

REBRANDING LIBRARIES - RICHARD DENNY

I've enjoyed reading 'Winning New Business, by Richard Denny. I asked if he would write a short piece for Managing Information magazine, and below is what he has written...Graham Coult, editor.

As an author and enthusiastic recipient of library royalties, I must declare a vested interest – there is nothing like a monetary reward to focus the mind! I confess to having a passion for not only keeping libraries alive, but for increasing footfall. Let's raise their profile and get more people visiting and using the excellent facilities available in most British libraries, helping them to compete with the Internet.

There has been much talk lately about replacing the word 'library' – apparently it sounds stuffy, out of fashion and part of a bygone era. I completely disagree. It is much easier to update and revitalise a well-known brand than to market an unknown name and turn it into a brand. Many positive associations also exist with the word 'library' including heritage, education, knowledge and experience to name a few. With this in mind, it would be sacrilege to abandon the term 'library'. Love it or hate it, the changing of a name or brand can have disastrous consequences – such as that of the 'Royal Mail' to 'Consignia' (and back again) – it is far better to try to change people's perceptions of an existing brand than to create a new one.

Here are some ideas:-

1. Invest in training library staff. We must accept that good products do not sell themselves; chief librarians and library managers must be trained and up-skilled on business development and marketing. This can be extremely inexpensive and the Government has earmarked substantial funds for up-skilling. Again, I must declare a vested interest, as this is a speciality of one of my companies; however, I have seen the results and the outstanding benefits that can be reaped from investment in people.
2. Hold more events and special promotions to which young people can be invited. These can be made really interesting and illustrated with imagination. Confident young people who learn to enjoy the library experience will inevitably develop a pattern throughout their lives.
3. Special events for the business community. Invite local business people so they can see first-hand how their lo-

cal library can not only help them with their business, but also enhance their personal and private life.

4. Train all library staff in customer service and customer care skills. We need to make sure that every visitor's experience is a 'WOW!' experience. This may sound American, but it is probably the single biggest opportunity to encourage people to come and use their local library. Staff that are charming, enthusiastic, positive and able to communicate effectively will make people feel more welcome, encouraging them to come back for more.
5. 'Blow your own trumpet'. Make greater use of local media, publicise events, occasions and new editions to the library.
6. 'Meet the Author'. Invite authors to visit the library and meet local users. As an author myself, I would be extremely willing to visit a library and chat with people. Most authors have a vested interest, so they should be prepared to encourage and be part of their own local library.

The library is a fantastic institution. Yes, it needs updating and yes, there is enormous competition from the Internet. However, let's not destroy a fantastic institution that already exists; rather, let's make it more exciting for the current climate.

Richard Denny is a highly successful businessman who has been sharing his ideas on success and achievement around the world for more than 20 years. He is Chairman of The Richard Denny Group, a company recognised as being at the forefront of business training on selling, leadership and management, customer care and business growth. With such a wealth of experience, Richard is a highly sought-after motivational speaker, becoming somewhat of a legend on the international speaking circuit, and helping thousands of people to succeed along the way.

Winning New Business: Essential Selling Skills For Non-Sales People. Richard Denny. Kogan Page 2007. ISBN 978 0 7494 5009 0