

# CAMPAIGN

## LOOK INWARD FOR EXTERNAL SUCCESS: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNAL MARKETING

*Poudre River Public Library District's Internal  
Rollout of a New Tagline*

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### Abstract

Marketers often overlook one of the most important pieces to branding and marketing success: getting the staff on board early and developing brand ambassadors who embody and “live the brand.” In other words: internal marketing.

When planning for a large marketing campaign that included introducing a new library tagline, Connect to Curiosity, the Communications team at Poudre River Public Library District recognized early in our planning process that the most critical step in our public rollout of the new tagline would be an internal one. This article is an overview of the goals, strategies, and take-aways from our internal marketing campaign.

**Keywords:** internal marketing, branding,  
brand ambassadors, marketing campaigns,  
practical approach

In recent years, libraries of all sizes have embraced the need for effective branding and marketing strategies not unlike those of traditional businesses. Library logos are the norm; slogans have become more prevalent; marketing and advertising campaigns are planned and implemented. Yet, for all this effort, marketers often overlook one of the most important pieces to branding and marketing success: getting the staff on board early and developing brand ambassadors who embody and “live the brand.”

In 2016, when the Communications team at Poudre River Public Library District in Fort Collins, Colorado, was tasked with “branding the library as a platform of continuous learning” as part of our strategic plan, we knew that critical to our success would be staff buy-in and support for our efforts. Therefore, we approached our plan from two directions: (1) using targeted external marketing strategies that most marketers are familiar with, and (2) including proper internal marketing to garner support and excitement.

### **Creating a New Library Tagline**

Our library’s Communications team consists of three people: Paula Watson-Lakamp, the communications manager, oversees the strategic direction of the library district’s marketing and communications program; I work mainly on content marketing, social media, and supporting special projects/events; and Laura Carter cre-

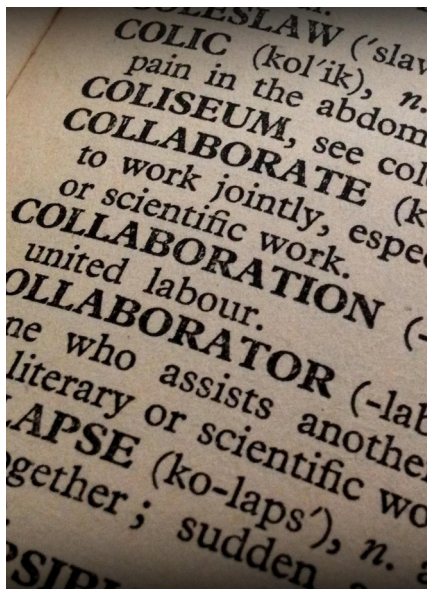


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ates award-winning graphic design. While we each have specific projects that we’re responsible for as part of our overall marketing plan, when it comes to large efforts like branding the library, the process is a true collaboration.

One of the first approaches we took to branding our library as a place for lifelong learning was to update our tagline to reflect our value to the community. The previous tagline, *Renew Your Mind*, was created when our library district was established by voter approval in 2006 and had not been highly visible. Our team determined that a new tagline, combined with our existing logo, could better convey the library’s contributions to the

community beyond books and help tie together the library and lifelong learning in people's minds.

In December 2016, we hosted a creative charrette-style event designed to help us identify new opportunities for marketing the library to various target audiences. The day-long workshop brought together more than 30 people from the community, including local marketing consultants, non-profit organizations, small business entities, parents, community organizers, and other library users, to help guide our marketing strategy and content creation. Our charrette had very specific goals:

- To help with messaging around the creation of a new tagline for the library district that reflects lifelong learning, and
- To identify what the library should be doing to connect with our target markets and the community.

We ended a very successful day with a collection of ideas and insights that would not only guide our marketing for the next few years but that would also set the Communications team along the path to a new tagline.

We approached the new tagline first by trying to define continuous learning and better understand the people who engage in formal and informal learning throughout their lives. Research about lifelong learning regularly points to people who ask questions,

are inquisitive and open minded, and seek out new ideas and experiences. We were able to use this information along with anecdotes collected from our charrette participants to narrow our focus: The common factor among lifelong learners is their boundless curiosity and sense of wonder. We had one solid continuous learning concept for our tagline. Now we needed to address the library as a platform or place.

