



The Local Network

Volume 17, Number 3

2007



Hazleton Historical Society
Hazleton, North Dakota

Reaching Teachers: Marketing Museum Education

(AASLH Technical Leaflet by Cindy Lucas)

In the twenty-first century, most museums place a high priority on education. With current issues of testing and transportation, marketing education programs is more important than ever. Museums must be creative in their approach to marketing their programs to teachers. The ability to reach teachers, sell the museum product, and bring teachers and students in the door requires customer service at the highest level possible.

As museums plan programs, attention to the needs and ideas of learners continues to be crucial to the planning process. The twenty-first century brings another component critical to the planning

process: attention to the needs of teachers. Museums must include in their marketing focus how a visit to the museum can help the teacher meet his or her needs. These needs might include providing the teacher with state Standards of Learning components within the lessons taught at the museum, providing avenues to meet state education mandates, or fulfilling a requirement associated with the No Child Left Behind Act.

With increased competition for education programs, marketing is an essential element of the entire planning process for a museum's education programs. Teachers participate voluntarily in museum education programs. To successfully market programs to schools, museums must provide exceptional customer service to teachers and students. This includes exchanging products, services, and knowledge that is of value to the museum, the teachers, and the students.

Getting Started

It is important to recognize the difference between marketing and advertising. When you are marketing, you use strategies to create interest in your museum. A good marketing plan can help position your museum in front of the competition. Focus on the big picture and your marketing efforts can persuade teachers you offer a good value.

Most museums begin a marketing program for their education programs for three reasons: to insure adequate participation for programs, to communicate with teachers and schools what the programs are about, and to convince teachers and school administrators that the museum is worth a

visit. To ensure participation, you must communicate the message that the program is useful and meaningful. Market the value and importance of the planned program, and what it can contribute to the lesson the teacher is teaching.

Four keys essential to a museum marketing program include:

- 1. Develop and maintain credibility.** Develop a track record of well-run, quality programs that build respect and trust with regular teachers and schools. Show them that you provide programs with their time. Also, demonstrate that your programs meet their required goals and objectives.
- 2. Build on successes.** Listen to the teachers, both in terms of suggestions on how to change current programs and practices and what future programs they would attend and why. Let them know their evaluation of the visit is taken seriously.
- 3. Know the competition.** Learn about the competition's programs. Who are their participants? How do they attract these participants? How can they assist you in designing and marketing current and future programs?
- 4. Find a market niche.** Find your museum's unique content area and design ways to offer programs around the topic that belongs only to your museum. Think about all topics requested by teachers, even when they are out of the usual scope of programs offered.

Think it Out

Before designing any marketing promotion the following questions need to be contemplated and well thought out. Do not be afraid to think outside of the box.

- Who needs to be sold on the value and

worth of the program? (Don't forget about school administrators and school board members.)

- What type of promotional material would most likely capture the attention of teachers in your target market?
- Would different copy or pictures make a difference in reaching a wider audience?
- What factors need to be highlighted to attract potential teachers to visit the museum?
- Where learning transference is important, how might interpreters get across the idea that a well-designed plan is incorporated into the program?
- Does the plan fit the context in which the students will apply their new knowledge and skills?
- Have a comprehensive and understandable description of the program(s). Do you have the right product to fit the needs of the audience that has been selected?
- Consider the cost to participate in the program and travel expenses. Do you have, or can you get subsidized funds for the program?
- Create value!

Promote, Promote, Promote

Your answers to the questions above create a clear picture of the audience you want to reach. Within your museum's marketing budget, begin to prepare and plan for distribution of the promotional material. Popular promotional material include brochures, online announcements and materials, and newsletters that often get lost on the desk or even discarded. Think outside the box and provide promotional pieces to teachers that can be used in the classroom year round and that are creative in scope and appearance. The piece should catch the reader's attention, create interest, engage the reader, and inspire action...like the teacher booking that reservation. Several pointers for preparing good promotional materials include:

- Keep in the forefront the audience's interests, experiences, backgrounds, and contexts in which they live and work.
- Keep it simple. Use short sentences, familiar words and clear images.
- Say what you want to say and no more.
- Images should match and illuminate the text.
- Use present tense, action words, and action images to give the message a sense of urgency.
- Do not overcrowd images...this disrupts the flow of the message.
- Emphasize benefits! Teachers and students should be able to see what they will learn and do. How does the program help the students and meet the needs of the teacher?

