

MARKETING AND MOTIVATING

Jan Robertson, Regional Languages' Adviser, Dunedin College of Education

ABSTRACT

This presentation will give practical ways, based on good marketing principles, of marketing language learning to current students, prospective students, parents and the wider community and to raise the profile of language learning in schools. The marketing principles will also be linked to motivating students learning a second language, so that they experience practical ways of using the language to give them satisfaction and enjoyment and the knowledge of how they benefit from learning another language.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MARKETING? HOW CAN THE CONCEPT APPLY TO THE MARKETING OF LANGUAGES?

The concept of marketing immediately conjures up the notion of selling and advertising. This is, however, a simplistic view, as the definition of marketing has widened to include not only the marketing of products, but also the marketing of services, such as law, health, military, communications, transportation and education.

Kotler (1994), as cited in Drysdale (2001), defines service as follows:

A service is any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product. (p. 11)

Drysdale (2001) goes on to state:

The most acknowledged difference between services and goods is the degree of intangibility. Education is essentially intangible; it cannot be touched, easily defined, formulated, or grasped mentally. The challenge for marketers with high levels of intangibility, such as in education, is to provide and manage tangible clues to help people understand and feel confident in the service (p. 11).

So what are the issues and implications associated with marketing in education? Vining (1997) comments that it is important to regard marketing "as a means of communicating with an audience, finding out what they want and working out ways to satisfy their needs" (p. 1).

Languages are historically the oldest subjects to have been taught. Even in Ancient Rome students were taught Greek. Marketing goes hand-in-hand with motivating. Marketing languages goes hand-in-hand with motivating students.

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As with schools in general, languages teachers need, according to McDowell (2002)¹ to do two things:

1. Stress the fact that marketing means developing a superior product, and then telling people about it. Kill the idea that marketing means just promotion.
2. Stress the fact that marketing also means having satisfied customers, and that means checking all the time to see that they remain satisfied.

DISCUSSION

THE SUPERIOR PRODUCT: MARKETING LANGUAGES FOR A COMPETITIVE EDGE

It can be argued that languages are as important as the sciences and technology in the school curriculum in that they help to equip students to take their place in the global village. There is a need to stress the importance of learning languages as they go hand-in-hand with science, technology, business, marketing, law, medicine and tourism.

A marketing plan is able to stress the importance and benefits of learning another language. By learning another language or other languages, New Zealand's Ministry of Education (2002) suggests that young New Zealanders can:

- broaden their understanding of people and their languages and cultures;
- develop skills, attitudes, and understandings that will help them to learn other languages;
- learn more about their own first language through becoming aware of how it resembles, and differs from, the international language;
- become confident in communicating with native speakers about personal and cultural issues, trade, travel, tourism, and other areas of mutual interest;
- learn to appreciate and enjoy the literatures and cultures of the target language speaking countries and people;
- broaden their career opportunities, both in New Zealand and internationally;
- travel with confidence not only in the main country of the target language but also in other countries where the target language is a day-to-day medium of communication;
- participate more fully as citizens of a multilingual world in which many different languages are spoken and many people can speak two, three, or more of them. (p. 9)

These points are important for the attraction of students in the first instance and for the retention of them into the senior school. Marketing in languages needs to address these aspects to motivate students to learn languages. Language teachers should be paving the way by their positive attitudes in showing the benefits of quality teaching for language learning to the school, the students, the parents and the community.

Marketing strategies by schools are usually to point out the school's competitive edge. The effectiveness of marketing strategies for languages within schools to enhance the competitive edge of those schools is hampered by the fact that international languages are not a compulsory part of the school curriculum, although the requirements of the new *Eighth Learning Area*, whereby "all schools catering for students in years 7-10 will be required to offer a language programme by 2008" (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 4) go a long way

¹ Several quotations used in this paper were part of an earlier paper by a different author. For this reason I am unfortunately unable to provide page references in these cases.

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towards addressing this. Teachers of languages, however, can do much to market languages and thereby to market the school by providing quality education and by extolling the various benefits of learning languages.

