

MARKETING FOR INCREASED REVENUE POTENTIAL

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Abstract

Funding from grants and requests is more difficult every year, and continued service is threatened without the usual financial methods. This paper develops the topic of acquiring new financial support through marketing: (1) the differences in methods and attitudes between funding and marketing; (2) specific examples of marketing techniques used by others; (3) planning methodology to get ready for new promotions; and (4) a view of the wider assessment market available in the US for increasing revenue potential.

It is truly a pleasure and a threat to be here today. A pleasure because you apparently want to hear what I'm going to say. But a threat because I know you're desperate for funds.

The other day, I received a phone call from one of my potential customers--a rehab firm that plans to buy assessment equipment from my company. The call was from the director of program planning who said he writes grant proposals and that he had heard I have access to funding.

Well, this was a little shocking to me, because my source of funding is to sell our products to his firm and others! But I could hear his concern, so we started to talk. They had just gone through a building program, so had used up local sources of funding; JTPA funds were sewed up by local schools; his state VR office had had to cut back on funds everywhere. He had not heard about Carl Perkins, so I sent him information on that, but they were already getting referrals from lawyers and insurance companies for Worker's Comp cases. In a sentence, his well was dried up!

Schools and the rehab field everywhere have this same problem. Money from charitable sources, government and specific project grants is scarcer than hen's teeth! And the sooner we stop grumbling, accept this reality and begin to build a marketing plan, the faster we'll be back in business. It's a lot harder to do marketing, however, than to write grant proposals!

I have to tell you a little story about getting more money. It has to do with the Chicago Bears Football Team. Now I'm just making up some of the details, here, because I didn't actually hear this, but I think Coach Mike Ditka must have gathered all his players and coaches together at training camp early in the 1985 season. And he said to them, "I don't know about you fellas, but I need more money." They all agreed, because when you're in a football team that has lost more football games in 20 years than they've won, you don't exactly earn big raises! So Ditka went on, "Now the way I figure it, if we win every game this season, plus every playoff game, plus the Super Bowl, they'll give us more money. (Yeh, man)

"But that's not where the real bucks are," he continued. "The big money is going to come from marketing! If we start promoting, all the advertising companies will want to pay us for personal appearances. If the team becomes famous, we'll all get rich and famous too! The new kid we got this year--the Refrigerator--we'll put him on the offense in some crazy plays so people will begin to notice us. Then we'll get a video made of us shuffling to the Super Bowl, and...."

Well, it seems like that's what happened! Just doing their specialty (playing football) even better than before would have gotten them only a little more money. But planning a scheme to get recognized--with actions not normally done by football players--was the pot of gold. Marketing, that's where the money is now.

But what are you willing to do to get this money? It's going to be different than what you've done in the past. It will take a winning attitude, first of all. If you want something really bad, then just go find a way to get it.

I've had evaluators tell me that yes, they want to buy our computerized assessment system, but there's no money now. Well, you have to want "it" as bad as Coach Ditka and the Boys before you sit down and plan a winning strategy. When you're finally desperate, you'll find a way. And it looks like that's where we are now.

Marketing Is Serious Business

Marketing is not at all like asking for grants. For grants, you propose to an anonymous (usually) group of judges what you want to do in return for a certain amount of money. You may even overstate the funds, just in case they cut you back. And after filling out a bunch of papers, you sit back and wait because there's no action method to guarantee you'll get the money--or when.

Not so in marketing. First of all, even though you know what you want the money for, you don't go out and ask for it as such. You must rearrange your thinking: It's not that you need money; it's that other people need you to do something for them--and they'll pay you for it. And if they don't know what it is they need for you to do, you convince them. And the way to convince them is to find out where their problems are and show how you can solve them. The entire ego structure is changed around: instead of being worried about yourself, you're worried about them--their problems--because solving their problems will bring you the money you want.

Stating this in terms of the Chicago Bears Football Team: Coach Ditka didn't go to the news media and say, "The players and I decided we want more money." He said, "The Chicago Bears Football Team is going to bring a lot of publicity to the city. Instead of being the 'Second City' (to New York), Chicago is going to be so famous from what we do that it'll be known as the First City." And the news media gave him the publicity, the media got more advertising revenue, and the players got more money.

Marketing is more than an attitude change, though. It includes selling, advertising, promotion and follow-up. Instead of waiting for money to come to you, you follow up prospects--and follow up--until you have their promise and money. It's hard work!

