
The Marketing Audit: Baseline for Action

LAURA CRAM

ABSTRACT

MOST LIBRARIANS DO NOT APPRECIATE that the only way for a service-based organization to succeed is to have a clear understanding of what services are in demand by the users and nonusers of the community. Customers not only appreciate, but challenge, providers who offer quality service. This article looks at the steps necessary to develop a solid base for planning, from the comprehensive community profile (including a competitive review) to the "perceived service quality," both from the point of view of customers and staff. Most managers do, indeed, know something about their communities, but discovering what makes it "live" the way it does is one of the more exciting aspects of the marketing audit. The value of knowing who and what is out there, as well as what strengths and weaknesses one's own agency and others have, will lay the groundwork for making decisions. Difficult questions regarding whether to focus on certain market niches where your strengths lie or whether to continue trying to serve everyone with the same level of adequacy become easier to consider. The SWOT analysis as a tool for evaluating specific data is examined: is it something to build on (strength), something to eliminate (weakness), something to anticipate (opportunity), or something to outmaneuver (threat)? Finally, barriers to effective diagnosis of the data are discussed.

THE MARKETING AUDIT: BASELINE FOR ACTION

Most information professionals today realize that changes in technology and social trends are overtaking them faster than they can be identified. The difficulty is that they often do not know what direction to take for fear that it will be a direction with no future. When economic growth provided a stable working environment, it was less important to take the right direction with the first step; they could always go back and try again if it did not turn out to be an appropriate action after all. The idiom of "practice makes perfect" seems less practical and affordable today, however, and there is growing pressure on making the right decisions every time one has to be made.

One of the changes in our society which has had a tremendous impact on libraries is the rapid growth of the service economy. Although most librarians would agree that their agencies are firmly placed within the service sector, many do not appreciate that the only way for a service-based organization to succeed is to have a clear understanding of what services are in demand by the users and nonusers of the community. Customers not only appreciate, but challenge, providers who offer quality service today. And yet, "[b]ecause most libraries have no perceived competitors some provide a passive and reactive service to their clients. Libraries need to become proactive and create and capitalise on growth opportunities" (Paul, 1990, p. 65). To move in this direction, they need to acquire a better understanding of their role in, and the needs of, the community they serve.

Before someone knows the direction in which to head, however, libraries have to know where they are at present. They accomplish this by establishing a solid base of information from which to strategically plan. Crompton and Lamb (1986) argue that "[it] is an unfortunate trait of human nature that we rarely engage in any action until under pressure to do so. Perhaps the major reason for lack of effective marketing planning in public agencies has been the lack of a catalyzing crisis. Growth can be managed on an ad hoc basis; retrenchment cannot" (p. 45). They go on to suggest that:

an examination of environmental forces enhances an agency's ability to be proactive by looking beyond the short term horizon and considering the impact of changing...conditions...Without an understanding of the potential impact of these forces, an agency is constantly forced to react to crises instead of anticipating shifts and formulating strategies to adapt to them. Good planning has been described as a two step process: first figure out what is inevitable, then find a way to take advantage of it. (p. 49)

The concept of taking advantage of the opportunities made possible by change is a marketing-oriented one; its traditional opposite

concept, that of insulating oneself from changes which are regarded as problems and focusing instead on doing better what has normally been done, is a product-oriented one:

Early marketing models focussed on the product, often referred to as "how to make a better mousetrap". This approach, still evident in many libraries, is all about improving the product or service and being the most efficient supplier in the marketplace.... [Theodore Levin's 1960 article, "Marketing Myopia"] actually turned the focus onto the customer to ask what benefits are there for the customer. If there are no benefits to the customer then no matter how good the product is, it will not sell. (Wright, 1994, p. 14)

Unless a manager can become excited by the challenge of keeping services in line with the changing expectations of clients, the time and energy which must be spent to adequately prepare for change will not be worthwhile.

DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Before looking at methods of determining one's direction in the changing community, it is important to provide some definitions of terms used and assumptions in this article. "Strategic planning" is the formal, long-range planning process used to define and achieve the organization's mission, future directions, and customer base. A procedure within strategic planning is the "marketing audit," which Weingand (1987) defines as assessing client needs and understanding community patterns, while also examining internal factors within the information agency (information audit and situation audit are terms used in a similar manner) (p. 36). A subset of the audit is "community analysis," where community needs are explored, particularly looking at primary and secondary data to determine their current profile (Weingand, 1987, p. 36). Another subset is "environmental scanning," or the systematic process of "identifying hazards or opportunities in the outside world that may impact the organization," looking at assumptions and key changes in the external environment (Newsome & McInerney, 1990, p. 285). A "SWOT analysis" (standing for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) can be considered more of an end product of auditing, as it presents the internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats, aligning them in such a way as to facilitate proactive planning. Another term which is often used interchangeably with some of the above terms is "needs analysis." This concept, however, is more often defined as the determination of the need for an as yet undefined service to the specified community and is generally a reaction to a declared need (St. Clair, 1993, p. 756). As such, it does not fall within the scope of this article.

Additionally, as the marketing audit nears completion, it is imperative to assess the central four components of the marketing mix: the product, price, place, and promotion activities of the agency. As these components will be dealt with elsewhere in this issue of *Library Trends*, however, they will not be discussed here.

Several assumptions made in this article must also be made clear. One is that the customer's concern is a vital issue to be factored into the equation of why the information agency exists. Another is that no situation is static anymore, so planning for change has to be a constant activity for management. Third, what suits one library or information agency does not necessarily suit another. While data and ideas can certainly be borrowed, the strategies which will work in another community must be conceived with the addition of pertinent information from that unique community. And, finally, library and information professionals must be prepared to compete with others in similar areas of expertise in order to maintain a healthy service.