The reality for secondary schools is that they need pupils and that they need to attract them. However, Taylor (1997) comments that there are “some colleagues who see the competition as unethical, undesirable and self promoting” (p. 5). He believes nonetheless:

[M]ost school leaders throughout the country would be working hard in their individual schools to give their students the best deal possible. They would be working hard to ensure their school is seen in the best light by their parents and community through demonstrating the quality of the learning and teaching programmes, promoting school image by using the style, content and professionalism of the school newsletter, the behaviour of the children, and a myriad of other factors. All these efforts are ‘marketing practices’. Hence all good principals employ some marketing elements. (p. 5)

Contract research carried out by Auckland Uniservices (1999) to evaluate the *Second Language Learning Funding Pool* states: “First, a number of primary Principals interviewed mentioned at some stage the significance of languages in ‘giving the school a competitive advantage’ (p. 105). In two or three cases the ‘competitor’ was mentioned by name, while several primary Principals said that they made a point of publicising the languages programme in publicity and promotional materials and enrolment interviews. There was a related reaction from several secondary Principals, who noted the importance of – in the words of one – ‘capturing’ the children from a local feeder school, many of whom had in the past gone to a different secondary school in the same district. This suggests that, while the Principals generally confirmed their support for the programme on a range of other grounds, these ‘competition’ factors were frequently present.

In addition, languages teachers can heed and use a report from the United Kingdom. Jessup (1995) states:

In education and training, core skills are naturally developed and used. But because they are embedded in an occupation or subject they will tend not to be identified as core skills and their potential for transfer and application to other contexts may be lost or limited. ...If however the core skills are recognised as such by learners their potential ability to use the skills elsewhere is increased.....The six core skills identified were: Problem solving, Communication, Numeracy, Personal Skills, Information Technology and Competence in modern foreign languages. (p. 48)

To bring this into our New Zealand context, the New Zealand Curriculum *Marautanga Project* has on-line discussion about the proposed five key competencies (see www.tki.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/index_e.php):

- Relating to others;
- Managing self;
- Participating and contributing;
- Thinking; and
- Using languages, symbols and texts

When marketing our languages we also need to focus on these five key competencies, which are an integral part of language learning, and on their potential for transfer and application to other contexts.

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As Zakaryan (2000) states,

The new world is exploding with social, political and cultural change. New technology, instantaneous communication, and global economies are shrinking the earth and compressing its diverse peoples into uncomfortable relationships and unexpected competition.....Ignore that you are living in a new world...and risk the eventual disintegration of your career and lifestyle as you currently know them...[or] recognise that this is a new world and begin the challenging task of preparing yourself to share in its potential and its benefits.

Learning languages is going to equip students with the necessary skills to live in the new world: understanding other cultures, communicating in another language, having tolerance for differences, thinking with a new set of tools, seeing the world from another perspective, realising that there are different ways of doing things and taking risks when using the new language(s). It gives them a competitive edge.

Franke (2003) puts it like this:

It is important to realize that the acquisition of *any* language has benefits. Learning a language trains cultural understanding, lateral thinking, an awareness and understanding of linguistic and systematic structures (e.g. through grammar teaching), memory and perseverance. Employers who consider successful language graduates for jobs can be reasonably sure that they are dealing with creative and skilful people who did not glide through the education system on soft options. And from the students' perspective it should be noted that multiple skills, languages in combination with science, business studies or liberal arts, are particularly marketable. (p. 8)

Innovative marketing needs to make students and parents aware of these transferable skills, which are essential in the world today.

Franke (2003) goes on to suggest:

In order to fully realize the potential of export markets it is important to understand the needs and the potential of prospective customers. This can only be achieved through insider knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of the target cultures. Only academic language teaching can provide the necessary linguistic and culture skills. Conversely, it is important to educate customers and retailers, right down to shelf managers, and to project the right image of New Zealand products. This too, has to be done largely in the language of the target culture. (p. 8)

Language skills add to educational quality and provide a competitive edge for workplace skills in the world today.

Zakaryan (2000) stresses the importance of becoming a people person:

Working with people to get the results you want has always been the most difficult of challenges for all of us. In the new world, it's going to get even tougher. As the world is drawn closer together, you will be surrounded by an incredible mix of people in your personal and professional lives. They will be all nationalities, ages, races, religions, cultures, languages, education and personalities. You must see beyond their differences and recognize the special value each persona possesses. Study what motivates each of them, and develop an appreciation of how the differences can actually work to our

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advantage. Your ultimate success depends on your ability to accept, understand, and lead the diverse group of people the new world will inject into your life.

Students and parents need to be informed and shown how learning languages will help provide them with the tools to deal with diverse peoples.

Language teachers need to recognise that by providing quality education they are adding value to their school and enhancing its competitive edge. They need to market the language teaching and learning as a superior product to motivate their students.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Just as “it is no longer safe to assume a secure, captive market for a school’s product and service” (Davies & Ellison, 1991, p. 41), languages teachers cannot assume that students will continue their language learning. As Davies and Ellison argue:

If the school is to be an outward looking organisation, its efforts should be focused on the wants and needs of its client groups...The new market environment has often been represented as a considerable shift in emphasis from ‘producer capture’ towards ‘consumer power’. (p. 41)

Many students opt out of languages when they realise that learning them is hard work and takes a great deal of continued effort. They perceive other subjects as being easier options. Languages are still inclined to be regarded as subjects for the academically elite, and unfortunately some teachers adhere to this notion as they prefer smaller classes with ‘brighter’ students, especially in the senior school. “Relationship marketing ... emerged with the realisation that keeping current customers was as important as gaining new customers” (Drysdale, 2001, p. 7). “See marketing as a means of communicating with an audience, finding out what they want and working out ways to use your resources to satisfy their needs” (Vining, 1997).

