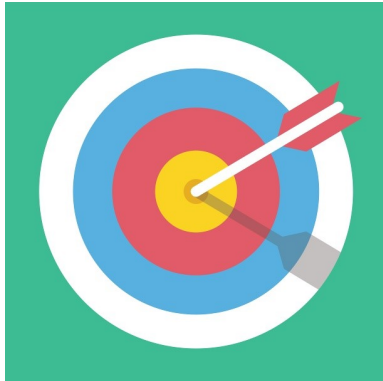


**June 2016**

# Our Voice



## Marketing Your Literacy Agency

### Introduction

Welcome to Community Literacy of Ontario's **MARKETING** newsletter. In this newsletter, we share tools, ideas and resources to support the marketing, communication and outreach efforts of Ontario's literacy agencies.

As literacy educators, we strive to help our communities to understand and support our programs and services, as well as to attract learners, volunteers, partners, funders and donors to the services that we provide. Marketing is crucial to our success!

However, marketing can often be difficult. We are doing great work, and we are involved in an important cause, so why isn't marketing an easy sell?

There are various reasons for this. Firstly, it's a noisy world! People are bombarded with ideas and information on a daily basis. It's hard to stand out or to even get your message heard. Secondly, literacy can be a difficult sell. Literacy has all too often been a hidden, or negative topic, with a stigma associated with it. Thirdly, non-profit organizations can sometimes lack marketing skills and may have a difficult time effectively showcasing who they are and the important work that they do. Sometimes, non-profits bombard people with too much information, rather than communicating in succinct, impactful ways.

While we certainly cannot cover every aspect of good marketing in only one newsletter, we will share practical information to help you market your literacy organization in our noisy world. Because an extensive amount of information is already available on this topic on the internet, we are taking this opportunity to focus on best practices and ideas from Ontario's community-based literacy agencies. You know, those organizations who share the same challenges as you do: limited funding and staff capacity, limited resources for marketing, and huge, important missions!

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## So, Exactly What Is Marketing?

Marketing is fundamentally about communicating the value of your services to the people you are seeking to reach. Sometimes we equate marketing to selling something, like a product, but it's about much more than that. Marketing can be used to promote an event or a service. Marketing can also be used to recruit students, volunteers, supporters and donors. Marketing also lets the community at large know what your organization is about and what it achieves.

Marketing can include traditional methods of communication such as word-of-mouth promotion, creating flyers and brochures, attending community events, hosting fundraisers and engaging the media (TV, radio, newspaper). Or, it can involve using new media strategies such as social media, video, online networking, and more.

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## Market the Benefits

Literacy can be a difficult "sell". Professional marketers advise clients not to sell the product, but rather to solve their customers' problems. We can look at marketing literacy programs the same way; and talk about literacy not as a product, but as a solution. **The benefits we offer are the solution we should be marketing.** For example, rather than trying to promote an upgrading class, we should highlight the learners' achievements and the outcomes that will be the result, because the class itself isn't the benefit – the skills and the learning are.

When developing marketing materials, a good way to determine what to write is to ask yourself, "**So what?**" Answering that question can help you state the benefits in a clear way. For example, when marketing your literacy program to a community partner, rather than simply saying, "*We can help your clients upgrade their skills*", go on to answer the question, "So what?" Then specify that, "*We can help your clients update their skills, which means that they will be more likely to find entry level employment in the next six months.*"

The more we speak about the benefits to our clients and our communities, and the positive outcomes from our programs, the more clear and powerful our marketing material will be.

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## Setting the Stage for Marketing

We know that YOU know who you are! You are an amazing literacy agency that does remarkable work in your community. You have an important cause, mission and values. BUT have you found a way to describe who you are and what you do in a way that is compelling and easy to understand for others?

To help you develop better marketing materials and strategies, here are some key questions to ask:

- What are your marketing **goals**? (What are you hoping to achieve through marketing?)
- What unique **products, values and strengths** does your organization have?
- Think about your **target audience(s)** for your marketing materials. Divide them into primary and secondary audiences (clients, volunteers, community stakeholders, donors, funders, etc.).
- What marketing **materials, messages and strategies** are likely to best reach your various target audience(s)?
- When people think about your organization, what **immediate thoughts** likely come to mind?
- Is this the **image** you are seeking to project? If not, what can you do to improve your image?

## Slogans

Community Literacy of Ontario researched some of our members’ slogans and mission statements, since they can be a great way to tell the world who you are and set the stage for marketing.

A good slogan helps people to quickly understand and remember what your organization does. A slogan can be an excellent marketing tool that helps to promote your image or “brand”. For inspiration, we gathered a few sample slogans from community-based literacy organizations in Ontario.

