



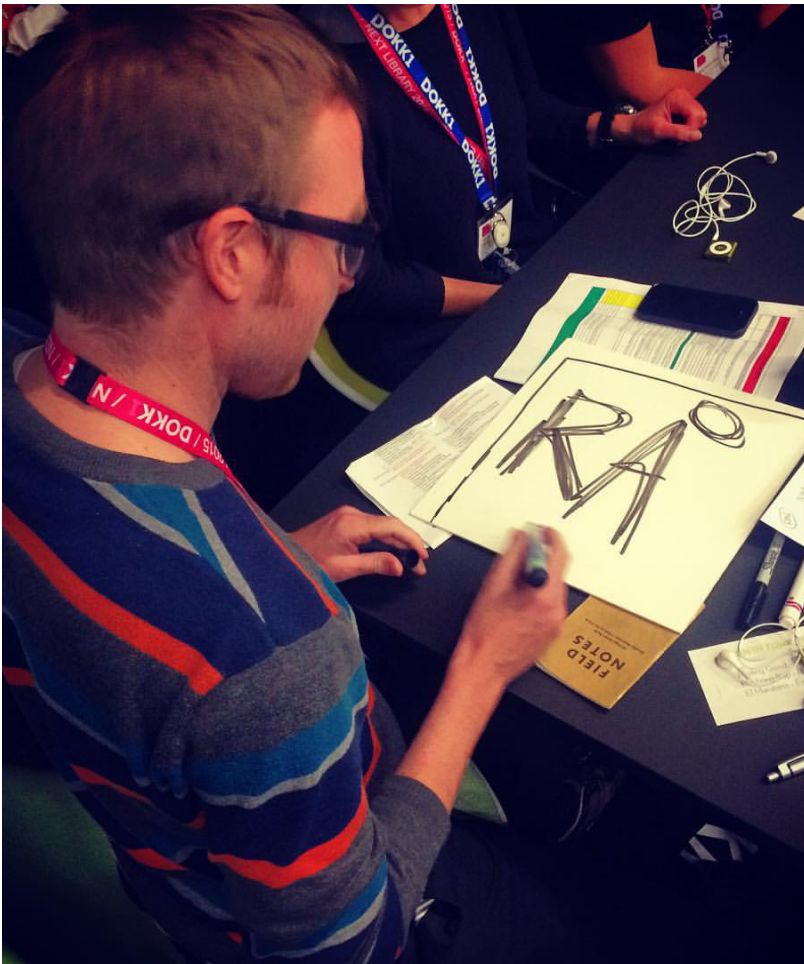
5 essential questions for your next marketing strategy

By Stacie Ledden | Nov. 20, 2024

In 2015, my colleague and I traveled to Aarhus, Denmark, to present at the [NEXT Library Festival](#). This biannual gathering brings together some of the most forward-thinking library professionals from around the world to discuss innovation in libraries.

This was our first time presenting to an international audience, and we wanted a theme that would resonate with people from different geographic regions and backgrounds. "Music is the universal language of mankind," as poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, so we centered our session around music.

"We Put the FUN in FUNK: The Intersection of Branding and Culture" was a 90-minute workshop highlighting the ways an organization's brand and culture influence each other. We used [Anythink](#) as a case study, and then facilitated an interactive exercise where small groups created their own band and album cover. Through a series of prompts - using music as inspiration - groups learned how their values influence their brand/image and how the world perceives them based on their messaging.



NEXT Library attendee Trent Miller designs his group's album cover.

marketing initiative. No matter if you're an entrepreneur building a new business or a large, established corporation - the concept is the same. Understand who you are, why you exist, how you want people to feel when they engage with you and your product, and infuse these into everything that you do.

We'll continue to use music as our inspiration as we explore these five essential questions for your next marketing strategy.

Each group was given ipods preloaded with songs. They then picked one song to inspire their imaginary band. Once the song was selected, participants did a "liststorming" exercise, a concept adopted from author and entrepreneur [Josh Linkner](#), where they had to list as many emotions evoked by the song that they could in three minutes. From that list they selected a few that were to become the essence of the band. Next, they picked a band name, wrote out values ("What are those beliefs this band holds dear?"), designed an album cover inspired by those values using card stock and markers, and then wrote a Rolling Stone review of how they hoped to be perceived. Each group then shared their work with the rest of the 40 participants.

The exercise was a ton of fun, and it was incredible to see the collaboration and creativity happening in the groups that might include someone from South Africa next to someone from Estonia next to someone from South Korea. In addition to all the fun, this exercise helped to reiterate how values can and should influence your brand and messaging.

