**DEMONSTRATING MARKETING EXCELLENCE**

**Public Libraries - Winner**

Marketing Excellence Award entry by: Mr Marcus Payne, Senior Librarian

Organisation Name: Penarth Library

Organisation Address: Stanwell Road

Town: Penarth

Postcode: CF64 2YT

Contact Number: 02920 708438

Email: penarthlibrary@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Twitter Account: @penarthlibrary

Organisation Profile/ Overview:

One of nine libraries under the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Penarth Public Library is a community focused hub of activity and creativity.

Penarth's town library was opened in 1905, thanks to a donation by the Carnegie Trust and continues to this day to be a valued and loved community fixture, with a wide range of services from computer access to DVD rentals, one-to-one tutorials, events and a thriving children's library.

Category Entered: Public Libraries

Project Title: PROTEEN

Context:

We are comfortable with admitting that as a library, when it came to teens and young adults, we were missing the mark. The stats weren’t promising. Why weren’t teens interested in the library?

Marketing for teens is a challenge. By the time you’ve jumped on the trend bandwagon, they’ve already jumped off and on to another. The demographic is, by default, fickle and fussy. They say that the number one marketing rule for teens, is not to market for teens. When they find something that they like, they will market it themselves, which is why peer-to-peer advertising is so crucial. We have found that you have to constantly grow with them, tactics, approaches and strategies must develop organically and flow with changing times.

Teenage fickleness has only increased over recent years, the proliferation of technology and social media encourages young minds to ‘keep up’ with the times, seek out the latest, the newest and the best. Where as libraries have only just began to understand how modernisation is the key to a sustainable future. Marketing aimed at teens does not have a formula or a plan, it is constantly changing and adapting to keep up with the fast-paced world of modern society and with the young people that centre their lives around it.

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Libraries are not known for getting ahead of the times, they are often referred to as community hubs for those that seek to learn, not for those that seek to 'seek'. Throughout our research we have discovered some key elements in successful marketing for teens, we have found that they want interactivity, connection and stimulation. We have tried various marketing approaches, from leaflets to social media. We have failed, we have succeeded and we have plateaued. But we continue to work along side local teens and young adults to create a solid structure that can be adapted and altered to fit current social trending and interest.

Despite the teenage demographic constantly changing their preferences, from a marketing point of view, Libraries can benefit greatly from this, especially considering their fluctuating funding and limited resources.

So the question we asked was..."in the age of instant global communication, media saturation and material excess” - what do young people want from their libraries?

“We want fun, we want entertainment that isn’t through a screen” - Cat 16

Generation Y (and now Z) have fast become the gurus of modern living. Technology is second nature. Trending is a #reflex. Social media is ‘oxygen’, Emojis are a second language. How could we keep up? How could we compete with modern technology and past-paced trending? We asked what it was that we could do to improve the service for them, how could we encourage them in to the library. One response stood out. Emily, aged 17 - “We already love the library, but at our age, we often feel like a nuisance in public places, we don’t want to make people feel uncomfortable. There isn’t many places where we can go in groups and socialise, not without spending money”.

This became the catalyst for our change, this inspired our determination to create a space for teenagers and young adults, where they could surround themselves in an environment that encourages learning and growth and at the same time, provide an opportunity to have fun and interact with fellow peers.

The first wave of realisation came when we hosted an event (06.03.14) aimed at adults, 11 young people aged 17-18 attended and made a point of giving us both verbal and written feedback after the event, stating how they would love for us to do similar events aimed at their age group, as many more of their friends would have attended had it not been for the limited number of spaces. Over the next month we set about planning and marketing a similar event for ‘teens’, which we hosted on World Book Night (23.04.14) and was aptly named ‘The #iknowthat Teen Quiz’.

The reality well exceeded our expectations, with 44 young people attending the event (12 male/32 female) A staggering amount considering we had not yet used the force of social media directly to advertise, this was achieved by peer-to-peer advertising and local outreach. We continued on from our success by hosting several more events throughout 2014, including quizzes and the increasingly popular Game Nights (A social event where we provide young people with board games, video games, tournaments, music and food. Funding was obtained from the Council to purchase a number of unique board games from Rules of Play Cardiff)

This was just the beginning....