GETTING STARTED

There are certain common elements in the application of strategic planning steps and procedures, regardless of the type of "business" an organization may be in. The first step is usually to create a working group which will organize and carry out a major proportion of the planning to come. This planning committee will do several things initially. First, it will determine what elements will be covered and in what depth. A knowledge of the limitations of resources (including staff time) and the observed change in the community since the last audit will dictate this. It will also decide on the depth of presentation of the audit (Weingand, 1987, pp. 45-46). Second, it will set up a timeline, identify who will be responsible for outcomes, and determine an evaluative method of tracking the audit process so that it does not bog down in side issues. Finally, it will arrange for an analysis of the external environment within which the entity exists, including customers, suppliers, and competitors, concurrent with an analysis of its internal strengths and weaknesses. Analysis is the critical starting point of strategic thinking. Strategic thinking, however, is something for which many organizations find little time or energy. Yet it is a vital part of the group process which will help stakeholders consolidate commitment to new strategies. Without taking time to do strategic thinking, *diagnosis* of the analysis, which is the starting point of preparing for action, will also be incomplete and may well point the organization in the wrong direction.

When beginning this stage of strategic planning, it follows, therefore, that there should be several "premoves" that incorporate

thinking. Ideally, a first strategy would be to consider the options for the organization. What position would it be in if nothing were done differently for the next five years? Brainstorming and scenario building are effective tools not only for "seeing into" the future but also for bringing staff together and making them less anxious about change. A key to effective brainstorming is to encourage staff to separate themselves from the ideas; otherwise those whose ideas are rejected may feel hurt or slighted (Curzon, 1989, p. 52). In scenario building, the idea is to look at any factors operating outside of the organization and to project their consequences on the organization. Identification of high risk service areas, such as preschool story hours in a community whose schools are closing down due to a decrease in young families in the district, may make staff aware that creative alternatives are needed (for a look at some examples of scenarios, Jacob [1990] offers several [pp. 39-47]).

Once a picture is described of where the agency would be in five years, it is then time to consider where it would like to be in five years. If the picture is different, then strategic planning is necessary to negotiate the needed changes. Consider the situation, however, where the agency is very successful at the moment and content with its place in the external environment. Drucker (1990) suggests that this is the ideal time to implement change. "Refocus and change the organization when you are successful....When everybody says, 'Don't rock the boat. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' At that point...is the very time to ask, 'Can't we do better?' The best rule for improvement strategies is to put your efforts into your successes. Improve the areas of success, and change them" (pp. 66-77).

Another good premise is to brush up on research techniques. Increasingly, the information profession is becoming active in quantifying both the input and the output of its efforts, and there are a number of sources available which make such quantification easier to accomplish. Documents such as *A Planning Process for Public Libraries* (Palmour et al., 1980), *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries* (McClure et al., 1987), and *Output Measures for Public Libraries* (Van House et al., 1987) provide standardized procedures for gathering quantitative data as well as other strategies for acquiring qualitative information.

Looking at research which has already been done may also help to provide insight into what clients want of services in general. For example, in a study of service quality in the United States, the five "principal dimensions" used for judging service were identified (Berry et al., 1990, p. 29). St. Clair (1993) has adapted these to the information service environment and has also adapted Carr's fifteen steps to customer satisfaction (pp. 69-73). Several research studies on reference

service in academic libraries were the subject of papers at an Australian Library and Information Association Conference: "Priorities for the Future" (1992). Westin and Finger's (1991) U. S. national public opinion survey report on using the public library in the computer age presents useful data as well. McIntyre's (1990) examination of Victoria's public libraries and their service priorities provides data for a scenario which is likely to become all too real in Australia—i.e., that of charging, or even of tendering bids, for public services. Hales's (1985) research into how the information needs of the aging should be met is especially useful, as increasingly many organizations' clients are falling into that group. These are just a few examples of the myriad of research findings published which can provide useful background data to assist organizations as they prepare to plan.

Another useful premove prior to planning is to examine the organization's mission statement, policies, goals and objectives, and its placement in the larger organization in order to determine its last known position. The aim is to arrive at an agreed understanding of the organization's purpose and role in the community. There is little point in carrying out market or community research without knowing what it is the agency wishes to achieve and why. Thus it is necessary to determine what business the organization is really in. Traditionally, libraries have been concerned with the provision of information and educational and recreational services. Today, however, it might be said that they are in the information services industry, competing against such companies as electronic network providers, database vendors, information consultants, and corporations whose existence may be new or largely unknown to librarians. This means that managers not only have to take into account what the customers want, but also what others in the information services industry are doing. It also means understanding one's own capabilities; if the agency cannot do a job properly, should it be trying to compete against others in that area?

Any "givens" should also be identified. These are elements which are not open to change and might include such things as corporate control and funding allocation. "Knowing that there is little control over factors important to your operation can be frustrating, but if this is an issue in your organization, it may help to explore what those limits actually are and whether you have any flexibility within the framework of that reality" (Espy, 1986, p. 30). It is also useful to identify these in order to avoid spending too much time getting caught up in wishful planning that might never result in any useful action.

Finally, it is advantageous to determine what individual and organizational assumptions there are in order to try to counteract

them while performing the marketing audit. This will help to avoid bias. It may become clear what these are when statements such as "But we've always done it this way" are aired.

