

Chapter 1

What is Marketing and Why Does It Matter?

The marketing and promotion of career development programs and services is a part of service delivery in which many professionals, both veterans and newcomers, do not have formal training or experience. Yet most counselors, trainers, developers, and evaluators of career development programs and services find that they are involved in handling responsibilities that fall under the general heading of marketing or promotion at some level. In fact, marketing is a component of many of the activities career development professionals perform as part of their everyday work, whether that is planning and delivering a workshop, writing a brochure, deciding what to put on a Web site, designing a business card, or doing a wide variety of other activities that are a regular part of our jobs. By examining what marketing is, and by broadening our understanding of what makes up marketing and promotional efforts, we begin to see that everyone performs some type of marketing or promotional activity nearly every day. The way that we carry ourselves and how we present our opinions or knowledge are examples of ways that each of us is involved in personal marketing and promotion on a daily, even hourly, basis.

When exploring how to develop our skills in the marketing and promotional aspects of our work, it helps to start by considering just what marketing encompasses. In the Career Development Facilitator (CDF) competencies developed by the National Career Development Association, the marketing related competency is stated as “knowing how to market and promote career development programs with staff and supervisors.” I always broaden the competency as stated to include not just staff and supervisors, but also *potential customers*. All of us, whether we are CDFs, instructors, trainers, counselors, educators, or employment specialists, are involved in the delivery of some type of service or program to *potential or current customers or clients*. These customers could be students, adults in transition, colleagues, recent graduates, new retirees, or anything in between. If there weren’t any customers or clients for us to serve, we would not be in business. So reaching out to those individuals and groups about what we have available (our programs, services, and resources) is the very essence of what

marketing is about. It is also the reason why sound marketing must be understood and practiced if we want to succeed.

We are going to take a look at basic concepts and strategies that can be applied to almost any marketing or promotional endeavor. Years ago, when I took my first college course in marketing, my initial thought was “This is easy! It’s just common sense.” Today, I’m happy to say I’ve seen many career practitioners come to the same realization. A lot of marketing is common sense. At the same, some individuals have a natural inclination and skills in marketing as well as an innate understanding of its underlying psychology. Yet I believe that most people can learn how to apply essential marketing tenets to develop quality programs, services, and resources to inform others about these offerings in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. Many practitioners, who are experts in their field of knowledge, lack the marketing knowledge and experience to write an effective brochure, decide who to send e-mails to about an upcoming event, or determine fees for their services. By exploring some basic marketing concepts, career development experts and novices alike will be able to address their unique marketing challenges equipped with the same tools that every “natural” marketing guru or professional marketer uses.

Three Keys: Cost, Audience, and Timing

Effective marketing can be boiled down to three simple but important guidelines. Get your message out

1. cost-effectively,
2. to the right people, and
3. at the right time.

Missing the mark on any of these three targets can lead to ineffective marketing practice, which in turn can lead to wasted time, money, and effort. To illustrate, imagine you are putting together a series of trainings related to employability skills for students at a four-year undergraduate institution. You and your team put together an informative, inexpensive, and engaging brochure and send out e-mails to all junior

and senior students on campus to announce the events. Unknowingly, you send the e-mails on the last class day before spring break, announcing that the first training is scheduled the first week students are back on campus. In addition, the brochures won't be printed until halfway through spring break because the printing shop depends upon student helpers for printing jobs and the students will be off campus at the time you need the job run. Can you see how difficult it will be now to make this promotional effort—and therefore, the entire program—succeed? Even though the first two factors, *cost* and *getting to the right people*, were met, by delivering your message at the wrong time for your particular audience of students, you have missed the important factor of promoting *at the right time*.

Here's another example based on my personal experience. I once was a direct response copywriter for a major insurance corporation. (I'll explain direct response later, but for now, just know it means I created the kinds of mailings you get in your home mail designed to sell you auto or life insurance—sometimes called “junk mail.”) The nice thing about direct response marketing is that you get a “direct response” from any promotional or advertising action you take, and this response is tracked so that the marketer can determine the effectiveness of the promotion. (In contrast, *general* marketing usually is part of a larger campaign, and direct results of marketing activities cannot be tracked.)

