



Connecting with K-12:

How Businesses and Nonprofits Can Best Reach and Benefit the Education Market

Given the mounting challenges facing US public education systems on the one hand, and the dramatic rise in corporate citizenship efforts on the other, an unprecedented opportunity exists for businesses and nonprofits to support education in meaningful ways. Many businesses and nonprofits, however, are unaware of the positive impact they can make on schools, pre-K through college, through education outreach campaigns that reinforce brand identity, nurture community goodwill, and fulfill core missions.

What opportunities exist to work with schools? Which key factors should one consider when planning a campaign? Which messages resonate most strongly with educators? Which distribution channels are most effective in delivering those messages?

This white paper aims to address these questions and more, and in doing so, provide practical information to public affairs departments, marketing professionals, CSR¹ champions, and other concerned individuals wanting to appeal to, reach, and benefit students and teachers in schools, pre-K through college, by supporting their classroom needs. →

Plan strategically before acting tactically

The first step in any strategic planning should probably be backward rather than forward. That is, take a step back and you'll get a broader view of the current education landscape. Gather the thoughts of others, especially teachers and other partners whom you'd like to involve. It's easy to assume you know what teachers, students and administrators want. But are you sure? Why risk shaping your service/product based on assumptions when it's so easy to ask your potential users what it is they really would like from you – and how they'd like it delivered.

One way to accomplish this is to form an Educator Advisory Council, made up of teachers various education levels – elementary, middle, and high school – and across core curricular areas. These councils can help you keep abreast of current education trends, offer you ongoing access to an targeted audience you care about, and serve as an initial focus group for your new initiatives.²



Need another incentive? Councils such as these can serve as valuable word-of-mouth marketing tools as well, especially when you are, as Glen McCandless states, "developing programs to implement in the peer-to-peer selling environment

epitomized by schools."³ Other research supports this conclusion as well. Market Data Retrieval (MDR) found that "word of mouth" was the second most preferred method for learning about new products, behind only publisher's catalogs.⁴

Consider your audience

As you take your view of the landscape from 40,000 feet, consider any recent changes the education market is facing. Then determine who the best fit is among those educators and how you may be able to leverage your capabilities to create a win-win situation for your audience and your organization.

What are the issues?

Two common examples are listed here, though additional factors surely exist in your own community. Before moving forward, it is vital that you know what those issues are.

1. Budget shortfalls. Many states and school districts struggle with severe budget shortfalls on a seemingly continual basis.⁵ Because of these deficits, states and districts often cut education budgets from pre-K through high school, while forcing many state colleges and universities to enact large tuition increases.

Consider recent changes in the education market and determine the best fit for your capabilities and intended audience.

These budget shortfalls are a fact of life for teachers in practically every state in the US.⁶ Too often this translates into fewer textbooks, videos, and other state-funded curriculum material. Teachers do not accept this fate blindly, however. Quite the opposite is true. Rather, teachers consistently look for alternative, supplementary resources in new places.

Such resources could come in the form of local expert volunteers who agree to share their knowledge and real-world experience in subjects related to curriculum standards. Employee-volunteers may offer expertise in a variety of subject areas from core subjects

such as social studies to new technologies.⁷

These resources could also take the form of supplementary curriculum materials – which are especially interesting for teachers looking for fresh, innovative activities that offer real-world application to their existing curricula. In October 2003, the Education Policy Studies Laboratory, which is part of the College of Education at Arizona State University, published its sixth annual report on schoolhouse commercialism trends. In this report, author Alex Molnar finds a “four-fold increase” in media references (press releases, news articles, product reviews, etc) to sponsored educational materials,⁸ between the 2001-02 school year and the 2002-03 school year.⁹ Molnar points to this trend as a warning sign of growing commercialization in education. Teachers, however, appear to understand that good, useful materials can and do come from non-traditional sources. Simply, teachers are not sitting on their hands and waiting for budgetary pressures to subside. Rather, they are taking the initiative and finding the resources they need to make their classroom instruction as good as it can be. Determine where your organization best fits in this regard.

2. Increased emphasis on accountability.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is a major education reform program of the federal government that aims to improve student achievement (as measured by mandated, standardized tests). In a word, NCLB is focused on accountability, holding schools responsible for the academic achievements of all students. Even before NCLB, however, most states had already developed their own curriculum standards and standardized assessments designed to measure

achievement among a state’s students.¹⁰

To say that teachers have an increasing pressure to ensure their students perform well on these tests is an understatement.