Asking gentle but pointed questions about these assumptions may help to flush out irrational or outdated assumptions and subject them to closer scrutiny. Suggesting that a closer look be taken may initially be viewed as an act of heresy, but it may yield to a productive discussion. Even if the conclusion is to allow the sacred cow a long and happy life, recognizing this limitation is useful knowledge as you proceed with your plan. (Espy, 1986, p. 31)

We must not let resistance to change dictate our decisions. Past strengths may well be future weaknesses, so we cannot let success fool us when considering our future role in society. Thus even our assumptions of success must be open to scrutiny as we begin to plan.

Looking Around

The external environment yields a great deal of fascinating information, which has an impact on the service of any organization. Most managers do, indeed, know something about their communities, but discovering what makes it "live" the way it does is one of the more exciting aspects of the marketing audit. After determining the level of depth (e.g., time required) to probe, it is time to get all staff and planning committee members participating in the hunt for information for the community analysis.

Who is Served? Knowing who the stakeholders of the organization are is a good first step in the development of a community or agency service area profile. Stakeholders can be defined as those "who would be affected to varying degrees if you closed shop tomorrow...and who you can count on for funding, backing, and positive word of mouth" (Espy, 1986, p. 35). Examples might include friends, political groups, suppliers, employees, board members, corporate management, and other libraries' staff. Not only knowing who they are but also "their levels of influence and how each may politically, socially, or economically affect the library's operations, functions, and future plans" will assure that none is ignored and that sufficient resources are in place to effect good public relations with them (Bryson, 1990, p. 15). It is also valuable to get stakeholders involved in the planning process. In fact, it makes no sense to proceed with strategic planning without finding out what is in these people's minds. There must be a clear concept of the readiness of the organization's staff to undertake any activities which will eventually evolve from the process.

It is also important to identify the customers and potential customers at this early stage.

Good marketing begins with research into the expectations, preferences, and patterns of behaviour of the target client group. This should include the quantification of the total number of potential clients as well as existing ones. For libraries this translates into the patterns of recreation and information seeking of everyone in the target community. Only then is it possible to determine market potential, the existence of competition and strategies to meet the competition. (Wright, 1994, p. 14)

Demographic, psychographic, and motivational information about community members is all useful to the organization. Demographic factors include age, occupation, income level, language, household size, and educational level, and can be retrieved largely from census documents and government planning authorities. When considering these factors, it is vital to link them to each other as well. For example, knowing how many aging female members of racial language minorities there are in your service area could indicate special information needs. Psychographic, or lifestyle, information adds character to the statistics but is still quantifiable. It includes such things as interests, attitudes, and values and is usually compiled through self-administered surveys. With these data, one can determine, for example, a student's priorities on how he or she prefers to study or what levels of customer satisfaction are being achieved. Motivational factors are typically qualitative in nature and describe the driving forces within individuals. Everyone selects specific behaviors to achieve their goals. Identification of these goals can be useful when determining why someone might use one service over another or what benefits they derive from the services offered and is gathered typically from interviews and focus groups (Schiffman, 1987).

The focus group is an interesting and inexpensive method of letting group dynamics bring out many issues relevant to the service which might otherwise have remained hidden. Finding the answers to two questions in particular can show not only the customer's perception of the quality of service but can also provide suggestions for how to increase positive attitudes and awareness of that service. Those questions are simply, How are we doing? and How can we get better? (LeBoeuf, 1987, pp. 65-66).

Knowing the perceptions and attitudes of the customers regarding the service they receive can be extremely valuable when it comes to analyzing and diagnosing the data compiled throughout the marketing audit. Albrecht (1988) suggests that this information will "identify the characteristics of the service product that are most critical to its acceptance by the customer and... isolate characteristics that can form the basis for successful differentiation of your service product from others in the market" (p. 161). Additionally, the "perceived service quality" is linked to expectations and may be quite different

from the reality, which is observed from the staff side of the service desk. Yet "how that person's expectations are met will determine whether or not he or she will judge the information interaction positively or negatively" (St. Clair, 1993, p. 30). In other words, the agency may be providing exactly the service required by members of a particular group, but unless they perceive that it is exactly what they need and that they will benefit from an interaction with the agency, the likelihood is that they will not even think of going to that agency.

One example of the effect of perception as opposed to reality is shown in a study by James (1983), who was attempting to determine how students visualized the library when they were asked to draw it from memory. Results of the maps showed that "[s]tudents were not equally familiar with all parts of the library. Rooms were omitted or represented by a door, a void and the implied legend, 'here be dragons.' There were considerable internal variations in scale. When these maps were compared with students' designation of areas of most use...it tended to be these areas that had been magnified" (p. 23).

When asking community members to assist in the information-gathering process, it is important to keep in mind that there "is a large core of service which the public expects, revolving around books, reference and research, and study space.... [I]n general, the public lacks a fine sense of how libraries should proceed to provide these materials and services, lacks any common expectation as to how well services should be provided for them, and lacks a common view of what other services should be provided" (Beckerman, 1990, p. 58). This biased perception needs to be taken into account but should not be dismissed.

What has an Impact? Once the membership of the community has been defined, other environmental factors must be gathered. *A Planning Process for Public Libraries* (Palmour et al., 1980) and other manuals suggest that these should include the growth and development of the community, its government, business and industry, communications, transportation, educational facilities, climate and geography, recreational opportunities, cultural and community activities, and other library and nonlibrary information resources. Again, examining the mix of these factors is valuable—e.g., the mix of business, manufacturing, farming, and service bases. The required information is gathered from municipal planning reports; business publications; interviews with community and business leaders; annual reports; state, regional, and local planning

agencies; moving and observing throughout the community; local bulletin boards (electronic and otherwise); the local press; service organizations and clubs; and so on.

