

# Dollars & Sense



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

### BARRY MCLEISH

Before joining M/J, Barry McLeish was the Director of Development & Marketing for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and served as a member of Inter-Varsity's senior management team. He also served as Creative Director. Barry coauthored a book on personal support fund-raising entitled *The Personal Support Raising Handbook*. He is also the author of *The Donor Bond*, and *Successful Marketing Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations*. His latest book, entitled *Yours, Mine and Ours: Creating a Compelling Donor Experience*, will be available this August through Wiley Press.

As a member of McConkey / Johnston's executive team, he combines many years of experience as a manager of comprehensive development programs with special expertise in direct mail, advertising, public relations and brochure techniques. Barry attended the University of Wisconsin - Madison, where he received a B.A. in Advertising and a Master's Degree in Direct Marketing. He also holds an M.A. from the Fielding Institute in Human and Organization Development. Barry and his wife, Deborah, live near Madison, Wisconsin.

Successful nonprofits increasingly depend on more than a functional approach to marketing strategies that too often tend to be vaguely conceived and too broadly targeted.

## When Two Plus Two Equals More than Four

by Barry J. McLeish

Someone once suggested that "Everything is marketing and marketing is everything." While this may ultimately prove true in the organizational scheme of things, what is also decidedly true is that too few nonprofit institutions realize that marketing must be seen inside their organizations as more than a functional departmental assignment. In fact, marketing is more than either a department or an individual assignment. It goes beyond departmental structures and individuals to the very heart of the experience an organization wants to provide for those within its constituency.

As such, the goals marketing has for an agency's stakeholders need to be integrated into the entire organization so that combined, all parts of an agency work together to create for a stakeholder an experience that is meaningful, memorable, and as relevant as possible. Unfortunately, memorable experiences from the stakeholder's point of view do not just happen on their own. They

come from a set of contacts, exposures, and touchpoints the stakeholder has with any organization during the course of their mutual relationship. Over time, integration's goal in this environment is to communicate a single incorporated experience from the point of view of the stakeholders associated with your organization.

How does all of this come about? The procedure of integration starts with the organization's original philosophical desire to undertake such an activity and then first resides within an agency's strategic marketing plan. For example: virtually every nonprofit organization has a problem with retaining donors over time. Developing an explicit retention strategy by audience segment for dealing with this problem could become a necessary outgrowth and initial early step in developing marketing integration into your strategy plan.

However, the process doesn't simply stop with an organization's desire to

integrate all of its operations that interact with various segments of the public into a cohesive sounding message. The next step has to do with asking “How do your stakeholders experience your causal product?” Sticking with the tactical urgency of retaining stakeholders longer, what parts of their experience with your organization must change in order for them to want to stay with your organization longer? The tactics that define your strategy must provide the answer to this question.

It is necessary to understand as completely as possible where your stakeholders stand in regard to your institution in order for your marketing efforts to appear relevant and meaningful to them. Having knowledge of their values and emotional stance allows you to tactically design touchpoints they can have with your organization in a way that reinforces messages that are important to helping retain them over time (“Your gifts are making a difference – here’s how” etc.).

What are these touchpoints? Beyond the emotional feelings a stakeholder may have for your institution, there are ordinarily other contact points that occur along a continuum that reflect an agency’s communication across the different transactions he or she may have with the organization. These contacts may range from having an encounter with an agency field representative on one end of the spectrum to normative communication, advertising, and solicitational

opportunities designed to extend the stakeholder’s experience. Should an organization implement extensive audience segmentation approaches, the integrated marketing process also speaks to those special relevant contacts that may be made in order to establish customized relationships in which the experience is tailored for the stakeholder.

Obviously in our little example, there are a variety of strategic options available to an agency interested in extending the life of its stakeholders. An institution could concentrate on those individuals giving signals that they are about to lapse in their giving. Another agency strategy might be to concentrate on key donors to their organization to ensure that they would stay in the fold. Or, a nonprofit institution could expend its effort towards new donors, trying to create for them a compelling reason to stick around and give again.

Integrated marketing requires that your institution defines a concept – regardless of the audience segment it is talking to – that will enrich that segment’s experience with the organization. By undertaking this effort, the organizational concept of branding then flows from the effort to

make the stakeholder’s experience more meaningful and relevant. The popular notion of “brand” becomes a litmus test in the agency’s desire to deliver a wonderful experience for the stakeholder.



An obvious strength of integrated marketing is that the experience a stakeholder has with your institution does not necessarily have to be tied explicitly to the action of donating, purchasing a product, or volunteering. Experiences can be created outside of direct actions with your causal product. Your web site can be a touchpoint for a stakeholder by telling stories of how individuals are involved with your organization. Advertising of all forms can likewise communicate the same concept to stakeholders. Presentations the stakeholder may hear, or events they may attend can have the same effect. Likewise, viral marketing can reinforce broad sentiments that are central to your system of values.

The challenge to your marketing program today is the need to inte-

grate and coordinate literally hundreds of contacts you have with your stakeholders – those contacts you control and those you don't – in order to give your stakeholders a sense that the values they hold, the issues they would like to see resolved, are being well handled by your organization. Marketing integration must be seen as:

1. A philosophy your organization holds to.
2. As something more than one department or function – it must be seen as cross-functional and vital to the comprehensive communication efforts of the organization.

To learn more about marketplace dynamics and their effect on your marketing and fundraising strategies, read Barry's book, *Successful Marketing Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations*. Contact Barry or any M/J consultant by visiting our website at [mcconkey-johnston.com](http://mcconkey-johnston.com).