The Marketing Audit—A Starting Point for Strategic Planning

John L. Crompton
Charles W. Lamb

ABSTRACT: Recreation and park agencies are increasingly recognizing the importance of marketing. Some are beginning to develop strategic marketing plans. This article briefly defines and discusses strategic marketing. It then provides a more in-depth overview of the marketing audit process, which is the first stage in strategic marketing planning. A comprehensive audit outline is included.

KEYWORDS: Strategic marketing planning, marketing audit, recreation and parks.

THE AUTHORS: John L. Crompton is a professor in the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station at Texas A&M University. Charles W. Lamb is the M. J. Neeley Professor of Marketing at Texas Christian University. They are the co-authors of Marketing Government and Social Services.

A key requirement for good marketing is good marketing planning. The business community has long recognized the importance of a formalized marketing plan for successful management. Planning is the key to survival because it is the road map or blueprint that guides all marketing endeavors.

In today’s complex world of business, strategic planning is indispensable to effective management. Ever since the mid-1950s, when American companies began to develop formal long-range planning systems, wise managers have understood the importance of knowing where their firms were headed and how they intended to get there. To function effectively in a modern, planned operation, every manager must have a practical understanding of how the planning process works (Steiner 1979:cover jacket). Foresight is an essential part of marketing. To foresee, in this context, means both to assess the future and to make provision for it. Some people believe that planning is merely deciding what to do in the future. However, a better description of planning might be deciding what one has to do in order to have a future!

In recreation and park agencies, the term planning has traditionally been used to refer to architectural or facility planning, and its use has evolved around construction of new facilities. This limited view of planning is no longer appropriate. Planning must be viewed as the anticipation of change and the development of appropriate strategies to deal with change. Such planning is concerned with identifying environmental impacts and making appropriate adjustments in all aspects of an agency’s service delivery efforts. Physical planning is only one small part of an agency’s operations.

In an era of retrenchment, physical planning is of decreasing importance relative to the much more substantial concern of formulating directions and
realigning resources to facilitate effective total service delivery efforts in the future. The current emergence of interest among recreation and park agencies in strategic marketing planning is not accidental. The increasingly complex environmental pressures to which agencies are exposed has intensified the search for a more effective process of guiding agency decisions. The predictable pattern of expanded services, increasing budgets, and new facility developments which provided some logic for the preoccupation with physical planning in the past has been replaced by a much less predictable environment in which primary planning concerns relate to the impact of competitive forces, reduced public support, accountability demands, and increased regulatory and legislative requirements.

It is an unfortunate trait of human nature that we rarely engage in any action until there is pressure to do so. Perhaps the major reason for lack of effective marketing planning in recreation and park agencies has been the lack of a crisis to provoke it. Growth can be managed on an ad hoc basis; retrenchment cannot. With growth it has been possible for agencies to prosper with little strategic planning. Citizen demands could be met by raising taxes, and an agency’s leaders could “let a thousand flowers” bloom. In an era of decline they are required to consciously decide not only what to plant, cultivate and nourish, but also what to plow under (Behn 1980). This radical change in environmental conditions is encouraging a shift to take place in recreation and park agencies from facility-oriented physical planning to market-oriented strategic planning.

Three forces have pushed strategic planning to the center of executive attention. The first, and most important reason is survival. . . . Strategic marketing planning is a necessary requirement for . . . success in these turbulent times. Second, is the recognition by many chief executive officers of the central role of markets and marketing strategies in shaping strategic plans. The third force is the need to track the rapidly changing . . . environment in order to anticipate change and to develop strategies to take advantage of new opportunities. (Cravens and Lamb 1983:6)

Strategic marketing planning aids management in two main ways:

- It focuses attention upon long-term objectives rather than upon short-term expediences, thus providing direction for action in times of crisis.
- It forces management to continually realign its resources with the changing external environmental situation and changing clientele priorities.

Marketing planning, or its lack, is a concrete expression of the way in which an agency, through its management, has decided to live. Many agency managers are too preoccupied with immediate issues to think about what the agency will be doing in the future. Yet these same managers make frequent decisions with long-term implications. A typical comment is “The pressures of the moment prevent me from giving any attention to the future of the agency.” Other managers are action-minded and decision-oriented. They
enjoy and derive great satisfaction from "doing things." Instead of engaging in strategic planning there is a tendency to settle for "muddling through."