From feedback gathered at the creative charrette and from data gleaned from September 2016 intercept interviews with library users, we quickly recognized our library district's greatest value is our staff and their ability to quickly and effectively help library users access materials, research, community resources, people, programs, and services that they need or want. Our libraries are the point of connection between the customers and the ways and means to satisfy their curiosity.

So, in early 2017, after a few different iterations and feedback from managers, *Connect to Curiosity* became the rallying cry for the Poudre River libraries.

If you've ever refreshed or updated a brand, you know that once the new logo, tagline, typography, or color palette is created, the real work begins: rolling out the changes in a meaningful way to the community. We recognized early in the planning process that the most critical step in

our public rollout of *Connect to Curiosity* would be an internal one.

### **Importance of Internal Marketing**

Internal marketing is more than putting a flyer in the breakroom or sending out a staff e-mail. It's acknowledging that the entire staff must be convinced of a new marketing campaign or vision just as purposefully as an external audience. It's promoting your marketing vision to those who make it successful. It's equipping the entire staff with the tools to encourage them to help grow your library brand or service or program.

The Communications team intentionally created an internal marketing plan to introduce staff to *Connect to Curiosity* in a fun and exciting way. We knew that any internal rollout could not overwhelm an already busy staff; we also recognized that many of our staff members are not full-time employees and have limited or infrequent access to e-mail and other typical communication channels.

The main goals of the internal campaign were to:

1. Educate the entire staff about the new tagline and sell them on it;
2. Demonstrate the staff's relationship to *Connect to Curiosity* or "what's in it for me";
3. Create a common sense of purpose and identity; and
4. Build brand ambassadors who reflect the spirit of *Connect to*

*Curiosity* in their work and personal spaces.

We were able to fully accomplish the first three goals within six weeks. Our desire to develop staff brand ambassadors was always envisioned as a long-term goal that would include ongoing internal marketing efforts that accompanied the public rollout of the tagline.

### **Overview of the Internal Rollout**

In February 2017, we began actively planning and preparing for the internal and external rollouts of the new tagline. The official internal launch to staff occurred in the last week of March and built toward major activities coinciding with mid-April's National Library Week and Library Worker's Day. Our time frame took into consideration our popular Summer Reading Challenge, as we knew our staff's attention would shift entirely to our largest annual program by mid-May. Key pieces of the rollout absolutely had to be completed prior to the start of summer reading.

Since many of the staff had already heard from their library managers about a new tagline, it wasn't a shock when the Communications team shared a brief animated video introducing the tagline and demonstrating the role the entire staff plays in embodying *Connect to Curiosity*. The video, created using the free PowToon service, presented the tagline's overarching concept and was followed up with more detailed information in a

“Talking Points and Messaging” document posted to the Communications section of the staff intranet.

On this first day of the launch, we also distributed “pieces of flair”—or “tag swag” as we called it—orange ribbons with the tagline design that adhered to the back of staff name tags. Each of our three library managers along with the library leadership team was instrumental in getting the entire staff to add the ribbon to their name tag. Many staff members reported very quickly after receiving their ribbon that the new flair sparked conversations with customers and gave them an opportunity to talk about the library in new ways.

To build on the momentum of the video and ribbons, the Communications team created a weekly “Curiosity Conversation” e-mail series sent to staff from the executive director, David Slivken. The purpose was to continue engaging staff with *Connect to Curiosity* while also giving the director a unique channel for communicating with staff. The first Curiosity Conversation focused on continuous learning and how it’s reflected in the library district’s strategic plan efforts, our library mission, and our community. Curiosity Conversations use a fun, casual tone and relay important information in an appealing way. Library staff is encouraged to comment or react to the executive director’s conversations using the “Ask David” feature on our intranet, which allows for anonymity if one chooses, or by taking

the executive director up on his open-door practice that welcomes input from staff at any time. The Curiosity Conversations e-mail series continues today as a biweekly internal communication tool rather than weekly.

One of our most effective internal marketing tactics was a series of interactive sticky notes hung on the wall in the staff lounges at each of the three library locations and in the administration building. The sticky notes posed open-ended questions that built upon one another in a way that deepened staff connection to *Connect to Curiosity* and planted the seeds for brand ambassadors. The simple format of sticky notes with markers for staff responses worked well and was very budget-friendly; we collected all of the staff responses to use for future internal marketing updates and external communications.

