Library Marketing & Communications Challenges & Solutions

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Florida Public Library
Directors Meeting

December 2022

My Background

- Library Marketing & Communications Consultant since 2018

- 20+ years in Marketing & Communications; 15 with Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

- Accredited in Public Relations

- 2016 *Library Journal* Marketer of the Year, Two-time John Cotton Dana winner

- Advisory Board Member, UNC Charlotte Atkins Library

Library
MARKETING
and
COMMUNICATIONS

Strategies to Increase Relevance and Results

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Available now at:
alastore.ala.org/relevanceresults

Today's Agenda

9:15 – 10:45 a.m.

Part 1: Overview of Library Marketing & Communications

Part 2: Challenges & Solutions

Break

11:00 a.m.

Part 3: Breakout Session

PART 1: Overview of Library Marketing & Communications

Why Marketing and Communications Are Integral to a Library's Success and Its Ability to Serve Its Community
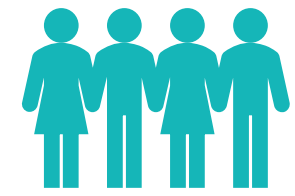
Public Relations:

The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.
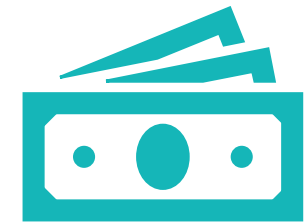
Let's break that down.

Publics = Audiences

**Internal Audiences**

External Audiences

Funding Stakeholders

Success

- Serving as many people as possible with a broad array of services and programs.

- Having a positive impact on the community you serve.

- Getting the funding – sustained and one-time – that you need to accomplish these.
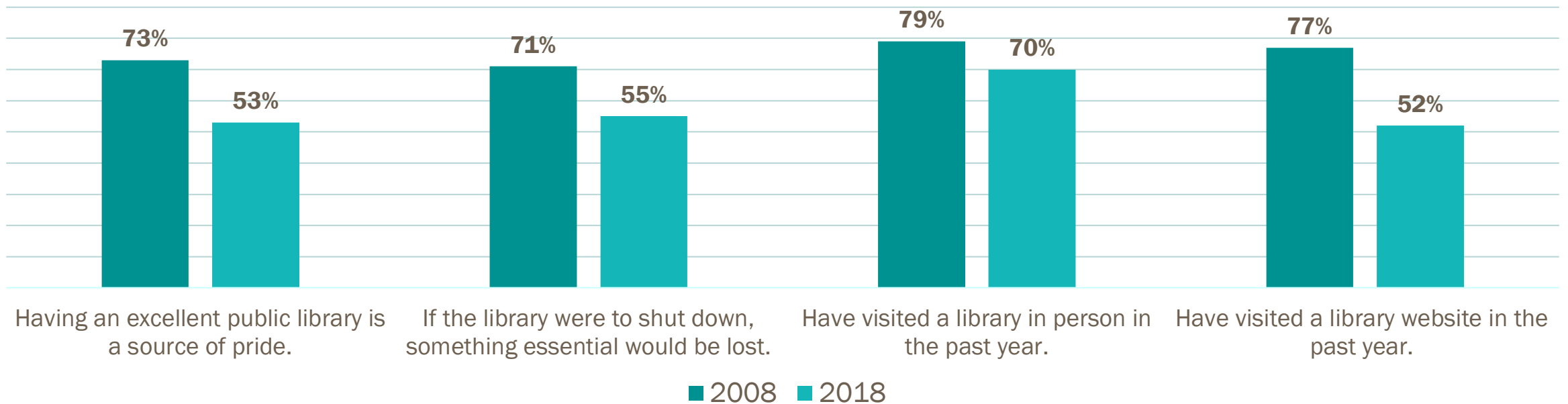
Mutually Beneficial Relationships

Communication

Relationship

Library

Feedback

Audiences
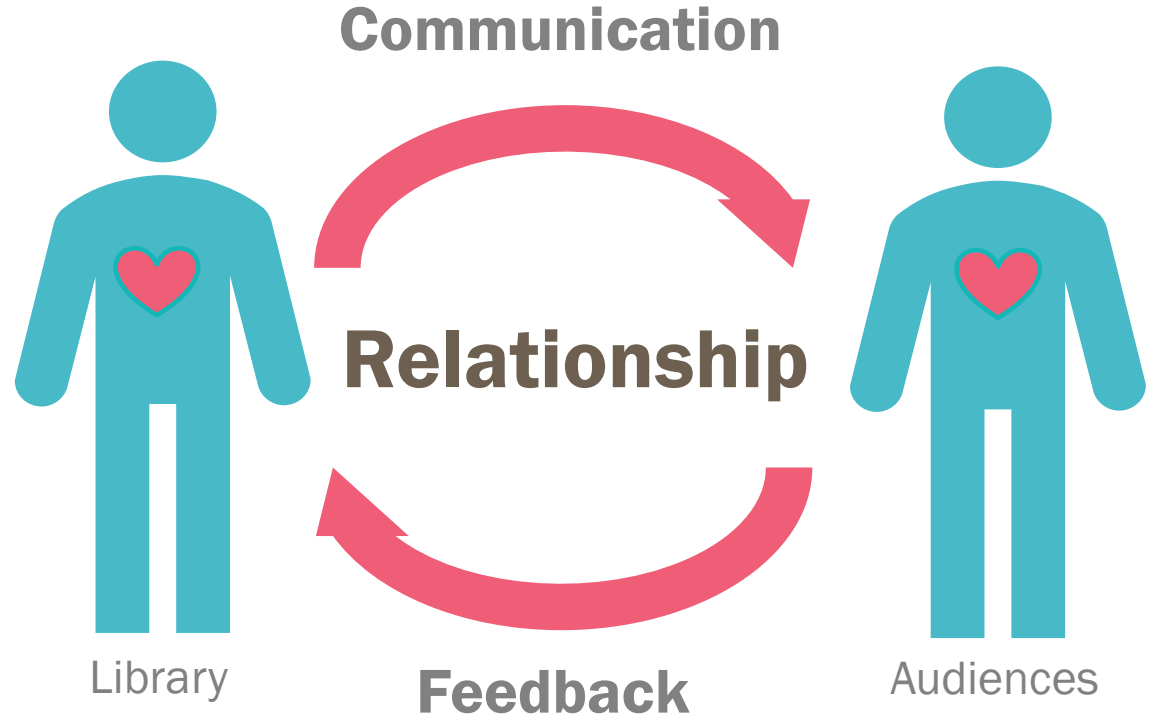
What Problem Are We Trying To Solve?

2018 Study "From Awareness to Funding"

- Libraries' perceived value and relevance to their communities declined from 2008-2018. This was *before* the pandemic.

- oc.lc/awareness2018

Survey Findings

	2008	2018
Having an excellent public library is a source of pride.	73%	53%
If the library were to shut down, something essential would be lost.	71%	55%
Have visited a library in person in the past year.	79%	70%
Have visited a library website in the past year.	77%	52%

■ 2008 ■ 2018

The Relevance Question

Defining Relevance

- Relevance is **subjective**.

- Before you can determine if you're relevant, you need to ask yourself, **"to whom?"**

- Understanding your library's relevance requires first understanding **your audiences**.

Understanding What's Relevant

It starts with learning about your audiences …

- Who they are.
- What's important to them.
- What they want and need.

Hhen thinking about your broader community.

- What makes it unique.
- What's important to community members.
- What problems individuals and organizations are working to solve; or what needs they are trying to meet.

Communicating Relevance

- What's relevant depends on to whom you are speaking.

- When communicating about your library, you need to answer, **"What's in it for me?"** for your audiences"

- Then you can use marketing & communications strategies to get the right message to the right people, leading to increased perceptions of relevance.

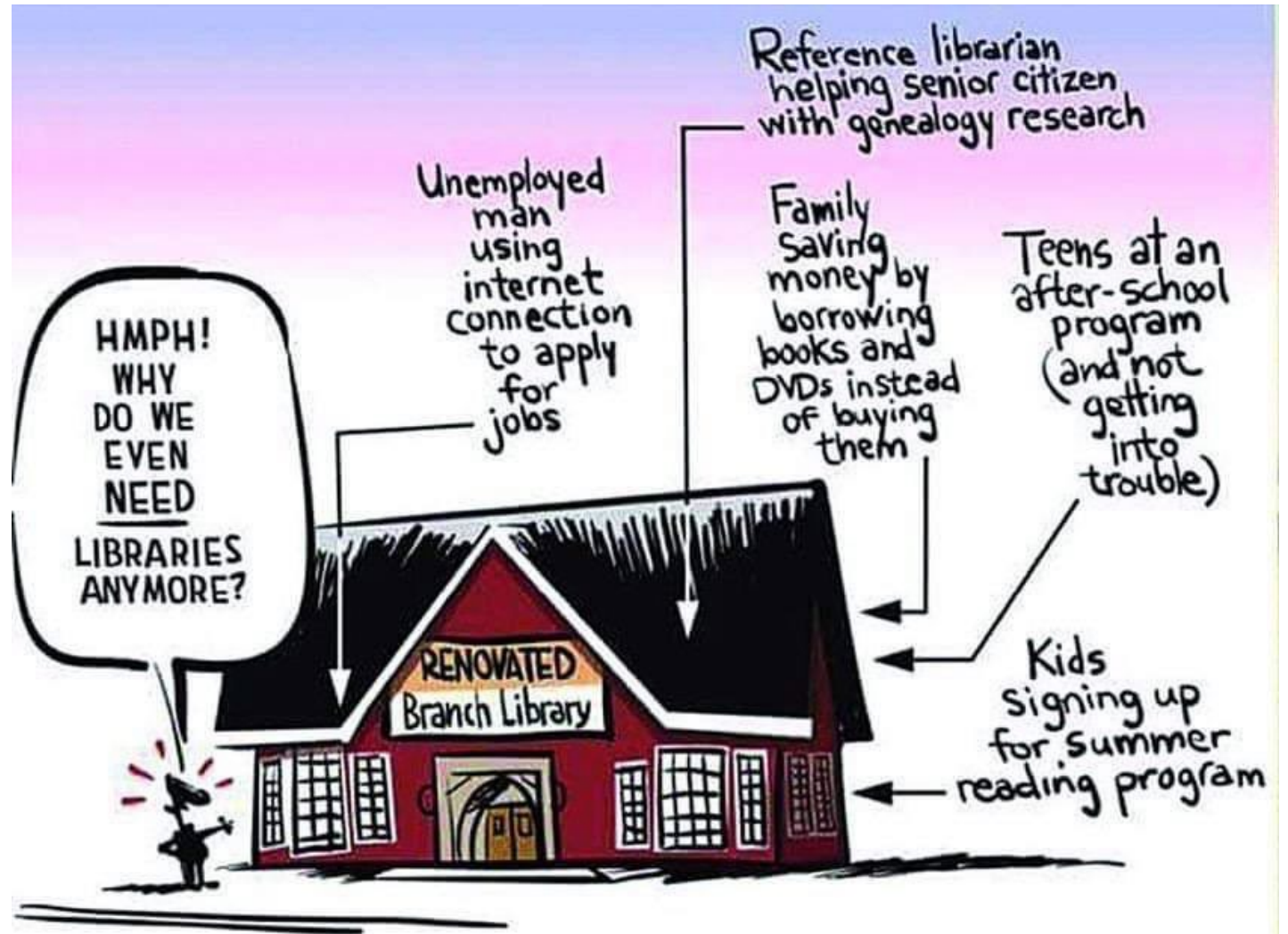# How Marketing and Communications Are Tied to Funding, Relevancy, Library Usage and More

Question:

Have you ever heard one of these?

