

Marketing in the Public Sector

1. Introduction to Marketing in the Public Sector

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Marketing is a core management function in most organizations, designed to help achieve organizational goals and objectives through integrated approaches to product and service planning, pricing, promotion, and distribution. Within the public sector, marketing is as important as elsewhere in publicizing public services and engaging with clients and stakeholders, and public sector marketing may increasingly become necessary as government takes a more enabling or facilitating approach. Deficiencies in marketing capability in the public sector were identified as a major constraint to the effective take-up of the best value initiative. The importance of marketing in the public sector, for a public purpose rather than to create profits, means that it may require nuanced or different strategies compared to those adopted in the private sector.

This section introduces the concept of marketing but is not a primer on marketing per se. We will, however, outline a few of the leaders because it is necessary to illustrate the diversity of approaches to marketing in the public sector in general, and social marketing in particular. Before examining the scope of these management approaches, it is first necessary to examine in greater depth the motivations for marketing in public organizations. Most approaches to marketing stress the importance of identifying the desires and needs of specific groups of stakeholders. In the private sector, this is primarily done to sell products or services in order to create a profit, and our conception of marketing reflects on how the skills of private marketers might be used for a public outcome, in other words to 'sell our public products'. Success for many market orientation initiatives relies upon ensuring that all stakeholders are involved in whatever process is being redesigned. This is one of the knowledge, skills, and understanding to be covered by marketing training.

2. Fundamentals of Marketing in Public Organizations

When exploring the application of marketing to public organizations, the fundamental question is: how can marketing convince community members to get involved with their local government? If government organizations are to offer services that are relevant to those that the government serves, it must do marketing. A marketing function assures that the services and outputs of the government are aligned to the real and perceived needs and wants of the citizens who live and work in our communities. Marketing makes sure public organizations understand the behavior of their customers in order to enhance customer satisfaction and trust. To discuss marketing in public service, we start with some of the key concepts of marketing found in the private sector and provide public sector applications for these concepts.

The marketing concept of the four P's has even been called the "managerial eureka" for public and non-profit managers to create a better match of services and the citizenry of public organizations. It emphasizes the two-way communication between the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Similar to new and more neighborhood-based organizations and local government public engagement activities, relationship marketing is making the resurgence of marketing concepts that not long ago seemed the exclusive domain of for-profit marketing. Rather than focus on transactions, relationship marketing involves a series of activities and making choices about tactics that extend beyond the transaction. An emphasis on relationship marketing is a nice fit with marketing for transparency and public engagement.

3. Strategic Planning and Marketing Objectives in Public Sector Marketing

Marketing in the Public Sector: A Strategic Plan and Marketing Objectives in Public Sector Marketing

Public sector marketing is dynamic in nature, and as such, it requires strategic planning for a framework for marketing. It is important to gain an understanding of the steps and trends that will impact the objectives that are developed. Objectives are related to what the organization needs, and after undertaking the situation analysis, stakeholders can provide input concerning the changes they believe need

to occur and the direction the organization should take. Marketing objectives need to be developed to ensure that they are aligned with the organization's overall mission and vision, and the strategic planning as a framework for marketing reflects all elements included in the philosophy.

Following the mission and vision development, objectives are then stated. These objectives utilize a SWOT analysis, including the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and the opportunities and threats facing marketing to the public and the political marketing environment. Strategic planning leads to support from staff, the community, and elected officials in implementing these strategies, and their inputs are sought to understand the values of the municipality and the various strategies that are being considered. The public sector organizations from which this data is drawn are represented to ease their situation by identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are crucial to improving marketing planning and evaluating strategies in the future. Consequently, this situational data has been used in formulating the marketing plans and marketing objectives to assist organizations and local governments in ensuring that the public is informed, educated, and involved.

3.1. Mission and Vision Alignment

The purpose of this article is to examine the role that marketing has come to play in public sector organizations. Over the past two decades, it has become increasingly common for public sector entities of all shapes and sizes to pursue marketing objectives. In this subsection, we will begin by demonstrating what utilizing a strategic statement provides for an organization. Furthermore, we argue why a marketing strategy should be linked to the larger mission of the organization. Finally, we will make a series of observations about best practices as well as identify potential challenges that public managers and their partners in private sector contracting may face in translating marketing into mission-related activity.

