

### **Branding & Marketing: Sustaining Your Museum during an Economic Downturn** **Tuesday, July 21, 2009, 1:00 p.m. EDT**

#### **Facilitated by:**

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This call incorporated a PowerPoint presentation, which can be downloaded from the ACM Members Only Web site.

ACM Board Chair Neil Gordon introduced the speakers and the agenda for the call. He reminded the group that Fran and Bill Lytle led a popular session at InterActivity 2009, "How to Motivate Visitation."

#### **What you need to know about human behavior**

- Sociology and anthropology insights can explain how men and women make decisions, how they react to different types of messaging and content and what will motivate them to visit your museum. Museums should develop communications that connect with people. For museums, this means not just visitors but members and potential funders.
- The brain takes in data and tries to create meaning from it. When people make nonessential decisions like where to spend leisure time with their families, you want to get to the meaning as soon as possible. Give the meaning first, and then back it up with data and design.

#### **What you need to know about brands**

- Brands are living, breathing entities. A brand should have personality.
- If you can define your brand as a person, it's easier for your audience to understand what kind of relationship to have with the brand.

#### **Gender differences**

- Men use one side of their brains at a time. They make decisions by looking at one thing at a time and then making a decision. Women think differently, by multitasking – they will look at one thing and then spiral back to get information other ways to validate possible decisions. In deciding to go to a museum, they will talk to others about their experiences and look at the museum's Web site.
- Men are outwardly competitive. For instance, you might want to mention celebrities who have attended your museums, so men can make a comparison between themselves and celebrities. For women, the choice needs to be about connection, not competition.
- There are also gender differences in personal values: women are concerned with establishing and nurturing relationships; men are concerned with establishing and defending rank.
- The role of conversations is important: women share information while men transmit information. Museums should have their communication be a conversation, including engaging in new world of social media.
- Women are attracted to curves, while men are attracted to straight lines. Children's museums may wish to incorporate curves into their logos to appeal to female visitors.

#### **How to connect with women/moms**

- There are 75 million moms in the U.S. Word of mouth motivates their decisions, particularly what to do with family leisure times.
- Moms are too time-starved to connect through traditional media. Also, moms want to be "connected with" not "sold to." According to a recent social media survey, 42 million women participate in social media weekly. It is not just the economic downturn that motivates the use of social media, but it's because this is a way for women to engage in conversation
- Forrester Research conducted a recent study in which 70 percent of marketers said they expected the popularity of social media and digital media to increase. In 2009, digital marketing comprised 12 percent of total marketing spending, but the survey indicated that this is likely to grow to 21 percent in five years.

#### **Emotional Branding**

Rethink branding efforts based on emotional branding:

*From consumers, to people: Consumers buy, people live.*

*From honesty, to trust:* Honesty is expected. Trust is engaging and intimate. It needs to be earned.  
*From notoriety, to aspiration:* Being known doesn't mean that you're loved!  
*From identity, to personality:* Identity is recognition. Personality is about charisma!  
*From communication, to conversation:* Communication is telling. Conversation is sharing.  
*From service, to relationship:* Service is selling. Relationship is acknowledgment. Acknowledgment is knowledge of who those people are.  
*From product, to experience:* Products fulfill needs. Experiences fulfill desires.

### **Making your Web site search & social media friendly**

There are four essential steps to making your Web site search engine friendly and social media friendly:

- 1) Fresh content: Even if you don't have the money to invest in search optimization, just adding fresh content will allow you to have more search results.
- 2) Social content: Posts to Twitter and Facebook are communication modes that will continue into the future. Ask staff to participate in online conversations, such as a "chat with a curator" feature. These features give a reason to return to the Web site to see what new is happening.
- 3) Interaction: Make your site easy for visitors to interact with the Web site and with other visitors, through the ability to create profiles, share interests, connect with others, vote/rate and comment on content.
- 4) Make Web site easy to share: A service called Add This (AddThis.com) allows people who view your site to share it with others. This is a way for a mom to share something on a Web site with her children. Those discussions that traditionally happened around the dinner table about leisure-time plans will be influenced by sharing things through social media.

### **Why traditional media doesn't work as well as it used to**

- People are more limited in the time they devote to learning through traditional media.
- Because of the speed that people are driving, outdoor billboards are probably not the most effective way to advertise and allocate resources. Most of the times that museums use a billboard it is to help the board of directors feel good about the brand, but it will not motivate visitation! If you were going to use a billboard, your best chance that drivers would remember it would be to just use a large logo and Web address.

### **How to avoid creating social media spam**

If you are going to invest in social media, you have to create a plan for what you want to achieve, which types of social media you are going to engage in and the number of hours staff is going to spend on these activities.

### **Track use of your social media**

Measure and evaluate your social media results and impact with the following sites/applications:

- Google trends to make sure your search terms relate to your audience. Use specific search terms (five at time) to find out which is most effective. Google Analytics is another useful tool for analyzing your Web traffic.
- Do a Twitter search to find out who is discussing that topic. Start to add followers – you can find out if they are from your area. Download applications from the "Apps" link on Twitter search if you aren't already using.
- Connect through bloggers on BackType ([www.BackType.com](http://www.BackType.com)). Follow bloggers to find out what they blog about and then befriend them because they can be influential.
- Put links to Facebook, Twitter etc. on your Web page so people can connect with you
- Twitterific is a software that will open a window when you get a tweet.
- Twitter can be a very time consuming activity, so watch your time use. Try to split it up into a human resource plan. Any one person should spend no more than 1 hour per day on this, but you should try to get multiple staff to do it so it is a team effort. Keep connected internally on the team effort.

