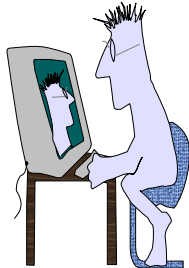


Making the Most of Bad Times

Being there for your customer and yourself in 2009

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After today's session, you will

- Focus on user needs and service opportunities in the current environment.
- Develop and implement the culture, policies services and environment that serve your customers well in the recession.
- Get the message out to customers, potential customers and the press.
- Take maximum advantage of the second (or maybe first) look that your libraries may receive.

Define bad times

- Loss of security: job, career, income, savings
- Abrupt shift in plans: selling a home, relocating, going to college, travel
- Fear of all of the above
- Disorientation
- Loss of familiar ways to deal with stress
- Sitting on the edge of the unknown

People might come to the library...

- To look for a job or career.
- To write a resume.
- To apply for a job online and/or learn how to get an email address.
- To start or grow a business.
- To network with others in a positive, neutral environment.
- To give structure to the day.

People might come to the library...

- To cheer themselves up.
- To get back to reading.
- To get free books, DVD's, etc.
- To read free magazines, newspapers.
- To attend free programs and activities for themselves and their families.

So where are you in this picture?

- We already do those things anyway.
- We really are terrific and they still cut our budget.
- Hey they need us now, don't they?
- We're stressed... all these new people and they're staying all day.
- What an opportunity...

New Opportunities to...



- Reposition and group current services.
- Embrace new roles.
- Develop skills in rapid response.
- Get the word out.
- Fundraise.
- Transform the library experience.

Step 1



Shop your closet
i.e. reposition and group
current services for
stronger impact .

Weathering the Recession at the XYZ Library
could include:



- Use a computer...
- Look for a job...
- Take a class...
- Meet with others...
- Talk with a librarian...
- Attend a free program or movie...
- Bring the family for an afternoon out...
- What others have said....

In print, on signs and on the home page

Step 2



**Develop your
services.**

Developing your services



- Computer access: more computers, longer time limits, laptops for loan in the library.
- Classes: job hunting/career choice resources, resume writing, getting an email address and applying online.
- Materials: more job hunting, money saving etc.etc.etc.
- Meeting space: networking groups for unemployed in different industries?
- Job fair?
- Partnering with Workforce Development Center
- Personal orientation for new customers, greeter, appointments with librarians

Step 3



**Get the word
out.**

Getting the word out

- Put up new signage: noticeable, welcoming, flexible, creative.
- Piggyback on glowing national press: poster in the library, add link to your webpage and press releases.
- Put out attractive flyers: in library, local businesses, on the web.
- Collect and share comments and feedback. Have “May we quote you?” sheets. Take pictures.
- Think friendly, fun, welcoming, easy to understand.



Step 4

Practice Rapid Response.



Responding Rapidly

- Look outward: at people's behavior, media, etc. The major focus of people's lives in your community needs to be a major focus of your library and its services.
- Have a mechanism in place: someone's job? small group?
- Follow the 80/20 rule.
- Try, evaluate and build on what you learn.
- Stay flexible.



The new “best practices”

- Continually scanning the environment.
- Finding out what societal shifts impact on what your customers and potential customers may care about today.
- Looking for yourself in this picture.
- Putting your efforts into things that could matter to your customers and fit with those changes.
- Staying flexible.



Step 5

Fundraise.



Fundraising

- Times are bad but people are giving.
- Simple direct message.
- Targeted campaign?
- Small donations are fine.
- Link on the home page.



Step 6



Reduce stress.

Reducing their stress



Get rid of everything that makes the average person feel

- stupid
- like a bad 12-year old, or
- like a victim of bureaucracy

They already feel that way enough!

Ditch the rules



- Have a bonfire for the signs... am I willing to pay the price?
- Look at your rules and root out the negatives and everything that reinforces a stereotypical impression of the library and/or looks stupid to the average person.
- Solve problems when they happen.

When it comes to customer service



- Every choice has a down side – including your current “choices.”
- Err on the side of customer service that is positive, welcoming, and empowering for the customer.

Reducing your stress



- Divest
- Follow the 80/20 rule
- Make a list of 5 things that are bothering you every day. Address one or two. Do you feel better?

Step 7



Transform the library experience.



A brand is an expectation of something delivering a certain feeling.

A brand is what people feel about themselves and their decisions in your presence.

Your library is as friendly as your least friendly public service employee.

In almost every interaction, an organization's message comes through.

Some possibilities
People might feel

- Smart
- Thrifty
- Green
- Happy
- Excited
- Comforted
- Trendy
- Connected
- Known
- Useful
- Safe

When they're with you.

Some possibilities

People might feel

- Blah/Bored
- Confused
- Annoyed
- Ignored
- Unwelcome
- Angry
- Depressed
- Insulted

When they're with you.



If how people feel (and expect to feel) is our brand, shouldn't we...

- Choose and deliver a clear, consistent and targeted message?
- Offer a consistently pleasant experience?
- Have fewer stupid rules?
- Have a bonfire the signs?
- Be nicer?
- Make their day.



Treat every customer with empathy and skill.



Step 8

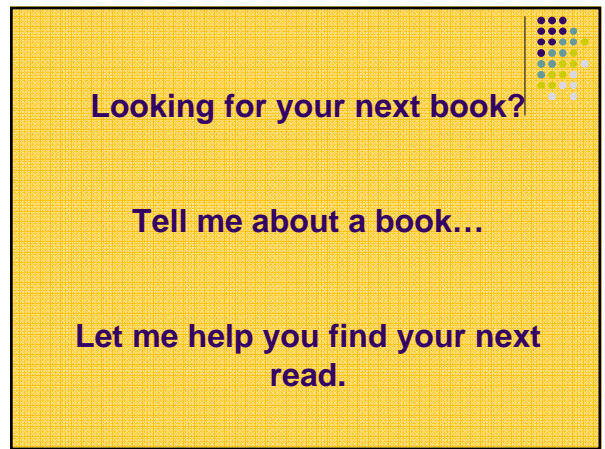
Be fun.



Be fun

- Third place?
- Fine Free Fridays
- Eating and Drinking
- Concerts
- Dance lessons
- Movies





5 things you can start today



1. Review people's needs and all of your services and potential services that respond to those needs.
2. Group your services around the recession theme for maximum impact. Mix job hunting and financial planning with the fun and free. Be upbeat.
3. Let people know all the ways you can help in as many ways you can. Don't wait! You can always update with more. Get their quotes and add them to your stories.
4. Make your library hospitable. Look at the rules; get rid of most of them and restate the rest in a positive way. "Walk through" your building and every service and fix what doesn't work for the customer.
5. Keep looking and stay flexible. Set up a mechanism for rapid response and practice the 80/20 rule.

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