A higher level manager at the insurance company thought it would be a good idea to make insurance “personal” for our audience. He wanted us to feature one of our own lower level managers—a young, up-and-coming business man, recently married and with a new mortgage. The higher level manager asked us to write a brochure in which this young man talked one-to-one with the potential customer about his own insurance needs. Unfortunately, as sometimes happens in large corporations, the concept had not been fully developed before it was passed on to the creative person (me!). So we ended up creating a beautiful, heart-warming, full-color brochure of a wonderful young man. It cost a fortune to print, and thus made the cost of the mailing very high. In the end, that mailing was a great addition to my creative portfolio, but it did not bring in enough orders or inquiries for the insurance company to pay for producing so expensive a mailing package. Essentially, the first marketing guideline, *cost-effectiveness*, was violated.

I could cite many more examples of programs, services, and resources that were not successfully mar-

keted because one of the three guidelines of marketing—*cost-effectiveness*, finding the right people, and timing—were not carefully considered. All three are vital.

Content is Just the Beginning

Marketing is everywhere. My first boss had a poster in his office that had a photo of a young, well-dressed business man. It said something like this: “Hate advertising? So does this man—who got up this morning, brushed his teeth with his favorite advertised brand of toothpaste, took a shower using his preferred advertised brand of soap, shaved using an aftershave he discovered after viewing a television commercial, ate a bowl of his favorite advertised cereal, got into the car he found through an advertisement on the radio, and headed off to the job he found through a local newspaper advertisement.”

This poster reminds me that, like it or not, advertising and marketing are all around us. We cannot escape it. And it is not just in the commercial sense. The e-mails we get at work about professional development opportunities, the newsletters we get at home from our healthcare provider, and the Web site we consult on the Internet to help us write a paper are forms of promotion and advertising. Even the way we present ourselves—what we wear, how we speak, and how we carry ourselves—are a type of marketing.

Why does marketing matter? As career development experts, why should we be concerned about planning and marketing? Isn't the quality of the content of what we deliver all that really matters? It's not uncommon to hear comments like this, particularly from people in education or counseling. After all, they are in the business of teaching, training, and counseling—not selling. Yet, the reality is that marketing does make a difference—a *big* difference.

Without adequate or informed marketing, the applicability of content to the audience, the method of delivery, the format of the program or service, the price or timing of services, and dozens of other variables can go wrong. Sound marketing includes *planning* what you will offer, *implementing* the steps to create and deliver it, and *informing others* about it. Each of these plays an important role in your career development program, and each is critical.

Nowhere is the importance of a comprehensive approach to marketing more evident than in the design of a career development training program. An overlooked detail or a careless error in the planning or implementation of an event can lead to a complete

failure. Below are some of the factors to consider. Although not comprehensive, this list will give you an idea of the decisions and details you need to consider when you plan the development of a product or program. The same attention to detail and thoughtful planning shown here applies to any undertaking that includes marketing (e.g., delivering career counseling services, writing a brochure or book, developing a class or presentation). From start to finish, attention to detail and remembering the big picture help ensure a positive result. Some of the factors to consider in planning and marketing any event include:

When. What else is going on at the same time? Are there competing activities or other events that may cause conflicts for people who want to participate? Have you considered when other local or industry events are occurring? Is there anything happening in your community, the industry, or the broader world (e.g., an election, a major sporting event, a holiday weekend) that might influence attendance?

Where. What meeting spaces are available on your preferred dates and times? Is there a cost for using the space, and if so, is it in your budget? Is convenient parking available? If your audience uses public transportation, is it accessible to your potential site?

Timing. Is one season or time of year better suited for the needs of your audience? What about time of the day or week? For example, if your intended audience is executives considering early retirement, avoid planning your event during a regular 9–5 workday when they will be unable to attend due to work obligations.

