

# Directions to



## **PLAN to Empower Teachers/Tutors with Marketing and Recruitment Strategies**

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The challenges we are facing in the 21st Century are posing a totally different environment for adult basic education (ABE) class programming. We need to develop models to help our customers understand these changes and the kind of reform that needs to take place in order to fully respond to opportunities the future presents for all of us. The best way to describe this paradigm shift is ‘from marketing our program’ to ‘programming our market.’ In the past, we ‘marketed our program’ to our target audience. Today, we need to first determine who our audience, or our market, is; then, we need to develop our program around that market, or ‘program our market.’<sup>(2)</sup>

Marketing and recruitment go hand-in-hand, but they are not synonymous. There are major differences in how and why adult basic education (ABE) markets its programs and how and why it recruits students for these programs. Many words and phrases are used when referring to marketing and recruitment activities. Perhaps it would be helpful to clarify several of these terms for use within ABE programs.

**Customers** are individuals, community organizations, and businesses that access adult education services and products to assist in meeting personal, career, or corporate goals.

**Marketing** is the process of identifying customers’ perceptions, needs, wants, and expectations. It is a broad communication art that involves both listening and responding. After gaining an understanding of these needs, wants, and expectations (listening), marketing is the design of services, facilities, and products to meet customer needs (responding).

One activity of marketing called **market analysis**, or **needs assessment**, involves research to determine the needs of potential customers.

A **market segment** is a collection of people, potential and repeat customers, who have common interests and needs.

Another activity of marketing, **selling (a component of recruitment)**, begins after marketing research says, “Yes, people want this.” Selling is providing the customer with services and products you have already developed.

The next activity of marketing, **promoting (the other component of recruitment)**, lets the customers know that the services they want are available. Promotion makes customers aware and creates interest through special promotional activities.

Serving customers has an inevitable by-product, **customer relations**. Customers develop perceptions and impressions (relations of a service) through experiences gained through the course of being served.

**Are you marketing your program or programming your market?**

**Marketing? Recruitment? What’s the difference?**

**What is our mission?  
What is our vision?**

All of the marketing activities that affect customers are *customer retention marketing*, known as *customer service*. This includes maintaining facilities, projecting a good image, delivering services, enrolling and registering, conducting evaluations, responding to inquiries, handling crises, preparing verbal and written communications, and sustaining customer relations.

The culmination of a program’s activities intended to influence the opinion of the general public is known as *public relations*.<sup>(1)</sup>

The most important aspect of student retention is defining the particular goal or aim of the program. Because for many years adult basic education (ABE) has been given low priority nationwide, many programs have suffered from poor organization and shoestring budgets. As a result, conditions that would not be tolerated in even the most limited PreK-12 school system in the same community can be seen in a local ABE program. The teachers in such programs often bear the brunt. Thus, researchers describe some of the conditions they observed in their survey of ABE in Illinois: “Many instructors work with little or no job security or clear career objectives in the field of adult education. Many programs expect part-time instructors to decide what will be taught and how, recruit students, and follow-up, as well as to counsel and keep records. With a relatively low stipend and an absence of fringe benefits, the part-time instructor often subsidizes much of the program.”<sup>(6)</sup>

These conditions often result in poor teacher morale and lack of student achievement that leads to student attrition. This indicates a need for higher standards, program accountability, new ideals, an analysis of our programs, and perhaps even a restructure of our programs. At no other time has it been more important for adult educators to make a commitment and stay focused on, not only our mission, but on the goals and lives of the adults whom we meet along the way.

*A formal mission statement can help considerably in this regard.*

***WVABE Mission Statement***

**“To enable adult learners to be literate, productive, and successful in the workplace, home, and community by delivering responsive adult education programs and services.”**

***WVABE Vision Statement***

**“To be a highly valued provider of quality educational programs that offer every adult in West Virginia an opportunity to build skills for success.”**

***WVABE Goals***

- To sustain a high-performing, resource-balanced, flexible, and customer-focused organization by strengthening its structure and operations.
- To identify, design, and implement quality programs and services that address customer needs.
- To sustain organizational values and processes that develop, engage, and reward employees and cultivate a commitment to excellence.
- To establish and sustain collaborative relationships with other organizations to strengthen and expand adult education programs and services.
- To use technology to improve communication, efficiency, delivery of instruction, and ease of access to programs and services.
- To raise awareness of the organization and promote a positive image of its work.
- To use an effective continuous improvement process that ensures accountability balanced to the needs of the customers and staff.