"Do you want me to plan it or do it?" is not a legitimate question. Planning and doing are separate parts of the same job—they are not separate jobs. The real payoff of a marketing plan is the help it gives management to make better decisions. It enables managers to act today with increased skill, speed and confidence necessary to produce desired results tomorrow. Even those who have no responsibility for the overall direction of the agency can use the marketing planning process to guide departments and subdivisions within the organization.

*Strategy* is derived from a Greek root meaning *generalship*. Strategic planning is the process by which the really fundamental and fateful decisions, which are within the agency's control, are made. The resources available to an agency are usually less than the opportunities for service delivery. Hence the importance of planned decision making. It is here that the agency seeks to realign its activities and redirect its efforts to ensure that they are the best fit for the current and likely future environment.

Strategic planning looks objectively at where the organization is now, at where it has been in the past, at where it is headed in the future, and how it is going to get there. Strategic planning assumes that change is inevitable: change brings with it risk but strategic planning can chart a course so that an organization minimizes risk while maximizing opportunities. (Ford and Neiman 1979:70)

Good planning takes time and resources. If procrastination prevails, and strategic marketing planning is delayed until a severe crisis emerges, then the resources necessary to undertake the job may become more difficult to obtain, and the end result is likely to be less than optimum.

Many managers have ideas about what they want to achieve in the future, and in this sense they have a plan. However, a formal marketing plan, developed in the form of a written document, is essential for purposeful management since it guides the future operation of marketing functions. Without a written plan, it is likely that short-term decisions will be made to achieve short-term objectives that may be inconsistent with the agency's best long-term interests.

If it isn't on paper, you haven't got a plan. Talking about what you want to do is like a New Year's resolution. It's all verbal, makes you feel good, and nothing ever happens. Put it on paper. (Redhead 1982:10)

**The Role of Marketing Audits**

The starting point in strategic planning is to ask the question "Where are we now?" Answering this question requires an agency-wide evaluation that assesses the overall status of all of the agency's services and marketing activities. This is sometimes referred to as a situation analysis or a current assessment. The evaluation is conducted by means of a marketing audit.

The marketing audit is "an attempt to describe the current marketing situation, to speculate about the relevant future, and to analyze the organi-
ization's marketing performance and potential" (Mokwa 1980:272). It operationalizes Abraham Lincoln's advice: "If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it" (Stanley 1974:381). Thus, the audit is not only historical, but it also includes a forecast dimension which speculates about likely changes in the internal and external environments and searches for new market opportunities. More specifically, the marketing audit has been defined as

a systematic, critical, and impartial review and appraisal of the total marketing operation: of the basic objectives and policies and the assumptions which underlie them as well as the methods, procedures, personnel, and organization employed to implement the policies and achieve the objectives. (Shuschman 1959:13)

Although the primary purposes of the audit are to develop a comprehensive profile of an agency's total marketing effort and to provide a basis for developing and revising a strategic marketing plan, the audit is also an excellent mechanism for improving communication and raising marketing consciousness within the agency. That is, it is a useful vehicle for marketing the philosophy and techniques of marketing.

Marketing Audit Procedure

Administration of an audit requires that three important and related decisions be made (Mokwa 1980:273). First, the scope of the audit must be determined. Second, methods by which costs are to be collected must be delineated. Third, an auditor must be selected. Each of these decisions is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Scope of the Audit

The audit is an information-gathering process and, like many new tasks, the first attempt at doing an agency-wide audit is likely to be more costly in effort and resources than when the process is repeated. Ideally, if it is to fully evaluate the agency's current overall marketing operation, the audit should be very comprehensive. However, there is no virtue in collecting detailed and refined information unless the agency has sufficient resources to use it.

Conducting an audit can take a considerable amount of effort, and each organization must decide how detailed and complex its audit should be and the amount of resources to commit to it. The level of detail may vary considerably. For the small agency, an audit might be more useful if conducted at a rather limited level, since the agency may lack the resources both to collect detailed information and to implement a large number of relatively detailed suggestions which may emerge.