The questions we asked during the workshop are essentially the same questions I ask anyone that I work with when embarking on a new

“Music is the universal language of mankind.”

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

**“I am everyday people, yeah,
yeah....”**

Sly & The Family Stone’s song “Everyday People” reminds me of the answer I often get when I ask library professionals about their audience - “Everyone!” As a public institution whose purpose is to provide services to all, it can be difficult to shift that mindset. And it’s a noble one. But when it comes to marketing, “everyone” doesn’t cut it. Identifying your audience helps you to focus your messaging, how and where content is delivered, and hone what it takes to establish a deeper emotional connection with that audience.

Recently, I was talking with my friend Alana Foeller, owner of [3 Pillars Holistic Health](#), about her acupuncture and holistic health business. I asked her this question, and after a moment’s pause, she started breaking it down: “My ideal client is someone who wants to take their health into their own hands. They are someone who wants to do the work to get better. They may have been told they’re fine, but they don’t feel fine. These are people who may have tried everything else, but they’re still looking for solutions. They want a different option.”

Once we had a better understanding of the audience - who they were and what motivates them - we could start discussing how and where we would connect with that audience. Which leads us to our next question...

TURN THE BEAT AROUND 5-QUESTION PLAYLIST

“Turn the Beat Around” - Gloria Estefan

“Who Are You” - The Who

“Fight For Your Right” - Beastie Boys

“Everyday People” - Sly & The Family Stone

“You Make Me Feel Like Dancing” - Leo Sayer

“Cozy” - Beyoncé

For more music recs, follow [@quadroponicsleds](#) on Instagram or [Stacie Ledden](#) on Spotify.



HOW DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL?

“You make me feel like dancin’, I wanna dance the night away...”

Every time I hear this song by Leo Sayer, it puts me in a good mood. The shoulders start moving, the hips start grooving - in the car, cooking dinner, late night gabbing with friends. Marketing is about people - creating an emotional relationship between a brand, product or service and an individual to inspire them to action. When I hear this Sayer song, I’m inspired to dance because it makes me feel carefree.

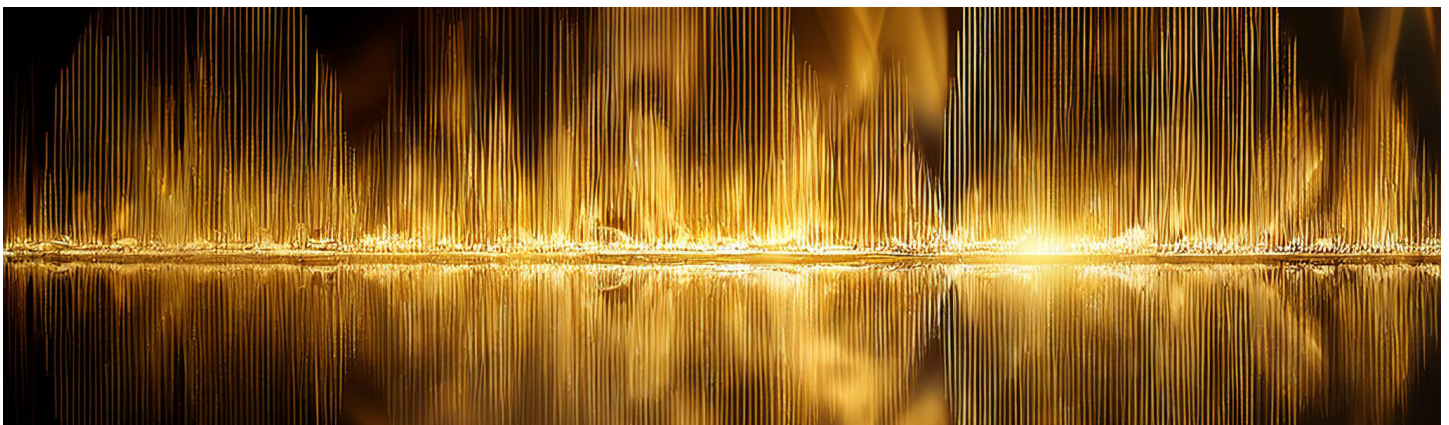
Music evokes so much emotion, so thinking about how a song makes you feel seems easy. When you listen to punk, you may feel rebellious. Classic rock, nostalgic. Deep house music, energized. How can a brand do the same thing?