Strategy (or Positioning) Statement: By shaping the perception of the institution, marketing contributes to the public sector organization's role or responsibility in addressing and delivering on their more traditional mission while increasing the value of the enterprise, vis-à-vis competition. The Marketing Dilemma: The question is why should two educational organizations maintain the same public services as well as the same operational systems, and yet develop their own unique marketing

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strategies? In order to maximize the human and financial resources of the system, that is, to act efficiently, they would want to ensure that the values, priorities, and objectives promulgated through their marketing programs are congruent with that of the university. This should simultaneously attract resources as it builds community trust, confidence, and patronage, and help to guide the activities of the institution to better meet its members' needs. Best Practices: Given the positive effects that strong mission-information inheritance and related marketing may have, there are best practices that a central human resource unit can disseminate. Challenges: The discussion of mission and marketing involves the "cross pressure of contradictory stakeholder influence." This refers to the conflicting pressures that can be felt by colleges and universities when they engage in marketing activities. Market yourself to one stakeholder, and you may alienate another. In short, positioning decisions are made complex by the fact that higher education institutions serve a number of masters (and often competing loyalties). This becomes particularly complex given that the institution's mission area and its target audience are constantly changing. This discussion of potentially competing masters and interests can be extended to communities, hospitals, fire districts, courts, jails, and just about any public service where a voting or tax-paying public may influence operations and success.

In this section, we directly address what the mission of the organization is and why that is important to those that desire and/or deserve the services provided. Marketing is a conscious activity undertaken for the purpose of turning some positive features of the "seller" into meaningful benefits to a customer or "buyer." It is grounded in four principles or concepts: It is focused on developing a teaching and learning (formal and informal) product that meets both the perceived and actual needs and wants of consumer-students, as well as an academic research and service (instructional, public, and community) product. It is based on interacting with, getting to know, and communicating with potential and current consumer-students in order to build mutually positive relationships. It is built around substantial recovery of the costs of developing, delivering, building, and communicating about programs by generating ample revenue from "consumers."

3.2. SWOT Analysis in Public Sector Marketing

SWOT analysis is a well-known strategic tool used in marketing. The term SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and

weaknesses refer to the internal environment of the organization, while opportunities and threats reflect the external environment. For public organizations to be effective in their marketing efforts, it is important to gain an understanding of what they do well and where there are opportunities for improvement. SWOT analysis, when used effectively, enables public sector organizations to develop targeted marketing promotions.

What the SWOT study reveals helps to formulate the marketing plan. The purpose of this document is to help marketers at all levels in the public sector create practical action steps in the preferred marketing strategy. A comprehensive list of strengths and weaknesses is important in public sector marketing because these internal features will determine the success of the marketing mix. The strength of the agency lies in the sales force, the advertising, the reputation, the pricing, the internal support for promotions, and so on. A complete discussion on the opportunities and threats is important because these aspects of demand will influence the problems of public sector marketing. An opportunity can be discovered when community leaders urge the agency to pursue it, when the authority already has a leader, when it is affordable, etc.

4. Market Research and Analysis in Public Sector Marketing

Market research is crucial for the development of marketing strategies because it is through this process that marketing staff are able to understand the needs, preferences, behaviors, and influences of their target audiences, and to develop the most appropriate and efficient ways to respond to these. In the public sector, research is often the starting point of any marketing-initiated project because understanding the reasons why people behave the way they do, or whether they would be open to new products or services, is essential to the development of a project or program that will be truly useful to the community. There are a number of methods that can be used to study the needs, behavior, and attitudes of clients. Some of these are quantitative techniques, while others are more qualitative approaches. Qualitative studies often involve smaller populations and are used to develop ideas and to seek an in-depth understanding of people's feelings and behavior. Quantitative studies often involve the collection of larger data sets and are used to provide data that is broadly representative of an entire group or community.