Although there is no common format that is appropriate for all agencies, the major areas usually addressed in an audit are identified in the comprehensive outline presented at the end of this article. This outline includes a large number of specific questions which may serve as a checklist.
Data Collection

Data are compiled for analysis and evaluation from three main sources: internal interviews, external interviews, and secondary documentary sources. The intent is to integrate objective analysis of an agency’s marketing practices and performances with subjective probing and appraisal of basic management assumptions, philosophies, and expectations. Internal interviews with key individuals in the agency seek to draw upon their knowledge of all aspects of the agency’s operations, competencies and constraints. Interviews are guided by questions selected from the audit outline given at the end of this article. When these questions are put to a number of individuals, their responses will generally reveal a level of agreement. In the case of those questions that produce obvious disagreement, the audit identifies a problem area that should be subjected to closer scrutiny.

The internal interviews should be supplemented by a series of extended interviews with key members of the agency’s public such as elected officials, suppliers, competitors, and customers. There will be some issues that these public representatives will be unable to address knowledgeably, but there will be other issues on which their perceptions of the agency’s current efforts may be insightful.

In addition to personal interviews, the audit should review secondary data sources available within agency files, or from literature searches, that pertain to the issues of interest. The use of secondary sources for obtaining reliable information upon which to base evaluations is most successful if these sources have been developed with this intent at the outset. If evaluation capability is not deliberately built into the administrative machinery, then retrieval of the data later for evaluative purposes becomes a more complicated affair; the quality of the data in terms of their accuracy, completeness, and comparability may be adversely affected. The data that will be needed for evaluation should be identified prior to the data collection, and a mechanism should be established to make sure they are gathered in the form desired. Otherwise, the availability of certain kinds of data, and the problems of collecting other kinds of data, may dictate the evaluation itself. Together these three sources of information offer a broad-based approach for deriving an assessment of the agency’s current marketing operations. Again, the extent of the data collection will be governed by the scope of the audit to which the agency is committed. For smaller agencies this may lead to only one or two of the sources being used.

Who Should Conduct the Audit?

Marketing audits may be conducted by someone either from within or from outside the organization. Given severely limited resources, a high-rank- ing staff member or an agency-wide auditing committee may conduct the audit. However, self-audits lack the objectivity of independent audits by outside persons or organizations. Self-audits are less likely to get at “sacred cows” since it is difficult for individuals to objectively critique decisions that they themselves or their close colleagues have made or influenced. A third
party, with whom people can talk openly without feeling any threat toward their position in the agency, can report insights that might not be offered as candidly to someone from within the organization.

Post-Audit Tasks

After the audit has been completed, three tasks remain in order to ensure that full benefits accrue from the process. First, when the data have been assembled, their usefulness will depend upon the auditor’s skill in interpreting and successfully presenting these data so that decision makers can quickly grasp the major points. The presentation should address results of the appraisal in each of the seven areas of marketing operations covered in the audit outline, and from these, evaluate the overall performance of marketing operations. The audit should provide a profile that identifies not only existing weaknesses and inhibiting factors, but also the agency’s strengths and new opportunities available to it. Recommendations have to be judged and prioritized so that those contributing most to improving marketing performance are implemented first.

The second task is to ensure that the role of the audit has been clearly communicated. It is unlikely that suggestions will emerge that require radical changes in the way the agency operates. The audit’s main role is to address the question “Where are we now?” and to make some tentative suggestions about ways of improving what the organization already does:

The marketing audit is not a marketing plan but rather it is an independent appraisal by an inside or outside auditor of the main problems and opportunities facing the agency and what it can do about them. (Kotler 1980:125)

The final post-audit task is to make someone accountable for ensuring that recommendations are implemented. We are all familiar with reports that have been prepared, presented, applauded and filed away to gather dust. The person made accountable should be someone committed to the project who has the political clout and leverage necessary to make things happen.

A Marketing Audit Outline

The reader should not be overwhelmed by the scope of this outline. The intent is not for an agency to evaluate every question in depth; rather, the agency may select from this list those questions which are deemed to be most pertinent in the development of its own strategic marketing plans and should examine those in detail. Others may be addressed more casually and in less detail if they are considered peripheral to the agency’s effectiveness and efficiency.