How to tell others (i.e., how to promote and advertise it). Will you send e-mails, create a flyer, or send a mailing? Whatever method is chosen, check all the details for accuracy. Sending out a flyer with a typo in the street address of the site could prove disastrous for people unfamiliar with the location. Forgetting to include a phone number, e-mail, or Web site address will prevent people from contacting you with questions or to register.

Budgeting and expenses. How much can you afford to pay for advertising, audiovisual equipment, and materials? Will you need to pay a

speaker or cover travel or other related expenses? Plan for every single expenditure you will incur so that you don't end up losing money on an event that was intended to generate revenue.

Logistics. Consider every detail including technology, hospitality, seating, and a myriad of other concerns to keep a small item from ruining the entire event or program. For example, consider what would happen if your attendees arrive at the workshop site on the planned day to find that the door is locked and no one has a key to get in the building. Small details are as important to an event's success as the time spent preparing the presentation.

What's in a Name: Other Marketing Terms

There are a number of different terms that are often used interchangeably with the words *marketing* and *promotion*. *Advertising* is one of the terms we hear often. In general, advertising brings a product or service to the attention of potential customers (or clients or students). We see and hear advertising around us every day. Some examples are television commercials, computer pop-ups, radio spots, billboards, brochures, e-mails, posters, and Web sites. *Promotion* keeps a product or service in the customer's mind and stimulates demand. Promotion generally refers to ongoing activity rather than a one-time effort. For example, press coverage and publicity are examples of *promotion*, the umbrella term that refers to any activity designed to disseminate information and attract attention. They can be used over time to create a certain perception or image in the mind of the intended audience.

Public relations refers to ongoing activities that ensure a strong public image. Public relations includes work through the media, such as newspaper, television, radio, and magazine coverage. In public relations efforts, you (and your organization) are in control, deciding when and where to inform others. One way to clarify the meaning of public relations is to think about a company that calls a press conference to address safety or another concern. The company is in charge of the press conference, and the company decides what will be stated. In *publicity*, on the other hand, the media is in control, deciding which stories to run and how to tell them. Think about what stories were on the front page of your newspaper last night or at the top of the news broadcast and you will see how publicity is controlled by a person in power who decides what is important and how to portray that to

the general audience. *Sales* is also a part of marketing and usually includes activities such as finding people who will be interested in your offering (cultivating leads), clearly explaining what your product or service is and how it could assist them (conveying features, advantages, and benefits), and following through to get attendees or complete the purchase (closing the sale). *Customer service* is often the final step in the marketing effort and refers to the delivery of products or services and follow-up with the customer or client.

The Marketing Mix

There are many different components of marketing. Promotional activities are the part we may think of first when we discuss marketing, but there are other considerations in overall marketing too, such as positioning, pricing, strategy, and assessment. One reason for developing a complete marketing plan is so that you can pay attention to the many variables that will play a role in the success of your marketing and not overlook any critical considerations. All the pieces of your marketing mix are interconnected and must be considered in relationship to the others. For example, positioning will affect promotions, and pricing will connect with program planning. Each component must be considered in connection with the whole.

Successful marketing, including the marketing of career development services and programs, can include just one, all, or, as in most cases, a combination of several activities and elements. It really doesn't matter what terms you use when talking about your marketing and promotional efforts, but it does help to know about the options available for you to choose from. Marketing is similar to a puzzle where many different pieces must fit together in order to make the whole thing come together to function most effectively. The wide range of activities and components that help marketers meet the needs of their customers include, but are not limited to:

- mailings,
- e-mails,
- lists,
- flyers,
- posters,
- research,
- brochures,
- Web sites,
- pricing,
- positioning,
- branding,

- strategizing,
- customer feedback,
- word of mouth,
- publicity, and
- press releases.

The diagram in Appendix A illustrates how the marketing strategy is central to all the other components of your marketing mix. Setting a strategy and plan is a matter that should influence all marketing activities and decisions as you move along in your marketing continuum.

