

Marketing Community Corrections

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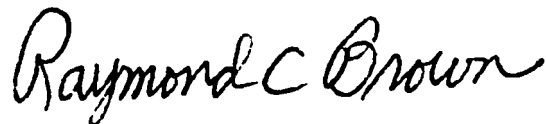
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Foreword

Marketing one's product has been a part of doing business for a long period of time, but it is a relatively new concept for the field of corrections. As new programs have been developed for the supervision of offenders-particularly within the area of community corrections-and fiscal resources have become more scarce, the need to market these programs has become imperative if they are to survive and become integral parts of the continuum of resources available to deal with the offender.

This monograph is designed to provide community corrections program administrators with knowledge of marketing principles that will assist them in proactively marketing their programs. It focuses on such issues as defining products and services, publics and markets, and marketing techniques.

The authors have had considerable experience in marketing their own agency products and have worked with the National Institute of Corrections in conducting training seminars on marketing community corrections, as well as providing technical assistance to improve the marketing skills of numerous state and local corrections agency personnel.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raymond C. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raymond C. Brown, Director
National Institute of Corrections

Preface

In the Fall of 1984, George Keiser, Chief of the Community Corrections Division of the National Institute of Corrections, asked that we work on the development of a marketing curriculum for community corrections professionals. The National Academy of Corrections and Community Corrections Division of NIC then invited us to present two, week-long training events at the Academy. We have continued to present the course throughout the country at the request of community corrections agencies and associations.

This monograph is designed to serve as an introduction to marketing principles and their applications to community corrections. We extend our deep appreciation to all of the trainees who returned to their organizations to test the marketing strategies they developed, and then shared their experiences with us. Through their feedback, we have been able to continue refining the material to meet the unique needs of community corrections providers. For those who wish to pursue this subject further, a reading list is provided.

Our special thanks to George Keiser for his insight into the value of applying marketing principles to the administration of community corrections services.

Sherry Haller
F.G. Mullaney

Introduction

For many, marketing community corrections is a new concept. Some may do it naturally and not realize it. Others may not be utilizing marketing techniques at all. Some may mistakenly believe that marketing and public relations are one and the same, or that marketing has no place in the not-for-profit, service delivery world.

Whatever our assumptions, marketing need not be any more mysterious than the rest of our program operation. It need not be slick or manipulative and can be used effectively by community corrections professionals in ways consistent with social welfare philosophy. In this decade it must, if it is to survive with its values intact.

There are several reasons for this imperative. First, the human service industry is no longer the “sleepy” arena. Increasingly, agencies are being asked for strict accountability, including the demonstration that they effectively meet a widely felt need for service.

Second, not-for-profit agencies no longer have a monopoly on the market. The privatization wave has come ashore for hospital care, corrections, library services, and other human service areas which have traditionally been provided through the public sector. Now, more than ever, community corrections agencies must have business skills, such as marketing, to effectively compete with for-profit businesses.

Third, some community corrections’ customers (e.g. voting public, judges, legislature) are expressing needs and wants which differ from current correctional practices. What is the conceptual framework which will guide corrections through a review of the situation and lead to an effective response?

The Business of Community Corrections

Principle: "The answer to the question 'What is our business?' is always a choice between alternatives, each of which rests on different assumptions regarding the reality of the business and its environment. It is always a high-risk decision."

This year, 60,000 commercial businesses will fail. They may be under-capitalized, mismanaged, ill-timed, or suffer unknown shortcomings. Some businesses will survive, and still others will flourish. The reasons are not always obvious. A halfway house may be strongly supported in one community and close under the weight of popular opposition in another. A probation department may be highly regarded in one city, while a similar office in another city may be considered a waste of taxpayer money.

Understanding why a business succeeds or fails is the key to unlocking the potential for future success in any enterprise, including the business of community corrections.

One of the first steps in developing a marketing approach to community corrections is to clarify what specific business we are in. It seems obvious until we ask the question. For example, are we in the business of punishment? Rehabilitation? Human development? Supervision?