### **Q & A with ACM Members**

*Member: Have you seen changes in allocations for marketing budgets?*

*Lytles: We have been working with museums where there have been cuts in marketing budgets because of cuts in state aid for cultural institutions. These museums are holding steady and recognize that they have to continue to*

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promote themselves, but if they don't receive the grant funds then they have to cut back. We suggest always tying your marketing efforts to something measurable.

Other reallocations we have seen include the following:

- Reallocations in terms of types of media: Part of a social media plan is integrating it with traditional media. Based on the economy, there will be downturns on reach.
- Allocation of staff time: We are seeing staff being reallocated from print communications to social media and Web communications.

*Member: Our museum is moving to a new location. Could this be an opportunity to rebrand the museum?*

*Lytles: We suggest doing what you think that your brand-lovers are going to respect. Build your brand on the strength of what it is. Sit down as a group within your organization to talk about what the museum brand would be distinct from its location. Define your brand personality and visitor relationship. Examine your brand name to see if it represents your brand.*

*Member: In this economic climate, how can children's museums compete with direct service organizations for basic needs?*

*Lytles: There is a hierarchy of needs, which includes psychological needs (motivational drivers.) These psychological needs include a sense of belonging, freedom, power and fun. If fun is a strong psychological need, then that is just as strong as need for food. People need to maintain a balance between physical and psychological needs. Think about your events and exhibits that will address people's needs to have fun, and balance those nicely.*

*Member: What are some tips for using thank yous to maintain supporters?*

*Lytles: We suggest keeping strong those recognition programs already in place. The goal should be to see how many more times you can get people to visit your museum. Think about what can you do for your visitors, and construct a program that will incentivize them to increase their visits. Consider which dimensions you could accentuate or seek to develop. Stress the relationship-building concept. You should aim to convince people that visiting the museum and becoming a member will help them to nurture relationships with their families.*

*Member: Is increasing the perception of value of the children's museum brand important in this economic time?*

*Lytles: Museums can communicate to parents that the museum is helping them to enhance their children's life socially and educationally, which is of huge value. Dove's campaign that encourages young girls to have sense of inner beauty. Consumers value the brand because they support what mothers are trying to teach their daughters. Consider conveying that the museum wants to work with parents and caregivers as a member of a team and/or as partners. Remember that your audience determines the value proposition. What are visitors going to gain from multiple visits? How are museum visits going to affect/change them? There are a lot of ways that the economic downturn can be turned into opportunities.*

*Member: What other advice can you give about communicating a brand?*

*Lytles: Your brand personality will define tonality of your communications. People don't talk anymore about elevator speeches; you should be able to use 20 words or less to define your product. Remember that people will mostly remember the first and last things that you told them. Social media is a great way to build a following and a community where you can ask questions and encourage people to share their opinions through polls and informal questionnaires. Don't let them see that it is part of formal research, but that you are asking conversationally (although you should record responses).*

*Member: Should there be a difference between internal and external communication?*

*Lytles: Have the brand message be consistent internally and externally. In your social media plan, you should decide what content you are going to put out externally, how you are going to put it out (through which sites) and how often.*

*Member: What should you do if you find through surveys that people think something differently about your brand than what you are trying to communicate?*

*Lytles: Honestly address any misperceptions that are brought to your attention. First acknowledge them, then use this as motivation. Bring together a diverse constituency that touches the brand in different ways, and write down words that describe your brand (then find word pairings). Keep in mind the following questions: Who are you trying to influence? What do you want them to think? Why do you want them to think this way? Would it be more*

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effective to nurture two-way relationships with existing visitors rather than raising awareness among potential visitors? You should think about characteristics that define your favorite customers (lifestyle, demographics, etc.). Where else in their lives can you connect with them?

*Member: Are there differences in marketing in rural versus urban communities?*

*Lytle:* The popularity of social media is also happening in rural communities. Everyone responds to the same kind of messaging if it is relevant. The voice of this communication should reflect the location.

*Member: A third to a fourth of our attendees are grandparents. What is the philosophy in marketing to them?*

*A:* Even grandparents are getting into technology. SavvyAuntie.com is a unique social community geared at nonparent figures in kids' lives. For this group, connect with them using the same motivation of nurturing relationships.

*Member: What are some ways that museums can capture some of the positive elements of social media through traditional media?*

*Lytle:* Try capturing the conversational aspects of social media when traditional media is used. This can be accomplished through the use of stories, such as recounting a visit. Use a story format in a way that is conversational but not necessarily long.

*Q: What is branding anyway?*

*A:* Branding is a concept of creating an entity that people can have a relationship with. A logo is a graphic representation of the brand. Like a person, your visitors need to know that your museum loves them back!