- "Even our most loyal library users don't know all of the services we offer."

- "People think libraries are outdated, or that all we offer are books."

- "People sign up for a library card, but then they don't use the library."

Said Another Way ...

How Libraries Measure Success

Usage

Circulation, computer usage, program attendance, website visits, etc.

Impact

Improved lives, community problems solved, partnerships, etc.

Funding

Receiving grants & awards, operating funding increases, capital funding for new/improved facilities, etc.

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Awareness is Critical to All Three

"Awareness of library offerings and value continues to be a challenge—perhaps one that is only growing as people are more distracted and diverted into a fragmented communications environment. The Pew Research Center has consistently found in their household surveys that many Americans, including library users, are still unaware of the breadth of resources offered by the public library."

- From Awareness to Funding: Voter Perceptions and Support of Public Libraries in 2018 oc.lc/awareness2018

Usage Depends on Marketing

Marketing is the **management function** that **identifies human needs and wants**, offers products and services to satisfy those demands, and causes transactions that deliver products and services in exchange for something of value to the provider.

Library employee identifies a customer or community need.

They develop a program or service to meet that need.

They target the right audiences with marketing messages about the benefits of the program or service.

People use the program or service, have their needs met, and form a relationship with the library.
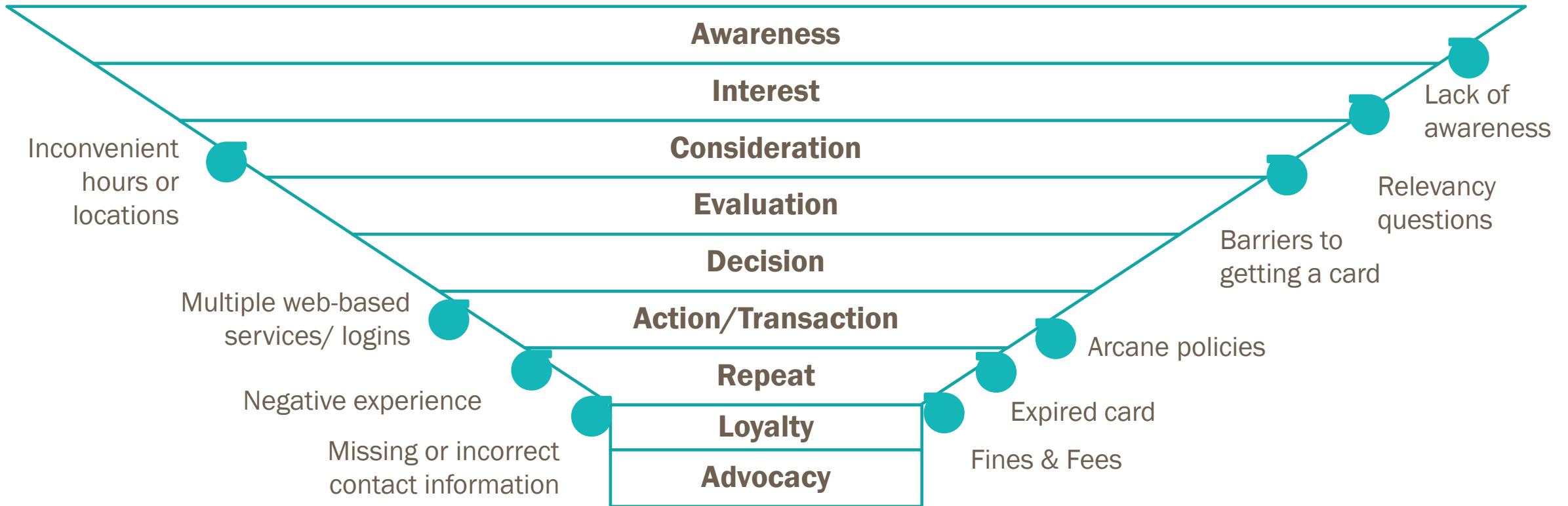
How Library Marketing Should Work

Yes, We're On Board With Marketing!

But what happens when a customer tries to use the library?

Barriers to Usage

Members of your community

Awareness

Interest

Consideration

Evaluation

Decision

Action/Transaction

Repeat

Loyalty

Advocacy

Lack of awareness

Relevancy questions

Barriers to getting a card

Arcane policies

Expired card

Fines & Fees

Inconvenient hours or locations

Multiple web-based services/ logins

Negative experience

Missing or incorrect contact information

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**Library Marketing Funnel**

Usage Drives Impact

- If fewer people are using the library, you have fewer opportunities to make positive impacts in their lives, or your community as a whole.

- Without marketing, people don't know what the library is offering.

- With **barriers** in place, even people who are aware and motivated to use the library can't do so.

Impact Drives Funding

- Public funders are more likely to support a library that is highly used and able to demonstrate its impact in the community.

- Libraries who partner within the community to solve big problems are more likely to be perceived positively.

- Private funders – donors, foundations, sponsors, etc. – are more likely to donate to a library that can demonstrate its impact.

Virtuous Cycle

Increased Capacity → More Usage → More Impact → More Funding
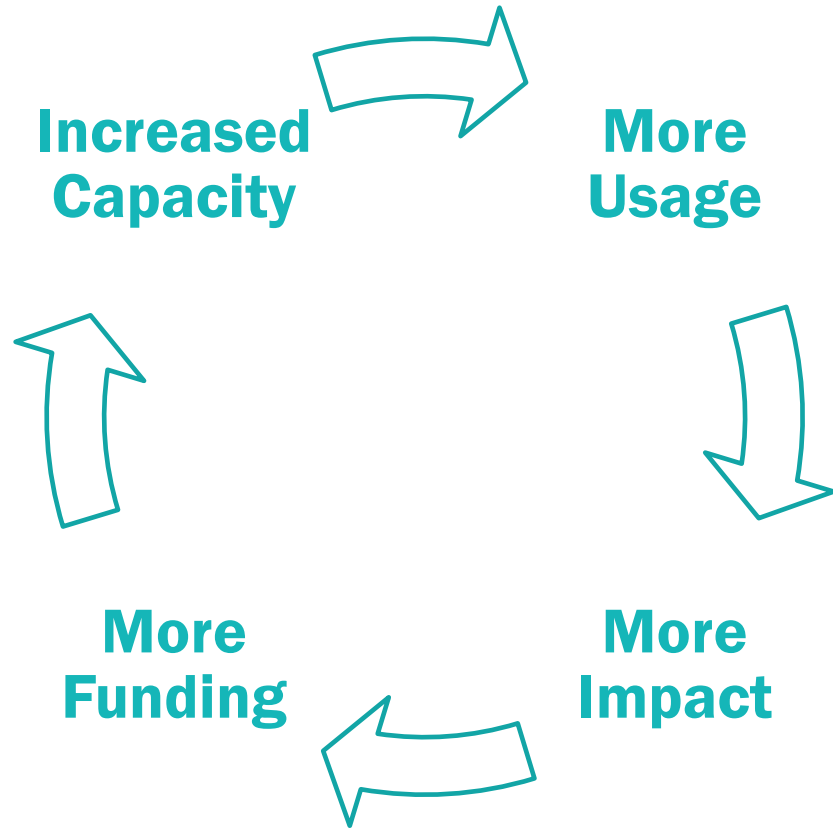
How Marketing and Communications Fit Into a Library's Larger Strategic Priorities

Examples: Library Strategic Plans

XYZ Library connects all patrons to services, resources, and technology that are convenient, relevant, and accessible.

Increase access to library services.

Raise public awareness of the library's resources and services.

XYZ Library communicates the Library's value to the community by expanding awareness, growing our customer base, and improving customer retention.

Develop a systemwide approach to educate people on the Library's offerings.

Identify and provide access to collections, programs, and services.

"From Awareness to Funding" Recommendations: Reprioritize & Reposition

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01
Target Public Awareness Efforts
- "libraries may connect announcements of new programs or services to larger stories about how the library supports school-age children, workforce readiness, or small business development."

02
Leverage Areas of Positive Public Perception
- "leverage areas where we see improving public perception, including helping provide … skills for the workforce and providing an inviting gathering place for community members to connect and learn together."

03
Amplify Library Resources and Impacts for School-Age Children
- "more work is needed to raise awareness of the vital roles that libraries play for children and families."

04
Engage the "Library as Office" Segment
- "[Focus] on the library traits that mean most to them: convenience, comfortable work spaces, and ample access to computers and technology."

05
Recognize Libraries as Community Hubs
- "the spotlight can be shined on assets that are often overlooked: the library as a safe and welcoming place, a hub that connects people and gives them opportunities to learn together, and the positive impact of library staff engaged with the community around local priorities."

oc.lc/awareness2018

Marketing & Communications 5re Behind Everything

"We created a document to track progress toward our strategic plan goals, and even though there are only a few goals directly tied to the marketing department, I feel like we are supporting all of them. I wish our director could see that."

- Library Marketing Director

5-Minute Break

Next Up: Challenges & Solutions

Part 2: Library Marketing & Communications Challenges & Solutions

Library Marketing Challenges Responses

Audiences & Channels

This includes identifying audiences and determining what channels to use to reach them.

How can we market ourselves when our audience is "everyone?"

How can we implement more targeted marketing to specific audiences?

How can we reach non-users and people in the community who don't know about the library?

Marketing Strategies

This includes planning, content creation, strategies for different audiences or services; and how to market many different services, programs and collections.

> What strategies and tactics are we using, and are they the right ones?

> How do we prioritize when we have such a broad audience and so many services?

> How can we get the word out about lesser-known and unique services such as databases and collections?

> How can we manage content creation in an efficient and effective way?

Community Relationships

Strengthening external relationships, whether with community partners or the media.

How can we make more connections in the community?

How can we stay up-to-date with our community partners?

What's the best way to build relationships with the media?

Branding

Includes how to build a brand, especially when the library doesn't "own" the branding.

