

MARKETING: The Fundamentals

ABSTRACT

Peter Drucker, defines marketing as the whole firm or organization taken from the customer's point of view. Who better than advisory leadership to keep Cooperative Extension in tune with the public's perception? In fact, Extension needs advisory leadership to understand and assume this role as it relates to their other roles of program development and advocacy on behalf of Extension.

Cooperative Extension and advisory leadership are partners in marketing Extension. Advisory leaders have connections and credibility. Agents have expertise and knowledge of programs. Both have keen interest in success for Extension. Hiam, (1997) outlined principles of marketing that address this collaborative arrangement. Four of these principles and how the partnership works are as follows:

➤ *Your customers aren't listening to you*

The general public is not listening to Extension. The man on the street doesn't know or care about Extension because they don't know what Extension does for them. On the other hand, John Q public does not need to value Extension the same as a County Commissioner. Having advisory leaders as credible sources for relating to targeted customers helps extend the outreach of Extension and delivers the message in a credible way.

➤ *Everybody else is shouting at your customers too.*

Commercials and advertisements are everywhere. Every ten to fifteen minutes regular programming on radio and TV are interrupted with commercials. The internet is rampant with ads and spam on e-mail is a constant annoyance. In defense, people tune out everything except information that has relevance to them. It helps when the message is delivered by a credible source and is spoken in terms that have meaning for the customer. With extension marketing and advocacy efforts, the message or communication points are delivered by a significant someone who can bring understanding to the message. Obviously, advisory leaders are respected in their community and should have relationships with appropriate decision makers when needed.

➤ *You can't be successful without the rest of your organization.*

This point speaks to the importance of having informed advisory leaders who know about all the program areas of Cooperative Extension and its connection to the land grant institutions. Informed advisory leaders value the breadth and scope of Extension programs. Advisory leaders can help craft communications points from the customer's perspective. Then, faculty and advisory leaders need to deliver the communications points consistently and often.

➤ *Being good is not good enough – you have to be better.*

Times have changed rapidly and the context in which Extension operates is significantly different than it was even five years ago. The history of Extension has been great, but status quo just doesn't work anymore. Doing the right things is just as critical as doing them well. Advisory leaders serve to remind the organization what is working and when to change course.

This lesson is about helping advisory leaders understand the pervasive nature of the marketing part of their role. It begins with simple awareness that advisory leaders represent Cooperative Extension even when they are not going to an Extension meeting.

As the lesson progresses, the focus becomes challenging advisory leaders to develop communication points around an issue. The perspective of advisory leaders addressing communication points from the County Commissioners perception is the key. Finally, advisory leaders are asked to consider how they can be ambassadors for Extension in their daily activities in the community, county or state leadership roles.

Marketing is everyone's job. It takes both faculty and volunteers from all program areas and especially advisory leaders working together to keep Cooperative Extension visible and viable in a county.

References:

Hiam, Alexander, 1997. Marketing for dummies. IDG Books Worldwide, Inc. Chicago, Ill.