

## How to win friends and influence people

Apologies to Dale Carnegie for stealing the title of his famous book but isn't this what marketing is all about? Some of the most influential friends you can have are in the media, so here's my list of top tips for successful media mateship to get you started.

### 1. Remember it's your job, not theirs

A 'Good Thing' isn't automatically a good story. The job of the media is to communicate what's happening in the community it serves so think like they do – what's in your news for their audience? Why will they care? That's your angle to 'sell' your story.

### 2. Go through proper channels

Most libraries are part of bigger organizations, which means there are probably policies in place about who can speak to the media and how media liaison is managed. Make sure they know what's going on and use their resources for help with media liaison and developing your media materials. Use your opportunities to make friends in-house – public libraries could ask their mayor to open an event, for example. His media profile will help get your story out because your local journalists will already know who he/she is.

### 3. Start close to home

Never underestimate the locals. The community angle is a great place to start with your story, and improves your chances of someone coming to visit the library instead of simply cannibalising your media release. Positive contributions to the quality of life in the community are more important to local media – and isn't that what libraries are all about?

### 4. Do the work for them

No matter whether in the broadcast or print media, a journalist has only one focus: getting enough of a story to use. Help bridge the knowledge gap – and increase the chance of your story running – by providing extra information, facts, and figures in a backgrounder sheet with your media release. For example, the media release may announce your program for Library and Information Week, and the fact sheet will explain how many members you have, how many people come to these events each year, and what happens. These facts tell a journalist that the library is significant in the community they are writing for and helps convince them to run the story.

### 5. Pictures tell a thousand words

A photo with your story is a proven way to add significant value to the exposure you gain through a story in the media. Is your story a visual one? It won't attract a photographer if it's not. That's why National Simultaneous Storytime gets double the newspaper coverage of Library and Information

Week – there's something to photograph or film for the news outlet. But be aware you will need to have your legal ducks in a row on this – there may be rules in your organisation's media policy about photography, as there are in schools for example, and if you are taking the photos yourself, it's best to get written permission from anyone in them for their use in publications or on the internet. For tips on good photo taking, go here <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/liw/2008/photos.media.pdf>.

### 6. Follow it up

Don't just send your release and sit back to wait for stampede of Pulitzer Prizewinners to arrive. Give it a day or two and then ring your top priority targets to ask if they've received it. This gives you a chance to make personal contact and 'sell your story in' to the media outlet. There's a lot of competition out there and, on average, up to a third of initial emails and faxes don't hit the desk they're intended for on the first try. You can also use this call to offer spokespersons for interview, to try to set up a photo opportunity and to help raise the library's profile generally with your local journalists.

### 7. Be there when the phone rings

Your media release must contain all-hours access for journalists because they don't work 9–5. Your spokesperson's mobile number is a must, but whoever the spokesperson is, she/he has to answer the phone. Ringing back later could kill your story because the journo often won't have time to try again later; they'll just pick up the next media release and move on. And, of course, your spokesperson needs to be fully briefed and able to expand on the story you want told.

If you are just starting out with working with the media, you'll find lots of resources online on the ALIA website: <http://www.alia.org.au/>

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## Marketing your library: getting back to basics

It's 2009 and we're in the midst of a global economic downturn. Unemployment rates are increasing, workers are delaying retirement, and people are tightening their purse strings.

### So what does this mean for our libraries?

The current climate not only presents us with an opportunity to raise awareness of library services – our libraries have a responsibility to ensure people know what's on offer. From the unemployed searching online for job vacancies to parents borrowing books and DVDs for the kids, libraries are even more important when times are tough.

It's time to get back to basics with your marketing.

**Marketing is not a dirty word.** One of my favourite definitions of marketing is by Edward de Bono, who said, "Marketing is about providing customers with the best possible value, and being famous for it". Marketing is an essential function within libraries: it helps attract more patrons to your library, it encourages them to visit more often, and it encourages them to use more library products and services and provide feedback about them. Successful libraries properly invest time, money, and personnel in the marketing function. Make sure your library does too – after all, what's the point of having a great collection or event if no one knows about it?