? How can we communicate what our library's brand is when we offer so many different things?

How can we differentiate ourselves from the larger municipality that we are a part of?

How can we build a brand when we're required to use the City's logo?

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Data & Metrics

This includes determining what to measure and how to use data and metrics to improve library marketing and communications.

How can we leverage data to improve marketing strategies?

What are the best ways to gather feedback on marketing efforts?

How can we measure the impact of our marketing efforts?

How do we know which channels are the most effective?

Budget & Staffing

This includes determining how to effectively market the library when budget and staffing are scarce.

$ How do we get the most out of our limited staffing and budget?

What is the optimal staffing level and marketing budget for my library?

How can we operate more efficiently to manage internal and external demands on our marketing staff and dollars?

Implementing Solutions
Starting With Marketing & Communications Planning

Research: Learning About Your Library and Your Audiences

- Learning about your audiences.
  - Who they are.
  - What they want and need.
  - How to reach them.
- Developing key messages.
  - Who you are.
  - How you are meeting your audiences' wants and needs.
- Assessing your existing communications.
- Identifying what problems you are trying to solve.

Planning: Mapping Out Strategies & Tactics, Creating & Communicating Key Messages

- Creating key messages that center the needs of your audiences and describe how your library meets their needs.
    - Short-term key messages can be kept in a content calendar.
    - Long-term key messages can be stored in your plan and used repeatedly (more later).
- Using different channels to get your messages to your audiences.
- Aligning strategies and tactics with goals and objectives.

Implementation: Getting Messages to Your Audiences

Using different communication channels to reach audiences with the right message at the right place and time.

Message

Library

Feedback
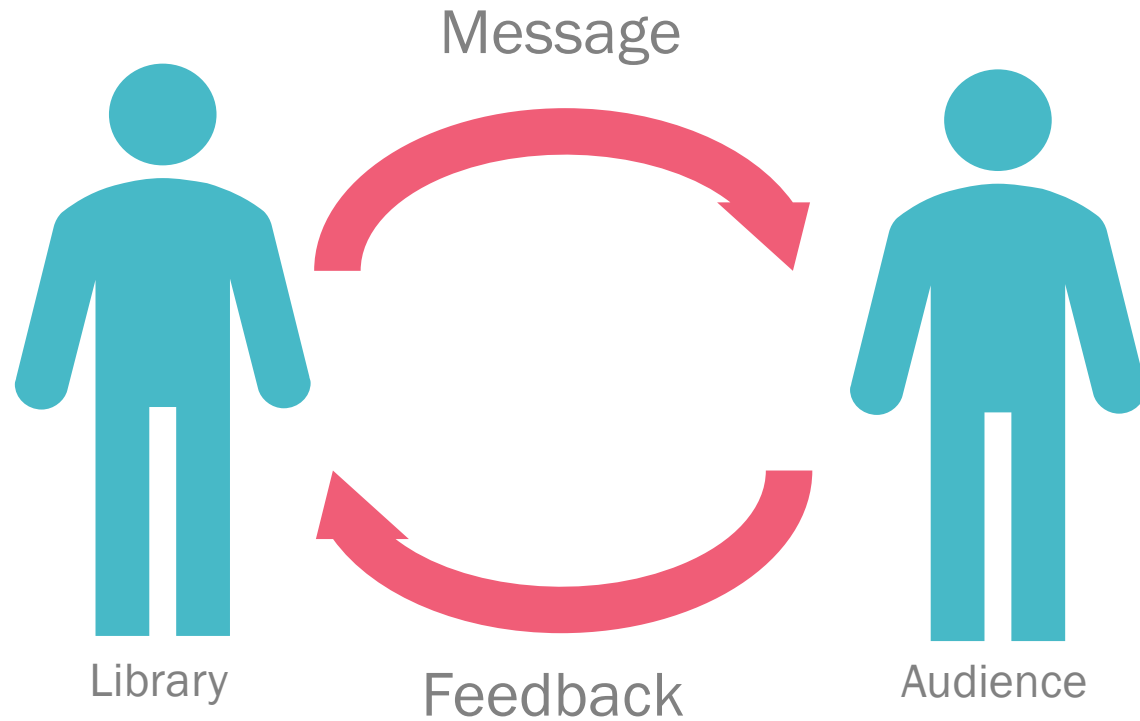
Audience

Evaluation: Knowing What to Measure and Why

- Identifying key metrics for planning and evaluation.

- Understanding how to measure audience behaviors and attitudes.

- Creating a reporting cadence.

Social and cultural change

who repeat behavior
who behave as desired
who change attitudes
who change opinions
who learn content

Impact

Implementation

Preparation

# of messages received
# of people acting on messages

# of messages sent
# of people who receive messages

Appropriateness of message and content
Quality of message and presentation

Quality of research and background information
Quality of campaign design

Adapted from *Effective Public Relations*, Ninth Edition

Starting With Audiences

Focusing on your audiences can yield greater engagement and a more meaningful relationship between them and your library.

Message

Relationship

Feedback

Sender

Receiver
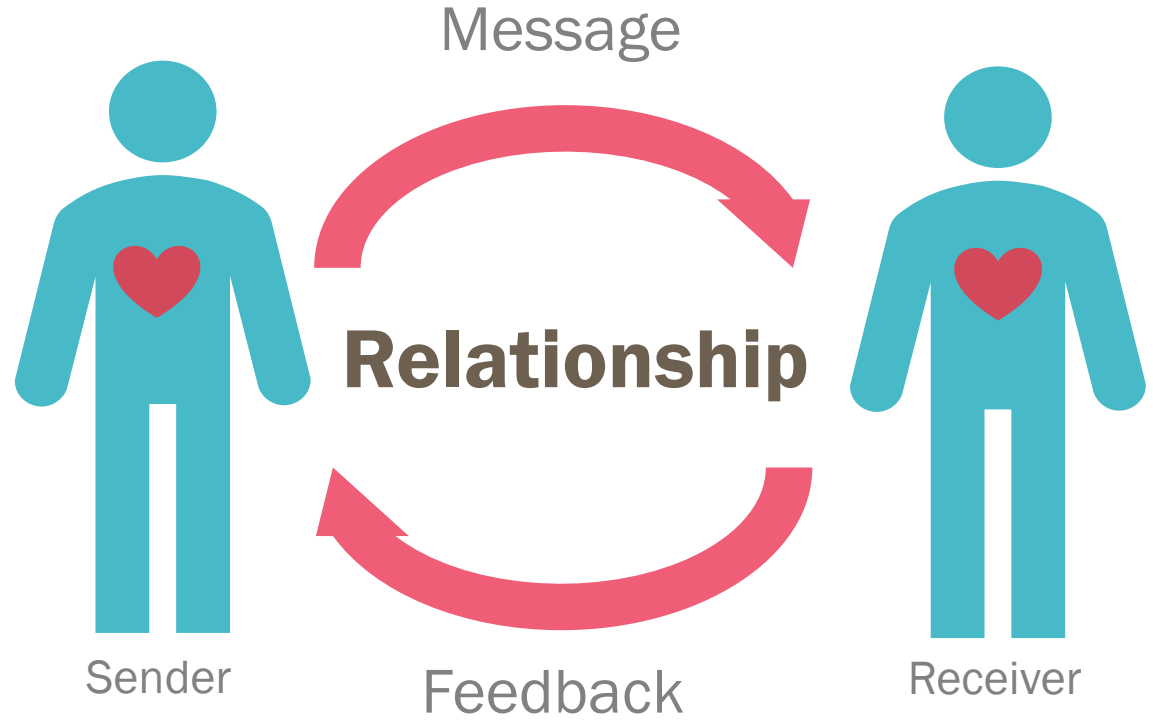
Internal

- Library Staff

- Library Board

- Library Volunteers

- Third Party Vendors

- Other

External

- Current Library Customers

- Past Library Customers

- Future Library Customers

- Community Residents

- Community Partners

- Community-Serving Orgs & Nonprofits

- Other

Funding Stakeholders

- Public Funders
    - Local
    - State
    - National
- Friends of the Library
- Donors
- Foundations
- Grant-Giving Organizations
- Other

Audiences: Examples by Category

Internal	External	Funding Stakeholders

• Library Staff
   o All employees
   o Managers
   o Departments
• Library Board
• Library Volunteers
• Third Party Vendors
   • Security
   • Maintenance
• Other
	• Current Library Customers
	   • In person
	   • Online
	• Past/Future Library Customers
	• Segments
	   • By Age
	   • By Geography
	   • By Interest
	   • By Need
	• Community Residents
	• Community Partners
	• Community-Serving Orgs & Nonprofits
	• News Media
		• Public Funders
		   • Local
		   • State
		   • National
		• Budget Office
		• Elected Officials (if applicable)
		• Friends of the Library
		• Donors – Individual, Corporate, Foundation
		• Foundations
		• Grant-Giving Organizations
		• Other

Key Messages

Why are key messages important?

- You are trying to build a relationship with our audiences. Trust = Time + Repetition.

- Key Messages help you get to your goal by providing consistent, clear and compelling messaging about your library.

- Key Messages are integral to your library's identity, your reputation and your brand.

Types of Key Messages

- **Foundational Messages:** Your library's story, history, mission, vision, who you serve, how you are funded and governed, etc. *Change Rarely.*

- **Service Messages:** What services you offer, how many locations you have, how many staff you have, how you operate, etc. *Change Episodically.*

- **Seasonal Messages:** What programs you offer, what is coming up, new service offerings, etc. *Change Seasonally.*

- **Impact Messages:** How you make a difference for individuals and the community you serve.

Foundational Messages: Barrie Public Library

- The Barrie Public Library strives to provide equitable library service while removing as many barriers as possible.

- The Barrie Public Library helps residents of Barrie and Oro-Medonte discover opportunities and provides a place for the community to come together.

- We care about and respond to the needs of our community and our colleagues. We have unique interests, experiences, and passions, and we bring these to work every day. We engage with our community and welcome everyone.