Government departments and agencies, as well as non-profit organizations such as charities and voluntary associations, also use various forms of research to help them understand the attitudes, preferences, and service requirements of individuals and groups. These organizations seek to achieve better support and understanding of the people who use their services or who are affected by their activities. In the public sector, research often involves the collection of what are known as 'secondary' as well as 'primary' data. Secondary data is information that is already available and does not cost extra to obtain, such as data produced by other government departments and agencies, council documents, social surveys, or relevant journal and newspaper articles. Secondary data can be a useful initial source of information on clients and communities. Primary data is gathered specifically to answer a new question or a specific problem. As a market researcher, you start developing your own information by talking, phoning, or mailing people to ask them questions and then use what they say to improve your understanding. Market research has created many benefits for the public sector, including improvements in the delivery of services and the management of projects, and increases in public participation in many different areas. For example, in the area of roads and transport, research revealed poor public awareness of the impact of road accidents, and it was increased by 14 percent within 12 months, following a marketing campaign that used the research data to identify target areas and messages. Equally, a discussion guide and interviews were developed to gather key opinions, attitudes, and expectations of tourism from residents of selected communities. When the area tourism partnership looked to develop a Regional Destination Model – a tool that uses a consumer approach to position the destination as a whole – they used the findings from the research to structure their marketing plan. Overall, the research was used to guide how marketing funds would be allocated so they could maximize results in areas identified as having the most potential. Traffic to the website increased significantly, and holiday visits were up from the previous year. In the following year, there were millions of holiday visits earning substantial income.

5. Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning in the Public Sector

One of the tools from traditional or conventional marketing that is frequently used and applied in the field of public sector marketing is market segmentation, targeting,

and positioning. This tool is proven to be very beneficial for those public organizations charged with delivering a high number of products and services that are socially shared, and the organizations are under social pressure to perform effectively. Market segmentation can help public organizations identify the diversity of people in their area or community or among their stakeholders. The processes of segmentation can divide the general mass into distinct subsets, which can be similar-based or different-based. Targeting is about directing or allocating a resource or effort toward a chosen or specific segment. In marketing, it means directing or allocating the effort as well as the products or services to the segment that will be more easily profitable. Targeting the right market will optimize the resources in terms of time, effort, and money. Finally, positioning is about creating a place in the minds of the target market for the services or products one sells.

One or more segments can be selected, although the organization needs to position itself in relation to other similar public organizations against the same or similar target market. Segmentation will usually identify many different segments. However, given the practical resource implications of a public organization serving a diverse community, it is not feasible to target each individual segment. Since the aim of segmentation is to identify differentiated markets, each characterized by its own features, which could affect the behavior of each segment, the need to target part or parts of the segmented market follows directly from the segmentation process. A key to successful marketing is to target the 'right' segment(s). This will determine the extent and types of marketing strategies to be employed. Public services marketing has to be holistic in addressing the entire entity, including the physical evidence of the services, the people or employees, and the communication. Public services can follow private sector trends in using symbols as the brand name to develop and construct the image of the services in the minds of the public. A systematic and structured process of public sector marketing will, however, direct the thrust of the organization towards the perception of the public, the client, or the user.

6. Branding and Image Building in Public Organizations

It's your new brand: A guide to branding and image building for public services offers a window into the power of branding in public sectors around the world. It is a collection of over two dozen case studies from public, non-profit, and public-

private partnership organizations in various nations, all representing the very best of government effort to make a difference in their communities.

These organizations recognize the importance of branding as a critical step in a comprehensive communication strategy, including a way of creating extra value and responsiveness to their constituents, as well as a way of achieving external support for internal delivery. Further, they see branding in the public sector as different from the private sector, with values, service, and connection at the core of branding efforts. This view reflects the emerging role of financing as just one factor in community success, the need for governments to better serve citizens with more and better information that enables more and more citizens to make better and better choices, and the need for governments to speak the “language of the community.” This is a language that is centered on service, values, connection, and on a view of public service characterized by commitment and improvement. Branding is at the heart of this way of doing business, creating a way to reach people at a “values” level and connect at a deep, emotional level in ways that just aren't possible through information alone. It is a complex task, but the reward is strong ties between the organization and its constituents that are the ultimate guarantor of success.