Pressure to ensure measurable student performance is a fact of life for public school teachers.

And this new pressure manifests itself in which materials teachers select to use in their own classrooms.

According to Waugh and Brady, “The importance of curriculum and testing alignment is such that most school districts will not now purchase curricular or classroom materials, nor will states make statewide adoptions of similar content, unless vendors can demonstrate that their educational content is correlated to relevant standards of a state.”¹¹

As with budget deficits, though, specific curriculum materials aren’t the only way teachers can simultaneously teach to the standards while maintaining an engaging classroom that promotes authentic student learning. Guest speakers with highly detailed knowledge can supplement a teacher’s general curriculum nicely. Also, contests that call for essays, experiments, or other projects can also be a very effective way for teachers to marry content knowledge attainment with an attractive, engaging classroom atmosphere.

Naturally, these are not the only factors teachers in your target communities face; others surely exist. Perhaps a school bond is up for vote this year in your local community. Maybe math scores are down across the nation. The key is to take the time to find out what those issues are before you commit to one outreach plan or another.

Where do we fit in?

Upon cataloging the current education issues, your next step is to analyze your own capabilities to see whom among these educators you are best able to help. For example, while some existing materials you have may generally fit with curriculum standards across the K-12 spectrum, it's likely that these materials will not fully engage students across such a broad age range. Be critical enough about your own resources to ascertain the *best fit* – not just a good fit

Take a critical look at your resources to determine which educators you can best help.

or decent fit. The same approach should be used in planning any new materials as well. Though this may necessarily result in a smaller total audience, that smaller, targeted audience will receive assistance from you that is best customized to their needs. Teachers will notice the effort and level of specificity you are offering, allowing you to build a strong, core group of satisfied (and repeat!) users/customers.

With that in mind, consider these questions as you continue your planning:

- > *Do members of your staff have the required knowledge necessary to serve as guest speakers at the high school, middle school, or elementary level?*
- > *Which subject areas are the best fit between what teachers need, your industry or corporate focus, and your natural strengths? (For example, if you are an engineering or high-tech firm, does a science focus make more sense than English?)*
- > *If you plan to capitalize on existing content, which age group fits best with the program's themes, styles, and voice?*

- > *Does your content correlate with curriculum standards? In which core areas?*

Determine your opportunity

Simply knowing what teachers are dealing with on a day-to-day basis – as well as where your own natural opportunities lie – can go a long way toward helping you determine the appropriate paths to pursue in your education-focused endeavors. Below are a few types of initiatives that may fit your (and your intended audiences') needs.

1. Community Events. For organizations that want face-to-face contact and personal communication with customers/participants, hosting or sponsoring a community event may be the best option. Community events, if publicized appropriately, are likely to draw local media, leading to high visibility for the sponsor/host. Further, if members of your organization have direct contact with educators and school system administrators in their service areas, these professionals should be able to coordinate appropriate time and place for maximum attendance, given enough lead-time to work through various scheduling challenges. This is an important point: appropriate lead-time is NOT two or three weeks. Even two or three months is probably too little time. Think 6-12 months out instead, if at all possible.

Bear in mind that events don't offer educational value by themselves. Rather, you must be sure that your event offers clear curricular ties. The Weather Channel's SafeSide®, in partnership with the American Red Cross and local cable affiliates, is a good example of a successful community event initiative. SafeSide® is designed to provide students with information about what they

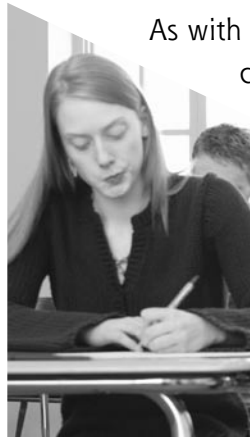
and their families should do to prepare for a hurricane, earthquake, or other natural disaster, and what to do if such a dangerous natural event threatens their community. Partnering with local operators, who work with area schools to select participating classes, The Weather Channel offers important information to students (and their parents) in a way that supplements teachers' existing curricular responsibilities.