To answer that question, marketing recognizes the dependence of any business on the customer for survival. Although definitions of community corrections agencies may differ, the customer serves as the foundation. Once

"It is the customer alone whose willingness to pay for a good or a service converts economic resources into wealth, things into goods. What the business thinks it produces is not importance - especially not to the future of the business and to its success...What the customer thinks he is buy in what he considers value, is decisive - it determines what a business is, what it produces, and whether it will prosper."²

this tenet is established, then the question is whether your business is able and willing to develop the products and services to meet customer demands.

By defining our businesses broadly, we give ourselves the flexibility to offer what our customers want to buy. If there are programs we believe will work well one day, we must stay in business long enough to see our opinion vindicated by providing the programs customers want now.

However, there should be no confusion between “selling” and “selling out.” If customer demands for particular products or services are in violation of your business’ mission or its underlying philosophy and values, don’t offer them - without recognizing that they change the very nature of your organization.

Customers

Principle: Customers, not clients, are the foundation of any business and determine whether it will succeed or fail.

Stated simply, our customers are those who give community corrections essential resources in return for products or services. Clients are not customers because they do not “pay” for our services with money, prestige, or political support.

“At one company, the guys in research are three and four years old” - Wall Street Journal headline reporting on a toy company; December 20, 1972

For example, when a judge remands an offender to your program, the offender is your client, but the judge is your customer. Regardless of whether the court pays for the service, the judge is giving essential resources to your program - legitimacy, authority, credibility - critical elements to your agency’s success. Local and state legislatures may allocate funds for your program - if so, they are customers. Law enforcement agencies may refer clients to your program - they, too, are part of the customer base.

This is a critical point of understanding. Although some measure

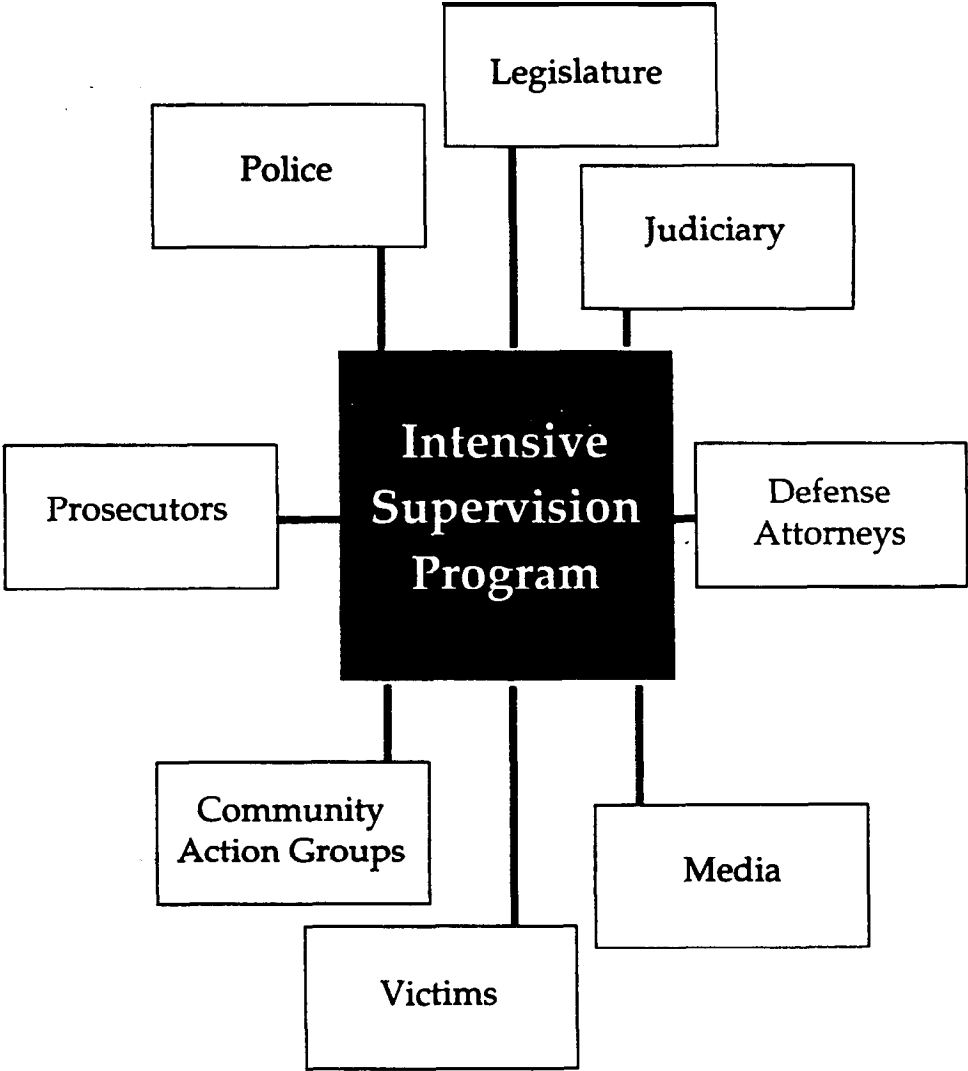
If the customer perceives a benefit, self-interest requires him/her to provide the rewards that will perpetuate the business - such as money, support, or recognition. This is as true for community corrections as for General Electric or a neighborhood department store.