Today's environment regarding museum visits centers cautiously around fund-raising issues. These include museum admission, transportation, and low-income, disadvantaged populations who need the type of experiences a museum visit offers. A subsidized fund is a key word that teachers look for as they consider museum visits. Providing subsidized funds is an important aspect in marketing to teachers. Sources of funds for subsidies include: business organizations, philanthropic-minded individuals, sale of product or materials, foundations, special interest groups, endowments, fundraising events, and federal, state, and local grant agencies. In the financial planning for your institution, subsidized funds are well worth the time and effort it takes to put the program together.

Getting the Educator's Attention

Marketing is an activity used to get a teacher's attention, to motivate the teacher to visit the museum, and to get the teacher to actually visit, and last, but not least, get the teacher to visit again and again to build in retention from year to year.

Marketing to teachers means defining your product, positioning your museum program,

promoting your product, distributing your product, and maintaining a positive relationship with your teacher and the students he or she brings.

A reminder!

Information and application forms are now available for the **State Historical Society's Cultural Heritage Grant Program**. Go to www.nd.gov/hist; it is the first entry on the home page. There will be only one funding cycle for this biennium so this is your opportunity.

Grant Categories:

EXHIBITS:

- ★ Presentation of ideas and/or collections to interpret and provide a meaningful experience.
- ★ Exhibits can be two-dimensional or three-dimensional, including structures or environments.
- ★ May also include traveling exhibits.

SPECIAL PROJECTS/EVENTS:

- ★ Professional development of organization's staff, festivals, lecture series, publications, etc.

EDUCATION:

- ★ Programs or school-related activities that present ideas or enhance an exhibit, event, or theme.
- ★ Examples may include theater performances, publications, tours, or electronic format.

COLLECTIONS:

- ★ Materials owned by an organization that illustrate and interpret the mission of that institution.
- ★ Materials include items such as photos, books, manuscripts, film, artifacts, archeological, biological, and geological specimens.
- ★ Funded projects may include cataloging, collections care, research, computer and software purchases.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS:

- ★ Construction of new buildings or remodeling or preservation of existing structures or historical

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Save the Date!

The 19th Annual Governor's Conference on North Dakota History will be held November 2-3, 2007, at the North



Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck. The conference theme is North Dakota railroad history.

The 2007 and 2008 history conferences will commemorate the Lincoln Bicentennial by examining railroad and homestead

history. President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act in 1862 and the Charter for the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1864. Conference details will be available later this summer.

Cultural Heritage Grant Update

A new round of grants from the State Historical Society's Cultural Heritage Grant Program will begin later this summer. Since July 1, 2005, approximately \$325,000 in grants and scholarships have been awarded to museums and historical organizations through this program. Grant categories are described on page 3 of this newsletter. For more information on the Cultural Heritage Grant Program, contact Chris Johnson at 701-328-2124 or email to cjohnson@nd.gov.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MAKES \$80,000 AVAILABLE FOR RESTORATION, PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTY

The State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND), through its annual appropriation of Historic Preservation Fund money from the National Parks Service, is making available to the public \$80,000 for use in the restoration, stabilization, and protection of historic and archaeological properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. All applications must be received by the SHSND by August 2, 2007.

To receive an application for an Historic Preservation Fund grant, contact grants and contracts officer Amy Munson at 701 328-2672 or email to amunson@nd.gov.

Mark your calendar! The Annual Mountain Plains Museum Association (MPMA) conference will be held in Fargo on September 10-14, 2007.

Scholarships are available for the MPMA conference and the Governor's Conference on North Dakota History through the Cultural Heritage Grant Program.

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