Adult basic education (ABE) is a ‘business’ which provides a service to the community; and, in order to be successful, it has to meet the perceptions, needs, wants, and expectations of the customers who may choose to utilize it. Therefore, each program will need to survey, listen to, and respond appropriately to the results of its marketing efforts.

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The first step of marketing is determining what audience you wish to reach--or, in other words, doing the market analysis. *Who* will be participating in the program? Then you need to distinguish the characteristics of the audience--*Why* will they be participating? What do they *need/want* to learn? What *barriers* to participation are likely to affect them?

A thorough examination of the population make-up is crucial in this first step of marketing as well as when planning program, recruitment, promotion, and retention activities. Information obtainable through the West Virginia State Census Data Center can be the most useful tool to cultivate this data. Some helpful information you will need to gather when determining who will possibly be interested in an adult education program will be: the total population of the community; the total number of households; the total number of families; the breakdown on number of males vs. females; number of persons living in rural area vs. urban area; number of ethnic backgrounds involved in the area; per capita income; average age; employment status of men and women; and the amount of education attained by those living in the community. This information has been compiled in *Literacy Counts* available by calling the WV Adult Education Hotline, (800) 642-2670 or by logging-on to [www.wvde.state.wv.us/abe](http://www.wvde.state.wv.us/abe).

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It is interesting to review the various types of students we find in adult basic education (ABE).

- The first type, the *Persisters*, are students who are currently enrolled and attending class regularly.
- Similar to the Persisters are the *Mandatory* students who must attend a program by order of the court or public assistance agency. These students overcome obstacles because they are required to attend class on a regular basis.
- Then there are the *Pretenders (often referred to as Try-out students* <sup>(18)</sup>), who are currently enrolled but do not attend class regularly. They are motivated to learn, but they do not have clear goals and are not ready to make a commitment to program participation. These students have high-risk dropout potential.
- Another group of students is the *Withdrawers*, those students who have left the program for a reason *beyond the program’s control*. They have moved, become ill, accepted new work, or have family responsibilities that conflict directly with class attendance.
- *Intermittent* <sup>(18)</sup> students (*often referred to as Stop-out students*) attend erratically. Their attendance may re-occur several times and in more than one program. Their goals require a long time to achieve, but personal and social factors limit their ability to attend regularly.
- The *Drop-outs* are students who want and need help but do not persist due to any of a variety of minor reasons.
- Then, finally, there are the *Completers*. These are students who have achieved their purpose for attending class and have moved on to new goals. *Often completers may appear on class rolls as dropouts, especially if programs are not aware of the student’s goals for attendance.*<sup>(1)</sup> *This is the importance of developing clear goals at enrollment, which will be discussed in detail later.*

**Who will be participating in our program?**

**Why will students want to come to our program?**

To elaborate on these various types of adult students, we need to examine why adults attend class, why they do not stay, and when they decide to leave.

Adults need a purpose for participating in adult basic education (ABE) classes as well as motivation to balance the ‘costs’ of attending. ‘Economic’ costs in a free program are low; but the ‘opportunity’ costs, such as time away from family and reduced recreational time are rather high. If motivation exceeds costs, participation is likely. If the reverse is true, participation is highly unlikely in a voluntary program.

Intrinsic benefits play a large role and possibly a larger role than extrinsic benefits in motivating adult learners. The GED Diploma (General Educational Development) is seen as a means-to-an-end rather than an end in itself. Ultimate benefits include *improved self-image, parenting skills, social skills, knowledge of career choices, and increased support from others*. *Extrinsic benefits such as literacy development, job advancement, economic need, and educational advancement* are important, but these types of motivations are only the catalysts.

**What will customers need and want from our program?**

As we have become more sophisticated as providers of programs, so have our participants. They are more focused, more customer-service oriented, more demanding, and more advanced. Their wants and needs will vary, but they all want more; whether it be more information, more interaction with other participants, or more involvement and a sense of belonging to our program. With fewer resources--less time and money--they will also have less patience. They will want the best content in the best package; and they will want it now!

Because needs differ from community to community, adult basic education (ABE) program planning should include a survey to determine specific needs for the prospective program clientele, provide the most feasible means to meet them, and make sure that those provisions are clearly and sensitively communicated as part of any recruitment process.