of client satisfaction will contribute to customer satisfaction, it is the customer’s satisfaction which is the determining factor.

This does not negate the importance of client satisfaction. The very integrity of a community corrections business is based on its effective responses to clients. There may be times when what best serves the client may not have many “buyers.” Then our business’ mission philosophy may call for us to meet our clients’ needs first and seek to create a customer base through education and persuasion.

What follows are two diagrams which will help you identify your customers. In the first diagram, represent your agency as a box in the center of a piece of paper and then cluster around it boxes representing all of the agencies, people, and organizations from whom your agency receives essential resources.

The distance from the black box to the white boxes should reflect the relative dependency of your agency on that person or organization. The resulting diagram is both a picture of your agency's "customers" and also an estimate of the relative importance of each. An intensive supervision program is used as an illustration.



There are also customers within your agency. For example, members of your board of directors are customers because they pay you to manage the program, may provide vital contact with the general public, or instill confidence and support. Your staff are customers because your agency needs their expertise and involvement. Volunteers are also customers because they can provide your agency with service, loyalty, and ideas.

No wonder the Disney people are so successful in satisfying their "guests." Their exchanges with employees help the latter feel important and personally responsible for the "show." The employees' sense of "owning the organization" spills over to the millions of visitors with whom they come into contact.

The second diagram illustrates the potential range of community 'corrections customers. All of these

persons or organizations can be thought of as typical customers because they each give essential resources to a community corrections agency in exchange for something they want the agency to provide.

Internal Customers

- Board of Directors or Advisory Board
- Volunteers
- Staff

External Customers

Public

- General Public
- Neighborhood Groups
- Special Interest Groups

Support

- Foundations
- Government (city, county, state, federal)
- Service Clubs

Regulatory

- Department of Corrections
- Health Department
- Civil Liberties Agency
- Federal Court

Sub-Contractors

- Job training services
- Alcohol/drug counseling
- Psychological testing

What has been described in this chapter can be termed a customer-centered, rather than self-centered, approach to the management of community corrections. “The special relationship by means of which a vendor and a (customer) develop a mutual strategy is replacing the more restrictive philosophy that focuses solely on achieving a sale...Such a partnership concept makes use of an entire organization to build and nurture customer alliances for mutual growth and profit”. The table below outlines the significant contrasts between these two approaches.⁵

The Self-Centered Organization

- we design our products, then offer them for sale.
 - we provide services.
- we determine what is needed and then develop products to meet those needs.
- we believe preserving the organization is critical.

The Customer-Centered Organization

- we develop products around expressed customer needs.
- we ask our customers what they want.
- we believe preserving societal well-being is critical.

Phillip Kotler expressed it best: “The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself. Ideally, marketing should result in a customer who is ready to buy. All that should be needed then is to make the product or service available.”⁶

Market Research

Principle: Understanding customer attitudes and desires is an integral part of any community corrections business.