It also means changing your vocabulary--often. In our business of selling assessment tools, we've found out the term "vocation" is OK for rehab firms, hospitals and vocational schools; but it has to be "occupation" or "career" to colleges, businesses and career counselors. "Job" sometimes needs to be "position", "assessment" changed to "discovery", and so forth. If you're in doubt about words or phrases, try them out on friends or ask people in the advertising business, "which word (or sentence) makes more sense to you?"

Often, though, it's attitude, words and concepts that need studying. I'd like to show you a brochure put out by the PACE Institute located in Chicago's Cook County Jail. They wanted money to install our assessment methods for vocation in

their pre-release program. But look at their brochure's front cover! "Burglary Insurance Only \$22!" If they dropped these leaflets all over the country there isn't anyone who would ignore this. Furthermore, on the inside there's Jimmy Jones who pleads with open hands, "It costs only \$22 to find out I can use my hands for something other than breaking and entering." And the entire pitch concentrates on saving the public from crime.

But notice the concept. They didn't ask for \$2200--or the \$10,000 they really wanted. They asked for \$22, and they got many \$22 checks they wouldn't have otherwise. They also received \$220 and \$2200 checks from businesses who were able to take care of more than one prisoner's potential. Credit for this cleverness, however, belongs to the outstanding advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, which happens to be represented on PACE's Board. (Is there a clue here for your Board's representation?)

How Do You Do Marketing?

Start by planning. Sit down and write out every conceivable way you could get your message across. I've done it here in the shape of a wheel.



After you've thought of everything, think some more--even crazy, off-the-wall ways to publicize yourself. Notice one of the items I've shown is "headbands." This would never have occurred to me until the headband publicity stunts that were pulled by the Chicago Bears' quarterback this year. Do you know that one of his headbands worn during the Super Bowl brought in thousands of dollars to a little-known organization working with juvenile diabetes?

Plan by writing down who it is in your community that has money available. Businesses, yuppies, working couples, retired persons--especially from the military. Find out who has the money, then see if there's anything you can do for them. Set up retirement day facilities, nursery centers, outplacement counseling, career planning. Again, write down every conceivable idea, whether you think you want to do it or not. The object is to look at every potential, and then cross out the unlikely ones after you've had fun teasing about them!

Study other people's marketing literature, magazine ads, publicity stunts. Write down what's

on your community's "hot-item" list; you may find popular problems you could solve by adding a service to your facility. Are there any companies in your city that are going out of business? Counsel their employees for vocation; many companies would like the positive image that they're doing everything they can for their employees.

Your Future: Jack of All Trades?

You may be confused by now. It must sound like I'm giving you information that will work with every kind of population but those you normally serve in the rehab field. Let me just state that there are tens of millions of people in the US who want and are willing to pay for "vocational rehabilitation."

They don't call it that; they say they need career advice, but all over the country we're finding they actually want a similar kind of thorough assessment as you've been providing rehab clients. And you are the only people fully trained to serve them. Today's "career counselors" do not understand the importance of assessment--especially of a person's actual ability to do a job. What they've been doing is not satisfying their clients, but they are busy inventing methods that you've got the lock and key on.

Let me also mention that if the schools are getting the JTPA and Carl Perkins funds, then the schools will be taking some of your clients. If hospitals have to get into rehabilitation assessment and adjustment just to keep from closing up, then the hospitals will take some of your clients. If colleges, prisons, career counselors, management consultants and psychologists begin to do assessments.... What is it you're going to do?

Again, you're going to sit down and plan. Look at the entire spectrum of vocational assessment and choose your specialty. When you've chosen it (or them!), begin publicity that you're the experts in your community. Tell people how you can serve them!

You may have to make some changes. Like changing your name from XYZ Mental Retardation Center to XYZ Community Center. You may have to change locations or add a storefront location for another specialty. You may need to add other specialists to your staff. You may need to change or add to your assessment tools so you can do faster screening-type assessments, such as the one we offer. You may be tempted to start your own business!

My message today? Now is the time for creative planning in the rehabilitation field. When you can't do business the way you've been doing it, it's time to re-group, re-think, re-plan. Switching from funding to marketing activities in order to do business places you in a more competitive environment. You must be sure of your goals and the services you offer. And if any of you individually need help, please call on me. Meanwhile, good luck!

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