

Customer-Brand Relationship Strategy for Vancouver Community Library



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Fort Vancouver Regional Library District provides gateways to ideas,
information and community interaction



Executive Summary

A cornerstone of democracy, a sanctuary for every individual, public libraries are a trusted institution singularly free of the profit motive. More than a repository of books, the public library invites opportunity for inquiry and genuine connectedness in a ceaselessly noisy, fragmented world. In a word; community.

Vancouver Community Library is a vital public good, offering access to the world's collected knowledge and culture, via readily available information resources, in multiple formats. Local community-building opportunities through events and original programs is another valuable service.

Competition is for attention, engagement, and advocacy, rather than an actual competitor. Library funding relies on taxpayer goodwill, therefore, thought must be given to the patron experience of the library as nimble, attentive, and catering to the individual's needs. Personas frame patron profiles to inform this. Brand identity and value proposition is articulated. Patron engagement plan and message content communication advances customer-centric philosophies and updated opportunities for connection and inclusion. This includes experiential marketing activities, and establishing a sub-brand synonymous with community programs and events. Also, utilizing pull vs push communications for relevant content and lasting relationships. New communication and media choice ideas provide a fresh path to energizing library advocacy, asserting singular value that includes and transcends the "Google Age." Specific recommendations to accomplish these objectives are offered in this integrated plan.



Customer Description

PERSONAS:

Character Capturing Quote:

"I guess I want the library to be everything to all of us, even if that's expecting a lot!"



- Persona Profile #1-Jenna Wang Pierce-33 years old
- Lives downtown
- Young mom with 2 kids, regularly attends 3rd floor children's activities
- 4 year college degree
- Stay at home mom. Home schools
- Jenna moved from CA 6 years ago and loves the pacific northwest
- Jenna and her husband, Jake, have 2 kids, Jack, 7, and Viola, 3. Hands on, outdoorsy people who are very engaged in parenting their daughter and son. They hike, picnic, eat at local cafes, go to museums, take their kids everywhere.

- Jenna wants to give her kids every advantage, so home schools the early years.
- Jenna loves the library, and relies on it for giving her lots of useful materials, and as a great place for a break for her, as well as finding materials to engage her kids.
- Jenna likes to save money on teaching materials by borrowing them.
- Jenna may use the library more if both her kids could engage at the same time. Difference in their ages means sometimes programming excludes one of her kids
- Jenna would love more inclusive events and programming that offer her whole family an opportunity to participate.
- Parking limitations annoy her. Parking lot is small, with a 2-hour limit strictly enforced by the city. Not much street parking weekdays. She wants

convenient parking near the entrance, without worrying about getting a ticket, so she can more easily deal with the stroller for her little one.

Jenna's Statements:

- "I want to feel connected to the community, and trust the library to be the source of everything going on."
- "I want lots of events and programming. I'd love creative maker ideas and fun and educational items on the shelf for my kids. Maybe some fun adult programs I can go to with my husband, on our own? What about events my friends, even the non-moms, can attend?"
- "I believe in public libraries so much, and I guess I want the library to be everything to all of us, even if that's expecting a lot! I think public libraries are the most important public good and should keep up with the times. I appreciate all the online advantages I can access from home, like the databases, and streaming music, downloadable music and movies to checkout or stream."

Summary- Jenna wants a safe public place to come, with plenty to do for her family, actual and virtual. She is an advocate, recognizing the library as a strong, practical asset.

Character Capturing Quote:

"I wonder if the library people understand how important the library is as a safe place for older, single ladies?"

- Persona Profile #2- June Lancaster -74 years old
- "Retired and relaxed, not dead"



- June is a single, long retired school teacher who comes to the library often. She lives in an apartment with her cat.

- Reticent at first to take advantage, June now is actively learning about computers, and enjoys going online at the library to use Facebook. Recently, she took a pinterest class at the library and loved it. June resents the idea that she needs "hand-holding," but, at the same time, she feels left behind when it comes to technology.

- June is fairly relaxed about her experience at the library, but she would like more programming that she finds more fully useful. For example, she attended "Savvy Smarts for Living" and found out

about free and almost free things to do in the Portland Metro area, but not enough explanation about how to access activities without a car. She would like a class on getting around by bus and how to safely navigate as an elder, single lady.

June's statements:

- "I would like more gradual computer classes, and I'd like it if they would repeat on a regular basis. I need to hear things a lot to remember, and I need practice!"
- "I love coming in and finding the latest bestseller on the Lucky Day shelf."
- "I love coming to the First Friday art shows and meeting people."
- "I wish the library would provide more sources for trustworthy handymen, or easy DIY, how to buy computers, what devices I need, things like that."

