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## Education for marketing strategies

*Fay Nicholson writes about the needs of libraries and information agencies*

**S**kills in marketing techniques are becoming increasingly important for our profession. Marketing strategies are required for promotion of libraries within organisations as well as in their market place. For most librarians and library technicians their initial training programs covered the subject in general terms or concentrated only on one aspect such as planning or promotion. Skills therefore tend to be developed on the job. The ALIA marketing package was designed to enable practitioners to apply the total marketing process within their workplace.

The term 'marketing' is often used to cover many specialist areas. This is not surprising as marketing is a complex, planned process, not an ad hoc approach. Successful marketing requires a positive approach to change, as it aims to improve a situation or to introduce a new product or service.

Development of a successful marketing program requires skills in several areas, particularly analysis, planning, costing, change management and evaluation.

Firstly, analysis of the market is required, through research, identification of market segments, and selection of target groups. Most libraries have access to considerable data on their particular markets, but many have limited current information on their clients' needs, expectations and attitudes. Skills in acquiring such information are required, as well as time set aside to analyse results.

Secondly, analysis of the environment within which libraries operate is essential to successful marketing. This is a real challenge for our profession in times of rapid and extensive change. Librarians

have to be out and about in their organisation, to know what its plans and trends are. And what about the organisation's competitors? They are part of the analysis.

While marketing may be seen as the answer to many problems, the form marketing strategies can take depends on the weaknesses—it is no use planning a marketing program if there is no means of implementing it. We need to know what is possible in terms of staff-skills and time, collections and services, budgets and physical facilities.

The choice of what is to be marketed is dependent on these analyses. Development of a marketing plan will be based on this information—and its success is often dependent on its predictions. Each element of the marketing plan in term requires background information and analysis.

Products and resources, services and professional expertise are designed to meet clients' needs. Libraries offer an extensive range of diversified resources and services but each client group's needs are different.

Skills in costing are essential, and include full costing of the particular product, resource, service or expertise to be marketed and all other elements of the marketing plan—promotion, distribution, delivery etc. The cost of the plan may kill it off before it begins—it just may not be possible!

The other major aspect of costing is pricing—identifying the cost to the user. Many librarians are already dealing with charging back to sections, cost recovery and fee based value added services. Some feel inse-

cure in the financial area. However, skills in cost analysis certainly enable librarians to present their services in financial terms, and to demonstrate cost benefit and cost effectiveness.

Librarians are responding to the rapid changes in technology in many areas, particularly in the delivery of information to clients. Community expectations of service are changing rapidly and our profession is responding with a range of service delivery strategies. The library building itself is very important as an element in marketing for some libraries, but for others clients may rarely visit. The marketing term 'Place' covers all aspects of delivery. Analysis of methods of delivery and appropriate timeliness is essential to meet client needs.

Most librarians pay attention to promotional and public relation aspects of their service. Rightly so, as this is the public face of marketing. However, all the time and skill associated with publicity is wasted unless it is carefully planned in terms of the objectives of the marketing plan, the client's needs and preferences and integrated into the total library program to enable fulfilment of what is advertised.

Finally, unless objectives have been set in terms that can be evaluated, it is not possible to assess if all elements of the marketing plan have been successful.

Librarianship is a client-centred profession. The challenge we face today is clarifying our objectives and analysing our clients in these terms in order to match their needs in the most effective manner—for the library as well as the clients. ■