Obviously there are also national and global macro environmental factors which impact on society as a whole and over which there is no local control. To be aware of these factors which will impact upon all organizations will help not only in identifying trends but also in moderating the concerns and expectations of the planning group when examining local conditions. Certainly demographic details such as the general aging of the population are among the uncontrollable factors in some countries. National legislation, such as the Library Services and Construction Act, falls into the category of legislative macro analysis. The economy is another uncontrollable factor. Specifically, the rise in postage rates or the price of fuel to operate the bookmobile could have deleterious effects on an outreach service. "Notwithstanding the difficulties of economic forecasting, it is nonetheless an essential task to review the likely impact of the economy on society as a whole, on the industry which the organization operates in, on the organisation itself and its customers, competitors and suppliers" (Reed, 1992, p. 48). Keeping generally and reliably informed through press and business journals is, therefore, an important practice in environmental scanning.

Technological innovation is also an external factor which takes place on a global level and has a great effect on information agencies. For example, "[s]atellites and ISDN networks provide new dimensions for information transmission and video conferencing. Videotex, EDI facilities, and electronic mail offer opportunities for interlibrary loans and access to library collections. It may be that, in the future, remote access may become the preferred form of library usage. This has implications for library staff and buildings" (Bryson, 1990, p. 28). It is particularly important to be able to forecast trends in this area. On a primary level, however, reading computer as well as library journals, attending suitable conferences, and consulting with government or corporate officials in the information technology field will provide sufficient data to conduct environmental scanning for the marketing audit.

A final task which will be examined in the external environment is that of developing the competitive review. Every agency has competitors, even if they are genteel about it. Some would be obvious. For example, public libraries provide a variety of recreational material, which directly competes with the entertainment and recreational provisions of television, video games, movies, and the like. All information agencies see one of their roles as providing information for specific needs. Yet often their reference service, online

service, and other information services are largely unknown and unused by businesses. Information brokers are increasingly taking over in providing service to this client group and are thus an obvious threat to other information agencies. In an academic setting, competition would clearly come from the university's computer center. Both the university library and the computer center handle information required by their community members, although that information is manipulated in different ways by them. However, there are more subtle competitors, as well:

Libraries and academic computer centers are further impacted by other information stakeholders on campus, such as telecommunications services, administrative computing centers, and media centers. Boundaries among these agencies are blurring and relations among the competing information providers on campus may be more crucial to the library's longterm health than internal organizational changes in the library. A period of unsettling transition awaits those libraries that fail to clearly define their place in the campus information environment. (Martin, 1992, p. 77)

In order to determine who the competitors are, it is important that the organization has agreed on an understanding of what business it is in. Those agencies beyond the scope of this defined "business" need not be examined at great length. Looking at the obvious and the more subtle competitors, certain questions must be asked about each of them in order to complete the external environment analysis. Are they well entrenched and getting stronger, struggling and losing ground, or reorganizing themselves to fit more securely into a particular niche in the market? What are their goals and objectives? Are they risk takers or conservative followers? What is the quality of customer service, technology, and products provided? What is their image among the clientele which is in common with both agencies? What are their likely future strategies? Are there any actions you could take which might provoke their retaliation (Reed, 1992, p. 567)? "Where are the areas of duplication? Are there possibilities for cooperation? Finally, ...is there sufficient market to support both or all providers" (Weingand, 1987, p. 40)?

Increasingly, it is likely that most information agencies will find that there is not sufficient market to support all providers if all are attempting to serve the broad spectrum of the community well. The value of knowing who and what is out there, as well as what strengths and weaknesses one's own agency and others have, will lay the groundwork for making decisions. Difficult questions regarding whether to focus on certain market niches where your strengths lie, or whether to continue trying to serve everyone with the same level

of adequacy, become easier to consider. Can any competitors become part of a cooperative network, so that the community is much better served by a number of organizations who are each allowed to focus on particular strategies? It might be worthwhile doing something similar to what a group of librarians in Western Australia have been doing to enhance cooperation levels. They are meeting together to work out their marketing knowhow and strategies. "As librarians we often operate in isolation....The main function of the group was professional support through sharing information, knowledge, experience and resources" (Ritchie, 1994, p. 14). The group is using a packaged self-education marketing course produced by the Australian Library and Information Association (Nicholson, 1993) to assist them in their venture.

For an excellent selection of worksheets to assist planners in the compilation and analysis of a community profile, see Turock (1992). Once prepared, it can be regularly updated as appropriate.

Looking Inward

Having decided what it is the organization hopes to accomplish, for whom, and in what environment, the next step in the marketing audit is to review its existing services, resources, image, and staff utilization to determine what refinements are necessary to place it more securely on its future path. It is interesting to consider how much is truly known about one's own organization. Most impressions are seen from very biased eyes. To begin an examination of its strengths and weaknesses, a valuable exercise is to view the organization from the point of view of the customer. How do our publics see us and our competitors? What is the library's public image?

What is the customer's point of view?