2. Contests. For companies or organizations seeking to raise awareness for a specific topic that wouldn't grab headlines otherwise, contests should be considered. If promoted appropriately, contests have the potential to receive high visibility in both the application and the award stages. In seeking to pique interest in water quality worldwide, the Water Environment Federation (WEF) hosts the US national Stockholm Junior Water Prize (SJWP). The prize is the most prestigious international youth award for a high school water science research. Its purpose is to increase students' interest in water-related issues and research, and to sensitize them – as future leaders – to global water challenges. For the 2005 contest, WEF received entries from nearly every state (47) in the union.¹²

A desire to reward teacher and/or student excellence is another reason to consider some form of contest. *USA Today's* All-USA Academic Team contest provides one well-known example. Begun in 1987, the All-USA High School Academic Team program seeks nominations of high school seniors based on the students' "outstanding original academic, artistic or leadership endeavor."¹³

As a result of the program's success, college and teacher competitions were developed in subsequent years. Originally providing

winners with cash awards and profiles in the newspaper, *USA Today* recently began doing more in-depth profiles due to public interest and the enthusiasm of its reporters for the program, and expects to continue building on this successful recognition initiative.



As with community events, allowing considerable lead-time is important, particularly for contests requesting student participation. By promoting the contest early (and often), organizations allow teachers time to integrate the contest into their instruction calendars and allow students time to complete the application and requirements process in a reasonable manner.

3. Curriculum Development. If your goals align with supporting an existing instructional need, and can be linked with state or national curriculum standards, the development and free distribution of classroom materials (lesson plans, activity booklets, laboratory procedures, teacher guides, interactive web experiences, etc.) can be an excellent method of outreach to the education community.

If curriculum does match both your needs and the needs of your audience, follow these guidelines to ensure the best chance of teacher adoption of your materials.

> *Align materials to state and/or national curriculum standards.* As mentioned previously, school and teacher accountability is at an all-time high. Materials that don't meet standards aren't likely to be used.¹⁴

> *Create materials that teachers want.* Across K-12, the five most sought-after types of materials by teachers are activity books, games/puzzles, manipulatives, trade books, and videos/DVDs.¹⁵ Keep in mind, though, that these materials may not be used evenly across core curriculum areas. For example, Early Childhood teachers spend far more time each week on “Reading” (7.4 hours) than on “Social Studies” (2.9 hours) or “Science” (2.8 hours).¹⁶

> *Involve experts.* Be sure that the materials you offer are created (or at least edited) by experienced curriculum developers. Additionally, if possible, test any curriculum in actual classrooms. Teachers can tell quickly if materials are suitable for their classrooms. If a teacher determines your materials are not acceptable, you may never get a second chance with her – or her colleagues.¹⁷

> *Be sensitive to time pressures.* Teachers want to use materials that make their jobs easier and their required planning time lower.

Materials that provide clear instructions and objectives offer that, and therefore have an edge over those that do not. In addition to planning time, you must also consider class time. Can your lesson be completed in one class period? If not, can it easily be split among two or more periods?

Several good examples exist of business and nonprofit-created curriculum materials. Citigroup’s excellent Financial Education Program is one such example. Others include the Independent Film Channel’s FilmSchool and many offerings from both National Geographic and PBS.

4. Volunteering. As with any good company, one of your most valuable resources is the people with whom you work every day. By developing a formal volunteer program, you can offer local schools a great resource, while generating very positive PR for your own organization. Schools are always looking for community support, from guest speakers to student mentors to lunch buddies. Some school may also seek tutors to help bring all students up to grade level proficiency, though you should check with school officials first. Depending on the school’s situation, the principal or teacher may be better served in other areas. Volunteer initiatives such as mentoring programs establish participating professionals and organizations as active members and supporters of the local community.

Time Warner’s *Time To Read* program is a good example of volunteerism done well. Each year hundreds of Time Warner employees participate as tutor/mentors in the company’s literacy program. Since 1985, the TTR program has helped more than 250,000 learners in more than 525 program locations.

Has the program been successful? The data from TTR’s biennial, independently-audited evaluation certainly suggests it has. In fact, 97% of respondents to the 2001 evaluation reported that they have “become better at reading.” Further, 88% learners responded that they now “enjoy reading more.”¹⁸ Now that is positive feedback!

Getting down to brass tac(tic)s

Once you have surveyed the landscape and have determined the best way you can benefit the education community in

Materials that are easy to use and adapt to individual classrooms appeal strongly to teachers.

a way that makes sense, it's time to begin the tactical phase of your program. Follow these steps to develop the most successful education outreach endeavor possible.