**“Adult literacy, one-on-one”**

*People, Words & Change, Ottawa*

**“An Open Door to Literacy for Work, Home and Life”**

*The Literacy Council of Burlington*

**“Bringing Learning to Life!”**

*Barrie Literacy Council*

**“Build Your Skills, Shape Your Future”**

*Kingston Literacy & Skills*

**“Discover Your Potential”**

*Brant Skills Centre*

**“Learning for a Better Future”**

*Training & Learning Centre of Renfrew County*

**“Literacy. Learning for Life.”**

*Frontier College*

**“Pathway to Possibilities.”**

*PTP*



## Mission Statements

A good mission statement helps to clearly communicate who you are and what you do. Knowing that is key to creating impactful marketing materials and strategies. Here are several sample mission statements from Ontario’s community-based literacy organizations.

- **Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council** works with adults in Haldimand-Norfolk to improve their quality of life through increased literacy and math skills.
- **Literacy Nipissing** provides opportunities for adults in the Nipissing District to improve English literacy and numeracy skills.
- **The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region** is a community based organization that provides accessible literacy training services to empower adults to reach their goals and improve their quality of life.

## Websites

In today's digital world, your website is often the "go-to" place for most people to learn about your organization. This of course means that your website is a critical marketing tool! It is therefore very important to ensure that your website is well-designed, user-friendly and up-to-date.

### Helpful website design principles include:

- Provide clear information about your organization (would someone quickly know who you are and what you do?)
- Provide an easy-to-navigate menu system to help people find their way around
- Ensure an eye appealing, uncluttered look
- Use easy-to-read fonts (and use only one or two fonts – not multiple fonts)
- Use lots of whitespace for overall visual balance
- Use appropriate images that convey your message (but respect privacy and copyright!)
- Offer compelling, relevant and up-to-date content
- Include items that "humanize" your organization (quotes, stories, videos and pictures)
- Use clear language and design
- Include links to your social media accounts and easily accessibly contact information
- Reflect your organizational image in tone and style
- Include your call to action at the top of your website (i.e. donate now, learn more, register now, etc.)
- Include your logo (and slogan, if you have one)
- Ideally, make your website mobile friendly



### Sample literacy websites:

- Literacy Alliance of West Nipissing: <http://yes2literacy.ca/index.php>
- Literacy Council of Durham Region: <https://literacydurham.ca/>
- Literacy London: <http://literacylondon.ca/>
- Literacy Nipissing: <http://literacynipissing.ca/>
- People, Words & Change: [www.pwc-ottawa.ca/](http://www.pwc-ottawa.ca/)
- PTP Adult Learning: <http://www.ptp.ca/>
- Toronto Centre for Community Learning & Development: [www.tccltd.org/](http://www.tccltd.org/)
- Thunder Bay Literacy Group: [www.tblg.org/](http://www.tblg.org/)

### Useful online resources:

- [13 Simple Tips for Improving Your Web Design \(by CIO\)](#)
- [7 Tips for Creating an Awesome Nonprofit Website \(by Salsa Blog\)](#)



## Video

Videos are a fantastic way to market your literacy agency and engage your audience in your organization's mission. Video sharing is an incredibly popular marketing tool. In fact, YouTube is the third-most popular website in the world AND it is the second-most popular search engine tool (after Google)!

For literacy agencies, videos are helpful marketing tools to tell learner stories, share organizational information and promote the importance of literacy. CLO is pleased to share some of the awesome videos produced by the literacy community.



### Marketing your organization

- The **Timmins Learning Centre** developed two promotional videos about its services. The first is a short, 30-second overview, with the tag line "We Can Help You Get There": [www.learntlc.org/](http://www.learntlc.org/). The second video goes into more depth about the programs and services that they offer: [www.learntlc.org/adultprograms](http://www.learntlc.org/adultprograms).
- The **Gateway Centre for Learning** (in Midland) created this [promotional video](#) where an adult student encourages others to attend the centre.
- Community-based literacy programs in **Eastern Ontario** collaborated together to produce this helpful video called "[Our Programs](#)". It explains more about the Literacy and Basic Skills Programs in their region by talking to the program managers, volunteers and teachers who make these programs possible.

### Telling the stories of adult learners

- **People, Words & Change** (in Ottawa), created "[Make the Call for Literacy](#)" which powerfully shares the stories of six adult students.
- The **Tri County Literacy Network** produced four videos in its "[Learning to Earning](#)" series to show how upgrading can positively impact future success.

### Promoting literacy and Essential Skills

- The **Essential Skills Group** developed this fabulous video called "[Don't Think Essential Skills are Important? Think Again!](#)". All we can say is "wow"!
- The **QUILL Learning Network** produced this [helpful video](#) to promote literacy and its links to employment, and to share information about programs and services in its region.

# Tip!

Do remember that many people have short attention spans in today's digital world so be sure to make your video short! Most experts recommend that videos should be between 30 seconds to 3 minutes in length.

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## The Great Idea Factory!