Customer needs and interest can be measured by any number of market research techniques. Formal research is not always necessary. A great deal of information can be obtained informally by inviting a judge (customer) to lunch and asking what he/she may want from your agency over the next few years; or focus groups, consisting of current, or potential customers, can be convened to discuss issues of concern. Carefully selected, such individuals or groups can reflect widely-held interests, thus guiding your “product design” and ultimately strengthening and expanding your customer base.

Phillip Kotler suggests that primary data can be collected in the following ways:

Observational: A great deal can be learned by watching behavior. Observing and listening to customer reactions about the services in your agency or those of your competitors are excellent inexpensive ways to collect important data.

Survey: We have all received surveys in the mail or been contacted by phone to answer questions on any number of topics - political canvassing to solicitations for community donations. Survey data, particularly surveys which are targeted for distinct population groups (lawmakers, civic associations, etc.) can serve as a strong resource in shaping program and communications themes. They are also excellent resources for learning more about customer attitudes and preferences.

Experimental: Experimental research, the most formal of research methods, selects matched groups and (by providing different stimuli and controlling outside variables) determines the importance of a particular variable on its subjects. Community corrections agencies, unlike their institutional counterparts, may find experimental research beyond their

budget limitations and extremely challenging. Although it is more difficult to control the presence or absence of various stimuli in the community, than in the controlled environment of a correctional facility, the results of experimental research can be a tremendous advantage. It can enhance agency credibility and create the potential for increased support, of its programming operation.

Market research does not always translate into programmatic overhaul. Once research is completed, you may find that only minor adjustments with currently programming is necessary to enhance marketability. For instance, adding a victim compensation component to your basic work-release program may make it much more attractive to your customers without compromising your business' mission.

If you feel unprepared to tackle research, college and university research departments may welcome the opportunity to work with you, or research firms may donate their expertise or allow you to purchase their assistance at reduced rates. Whether minor or major overhauls are needed, market research is essential to ensure sound community corrections management decisions.

Fair Exchange

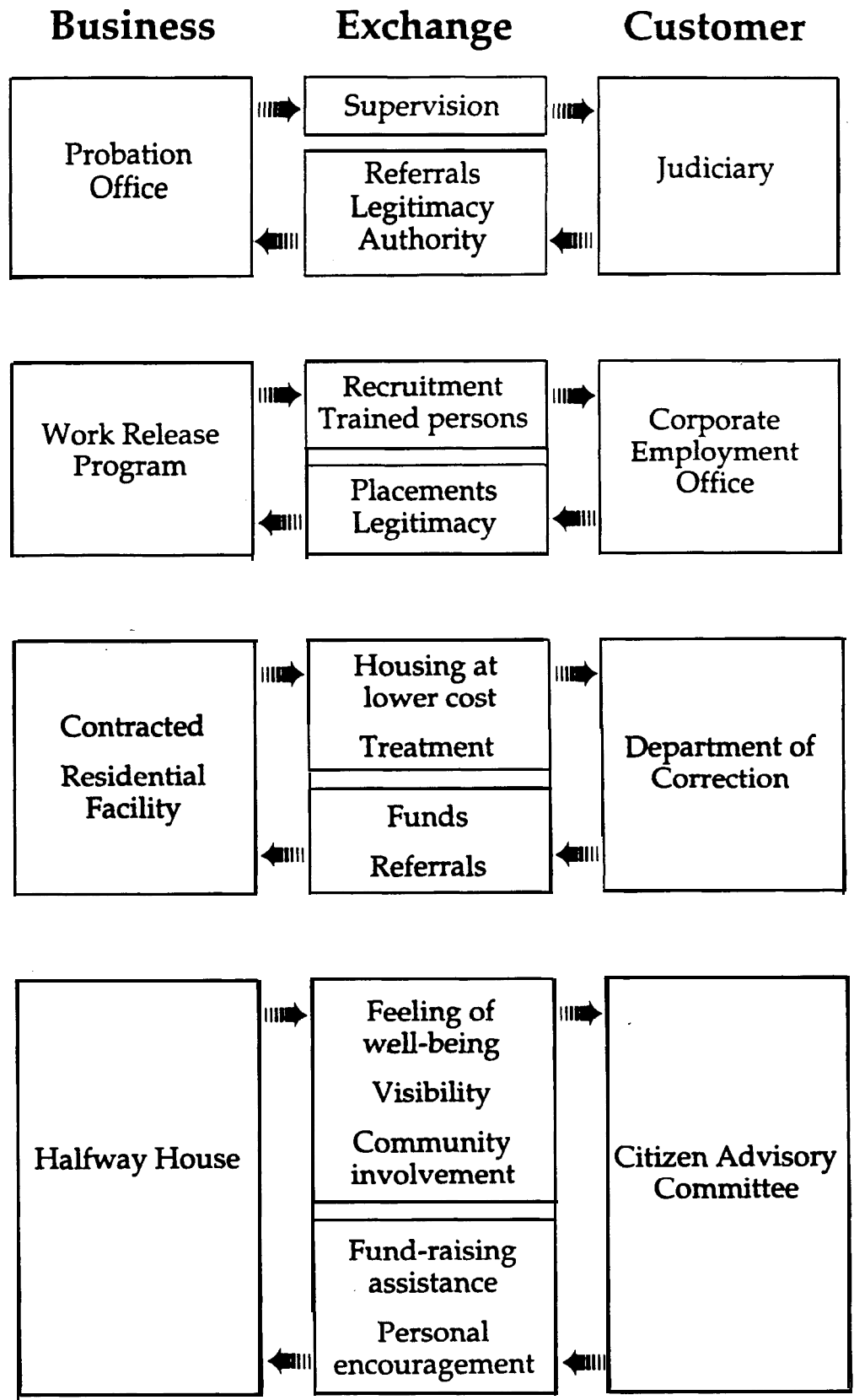
Principle: Marketing is most often the process by which effective businesses insure that both the customer and seller obtain what each needs and desires.