- We believe in collaboration, inclusion, and diversity. We seek opportunities to cooperate and build connections through partnerships and community engagement.
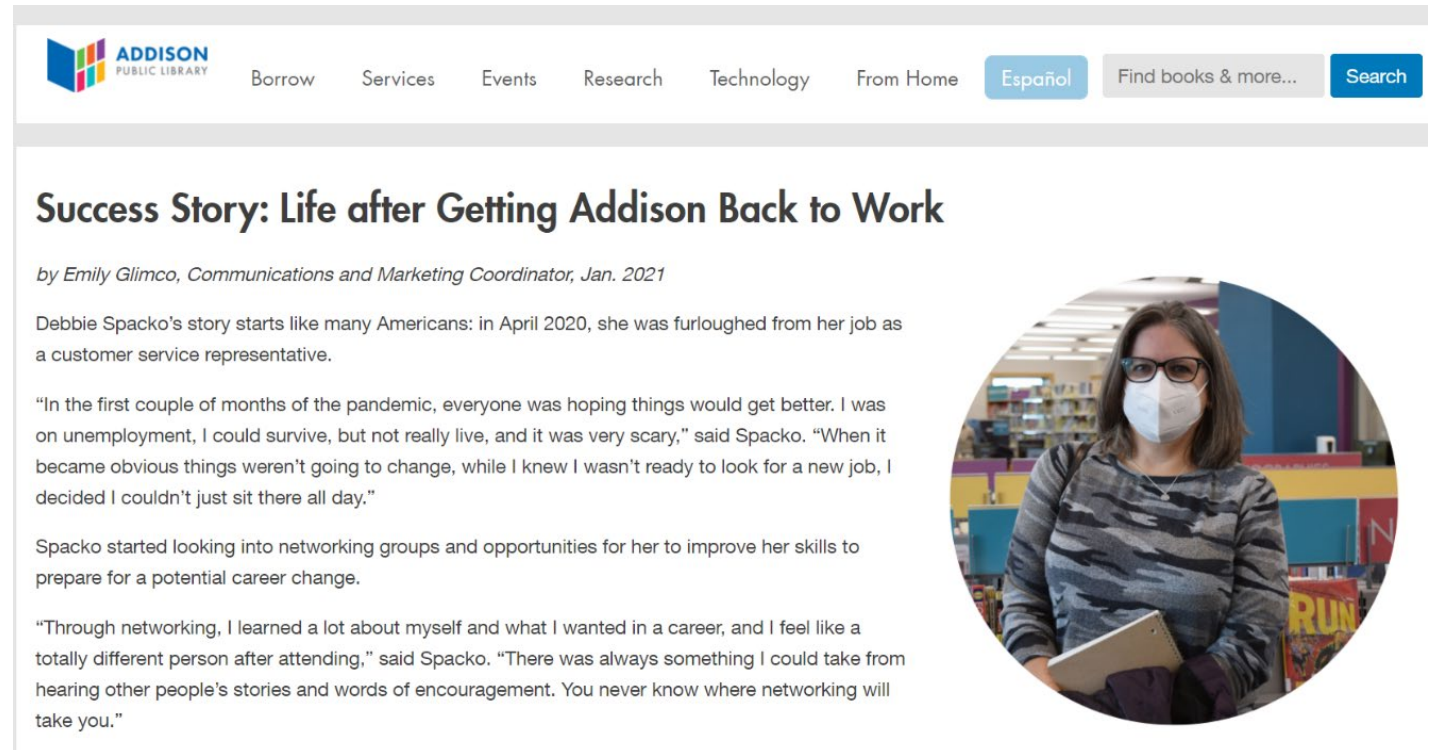
Service Messages: Cecil County Public Library

- **The Library supports early literacy.** Reading books together is one of the most important activities you can do to help your child thrive. With 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, you will help your child develop a life-long love of reading by taking the challenge to read 1,000 books.

- **The Library supports entrepreneurs and business owners.** CCPL's Business Information Center provides free assistance with the process of starting or running a business or nonprofit. Meet with a Business Librarian to research business concepts, refine your plan, find industry-specific business information, conduct market research, and more.

- **The Library provides free access to the internet and technology.** All library branches have public Internet access computers with the Microsoft Office Suite as well as free wireless Internet service. Wi-Fi is also available in all branch parking lots. Wi-Fi printing is also available.

Impact Message: Addison Public Library

- Debbie, a library user, was furloughed from her job as a customer service representative. She started using Addison Public Library's Job Seeker Services including networking, classes and more. Thanks to the skills and knowledge she gained, she applied for and got a sales job.

www.addisonlibrary.org/career-success

Seasonal Messages: Content Calendar

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly Theme	New Year	Love Your Library	Women's History	National Library Week	AAPI Heritage	Summer Reading	Summer Reading	Back to School	Library Card Signups	Hispanic Heritage	Thanks-giving	Holiday Happenings
Services & Programs to Highlight	Nonfiction Books	Black Authors	Women's Biographies	E-Book Offerings	AAPI Authors	Summer Reading Kickoff	Summer Learning	Summer Reading Finale	Homework Help	Audiobooks	Cozy Reads	Winter Mysteries
Seasonal Happenings	New Year's Resolutions		Women's History Programs	Spring Festival	AAPI Programs	Summer Reading Programs	Summer Reading Programs	Backpack Drive		Fall Festival		
Community Happenings		Tax Assistance		Centennial	New HQ Opening		Fireworks Festival	First Day of School				Holiday Festival
Internal Priorities				Employee 5ppreciation		Staff Picnic				Staff In-Service		
Other	Website Redesign			Branch Renovation		Hurricane Season			New Printer Software			Fine Forgiveness Week

Example: Digital Literacy Initiative

	Internal	External	Funding Stakeholders
Questions to Answer in Your Messaging	• Who is responsible? • What do staff need to know and do? • When does it start? • Will we receive training? • How do I answer customer questions?	• Is this program for me? • What do I get out of it? • Is the program at a convenient time and place? • How do I access this program?	• How is the library using the funding we provided? • Is the library providing a good return on my investment? • Are they crediting us appropriately?
Strategies/Channels	• Employee intranet • Employee newsletter • Staff meetings • FAQs	• Website • Email marketing • Flyers & Posters	• Reporting back on results • Crediting them in all materials

Tailoring Messages & Strategies to Each Category

Strategies & Tactics

Strategies are the methods you will use to get your messages to your audiences.

Examples:

- Partner with a community-facing organization on an event

- Generate coverage on the local news media

- Reach new customers with a direct mail campaign

Communications Audit

- First, capture what you are *already doing.*

- Then, think about what you would *like to be doing.*

- Finally, ask: What are you willing to *stop doing* to create capacity for new things.

"PESO" Method

Paid	Earned	Social	Owned
• Anything you pay for, including advertising, printed materials, flyers, brochures, etc.	• News articles (a.k.a. "earned media") about your library or product, including print, TV, radio, online, etc.	• Communications on your official social media presences as well as communications about you on others' social media presences (ex: online reviews)	• Communications channels you own such as your website, signage, blogs, distribution lists, etc.

Paid

Examples:

- Flyers

- Newsletters

- Advertising: Print, Radio, TV, Billboards

- Digital Ads

- Sponsorships

Earned

Examples:

- News stories
  - TV
  - Radio
  - Print
  - Online
- Op Eds
- Partnerships

Social

Examples:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- SnapChat
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- WhatsApp
- Online Reviews (Yelp, Google)

Owned

Examples:

- Website

- Email Lists

- Display Spaces in Branches

- Exterior Signage, Banners

- Receipts

- Text Messages

- Staff Interactions!

Increase Engagement With Segmentation

Content targeted to your audience, their characteristics, and their wants and needs, makes them more likely to engage.

Examples of Segments:

- Geography (by zip code)

- Customer Status (active, inactive, fine balance over limit, etc.)

- Age of User

- Other Engagement (has attended program, clicked on a link, visited a branch, etc.)

Implementing Solutions
To Help Improve Day-to-Day Operations

Tip 1: Prioritize

- Start with your audiences: specifically your customers and your community.

- Ask: What are their biggest wants and needs? What does the library offer that meets those wants and needs?

- Then, think about how to reach them with messages about how the library meets their wants and needs.

Two Approaches to Prioritization

1. Based on level of impact - i.e., the things that affect the most customers.

2. Based on the level of difficulty, starting with easier fixes.

Tip: Try for a mix of "quick wins" that are easy to implement and "heavy lifts" that make a big impact.

Tip 2: Rebalance Your Marketing Efforts

Most libraries spend **more than half** of their marketing and communications time and budget on marketing programs.

Marketing programs takes more time and effort because programs are time-sensitive and there are always more.
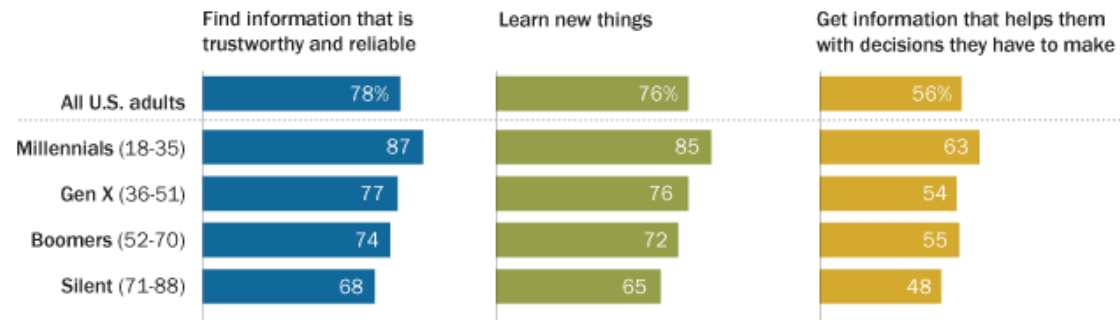
This leaves services, services, resources and physical spaces with very little marketing attention.

People Value Services & Spaces

Millennials more likely than older generations to say libraries help them find trustworthy information, learn new things and make informed decisions

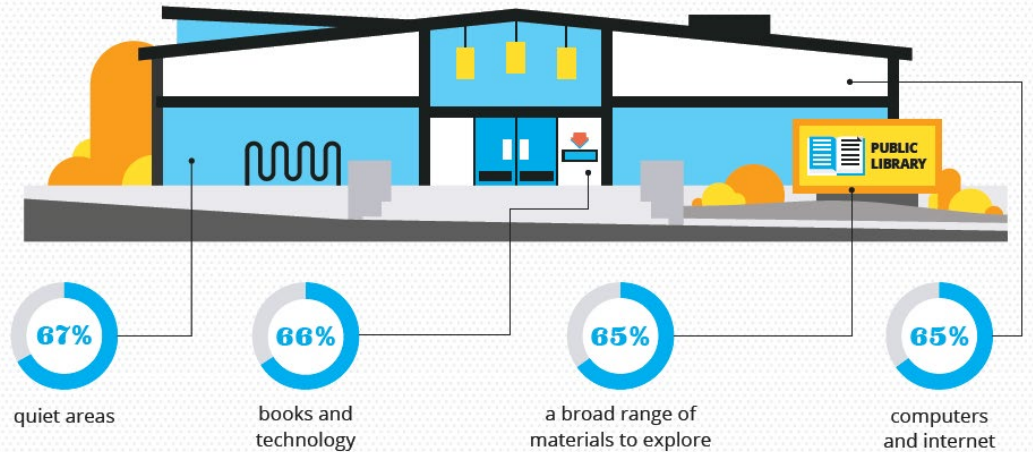*% of adults who say they think the public library helps them ...*

	Find information that is trustworthy and reliable	Learn new things	Get information that helps them with decisions they have to make
All U.S. adults	78%	76%	56%
Millennials (18-35)	87	85	63
Gen X (36-51)	77	76	54
Boomers (52-70)	74	72	55
Silent (71-88)	68	65	48

Source: Survey conducted Sept. 29-Nov. 6, 2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2 in 3 voters place high importance on foundational library services, including:

67% quiet areas

66% books and technology

65% a broad range of materials to explore

65% computers and internet

Read the full report to learn more!

