

# Make a Plan: Marketing Your Mentoring Program

**Strategy:** You can greatly simplify recruitment and public relations tasks, as well as achieve better results, if you identify the benefits for your audience, earmark a budget and devise a month-by-month plan.

## Marketing Objectives

You must develop clear objectives before proceeding with community outreach and marketing efforts. These objectives are as follows:

- Obtain support for the mentoring concept;
- Obtain funding for the mentoring program; and
- Recruit volunteer mentors and program participants.

The next step is to develop an effective communications strategy, which includes choosing your most important audiences and deciding on the best ways to communicate with them. Marketing your mentoring program is an ongoing process that must be incorporated into the marketing plan for the entire organization.

## Communications Strategy

Four basic components of the communications strategy should be included in all materials or presentations promoting your mentoring program:

1. Establish the need for mentoring to enhance support services available for at-risk populations.
  - Include statistics on the client populations. (These numbers are specific to your community.)
  - Tie your message into your organization's mission and history.
2. Describe program components and activities.
3. List benefits of mentoring program for:
  - Program participants (clients);
  - Mentors; and
  - Community at large (emphasize those groups most important to you).
4. Include an example or case study of a mentoring success story (if possible).

The communications strategy should include different forms of promotion. It is important to choose a form of promotion that is practical and appropriate for each audience. By highlighting specific benefits to specific audiences, you can tailor your message.

Courtesy of United Way of America and The Enterprise Foundation, *Partnerships for Success: A Mentoring Program Manual* (1990), and Oregon Mentors.

The examples that follow provide options for communicating with each audience using specific forms of promotion and highlighting specific benefits.

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## Communicating with an Audience

**Audience #1: Business Community – corporations, small business, labor, professional associations.**

Objective: To generate mentors, internships/jobs, funding.

Forms of Promotion:

- Mentoring program articles in corporate newsletters and trade magazines;
- Presentations to corporate volunteer councils and private industry councils; and
- Information packet/brochure and letter to community affairs/public relations departments. (Requires telephone follow-up.)

Benefits of Involvement:

- Publicity as an active, positive corporate citizen;
- An increase in the number of self-sufficient individuals and a better educated/trained workforce; and
- More highly motivated employees who are proud to work for an involved, caring organization.

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**Audience #2: Local Media – TV, radio, newspapers.**

Objectives: To position the mentoring program as a new, exciting way of enhancing community support services. To assist in recruitment and funding assistance for general public. To provide mentors, guest speakers and internships/jobs.

Forms of Promotion:

- Send press releases and information packets to community affairs/public relations departments, news departments, columnists and producers of special features (columns or talk shows).
- Position mentoring program as a newsworthy item. Prepare news releases from a variety of perspectives:
  - Unique collaboration among a variety of agencies;
  - Human interest focus on the volunteer mentor (can be tied into volunteer recognition themes);
  - Issue focus on ultimate goal of mentoring program, such as increased job retention, decreased school dropouts, prevention of substance abuse, reduced welfare dependency or career development (can be tied into media's interest in covering a particular issue); and

- Mentoring relationship, the impact of one-to-one relationship (can be tied into national service, “points of light” volunteerism angle).
- Develop public service announcements. Work with TV station to tie into theme of existing media (e.g., Volunteer Connection, Time to Care, Youth Plus; check with your local PBS station, many of which are involved with special features on mentoring).

Benefits of Involvement:

- Less work for media to research news stories; and
  - Media organization positioned as concerned corporate citizen and community partner.
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**Audience #3: Fraternal/Civic Volunteer Organizations – Kiwanis, Lions, Jaycees, Chamber of Commerce, Junior League and so forth.**

Objective: To recruit mentors and generate in-kind support.

Forms of Promotion:

- Articles in organizational newsletters/magazines;
- Presentations to members; and
- Letter and information packet to organization’s public relations/community affairs person.

Benefits of Involvement:

- Increased opportunity for civic involvement; and
  - Recognition of volunteer efforts of members.
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**Audience #4: Local Government – department of human services, social service, state/city offices of volunteerism, welfare offices.**

Objectives: To recruit mentors. To encourage word-of-mouth promotion. To generate awareness among possible mentees.

Forms of Promotion:

- Articles in government newsletters;
- Presentations; and
- Literature/posters in local client offices of welfare/social services.

Benefits of Involvement:

- Expanded network of service;
  - Alternative to one-to-one support for clients, which overburdened government offices cannot provide;
  - Opportunity to link clients with comprehensive services; and
  - New volunteer opportunities for government employees.
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## **Audience #5: Schools/Universities.**

Objective: To recruit mentors/program participants.

Forms of Promotion:

- Presentations to board of education, PTAs, university student associations and faculty;
- Articles/feature stories in newsletters and students newspapers; and
- Special events to bring mentors/students/parents together.

Benefits of Involvement:

- Motivated, informed students; and
  - Recognition as an active institution responsive to community needs.
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## **Audience #6: Health/Human Services Agencies.**

Objectives: To obtain cooperation of the health and human services agencies in the community. To recruit program participants.

Forms of Promotion:

- Articles in nonprofit newsletters/publications;
- Information packet for organization's volunteer coordinator, public relations head, executive director; and
- Task force of service providers convenes to look at impact of mentoring.

Benefits of Involvement:

- Enhanced network of social services;
  - Visibility and recognition highlighting cooperative efforts; and
  - Increased opportunities for client referral.
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## **Audience #7: Churches.**

Objectives: To recruit mentors. To generate awareness among possible mentees.

Forms of Promotion:

- Informal networks of various denominations to publicize need for mentors;
- Church bulletins; and
- Articles in regional religious newspapers.

Benefits of Involvement:

- Opportunity for expanded outreach and ministry; and
- Recognition of church members' efforts.

Courtesy of United Way of America and The Enterprise Foundation, *Partnerships for Success: A Mentoring Program Manual* (1990), and Oregon Mentors.

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## Audience #8: Community Foundations/Other Funding Sources.

Objective: To generate contributions and in-kind support.

Focus of Promotion:

- Formal proposal focusing on the interests and mission of the foundation.

Benefits of Involvement:

- Visibility; and
- Tangible enhancement of their missions.

Your marketing plan should be detailed but flexible. You will want to take advantage of marketing opportunities. Nearly always, your best opportunities stem from individual success stories and positive program outcomes. Keep a file of success stories—the media love them. They're valuable for recruitment, too.

Plan, too, to develop promotional materials that help achieve your goal. At a minimum, you will probably want

- A mentor outreach brochure;
- A participant outreach brochure;
- A fact sheet about your organization and your mentoring partner; and
- Mentoring program letterhead.

Avoid the temptation to combine the mentor and participant brochures to save money. The benefits are different for each group. A combined brochure will waste money in the long run.