Once your customers have been identified, the challenge is developing a fair exchange; that is, to create a “win-win” situation, where both business and customer obtain what each wants.

In the for-profit sector, fair exchanges between a business and its customers are obvious. Apple, Leading Edge, and IBM exchange computers for money; Kodak and Polaroid, cameras. In the not-for-profit sector, these exchanges are less apparent, but just as vital to agency survival and growth. They may involve intangibles, such as good will, prestige, and power. Or, they may be measurable - for example, a fire department exchanging prompt response time for financial and community support.

In determining the fair exchange in community corrections, we must ask ourselves: What do my primary customers (those which my agency depends on the most) want? Can I satisfy those requirements with my current product or service line? Can I develop new or revised offerings within the confines of my agency’s philosophy and goals?

On the following page are examples of exchanges between community corrections organizations and their customers.



Price and Currency

Principle: When determining price, consider not only the costs in providing the product/service, but its value to the customer.

Price is an important element in developing an effective marketing plan. Like any business, you can place yourself out of the market by charging too much or underrating the importance of your product or service to the customer.

It is important to understand that no one buys your product. A customer who purchases a luxury automobile may be buying prestige, status, dependability, or durability. A customer of a probation agency is not buying client-specific planning, but may be purchasing public safety, or perhaps the more humane treatment of offenders.

Significant gains can be made by expanding our thinking about currencies. Although money is the obvious one, expertise, information, and physical resources are some examples of non-monetary currencies which are valuable in and of themselves and may lead to financial support later.

**Shoe tycoon
Francis Rooney**

“People no longer buy shoes to keep their feet warm and dry. They buy them because of the way the shoes make them feel—masculine, feminine, rugged, different, sophisticated, young, glamorous, 'in.' Buying shoes has become an emotional experience. Our business now is selling excitement rather than shoes.”^B

Communications and Image

Principle: Communication is the art of knowing what to say, when to say it, and to whom it is said.

