advertising campaign based on our employees (see figure 2). We used bus posters and community newspapers that featured photos of actual employees with backgrounds from Puerto Rico, Trinidad, India, China, and the United States. Our headline was "I Am Your Queens Library." Residents saw familiar faces in their new environment with their name, title, and location listed. The initial campaign, featuring staff with heritages as diverse as Queens itself, created confidence for customers to come into the library and get a library card. Visitor counts, new card registrations, and circulation all jumped.

There was also a surprise benefit. Staff members responded enthusiastically to the new QL brand campaign that featured them. They applauded the fact that senior management recognized the essential role that all employees play in the library's success and made them the stars. Shortly after the campaign launched, staff members appeared at my office daily with a photo of themselves volunteering to be in the campaign. Internal research showed that employee morale had substantially increased.

Many of our staff not only work in Queens, but live there as well. A funny thing started to happen. Employees who were featured in the ad campaign began to get stopped on the street or in the supermarket. "You're the library lady on the side of the buses," people would say. One staffer started to get ardent fan e-mail. Many customers were proud that "their" librarian was in the campaign. A key part of the brand strategic positioning statement ("Queens Library has a friendly, supportive, and professional staff") was successfully communicated, again, due to the highlighting and participation of our employees.

Consistent Brand Use

Promotion of QL programs and services is a very important and ongoing challenge. We run more than 30,000 program sessions each year: from toddler time to after-school homework help; learning to speak and write English to adult and family literacy; book discussion groups; computer learning; and a host of cultural and recreational programs. Prior to the establishment of the QL brand, many of the programs and services were promoted by staffers at the local community level. Flyers and posters depended heavily on the individual abilities of those who created them. Since individual employee creativity was involved (whether enhanced or not by computer software), it was essential that all communications produced on behalf of the brand have a similar look and feel.

While it took some effort by the marketing department "brand police," eventually we were able to get the vast majority of promotion and communication vehicles to reflect the QL brand's look and feel. A major part of the solution was to create brand templates for community library staffers to use. Instead of announcing a program at Middle Village, it was announced at Queens Library at Middle Village and featured the proper use of the new logo and theme line. Occasionally, we come across a renegade flyer or poster at the local level, but we sensitively explain the importance of promoting the QL brand and the problem is resolved.

As you might imagine, it can be difficult for QL to get media coverage in a city as large as New York City, especially when there are three separate library systems here: QL, Brooklyn Public Library, and the New York Public Library. We have found that pitching stories to the media is more successful when we can wrap the story around a staffer. Whether it's a children's librarian challenging her summer readers that, if they read more books, she would dye her hair purple, or the Russian immigrant who found a career and success as a QL employee, the human element adds to the story, and to the brand.

We have also found that using employees to promote working at QL is a key part of our recruitment efforts. We produced a

DVD video featuring the stories of four QL employees. We avoided the usual talking-head shots or senior-management comments and focused on the staffers at work. It has been very effective at library schools and industry conferences at selling the QL brand in recruitment.

So, when a new marketing direction or brand development is needed, it is of essential importance to utilize, involve, and engage your employees at every step of the process. Your staff is the personification of your marketing and communication efforts. Staffers are your direct contact with your customers and need to reflect what your strategic positioning is and how it comes alive. When you're focusing on your marketing efforts, always keep that important target—your staff—front and center. ■

REFERENCES

1. James A. Keller, "Branding and Marketing Your Library," *Public Libraries* 47, no. 5 (Sept./Oct. 2008).
2. Vineet Nayar, *Employees First, Customers Second: Turning Conventional Management Upside Down* (Boston: Harvard Business, June 2010).

ADDITIONAL READING

All of these titles are available from ALA Editions (www.alastore.ala.org):

- Elisabeth Doucett, *Creating Your Library Brand: Communicating Your Relevance and Value to Your Patrons* (2008)
- Peggy Barber and Linda Wallace, *Building a Buzz: Libraries & Word-of-Mouth Marketing* (2010)
- Nancy Dowd, Mary Evangeliste, and Jonathan Silberman, *Bite-Sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for the Overworked Librarian* (2010)
- Patricia H. Fisher and Marseille M. Pride, *Blueprint for Your Library Marketing Plan: A Guide to Help You Survive and Thrive* (2005)

JAMES KELLER BIOGRAPHY



James Keller is the former Chief Marketing Officer for the Queens Library System in New York City. In that senior management role he oversaw all branding, marketing and communications efforts for the 63 community libraries in Queens County. Queens Library became the number one circulating public library system in the U.S. during James' tenure and was awarded the national 'Library of the Year' honor by *Library Journal* magazine. James is the Co-Leader of the PLA International Relations CoP and a member of numerous American Library Association committees including International Relations and the PLDS Statistical Report. He is a Board member of the Public Library Section of the New York Library Association. James is also a frequent speaker/writer on branding /marketing/strategic issues in the library industry and is a contributing editor and columnist for *Public Libraries* magazine

In a professional career spanning nearly 40 years James has played a part in the development of some of the most well-known and successful brands in the world. Beginning in Chicago, James' hometown, he helped create the *Bradford Exchange*, which became the largest clearinghouse for collectibles in the world and won numerous direct mail and direct marketing awards. He also managed the 'Incredible Edible Egg' campaign for the *American Egg Board*.

Moving to New York, James introduced the caffeine-free soft drink category for *PepsiCo* and LUVS Disposable Diapers for *Procter & Gamble*. He created the brand strategy for 'GE. We Bring Good Things To Life' for *General Electric*. James also was the senior management representative for the national *Campbell Soup* account winning a Gold Effie for advertising effectiveness. In a senior management role James has worked with clients such as *Duracell*, *Unilever*, *Gillette*, *Coca-Cola* and other major companies and has received two additional Gold Effies, as well as other industry awards. He was a member of *BBDO's* international SWAT team for Western Europe working with the agency's largest clients.

James served as the VP-Marketing for *Gannett's* out-of-home media division and became a leading spokesperson for the outdoor industry both in the United States and overseas, as well as a contributing editor to the industry's leading trade publication.

He was named the General Manager of *Saatchi & Saatchi's* agency in Beijing, China and spent four years living in Hong Kong and mainland China working with the agency's largest international clients, as well as training the local staff in branding and marketing.

In a non-profit role James served as the SVP-Marketing & Communications for the *Leukemia Society of America* helping the organization develop a strategic positioning and marketing plan. He reversed a multi-year decline in awareness and aided the development staff in increasing donations, particularly with the Society's 'Team in Training' program.

James is also president of *J.A. Keller & Associates, Inc.*, a branding/marketing consultancy that is in its 27th year. James lives in Westchester County, New York with his wife, Diane, in a 200 year old farmhouse. James has four sons from a previous marriage, three of whom have served America in the U.S. Army and Marines. James is an avid tennis player. He has also completed five marathons and climbed a number of major mountains around the world. You can reach James at jamesakeller@hotline.com.