



Libraries Matter: Communicating the Value of Library Services

There's never been a more critical time for libraries to get smart at identifying and communicating the value of their services.

Simplistic assumptions about what libraries do and who libraries are for, often shared by those who most influence library funding and investment, undervalue what library services deliver - every day.

The reason is not that libraries are failing to deliver that value. In some cases libraries are just too unassertive about themselves, but in most instances simply not rigorous enough in identifying, analysing and articulating their value - specifically, consistently, relentlessly.

Sometimes we are too close to what we do and don't take time to reflect on how the things we do routinely every day (like organising story times or guiding people through the internet) are amazingly diverse and often astonishing to people who don't know - and to the people who most need to know.

Now the Libraries Agency has launched a structured, facilitated methodology for creating a communications strategy to identify and communicate library value to a variety of audiences, providing every library service with an effective advocacy discipline.

Libraries Matter: Analysing Library Value

A one day workshop, working with members of the management team or a wider cross-section of service champions, getting down to basics:

What really are your core products and services?

How do we move away from broad categories such as 'books' and 'information' to really understand the value and uniqueness of what we do?

How does that value change for different audiences?

Can we describe our performance in qualitative as well as quantitative terms, and in the most persuasive way?

When we add all our services together, who benefits, and who most needs to know?

Who are our key influential audiences and how can we organise them into manageable target groups?

The outcome is a thorough understanding of what needs to be done to create an effective in-house communications strategy to reach peer groups, internal audiences, partners and potential allies. You might then want to move on to getting it done with the help of a second workshop that develops the methodology into a working model.

Libraries Matter: Implementing a Communications Strategy

The analysis workshop will come up with a lot of information, and some requirements to find out a bit more. All that information will make sense - to us. Now we need to build on existing communication channels and processes to get the right messages to the right audiences in the most effective way. And we need to set up a process for capturing news and frontline information to feed into the communications activity.

In the second workshop we explore the ABCDE model for effective communications, which will help us decide the best way to reach target audiences with the right message through the most appropriate and effective channels.

A is for **Audience**: know who to hit, when and with what.

B is for **Behaviour**: there is no point in sending anyone information just to impress them - we expect them to behave in a particular way in response to our message.

C is for **Content**: keeping it simple and to the point, and relevant to the recipient.

D is for **Design**: there's more than one way to reach the hearts and budget spreadsheets of your audience - emails can work, press releases can work, but face to face works effectively too.

E is for **Execution**: that's not just getting the message out, it's being able to respond effectively to its impact, to follow it up, to deliver whatever you may have promised. And **E** must also stand for **Evaluation** - because if it hasn't worked you have to do it again, differently.

Libraries Matter Workshops

They're practical and hands-on, detailed, exhaustive. But necessary - everyone needs to know the true value of your services (including you). And you need to begin now.

For further information and a general discussion contact
David Lindley on 01788 822975 or email info@librariesagency.com

www.librariesagency.com