Create a list of measurable objectives

One difficulty in many initiatives is determining impact. Community events just don't offer the ability to track easily the impact as do other marketing efforts, such as direct mail. This fact doesn't mean participating companies shouldn't be concerned with quantifiable data, however, as that data is useful to compare the success of various initiatives. So, once your opportunity has been discerned, set down a list of measurables you want to monitor both during the build-up to the event/program and afterwards. Examples of those include: number of participants, the number of media references generated, or the number of email addresses captured.

The importance of capturing contact information cannot be overstated. Developing a full, up-to-date customer database offers your organization the ability to easily gather feedback, cross-promote new projects, test new initiatives or ideas, and build a solid, continual relationship with your best bets for new business: your current customers.

Offer a compelling product

With your measurable objectives set, the next step is to develop a compelling product or service that educators will want. This seems obvious. As discussed previously, however, teachers and administrators are quite busy. They have little patience for new "opportunities" that occur at inopportune

times or that generate relatively little benefit. Take advantage of the information gleaned during your strategic phase to ensure you are offering something of value. The "build it and they will come" approach does not work. Educators' time is simply too valuable to spend on materials that add no clear value to their classroom experience.

Recognize key market factors

Assuming you have a compelling product, service, or scheduled event, consider the following issues when planning your outreach campaign:

> *Buying/Review cycles are crucial.* Typically, instructional materials are reviewed and ordered throughout the spring (approximately February through May) and during a much more compressed period in the fall (primarily August 15 through October 1). Funding is one of the primary reasons for this cycle – schools receive the bulk of their funding in July of each year. It isn't the only reason, however. Curriculum planning for the new school year, which is likely to include planning for field trips or other non-traditional education events, is another major factor.

As a result, large curriculum packages or outside events can expect better response/attendance by following these purchasing and review calendar patterns. On the other hand, free materials, events, or other offerings calling for limited classroom time can be promoted throughout the school year, as long as teachers are afforded appropriate lead-time. How much lead-time is appropriate for these smaller initiatives? A minimum of six weeks is a good rule of thumb; however, up to three

months, with intermittent reminders, is probably even better.

- > *Be aware of standardized testing cycles.* As with purchase/review cycles, being aware of testing cycles is vital. Few things will kill the attendance of an event in the education community faster than having that event on the first day of state-mandated End-of-Course (EOC) tests. Generally speaking, these testing dates are set near the end of each semester. The New York City Public Schools, for example, has targeted late April for its Citywide English/Language Arts (ELA) test (grades 3-7) and early May for its state math exams (grades 4 and 8).¹⁹ These dates will vary slightly from state to state. The important factor to consider is the set of testing dates for your intended audience.

- > *Targeted prospects vary by product and district.* Product/event cost and complexity determines whether your promotions should go directly to teachers, department heads, or administration members (from technology specialists to principals). If you are offering free curriculum materials suitable for 8th grade science teachers, you



may promote your product directly to those teachers. School-wide events or assemblies, on the other hand, require input from the administration. Large-scale, community-wide initiatives should begin with discussions at the superintendent/district level.

Create a powerful outreach message

The most important thing to consider when developing your promotional message is your prospects' time. "Educators have little time to sift through their mail in any detail, so it's up to you to make their job easy," says Gerry Bogatz of MarketingWorks.²⁰ Regardless of the communication channels you choose, the following tips will help you get and keep the attention of teachers:

- *Put benefits in the forefront.* Tell teachers/administrators how your materials, service or event will help them do their jobs better or make their lives easier, and do it quickly so as not to lose their attention. Benefits may include standards alignment or a strong relationship to service learning or character education goals. Think in terms of solutions, not features: remember that "people want quarter-inch holes, not quarter-inch drills."²¹
- *Be creative.* In order to appeal to educators, it helps to understand a teacher's normal routine. For example, show them you understand their high stress levels, and use a caring approach that will invite a second look at your materials by using empathetic headlines and bullet points.²²
- *Include a sample.* Particularly if you are offering curriculum materials, consider offering your targeted audience a sample of what they can expect should they choose to order your product. According to research completed by School Market Research Institute, including a sample in a direct mail promotion is the best way

to ensure the promotion is opened and read.²³ If you are sponsoring a community-wide event instead, consider including testimonials from teachers who attended similar, previous events. Or, promise a free take-away for teachers attending the event — such as a classroom appropriate DVD.