7. Product and Service Marketing in the Public Sector

When considering the marketing of public sector services, we should briefly discuss the public sector's products and services. To some, the suggestion of marketing products and services offered by public sector organizations will come as a surprise; the marketing concept states that customer value can be identified, communicated, and supplied, so the application to the public sector is relatively straightforward as long as there are customers. Marketers should be particularly good at understanding the wants and needs of their target markets. Although cost is the traditional component of the marketing mix that the public raises as the basis for judging public sector performance, what is offered, when, how quality of customer satisfaction is, and how different approaches affect members of the community?

Attempting to separate the marketing of products from services does not do justice to their inseparability. A service is more accurately equated with an experience because a service is an intangible product. From the customer's standpoint, service quality equals the quality of the experience. Just as the quality of the goods is the

customer's view of the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy a given need, service quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy a given need for the customer. Quality encompasses what is done and how it is done. There is an overwhelming amount of services offered that would never be considered products - especially where 'service' plus 'customer' equals 'community' - even though their tangible results may be transferred to the customer. Consequently, the marketing logic of 'services' guides us to marketing strategies for the public sector.

8. Pricing Strategies for Public Services

Pricing in the public sector is different from pricing in the private sector. In the private sector, pricing is often determined by a profit motive, based on market demand and changes in production costs, which cause prices to rise or fall. Pricing is generally determined by the level of costs plus a certain rate of profit, which is determined by the level of risk perceived by the organization and the prevailing interest rates in the financial markets. Social concerns are generally only one of a number of factors in pricing strategies and can often be relegated to the background with few consequences.

Many services provided by the state are funded from general taxation and are free to the citizen. However, this is only one possible public sector pricing model, and many other situations exist where public services are priced. There are broadly four different types of pricing strategies that can be applied in public sector organizations: Free services can be provided where there is widespread agreement that access for everyone is to be encouraged. Subsidized pricing, where particular user prices are charged, but the level is set at less than full direct or indirect costs to facilitate greater use of the services. Subsidization pricing, where full 'retail' prices are charged to users, but there is provision of 'backdoor' subsidies from funds which come from more general sources of revenue. Cost recovery pricing, with the provision of selected 'retail' prices and often a 'cost sharing' philosophy where it is the users of services rather than the providers who determine the nature of the provision. Full cost pricing is probably the simplest system, but by no means the only means of pricing in what can be a complex and sometimes controversial choice of pricing strategy. However, cost-based pricing systems do facilitate simplicity and certainly transparency in pricing.

The setting of prices in the public sector, where the provider is often the same person as the regulator, citizen, and taxpayer, can often be a particularly sensitive and controversial matter. There are often undertones of dishonesty and inappropriate actions by 'greedy' public servants who are not seen or trusted as honest brokers. This chapter first examines a number of theories by which understanding of pricing can be developed and evaluated as a starting point to examining issues such as equity and pricing. The major concern in the chapter is with the perceptions of fairness and trust in the system rather than the more objective technical implications. How to determine and argue a pricing policy in a public organization is addressed.

Promotion and Communication Strategies in Public Sector Marketing

Keywords: Communication, Promotion, Stakeholder, Newsletter, Media, Social, Tool, Marketing Objectives, Channel

This section will focus on the development of communication and promotional strategies within the public sector to encourage public engagement. Communication is an essential part of relationship management and is used to create and manage relationships between the agency and different stakeholders. Providing professional, reliable customer service to citizens and customers is a key aspect of meeting marketing objectives and increasing the efficient delivery of public services.

There are a number of communication channels and tools available to government to engage with the public. They include but are not limited to newsletters, websites, social media, email and publication promotion, print and electronic media, community events, conferences, telephone and direct mail marketing. The communication strategy must address the fact that in some communities and groups traditional channels such as newspapers do not reach their members, due to both cost and interest, and therefore alternative communication methods may be necessary to reach these groups.

In every instance, the message communicated should be tailored to the audience in order to ensure that it is communicated in a way that will be best understood and received. This can involve developing more than one version of a message or promotion. This is important as different groups in a community may have different

positive and negative perceptions of a proposal. Essentially, changing the language to suit the audience will usually allow you to effectively and positively represent the message. There are numerous promotional channels and tools available that can be used. The choice of communication tool will depend on the size and resources of the agency and its particular communication objectives and stakeholders. Evaluation of communication tools for marginal votes in relation to the marginality of the issue or proposal is important. Unfortunately, one of the more effective but time-consuming methods of communicating at a personal level is one-on-one communication. Feedback also provides an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of your communication strategy and to adjust that strategy in response. Moreover, feedback can provide information for further research.

