

Scholarly Serials Marketing: Contemporary Tools for Traditional Content

Realistic Concepts for Low-Budget Marketing

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Common internal challenges

- Little \$\$ for marketing
- No time for marketing
- Leadership perception that marketing is too “commercial”
- Marketing not within Publications Dept. “sphere of influence”
- No Marketing Dept.
- Disconnect between leadership and editor’s office

Common external challenges

- Branding
 - What the heck is a “Roentgen Ray” anyway?
- Member vs. Subscriber
 - Where is their loyalty?
- STM Publishing faces uncertain times
 - How will open access, online publication, and library cutbacks affect your publication?

Status Quo

- Small marketing budget
- Probably not a lot of detailed information about our market and our members
- Several key groups we need to reach within a niche market
- New markets we'd like to exploit but may not be able to reach them easily or cheaply

Staff and leadership

- How many of your colleagues actually unwrap the plastic on your publication?
- How many of your leaders and committee chairs institutions have subscriptions?
- Does your leadership submit papers, review, read the journal?
- How many can quote your impact factor, your circulation numbers, the number of manuscripts you receive?

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Prepare a Top Ten List that clearly states the best features of your publication and make sure everyone has a copy.
- Send your leaders an institutional subscription form and ask them to take it to their librarian.

Authors, Reviewers, and Editors

- Large group, maybe thousands
- Likely to include non-members
- Active participants in your publication
- You already know a lot about them
- May be your best allies

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- When you publish an article, check the subscriber status of the author's institution; send a note to their PR dept. and their library alerting about the publication
- Start a "Tell a Friend" campaign
- Mine your database and unearth non-members for solicitation
- Issue press-releases on select articles in each issue

Existing Members/Subscribers

- May view journal and membership as separate; may not know the difference
- May appreciate only some publication features and not care about others
- Retention is key

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Conduct regular reader surveys and publicize the results
- Mine your online readership data
- Report on and continually remind about features
- Integrate publication into annual meeting

Institutional Subscribers

- Retention is the biggest issue
- Need to create a compelling argument
- Pressure to reduce cost
- Hard to reach end user

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Start early and develop a year-long communication plan
- Enlist support from readers, authors, members
- Conduct a drop survey
- Get end-user information from your subscription agents
- Be honest about your pricing and your costs

Advertisers

- Tremendous competition for their \$\$ both within and outside your organization
- Advertising dollars shrinking
- Effect of online publishing on circulation numbers

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Develop a classified ad prospect list and communicate with them each month, even if not advertising
- Consider developing package deals that include sponsorship
- Be able to show valid circulation or web usage data
- Provide as much detail as possible in your media kit and put it online
- Sell your own advertising

Related Professionals

- Are there other professions with an interest in your publication?
- Can a turf war do you good?
- Is here a subset of your content that can be marketed?

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Consider licensing or creating a special publication to reach a new audience
- Special online collections reduce risk/cost
- RSS lets you experiment at low risk
- Mine your CiteTrack alerts for key words and other hints
- May be the start of other strategic relationships; e.g., physicians and allied health professions

Sources for more information

- HighWire meetings
- Your advertisers and industry reps.
- Your competition
- Your professional colleagues
- Federal and local government
- Look for examples outside of association mgmt.
- Be unpredictable and suggest the outrageous
- Take 5 minutes out of each day to be creative