Here are some innovative marketing ideas from the literacy community that we just have to share with you.

### *Picture it*

- The **Literacy Alliance of West Nipissing** worked with students in their community to create a wonderful “Literacy Mural” to engage their community in a dynamic and visual way. They also created a “[Virtual Tour](#)” of their literacy centre (this tour includes pictures of the mural).

### *Evaluate it*

- Use your evaluation **results** to promote your organization. Share your successful results to demonstrate the value of participating in your programs and services. In this example, **Frontier College** shares successful evaluation statistics on the homepage of their [website](#).

### *Promote it*

- You can use **online** promotional materials to market your cause in a cost-effective way. For example, one of Community **Literacy of Ontario's** most enduringly popular marketing tools is “[Literacy: Why it Matters](#)”. This helpful online resource shares 20 reasons why literacy is critical for home, work and life.

### *Profile it*

- Market your organization by profiling its strengths, its vision and its people in creative ways. Get inspired by the **Toronto Public Library's** fabulous “[100 Reasons to Check out TPL](#)” campaign!

### *Fundraise it*

- Fundraising events not only raise money, they can also be an excellent way to market your organization. For example, **Kingston Literacy & Skills** promotes their annual [Spelling Bee](#) and reaps the double benefit of raising money AND their community profile.

### *Tweet it*

- Twitter is an effective way to market your services to community partners, government, foundations, etc. Would you like to know how your fellow literacy educators are using Twitter for marketing? Luckily, **CLO** has created a “[Twitter List](#)” of community-based literacy agencies who are on Twitter. (If we've missed you, let us know and we will be sure to add you to the list.)

### *Facebook it*

- Facebook is a popular way to link with your stakeholders and promote your programs and services to students, volunteers, community partners and more. Many community literacy agencies use Facebook for marketing. To learn which of your fellow organizations are on Facebook, visit [CLO's Facebook Page](#) and see who we follow. If you are searching for creative marketing ideas, one [Facebook Page](#) not to be missed belongs to the **Organization for Literacy in Lambton**.

### *Blog it*

- Post regular news and updates about your organization and the various activities and events you are involved in via a blog. Blogs can be an interactive and informative way to connect with your community! To see a notable example of a blog in action, check out the **Literacy Group of Waterloo Region's** [blog](#).

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## More from the Great Idea Factory

### *Tell it*

- Telling the **stories** of students, volunteers and others is a key marketing tool. In this example, **Frontier College** shares the stories of students, volunteers and community partners on their [website](#).

### *Explain it*

- Sharing **information** that clearly tells people WHY they should get involved with your organization is an important promotional strategy. One example is the **Orillia & District Literacy Council's** "[Top 10 Reasons](#)" to come to their literacy program.

### *Answer it*

- Think **about** what questions and concerns people may have about getting involved in your organization. Then, answer those questions in a pro-active manner. The **Literacy Alliance of West Nipissing** created a series of online "[FAQs](#)" to answer those commonly asked questions.

### *Celebrate it*

- **Celebrating** the successes of your organization and its people, and celebrating the cause of literacy are positive ways to engage in marketing. One example is CLO's "[Love Letters to Literacy](#)" campaign. As part of this campaign, **Community Learning Alternatives'** produced this wonderful video: "[Love Letters to Literacy](#)".

### *Flash it*

- Now for **something** completely amazing! British Columbia's **Decoda Literacy** staged a "Flash Mob" in downtown Vancouver to promote literacy. You can see all of the action by clicking [here](#).

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## Story Telling

Sharing stories of the courage and resilience of adult students is an extremely powerful way to market your organization. Literacy organization excel at this, and we found many helpful examples (including the videos we shared earlier on). Here are just a few:

- Barrie Literacy Council – "[Student Stories](#)"
- Literacy Council of Durham Region – "[Learner Stories](#)"
- Literacy Group of Waterloo Region – "[Student Stories](#)"
- Peel Adult Learning Centre – "[Student Corner](#)"
- Training & Learning Centre of Renfrew County – "[Testimonials](#)"
- Tri-County Literacy Council – "[Testimonials](#)"





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Research and writing by Joanne Kaattari

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## Social Media Marketing

Social media is a critical part of marketing. You can learn all about it by using Community Literacy of Ontario's social media marketing training modules.

These free online modules will provide you with a step-by-step overview of how to use various social media technologies, including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, blogs and more.

The modules share practical marketing tools and strategies, along with examples of how other organizations (including literacy, employment services, the non-profit sector and business) have successfully used social media technologies for marketing.

You can access our social media marketing modules at:

[www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/social-media-marketing/](http://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/social-media-marketing/)



## Conclusion

Community Literacy of Ontario hopes that this newsletter provided you with helpful information, tools, examples and resources, and that it will support you in the important work that you do!

Let's keep the conversation going! If you have marketing successes or challenges to share please let us know via email or social media.