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# Marketing: A Survival Tool for the Nineties and Beyond

by Dennis Sears

Patricia Cavill, president of Pat Cavill Consulting, is a librarian by profession. Having been employed as a librarian for 28 years, she now uses her experience and expertise to assist libraries to better market themselves in the face of tremendous challenges, including: an explosion in technology,

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inroads by out-sourcing services, stagnant or shrinking budgets, and downsizing. She also teaches marketing at the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia.

Cavill recognizes that many librarians have a negative perception of "marketing." She notes that "marketing" has evolved over the last half century and identifies some of the weaknesses in that evolutionary process. The focus of the 1950s was on the *product* and selling it to the public. During the 1970s, the next stage, public relations was preeminent. The focus of public relations was on the *provider* of the product. During the marketing years of the 1980s, the focus shifted from the provider to the potential *customer*. Finally, the buzzword of the 1990s is advocacy which focuses on the *relationships*. Advocacy tends to be strategic in nature. At the core are the relationships developed with similar groups, customers, and decision-makers.

Cavill still terms her efforts "marketing," defined as "finding out what the customer wants and needs and changing when necessary to meet those needs." Her approach is a five-step process: (1) defining your objectives; (2) identifying your target group; (3) developing your strategies; (4) selecting your communications tools; and (5) evaluating your performance.

What makes her marketing approach unique is the basis of this approach: respect. By respect, Cavill means recognizing, understanding, and appreciating the environment in which decision-makers work: the responsibilities they bear; the concerns they have; the demands made upon them, including competing demands; and the pressures they feel. By definition, decision-makers are those who impact the resourcing of your library in terms of the collection, personnel, facilities, equipment, supplies, etc. Failing to recognize, understand, and appreciate the decision-makers' environment is "disrespectful."

A corollary to this approach is being mindful of the fact that "people do things for their reasons, not yours." Success is more likely if you can identify and understand your decision-makers' agenda and are able to couch your objectives in terms of that agenda. This creates a win-win situation.

Basing marketing on respect dictates a reorientation of perspective. Reorienting the perspective means shifting your focus away from you (i.e., who **you** are, what **you** do, when and where **you** do it) to the customer—i.e., who the **customer** is, what the **customer** needs, and how where and when can it best be delivered to the **customer**. To Cavill, the "essence of marketing" is "the customer first, last, and always."

As law librarians, we have so much more to learn and apply from the principles of marketing, not only to effectively represent the concerns of the profession to our decision-makers, but, more immediately, to instill in them an appreciation of our skills and the services we already provide. All of this is necessary if we are to survive into the new millennium.

*This article summarizes Pat Cavill's marketing approach as she presented it at the WestPac Annual Meeting, October 9, 1998, at Missoula, Montana.*

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