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**MARKETING INFORMATION SERVICES AT THE
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

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1. One of the major goals that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has set to help accomplish its mission is to expand Americans' right to know about their environment. Our strategic plan states that "Easy access to a wealth of information about the state of their local environment will expand citizen involvement and give people tools to protect their families and their communities as they see fit. Increased information exchange between scientists, public health officials, businesses, citizens, and all levels of government will foster greater knowledge about the environment and what can be done to protect it."
2. The USEPA must also support the work of its managers and staff by providing access to the many different types of information they need to do their jobs effectively. These needs range from everyday administrative functions to complex scientific and legal research.
3. The information products and services that we provide for internal and public use are disseminated through four major categories:
 - Our Internet Web site,
 - Our Intranet Web sites,
 - Our libraries, and
 - Our information hotlines.
4. To meet these needs, we have provided information products and services that we hope will be both useful and used, and have made them widely available. But being widely available does not mean they will be widely used unless people are aware that they exist and how to access them.

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5. We have used a variety of marketing techniques to inform USEPA managers and staff and the public about these products and services. This paper will present some of the marketing activities we have done, some tips that we hope will prove useful, and will summarise our draft plan for marketing our Internet Web site to the public in the coming year.

Marketing Our Internet Web Site and Services

6. Our Internet Web site is the primary vehicle we use to present information to the public. We have sought many opportunities to make the public aware of our Web site and its information offerings. Our marketing efforts have “advertised” our USEPA home page - www.epa.gov - as well as the many information offerings within the www.epa.gov site. These include our Infoterra site, our Envirofacts data warehouse, the Enviromapper Internet mapping service, the Surf Your Watershed site, the Toxic Release Inventory Explorer statistical query and response tool, and many others.

7. Marketing techniques we have used for our Web site in the past include brochures, posters, bookmarks, stick-on tattoos, magnets, “What’s New” and “Hot Topics” buttons on the Web site, listservs, library displays, meeting and conference presentations, the URL on our letterhead, and an information booth during Earth Day exhibitions.

8. This past July we hosted an Internet/public-access conference called “WebWorld 2000” open to people inside and outside of the USEPA. The conference served to emphasise the importance we place on our Web site and was a significant marketing event as well, both internally and externally. Through a press advisory, we brought the conference and, coincidentally, the USEPA’s Web site to the attention of the press and many others. Our USEPA Deputy Administrator, W. Michael McCabe, gave the keynote address, highlighting the importance that our senior managers place on the Web site and our public information dissemination policies and practices.

Marketing our Intranet Web Site

9. The Information Access Division at the USEPA Headquarters maintains our overall Agency Intranet as well as the Headquarters Intranet site intended for USEPA use. Most USEPA regions and program offices are represented on our Intranet. However, our Intranet sites have not yet been developed to be as richly populated and used as our Internet site.

10. We are working on redesigning our Intranet site to make it more usable and to encourage increased attention to maintaining its information and services and improving upon them. The major types of information that are provided on the Intranet are:

- Administrative information, services and tools;
- Internal policies and guidance;
- Scientific data and analytical tools; and
- Organization and people information.

11. These services are being increasingly used, but we are still climbing to achieve our goal of full organisational participation and universally common usage by managers and staff.

12. We are working with an Intranet content provider team to create our new design and to encourage increased attention to improving the Intranet information and service offerings. This team represents our program offices and some regions and helps to engage their offices’ attention to making useful information available to USEPA desktops through the Intranet.

13. Our Intranet marketing efforts have been limited to date. We did a mass distribution of an email message describing how to use the Intranet and also sent a mass usage survey that contained information on, and links to, some of the major services on the Intranet. The survey response was good and we believe it has helped increase usage. We also emailed information about new scientific subscription services now

available through the Intranet; usage of this research information has increased dramatically. Our Intranet team individually met with and trained staff in our program offices.

14. We plan to market our Intranet site more as we redesign it and particularly as we implement the new site. Mass email and “Did you know?” teaser posters by elevators are techniques we plan to use. However, the potential of the Intranet will only be realised when its worth is proven and recognised at a senior management level, and that must be our key marketing focus until it becomes more commonly accepted.

Marketing Our Libraries

15. USEPA’s libraries serve our programs and laboratories across the country. USEPA has 29 libraries run by Headquarters, USEPA regions and some of our laboratories. While the chief purpose of these libraries is to serve internal USEPA staff, they are also available to the public. These libraries are staffed, for the most part, by contract librarians overseen by USEPA librarians or other information services staff. The librarians are adept at “getting the word out” regarding their products and services.

16. Our annual library network conference was held in July and included a session on marketing. An outline of a generic USEPA library marketing strategy was developed:

- Consider your mission. Do the services you offer anticipate and meet the needs of the people you serve?
- Consider your customers, internal as well as external. What unique needs might technical, enforcement, management, outreach, support staff have?
- Plan marketing events. There are quarterly, monthly, even daily opportunities to market your services.
- Replay your message, and use a variety of techniques to get the word out. For example, when promoting a workshop, put up posters, promote it on the local network bulletin board, listservs, etc. After the workshop, send out a follow-up message – “Did you miss the workshop?” – telling people how to access the handouts, when the next workshop will be, and how to learn more.
- Be consistent. Make sure all library staff have the training needed to match the marketing events. For example, if you announce a new database, be sure that library staff know how to assist others with that database.