I. Orientation

1. Has the agency established a marketing orientation? That is, has the agency identified the benefits particular clientele seek and developed programs based upon this input?
2. Are personnel efforts focused on satisfying the wants of actual potential clientele, rather than on actual or potential programs, rules and regulations, or their own immediate personal well-being?
3. Does the agency define its business in terms of benefits its client groups want rather than in terms of programs and services?
4. Does the agency try to direct its services only to specific groups of people or to everybody?
5. Is the agency’s primary goal to maximize customer satisfaction or to get as many people through the door as possible?
6. Does the agency seek to achieve its goal primarily through a coordinated use of the set of marketing activities (i.e., promotion, program, pricing, and distribution) or only through intensive promotion?
7. Does the agency have a mission statement, and is it translated into operational terms regarding the objectives of the agency?

II. Marketing Planning

A. The External Environment

1. Social
What major social and lifestyle developments and trends will have an impact on the agency? What action has the agency been taking in response to these developments and trends?

2. Demographics
What impact will forecasted trends in the size, age, profile, and distribution of population have on the agency? How will the changing nature of the family, increase in the proportion of women in the work force, and changes in ethnic composition of the population affect the agency? What action has the agency taken in response to these developments and trends? Has the agency reevaluated traditional services and expanded the range of specialized offerings in order to respond to these changes?

3. Economic
What major developments and trends in taxation and other income sources will have an impact on the agency? What action has the agency taken in response to these developments and trends?

4. Political, Legal and Financial
What financing laws are now being proposed at federal, state, and local levels that could affect marketing strategy and tactics? What recent changes in regulations and court decisions affect the agency? What political changes at each government level are taking place? What action has the agency taken in response to these legal and political changes?

5. Competition
Which organizations are competing with us directly by offering a similar service? Which organizations are competing with us indirectly by securing our prime prospects’ time, money, energy, or commitment? What new competitive trends seem likely to emerge? How effective is the compe-
tition? What benefits do our competitors offer that we do not? Is it appropriate for us to compete? Could we more usefully withdraw from some areas in which there are alternative suppliers and use our resources to improve service to new, unserved client groups?

6. Technological
What major technological changes are occurring that affect the agency?

7. Ecological
What is the outlook for the cost and availability of natural resources and energy needed by the agency?

B. Needs Assessments

1. Are needs assessments undertaken?

2. Have secondary data been used in the needs assessments? If so, is the information current? Classified in a useful manner? Impartial? Reliable? Valid?

3. What does the agency want to learn from the needs assessments?

4. Are surveys used in the needs assessment process? If so, is each and every question necessary? Can the agency determine what will be done with the information from every question? Do the respondents have the ability to answer the questions accurately? Will respondents provide the information? Are the questions threatening or too personal? Are the questions worded simply enough to be understood by individuals with a low education level? Is the sample size appropriate?

5. How have agency personnel used the information that they have generated about the agency’s markets and other publics for improving services?

6. What are the evolving needs and satisfactions being sought by the agency’s client groups?

7. Who uses the agency’s services? How does a potential user find out about the organization? When and how does a non-user become a user?

8. What are the major objections given by consumers as to why they do not use the agency’s services?

9. How do users find out about and decide to try and/or use the organization’s services? When and where?

10. Are evaluative reports on the needs assessment studies written? If so, are the needs assessment reports too long or too technical? Do they provide a summary of the high points that are of most interest to the reader?

C. Objectives and Mission

1. What is the mission of the agency? What business is it in? How well is its mission understood throughout the organization? Five years from now, what business does it wish to be in?

2. What are the stated objectives of the organization? Are they formally written down? Do they lead logically to clearly stated marketing objectives?
3. Are the organization’s marketing objectives stated in hierarchical order? Are they specific so that progress toward achievement can be measured? Are the objectives reasonable in light of the organization’s resources? Are the objectives ambiguous? Do the objectives specify a time frame? Are the objectives that are concerned with effectiveness benefit-oriented?
4. Does the agency have both long-term and short-term plans? Do the short-term plans contribute toward the achievement of the long-term plan?
5. Are the objectives and roles of each element of the marketing mix clearly specified?
6. What policies inhibit the achievement of our objectives with respect to organization, allocation of resources, operations, hiring and training, products, pricing and promotion?
7. Should the agency seek to expand, contract, or change the emphasis of its offerings or selected target markets? If so, in which service areas and target markets, and how vigorously?