Aims and Objectives:

It is hard to miss news of potential threats that Libraries across the UK are currently facing, change is imminent. However, Staff at Penarth Library saw the impending threat of cuts as an opportunity. With encouragement from governing bodies to explore modernisation and new strategies for marketing, we dove straight in. Due to the challenges with Council restrictions, our journey into Social Media is still in it infancy but speedily gaining traction and will provide us with a dynamic and sustainable platform to interact, connect and inform. With limited resources and funds, creating a new ‘modern' image for our library wasn’t easy, which is why social media has become a life line for libraries and current and future plans to explore this dynamic and vast new world is both exciting and essential to the sustainability of the library service.

Aims: To connect with local teens and young adults and encourage use of the library building/service. To create a fun, stimulating and inviting space for teens and young adults to enjoy.

To expand marketing to social media platforms and to establish a new way of communicating, connecting and interacting with the public and the local youth community. We felt that in order for us to reach teens, we needed to be present on the platforms they are most active on. Teens are visual. A robust visual smorgasbord of interactivity, creativity and connectivity. That is what we are attempting to create with Social Media.

To discover a new marketing approach that showcases staff diversity and skill and that presents staff with an opportunity to utilise their own knowledge and talents.

Our goal was to provide the youth community with clubs, events and promotions to encourage learning and growth in a fun, safe and engaging environment. Our aim was to develop sustainable partnerships with local youth, based on respect, creativity and community values.

After the response received from events, the library was eager to keep a hold of this connection to local teens. The formation of a Teen Advisory Group (T.A.G) became a popular tool for both continuing to modernise the service and for keeping up to date with the wants and needs of the teen demographic. Our T.A.G consists of 20 motivated young individuals that actively assist in promoting the library service, including events, social media, stock and current and future projects (i.e. Eco-garden, Technotweens, clubs).

Strategy and Planning:

Since the re-evaluation of library services within the UK, we wanted to show evidence that with innovation and creative thought, we could reinvent an area of the service that we felt was lacking. Recent consultation and re-evaluation allowed Libraries to experiment with new ways of promoting and marketing, a considerable amount of freedom and trust was presented to staff and we at Penarth Library felt that this greatly benefited our library. With this opportunity to develop a strategy to modernise, to refresh the image of the service and introduce a new way to use and interact with your library, a designated group of staff set about creating and marketing this new approach/image via community outreach, social media marketing, traditional marketing such as design of leaflets, posters and other promotional material and the formation of T.A.G (Teen Advisory Group).

Our marketing approach/strategy was to stay relevant and up-to-date, use personal knowledge and skill in conjunction with consultation with the Teen Advisory Group to pin point exact goals to focus on. For example, a recent partnership has formed between several local media students that are eager to assist library staff in creating an educational and information YouTube channel, with assistance from a local comprehension school and their media technology. We continuously research new and interesting ways to promote and market our service, from events, social media and competitions, sharing and lending ideas with libraries from all over the world.

Involvement. Interactivity. Connectivity. That is our strategy.

A library is a community project. We are there to benefit our communities and provide a service that is not only essential, but enjoyed. This new partnership between teens/young adults and the library has injected the service with a new found energy and sense of community. Our aim was to highlight libraries as an essential community hub AND as a place that is full of enjoyment and laughter and social engagement.

Tactics and Implementation:

Our plan was to first discover what we could do for our targeted group. What did they want? What were we missing as an organisation?

During the initial push for modernisation, we were allocated a budget for new shelving, comfortable seating areas, a lick of paint and the introduction of a video game kiosk, which has played a vital part in reinventing our image, with that in place, we were able to craft advertising material that would appeal to younger audiences. ‘Hip”, ‘Cool’, ‘Edgy” - Not exactly the first words that spring to mind when referring to a public library, but this is the image that we wanted to create and more importantly, to sustain. Our tactic is to avoid coming across as “trying too hard” - Despite using the tern ‘teen’ quite a bit, we approach the marketing from a more subtle angle. We try to market ourselves as fun, authentic and contemporary, taking on advice and suggestions from the teens themselves, we feel it is important to seek their approval, especially where social media is concerned. Working in partnership WITH the teens and young adults is the key to our success.

"If Millennials were pioneers hacking through the wilderness of this teen landscape, today's teens were born there. They were the first generation inherently attuned to this, They didn't have to adapt their lifestyle to it, so they're more fluent in new technology.” - Rob Callender (The Futures Company).