Summary- June wants to be able to learn new skills, be up to date. June wishes for a stronger sense of community that she believes the library is in the position to offer.

Character Capturing Quote:

“I don't see why we really need libraries
anymore.”



- Persona Profile #3-“Busy Stanley”
- Stan Mankesen-56
- Construction worker
- Stan is a divorced man, works full time as a laborer. He failed the GED twice.
- Stan is busy remodeling his garage for a home gym so he can get back in shape.
- Stan is not social. He eats a lot of fast-food take-out, alone, in front of his TV. He

likes domestic beer, cold cereal, reality TV, old sitcoms, and war documentaries.

- Stan doesn't really like the idea of social media, but has recently started on Facebook. Stan is impatient.
- Stan is lonely, but doesn't now how to remedy this. He'd like to try online dating, but he's afraid.
- Stan doesn't have a computer, so uses the public computers at the library. But, he doesn't know much about navigating. He can do very basic functions, like use the mouse, though even that is still awkward.

- Stan feels ignorant and out of touch, and this leaves him defensive. He resents needing instruction.

Stan's statements :

- "I don't see why we even need libraries anymore. I just want to get on the computer, get online, not have to work so hard figuring it out."
- "I don't get the web thing. I get lost. I don't have time to take computer classes. It shouldn't be so hard."
- "Most of my friends don't even use the library. I got friends who do it all online."
- "This building cost a lot of money. Is that taxpayer money?"

Summary- Stan has many informational, educational, and social needs that the library can effectively provide for him. The library needs to communicate this fact better, so Stan can become an active, included and satisfied library patron, as well as an advocate of his public library.



Brand Identity

Our brand identity is our value. A value proposition is a positioning statement that explains what benefit we provide for who, and how we do it uniquely well. It describes our patrons, the problems we solve, and why we are distinctly better than alternatives:

'At Vancouver Community Library, we are part of an unbroken legacy, spanning centuries and the globe. We are the human interface of opportunity for knowledge and culture, for all who seek it. We protect the right to private inquiry, and serve all people, without exception. We offer sanctuary and service free of the exploitation inherent in profit-seeking.'

In understanding the brand experience, we seek to include all three elements of a patron's experience: Functional, Emotional, and Self-Expressive.

1- Functional: Basic needs met, and problems solved. With the understanding that there is a unique element here that people care about.

Vancouver public Library solves the problem of information access. We ensure freedom and privacy for patrons to do with the result of their private inquiries as they please, free from exploitation of any kind.

2- Emotional: Feelings created through experience of use.

Vancouver Community Library assists in creating feelings of capability, confidence, and empowerment, through informed consent, self governance, and personal enrichment. We are here to help you get knowledge satisfaction.

3- Self-Expressive: How experience contributes to view of self.

Human beings want to feel we belong, we are teachable, capable, and part of something larger. The public library is a resource for democracy, an unbroken tradition of knowledge collection, curation and access. We are the symbol of humanity's need to know and share.

Although one may argue that the public library embraces solutions, information, value and access, or SIVA principles, by definition, it's useful to articulate this perspective in creating a customer-brand relationship strategy. Consider the following table that will inform recommendations to come:

Solution	What needs to be solved for?	Lack of patron inclusion in event content creation. Need improved communication in marketing community programs & events. Discover what patrons want and effectively design and deliver this. Offer ownership and create stakeholders through co-creation. Lack of personality. How did we become like an old musty aunt, or like broccoli? "Have it, its good for you."
Information	Where can information be found?	Presently a combination of library website, outside websites and library signage. Increased availability of parallel messaging and co-creation on social media messaging, including patron-offered media and video advised.
Value	What is the value?	Learning life-enhancing tools of tremendous variety outside education system. Opportunities for engaging in inclusive community building and participation in self-governance. Library is an historic public good funded by property taxes and with no commercial exploitation agenda. Programs and events are at no additional cost. Ineffable advantages include social connection and community embrace, supporting multiple levels of individual and societal health.
Access	What access does VCL offer patrons?	Equal access to world knowledge for all. Global awareness, local involvement. Inspiration, information, and hands-on creation.