**Write down your objectives and stay focused.** Many libraries have Library Plans, which contain clear goals and objectives. Does your library aim to increase circulations? Funding? Number of staff? Memberships? Information inquiries? Attendance rates? Only by having clear objectives and writing them down can you measure the success of your marketing activities.

**Be clear about who you are targeting.** This is essential for effective communication. The more defined your audience, the easier it is to communicate to them. Not sure how to do this? Decide the criteria on which you are grouping your audience. This can be by age, location, gender, hobby, knowledge of technology, and so on. Develop a profile of these people, walk in their shoes. Decide what to communicate, and how to communicate: select one or two key messages to convey and don't use library jargon. Focus on the benefits of what you are providing the what's in it for me (WIIFM) factor. Then implement, assess, and continuously improve.

**Be prepared to be persistent and consistent.** People rarely take action after one exposure to a marketing message. Research tells us that it usually takes multiple exposures for people to be motivated enough to visit your branches, become a member, borrow an item, attend an event. Remember, marketing is a permanent process – not a once-off task.

**Encourage your patrons to visit, and visit again.** Say thank you for becoming a member. Ask for a testimonial and use it on marketing collateral. Turn outstanding fines into positives. For example, ask patrons to donate food in return for their fines being revoked, and donate the food to a charitable organisation (a great way to attract local media coverage!). Conduct a satisfaction survey of members. Run membership campaigns and competitions. Establish a Milestone Member (eg 10,000th member). Conduct random monthly draws for prizes donated by commercial partners. Grow your membership numbers, for example 30 members in 30 days. Use your membership database; distribute regular print or email newsletters promoting what's new to your collection and upcoming events. Officially launch a new product, service, alliance, or event. Piggyback on other events in the community.

**Focus on building long-term relationships.** Bain and Co (2002) highlight some reasons why organisations should focus on customer loyalty: keeping existing customers is 6 times cheaper than acquiring new ones, loyal customers increase their spending (or in libraries case, borrowing)

over time, the costs associated with serving them decrease, including marketing, and satisfied customers recommend the organisation to others.

**Work with the media.** Before you do, however, know their deadlines. Know the writers and photographers – ask for names, emails, phone, and fax numbers and keep a current database. Do your research, read, and listen to have a better understanding of their medium. Test your story ideas with colleagues. If your story idea isn't so newsworthy, consider submitting it to community notice boards. Also consider producing a media kit for your library, which contains fact sheets, backgrounders, features, bios, and other collateral such as business cards, posters, promotional merchandise, newsletters, or calendar of events.

**Don't go it alone – collaborate!** By collaborating with other organisations, you can save money, attract funding, gain media attention, and deliver successful events. Approach commercial entities for in-kind and financial support. Libraries provide a terrific opportunity for companies to give back to the local community (corporate social responsibility). Sporting clubs such as AFL teams often have policies about their players dedicating a certain amount of time – for free – for community activities. A major sporting identity as a library ambassador can attract the media and new members.

Times may be tough for many members of our community in the year ahead. Embrace your library's marketing – by doing so you'll remind residents of the value we as Australians place on literacy, education, culture, and freedom.

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## Marketing libraries for the community

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) is an innovative and dynamic library service, one of the largest in the Melbourne metropolitan area, covering the municipalities of Banyule, Whittlesea, and Nillumbik.

In the past two years, YPRL has redefined its organisational values. It aspires to be "Informed, Connected, Inclusive and Educated". In its 2008 strategic plan, the Library Board, in partnership with the EMT team, defined six key goals for its branches:

1. Libraries building community capacity
2. Libraries as community hubs
3. Libraries online
4. Skilled and confident library staff
5. Seamless integrated technology
6. Sustainable and responsible finance and governance.

The YPRL community is socio-economically and ethnically diverse, with 153 languages spoken in our area. Our libraries must therefore cater for a wide demographic, including young families, a large student body, and an ageing population.