Balance was important, so as not to isolate current and older patrons, promoting, events and marketing had to be done strategically and sensitively. Over the past year, we have noticed several patterns develop, from lending to attendance. Timing, for example, had to be taken into consideration, attendance tends to fluctuate during exam season. Strategically planning when to hold events requires research, communication and a little bit of common sense, Teens are less likely to attend an event on Valentines Day than they would on World Book Day. As time goes on and more experience is gained, we are becoming more aware of social/societal dynamics, quiet periods and effective timing.

We wanted to keep budget to a minimum, therefore most of the preparations and promotional material was done in-house by Library staff using free software and inexpensive material. We wanted to promote the idea that is it possible to still create a substantial and viable marketing campaign for Libraries within a minimal budget.

The recent installation of The Cloud has proven to be popular among the younger library users. Further plans for modernisation due to be implemented over the coming year involve the setting-up of a number of clubs based at the library, including a Film Club, more Game Nights, Tournaments and Quizzes and a Teen Quiz League that has already been rolled out to two other Vale of Glamorgan libraries with big hopes of encouraging more UK libraries to participate. With encouragement focused on teens to create and set up their own clubs and groups with support from the Library. Participation in national and global programmes and celebrations such as Six Book Challenge and World Gaming Day have also proven successful.

Please refer to the links below as evidence of social media engagement & Marketing:

www.facebook.com/penarthlibrary

www.twitter.com/penarthlibrary

Results/Measurements/Outcomes

We consider the Project to be ongoing, so results are constantly changing. Although confident that we have achieved continued success with this project, we are learning and trying new methods and strategies on a regular basis. With direct access to social media now available to us, the possibilities for future outreach and marketing is limitless. In our first week our social media outreach we have gained 350 new followers on Twitter, 80 on Facebook (with the total reach in the region of 700 ^260.9%). Pinterest and Instagram are steadily gaining new interest the more we promote.

The project has increased library usage, especially late night opening, which was deemed redundant and considered as a potential cut during discussion of reduction in hours. Each event brings in the region of 30-40 people including regular weekly room hire by interest groups (i.e. Warhammer Club - which have since been granted permission to refer to themselves as the Penarth Library Warhammer Group with the intention of competing on a national level). The events have not only increased library footfall but allowed for the opportunity to promote and advertise stock and services to younger people, focusing a great deal on digital collections such as eBooks, audio books and e-magazines, as well as the new addition to the library service, video game rentals. As part of the Proteen campaign the Library has promoted these games through the events (Tournaments & Gamification), traditional media, displays, social media and word-of-mouth.

The initial focus of the campaign was not to make profit, but to gain footfall and build a relationship with a demographic that libraries were struggling to connect with. In this respect we consider the project to have been a success, however, feedback has suggested that teens and young adults would be “more than happy to pay more for the events etc”. And despite being conscious of remaining a predominantly free service, this opens up the possibility to continue providing additional services to this age group during financial downtimes. Small but significant profits have been made during events, after the subtraction of minimal catering costs, the remaining profits are sent to a general council fund.

Time was a conscious issue while promoting this project, but consistent team work and organisation allowed us to create what we hope is a sustainable and developing project that can be implemented throughout many other libraries. We believe we have developed a strategy that is adaptable and enjoyable for all, we are currently in the process of implementing the changes throughout several other libraries in the Vale of Glamorgan with hopes of gaining the same level of success we have in Penarth.

Staff enthusiasm has played a huge part in the success of the libraries outreach campaign. Retaining passion and enthusiasm in the current climate is not easy but Staff have shown optimism and strength and definitely risen to the challenge.

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Of course none of this would have been possible without the most important partnership of all. The community. The community have shown tremendous support and encouragement towards all efforts by staff to modernise the library service.

Date of Project: 6th March 2015

Summary:

The Library is a place of vast knowledge, support and growth. A place that nurtures personal expansion and encourages both the discovery of new and the celebration of old. Proteen was created with the vision of connecting with local youth and developing a mutually beneficial partnership that supports creativity, ideas and innovation.

The energy the teens/young adults bring to the library is palpable and with unsure times ahead for the Library service, this refreshing injection of modernisation and spirit is exactly what has been needed to demonstrate the essential need for Libraries in communities, not only for the current users groups but for new and future ones.