Customer satisfaction is so important that you would think that most businesses would have a well thought out strategy for measuring it and putting this information to work....Yet very, very few even try to obtain, measure, or regularly monitor what the customer likes and dislikes about the job they do. It seems ironic that in the information age, most businesses aren't even trying to obtain, measure or use some of the most valuable information of all. (LeBoeuf, 1987, p. 66)

One way to obtain information on how customers view the service they regularly receive is to put yourself in their shoes and approach the library from the first point of contact (generally the street). How easy is it to gain access to the parking lot? Are there lighting problems at night or large ponds of rainwater at the entrance after a storm? Is the door easy to open? Is there a staff member welcoming you as you enter? Are there long lines at the OPACs? It is necessary to keep reminding yourself of what you are looking for. Each time a

decision has to be made by a customer, such as "Is it safe to park my car here?" it is a "moment of truth" for them. If anything turns them away at this moment, the organization's image suffers. Someone once said that "you never get a second chance to make a good first impression." There are some valuable opportunities for changing that first impression for the better but only after first experiencing it through the eyes of the customer.

The same is true for the messages libraries traditionally emit. Historically, librarians have given the impression to the community that there are good books in the library and that it is a good thing to read. To many people, good books mean that there are boring books there, not the kind of books that *they* like to read. It certainly does not sound enticing, especially to a nonreader. What does a potential customer expect from the organization? Probably only a small subset of what that organization is capable of offering. It is difficult to change public impressions once they are entrenched, but an examination of the message from the customer's point of view can be a valuable exercise and will assist staff in developing an updated promotional message.

One other strategy for acquiring information on how potential and actual customers perceive the organization and its competitors is to ask them. Useful questions include: How well do we deliver what is promised? How often do we do things right on time? How accessible are we when you need to contact us? How helpful and polite are we? How well do we understand and try to meet special needs and requests? How would you rate the quality of our (and our competitor's) service? How willing would you be to recommend us? What parts of our service are most important to you (LeBoeuf, 1987, pp. 68-69)?

Is the Structure Understood? There are structural components of every aspect of service provision by the organization. Understanding how these relate to each other is important so that ramifications of any future decisions are recognized. Most obvious is the managerial structure, which coordinates how decisions are made, how policies are developed and adhered to, and how staff formally liaise with and communicate at each level of the structure. It may be that a fairly rigid hierarchical system is in place, with close supervision, strict adherence to rules, clear lines of formal communication to follow, and a centralized decision-making standard. The opposite managerial structure is participative, decentralized, supportive, and creative. Most are somewhere in between, which offers enough

flexibility to plan for change and carry it out effectively (Bryson, 1990, pp. 38-41). Other structures include: the technical structure, which controls the processes, techniques, equipment, and facilities; the financial structure, which looks at the services and functions performed and the comparative level of cost versus value of each; and the informal staffing structure, which incorporates elements of the working relationship such as leadership styles, politics, status, reward systems, and ideologies. This latter is often the most difficult to understand and use to the increased benefit of the organization.

As indicated earlier, understanding how the library is perceived by those in the external environment is just as important as the reality. Similarly, an understanding of the perceptions and attitudes about internal commitment, trust and supportiveness, communication channels, staffing patterns, and decision structures must be achieved. These elements are a part of the corporate culture, and understanding them will help to identify those factors on which top management has built the organizational structure. Corporate culture is difficult to define and to change but not impossible if the need is there to do so. "We must be able to create cultures of pride, climates of success" (Kanter, 1983, p. 129). Often the best way to understand some of the less obvious elements of the internal structure is to have someone from outside the organization look at it. If reported with sensitivity and care, vital information can be shared without anyone feeling persecuted or without trampling any of those sacred cows mentioned earlier. In the light of day, some of the more problematic situations may seem trivial and solve themselves.

Are Staff Prepared for Change? The people in the organization can be seen as customers along with other stakeholders, users of the service, and potential clients. If staff are not sold on the value of the services they provide they will never be able to convince others of it. Albrecht (1988) suggests regularly monitoring the "quality of work life (QWL) defined in terms of the perceptions of the employees" (p. 169). If they believe that their job is worth doing, is safe and secure, and offers competent supervision, opportunities to learn and advance, adequate pay, a positive social climate, and a sense of justice and fair play, then a high QWL exists (p. 169). Of course, humans never feel that their needs are totally satisfied, and, in fact, the needs are constantly changing as the motivation to achieve those which have been met recedes.

Another important aspect of staff assessment is to recognize their expertise so that it can be put to proper use and not be squandered. Drucker and other management experts have emphasized that if you want people to perform in an organization, you have to use their

strengths and not emphasize their weaknesses. Abilities worth encouraging include those which engender better customer service—e.g., problem solving, good communication skills which includes active listening techniques and empathetic listening, and handling hostility. Other abilities to promote should relate to those trends and aspects of the community which have already been identified, not to mention specialized knowledge of sources and resources and service provision.

What Other Resources Must be Audited?

Other aspects of the internal environment which need to be assessed include finances and how adequate and secure are the suppliers and the operating budgets of the various departments or services. If opportunities in the external environment are identified, is there any possibility of taking advantage of them without devastating another valued service? Related to this concern is the knowledge of how funding authorities value the organization. What changes may be necessary in order to change not only their perception but also the reality of this value to them?

Also to be assessed is the technology and technical expertise available to the agency. It may not all be located within the structure of the agency itself but may, in fact, be part of the larger organization. The physical resources must be examined as well. The need is not only to identify what buildings, space, furnishings, and so on are available, but also to look at the information it holds (on paper or in machine-readable form), and what the collection's strengths are, and to assess the quality of those resources from the customer's point of view. There may indeed be fifty reader seats in the library, but if they are the most uncomfortable seats ever manufactured and no one ever sits in them, what is their worth? Comfort is an extremely valuable asset and relates to how the customer feels about the place as well as to the hardness of the chairs. A complete listing of services and programs will probably yield some surprises.

