



# MARKETSHARE Through MINDSHARE™

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## Debunking the Not-For-Profit Myth

*Observations by Donna Drake-Dunninger*

### **True or False? Marketing Not-For-Profit Organizations is Vastly Different From Marketing For-Profit Enterprises.**

The answer is **FALSE**. The same strategic marketing principles and tactics apply to virtually all organizations, including not-for-profits. These basics apply across the board:

#### **1 HAVE A GOAL**

Be clear on why you are making this marketing effort. Everyone in the organization needs to focus on the same anticipated outcomes. For example, if the goal is to achieve funding for a special project it should be made clear to all.

#### **2 DEFINE YOUR POSITION**

A carefully defined position needs to be established and coupled with the organization's goals. Accurate positioning is a prerequisite to success. The NFP should be looked at as a business stripped of, at least for a moment, the altruistic aspects of the organization. Your positioning has to be sustainable and must use real world marketing initiatives to maintain it.

#### **3 DEVISE A STRATEGIC PLAN**

A strategic planning process needs to be established before anything else. Without a plan there will be the inevitable spinning of wheels. You need to be "buy-in." This means the board members, stakeholders, and all others should commit to the strategic marketing process, goals, plans and programs.

#### **4 GATHER INFORMATION**

There needs to be a solid base of information to support your planning and decisions. If necessary, research should be conducted to obtain data. Even informal, low-cost research can be very enlightening. After all, it's a competitive landscape and other NFPs are competing for the same funds and growth that you are.



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**5 DEFINE METRICS**

There should be clearly defined metrics. Don't waste time and money by moving ahead with business development efforts without knowing the spokes that make up the wheel. Perhaps it goes without saying that all organizations, especially NFPs, need to be as cost-effective as possible in their business development efforts.

**6 LOOK INWARD AND OUTWARD**

Be sure that internal and external resources are used efficiently. Maximize internal talents in preparation for a smooth relationship when seeking help from outside marketers. If someone on staff has some basic writing ability let them write the outline of the message. Then ask the professionals to pick it up from there.

**7 DELIVER THE MESSAGE**

Meaningful messaging is a must. Have an overall campaign or marketing theme that will connect with your audiences — that's right, audiences . . . internal and external. Every organization has multiple audiences. Be sure to consider staff as an audience; they may be the best group to help disseminate your message. The message is the single most important part of a NFP's marketing mix.

**8 TEST YOUR MESSAGE**

Being creative does not necessarily mean being overly clever. Test your message to make sure it's not missing the mark. Remember, you are branding your NFP so you need to communicate your message clearly.

**9 APPROPRIATE FINANCIAL COMMITMENT**

Realize how much money you should spend in order to effectively raise money for your NFP. Invest in market research and quality decision-making, and demand outstanding implementation of all your efforts.

**10 CAUTION**

Early program success can breed over-confidence. Don't get lulled into thinking you don't have to continue to monitor progress. Remain "hungry" for strong program results over time.

**11 STAY THE COURSE**

Don't have a "putting out brush fires" mentality that causes you to react separately to each issue that may arise. Stick with your strategic plan and think long-term. Take corrective steps when things are clearly going in the wrong direction and make program adjustments when needed.

**12 ALL IMPORTANT**

Establishing or reinforcing a brand is often the primary goal of company marketing programs. It certainly should always be a top-of-mind consideration . . . even for a NFP.

▶ *Donna Drake-Dunninger, Director of Client Communications at Progressive Marketing Group, Inc. is an authority on marketing strategies and tactics for not-for-profit organizations.*



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