D. Marketing Planning and Evaluation
1. Does the organization have a marketing planning and evaluation system?
2. Does the marketing planning and evaluation system include an annual program evaluation as well as a longer-term, agency-wide evaluation?
3. Is this agency-wide evaluation (marketing audit) conducted every five years to assess the overall status of all the agency’s services and marketing activities? Does the audit describe the current marketing situation as well as speculate about the relevant future?
4. Is someone in the agency held accountable for ensuring that the recommendations of the marketing audit are implemented?
5. Are annual marketing plans developed, implemented, and used as the basis for evaluation?
6. Does the organization carry out periodic reviews of its programs and evaluations of its resource allocation decisions? How and with what results?
7. Is the five-year marketing audit a summation, synthesis, and integration of annual evaluations?
8. Are the short-term evaluation procedures (monthly, quarterly, etc.) adequate to insure that the long-term plan objectives are being achieved?
9. Should the agency enter, expand, contract, or withdraw from any existing segments?
10. What should be the short- and long-term cost and revenue consequences of these changes?
11. Does it seem that the agency is trying to do too much or not enough?
12. What are the core marketing strategies for achieving the agreed objectives? Are they sound?
13. Are the stated objectives being met, and are these objectives appropriate?
14. Are enough resources (or too many resources) budgeted to accomplish the marketing objectives?
15. Are the marketing resources allocated optimally to prime market segments and products of the organization?
16. Does the program offer the intended benefits to clients? Are the relevant publics satisfied with these benefits?
17. In which particular service areas should the agency make special efforts to improve their effectiveness?
18. Do any programs seem to have excessive costs? Are these costs valid? Can cost-reducing steps be taken?
19. Do registration forms make it hard or easy for someone to sign up? Is more information asked for than is necessary? How are the data used?
20. What is done with negative feedback about agency staff from consumers? How are complaints handled?
21. What is the agency’s reputation among its various publics?
22. What are the organization’s major strengths and weaknesses?

III. Target Market Strategies

A. Target Markets
1. Are the members of each program’s target markets homogeneous or heterogeneous with respect to geographic, sociodemographic and behavioral characteristics?
2. Describe the size, growth rate, and national and regional trends for each of the organization’s market segments.
3. Is the size of the market segment sufficiently large or important to develop a unique marketing mix to service it?
4. Are the market segments measurable and accessible? That is, are the market segments accessible to distribution and communication efforts?
5. Which are the high opportunity and low-opportunity segments?
6. What are the evolving needs and satisfactions being sought by constituent publics?
7. What benefits does the organization offer to each segment? How does this compare to the benefits offered by competitors?
8. Is the agency offering services to individuals who are not adequately served by other organizations?
9. Is the agency positioning itself with a unique service, and is it needed?
10. Is the agency targeting any unresponsive markets? If so, what particular constraints contribute to the underutilizers’ unresponsiveness?
11. How much of the program use is repeat versus new business? What percent of the public can be classified as non-users, light users, and heavy users?
12. How do current prospective client groups rate the agency and its competitors, particularly with respect to reputation, program quality, and price?
13. What is the agency’s image with respect to the specific market segments it seeks to serve?
14. Has the agency been efficient and effective in meeting the clientele’s needs?

B. Other Publics
1. What publics other than direct client groups (financial, media, government, citizen, local, general, and internal) represent particular opportunities or problems for the agency?
2. What steps has the agency taken to deal effectively with key publics?
3. What does each public seek from the agency? (i.e., what’s in it for them?)

IV. Distribution Decisions

A. The Equity Issue
1. Is there general understanding and commitment among all agency personnel to the equity standard under which the agency is seeking to operate?
2. Has the agreed standard of equity been articulated?
3. Is it used as the guideline for the distribution of all agency services and facilities?

