

Printing For (Non)Profit

I had an interesting conversation with my daughter last night. She's a recent college graduate, now working for a non-profit in New York. At the moment, she's the most senior person in the Development Department, and I made a comment about on-the-job-training. "On-the-job learning is more like it," she said. "When I started this job we had a Director of Development and two experienced people in the department. Now we have me and the two interns I hired last week. I can teach them what I know, but we could really use someone to teach me what I don't know!"

I was struck by the similarity of this situation to printing sales. The fact of the matter is that small printing companies have limited training resources, and that's usually a function of both cost and "internal" experience. One of the points I always try to make in my seminars is that a salesperson has a responsibility to augment *training* with *learning*. In other words, you have to make it your business to learn what you need to know in order to be successful. In a small business, you can't count on having someone who can teach it all to you.

Another Similarity

Another part of last night's conversation was about an upcoming telephone fundraising effort. My daughter was concerned that they'd end up talking to a lot of answering machines on a summer Sunday evening. We had already talked about the scripts she'd written for the interns and volunteers who'd be making the phone calls, and I asked her if she's also scripted a voice mail message.

"No," she said. "I've been told that you should never leave a message on a fundraising call. We have it set up to try again during the second hour, and I've been thinking about bringing a few people in on a weekday night to call the people we don't reach with the first two attempts."

"I think you're missing an opportunity," I told her. "Think of it this way. If you connect on the telephone, you have an opportunity to tell them something about your cause and then ask them to contribute. With voice mail, you at least have an opportunity to tell them something about your cause. That might not help with this weekend's results, but you might build some recognition that will make these people more likely to contribute when you do connect with them later on."

I have some of my sales coaching clients on a program where they leave a series of short voice mail messages over a 2-3 week period, each one telling a small part of the overall capabilities/benefits story. (Alternately, some of them send a series of e-mails, or combine the two strategies.) The overall strategy is sometimes referred to as "drip marketing," and it has proven to be an effective means of building recognition and establishing the beginnings of a relationship. I call it a CEC program, where the salesperson ultimately benefits from the Cumulative Effect of Contact.

Non-Profit Insight

It's been pretty well established that non-profits are a good target market for quick/digital/small commercial printers, but not every non-profit is an ideal customer. Another of the things I teach in seminars is that there are three distinct types of non-profits: *fundraising* non-profits, *membership* non-profits and *artistic* non-profits. My daughter works for a fundraising non-profit, and she can tell you that they are 100% cost-driven. It's a simple equation, the more they have to spend on the operation of the organization, the less they have available for the cause itself. Any cost item from personnel to printing must be minimized, and the less money they raise, the more desperate this situation becomes.

I hear frequent complaints from printers about how non-profits are always asking for donations. I think you need to understand that this is simply the nature of a fundraising non-profit's business!

Membership non-profits tend to be less cost-driven. These include everything from trade associations to religious groups, and their principal business is to provide member benefits—ranging from information and education to group insurance plans, and often involving events like meetings and conventions and trade shows. The members pay for all of this, often over and above their membership fees, so there's usually money in the budget to pay for business needs like printing and mailing services.

Artistic non-profits tend to be the least cost-driven of all. These are the museums and symphonies and ballets that put out a very high quality product, and depend on high quality printing and service to help them make their programs successful. At one end of the spectrum, the fundraising non-profits must often buy ugly printing because it's cheap. At the other end of the spectrum, the artistic non-profits can't buy cheap printing because its often ugly.

I hope knowing all of this will affect your strategy toward non-profits. Make the artistic and membership non-

profits your focus, because you can sell to and service them profitably. And if you're successful at that, you can also support a few fundraising non-profits by donating a level of quality and service they probably can't get at the prices they have to pay. Don't forget to talk to your accountant about maximizing the tax benefits of any cash, discount or "in kind" donations you make.

By the way, I'm not suggesting that you support every charity that asks you for help, and I know that you're probably being asked pretty frequently to make donations. This is easy to handle when you're going to say "yes," but it can be a touchy situation when the answer has to be "no."

I've written a letter that can give you some guidance on the right way to say "no." You'll find it on the "downloads" page at www.davefellman.com.

Coming Or Going

Here's another thought regarding membership non-profits, specifically their trade shows and events. I've spoken with quite a few quick/digital/small commercial printers who've wanted to position themselves as the "away" printer for people attending these trade shows and events, pushing the "distribute-then-print" model as opposed to buying the printing for the show from the "home" printer and then shipping it to the show city.

In theory, this approach makes a lot of sense. In practice, though, it doesn't seem to work very well. Even Kinko's has had limited success selling this model, and they have the benefit of a fairly massive national marketing budget. Yes, a printer in Destination City can get a list of exhibitors for an upcoming trade show, but it's proven to be difficult to connect with those people and convince them to use the distribute-then-print model. My recommendation is to focus on becoming the "home" printer for people who exhibit their products and services at lots of trade shows, and also to focus on becoming the "home" printer for the membership non-profits who are running those trade shows and events in the first place!