Choosing a Marketing Vehicle

Since the growth of the Internet, there is a wider variety of marketing options available. Which types of marketing vehicles you use will depend upon your goals, resources, budget, and expertise. To begin, think about your marketing goals, including who you are trying to reach. Consider how much money, time, and assistance you have available to reach out to your audience. For instance, if you know your audience will read a brochure, how much money do you have to print a brochure? Will you have to do the writing and the design, or is there someone else who will supply expertise in that area? How will you get that brochure out to your audience? Will you need to mail it? If so, do you have the budget for postage? If you are distributing brochures, will you need to do this yourself or are there others you can network with to help get the brochures circulated? These questions will help you determine which marketing vehicle(s) to use:

- Objective: What am I trying to do?
- What is the most appropriate method to achieve this?
- What is the cost of using this method?
- Will this reach the right people?
- Is there a less costly or free alternative (especially for smaller organizations or individuals)?

No matter which channels you decide to use for your promotions, you'll need to consider from the beginning whether you have the necessary resources to use that channel effectively. Below are some of the methods that are available to get your message out to potential customers.

Different Marketing Methods Suit Varying Needs

Mailings are materials, usually in the form of a letter

and envelope with possible additional pieces such as a brochure, that are mailed to the *prospect*, or intended customer. Postcards and self-mailers are also mailings. In the *direct response* industry, a trackable reply resulting from the marketing activity, in this case the mailing, is integral to the marketing materials. True direct response activities include not just mailings, but also telemarketing (phone call) activity, advertisements, e-mails, and any other marketing activity where the number of responses can be traced directly to the marketing effort.

Since most career development practitioners will not have the resources to directly track responses to their efforts, it is a good idea to have some means of determining if your marketing efforts are working. In many cases, that will simply be watching how many calls, orders, or registrations come in after conducting your promotional campaign. One way to do this is to ask people how they found out about you. Mailings are generally expensive because postage must be added in addition to the cost of printing and development of the materials. If you have a way to disseminate materials without using postage (such as stuffing materials into the mailboxes of staff, students, or educators) you will be able to save on postage costs. A key factor to successful mailings is making sure that a good customer or prospective customer list is used so that you are reaching out, or *targeting*, the correct audience.

This may be a good spot to briefly discuss the compilation of a *prospect list*. A prospect list contains contact information of individuals you think may be interested in your services or programs. This list usually includes mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, or both. Large companies, of course, have sophisticated databases and complete departments that handle this important marketing function. But even the private practice career counselor should be constantly updating and maintaining a prospect file, as well as a customer file. A resourceful marketer makes prospects a priority at all times and makes a point of adding the names and contact information of every possible client or buyer to their list on a regular basis. It is easy to start your own prospect list using a simple Excel file or Access database. Whatever method you choose, be constantly on the lookout for possible customers, and you will grow your prospect database over time. Yes, it takes time to compile these lists, but doing so is important to the success of your marketing endeavors. More information about lists compilation and selection will be included later in this monograph.

Telemarketing consists of a telephone call to the

prospect. We all have had the personal experience of being interrupted at dinnertime with a telemarketing call. But not all telemarketing needs to be annoying. Telemarketing can be used to achieve positive results with a highly targeted group of potential or past customers with whom you have a close tie. Usually telemarketing is considered a costly way to market. However, if your service is personalized, then telemarketing may be a viable route and can be as simple as making personal phone calls to referrals or past customers. Colleges and universities have caught on to this “personal phone call” strategy and are having current students make phone calls to alumni to ask for financial support. Nonprofit organizations, such as churches, use this method when they have your neighbor call you to ask for financial support. This general strategy of approaching someone you know, also known as *friend-to-friend* or *referral* marketing, can be used with positive results in many different marketing applications. It may be worthwhile to consider telemarketing for follow-up and customer service after an event, particularly if your audience is small.

Newsletters sent to prospects and/or customers allow you to keep in touch with them on a regular basis. The key to success with this method is including new or interesting information relevant to the audience, and secondarily adding information about your latest offer. Newsletters allow you to build a relationship with your customer. This relationship has been proven to be the most effective way to reach an audience and create customer loyalty. Electronic newsletters are less costly than printed newsletters, but your method will depend upon the reading habits of your audience and on your budget. Similar to regular newsletters, *blogs*, *e-seminars*, or *podcasts* can be used as a regular means of staying in touch with your customers. These methods will be discussed in more detail later in the Electronic Marketing section.

