

Walk the consumer's journey

Providing a rewarding experience for your customers

John Stanley, marketing consultant

Successful librarians take consumers on a journey. In a series of four articles I will explain that journey to you, and give you examples of how to implement it in your library. But first, let me provide the outline to the journey, so we are all aware of the process:

Step one — Journey of discovery

Step two — Journey of inspiration

Step three — Journey of excitement

Step four — Journey of trust

Step one: Journey of discovery

As librarians we often forget that our patrons are passing through our business on an extended journey. Although their visit to your library is a critical part of their journey, it is only a part of the journey.

The first step on their journey is actually the discovery of your library. The majority of potential consumers will discover your library via 'interruption' marketing, such as road signage, flyers and newspaper advertisements. In a typical day, you will be one of up to 3000 businesses aiming to get their message across to a potential customer. As you would expect, the majority will miss their target, as interruption marketing is becoming less and less effective in attracting new customers.

Placing 'safe' advertisements in newspapers stating where you are located and this week's promotional offer just does not work effectively for most businesses these days. In today's competitive market, it is essential that you come up with original ideas that grab new customers' attention. You must dare to be different.

How to play unsafe

Involve your team as well as the marketing arm of your council to invent ways consumers can discover your library. I use the word 'invent' on purpose. You may have to try something you have never tried before. Brainstorming ideas that get you away from the traditional promotion, but are not looked on as a gimmick, are the real key to your success. I would definitely suggest you get a copy of Seth Godin's book *Purple Cow* (Portfolio, 2003, ISBN 159184021X).

Consortium loyalty programs

Kare Anderson, in her new book *Smart partnering: how to attract and delight more customers while spending less* (visit the bookstore on our website to purchase a copy), picks up on a trend that I have seen grow around the world in the last twelve months, consortium loyalty programs.

A group of retailers and a library identify that they have the same consumer and then jointly promote to attract those consumers to all their businesses. The result is they promote to a larger database, but for a reduced cost per target consumer.

Some businesses are partnering in what at first might seem to be bizarre ways. For example, a Dutch fashion label, 50/50, is partnering with the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army sends clothing to the designer who then makes this clothing 'hip'. The designer sells the clothing and halves the profit with the Salvation Army.

Toys 'R' Us is installing 'The Toy Box' in Albertson's Supermarkets in the USA to see if a joint marketing campaign can extend their market penetration. Why not a Toys 'R' Us toy box in libraries?

According to Kare Anderson, there are seven key steps to looking for smart partners to grow your business.

1. Partner with business people you already know and trust.
2. Make sure you both target the same consumer.
3. Do not underestimate the power of 'movers' (advocates for your products) and 'connectors' (people who can connect you to new business opportunities).
4. Know where your target customers gather; what clubs, associations and meeting places they use. Target their venues to grow your business.
5. Attend meetings where your peers meet. This is where you find out what is happening in the marketplace.
6. Be aware of what is happening locally. Visit retail establishments and social gatherings in your local area. Find out what is happening with your consumer and what retailers are exposing them to.
7. Consider the 'big five MVPs' (most valuable partners) and how they can help your library. The big five are the companies that your customers are bound to visit in your neighbourhood. They are the supermarket, petrol station, bank, phone company and electric supplier (the last two come to your consumers' homes via bills, but this could still be a marketing opportunity). One of these businesses could be a key partner.

Use personality as a point of difference

Although I believe that partnering will be big in the future, you may still want to go it alone. If that is the case, then you need a novel approach, and using your personality as a drawcard is a great point of difference in itself.

Zanthorrea Nurseries in Western Australia are brilliant at relationship selling and it starts before you get to the store. They build relationships into their interruption marketing campaigns. The campaign illustrated here was used as a lead-up to their last Christmas promotion. As can be seen, the advert involves the team, provides a 'trust' statement and promises a fun relationship when the consumer enters the business.



Why not adapt these for a unique library promotion?

If you would like more ideas on how to build great relationships that encourage loyalty and repeat visits, our brand new book, *Think for your customer* (Lizard Publishing, 2004, ISBN 0975011812), has an entire section devoted to building relationships.

The next article in the series, Journey of Inspiration, will show you how to inspire your customers to do business with you in just thirty seconds.

John Stanley is a marketing consultant with over twenty years' experience working with libraries to assist them with their merchandising, training, image and customer service. John Stanley Associates produces an e-newsletter specific to library retail. If you would like to receive a regular copy, please visit <http://www.johnstanley.cc> or e-mail newsletter@johnstanley.cc.