9.1. Digital Marketing Trends in the Public Sector

Digital marketing is gaining momentum in the public sector for several reasons. Digital tools have revolutionized the way public organizations manage communications and engagement with their constituents. A digital strategy can extend the reach of an individual agency, launch a positive campaign to encourage community participation, and showcase the success of the local government. Modern public sector organizations invest heavily in web properties, social media, and mobile applications to ensure their constituents are involved, informed, and engaged in the governments that serve them.

While public sector marketing is not a new phenomenon, it has often been approached in two-dimensional forms such as print materials and ad space. Designing and distributing these materials does not guarantee the desired penetration. These dollars could more effectively be spent in the digital space where they can be fine-tuned to reach the target market. The advent of location-based social networking and the mountain of data collection possessed by search engine companies have greatly increased the reach and the effectiveness of public sector organizations. In the digital era, marketing to the public sector is quickly becoming the norm. Every municipality, business improvement district, parks and recreation team, local public schools, and the police department use social media, websites, and video to communicate and engage with the public. All told, there were many individual governmental organizations with assigned Twitter profiles, up from a mere few when the service was debuted. Success was measured by increased community participation, increased visibility and public relations, improved overall

perception of the agency, and ultimately, campaign goals were met. Public sector digital marketing is a unique combination of public relations, social media strategy, and political press blast. There are many principles to follow, but an equal amount of lessons to learn. Every campaign is funded with public dollars, calls for public participation, and is the first stop online for a variety of rebutting—and interesting—opinions. Additionally, some technical challenges arise between the old-form branded communications and the personal digital efforts, namely the rate of technological change alongside a larger volume of threats to the organization including viruses, hacking, and the potential leveraging of customer data. Although technology can provide substantial benefits, it also introduces vulnerabilities and risks. Local Government CIOs must provide a secure, user-friendly online experience to citizens, employees, and partners. As the nature of communication evolves and diversifies, there is an increasing need to improve monitoring, tracking, and benchmarking of how efforts are affecting the agency as a public institution. A more effective data management analysis system not only improves communications but proves that the agency is inclining based on best practice strategy and is acting transparently and professionally. It is best to pair digital marketing efforts with measuring effectiveness. Tracking certain metrics can reveal a great deal about an audience, the social media sites they prefer, and the reactions to content published. Modular releasing of content can guide new and proven social media strategic development. However, mere tracking of metrics is not enough. The most positive and proactive marketing campaigns create hard news content that is in enough quantity to meet a monthly, or at least quarterly, publishing calendar.

10. Public Relations and Stakeholder Engagement in Public Sector Marketing

Building stakeholder relationships is integral to public sector communications and supporting the marketing of services. The public sector often encompasses a broad range of stakeholders, including citizens who use services, family and friends, community leaders, neighborhood groups, and other organizations. A key function of public relations is to build and maintain positive relationships with these stakeholders through effective two-way communication and genuine dialogue. Stakeholder relations need to be built on the foundation of trust, which in turn is based on the values of honesty, openness, and transparency. In addressing the needs and concerns of communities, professionals can help to shape policy.

As part of integrated planning, public involvement and the media play crucial interrelated roles, but it is worth remembering that a very active role in public relations can be the only one changed in moments of crisis if the media starts an investigation on behavior and public engagement. Managing a crisis in the public sector in many cases can expose weaknesses, and an uncoordinated and unprepared response can at least provide ammunition for criticism and, at worst, irreparable reputational damage. Trust is key to effective communication, and reputation is our insurance policy when things go wrong. Trust will also hold a brand in good stead, increase demand for new and existing products and services, increase resident confidence, and community wealth. Undertaking public relations in an inclusive and open way is vital for public sector organizations and services. This chapter is about ensuring public involvement and readdressing the balance in relationships between local people and public services that ultimately have to respond and help address community needs and their agenda. We look at a number of illustrative case studies on the theme of inclusion.