Patron Engagement Plan

Public Libraries have a distinct advantage, as integrating marketing with the service mechanism is inherent in library structure. Searching the online catalog, interacting with library staff, attending library programs and events etc, all offer multiple touch point opportunities for an integration of attention, service, products, and brand awareness, as well as addressing recency and proximity. In creating an holistic patron experience, varied and multiple elements for consideration are:

- Experiential marketing - a marketing strategy that allows the library to build the Vancouver Community Library brand by staging memorable customer experiences. “Experiential marketing” is generally defined as any kind of live event marketing experience where consumers have the opportunity to interact with a product or brand face to face. Creative recommendations for this follow in forthcoming section.
- Microsite creation- a microsite is an individual Web page or group of pages designed as a supplement to another primary Web site. The home page will link to a discrete microsite, dedicated to communicating local happenings, programs and events. Full description in forthcoming section.
- Video concept: 60 seconds- Interior: Mom and child select new books, DVDs, magazines, recorded books. Zoom in on each printed price, as item drops into shopping bag. Sound FX : adding machine, running the number totals, and appearing as graphic on screen. See mom’s subtle concern as her child adds yet more items to the bag. The numbers keep adding up. Mom comes to counter, presents only her library card. She smiles when Librarian makes all the items snugly fit. Mom and child exit library, arms contentedly full, as the graphic replacing the numbers states, “All You Need is Your Library Card.” Post video short on homepage, Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram.
- Examine the specific patron path search journey, from patron perspective. Include origination from online, in person, and phone. Document each step in order to learn how patron’s information and community needs are being met. Statistical reference data analysis are established, and may be adapted to shape this study.

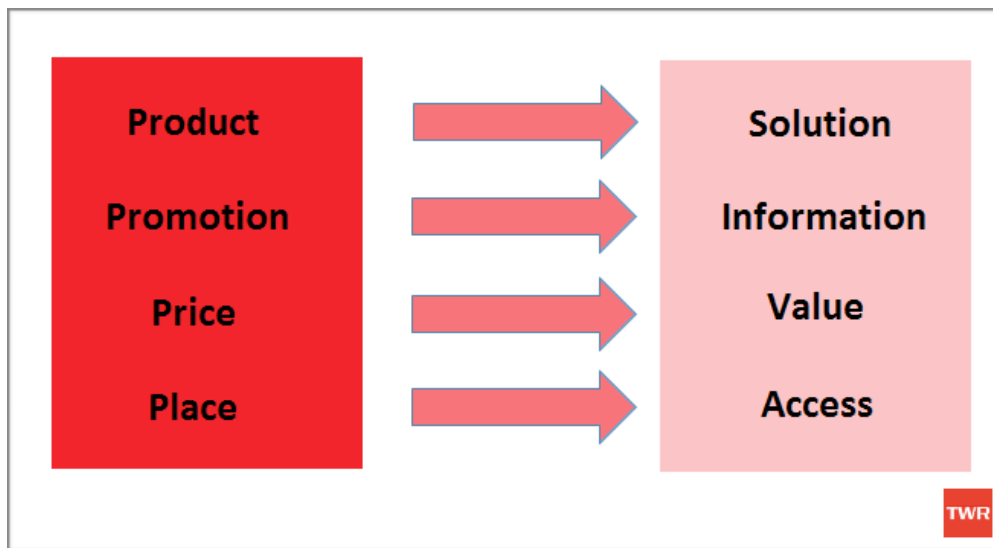
- Fragmentation inherent in processes of current patron journey suggest usefulness of one-stop-info-shopping, while polychronic media consumption suggests usefulness of parallel messaging for multiple platforms. Ensure access, immediacy, consistency, and convenience, for library patrons who choose device multi-tasking.
- Continue original programs that have proven successful. Examples include the quarterly Forums; inviting the community to discuss matters of self-governance. And the DIY or Maker movement, such as found in Treasure-Re and 3-D printing events. Measures for patron satisfaction should include on-site participation numbers, evaluations taken at programs and events, as well as online website and social media queries and contributions.



Message Content

The library is not selling anything, nevertheless, the paradigm for program and events marketing and communications may still follow a popular, but outdated approach, known as the 4Ps: product, promotion, price, place.

This approach is product-centric, instead of patron-centric. As the graphic below illustrates, the SIVA approach solves for this, and offers a worthwhile perspective to draw upon.



SIVA can be immediate and simple in utilization. Creating “pull” messaging informed by patron needs and desires, and invited, versus the “push” of one way messaging about product information, and uninvited. Mindful of the patron experience, here are impactful practical adjustments. With respect to designing programs and events:

- Create a compelling value for patrons to participate, from their point of view. What are we offering that they cannot get from google, TV, or another source?
- Understand the inherent discomfort for people entering an unfamiliar room where programming is going on.
- Realize people may feel trapped or afraid if they cannot easily leave once they enter.
- Be mindful that people may feel fearful that something is expected of them, and not understand what these expectations are, so simply avoid the experience.
- Recognize the value of offering succinctly informative event handouts, so patrons can discern at a glance, whether or not they wish to become participants.
- Design programs that include stand alone information, so entering at anytime is comfortable and useful to the patron.
- Understand that nobody wants to feel the self-consciousness or awkwardness of being late, or missing something, or unduly drawing attention to themselves, or, in any way, feeling unwelcome.
- Imagine every step from the patron perspective, and design accordingly.