We need to survey our participants repeatedly with more fervor, depth, and frequency than ever before. Because ‘ownership’ is a key to retention, this is a requirement for quality programming. We will improve our programming through this market research based on student input, feedback, suggestions, and ideas.

Programmers, the lifelong learning professionals who design courses, seminars, events, classes, conferences, or activities, *should* be responsible for conducting this market analysis (needs assessment). They are the ones who line up instructors, select times and places, and often are involved in writing copy for brochures so they must be immersed in needs assessment in order for their activities to be successful. We can no longer approach programming today by saying, “Here is our activity. How do we get people to come to it?” Instead, we have to say, “Here is our audience. How do we design activities they will want to attend?” Thus, needs assessments are central to today’s programming in adult education. Programmers cannot know what topics to offer, nor how to offer them (time, place, etc.) without doing needs assessments.<sup>(4)</sup>

### What Needs Assessment *is not*:

- It is not expensive.
- It is not a one-time study.
- It does not take up time. It replaces time that has been wasted or under-utilized.
- It is not a general overview. It is very specific.
- It is not something you contract out; it is too important. It is something you and your staff do.

*What Needs Assessment is not.*

### What Needs Assessment *is*:

- It is customer oriented.
- It is low cost.
- It involves some or all of your staff in some way.
- It is ongoing.
- It does not separate ‘needs from wants.’
- It understands that the participants or customers know more about their needs than any other entity.
- It is practical.
- It costs less than not doing needs assessments.

*What Needs Assessment is.*

### What Needs Assessment *determines*:

- target audience(s) i.e. unemployed, under-educated, elderly, displaced homemakers/workers, young adults, ESL
- characteristics of audience(s) i.e. age, sex, ethnicity, location
- needs and interests of audience(s)
- best location, day, and time in which to serve audience(s)
- medium or technique most likely to reach audience(s) i.e. newspaper, radio, TV, poster, mailer, billboard, table tent
- cost involved in utilizing specific media
- amount of funding available
- specific needs of business/industry

*What Needs Assessment determines.*

Needs assessments have been developed for use within the community, the classroom, agencies, and workplaces throughout West Virginia. (See Appendix A or log-on to [www.wvde.state.wv.us/abe](http://www.wvde.state.wv.us/abe)).

Our customers are internal as well as external, and we have to provide service for all of these customers to maintain a successful program. We have already determined why students, our internal customers, will be coming to our programs and what they expect: self-improvement, family responsibilities, diversion, community/church involvement, economic needs, or because they are urged by others.

We need to also determine what our external customers need, want, and expect from us. The community is looking for reduced dropout rates, reduced welfare rolls, less worker dislocation, less prison recidivism, and a decline in intergenerational illiteracy. Businesses are requiring employees to have basic skills, job-related training, communication skills, and social skills.<sup>(29)</sup>

**How do we let students know we are here?**

After you decide whom you are targeting, what they *need*, and what you can *offer*, you are ready to begin selling your program to the community in an effort to recruit students. Good recruitment strategies, if carefully planned, should aid in the retention of students.

***Promotion should not be seen as a cost, but as an investment.***

To recruit students, you must plan a **promotion campaign**. *Promotion should not be seen as a cost, but as an investment. It acts in direct relation to enrollment so, by cutting promotion, you cut enrollment!*

In a recession, it may be harder to get enrollments. It certainly will not be easier. Therefore, your overall promotion efforts should be maintained if not increased. A recession is a time of cutbacks. The stronger programs survive, even grow, while the weaker ones grow weaker and sometimes disappear. So you automatically think of cutting back on promotion. Well, as a strong program, *your continued promotion efforts will increase your visibility, maintain or increase your enrollments, and position your program to be stronger after the recession!* You may be able to recruit students from programs that have been closed and/or have the opportunity to develop new classes with a different market segment in mind.

In the *recruitment stage*, there are various areas that need attention to detail. First of all, be sure you do not advertise services you cannot provide. Then determine what medium or *technique* is most likely to reach your target audience. In other words, how can these students be recruited--newspaper, TV, radio, fliers, posters, table tents, etc.? What method works in recruiting these specific populations? After the best techniques have been decided, you need to determine what media is available within your community, the *costs* involved, as well as how much money has been *appropriated* for this component of your program.