11. Ethical Considerations in Public Sector Marketing

Ethical Considerations in Public Sector Marketing

Marketing is concerned with satisfying the needs and wants of the public through the provision of goods and services. Marketing, when used in public sector organizations, can enhance a community's overall quality of life. Today, it is equally as important, if not more so, to sell ideas which may perhaps have a less tangible result, such as attitude change, than a tangible one such as increasing a person's knowledge in a certain field. The marketing of services has its own unique and challenging areas as one needs to respond to the needs of the public, and this needs to be done responsibly to avoid any conflict of interest.

A number of ethical considerations come into play when discussing public sector marketing. Examples of public sector marketing constituents include not only internal stakeholders but also external stakeholders, which may include low-income earners, pensioners, dependent recipients, trade unions, employer groups, regional, community and special interest groups, parliamentary bodies, private companies, and individuals. The decision-making in this field needs to be done at arm's length and with a considerable amount of ethical input to ensure it is the public interest

that is paramount and not the servicing of self-interest in promoting goods and services to ensure the enhancement of delivery of such services.

The ethical dilemmas faced are a combination and a fine balancing act between providing the services, informing the client, and keeping the public informed with the marketing of services or ideas, while managing possible conflicts of interest that may exist. At all times, messaging should be designed to bring awareness to the community's needs, societal change, legal obligations, and organizational intent. The rules and ethical considerations mediating the advertisement of goods and services versus the message and intent behind well-thought-out campaigns should be designed to reduce social ills and improve the community's overall health and well-being. High ethical standards will result in marketing that is not likely to mislead where values and systems support a transparent and accountable agency.

12. Measuring and Evaluating Marketing Performance in the Public Sector

To understand if marketing is working in public sector organizations and maximize their effectiveness, it is necessary to measure and evaluate performance against the objectives. Metrics are the measurable components of an objective that, when tracked over time, give an indication of actual performance. The tools available for evaluating performance can range from econometric models assessing the revenue generation resulting from a campaign to simple text analysis of a press release. The critical question is, are measured results achieving quantified benchmarks – key performance indicators (KPIs) – which are used to signal success? This can indicate where funds should continue to be allocated and will provide insights to improve future efforts to the extent that they can also identify links between measured results and objectives. These indicators – the what – are coupled with methods that indicate how success could be achieved. The tools used for evaluation in the public sector can sometimes import evaluation tools from the private sector; however, there are some fundamental differences in evaluating marketing in the public sector, including resource limitations and often multiple stakeholders seeking different benefits from the ongoing public service offerings. However, effective evaluation practices can also specifically address marketing, provide better investment and accountability benefits, and lead to more effective allocation of resources as well as

ensuring that the public voice is better heard. Some public sector organizations have recognized the importance of these indications and have initiated evaluation efforts.

13. Case Studies and Best Practices in Public Sector Marketing

Case Studies and Best Practices in Public Sector Marketing

The following section offers an extensive range of interesting examples of how public sector organizations are engaged in marketing and promoting their services. We encourage you to look through these pages, which are organized, to the extent possible, by type of marketing focus: engineering, health, non-profit, partnership, tourism, and general community marketing. See how others have utilized marketing strategies and tactics throughout the world. Some key lessons learned from these case studies are: innovation in marketing can range from basic changes in product delivery or structure to complete image campaigns that establish importance and brand equity.

Many case studies show that a consumer/community-focused marketing strategy can help an agency adapt to changes in the social and economic environment. Public sector marketing initiatives range in scope, size, and resources. Some marketing in the public sector can be undertaken by one person; in the health service sector, there are many marketing and public relations personnel. The ability to build coalitions and partnerships across sectors has proven to be an invaluable tool for advancing marketing's success. Some case studies are helpful for real-world applications of community collaboration and marketing practices in health and general community development. In these studies, there are a few themes that could be broadly applied to other sectors as well. The hospitals highlight the value of hiring a marketing specialist who understands the unique dynamics of a public health care environment. Throughout the reports, the value of real, meaningful partnerships is stressed, focusing on delivering quality to the client rather than on competition. In terms of best practices, there is a model of how to assess community attitudes and priorities on critical issues.

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