B. Strategic Distribution Decisions
1. Has there been a recent evaluation of the agency’s existing distribution pattern of both facilities and services?
2. Is there a written statement of distribution objectives?
3. In which areas is it appropriate for the agency to be a direct provider? facilitator? engage in outreach efforts?
4. Should the agency attempt to deliver its offerings directly to consumers, or can they better deliver selected offerings by involving other agencies or organizations?
5. Are members of the target market willing and able to travel some distance to use the facility or receive the service?
6. How good is public transportation access to facilities? Can it be improved? How good is parking for bicycles and cars? How good is the access for physically handicapped? Which facilities need priority attention in these areas?
7. How are facility locations selected? Is the site accessible to the target markets? Is it visible to the target markets?
8. When are services made available to users? (a) season of year; (b) day of week; (c) time of day? Are these most appropriate?
9. How frequently are services offered? Are there multiple offerings?
10. Are the timing decisions made in the two previous questions based on analysis of users’ preferences? To what extent do the choices reflect staff and/or volunteer convenience? Inertia from the past?
V. Program Strategies

A. Program Management
1. What are the major services offered by the agency? Do they complement each other or is there unnecessary duplication?
2. Where is (a) the agency and (b) each major service in its life cycle? Calculate by using market share or participation.
3. Is the development of new programs, termination of old programs and allocation of resources correctly prioritized according to each program’s life cycle?
4. Is the type of management used at each stage of the life cycle appropriate?
5. What are the pressures among various publics to increase or decrease the (a) range of services and (b) quality of services?
6. What are the major weaknesses in each program area? What are the major complaints? What goes wrong most often?
7. Does the physical appearance of the facility create an environment which complements and enhances the program itself? Does it aid in the client’s participation? Is the environment relaxing and comfortable?
8. Is the program name easy to pronounce? Spell? Recall? Is it descriptive and does it communicate the benefits the service offers? Does the name distinguish the agency or program from all others?

B. New Program Development
1. Have new program committees been established? Do they keep senior management involved and/or informed?
2. What major new programs are in the planning stages?
3. Is the agency sufficiently organized to gather, generate and screen new program ideas?
4. Has a feasibility analysis been conducted to examine the costs and benefits of the proposal? Has the agency established criteria regarding what constitutes feasibility?
5. Does the agency carry out small-scale pilot tests with major new programs before launching them?
6. Are there sufficient personnel resources to effectively evaluate and launch new programs? Do the agency’s personnel have the appropriate expertise?
7. Are promotional efforts for new programs adequate?

C. Diffusion of New Services
1. Has the agency identified opinion leaders in order to help speed the rate of diffusion of services?
2. Are the opinion leaders also facilitating the extent of diffusion?
D. Program Retrenchment
1. Are the agency's managerial resources spread too thin?
2. What can the agency do to manage effectively with reduced resources?
3. What programs and services are being, or should be, phased out?
4. How does the organization determine which services are to be terminated?
5. Is there a regular review process to identify candidates for termination?
6. Could the resources allocated to a particular program generate greater total satisfaction to the community if they were re-allocated?
7. Is the agency assigning the highest caliber people to the highest priority services in the agency?
8. What strategies are used for terminating services so customer dissatisfaction and internal opposition are minimized?
9. Is retrenchment being implemented as part of an agency's overall plan so all concerned know why it is taking place and are aware of its implications?

VI. Pricing Strategies

A. Pricing Objectives and Policies
1. What are the agency's objectives in pricing each program?
2. Is there a current written pricing policy statement?
3. Is the statement specific enough to give definitive guidance to pricing decisions?
4. Does the pricing policy address all four functions or objectives of price: revenue production, equity, efficiency, and income redistribution?
5. What mechanisms does the agency have to ensure that disadvantaged groups are not excluded by prices charged?
6. Has the agency used price to improve efficiency? That is, do user prices serve as demand priority indicators? Do they alleviate congestion? Do they require agencies to be more accountable to citizens for the quality of services delivered? Does charging a direct price lead to more responsible use by client groups? Do user prices encourage competitive services from the private sector?
7. If a proposed price increase or decrease is implemented, by how many will the number of users go down or up? What will happen to the total revenue produced—will it increase or decrease?

B. Establishing a Price
1. What are the procedures for establishing and reviewing pricing policy?
2. Are prices reviewed at least annually?
3. Which method is used for establishing a price: going rate, demand-oriented, or cost-based?
4. What discounts to the basic fee structure are offered and with what rationale?
5. Can the agency identify, classify and equitably allocate the costs associated with each service?
6. What proportion of the costs incurred in delivering the service should be recovered from direct pricing?
7. What is the going rate of similar services?
8. Has the agency considered psychological dimensions of price in its initial price decisions as well as in its price revision decisions?
9. Are there occasions when offering variations of the average price to particular groups may achieve more equitable and efficient service delivery?
10. Are price increases keeping pace with cost increases or general inflation levels?
11. Does the agency use price promotions effectively?
12. Are there any opportunities for interested prospects to sample services at an introductory price?
13. What methods of payment are accepted (i.e., credit cards, check, credit accounts)? Is it in the agency’s best interest to use these various payment methods?