- *Remember: teachers are people too.* Don't be afraid to use a persuasive tone and purchasing incentives when marketing to teachers. According to Bob and Lynn Stimolo, "Despite what educators may lead marketers to believe at trade shows or focus sessions, they respond to the same types of buying incentives that motivate the rest of the world."²⁴

opportunity for testing; accountability; and the potential to involve the recipient. Added benefits specific to education marketing are that teachers can hold mailed information until they have the time and the need to review it, and that printed materials can be easily passed along to other teachers or copied for distribution during the product review process.²⁵

Direct mail is a popular, cost-effective method, especially when paired with online marketing.

List selection is widely considered to be the single most important factor in direct mailing. In contrast to general consumer marketing, the education market offers excellent compiled lists with detailed targeting capabilities;

specific response lists, however, are generally less available and offer fewer selects (but should still be carefully considered). Key industry providers include Quality Education Data (www.qed-data.com); Market Data Retrieval (www.schooldata.com); Venture Direct (www.venturedirect.com); School Market Research Institute (www.school-market.com); and Mailings Clearing House (www.mailings.com).

- > *Online marketing.* Like direct mail, the Internet offers potential for marketing to teachers but probably only as a secondary source at this time. Your web site can be an attractive source of product information for teachers, and the placement of listings, links, and ads on search engines and teacher-oriented sites can build traffic and visibility. Further, program blogs can be an effective communication tool to start conversations with your users, advocates, and even critics. To receive the highest

Determine your optimal marketing channels

While there are a number of channels used to market to teachers, direct mail has proven to be one of the most popular and cost-effective, with online marketing rapidly developing into a powerful complement. These two will be discussed below, along with other established channels for those interested in exploring all available options. (Note: for a definitive look at channel strategy, read *The Channel Advantage* by Friedman and Furey.) Outreach channels are listed alphabetically.

- > *Direct mail.* Bob Stone, author of *Successful Direct Marketing Methods*, notes that direct mail offers several advantages over other vehicles, including audience targeting; a wide choice of presentation formats; potential for personalization; lack of competition at the point of impact;

level of exposure, however, it is wise to use your online efforts as a supplement to your offline marketing efforts. There are a few reasons to broaden your marketing beyond cyberspace when reaching out to the education market.

- **Teachers don't use the Internet for finding products as often as you might think.** When asked what teachers use most often for new product information, "Internet/Web sites" finished well down the list (7th) with only 11.5% of teachers listing it as a "Top Choice."²⁶
- **Most teachers prefer NOT to receive email marketing messages.** When asked if they would be receptive to email announcement about new products or special offers sent by "companies from which you have purchased a product," more than 63% said they were NOT receptive to such offers. And those were from current vendors!²⁷
- **CAN-SPAM Act of 2003.** Congress passed CAN-SPAM in mid-December 2003, and the law went into effect on January 1, 2004, after President Bush signed the act into law. The purpose of the law is to curb the volume of unsolicited commercial email. While the law does not explicitly prohibit unsolicited email, email marketers must meet certain strict requirements. For example, email marketers must include a valid physical address in the message. Further, a functioning "opt-out" mechanism must be in place to allow recipients to remove themselves from your mailing list. Failure to meet

these and other requirements can result in a lawsuit brought on by the recipient.

- > *Partnerships: Nonprofits.* Exploring partnerships with local and national non-profit organizations is an effort that should be investigated for practically every education initiative. Teachers trust information coming from established education groups, such as the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). Being able to include these groups' logos on your materials can go a long way towards ensuring a positive response to your outreach campaign. An even better opportunity would have the partnering group promote the program for you! Ask if your program can be included in organizational newsletters, emails, and publications. Get information about the program on the partner's web site in

Partnering with the right non-profit groups can yield powerful results.

addition to your own site. If you include them from the beginning of the program, many educational organizations will be happy to help in this way.

To initiate such a partnership, research organizations that may have an interest in your project ideas, or work with an educational consultant who already understands this market and who may already have contacts within these organizations. Upon finding one or more good potential matches, contact executives at these organizations, share your ideas, describe any thoughts on the partnership that have already occurred to you, and encourage your potential partners to brainstorm other possible ways you can work together.

