



Marketing to Youth



2014

Marketing to Youth (Summary Notes)

Both literature and youth agree that youth must see how a program meets their needs before they would consider participating. In the London area, where youth unemployment is hovering at 20%, the end goal of youth is consistently employment. This clearly tells us that the stronger connection we can make between a program and employment, the greater the chance we have of engaging youth. Although building literacy skills can help someone eventually achieve employment goals, making a direct and immediate connection between literacy and employment can be challenging.

Many of our community's disengaged youth may be from a background of generational poverty. Bridges Out of Poverty training tells us that for people from generational poverty, "Education is valued and revered as abstract but not reality." We are further told a person from a family with generational poverty, "...lives in the moment – does not consider future ramifications. Being proactive, setting goals and planning ahead are not part of generational poverty... Future implications of present actions are seldom considered." By focussing strictly on an individual's final goal and the long path to achieving this goal, programs may not be taking into consideration the values and perceptions of our target population.

When developing marketing messages to attract youth, we must have a clear idea of the **immediate** goal of our target market. Also our messages must contain **concrete** examples of how our programs can help youth meet their immediate goal.

Over the past year the literacy field has conducted youth focus groups and pilot programming in order to better understand how to reach youth. When combining these findings with literature, some very consistent and clear messages about marketing to youth are revealed.

1. Word of mouth is still the best way to market to youth. This is either through peers or through people they trust, such as service providers. Often we assume that the best way to connect with youth is online, especially through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Youth have told us that if they use these tools they use them for recreational/social purposes only. That said, several youth claim that they use Kijiji to look for services.
2. Youth seek authenticity in marketing, as one youth said "not sounding fake." They'd like to see images that reflect their peer group and hear testimonials from their peers.
3. Youth feel they are too old to be called "youth." That's understandable as this term is often also used for people who are a decade younger. Youth suggestions for alternatives to the word "youth" include, "people 18-29 years of age" or "young adults."

4. Talking about free items and services will spark a youth's interest.
5. Youth will phone rather than sort through information on a website. They would like to see easy-to-find contact information on the front page of a website.

On a couple of occasions youth suggested that programs promote services by putting ads on buses where there is a captive audience and nothing else to look at.

Customer Life Cycle

There's a lot to be learned from approaches used by the business community. Our clients are our customers. An interesting online article *What is a Customer Life Cycle?* profiles the stages of the "customer life cycle." It claims our marketing approach will differ depending on who we're trying to attract. The customer life cycle in this case refers to what phase of contact that a customer is in, in relation to your organization:

1. Prospective New Customers
2. New Customers
3. Active Customers
4. Repeat or Loyal Customers
5. Lapsed Customers
6. Inactive or Abandoned Customers

The author of this article author gives insight to each step of the customer life cycle on how to engage or re-engage customers. It's worth considering what stage the customer that we are trying to attract is in, in relation to our programs. This will help further define and target marketing messages. <http://emailmarketing.comm100.com/email-marketing-ebook/customer-life-cycle.aspx>

Job Postings

A report put out by the Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board, *Electronic Youth: Creating the Current* (2011) outlines the variables that attract youth to job postings. These items can easily translate to help guide a posting for a youth program.

1. Detailed qualifications and requirements (Do youth fit? Do they have what they need to succeed in your program?)
2. Location (Can youth get there?)

3. Experience opportunities and advancement possibilities (What's in it for youth? Where can they transition to after completing your program? How does it bring them closer to their goals?)
4. Working conditions (What's the program environment like? Is it small group, 1:1 or a large class?)
5. Employment status – full-time, part-time, end date (How much time will the youth need to commit?)
6. Company reputation (What have youth heard about the program? Testimonials from their peers would be helpful)
7. Application process (How do youth join?)

Cross Postings

When we explored various job search websites and youth websites that could make a connection to literacy programs, we found very few postings that promote literacy programs. Interestingly, where educational options for youth were profiled, it seems that the opportunities were only for youth who successfully graduated from high school and seek further education. This assumes that most youth looking for jobs have been successful in school and have no need to upgrade their literacy skills. Those of us providing services in the community know differently. Many of the youth we see, especially high-risk youth, could benefit from attending literacy programs. It would be a good idea for literacy programs to strategically find other websites where they could promote their services, such as the websites of other Employment Ontario partners and local youth services. It's worth developing a promotional statement to submit to those agencies and then asking them to profile literacy programs.

Clear Writing

A marketing message needs to be written with the principles of Clear Writing. This helps the message stand out and be understood by as many people as possible. These principles take into consideration not only what the message says, but how it's presented. We have to make sure the information we create matches the skill level of our audience, especially people with low literacy or who may have English as their second language. Because youth also say they will spend little time considering advertising we also want to create information where the main message is easy to find. Clear Writing principles can help with both priorities.

This resource is one from a series:
Marketing to Youth, Engaging Youth, Maintaining Youth (2014).

This *Employment Ontario* project is funded in part
by the Government of Canada.

**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**



Literacy Link South Central
519-681-7307
literacylink@bellnet.ca
llsc.on.ca