After narrowing her audience, Alana said she wanted her clients to feel hopeful, empowered and safe. These are individuals who are looking for answers, are taking their health into their own hands, and are looking for alternatives to traditional Western medicine, so these emotions align well. These are the words that now guide not only her communications but the full experience she offers. When people walk into her office, she wants them to feel hopeful, empowered and safe by providing a welcoming space with resources available in a pleasing, calm atmosphere. When she engages online, she’s sharing tips and resources designed to empower and provide hope for a healthier life.

When you think about how you want your audience to feel, are those the emotions currently evoked when you review your communications? If the answer is no, it may be time for a refresh.

“A good path to creating something mediocre is having rigid rules for what you’re making and how you’re making it.”

– Adam Horovitz



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

“You survived all you been through... Confident, damn, you lethal...”

We can't talk about success without Queen Bey, the epitome of success. While we may not be striving for Beyoncé status with our marketing efforts, it's an important guiding question: What does success look like to you or your organization?

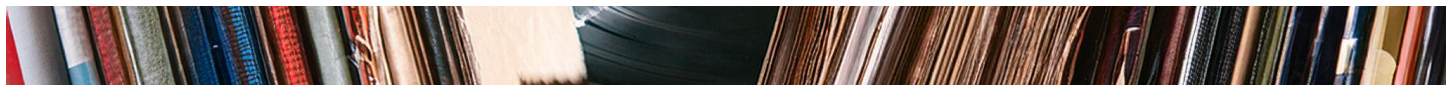
I like to examine this on both a macro and micro level. First, big picture, how do you know when your business or organization is successful? Is that a mention in a national news publication? A viral video? The ability to hire staff and delegate? What's the big dream? Success looks like different things to different people, but if you don't verbalize it for yourself, how will you know when you get there? What is it that you're striving for - putting in the time and hard work? What is your North Star?

On a micro level, defining success is a critical step in any marketing strategy. Understanding what success looks like allows you to experiment, evaluate and tweak. It helps to ensure your efforts match your desired outcomes and scale accordingly. It encourages an experimenter's mentality, forcing you to be nimble to track and react to your efforts.

Alana's goal is to add 5-10 more appointments per week with recurring or new clients. A large-scale advertising campaign might be a waste of money - as a sole proprietor, she can only handle a certain number of clients per week. A thoughtful, targeted marketing campaign leveraging partners and networks in creative ways may be the better approach to help her meet her goal. We wouldn't know that if we hadn't asked the question.



By defining success and setting realistic, measurable goals for your marketing efforts, you're able to better track what works and doesn't work, making adjustments as necessary. This also provides a great opportunity to celebrate when you get the results you were looking for. Celebrations for our successes big and small are important, too! (Queue the Beyoncé...)



As you begin to answer these five questions, they may lead to even more questions, but you will begin to gain clarity. You will understand where the gaps are in your story or strategy and where you may want to go next. These insights can lead to marketing efforts that are more authentic and focused, helping to build trust. Trust with your audience is what we're working towards. When your values, messages and outcomes align, people will have a better understanding of who you are, what you believe in, and they will want to come along for the ride.

ABOUT STACIE LEDDEN

Hi, I'm Stacie.

I helped launch and guide one of the most recognized library brands in the world. I'm passionate about community building, storytelling and joy as an essential service. I'm looking for partners, collaborators, clients and creatives to build movements together.

As a disruptor who likes tackling challenges in fresh ways, I love working with others who also have a disruptor's spirit. Whether you're an entrepreneur paving your way on your own, or an organization that has a vision but isn't quite sure how to get there, my approach is to develop creative strategies that grow an emotional connection between you and your audience.

Curious how we might work together? Have a music or book recommendation? Please reach out!



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BUILDING MOVEMENTS

Whether you're looking to grow your organization's culture, build a community of activists or create a movement around shared interests, my humanity-centered approach helps tap into people's passions and values to bring them together.

STORYTELLING

My life has been dedicated to the written word. From brand development, to journalism and storytelling through pictures and experiences, I build emotional connections to ideas, people and movements through powerful stories.

ART + MUSIC + EXPERIENCE

To me, "Joy as an essential service" means that no matter your background, age, socioeconomic status or any kind of status - you deserve access to moments of joy and beauty. By facilitating connections to art, music, and experiences, I hope to lift new, unique or overlooked voices and creations.

Consulting | Branding | Marketing | Public Relations | Workshop Facilitation | New Media | Writing/Editing | Presentations | Partnerships | Experience Design | Events | Community Engagement