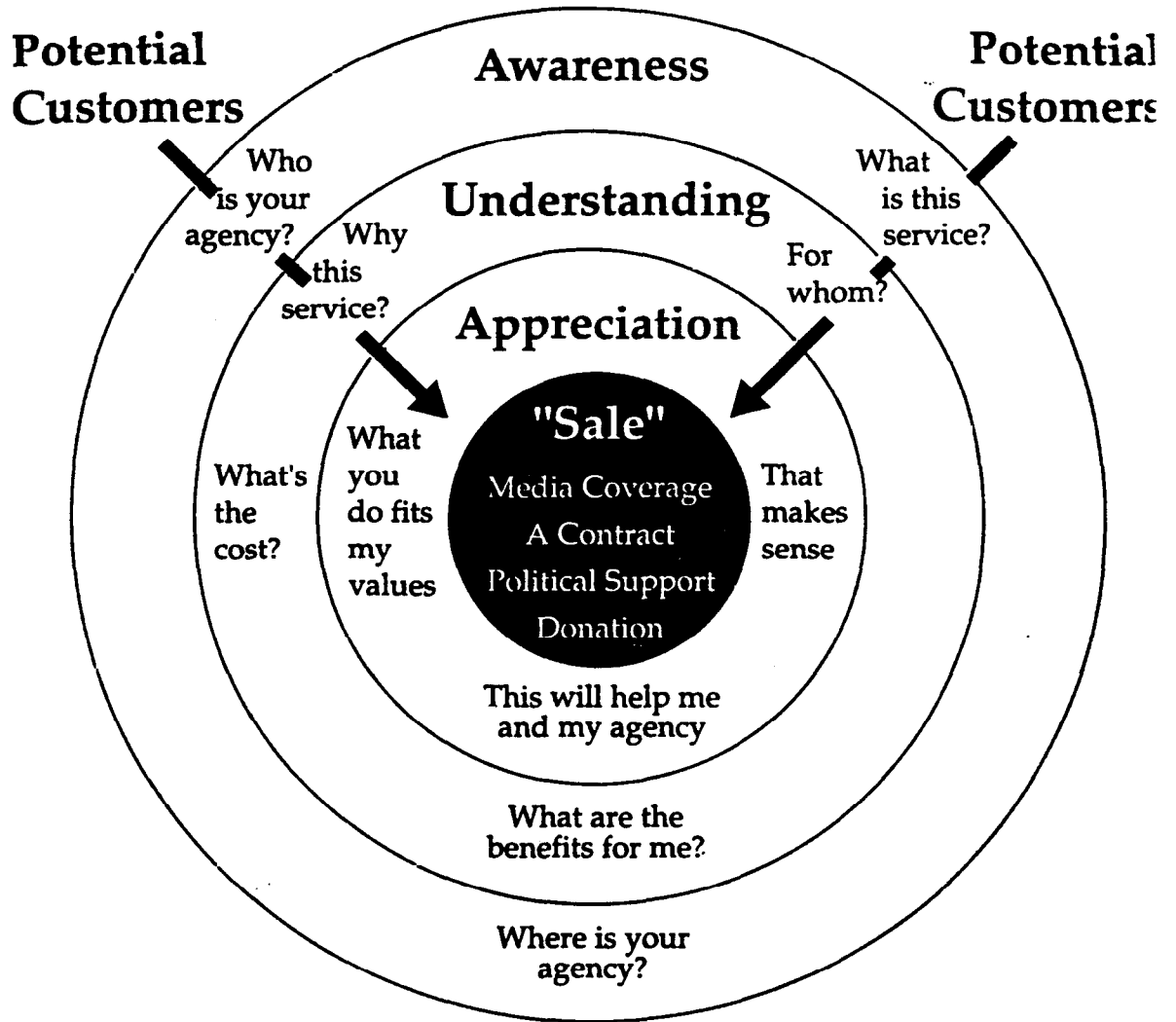
Communications involves three important phases in gaining support. Potential customers must:

1. Learn that you exist.
2. Understand the nature of your work
3. Come to appreciate the benefits of your services or products.

For example, assume you need the involvement of a newly-appointed judge for your house arrest program. Your task begins with making the judge aware of the program's existence and answering basic questions (some unspoken) about the nature of your agency. Once this initial phase is completed, he/she will be ready for additional information regarding the costs, results, and philosophy of the program. It is only after the judge's concerns have been addressed that you can expect him or her to gain a greater appreciation of your program's value and give serious consideration to using house arrest as a sentencing option.

