

Nonprofit Publications that Get Results

6 steps for creating highly effective
marketing collateral regardless of your budget

by **Tiffany Meyer**, president of Numa Marketing

Your marketing collateral (print and electronic publications) is your key connection to your customers. Collateral serves as the face and voice of your organization, and your tool to engage, inform, or to persuade your audience to take action. After over a decade of providing objective publication audits for organizations large and small — with budgets ranging from \$500 to \$150,000 — I've discovered a few common mistakes that seem to creep into nonprofit publication copy time after time.

Particularly if you operate on a limited budget, the 6 steps below will help you avoid the top nonprofit mistakes and create marketing collateral that gets the results you want.

Step 1: Start with your marketing objective and plan accordingly

Sure, this seems obvious, doesn't it? Yet time after time I've found that organizations jump to create marketing collateral without really knowing what their specific, measurable, time-based marketing objective is first. And before they know it, they've invested time and money into creating a beautiful brochure, only to discover it's not a brochure at all that is needed to meet their objective.

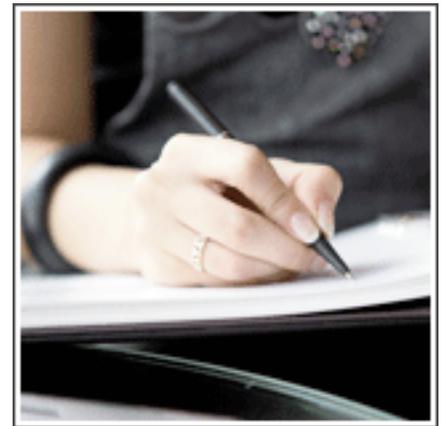
Take out a key collateral piece right now and put it to this test: *What is the specific, measurable, time-based marketing objective we want to achieve with this publication?*

If you're not sure, identify your marketing objective now. For instance, maybe you want 500 people to attend your annual conference in October — or specifically, maybe you want a minimum of 200 people to register by your early registration date of May 1.

Next, ask yourself: *What format of publication do we need to reach this objective in a cost-effective manner? Is it a brochure, a poster, an email, or is it a combination of materials?*

Step 2: Identify your target audience — determine what's most important to them

The next critical step is to determine who your publication is directed to — a specific demographic with unique needs. Ask these questions:



What is the specific demographic of this audience? Age, ethnicity, geographic location, socioeconomic position, typical occupation, typical education level?

In relation to what you're trying to achieve with your publication, what is most important to this audience? Is it quality, affordability, prestige, recognition, detailed information, or convenience? Identify what's most important to them.

What type of design and "voice" would appeal to this audience the most? Is it a conservative, formal voice, or one that's much more conversational and laid back?

A common mistake organizations can make is to develop a publication that attempts to reach more than one audience with more than one unique need or differing expectations. If you're concerned about maximizing a limited budget, focus on one primary audience for each publication. You'll find that the focus results in a boost in effectiveness that combined pieces struggle to achieve.

Step 3: Develop key messaging linked to your distinctive competence

The key to making your organization, services, product, or cause stand out from the crowd in your marketing collateral is knowing how what you offer differs from everything else vying for your customer's attention. What is your distinctive competence — what do you offer that is different from everyone else? What unique benefits do your services or products provide that the competition does not?

Step 4: Remember your call to action

Step 4 is one of the most critical, yet most commonly missed steps in creating effective marketing collateral. What specific action do you want your audience to take in response to reading/seeing your collateral? Is it to attend a free public event next week? Is it to register for your annual conference? Is it to enroll their child in your daycare program, or to make a \$50 donation?

Identify the specific action (or actions) you'd like your target audience to take. Next, ask what information you need to provide in your collateral to motivate the audience to take this action. Think again about what information is most important to this audience — details, benefits, etc.

Sometimes motivation requires creating a sense of urgency to act now. For instance, if you're conducting a funding drive, is there a limited time giveaway or matching contribution that you can offer that will motivate the audience to act now rather than later? For an annual conference, can you provide an early registration discount?

Step 5: Determine how you will measure results

Now that you've identified what you want to achieve, who your piece is directed to, what they want, what unique thing you offer, and what action you want them to take ... you'll need to ask yourself one more critical question. How will you measure the impact of this specific collateral piece? For instance, how will you know that the 1,200 postcards you distributed led to the 200 conference registrations you received? Especially when you also used a few advertisements, keyword optimization on your website, and presentations to promote your event?

“A common mistake organizations can make is to develop a publication that attempts to reach more than one audience with more than one unique need, or differing expectations.”

Is there something you can integrate into your marketing collateral that will help you track results?

Here are some ideas for you to consider:

- If you're using electronic publications for promotion (i.e., an announcement in an e-newsletter, or email marketing), you can track click-through rates specific to that publication. This involves adding unique tracking code to each piece.
- Put a unique URL on each print publication — If you're using a brochure, a postcard, a poster, and an advertisement to promote your conference and you'd like to know which had the most impact, put a unique, yet easy to remember, URL on each piece. This way you can track hits for each URL, and measure each publication's unique results. For instance, if your web site address is www.conference.com your poster could say:

www.conference.com/poster.htm,

and your ads could say:

www.conference.com/advertisement.htm

“Before you dive into the graphic design of your publication, think through your distribution plan.”

Step 6: Determine your distribution plan

Before you dive into the graphic design of your collateral, think through your distribution plan — how will your publication actually get into the hands of your target customer. Here are some questions to consider:

- Do you have a distribution list, or will you need to purchase or rent one?
- Will you need to work with a mailing/fulfillment service to distribute your postcards to the 20,000 people on your list? If so, is your list in the proper format for the fulfillment service?
- Is it more cost-effective to make the publication a self-mailer so you don't have to stuff it into an envelope? Can you incorporate a nonprofit bulk-rate postage code onto your publication to save on postage? If so, can the fulfillment house do this for you?
- If your publication will be tacked on to bulletin boards, is there a particular size restriction you need to consider? What color paper or color design will help it stand out on the board?
- If your publication will be added to information stands at area organizations and businesses, is there a standard size you need to work with so the piece fits into their display boxes?

Whether you develop your marketing collateral in-house on a shoestring budget, or you work with a marketing firm and outside designer, it's important to go into publication design purposefully, with as many of these questions answered as possible. Your results will definitely serve as ample reward for this initial time investment.

Need some help developing your marketing or fundraising collateral? Visit the Numa Marketing website to learn more about our award-winning marketing collateral design, and valuable publications audits.

TIFFANY MEYER is the author of *Writing a Results-Driven Marketing Plan: The Nonprofit's Guide to Making Every Dollar Count*, and president of Numa Marketing, a purposely-small firm strengthening the competitive health of nonprofits and small businesses with smart marketing. Each of our services are designed to substantially improve the capacity, competitive health, and financial sustainability of your organization — helping you in turn make an even bigger difference in the lives and communities you serve. For more information about our services, please contact Tiffany Meyer at 360-891-4929.

Schedule Meyer as a presenter for your next conference or association meeting, sign up to receive *The Smart Marketer* e-zine, order books, download more articles, or to learn about Numa Marketing's full line of services at: www.numamarketing.com

This article cannot be reprinted, copied or otherwise distributed without the written permission from the author. To reprint this article in your newsletter, publication, or to distribute at your conference, training or meeting, please contact Tiffany Meyer at 360-891-4929, or tiffany@numamarketing.com