> *Partnerships: Schools.* Another obvious partnership potential lies with your local school districts. Given the current education climate, districts are eagerly looking for more ways to work with corporate entities — for both



budgetary and accountability reasons. Businesses and nonprofit organizations offer school districts tremendous potential for new, engaging content, contests and community events that can be tied to curriculum standards; a highly-skilled workforce

that can serve as school volunteers; and interesting career paths that can be used to demonstrate for students the links between school and work.

Relationships with school districts provide many of the same benefits that Educator Advisory Councils offer, with the added potential benefit of much more feedback. And, of course, these districts provide new prospective customers and participants as well. As you finalize your program plans, be sure to include someone from the school district’s office. They may be able to offer good insight on the best dates for events and promotions and may even be able to find a captive audience for your endeavor.

> *Print Advertising.* Advertising in educational trade publications is one way to develop strong brand recognition. Building such recognition, however, may take considerable time. For single events or for smaller scale curricular offerings, advertising should probably not be

considered for more than a supplement to other outreach efforts. Like the Internet, “magazines/journals” fall well down the list (5th) of preferred information sources, with less than 1/4 of teachers selecting this medium as a “Top Choice.”²⁹ If one were to take out product reviews, the percentages would surely be far lower still.

On the other hand, if you are building a large, multi-year program, selective brand-centered print advertising may make sense. If so, consider having educators involved in the advertising design process.³⁰ One way to do this is to develop and maintain an Educator Advisory Board that could offer quick, personal feedback to this aspect of your program as well as other segments of the initiative.³¹

> *Public Relations.* PR can be an overlooked (yet important) aspect of effective outreach to the education community in certain circumstances. As with advertising, if your program is of a smaller scale, you may not receive the appropriate return to justify a significant PR campaign. One-time events just don’t benefit from PR as much as ongoing initiatives do. The reason is simple, of course. In small campaigns, the program is over before the PR can really get going.

Conversely, large or multi-year initiatives can benefit from effective PR as part of the overall outreach campaign. If public relations makes sense for your program, follow these guidelines from Valerie Chernek, Director of Internet Marketing and Public Relations for Achievement Technologies, Inc.

- **Expose your good works.** Show off the positive feedback you’ve

received from the program to date or from related programs through testimonials, case studies, or other formats by distributing that feedback via print or electronic methods.

- **Follow trends and write timely articles for targeted education publications.** If you are current in your “trend-tracking,” you will be able to submit articles related to your program during a time in which the article is more likely to be published. The key is staying on top of the trends to know when to strike.

- **Get permission to reprint, then circulate those reprints to potential participants.** Ms. Cherek asserts that “with the right kind of circulation, you’ll get more mileage out of a reprint than you do the actual story.”³²

> *Word of Mouth.* Given the near ubiquity of the Internet and the growing trends toward weblogs, the push for grassroots campaigns has seen a renewed vigor. But Internet chat rooms and weblogs are only two of the many ways to leverage the strength of word-of-mouth marketing. Educator Advisory Councils were mentioned above as a good resource for feedback on campaign designs and other aspects. These councils may also serve as an effective grassroots marketing tool. If you don’t have an advisory council such as the one McCandless promotes, consider distributing materials early to some of your most loyal educator-customers and ask them to test the product (or preview your program’s schedule of events) for you.

Word-of-mouth can be a powerful marketing tool, both online and offline.

Once these educators test the materials and give their “stamp of approval,” remind them that they are free to spread the word about the upcoming program or event. You may well be surprised at how effective this type of grassroots campaigning can be, especially for community events and local programs. If the educators enjoyed the experience, they likely will want to share the news with their peers.

Build a long-term relationship

As you build your customer base, take the opportunity to capture names, addresses, and transactional data at every opportunity. As Stan Rapp and Tom Collins state in *The New Maxi-Marketing*, “The customer database is today’s private marketplace, where you can make additional sales, cross-promote, explore new channels of distribution, test new products, begin new ventures, and – most important of all – develop an ongoing personalized relationship with your best customers so as to lock in their loyalty.”³³

Each of the marketing channels previously described offers opportunities for capturing information about your prospects and customers. Teachers can submit a business reply form in order to receive free information; they can enter your contest or drawing; they can register at your program’s web site. If you build your list and use it regularly and responsibly, it will soon become your most powerful marketing asset.

