



SPRING QUARTERLY GATHERING Nonprofit Marketing 101 ~ May 7, 2009



This year's first Quarterly Gathering featured Gary Mueller, Chief Creative Director of BVK Advertising in Milwaukee and founder of *Serve Marketing*. Serve is the country's first completely volunteer, not-for-profit ad agency dedicated to providing pro bono marketing services to underserved causes and has helped hundreds of non-profits to find a strong voice in their communities. Since 2002, Serve has donated over \$10 million in time and production services to non-profits, and his cause branding efforts have helped create greater awareness for issues ranging from shaken baby syndrome, brain injury, epilepsy and domestic violence to organ donation, teen pregnancy, child sexual abuse, ovarian cancer and abstinence.

The materials below summarize the presentation given by Gary, and will hopefully jumpstart a creative process that assists you and your organization in marketing its mission and programs. Thank you for joining us – we hope you found it enlightening and helpful!

Marketing is absolutely one of the most important things a non-profit can do.

It is critical to your success – without effective marketing, a cause cannot fulfill its mission. However, most non-profits suck at telling their story – they follow a set of arcane rules leading to...

10 BIGGEST MYTHS OF NON-PROFIT MARKETING

1. People can't wait to hear about your cause.

- All you have to do is tell them about what you do – right?
- But there are over 1.5 million non-profits in the U.S. and people are exposed to over 3,000 ad messages a day.
- It not just about what you have to say, but how you say it.
- Your message should be unconventional enough to get through all the static.

2. We can't afford to be provocative.

- Great marketing often uses the opposite of what the standard marketing was for that product or idea (such as Altoids).
- Capturing someone's attention can sometimes make them uncomfortable, particularly when you are trying to change behavior.
- "In advertising, the word "safe" means the same as "invisible." -Tracy Wong, Wong Daddy
 - Remember - there are also risks to doing safe marketing!
- A provocative approach requires that you reach out to those you think you may alienate.



3. Logic is more important than emotion.

- Non-profits love to use rational arguments and statistics that support their outcomes.
- The best advertising used to just make people think – now you have to make them feel.
- "If the idea doesn't have emotional significance to us, we're not likely to store it, so it won't be available for later recall." -Gerald Zaltman, Harvard Business School
- Logic without emotion does not motivate people to change their behavior.

4. Positive messages work best.

- Strategic risks can often be a more responsible use of what little marketing/ad dollars you have.
- Negative messages compete and command attention – they generate a huge amount of additional media coverage, where the positive information can then be delivered.

5. Negative messages work best.

- See the next myth (#6).
- How do you balance your messaging in ways that create urgency for action? This applies to changing behavior, increasing awareness and support for your organization, telling your story, etc. Sometimes either or both approaches work.



6. There are rules.

- Restricting yourself means you limit the way you frame your message and how you tell your story.
- Is there a place for humor in the issue? How can negative or provocative spots be targeted in such a way to generate additional coverage? Think back to Rule #2.



7. You need an ad agency to be successful.

- Who can you connect with to your cause, your agency, etc. that will help meet each of your goals? You never know what talents and skills are available to you if you never think to ask.
- Simple ideas that involve even a minimal amount of creativity can be very effective.
- The goal is to generate additional, earned media coverage; utilize PR to follow-up.
- Examples include the “bed event” for Pathfinders, Lawn & Garden ads, and other “guerilla marketing” tactics.

8. You have to like an ad to approve it.

- Even if you, your board member, your funder, your whoever doesn’t like it, that doesn’t mean it won’t have an impact.
- “25% of the people are against everything all the time.” -Robert Kennedy

9. When a campaign gets negative calls, it’s a bad thing.

- It’s an effective way to generate PR opportunities and to talk about the issue – don’t run at the first sight of blood.
- Make sure you’re prepared up front for the naysayers – this is when you must be armed with logic, statistics and arguments to support your cause.
- Think about it in terms of your mission – how far are you willing to go to achieve it?

10. Board members and funders make great creative directors.

- When you are asking for pro-bono help, let the experts do the creative. Their approaches and ideas are often means-tested for success!
- “Advertising created by committee is like being nibbled to death by ducks.” -Tom McElligot

11. No means no.

- See #8 and #9. Respectfully do not take “no” for an answer! Think about what will keep the process alive, who are your champions, how does this impact mission, etc.

12. There’s a perfect time to start.

- Not everything has to be in place for something to be successful. You won’t know if it works if you never try it!
- Marketing and PR is most often a commitment of your time and creative energies.
- “Do what you can with what you have today.” See #7.