The first interactive sticky note was posted about a week after the video was presented, giving all of our staff time to view the video and read the talking points document. We began the interactive element by asking staff to fill in the blank: “Being curious means \_\_\_\_\_.” Our intent was to encourage personal definitions that would help expand everyone’s notion of curiosity. There wasn’t a right or wrong answer—simply the opportunity for individual expression.

The sticky note was replaced each week with a new question designed to extend from the previous one. We

developed four interactive questions in all to help staff begin to internalize and “live the brand.”

- “What are you most curious about?” asked staff members identify examples of their own, making the concept familiar and personal.
- “How do you connect to your curiosity?” encouraged staff to apply the concept to their own lives.
- “How do you help/have you helped library customers connect to their curiosity?” challenged staff to point out ways in which they can or do bring the spirit of *Connect to Curiosity* to their work.

The final question was posted a few weeks prior to the beginning of external “teasers” of *Connect to Curiosity* through the library district’s social media and digital platforms.

Our internal marketing plan intentionally combined traditional communication methods like e-mail with unexpected strategies like the sticky notes. We also took it a step further by introducing activities that employees could personalize and adapt to their own interests and understanding of *Connect to Curiosity*. One way we accomplished this was asking staff to “bedazzle” their e-mail signatures. Many of our staff members already had personalized Outlook e-mail signatures detailing their name, job title, library location, and other infor-

mation. We wanted them to take it another step to reflect the spirit of curiosity in their own unique ways! One of the tools we provided for staff was the logo and tagline graphic in both English and Spanish, and sized specifically for their e-mail signature. This addition was easily implemented by staff for outgoing e-mail messages, with about 75% of staff choosing to include the graphic.

However, the staff reported having the most bedazzling fun when creating updated job titles and personal “curiosity statements.” Everyone was encouraged to revise their existing job title with a curiosity-themed twist—even if only temporarily to coincide with National Library Week. Quirky job titles soon popped up like “Adult Services Librarian & Curiosity Engineer,” “Manager & Curiosity Coordinator” and “Teen Services Librarian / How & Why Detective.”

The staff also was urged to add a dynamic “curiosity statement” at the end of their signature in the same way many had already included “what I’m reading now” statements to promote books. This bedazzling proved popular, with e-mail signatures highlighting “what I’m curious about” topics like steampunk, how muscles heal, and mindfulness.

Another fun opportunity to involve the staff came through custom fortune cookies, or “Curiosity Cookies,” given to staff to celebrate National Library Worker’s Day. The customized

sayings inside the cookies reflected a few of the key messages about *Connect to Curiosity* introduced in that first video and reflected the staff's important role in connecting the community to what they're curious about. Staff enjoyed cookies with six different "you" statements like "you unleash imagination" and "you create possibilities" along with the hashtag #ConnectToCuriosity.

As the internal campaign progressed toward May, and as the last of the interactive sticky notes was being completed, we made one final request of the staff: Send us a quick e-mail or photo showcasing the ways they were applying *Connect to Curiosity* to their work throughout the library district and with customers. The examples shared would be the ultimate measurement of how well we conducted the internal marketing campaign and met our goals of educating the staff in a meaningful way and creating a district-wide common sense of purpose and identity. We used the examples as an initial assessment of the campaign's success to date and as the groundwork for further developing staff into brand ambassadors.

### ***Staff Application of Connect to Curiosity***

**A**mong the many exciting examples we received from staff or witnessed ourselves, a few stood out as especially unique and creative. The library's Reader's Advisory Team pulled together two fantastic curiosity-themed books lists, one for fiction

called Curiosity Shelf and one for non-fiction called Curiosity Connection. The lists were made available on our website's Reader's Café page and in our libraries. Other staff quickly followed this lead by making book displays targeted at specific readers and topics. For instance, the Children's Librarian at our Harmony Library location created a display called "Where will curiosity take you?" and included books about trips to the zoo and under the sea, among other fun adventures.

Our Old Town Library technology lab assistants got in on the fun by designing and printing 3-D bracelets that included *Connect to Curiosity*. They are using the bracelets to demonstrate what patrons can do using our 3-D modeling software and printer. The Communications teams liked these bracelets so much that we're commissioning more of them to give to staff and to the public during outreach events.