Visit oc.lc/awareness2018

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Typical Public Library Budget

Personnel	$30,850,223.00	73%
Collections	$5,396,854.00	13%
Facilities	$2,939,022.00	7%
Other	$1,764,157.00	4%
Technology & Equipment	$1,248,619.00	3%
Programming	$284,682.00	1%
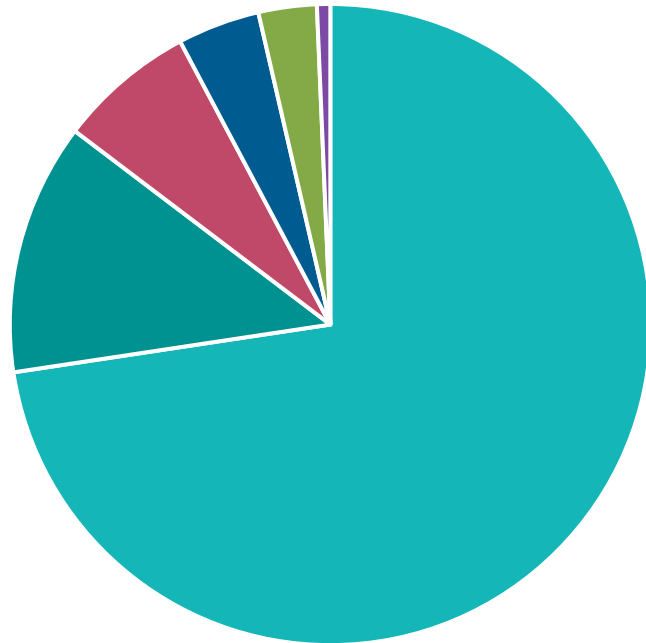
Legend:
- Personnel
- Collections
- Facilities
- Other
- Technology & Equipment
- Programming

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What Does This Tell Us?

Most libraries spend the bulk of their budgets on three things:

- Library Staff

- Collections

- Buildings (including furnishings and technology)

These are the same things that research tells us our audiences value.

Strategies for Rebalancing

- Align your marketing and communications strategies with your Strategic Plan goals and outcomes.

- Create a Marketing & Communications Plan so you can be more intentional about what services and programs you are marketing.

- Tools like a Content Calendar help you ensure you're marketing a healthy mix of things.
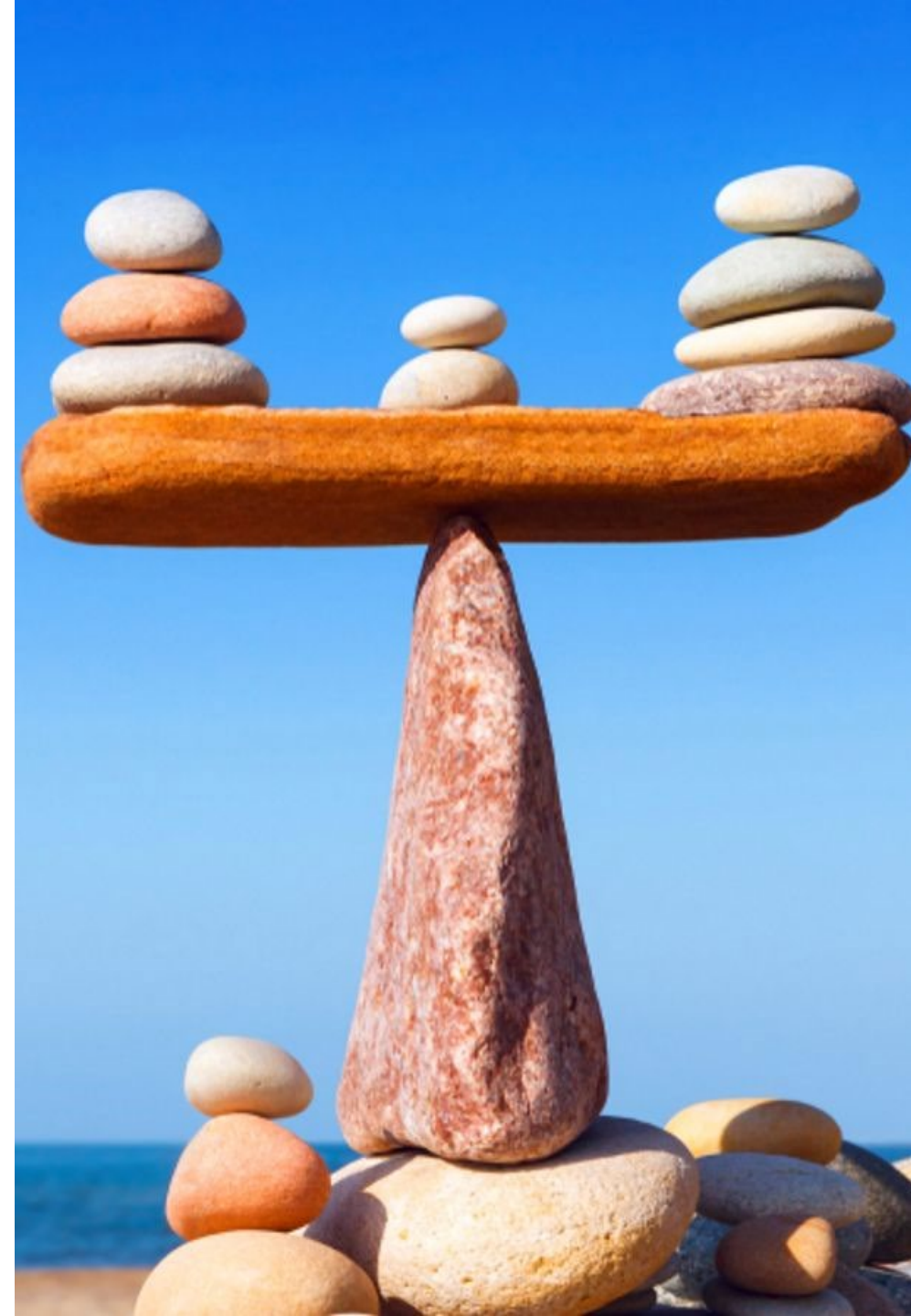
Tip 3: Understand Your Brand

- **Beliefs:** Mission, Vision, Values

- **Story:** Key Messages
    - The people whose lives you change.
    - The impact you have in your community.
    - The unique expertise, knowledge and services you offer that makes it all possible.

- **Brand Promise:** A value or experience your customers can expect to receive every single time they interact with you.

- A logo, while important, is just a symbol of your brand.
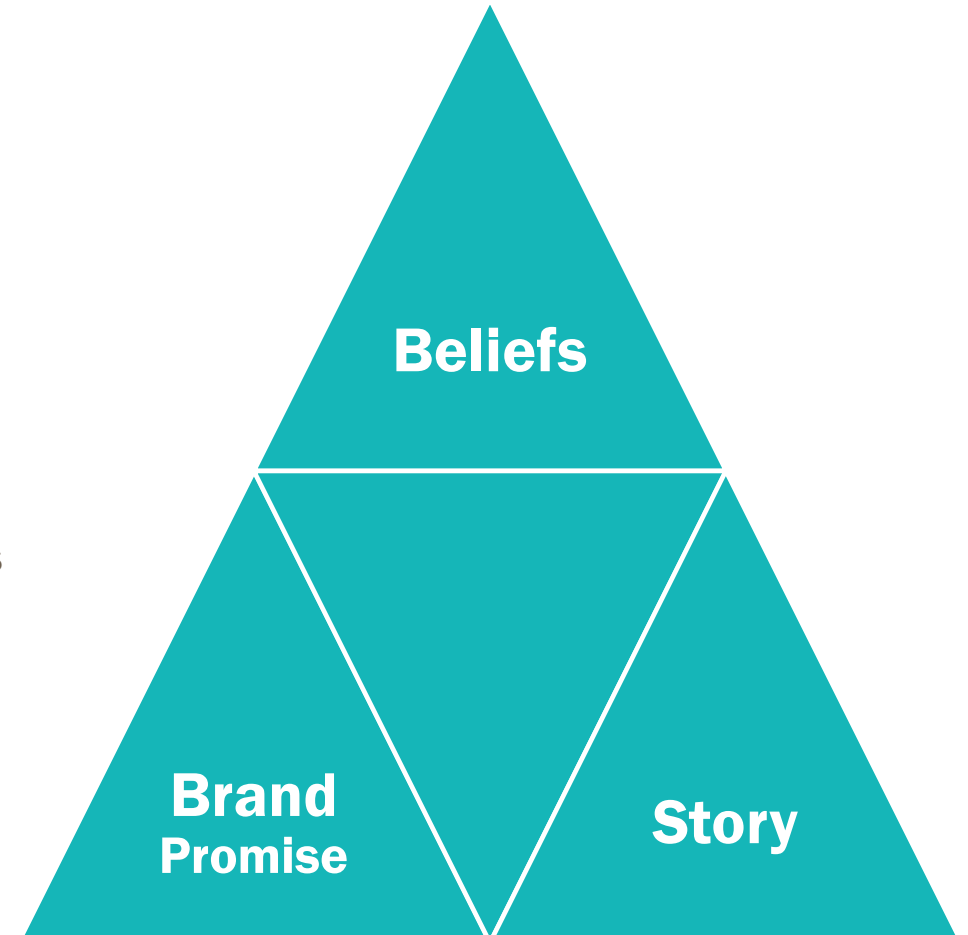
Strengthening Your Brand

- Ensure that all employees know your beliefs and are acting in accordance with them.

- Tell your story. How is your library helping customers, solving community problems, and making lives better?