McDonald's understands the great lesson of the 1980's - that marketing in the 80's is guerilla warfare. You can no longer fly over in your network B-52's and drop coherent, heavy messages, saturating communities with what you want to say, and hope for a response. Guerilla warfare marketing in the 80's means that the battles for the heart and mind and pocketbook of the consumer will be won on a block-by-block, store-by-store, purchase-by-purchase basis.^g

As illustrated in the communications model diagram below, the communications task is to help customers move from outside the circle, by going through the three communication phases - awareness, understanding, and appreciation - to the center where the "sale" or fair exchange can be made.



Once a certain image is ingrained in their minds, people see what they want to see and changing attitudes becomes more difficult. As a result, some businesses sometimes choose to “mesh” their products or services with prevailing thought, rather than attempting to change well-established patterns of opinion. However, there are times when attempts to modify customer attitudes are worth the risk. The Honda example in the column to the right illustrates this point.

Many communications avenues are available to reach your customers. Newsletters, open houses, promotions, paid advertising are just a few. The choice depends not only on budget, but upon the message to be communicated. There are resources which already exist in the community. Advertising and public relations firms are often looking for opportunities to assist non-profit organizations in their local communities. They may absorb the cost of creating and launching a public awareness campaign in-house or charge your organization a reduced fee.

Honda entered the U.S. motorcycle market facing a major decision. It could either sell its motorcycles to a small number of people already interested in motorcycles or try to increase the number interested in motorcycles. The latter would be more expensive because many people had negative attitudes toward motorcycles. They associated motorcycles with black leather jackets, switchblades, and crime. Honda took the second course and launched a major campaign based on the theme “you meet the nicest people on a Honda.” Its campaign worked and many people adopted a new attitude toward motorcycles.¹⁰

Your office environment also communicates something about your program. When a potential customer arrives for a visit, ask yourself, what does he or she see? What does your staff convey to customers during and after working hours? Review the agency image you wish to convey, compare it to what presently exists, and ask yourself whether there are opportunities for improvement.

Cadillac is turning to soft-sell approaches - such as sponsoring concerts held in rich and famous people's homes - to reach the super affluent market for Allante, the carmaker's new two-seater convertible.

- Excerpt from article "Allante Goes High Brow"

Advertising Age;
March 2, 1987

In summary, the tasks of communications are to make potential and current customers aware of your services; help them to understand the benefits; and lead them to an appreciation and acceptance of your business. Although no rule applies all the time, two elements are clear: first, knowledge of your audience enhances your ability to impart critical information about community corrections in sensitive, creative, and understandable ways; second, effective communication can move your potential or actual customer base toward a greater appreciation of the services your agency provides.

Summary

Marketing includes everything a business does that precedes the sale: defining our business; identifying our customers and researching their needs; developing a product or service line that meets those needs; agreeing on the fair exchange; negotiating price and currency; and communicating the benefits of our products or services to potential customers. Below is a diagram which illustrates this process.



Whether we are motivated by profit, social values, or simple pride, none of us wants our business to fail. Community corrections has skilled people and considerable resources. Marketing strategies are one of those resources. We should learn to use them. In doing so, we will come to understand that marketing is not a gimmick, but encompasses principles which are essential for ensuring the success of our businesses.

Footnotes

1. Peter Drucker, *Management* (New York, New York: Harper and Row, 1974), page 79.
2. Ibid., page 61.
3. Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management: analysis, planning, and control* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall 1984), page 463.
4. Devonshire Financial Corporation, "Sales Strategies Are Changing," *Sales and Marketing Digest*, May 1987, page 10.
5. Carl Aspler, *Marketing Skills for Corrections* (Ministry for Correctional Services: Ontario), page 3.
6. Kotler, op. cit., page 20
7. Ibid., page 30.
8. Ibid., page 602.
9. Ibid., page 251.
10. Ibid, page 142.

Suggested Reading List

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