- Remember that people don't necessarily remember what was said, but remember how they were made to feel. These feelings come to symbolize the library for them. Make every patron feel genuinely welcome.

Collaboration and cooperation through community partnerships has proven highly successful. The annual bookmark contest is an example. A district-wide, business sponsored, well-publicized annual contest. An example specific to Vancouver Community Library is "Treasure-Re Re-Turns," an original program highlighting earth-friendly, re-use techniques, which partnered with a local community group, "Vancouver Rocks!" This local group has both physical and virtual components (painting and hiding rocks, then giving clues to finding them on social media). Shared participation created cross-promotion, resulting in more than 200 highly engaged participants of multiple demographics.

A big-picture application of SIVA principles is creation of a sub-brand that is synonymous with Vancouver Community library community programs, events, and connection to local happenings. Experiential marketing activities such as "Ask Miss Keeley" microsite (below) illustrate how this strategy may take shape. Additionally, making the effort to discover genuine interests or concerns of community members is sought. Methods of outreach will include:

- Surveys offered on library website
- Surveys offered on social media websites, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
- Queries on the back of receipts generated at the library
- Queries made in person or through surveys at local schools
- Creating active partnerships with local community college
- Creating active partnerships with local university
- Creating active partnerships with local community center
- Creating active partnerships with local non-profits
- Creating active partnerships with local senior centers



Patron Engagement Experiential Marketing Activity



- “Ask Miss Keeley!” New Vancouver Community Library Community Microsite linked from homepage: Miss Keeley is our Librarian go-to person for all things Vancouver. She is our personification of library value; an up to the minute, ultra-aware, portable, and accessible asset. Miss Keeley actively welcomes input and ideas for events and community program content creation, and invites community discussion and opportunity for partnerships. She highlights databases and local resources, answers reference and reader’s advisory questions, and publishes a daily blog. Miss Keeley is genuine, friendly, warm, professional and playful, and, physically present at Vancouver Community Library. Her presence will be a brand consistently promoted across all platforms, including print, online, library signage, and social media sites.



●“How is Your library good for you, like broccoli, and fun for you, like ice cream?” An

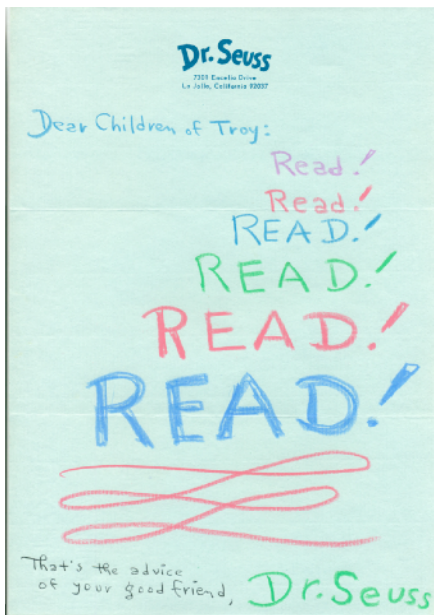


opportunity for all ages

to share thoughts, drawings, pictures, videos. It will playfully invite content from a SIVA perspective, hearing from patrons their views of the library experience, informed by these two concepts. The Broccoli and Ice cream invitation can include a physical component (for example, rolls of butcher paper), made available on the library website, as well as on social media; Facebook and Instagram. It can also be shared as a traveling artifact for schools, both physically and virtually. It may be a contest, with the winning entries voted on by all patrons, with the winners to receive a sponsored prize of fresh broccoli (Chuck’s Produce) and local ice cream. (Renaissance Ice Cream). Thoughts and images gathered will inform future campaigns and programs, and help shape activities for the defining brand experience.