Stott (1991) asserts:

An important part of marketing is devoting attention to ‘product quality’. Spend time and effort in ensuring that effective curriculum development is taking place, that heads of department and teachers are constantly evaluating their material and the way it is presented, and the (classroom) is a pleasant and attractive place in which to work.

Communication in the classroom needs to focus on task-based learning for pragmatic meaning and students need to have interaction in the target language for negotiation of meaning. Ellis’s (2005) ten principles of instructed second language acquisition should be the theory underpinning practice and students need to be informed of this to add to their awareness of the quality of their programmes. Very importantly, “students need to evaluate their own learning, not their lessons. Learners function as language users not just language learners” (Erlam, 2006).

To demonstrate not only that they are language users but also the quality of their learning, encourage students to visit the country of the target language for an extended length of time. There are exchanges available and the Ministry of Education last year offered immersion awards for students (and teachers). Market these opportunities as they will and do motivate students. The Languages’ Fundraising Group of parents and students that I started at Otago Girls’ High School, to give every girl the chance to participate in an exchange, has been

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going for ten years now. Parents and students join in Year 9 and begin fund-raising for exchanges in Years 11 and 12. One girl was able to fundraise over \$3,000 for a two-month exchange to France. The motivation for learning languages is immense and lasts as students have an achievable goal. The fundraising group supports students and their language learning and strengthens partnerships with parents and communities.

“Motivation is at the heart of successful language learning, and many Europeans are already motivated by the numerous personal and professional advantages to be gained from knowing another language” (European Commission, 2004, p. 7). Download the LINGO study with its 50 ways to motivate language learners. “These practices have been selected not only for their originality, but also because they are capable of being transferred to other countries or contexts” (European Commission, 2004, p. 7).

CONCLUSIONS

DEVELOPING A MARKETING PLAN

McDowell (2003) argues:

Just as a school often develops a marketing plan, languages teachers need to evolve a strategic as well as a tactical marketing plan, run an environmental scan to determine the most significant threats and opportunities in both internal and external markets and develop a languages profile, detailing strengths, weaknesses and experience.

In order to determine present and future client needs and wants, perceptions of the workplace and the kind of workplace people want in the context of language teaching and learning, the following three strategies, using quantitative and qualitative methods, could be applied in a reasonably cheap and effective way by any school wanting to implement such a marketing strategy.

1. Firstly, the phone call in the form of a short questionnaire, is a cheap and powerful way to determine client needs and wants. Six languages staff members (or when they were unavailable other staff members as helpers) interviewing six clients each from the school community would yield 36 perceptions. The school community in this context would consist of parents of present and potential students and Old Boys/Girls. “Phone surveys usually produce more revealing results than in-person surveys. On the phone, people will open up and reveal the information you need. When you call to ask for an opinion from someone, it says you value their opinion” (Beckwith, 1997, p. 28).
2. Secondly, a brief written questionnaire can be effective at a school meeting (e.g. PTSA, Meet-the-Teachers) so long as there is time given during the meeting to fill it out and hand it in, and not as everyone is rushing to go home. It is essential that such a form is collected in immediately to avoid the following: “Typically, 40 percent of people will respond to a written survey. (The response can fall lower than that.)” (Beckwith, 1997, p. 29).
3. Thirdly, in order for the student and not just the parental perception to be determined, a round-the-table interview-cum-discussion from representatives of students from each year level and of each language being learnt, would give valuable feedback. This could occur during a lunchtime for best effect, to avoid a clash with after-school activities: “An experienced interviewer can be more conversational and relaxed with the subjects and can go outside the script to probe even deeper” (Beckwith, 1997, p. 29). In the same

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way a group of students would find such an exercise non-threatening and be more likely to open-up and voice their needs and wants for their learning of languages.

