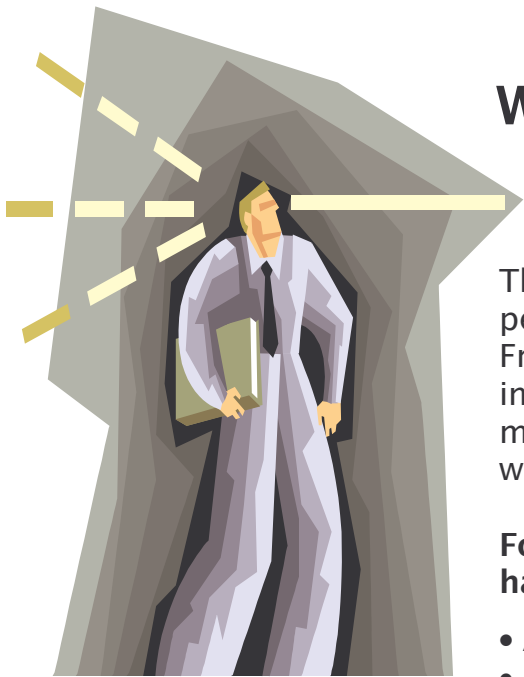


SPEAK UP: THE POWER OF WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING

—Peggy Barber and Linda Wallace
Library Communication Strategies



The very best way to get the word out is to tell people. Really. If every staff member, trustee and Friend of your library told 10 people about this incredible resource, and those 10 people told 10 more people, and those 10 people told...The word would be out in no time!

For word-of-mouth marketing to work, you must have:

- A plan
- A good product/GREAT customer relations
- A clear and consistent message
- A prepared and committed "salesforce"
- People who are willing to testify

Sample message: *The library is always open online. Please tell your friends.*

Tips

1. **Give people something to talk about.** Surprise and delight them with over-the-top service.
2. **Don't just pass out bookmarks.** Encourage frontline staff to look for opportunities to deliver the message when engaged with customers.
3. **Feed the grapevine.** Tell 10 people and ask those 10 people to tell 10 of their friends.
4. **Send a message with your message.** Add a signature line to your e-mail correspondence with the library message.
5. **Personalize the message.** Identify key audiences i.e. parents, seniors, teens and adapt the message to address their concerns.
6. **Collect testimonials.** Invite testimonials from community leaders, educators and other experts, as well as satisfied library users. Get permission to use them in publicity materials.
7. **Enlist the whole library family.** Make sure *all* staff (not just professionals or full-time), trustees and Friends—know the message, understand why it is important and can deliver it with confidence.

8. **Wear the message.** T-shirts, buttons and other “props” are conversation starters and help make your point.
9. **Be alert** for new and creative ways of delivering the message.
10. **Have fun!** Be enthusiastic. Encourage your "salesforce" to be. Remember, it's not just what you say but how you say it.

A Word-of-Mouth Marketing Checklist for Libraries

- _____ Do you have a clear, consistent and compelling message—one that can be said at the checkout desk or in a grocery store line?
- _____ Do the people at the checkout desk know and deliver the message?
- _____ Do you use testimonials/success stories?
- _____ Do you use outside experts to deliver your message?
- _____ Do staff collect and feedback what they hear—good and bad?
- _____ Do you have a prepared and enthusiastic sales force?
- _____ Does your library give superlative customer service?
- _____ Is conscious word-of-mouth part of your promotion strategies?

—Adapted from *The Secrets of Word-of-Mouth Marketing*,
George Silverman, AMACOM, Copyright 2001

Recommended Reading

The Secrets of Word-of-Mouth Marketing: How to Trigger Exponential Sales Through Runaway Word of Mouth, George Silverman, American Management Association, 2001. Silverman says traditional advertising doesn't have the impact it once did, and makes a great case for an organized, strategic approach to word of mouth.

How to Harness the Awesome Power of Word-of-Mouth Marketing, George Silverman, *Direct Marketing Magazine* (Nov. 1997):
www.mnav.com/H2HarnWOM.htm

An excellent introduction to WOM and the basis for Silverman's book.

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