The program is over; NOW what do I do?

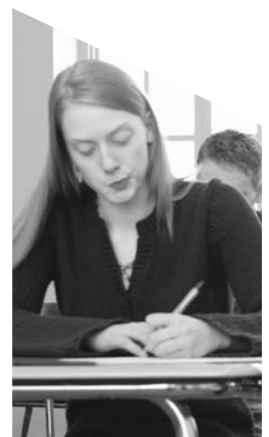
Spend some time reflecting on the just-completed program with your team and with all partners involved in the project. Consider the following questions during that reflection period:

- > *Have you collected your measurable data? If so, are the returns better or worse than you expected?*
- > *Did your organization benefit from the program? In what specific ways?*
- > *Did your partners similarly benefit?*
- > *If you provided pre/post assessments to teachers as part of a curriculum program, did these tests demonstrate positive results? Were these the results you expected?*
- > *If your project included classroom participation – contest entries, a service project – did you see the level of involvement you expected?*
- > *If yes, was the quality of that participation in line with expectations?*
- > *If no, were there overriding, external reasons*

for this, or was the problem specifically program-related?

- > *What types of comments did you receive from participants?*
- > *Which portions of the plan should have gone more smoothly? Were the problems avoidable?*
- > *Which portions of the plan went even better than expected?*
- > *Which outreach channels provided the best return on investment?*

Armed with the answers to these questions as well as the experience of a thoroughly planned and completed project, let your brain start to move on to new ideas for your next education initiative. Should you conduct a similar program, or try a new direction? Are some of your participants eager for more? If so, get them involved from the beginning in the planning of the next endeavor. These happy participants may even be willing to join your new advisory council to work on several new projects to come.



Endnotes

1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to voluntary actions that companies take, over and above compliance with legal requirements, that address both financial and competitive interests and the interests of the larger community (locally, nationally or globally).

2 McCandless, Glen "Six Reasons You Should Invest in an Educator Advisory Council," www.sellingtoschools.com. The article appears without a copyright date, but is available to download from the web site as of February 20, 2004.

3 Ibid.

4 *Educator Buying Trends: A National Survey*, Shelton, CT: Market Data Retrieval, 2003: 19.

5 On October 7, 2005, Pittsburgh Public Schools, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, forecast an expected budget deficit of \$47 million for 2006, the second budget deficit in as many years.

6 Lav, Iris and Nicholas Johnson, "State Budget Deficits for Fiscal Year 2004 are Huge and Growing," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, DC, Revised January 23, 2003: 4.

7 A listing of national social studies standards can be found at <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards>. Additionally, At the time of this publishing, 48 of the nation's 50 states have "adopted, adapted, or referenced ISTE's NETS in state department of education documents." More information can be found at <http://www.iste.org/standards>.

8 Sponsored Educational Materials, for the purposes of this report, are defined as "those curriculum materials that are produced largely by an outside corporate entity."

9 Molnar, Alex, "No Student Left Unsold: The Sixth Annual Report on Schoolhouse Commercialism Trends 2002-2003," Education Policy Studies Laboratory, College of Education, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, October 2003.

10 Of the 50 states, 49 have adopted state standards. Iowa allows school districts to set their own standards.

11 Waugh, Carol Ann and Corey E. Brady, eds., *The Experts' Guide to the K-12 School Market*, Denver, CO: The Internet Monitor, 2002: 37.

12 For more information on the Stockholm Junior Water Prize, visit the WEF website, <http://www.wef.org>.

13 From www.usatoday.com. The quote was available as of March 3, 2004.

14 Waugh and Brady, 37.

15 "Educator Buying Trends" report (EBT), p. 29.

16 *The Complete K-12 Report: Market Facts and Segment Analysis 2003*, Rockaway, NY: Education Market Research and Open Book Publishing, 2002: 149.

17 According to the MDR survey, "word of mouth" is the second most popular method teachers use when selecting new products for the classroom. EBT, 19.

18 "Time to Read Evaluation Report," AOL Time Warner, Inc. New York, 2001.

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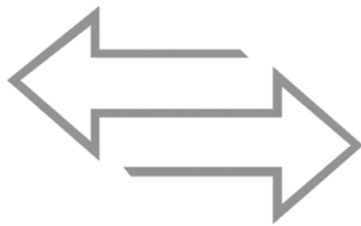
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