Human resources available for the marketing of teaching and learning languages in the school workplace are the Principal, the Board of Trustees, the languages' teachers, the languages' students and the parents. To utilise them in a wise marketing endeavour would mean tapping the skills of each group. How each group could be employed in "marketing" to raise the profile of languages and to promote the quality of the programmes is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. *Strategies to raise the profile of Language Learning*

MONTH	MARKETING STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES	RESPONSIBILITIES
February	Welcome new and returning students and their parents by a letter outlining events over the coming year.	To make students feel an important part of the languages community in the school and to stress the quality of the programmes.	HOD Languages with all languages teachers.
	Celebrate <i>Karneval</i> (Newspaper photo of the event).	To understand cultural events in Germany and to promote the language.	The German teacher(s), GANZ.
	Returning exchange students interviewed for local newspaper and to write an article themselves for the school newsletter and Yearbook.	To promote the benefits and special experiences of learning languages.	HOD Languages to organise newspaper interview. Exchange students to write articles. Parents.
March	Corridor displays and a main foyer display of work by students.	To display quality work and portray classroom activities.	All languages teachers to motivate students by 'showing' off their learning.
	Review of the first term in the school newsletter.	To report quality teaching programmes and student work and achievement.	HOD Languages and student writers.
April	Letter to parents asking for students to register for the Australian Languages Certificates.	To have an international benchmark to measure student achievement.	Languages Teacher in charge of organising the Australian Languages Certificates.
	Celebrate Easter in the traditional way of the country e.g. German Easter egg hunt. To give students a departmental booklet showing strategies for learning languages, studying languages and examination techniques.	To understand cultural events in the target language country and to promote the language(s). To inform students and parents how students can study the language and achieve best results in examinations so that student learning is supported.	All languages teachers and students and language associations. HOD Languages, all languages teachers and the Principal.
	Use a teaching idea from NZALT's <i>Polyglot</i> in the classroom.	To use the support available from outside the school.	NZALT and all languages teachers.
May	Get in early by writing poetry and stories in the target language for the school Yearbook (could be extended into a Languages Dept competition).	To practise writing in the target language for a school audience to show quality student achievement.	All languages teachers to organise for all students to provide a piece of work.

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	Celebrate Children's Day in Japan by making and flying carp streamers (photo and article for school newsletter and local paper).	To understand a culturally significant festival and to promote the Japanese language.	The Japanese teacher(s) and students.
	Register for the NZALT Biennial conference or in the alternate years the local Langsem and the Goethe-Institut Intensiv Kurs.	To use the Professional Development opportunities available for quality teaching.	NZALT and all languages teachers.
June	Open Night displays and activities.	To display the languages programmes and quality work achieved to attract and also retain students.	Principal, HOD Languages, all languages teachers and languages students.
	Take part in NZALT student competitions.	To promote the school within New Zealand.	HOD Languages, all languages teachers, students, parents.
July	Celebrate Bastille Day (photo and article for school newsletter and local newspaper).	To understand a culturally significant festival and to promote the language.	The French teacher(s) and students.
	Promote the benefits of learning languages as a lifetime skill and stress the importance of learning languages as they go hand-in-hand with other subjects. Invite ex-students studying or working in languages' areas to speak to classes.	To allow students to reflect about their future career and the importance of learning an international language to enhance employment desirability before deciding on options for the following year. To involve the wider school community.	HOD Languages, all languages teachers, NZALT and the specific subject associations. HOD Languages and all languages teachers.
	A presentation to the Board of Trustees to talk about languages programmes, show examples of quality work and to present future strategic plans for languages.	To show the Board of Trustees the quality teaching and learning in the languages' department and to make them aware of future needs.	HOD Languages.
August	Make the whole school aware that students are sitting the Australian Languages Certificates.	To show the opportunities for languages' students to take part in international assessments for measuring their learning.	Languages Teacher in charge of organising the certificates.
	Take an active part in International Languages Week events.	To show the school community that languages are important in New Zealand and in the world context for peace, tolerance and understanding.	Principal, HOD Languages, all languages teachers, Students, parents, NZALT and specific language associations.
September	Drive to finalise languages' materials for the school Yearbook.	To show the school community the quality of work produced by languages students.	HOD Languages, all languages teachers, students.
	Send in an article about a useful classroom teaching strategy to the editor of <i>Polyglot</i> .	To enhance the reputation of the teachers and the school in New Zealand by sharing expertise with others.	All languages teachers, NZALT.

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October	Languages Department Review.	To present a reflective review of the teaching and learning programmes and student achievement for school records and future planning.	HOD Languages and all languages teachers.
November / December	During a full school assembly present Australian Languages Certificates, NZALT Certificates of Excellence and other certificates and awards.	To show student achievement measured by national and international benchmarks.	Principal, HOD Languages, all languages teachers, NZALT.
	Languages programme for the junior school following exams, over one or two days.	To utilise practical games and activities and ICT to practise, use and reinforce language skills.	Principal, HOD Languages, all languages teachers.

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