- Develop a brand promise. The more your library can consistently deliver on that promise, the stronger your relationship with your audiences becomes.
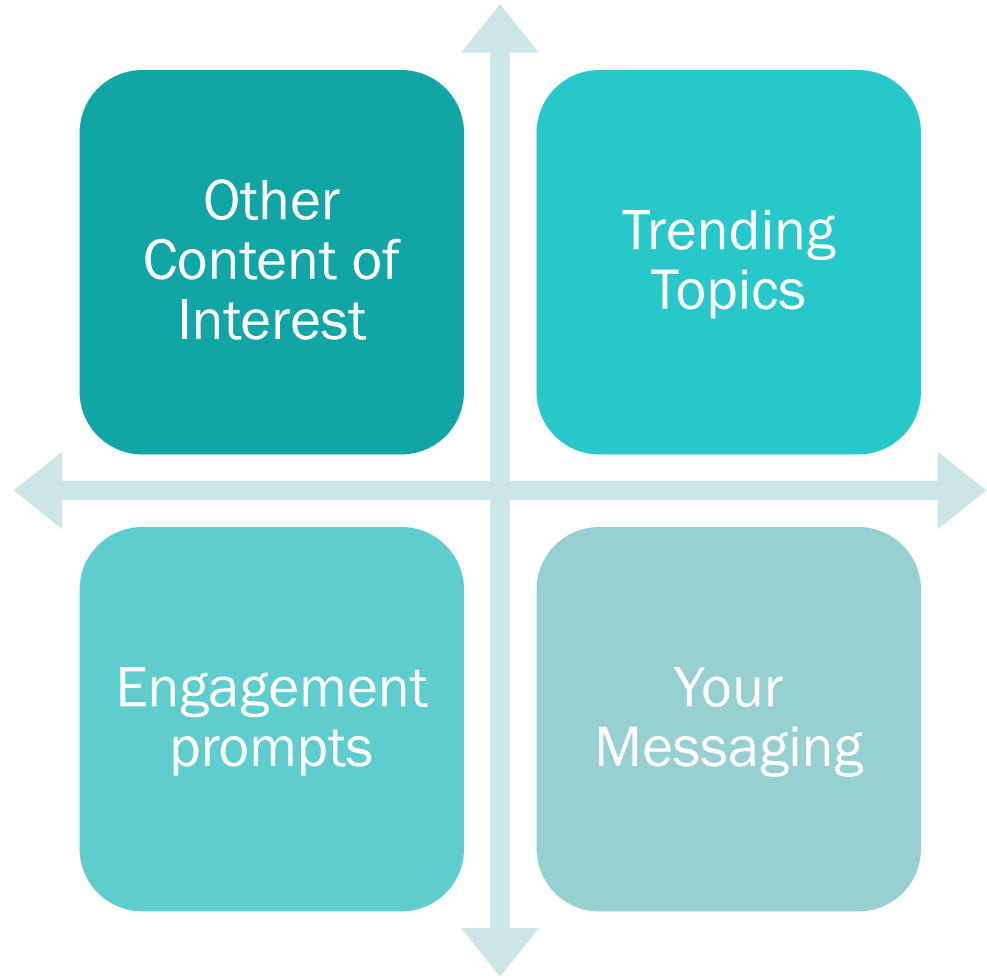
Tip 4: Maximize Social Media

- Ensure you have a good mix of content.

- Make sure you are monitoring social media for reputation management and engagement strategies.

- Solidify your social media governance structure.

Content

Monitoring
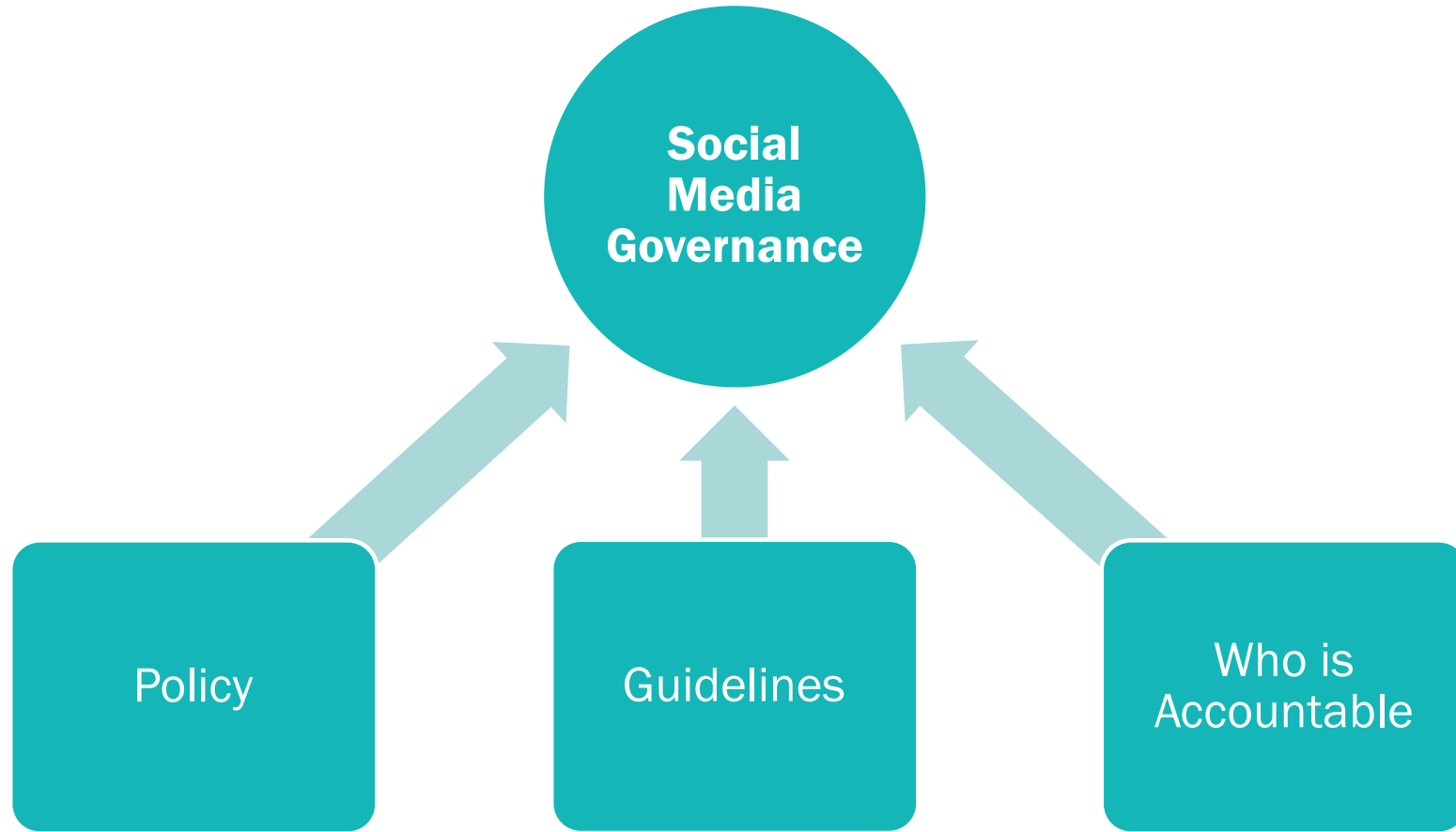
Governance

Content Types

Active Listening

- Monitor social media channels for:

    - Trending topics.

    - Post engagement.

    - Customer feedback and questions.

    - Negative comments and mis- or dis-information

- Channels to monitor:

    - Traditional social – Facebook, Twitter, IG, TikTok, SnapChat, YouTube, etc.

    - Online reviews – Yelp, Google, etc.

   - Other – blogs, forms, etc.

Governance

Option 1: Fully Centralized

- Content, Monitoring and Governance all reside with one person or department.

- Pros: Complete control, low reputation risk.

- Cons: Less creativity, lower engagement.

Social Media

Option 2: Fully Decentralized

- Content, Monitoring and Governance reside with many different people and/or departments.

- Pros: Lots of ideas at the table, more potential content.

- Cons:

  - Monitoring difficult or impossible.

  - Diffusion of responsibility.

  - Mixed and competing messages.