VII. Promotion Strategies

A. Strategic Promotion Decisions
1. Are there clear objectives for each element of the communication mix? How are the promotion activities related to these objectives?
2. How does a typical client find out about the agency’s services? Word of mouth? Personal selling? Advertising? Publicity?
3. Does the message the agency delivers gain the attention of the intended target audience? Does it address the wants of the potential client group and does it suggest a means for satisfying these wants? Is the message appropriately positioned?
4. Is the agency receiving adequate feedback from its promotional efforts?
5. Is the agency’s promotion effort effectively informing, persuading, educating, and reminding clientele about its services? How is this determined?
6. On what basis does the organization measure the effectiveness of its various communication programs (i.e., number of people aware of organization, program enrollment, financial contributions)?
7. Does the agency have a tendency to overpromise?
8. How is the budget for each promotional element determined? Does it appear to be at the appropriate level? How does the organization decide on which programs or markets to concentrate promotion?
9. Is promotion expenditure regarded as a cost or as an investment?

B. Advertising and Publicity
1. Is there a well-conceived publicity program?
2. How is the public relations normally done by the agency? By whom?
3. Is the publicity effort directed at all the agency's key publics or restricted only to the potential user public?

4. Are there agency policies restricting some public relations activities?

5. What does the advertising/publicity budget permit? If a significantly greater amount were spent on this activity, would there be a proportionately greater benefit to the agency and its clients?

6. Have close working relationships been established and nurtured between agency individuals responsible for publicity and reporters and editors in each of the media outlets serving the jurisdiction?

7. Is an effort made to understand each of the sought publicity outlets' needs, and to provide them with the types of stories that will appeal to their audiences in forms that they can readily use?

8. What media are currently being used?
   a. daily newspapers; articles and letters to the editor
   b. weekly newspapers
   c. weekly news magazines
   d. monthly magazines
   e. telephone directories
   f. television; news and talk shows
   g. radio spots, guest appearances
   h. exhibitions
   i. billboards
   j. catalogs
   k. posters
   l. fliers
   m. newsletters

9. Has the agency selected the type of media that will best reach the selected target markets?

10. Are the types of media used the most cost-effective, and do they contribute positively to the agency's image?

11. Are the dates and times the advertisements will appear the most appropriate?

12. Does the organization have a paid or volunteer advertising agency? What functions does the ad agency perform for the organization?

13. Is the agency utilizing public service announcements?

14. Has the agency prepared several versions of its PSA's?

15. What system is used to handle consumer inquiries resulting from advertising and promotion? What follow-up is done?

16. Are news clippings or records kept for evaluating the agency's ability to get accurate and favorable media coverage?

17. How are the advertising and public relations programs evaluated? How often?

18. What does the annual report say about the agency and its services? Who is being effectively reached by this vehicle? Does the benefit of this publication justify the cost?
C. Personal Selling

1. How much of a typical program director’s time is spent soliciting new clients, as compared to serving those already being served?
2. How is it determined which prospect will be called on and by whom? How is the frequency of contacts determined?
3. What incentive does the staff have for encouraging more people to use the services offered?
4. Is there a paid or volunteer personal selling force for either fundraising or increasing service utilization? If so, how is this force organized and managed?
5. Has the agency prepared an approach tailored to each prospect? Does this approach emphasize benefits to potential donors rather than benefits to the agency? Does the agency address the question, “What’s in it for them?”
6. Has the agency matched its personnel with the type of person characteristic of the target market?
7. Does the agency’s representative generate enthusiasm with respect to the agency’s services?
8. Is there appropriate follow-up to the initial personal selling effort? Are donors kept informed and provided with periodic progress reports on the status of projects or services? Are donors made to feel appreciated and part of the team?

D. Incentives

1. What is the specific purpose of each incentive? Why is it offered? What does it attempt to achieve?
2. What categories of incentives are being used? Promotional pricing? Free offers? Prizes? Celebrities?
3. How is their effectiveness evaluated?

References