Press releases are often a forgotten means of getting the word out, but they shouldn't be. It costs nothing to write a press release, and it earns you free publicity. Draw up a list of interested media contacts and send out information via e-mail. If they run the release, great! If not, you haven't lost anything but the time it took you to write it. Anyone can write a press release. If you are not sure if you can, then search online for some material that will show you how. I am often amazed at the number of people who don't take advantage of this simple way to promote their career development offerings. It really is free publicity. In

Appendix B, I have included a few tips on writing press releases that can help you get started or, if you are already writing press releases, can help increase the chances that your news releases will be placed in the media.

Presentations and meetings provide opportunities to speak publicly and to network with others. It is a good idea to always take along brochures or flyers if you attend meetings, conferences, or other events where possible contacts may be present. When giving presentations, briefly mention what you and your organization or department have planned for the future. Perhaps most importantly, use the contacts you make at these gatherings to follow up with afterwards. It is a great idea to send a friendly e-mail after such a meeting to stay in touch and to include information “just in case you or someone you know may be interested.”

Bulletin board notices, a low-tech way to promote your services, are especially appropriate if you work with students and educators. At schools and colleges, staff and students view bulletin boards on a regular basis. Businesses and companies, too, often have bulletin boards that personnel regularly skim while waiting for the elevator or getting a drink at the water fountain. Putting up a flyer or a brochure is inexpensive advertising that will let you reach your target audience where they are located.

Flyers and brochures are a method often used to promote products and services when you have a limited budget and resources. For these materials, you will need someone who can write and design effective materials. You will also incur printing costs. Consider using copiers in place of actual printers for smaller runs of printed items. Color copiers can often be used as an inexpensive way to create attractive brochures and flyers without the cost of print shop services.

Technology Provides New Options for Marketers

E-mails can take the place of direct mailing at a fraction of the cost. It is relatively easy to send an e-mail out to potential or current customers. However, there also are challenges when using e-mail, and these challenges are increasing every day. More and more e-mails are being blocked as they come into a group or individual’s mail system by increasingly sophisticated filters. If you use e-mails, you will need to take reasonable steps to keep your message from being blocked by filters and marked as spam. E-mails are

most appropriate when you want to communicate quickly and incur no expenses. An e-mail “blast” refers to the process of sending out e-mails to a large group of individuals at once.

Web sites can be used to promote your services and products to individuals who are likely to already know you, or who may be searching for similar services by keyword. The creation of a Web site takes a large amount of expertise and resources compared to many other methods of promotion. Not only will you need a host for your Web page as well as appropriate software, but you will also need a knowledgeable person who can create, design, and maintain the site. It is becoming easier for non-technical people to create their own Web sites with today’s new Web design software programs, but keep in mind that you also need to be able to maintain your Web site if you choose to use this method of promotion. Web sites can go a long way toward contributing to your “branding,” which will be discussed later in this monograph. For that reason, they can be an important part of an overall marketing strategy for individuals and companies who choose to invest in them.

Online listings, such as *eCalendars* (which are calendars of events that can be found on some association or group Web sites) are a great way to get some free advertising. Think about the associations and groups that have members who may be interested in what you have to offer. Then e-mail or call contacts from those groups to see if they’d be willing to post information about your event or programs online. It costs nothing to ask and can help you expand your reach if the organization agrees to post your information. You might also consider asking the group if it will send your message by e-mail to its members, or post information on its electronic mailing list, blog, or newsletter.

Links to other Web sites are another easy and inexpensive way to promote if you have your own Web site. Ask colleagues and professional contacts if they will provide a link to your Web page from their Web site. It is a cost-free way to help you reach the right kind of individual, essentially functioning as electronic “word of mouth.”

Electronic mailing lists are groups of people who have signed up to receive and post information on a chosen topic of interest. Members of an electronic mailing list receive regular e-mails from other members. There are electronic mailing lists for nearly all

industries and interests. Rules vary for each electronic mailing list so be sure you have permission before posting promotional material. Electronic mailing lists are a good way to reach a group of people who have shown an interest in similar topics.