Finally, other internal factors, such as ongoing planning or marketing systems, and evaluative or control systems, including a range of output measures, should be examined. Questions to ask relating to planning systems include: Is planning reactive or proactive? Is it systematic and organized? How do marketing activities interact with other aspects of management? Are these interactions positive and supportive? Are plans related to forecasts or potential? Are objectives realistic and attainable? Questions regarding controls at every service and departmental level might be: Are control procedures known and adequate? Do controls enable ongoing analysis? Is there provision for a regular stream of information to update the community profile and to effectively distribute the information? Is

service provision adequate, as seen from using output measures such as circulation per capita, reference transaction, program attendance, and so on (Nicholson, 1993, p. 3.4; Weingand, 1987, p. 43)?

DIAGNOSIS AND PRESENTATION

To date, the evaluation procedure has concentrated on the collection of information. It is now time to synthesize the findings from all of the earlier discussed activity and exercise some judgment in applying the evidence to the organization's current reality (Childers & Van House, 1993, p. 9). Interestingly, it is at this point that valuable information may be lost to the organization because of an inability to integrate "evaluation concepts and performance measures into a broader administrative context related to decision making and planning" (McClure, 1990, p. 17). Thus far, community analysis, environmental scanning, and examination of various internal input and output measures have provided valuable feedback. Some of the reasons why planning efforts fail to take advantage of the data are: the failure of staff to see what can be done about whatever the findings purport to show; their inability to convince the administrators that the information means anything; the predisposition of management to believe what they want to believe, regardless of the data; the lack of familiarity of staff with management uses of organizational data, creating an unfocused presentation; and staff belief that having this information will not make any difference in what is actually done in the library anyway (McClure, 1990, p. 26). To be able to understand and relate this new data to successful strategies requires a focused, creative, and open-minded planning team. If it is not successfully linked to strategies, there is danger of the evaluation becoming an end in itself and of the agency being engulfed by an "I told you so" attitude on the part of staff who believe that proper planning is a waste of time.

One useful method of presenting the data in a way that ensures evaluation is to perform a SWOT analysis. An evaluative decision must be made about each finding, even if it is to ultimately decide that the finding is irrelevant or an error. The SWOT analysis allows management to signify the decision's relevance to the organization: is it something to build on (strength), something to eliminate (weakness), something to anticipate (opportunity), or something to outmaneuver (threat)? A strength is a resource or capability an organization possesses to effectively achieve one or more of its objectives. It may be an outstanding health studies collection or a creative staff member. A weakness is a limitation, fault, or defect in the organization which will keep it from achieving one or more of its objectives. Examples might be limited opening hours or a status

quo-oriented staff. An opportunity is an attractive arena for activity in which the agency would enjoy a competitive advantage. It may be a trend or change in some community situation which indicates a demand for a service not previously or adequately provided such as remote access to an OPAC. A threat is an unfavorable situation in the agency's external environment which is potentially damaging to it or to its current strategy. Examples, unfortunately, are plentiful and include cutbacks in funding, privatization of information provision, or amalgamation of council areas or universities (Bryson, 1990, pp. 48-49).

The most difficult aspect of conducting a SWOT analysis is recognizing that specific weaknesses are a part of any organization, and that identifying these weaknesses may put individuals in a defensive position either for themselves or for the status quo. For this reason, it has already been suggested that an outsider may be in a better position to identify and inform staff of their results from the internal analysis. At the University of South Australia, students in Library and Information Management have an opportunity to work in teams as outside observers and researchers for interested agencies. As well as carrying out some of the actual data retrieval for a particular agency—for example, surveying users on particular issues—they also conduct a sample marketing audit for the agency. One of their assignments is to prepare a SWOT analysis which, although necessarily limited in scope, does produce some useful correlations (see Figure 1 for an example of one team's effort). In many situations, a correlation between a market opportunity and an internal strength would be identified. Smith and Saker (1992) suggest that an opportunity matched with a strength or strengths indicates planning for an attack strategy; an opportunity matched with a weakness indicates a need to reinforce the weakness to allow an attack strategy; a threat matched with a strength should lead to a defense strategy; and a threat matched with a weakness suggests that the weakness should be reinforced to allow a defense strategy (p. 12). There are, of course, other ways of looking at the results. Positioning strategies, such as market penetration (concentration on improving present products for present clients) or diversification (the marketing of new services to new clients), will become part of the final marketing plan.

Apart from a visual analysis of the internal and external environment, such as that afforded by a SWOT analysis set up in chart format, descriptive presentations of the findings are also valuable. Espy (1986) provides an example:

In addition, our geographic base has shifted; in the past three years, customers have increasingly come from Nexttown rather

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Highly specialized and unique collection of materials for health studies	Cumbersome and inefficient manual systems/ Staff may lack expertise in technical services	Promote acquisition of computerised catalog	Alienation of users by technical difficulties in accessing collection/ Potential competition from other agencies
Strong management collective	Limited and insecure operating grants/ Inadequate funding/ Lack of continuity of staff because of short term appointments	Investigate more varied and stable sources of funding	Cuts in Education Department funding/ Conservative backlash with a change in government
Qualified teachers on staff/ Materials developed specifically for teaching	Low use rate of specialized teaching materials	Actively promote specialized education services/ Develop consultancy service to other library and information services	
Knowledge, experience and commitment of staff to health issues, non-sexist and counter sexist education		Promote use of the Center through health studies courses at tertiary and secondary level	
	Links not established and maintained with institutions/ Location of Center isolates it from other education facilities	Create school or institutional membership	Possible loss of autonomy through increased links with Education Department
Strong support in the community at large and high loyalty of users	Center is short-staffed and more clerical support is needed / Relies heavily on volunteers, but skills are not fully utilized	Encourage participation by volunteers and develop and use their skills beyond basic clerical tasks	
Dedicated staff provide friendly, personalized service to users			

