

TIDY UP inside before you venture out

By **Catherine Baird**

When people think about marketing and advertising, they often associate these activities with an external focus. There's messaging and audience to think about, and then there are fun promotional activities such as contests and events. Don't get me wrong, these things are all important, and as a librarian who does this kind of work, they indeed occupy quite a bit of my time and energy.

However, one thing that I've learned after just over a year on the job is that the external-facing stuff works much better if you have solid internal communications in place.

In fact, in my eyes, that's one of the main distinctions between marketing and communications. Marketing considers external stakeholders or audiences, whereas communications is broader. It includes internal stakeholders – everyone who works at the library.

Why is this important? Consider what you would do if you were thinking of putting a house up for sale. What would you focus on first? You'd tidy up, de-clutter, streamline your belongings, slap on a bit of paint, and fix a leaky tap or two.

Before you go and buy the air freshener to spray around your library, the point I'm making is that before you advertise, before you promote, before you even can think about

air freshener ... you need to streamline your internal communications.

There are several reasons for this. Say you've done some promotion on a new series of workshops happening at the library. If people from your community show up for these workshops and no one behind the desk knows a thing about it, you're in trouble.

There's an even better solution, though, and that's just making sure that everyone who works at the library knows about the new workshops. There's an even better solution. Instead of simply knowing about the workshops, wouldn't it be great if the staff were so excited about them that they enthusiastically directed people to them, or utilized their own personal and social networks (online or otherwise) to help get the word out?

You need to be able to harness the energy of all library employees, convince them that there's a message that's worth communicating to patrons. In order to do this, you will have to do more than just circulate a calendar of events. You have to engage people. In short, you'll have to promote internally before you even think about going outside.

One way to facilitate this internal promotion is to incorporate communication planning into your day-to-day activi-

ties and projects. Communication planning for a project would involve the following:

- Crafting a short statement to describe the project or activity to be communicated
- Deciding who needs to know, either because they will have to tell other people about it, or because you want them to become an end-user
- Identifying a number of activities, such as email, blog posts, presentations to groups, launch events, or articles in a newsletter

Once you've created a communication plan a few times, you'll have an arsenal of activities for both internal and external audiences.

Getting everyone involved in marketing and communications is much like having everyone over to your house before you put it on the market. Not only are you asking them to paint, fix, patch, clean, and de-clutter, but you're also getting them excited about this great gem of a house that's about to be sold. They'll tell a couple of their friends and family members. Maybe they'll even post some pictures on Facebook. Before you know it, that house will have more than a few offers.

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