Blogs have now found their way into every industry and field. Blogs, considered personal online journals when they first began, are rapidly replacing newsletters for keeping individuals up to date on the latest resources and news. Creating a quality, informative blog can help you create a more personal link with your audience. It is probably not the best way to reach prospects, unless you are a well-known expert who people may be searching for online. Similar to blogs are *online chat groups* and discussion groups, where you can informally discuss your programs and make contacts with others interested in similar topics.

Networking Web sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, are growing in popularity, especially with younger people. These sites permit users to create their own Web pages that may include text, music, and photos. Viewers can see the pages and post responses, creating a “network”. New sites are being created on a regular basis, some focusing on a particular topic or interest. Although they are not commonly used for marketing purposes today, networking sites may become a viable marketing tool in the future as they continue to expand in number and variety.

Webinars, or e-seminars, are being used more and more frequently to reach customers and potential customers. These are events that are scheduled online that the audience views either from their own personal computer or in a group setting via satellite. Sometimes these “online seminars” are used to deliver training, such as a workshop on interviewing. Other times, the webinar or e-seminar serves as a promotional tool in much the same way as a well-written, content-laden newsletter. That is, it provides information that the audience wants and serves the purpose of helping to build a longer term relationship with the customer. The growing use of these electronic seminars or workshops also aids in building the brand of the host group or individual, a concept that will be discussed later in this monograph.

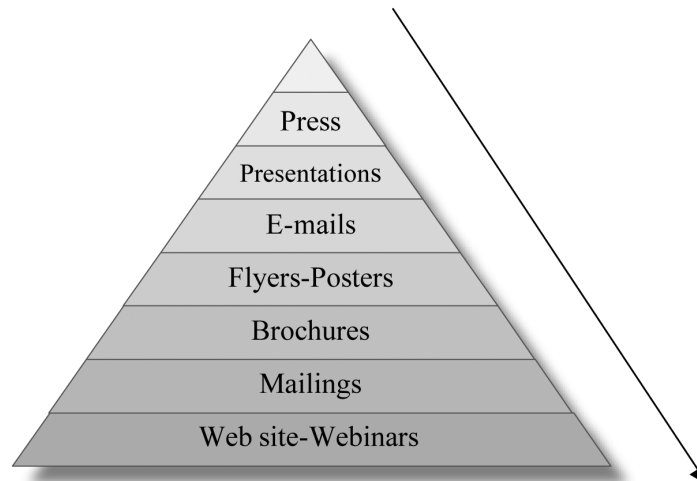
Podcasts are digital recordings of audio programs that are made available for downloading to an iPod or similar audio player through the Internet. Podcasts are generally used for presentations or programs and can include a mix of music and voice. However, podcasts

can be used as a promotional tool if the subject matter lends itself to related content and mention of your offerings can be included. Similar to a radio program, speakers and guests on podcasts can speak to the audience to build loyalty, interest, and credibility for you and your organization.

The pyramid below illustrates the time, cost, and expertise required to use some of the most common types of promotions. Those at the top require the least investment of time, money, and expertise, starting with writing a press release. Those at the bottom require the greatest investment, such as creating and maintaining a Web site or producing a webinar.

Diagram A. Pyramid of Common Marketing Methods

Requires least amount of time, money, or expertise



Requires greatest amount of time, money, or expertise

Clearly, the marketing methods near the top of the pyramid are those that can be most easily used by the sole practitioner or someone who has limited resources and a low promotional budget. In addition to press releases, word of mouth, mention at presentations, sending e-mails, and similar low-tech options require no additional expenses. Moving down the pyramid are methods that require some design knowledge and print or copying elements—such as creating brochures, flyers, or posters. Mailings are even more costly because of the additional cost of postage and the complexities of choosing and producing mailing lists. Finally, high-tech options such as Web sites, e-seminars, webcasts, and similar new methods require staff with knowledge and expertise, as well as monetary investment or access to new technologies.