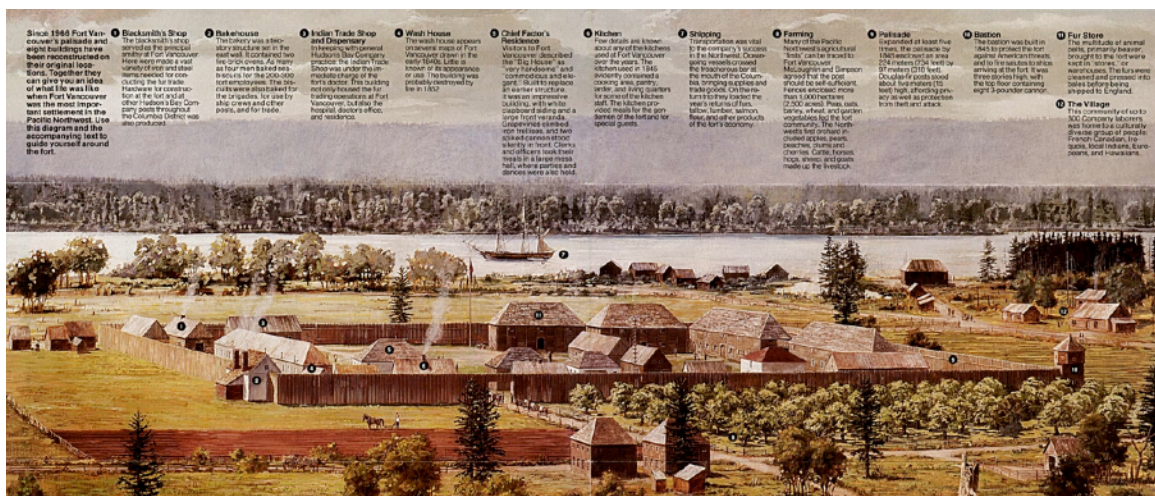
- Create our own version of “Letters to the Children of Troy.” In 1971, Troy, NY Public Librarian requested letters from individuals who spanned arts, sciences, and politics, asking them to pen the importance of public libraries, addressed to kids. She received 97. We can adapt this concept locally. For example, ask school-age children to make a request of their heroes, whether celebrities, or not.





●Where do You Find Yourself in History?

A huge, interactive wall map fashioned after our reference books, “Day by Day in Decades.” Global, national, regional and local events will be drawn as a timeline, ranging from 1825 (Establishment of Ft Vancouver) to 2016. Patrons place a figure depicting their place in time, with special symbol added for being in Vancouver, WA, at the depicted event. We will display our old Fort Vancouver maps, archived Life magazines, appropriate circulating and reference materials, and also highlight relevant databases. A scavenger hunt game may be added, inviting patrons to hunt for clues all through the library, to solve local history mystery questions.



Media Choice Recommendations

●Social media

Facebook, Instagram, our website. Create and maintain a 2-way conversation and open invitation to weigh in about community events, programs, and interactive library experiences. Post videos and include appropriate patron offerings of various media.

- Physical/Print

Neighborhood Newsletters. The Columbian newspaper, Vancouver Family magazine, Senior Messenger. Flyers for Main Street downtown and uptown shops, and community centers.

Library bi-monthly printed/online newsletter, “What’s Happening.”

On-site video screens on first floor atrium.

~Note that previous surveys conducted reveal a gap of knowledge of events and programs. Close this gap, consistently across all communication platforms.



Conclusion

The public library is unparalleled and without direct competition. Customer-brand relationships will benefit by designing content and messaging through SIVA principles. The age of google may seem a challenge to public libraries, however, data is cheap, but knowledge is priceless. Society contains a divide between those with resources, and those without. The library bridges this gap. The saying, “Closing libraries in a bad economy is like closing hospitals in an epidemic” is an apt one, and goes to the heart of the issue of access in the age of constant information. Re-framing the library then, not as some distant, musty institution, but the place to find a relevant, lively, long term, satisfying relationship, is key. Healthy relationships require effectively utilizing all media, as well as demonstrating care, inclusion, and attentiveness. Topeka-Shawnee public library was awarded **“Library of the Year” in 2016, and credits this recognition with direct knowledge and inclusion of their local community issues in creating events and programs. Nourishing advocates of the public library ensures the effective continuation of a vital, egalitarian tool of democracy, benefitting everyone. Knowledge is power, and the library embraces knowledge only to dispense it, to empower any that may ask. This is a brand value that timelessly transcends technology.

* * The “Library of the Year” is chosen based on which nominee most profoundly demonstrates service to the community; leadership in creating programs that can be emulated by other libraries; and creativity and innovation in developing specific community programs or a dramatic increase in library usage. The core values and skills intrinsic to the information professions make

those individuals natural at listening without judging, maintaining confidentiality, finding and synthesizing information, and valuing diverse perspectives. http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2016/06/awards/2016-galelj-library-of-the-year-topeka-shawnee-county-public-library-ks-leveraging-leadership/#_

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