

Managing outreach in health service libraries - Terry Kendrick

Reflections from the course – Wednesday 21st June 2017

Terry brought a very business focussed approach to managing outreach, which personally I really enjoyed. We need to think of our library services as our businesses – and if we don't manage and develop our business, we don't have a business.

Key messages from the day:-

Outreach is the process of **proactively** taking the **library message** and it's **value** to people who are not librarians

- What is our message? We need to make it clear
- Don't tell people that we've got "stuff" and expect them to work out how that will help them. They're not interested in a pile of "stuff".
- We need to tell people how we can help them. How do we describe what we do, not what we've got
- We need to do things that matter to people, not just doing "stuff"
- Don't confuse users by telling them too much – tell them what they need right now – you can always follow up later

All members of the team are critical to the success of outreach

- It's no good one person going out and "flying the flag", only for the counter staff to fail to deliver on promises made
- It needs to be a consistent offer – it shouldn't matter which member of library staff someone deals with, they should all provide the same offer (even though the tasks may be done by different people)

Skills required for outreach staff

- Be passionate, authentic, determined, creative, network

Getting to know the needs of users

- Understand users through experiments
- Don't do big market research pieces – users never tell the whole truth anyway. Be prepared to try, fail fast, try again

Marketing

- It's a dialogue over time
- Don't look for one size fits all – don't just take the “average” message
 - If your head is in the oven, and feet in the fridge, on average, your body temperature is okay – but clearly it's not
 - A 5 foot 4 inch statistician drowns in a river that is 5 foot on average ...
- Segment your market
- Get testimonials
- What's the word on the street about the library?
- Where are the tripadvisor style reviews?
- Are existing users “referring a friend”?

Contacting people

- Have a reason to contact someone (e.g. people like you have benefitted from....)
- Use the telephone a lot, use email a little (preferably after a telephone conversation)
- Be clear about what each contact is about (e.g. getting an appointment, building a relationship)

Value proposition – have a narrative

- Does the user get more back than what s/he puts into the event or relationship
- Have the stories – “one day X came into the library and they Y, as a result of which they were able to Z” – it's the Z part that's important

Think about your stakeholders

- And where do you spend most energy?
- Saviour / friend / saboteur / irritant / sleeping giant / acquaintance / time bomb / trip wire
- What levels of power, interest and attitude do they have? Be tactical
- How the stakeholders see you - gopher / servant ; friend ; trusted partner ; customer ; team member ; nothing ; a burden - are you even on their radar?

Personal marketing – it's all about *you*

- Are you recognised / appreciated / admired / promoted by others?
- You need “7 touches” before someone does something
- How much news do you make – networking / advertising / speaking / writing / brochures / business cards / personal websites / email signatures
- Plan to keep in touch with someone – wait for 10 days to say thank you – adds an opportunity for another “touch”

Indicators that you're perceived as useful value rather than cost

- You are often asked for advice
- You are regularly invited onto project teams
- You have direct access to key executives
- Users come to you with service ideas
- Budgets do not have inordinate pressure put on them
- Calls for extra resources are listened to with interest
- Are you more than a gopher?

Network with:-

- Gatekeepers / Influencers / Role models / Potential collaborators
- Find your champions!
- And be ready to handle the objections

Changes that I will make following the course:-

1. Remember not to tell people that we've got “stuff” – but rather to tell them how it will help them
2. Don't try to tell everyone everything all at once. E.g. at a subsequent meeting with the education team I just focussed on two key things that I wanted to tell them – work out your pre-call objectives!
3. Don't do big customer survey pieces of work – I'm now revisiting the concept of mapping our users. Evidence from a previous exercise, and more recent anecdotal information already tells me what we're going to find – so why not focus on outreach instead of proving what we already know? Take the time to segment the market instead

Helen Swales

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