  - Reputation risks.
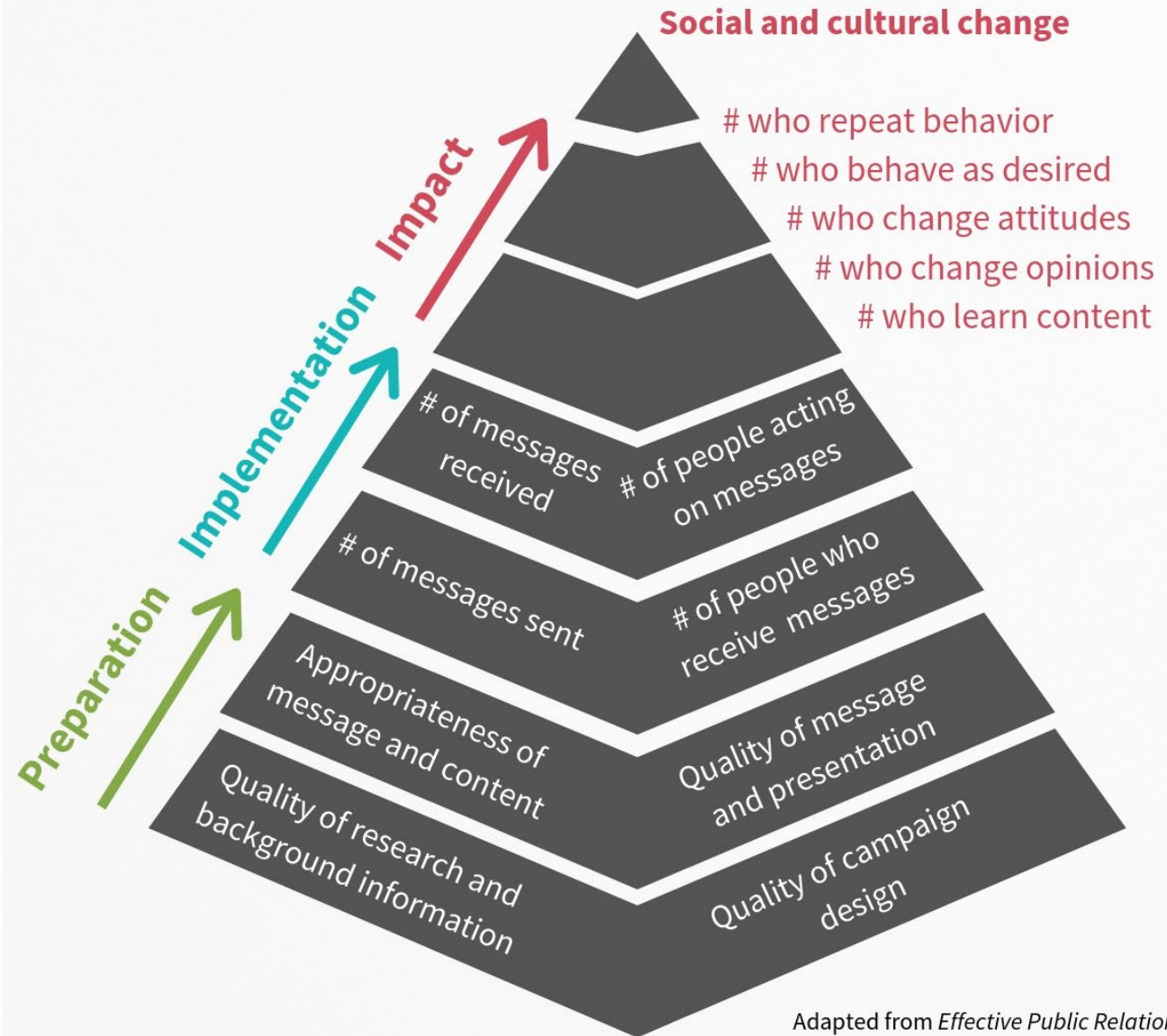
Content

Content

Content
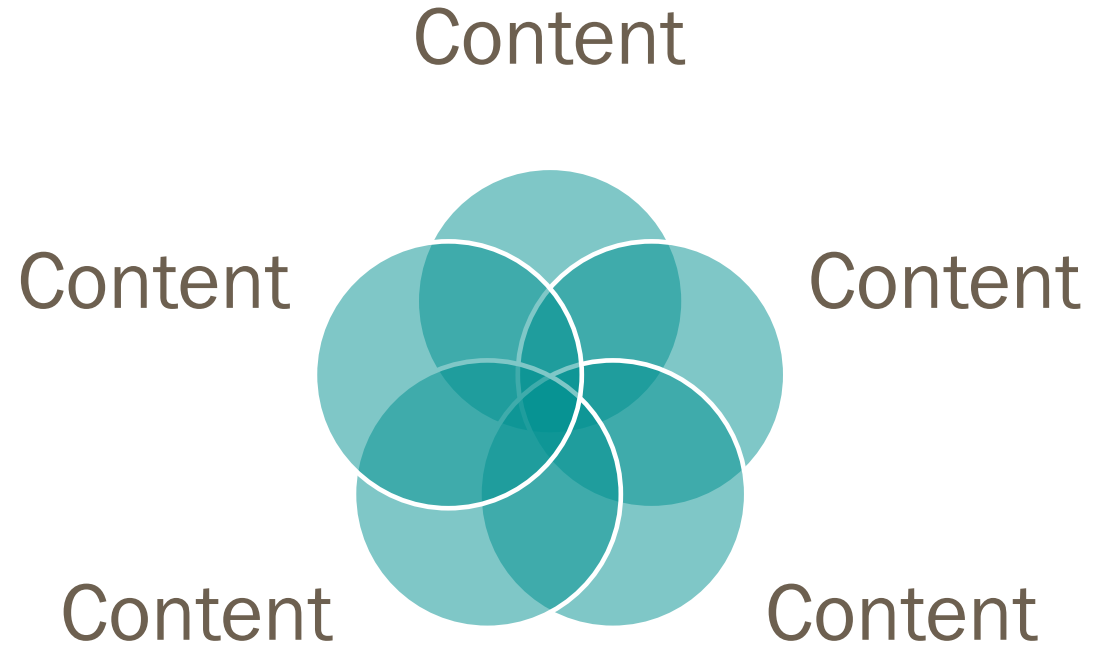
Content

Content

Option 3: Hybrid Model

- Content is shared among many people and/or departments.

- Monitoring and Governance reside with one department.

- Pros: Good mix of accountability and creativity, higher engagement.

- Cons: Some reputation risk, requires strategy and oversight to manage.
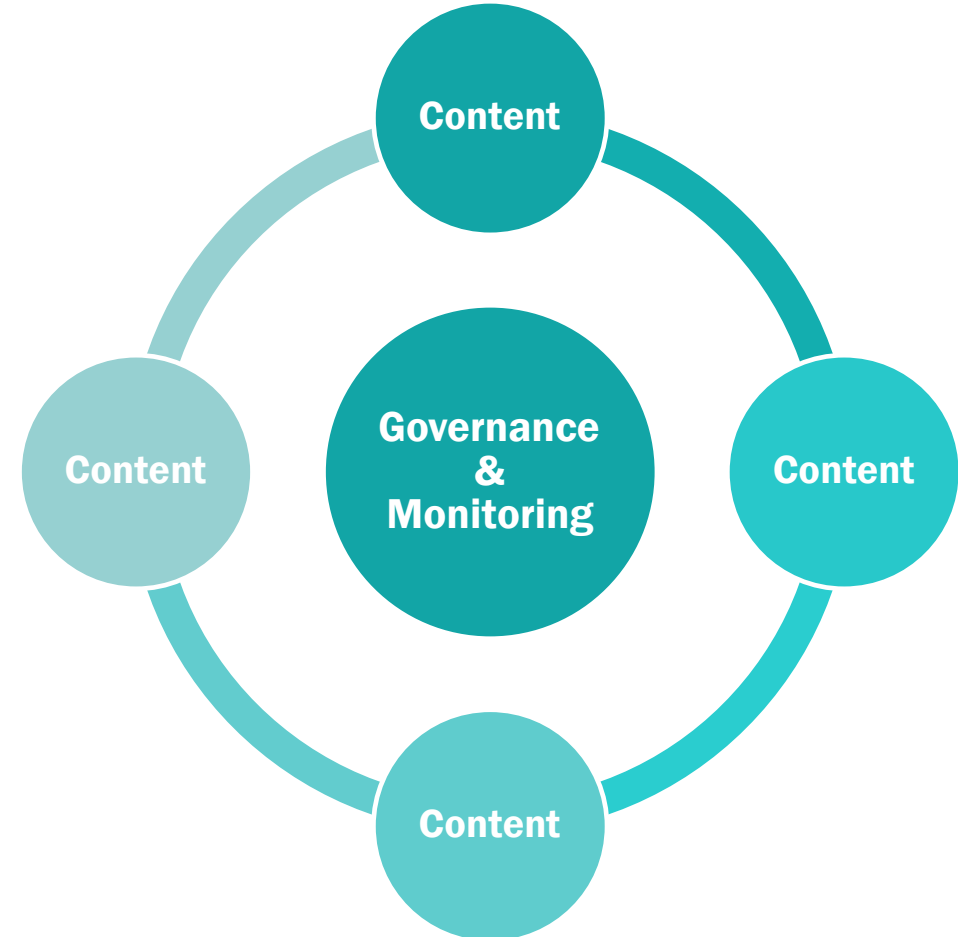
Tip 5: Measure Your Efforts

Adapted from *Effective Public Relations*, Ninth Edition

Leading & Lagging Indicators

A *leading* indicator looks forward at future outcomes and events.

A *lagging* indicator looks back at whether the intended result was achieved.
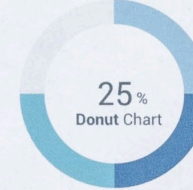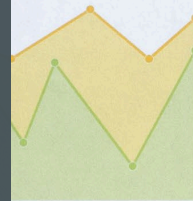
Leading Indicators
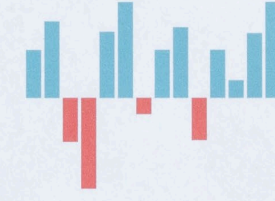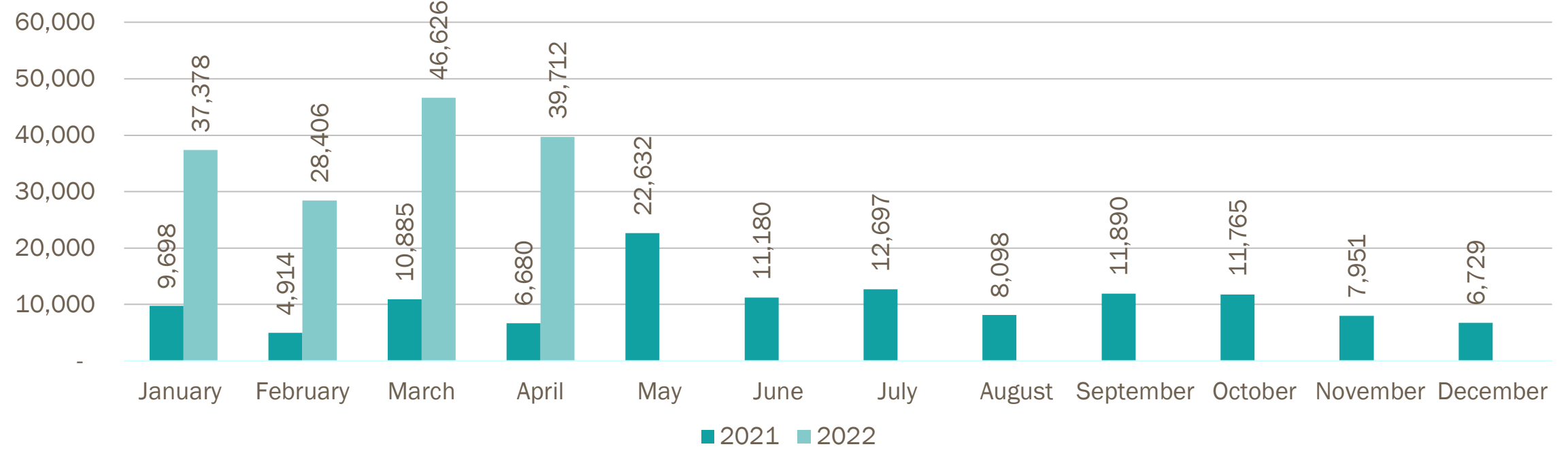
Measure	Example
# Of Messages Sent/Received	• Email: # of people on list • Direct mail: # households are on list • Media Relations: # journalists on your list • Social media: # of relevant posts
# Of People Who Receive Messages	• Email: Open rate (20% is a good target) • Direct mail: # households received mailing • Media Relations: # journalists opened press release • Social media: # of views of your posts
# Of People Acting On Messages	• Email: Click rate (2% is a good target) • Direct mail: # of people who responded to mailing • Media Relations: # journalists responded to press release, covered story • Social media: # of people who clicked, shared or commented on your posts (i.e. engagement)