Staff members also took on fun video projects that the Communications team can use in our external rollout. One librarian who visited Legoland with her family recorded video of the Lego characters saying "Connect to Curiosity." Another was at Starfest in Denver, a multimedia/science fiction event, and captured video of cosplayers from Kermit the Frog to Klingons talking about curiosity and lifelong learning.

Overall, the Communications team



felt the entire internal marketing campaign successfully introduced the staff to the new tagline and began the process of developing everyone into brand ambassadors for curiosity and continuous learning through the library. Our efforts with staff are ongoing and will continue even as our focus shifts to external awareness campaigns.

We found some interesting takeaways through our research, planning, and implementation of the *Connect to Curiosity* internal campaign that are important to note when conducting another internal promotion effort.

- 1. Don't overlook the importance of internal marketing.**

The biggest truth gained from our internal marketing efforts is to make sure you plan for and complete an internal campaign when launching a new or large marketing project! If we had not taken the time to prepare the staff for a new tagline, we would have had to double our efforts to educate and dispel any confusion at the same time as we conducted external marketing. You run the risk of people feeling alienated and resentful at this "added burden" to their responsibilities if you don't get staff buy-in before a public launch.

- 2. Empower employees through consistency over conformity.**

Because our entire approach to the staff rollout was to have

everyone personalize the spirit of *Connect to Curiosity* in their own unique ways, we never had to become "the brand police." The only requirement we asked of staff was to present a consistent message to our customers about curiosity and lifelong learning. The talking-points document helped them understand the messaging, but everyone was encouraged to make it their own. Ultimately, flexibility and adaptability proved to be very empowering to staff.

- 3. Choose your moment for maximum impact.**

Just as marketers plan external campaigns around key dates or events, so should you for an internal one. We recognized that we had a short window to energize the staff and get them on board before Summer Reading began and the entire staff's attention turned to this major program, so we strategically chose how and when we introduced the new tagline and how we asked employees to engage with it. This meant that we needed the entire staff to feel comfortable with *Connect to Curiosity* and be able to apply it to their work and outreach throughout the summer when we experience some of our largest attendance at programs.

- 4. Keep the momentum going.**

There is no real end date to an internal marketing campaign.



Yes, there may be a focused effort for a few weeks or months, but once you've captured the staff's excitement and gotten them participating, you need to keep that momentum going. Frontline library staff is your best marketing tool—better than any flyer or Facebook post can ever be!

So as we rollout *Connect to Curiosity* to the community, we have ongoing staff activities and contests planned to keep the staff engaged in the effort. One of our ongoing efforts includes a monthly Curiosity Contest that rewards staff with a gift card for the most unique or innovative application of *Connect to Curiosity* in their work at the library.

- 5. You don't need a huge budget.** By simply using existing marketing resources and communication channels, you can implement a strong and effective internal marketing plan. The challenge is to do it in an innovative and unexpected way that draws the staff in without overwhelming them.

Not every marketing project requires as extensive an internal marketing plan as we produced for *Connect to Curiosity*; after all, we were rolling out a major new branding piece. But there always must be some attention given to how to get staff on board with what you're trying to accomplish

and doing it in a timely fashion. Simply having building managers or leadership dictate a top-down approach is never successful and ultimately hampers your efforts.

There are many great resources available online—and at the library—that delve deeper into the importance of internal marketing and provide additional strategies for building your plan. One title we love is *Marketing Moxie for Librarians: Fresh Ideas, Proven Techniques, and Innovative Approaches* by our own Poudre River Public Library District communication manager, Paula Watson-Lakamp. As you plan your own internal marketing mix, check out free or low-cost video-creation resources like [PowToon](http://www.powtoon.com) ([www.powtoon.com](http://www.powtoon.com)), [Animaker](http://www.animaker.com) ([www.animaker.com](http://www.animaker.com)), and [Animoto](http://www.animoto.com) ([www.animoto.com](http://www.animoto.com)). Don't have a graphic designer on staff? Try free design resources like [Canva](http://www.canva.com) ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)) or [Pablo](http://Pablo.buffer.com) ([Pablo.buffer.com](http://Pablo.buffer.com)) for creating professional-looking graphics.

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