Figure 1. A SWOT Analysis (slightly modified) (Produced by Renee Amyot, Margaret Colmer, and Jeanne MacKenzie, for *Management for Information Work 2*. A marketing subject in the BA Library and Information Management, School of Communication and Information Studies, University of South Australia. The agency for which it was created has found it to be most useful.)

than Ourtown. Presently, only 31 percent reside in Ourtown. Our efforts last year at marketing our services in Ourtown yielded a brief but temporary rise in customers from that area; for two months, the service to those residents rose, but it then fell off to its original levels. (p. 79)

This type of presentation will appeal to certain members of staff and the management team, just as pie charts and quantitative descriptions will appeal to others. The aim of any presentation is to see more clearly what needs to be done, so a variety of presentation formats should be incorporated into the final package. If there is a deviation from anticipated results or an identified obstacle standing in the way of following an important trend, it must be clearly shown and accepted before any alternatives to these realities can be suggested (Withers & Vipperman, 1992, pp. 71-72).

What Barriers are in Place?

It is possible at this stage that some difficulties will arise. Areas of concern have been recorded by the planning team and can no longer be ignored. Further, elements of the information are about to be shared with a wider audience of stakeholders and upper management. It could easily hurt staff morale if problems which have been identified are not addressed. One thing that no service organization can afford is poor morale among staff, as it usually results in a poor attitude toward users (Coker, 1993, p. 30). One way to counteract this problem is by employing a positive team approach to encourage everyone to look for the opportunities arising from the marketing audit. "Membership on a team can be rejuvenating and inspirational. It can also raise the ante for individual performance. To let down the boss is bad, but to let down the team is often worse. Team participation can unleash one of the most potent of motivators—the respect of peers" (Berry et al., 1990, p. 33).

Implicit in the morale issue is the need to improve communication channels and make all of the information known. Hiding sensitive elements will only curtail the flow of communication. Peters (1992), in fact, argues that better communication is vital and demonstrates trust by showing a willingness to share virtually everything with everybody. He goes on to suggest that creating online databases that can be used across functional boundaries, or installing an "email ethos" where informal communication becomes the norm will help inspire the changing nature of organizational relationships (p. 122).

Other barriers to effective diagnosis of the data, as identified by Curzon (1989) and others, may be that there is insufficient data available to accurately predict the worth of a certain activity; politics puts too much pressure on the organization to allow for certain

changes to take place; managers may desire more and more information or time to wait and see what happens before acting, thus losing the opportunity they may have had to offer a unique service to the community; precedents are always going to affect decisionmaking; attitudes and values cannot be eliminated from the equation; a perceived threat puts everyone on the defensive without allowing for the chance to look for other opportunities; certain stakeholders disagree on fundamental issues with other stakeholders thus creating a stalemate; and humans will often react negatively to the prospect of learning to change by denying that there are any problems or by rejecting any proposals.

Another barrier, even at this stage of the planning process, relates to human foibles as well. It is easier to react to crises than to prepare to head them off through long-range planning.

Perhaps for that reason it is one of the most easily avoided activities in libraries since the needs of the institutions are more easily identified than the needs of users and the problems seem to be more immediate. This phenomenon of resistance exists despite the fact that overall organisational planning is a basic function from which all other actions should naturally emanate. Most of us continue to emphasise current operations at the expense of long range planning, content with reasoning that we are too busy with today's problems to worry about tomorrow's. (Stueart, 1986, p. 38)

Finally, White (1987) suggests that in times of declining resources "we are measured on the basis of budgets rather than results.... Because we are here to do 'good' and because we see our mission as a moral imperative rather than in more mundane down to earth terms, it may be precisely because we do not *want* to limit our objectives that we fail to tie them to the resources provided" (p. 198). This aspect of the corporate culture may be one of the most difficult attitude barriers to address, and yet, if the organization is to honestly assess the quality of its service, it must, indeed, link resources and goals along with the trends and issues within the community.

TOWARD THE NEXT STEP

The marketing audit is now complete, and questions can now be adequately answered in preparation for the next stage—preparing the plan. Such questions include: What are the agency's major strengths and weaknesses? Is it offering an appropriate mix of "products" for the customers/potential customers in the community? What is happening in the community that impacts on the agency? What services do users want that are not currently available? Which new services could or should be offered? What are the cost implications of service innovation? Are staff prepared to address any forthcoming

changes? What are the staff training implications of changes to services? A good final task at this stage, which should raise many more questions, is to go back to the scenario building/brainstorming activity and think about where the agency is placed in the environment and how well it operates there. What might the future hold and how can stakeholders initiate change to take advantage of the opportunities?

Robinson (1992), in discussing the Baltimore County Public Library system, stated that:

I would hope that change in public libraries is tending toward a recognition of serving the people.... At the BCPL, we have gone from being a traditional, collection oriented institution to that of a more service oriented institution....

We are starting with what works, and building our policies from that. We are letting the public we serve design the shoes for us to walk in, not the profession, not the library press, & most of all, not we ourselves. (pp. 43-44)

It is hoped that the most important result of the organization's analysis efforts will be an appreciation that it must build on its strengths, and that serving the individual is its *raison d'être*. This understanding is vital before proceeding to the next step. "We can no longer afford to pay lipservice to our users as our future rests in their hands as well as ours" (Paul, 1990, p. 69).

