

Marketing Strategies For Inmate Programs: A Succinct Review

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## Introduction

This paper will succinctly discuss marketing strategies for inmate programs. It will present ideas and concepts that can be used at the staff and line levels, and at inmate and general public levels to sell and develop constituency support for inmate programs. This paper will examine the benefits of inmate programs at the above mentioned levels and will identify some areas of constituency networking and marketing strategies.

## Benefits of Inmate Programs

Research indicates that inmates place high value on personal change as a result of their participation in various programs. Program activities develop the opportunity for inmates to gain self-respect and responsibility for their own behavior which often develops rehabilitation and resocialization within the inmate and his environment in and out of the confined setting. Research states that four out of ten education and ex-offender employment projects result in the acquisition of skills for the world of work as the primary benefit. Helping others is the main theme in one-fourth of human service programs and in one-third of those providing community service. Some inmate benefits are listed below:

1. Inmates are less likely to display disruptive behavior;
2. Tensions are reduced;

3. Reduces boredom and idleness;
4. Improves physical well-being;
5. Improves ability to function in a social group;
6. Acquisition of skills increase the inmate's sense of worth;
7. Positive effect on morale;
8. Can aid in the preparation of an inmate for his return to society: and
9. Gives inmates an opportunity to use special skills, interests and hobbies.

Some benefits of inmate programs for the staff and line are:

1. Helps control aggressive activities, and/or behaviors by inmates;
2. Helps to humanize the confinement environment and adds a personalization to the otherwise drab and hypnotic setting (long corridors, repeated doorways, etc.);
3. Provides positive activities for the inmates; and
4. Reduces liability because of reduced inmate stress and improved self-esteem; and
5. Increases communications between inmates and staff and line.

Some benefits of inmate programs for the public at large are:

1. Gives the public an opportunity to contribute their special skills;
2. Gives the public an opportunity to sponsor or become involved as a volunteer with a program; and
3. Give inmates the potential to return to society as a skilled contributor rather than as a social liability.

### Marketing Inmate Programs

Individuals (staff, line, inmates, and the general public) must be made aware of what inmate programming is all about in today's protean society. One of the main points

that must be communicated about the utilization of inmate programs is that of mutual benefits. Once this point is effectively communicated to all, the worth of supporting inmate programs becomes a non-issue.

The major question posed for this paper is, "How does one sell or market inmate programs?" The answer is simple---get word out to all through an organized-goal oriented constituency-building network system. The point should be made here that mere advertising in all probability is not going to be effective. Rather, a more effective marketing effort is mandated to insure that the selling of the inmate programs include an on-going assessment which includes internal and external factors. In marketing a program(s), there is a need to develop constituencies, for strong ties to networks of related services, and for linkage to confinement personnel, inmates, and the general public. The correctional manager whom effectively mobilizes substantial sources of support and cooperation can break down barriers between line, staff, inmates and the public at large. This is done by marketing the program(s) in other than the traditional public relations techniques. Effective marketing techniques should include the following strategies:

1. Develop an open systems climate - -the development of a mutual planning group to include inmates, personnel at all levels of the confinement environment and public sector. Also include legislative, budget and media personnel.
2. Develop programs from an aggressive approach --

the correctional manager should be proactive, initiating, sustaining, when it comes to program development and implementation. Programs should be developed as an ongoing process with internal initiative and at times other than budget preparation times.

3. Program benefits should be properly communicated -- increased communications between staff, line, inmates and the general public should be a top priority to not only present program benefits, but dispel rumors or false information.
4. Develop and implement 5 multi-faceted campaign -- this can be done by mass media in the form of press releases, radio/television appearances in talk show formats and by utilization of well designed and informative brochures, presentation to community groups, workshops and program orientations.
5. Program selection and assessment techniques -- this is an essential step because it identifies who is going to be involved in the program(s) and determines how the program will be evaluated. This could be referred to as the consumer survey.

Successful marketing of inmate program(s) depends on good planning, communications, tenacious and dedicated professionals working to develop and maintain an open system climate that fosters a network of constituency support.