

Find the Creative 'Hook' to Market Your Facility

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It is not one marketing effort, but many different marketing activities, that will bring your facility the attention you desire. The goal for everything you try should be to make sure each of your marketing efforts includes a creative "hook."

Anyone can send a press release, but finding a unique "hook" will increase the odds not only that the editor will run your release, but also that the publication's readers will read it. Creative hooks can be useful information, a heart-warming feature angle or an unusual news story, just to name a few.

Your display ads need a hook, too. It might be a very special coupon or offer, or a promotion of all the special features of your facility that would entice moms.

Your direct-marketing efforts also benefit from creative hooks - unique or special allurements, focused and targeted offers, special events and anything out of the ordinary that will draw attention to your mailings. Getting your mail to the right audience with the right creative hook will increase your odds of direct-marketing success.

Your Web site will also require one or more creative hooks to draw people in and keep them coming back. These marketing elements could include offering your Web audience useful information, fun games and activities for kids, and helpful services, along with the essential items your site requires.

You can be on the lookout for creative marketing hooks throughout your marketing efforts, such as creating a tagline for your facility that you can use on your business cards, letterhead, Web pages, direct marketing and advertising. Your tagline can be a short, clever, catchy, descriptive line of copy that defines your facility's experience for those who are mostly unfamiliar with it, and reinforces it for those who already know you.

To create a creative hook for your center, why not offer a free admission pass when anyone purchases a new pair of skates from your pro shop - plus, offer to donate \$1 to a worthy cause. You could contact your local children's hospital or social service and let them know that you want to work with them, what it is you want to do and that you want to promote it to your local media. You could then distribute press releases about your charitable effort, also providing details about the hospital or organization and its good works. You could even ask to use the organization's media list for the distribution of your press releases. Now you have created your hook, and it is tenfold more interesting - and more likely to receive coverage and attention - than a general press release about your skating center.

Don't ignore one of the most affordable and freshest sources of marketing ideas: children, or the child within. A client recently told me that he was looking for a creative name for his business, and he asked his young son what he might call it. He said his son came up with something that was volumes more fun, interesting and memorable than his own ideas. Why do we sometimes lack the unbounded creative thinking of our children or of our former childhood?

We have been programmed since our youth by our schools, by former employers and even by our own peers to be cautious about our ideas and thinking. Thinking creatively can be much like salmon trying to swim upstream. Our thinking has become conservative, uptight and reserved. But dramatic successes often require dramatic planning and risk taking.

Unleash your creativity in your marketing planning and look for the unique and thoughtful "hooks" that will interest the media and entice your customers.

Susan Snyder-Davis is the owner of Kids Marketing Factory (www.kidsmarketingfactory.com).

Recommended Reading

- o What's the Big Idea? Creating and Capitalizing on the Best New Management Thinking (Davenport, Prusak, Wilson)
- o Creativity Inc.: Building an Inventive Organization (Mauzy, Harriman)
- o Creativity at Work (DeGraff, Lawrence)
- o Jump Start Your Brain, (Hall)
- o Ideaship: How to Get Ideas Flowing in Your Workplace (Foster, Corby)
- o Aha! 10 Ways to Free Your Creative Spirit and Find Your Great Ideas (Ayan)
- o How to Get Ideas (Foster)
- o Why Didn't I Think of That? Think the Unthinkable and Achieve Creative Greatness (McCoy)
- o Thinkertoys (A Handbook of Business Creativity), (Michalko)
- o Thunderbolt Thinking: A How-to Guide for Strategic Innovators, Revised Edition (McGartland)
- o Thinking Out of the Box: How to Market Your Company Into the Future (Yohalem)
- o Five Star Mind: Games and Puzzles to Stimulate Your Creativity & Imagination (Wujec)
- o Collaborative Creativity: Unleashing the Power of Shared Thinking (Ricchiuto)