REFERENCES

- Albrecht, K. (1988). *At America's service: How corporations can revolutionize the way they treat their customers*. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones Irwin.
- Clayton, P., & McCaskie, R. (Eds.). (1992). *Priorities for the future: Proceedings of the First National Reference and Information Service Section Conference and the University, College and Research Libraries Section Workshop on Research* (1991: Canberra, A.C.T., Australia). Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: D.W. Thorpe.
- Beckerman, E. (1990). Public libraries: Flexibility and political action. In C. Curran & F. W. Summers (Eds.), *Library performance, accountability, and responsiveness: Essays in honor of R. DeProspero* (pp. 53-64). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.
- Berry, L. L.; Zeithaml, V. A.; & Parasuraman, A. (1990). Five imperatives for improving service quality. *Sloan Management Review*, 31(4), 29-38.
- Bryson, J. (1990). *Effective library and information centre management*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Gower Publishing.
- Childers, T. A., & Van House, N. A. (1993). *What's good? Describing your public library's effectiveness*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Coker, S. (1993). Libraries versus users? How and how not to deter library users. *Library Management*, 14(2), 24-31.
- Crompton, J. L., & Lamb, C. W., Jr. (1986). *Marketing government and social services*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Curzon, S. C. (1989). *Managing change: A how-to-do-it manual for planning, implementing, and evaluating change in libraries*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers.
- Drucker, P. F. (1990). *Managing the non-profit organization: Practices and principles*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Espy, S. N. (1986). *Handbook of strategic planning for nonprofit organizations*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

- Hales, C. (1985). How should the information needs of the aging be met? A Delphi response. *The Gerontologist*, 25(2), 172-176.
- Jacob, M. E. L. (1990). *Strategic planning: A how-to-do-it manual for librarians*. New York: Neal Schuman Publishers.
- James, R. (1983). Libraries in the mind: How can we see users' perceptions of libraries? *Journal of Librarianship*, 15(1), 19-28.
- Kanter, R. M. (1983). *The change masters*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Kotler, P. (1987). *Marketing for nonprofit organizations*, 3d ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- LeBoeuf, M. (1987). *How to win customers and keep them for life*. New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons.
- Martin, M. J. (1992). Academic libraries and computing centers: Opportunities for leadership. *Library Administration and Management*, 6(2), 77-81.
- McClure, C. R. (1990). Integrating performance measures into the planning process: Moving toward decision support systems. In C. C. Curran & F. W. Summers (Eds.), *Library performance, accountability, and responsiveness: Essays in honor of Ernest R. DeProspero* (pp. 17-32). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.
- McClure, C. R.; Owen, A.; Zweizig, D. L.; Lynch, M. J.; & Van House, N. (1987). *Planning and role setting for public libraries*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- McIntyre, B. (1990). Preparedness and response: Can public libraries thrive on chaos? In M. K. Rochester & F. Nicholson (Eds.), *Challenges in Australian library management* (pp. 40-61). Adelaide, South Australia: Auslib Press.
- Nicholson, F. (1993). *Marketing strategies for libraries and information agencies: An ALIA training and development package*. Queen Victoria Terrace, A.C.T.: Australian Library and Information Association.
- Newsome, J., & McInerney, C. (1990). Environmental scanning and the information manager. *Special Libraries*, 81(4), 285-293.
- Paul, M. (1990). Improving service provision. *Australian Library Journal*, 39(1), 64-69.
- Palmour, V. E. et al. 1980. *A planning process for public libraries*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Peters, T. J. (1992). *Liberation management*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.
- Reed, P. W. (1992). *Marketing planning and strategy*. Sydney, Australia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Ritchie, A. (1994). Marketing strategies for libraries. *inCite*, 1 April, 14.
- Robinson, C. W. (1992). The administrator as change agent: Reshaping organizations, questioning old verities and sharing the blame. In J. Varlejs (Ed.), *Agents of change: Progress and innovation in the library/information profession* (pp. 34-44). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- Schiffman, L. G., & Kanuk, L. L. (1987). *Consumer behavior*, 3d ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Smith, G., & Saker, J. (1992). Developing marketing strategy in the not-for-profit sector. *Library Management*, 13(4), 6-21.
- St. Clair, G. (1993). *Customer service in the information environment*. London, England: Bowker-Saur.
- Stueart, R. D. (1986). The future isn't what it used to be: Long-range planning in US public libraries today and tomorrow. In H. Ernestus & H.-D. Weger (Eds.), *Bertelsmann Foundation colloquium—public libraries today and tomorrow: Approaches to their goals and management* (pp. 37-46). Boston Spa, England: British Library.
- Turock, B. J., & Pedolsky, A. (1992). *Creating a financial plan: A how-to-do-it manual for librarians*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers.
- Van House, N. A.; Lynch, M. J.; McClure, C. R.; Zweizig, D. L.; & Rodger, E. J. (1987). *Output measures for public libraries: A manual of standardized procedures*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

- Weingand, D. E. (1987). *Marketing/planning library and information services*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Westin, A. F., & Finger, A. L. (1991). *Using the public library in the computer age: Present patterns, future possibilities*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- White, H. S. (1987). Entrepreneurship and the library profession. *Journal of Library Administration*, 8(1), 11-27.
- Withers, J., & Vipperman, C. (1992). *Marketing your service business: Plan a winning strategy*, 2d ed. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: Self-Counsel Press.
- Wright, J. (1994). Know your clients! *inCite*, 15(6), 14-15.