Lagging Indicators

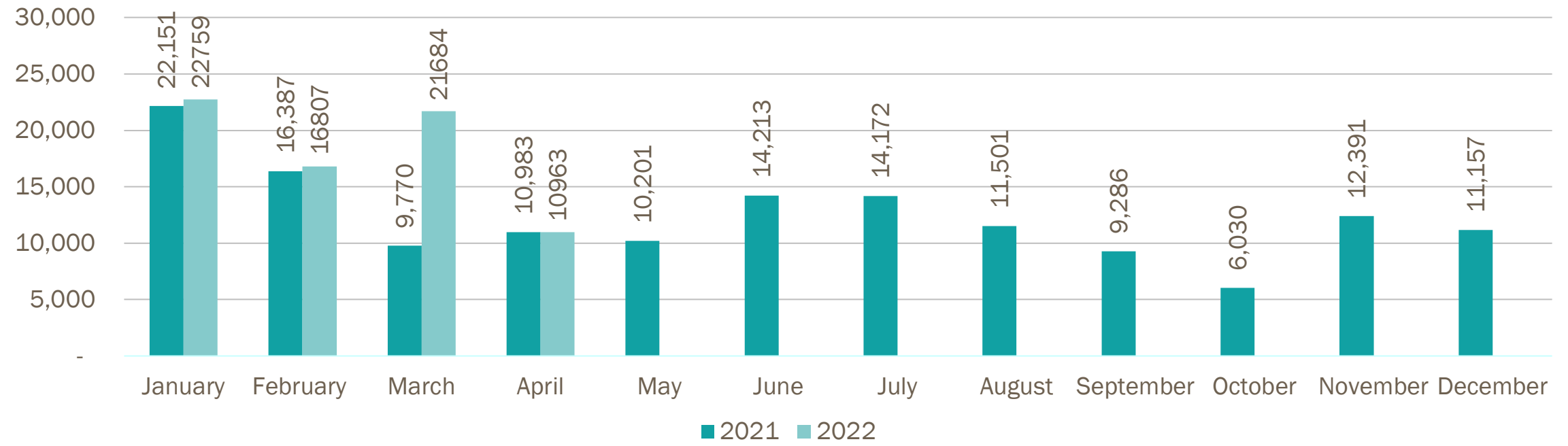| Measure	Example
# Who Learn Content	• Survey: "Are you aware that XYX Library has programs for all ages?"
# Who Change Opinions, Attitudes	• Survey: "Rate your level of agreement with the following statements …"
# Who Behave as Desired	• In person: # of people who came to your event • Conversion: # of people who used your product or service, became customers • Net promoter score: "Would you recommend this service?"
# Who Repeat Behavior	• In person: # of people who came *back* to more events • Customers: # who come back, become repeat customers

Example: Email Marketing Metric

Library Newsletter Opens

Example: Customer Metric

Active Library Account Holders

Month	2019	2020
January	51,967	80,870
February	52,856	84,705
March	53,691	87,048
April	54,661	
May	55,825	
June	56,924	
July	58,338	
August	60,546	
September	63,284	
October	66,144	
November	69,559	
December	73,641	
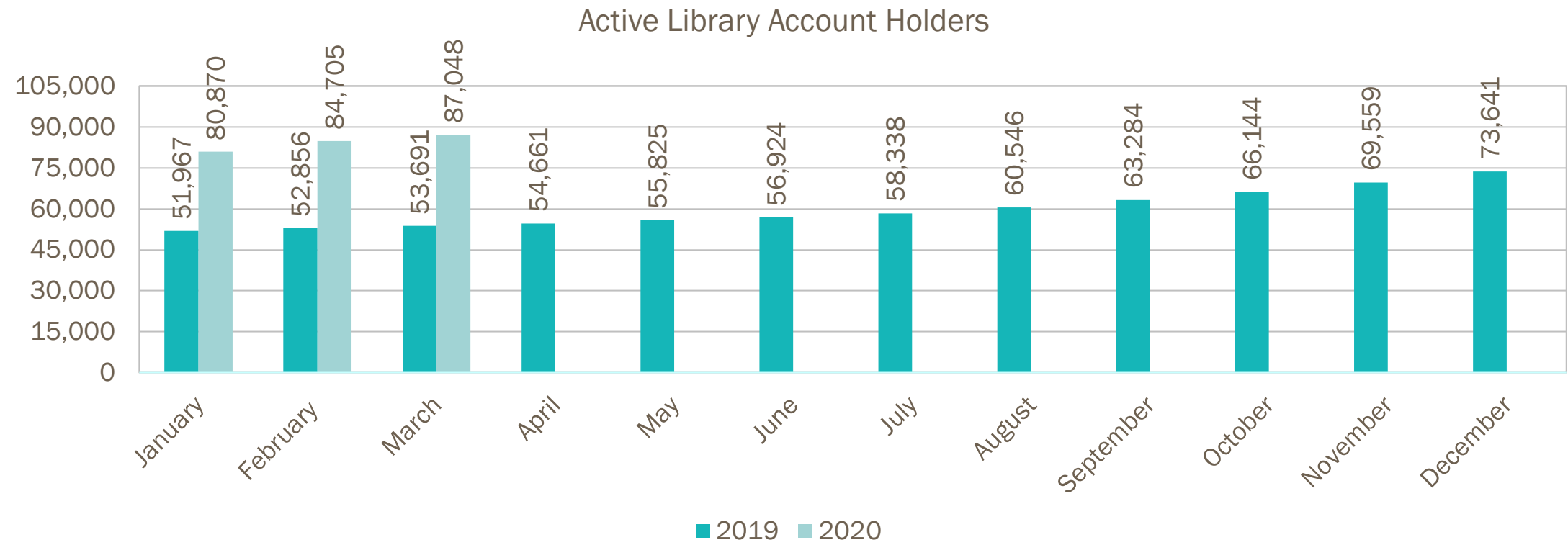
Tip 6: Invest in Partnerships

Ask yourself:

- What other organizations care about the same causes that your library cares about?

- What other organizations are trying to solve the same community problems that your library is trying to solve?

- Who else is talking to the audiences you are trying to reach?

- Who else is reaching the people who would also benefit from your services?

Getting the Most Out of Partnerships

- Establish a solid foundation for your partnership. Spend time discussing your goals, mission, etc. Work to get clarity.

- Avoid falling into the trap of offering to do most of the work and asking little in return from your partners!

- A good partner will talk about you to their audiences — not only about the activities you are doing together, but your library as a whole — whenever they have an opportunity.

Tip 7: Optimize Marketing & Communications Resources

- If possible, find the capacity to create and/or dedicate at least one position or contractor to marketing and communications.

- Select employees with marketing and communications backgrounds and/or offer them professional development specific to marketing and PR.

- Ensure that the work your in-house marketing and communications employees are doing is aligned with your priorities.

- Avoid letting library marketing and communications become a catch-all position or department. This can slowly encroach on their abilities to perform the very important and strategic duties of telling your library's story and increasing perceptions of relevance among your audiences.

- Most importantly, have at least one marketing and communications role be a leadership position.

Invest Wisely in Marketing

- Time is money! It can be more efficient and effective to pay for time-saving tools. (Ex: social media schedulers, email marketing platforms.)

- Do an audit of your marketing and communications budget. What are your highest cost items? Are they still effective? What else could you do?(Ex: print newsletter vs. paid advertising.)

- Use your Key Metrics to see what strategies are getting you the results you want.

- Ask yourself: Is your marketing budget actually being spent on marketing? (Ex: wayfinding signage, events, internal needs, etc.)
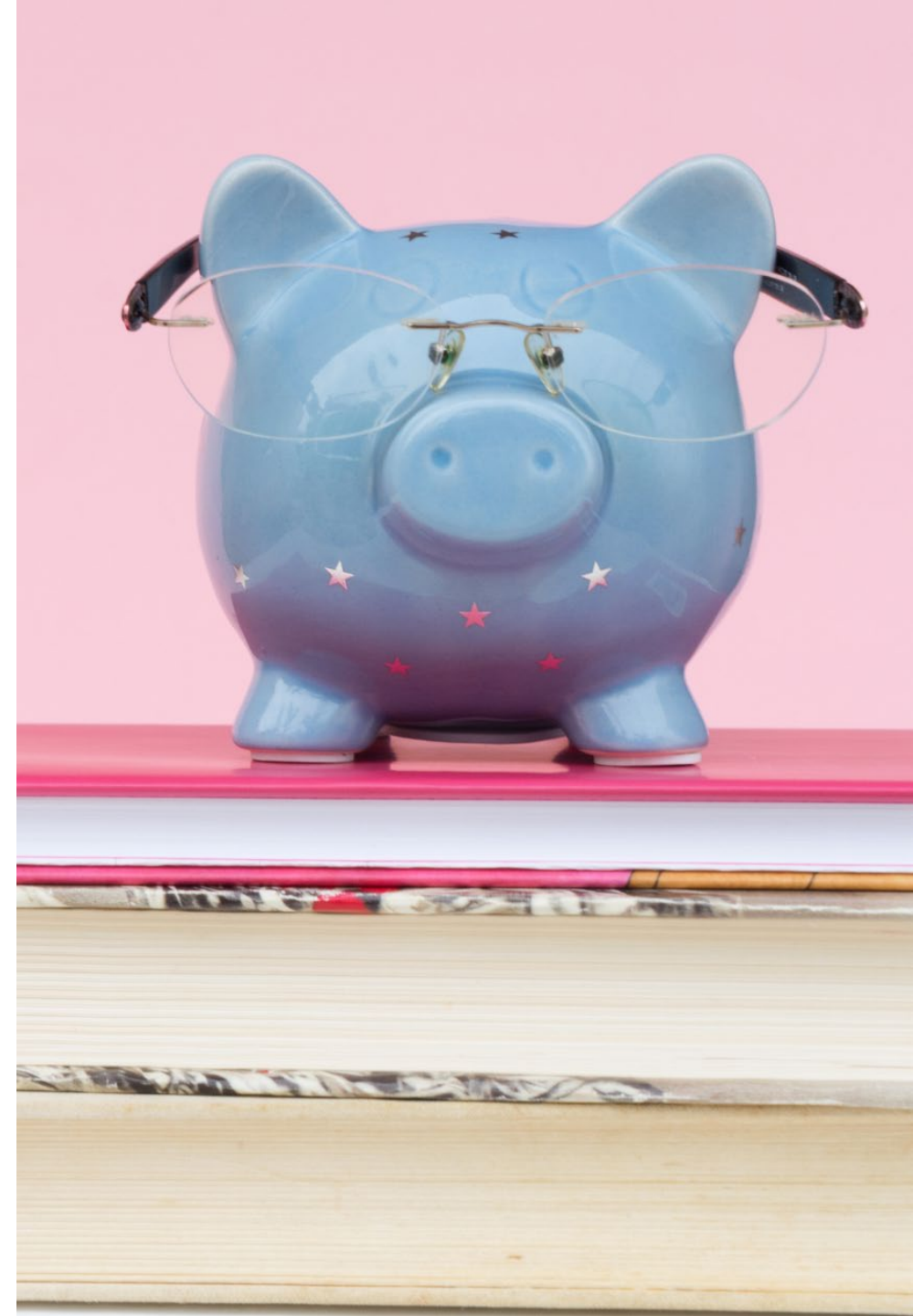
15-Minute Break

10:45 – 11:00 a.m.

Next Up: Marketing Solutions Breakout Session

30-Minute Breakout Session

- Break into groups of 4. (5 min.)
- Discuss your library's marketing challenges and solutions. (10 min.)
- Report out one example per group. (10 min.)
- Wrap up and lessons learned. (5 min.)