17. The libraries also came up with “Ways to Advertise,” all of which have been, and continue to be used in the libraries:

- Bookmarks – Put your Web site / Intranet site, contact information, list of services on the bookmarks and hand them out at training classes, to new staff, etc. You might have one bookmark advertising your Intranet site and services to staff, and another advertising your Web site and services to the public.
- Fliers / posters – Emphasize who, what, when, where, “what will this do for me?” Make them eye-catching.
- Magnets – Have them printed, or make your own using printable sheets of business card stock and business card magnets.
- Mailing groups / listservs – Create an in-house listserv or mailing group people can join, and send out periodic updates on new services, new books/publications/databases, workshops, etc.
- New book displays and new book lists – Publish a new book list. They’re still very popular with staff, even in the electronic age! Arrange a new book display in the library. Display book jackets for new books on a bulletin board.
- Newsletters – Print, Intranet, e-mail. Newsletters can be bi-weekly, weekly, monthly.

18. Those “Ways to Advertise” activities specifically geared towards USEPA staff members include:

- Bulletin boards (physical or virtual), video terminals, news ticker on Intranet page – Most offices have some kind of announcements system -- make the most of it!

- Table tents – Advertise upcoming events on table tents in the lunch rooms.

19. They also listed marketing tips, which included:

- Book swaps – Annual book swaps have been quite popular events for several libraries. You can also provide an ongoing book swap table or shelf in the library and encourage people to check it regularly. Libraries have had CD (music) Swaps, these are very popular. People come to the library for CDs but once they are there can find out about services that are offered.
- Branch / office newsletters – Write a column for the branch/regional/office newsletter.
- New employees – Provide a new employee packet with information about the library and its services.
- Open houses – Invite staff and frequent library users to "bring a friend."
- Respond to requests – Keep patrons up-to-date on the status of their requests. In addition, send patrons and staff members sample search results on a topic of interest. Let them know you can provide more information (there's more where that came from).
- "Mini Marketing Moments" – those extra opportunities to make staff aware, one on one, of the products and services you have to offer.

20. Our head USEPA librarian also found the following tips on the Internet:

Marketing Approach

- Information professionals should market their services by utilizing a "big tent" marketing philosophy. This approach encompasses any and all marketing techniques that captures client attention, generates interest, meets expectations, and satisfies needs.

Branding is very important

- Put the library name/logo on everything that is distributed both in hardcopy and electronically.

Low-Effort/High-Impact

- Electronic phone messages
- Push Technology for delivering third party electronic journals and newsletters
- An e-mail alert service - this allows libraries to engage their users' attention and counter the competition from the growing array of information providers on the Internet. It is an effective way to strengthen "brand" loyalty and to encourage user feedback.

Training/Exhibits/Presentations

- Provide training to clients on a specific product or service or provide general training on library services to new users/employees.
- Make presentations to client groups as well as at professional meetings and conferences.

Marketing USEPA's Hotlines

21. USEPA has close to 40 Hotlines on various topics such as hazardous incidents (oil or toxic spills), safe drinking water, and wastewater. These are primarily designed for the public and are advertised on our Web site and brochures. Most of these hotlines are available via a toll-free phone line.

22. Our office does not currently run a hotline, although part of our mission is to operate a central USEPA hotline (1-888-CALL-EPA) which would serve as an information and referral service. This would become the main hotline advertised by USEPA. We have not developed a marketing plan yet but this would have to consider how much attention we want to draw to our hotline as opposed to our Web site.

USEPA's Draft Web Marketing Plan

23. USEPA's newly redesigned Web site organises our information in ways that make our important documents, pages and data easier to find. Our offerings are prioritised by quality and are catalogued and indexed for easy retrieval. Not only do we want our "old" users to be aware of our improvements, we also believe that this is an excellent time to bring new users to our Web site. We are in the process of developing an annual 2001 marketing plan to make our site more broadly known and easier to find through the prominent Internet search engines. Our draft marketing plan includes strategies on targeting:

- Search engines – This effort entails two phases, registration and "rank management." Registration of a Web site and URL on the major search engines (i.e. Alta Vista, Yahoo, etc.) will attract those users unfamiliar with the Web site. After registration, the site may not appear until six weeks. It is important to register lower-level pages as well allowing topic specific pages to be found on request. When considering rank management, ensure that key words and description language are inherent in the site's code and presentation which will boost the possibility for high rankings in search engine results.
- Print media – Marketing through print media includes designing and distributing attractive brochures, business cards, exhibit materials, and posters. These are standard and cost-effective means of informing others about products and services.
- Partnering – Partnering with other environmental groups, agencies, or grantees can assist in effectively delivering one clear message with related objectives. This could include links from other Web sites or listing resources in partners' newsletter and listervs.

Conclusion

24. Some observations that I offer: Marketing of information services is part of providing and offering these services and products, and it can be done to fit a wide range of resources. While it presents the dilemma of increasing business activities for which we may not be "fully" funded, it has the potential of calling positive attention and additional resources to our work. Perhaps it could also have the reverse effect. However, is our job worth doing if our products and services are not known and used as widely as possible?

25. The services and information that Infoterra focal points can provide are important to human and environmental health. How can we grow and become more effective if we do not increase demand, and how do we increase demand without making people aware of what we offer?

26. In conclusion, participating in a handful of these marketing activities for our Agency's Internet and Intranet sites has proven successful. We continually experience an upward trend in the number of distinct hosts visiting our sites and in the hits we receive each month. As a result, the USEPA seems to have become our citizens' first stop for high quality, credible environmental information. However, it is important to note that in a perfect world, where funding is unlimited, we would be able participate in every single marketing activity listed above, but this is not t

27. he case. In order to achieve success, choose the few strategies that will work best for your product or service.