

Living The Brand

Four Ways to Brand-share With Your Donors

By Ann McKusick

The development team has the privilege of “living the brand” with one very special customer group: those who give. Here are four ways to brand-share with donors to inform, inspire, motivate and stimulate them to go deeper in their relationship with you, each other and your brand.

■ **Communications.** Develop consistency with your corporate image while designing unique features for special focus programs. When naming donor publications, events and giving programs, select names rich with meaning that align with and enhance your brand identification.

HomeWord’s new newsletter is named *The Welcome Mat*, to convey the warmth and hospitality of its new brand identity of “encouraging parents and building families.” Fuller Theological Seminary designed a major donor newsletter focusing on results and giving opportunities, and titled it “Manifold Ministries.” This phrase holds special meaning, as it’s embedded in the seminary’s mission statement.

■ **Connection.** Staff and volunteers serving on the front line of donor relations need to embody the brand. Their personal presentation of the cause is the brand. When donors contact you or send a gift, you’ll want to respond to them out of the fullness of your “brand identity.” This is customer service, uniquely colored with your values and style.

Church Resource Ministries (CRM) is about building leaders for the church. Thus, it flows naturally out of the culture for them to offer donor leaders such services as “Focused Living” seminars to nurture their spiritual calling.

At Opportunity International (OI), a micro-finance ministry to the poor, business people are hired as marketing representatives in development. These folks know how business can bring dignity and economic stability to a family or community. As a result of their first-hand experience, they’re deeply knowledgeable about the OI cause.

Be sure to hire, orient and continue fanning the flames of your mission in the front-line development team. In turn, the transformation in their lives invites donors to a deeper level of involvement.

■ **Listening.** To stay emotionally tied to your donors, you’ll want to hear about *their* needs of *your* organization. You can offer online surveys, provide opportunities for prayer requests and feedback through email and response cards, or offer information search options on your website to answer questions. When face-to-face, you’ll have the opportunity to find

out even more about their interests for information, service and giving options.

I recently received an online survey that John Pearson, CEO of Christian Management Association, sent to certain CMA members. SurveyMonkey.com made it a fun experience to give my viewpoints confidentially and to receive the results from the collective group that responded. This touched into an emotional driver for my connection to CMA — to serve Christ in community.

■ **Events.** While events can be multi-purposed—service, fundraising or educational—they’re a powerful point of contact for donors. In events, your culture and brand come alive visually, within community and through storytelling. This is a transforming time to express your mission and to invite givers to become the cause and not just support it.

Branding in events can take place through the event name, its ambiance, message and the selected activities. The Free Wheelchair Mission’s live auction offered cartons of wheelchairs as a “prize auction item” and the bidding was electric. The desire to help the disabled was an emotional pull as strong as any vacation destination.

Women of Vision, a program of World Vision, hosts an annual “Faces of Courage” luncheon. A woman who’s making a significant difference in the world is the featured speaker. Volunteer leaders are honored as well, while raising significant support for women who courageously live in the face of poverty. Courage is a hallmark of the type of women attracted to and leading this organization. Listening to your donors’ emotional drivers will help you shape events that deepen their ties to your brand.

The “people factor” of branding is emphasized in the development arena. People, products, service, events and mission-driven connection can encourage and stimulate donor giving, involvement and lasting commitment.

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