**What method works best with . . .**

As we go through the process of analyzing and adapting our programs, we find that we serve more than one market segment. There will be a dominant segment. However, as we analyze things further, we may find growing market segments or fading market segments. Some segments will be to our advantage to develop; and other segments, however worthy, are simply not cost effective enough to serve. As we segment our customers, we will be able to program to these various market segments differently. National studies have concluded that the adult basic education (ABE) population segments itself into the six following types:<sup>(2)</sup> (See Appendix B)

*mainstream women?*

**Mainstream women** comprise almost one-third of the ABE population and their most significant motivation for attending is family responsibility. They are female homemakers, married, and rural or small-town residents. More than any other group, they left school because of pregnancy or marriage and are the highest percentage with children in the home. They are above the population average in cognitive ability and achievement, and they have the highest family income. Femaleness defines this population and promotion messages should be geared to this characteristic. Mainstream women might also be recruited through female-oriented organizations and through

## Section One: Marketing and Recruitment

agencies such as the public schools that serve their children. We suspect that mainstream women are the largest group for two reasons: The first is that there are simply more of them, and the second is that they may be the easiest to attract.

**Least affluent; least employed** constitutes the second largest group accounting for 30 percent of the population. They are motivated by literacy development, which is their most significant motivation, and by self-improvement, economic need, and educational advancement. They are least motivated by family responsibility and job advancement. This group is mostly male oriented and has the lowest income. There is a lower-than-average incidence of marriage, and very few of those who work have skilled occupations. Low economic status is the predominant characteristic of this group, and a desire to improve it seems to be basic to their motivation. Promotion should recognize this. ABE may be seen as the means to an economic end for this group; and program linkages to job training agencies and job placement organizations might facilitate both recruitment and more effective instruction.

*least affluent;  
least  
employed?*

**Young adults** constitute a growing percent of the population. This group, aged 16-25, is most motivated by launching, suggesting that acquiring the prerogatives of adulthood is somewhat of a struggle for them. This group has the highest incidence of unemployment, poverty, public assistance, incarceration, health issues, divorce, and single parents. The top five reasons for students dropping out of high school which were identified by the report by Civic Enterprises entitled the *Silent Epidemic* include: uninteresting classes; missing too many days and not being able to catch up; spending time with people who were not interested in school; having too much freedom and not enough rules; and, failing in school.<sup>(28)</sup> Promotion might emphasize the importance of education to gain the respect and adult prerogatives they desire. High school guidance counselors may be a lucrative source of referral. As this group seems to have one foot in the youth culture and one foot in adulthood, age and role conflicts with older students are a possibility.

*young adults?*

**The urged** make up 12.1 percent of the population and are primarily motivated by the urging of others and by diversion. They are the oldest group and a disproportionate percent left school to go to work. Their incomes are relatively low and they have the highest incidence of receiving public assistance. A larger than average number reside in urban areas and large towns. The most salient characteristic of the urged is that they seem to need the support of others to attend. Gentle and warm urging from friends and relatives might be an effective form of informal recruitment; and, if employers were the promotion target, their urging might produce good results for this group.

*the urged?*

**The climbers** comprise only 6.5 percent of the population. They may represent an untapped potential. The motives of this group seem to be oriented towards moving up the socioeconomic ladder. This is an older segment and is disproportionately urban and has the highest incidence of skilled workers. Their family incomes are the second highest and they have by far the greatest incidence of separation, divorce, and widowhood. This segment might be a particular target in urban and large town areas. Promotion might emphasize the status of education and the relation of education to socioeconomic advancement.

*the climbers?*

*low ability strivers?*

**Low ability strivers** account for 10.2 percent of the population. They are most motivated by job advancement and by far the least motivated by educational advancement. They are the most male group, most employed, and have the greatest percentage of workers in unskilled jobs. The proportion of those receiving public assistance among this group is the lowest. Nearly two-thirds have never been married and the average cognitive ability of this group is the lowest, bordering on retardation. This group may represent the greatest challenge for recruitment and instruction. Although they are certainly strivers, their ability levels may make the earning of a GED® Diploma (General Educational Development) problematic. For this group, the issue may be less, “How do we recruit them?” than “What do we do with them once recruited?”

**What are the most effective recruitment techniques to use?**

There are a great many promotional approaches from which to choose. You need to be familiar with each one to select those most appropriate and efficient and, once selected, use them effectively. (See Appendix C)

Some of the most widely used approaches are listed below:

- press releases
- public service announcements
- newspaper advertisements
- classified advertisements
- radio/television commercials
- open houses
- brochures
- grocery bag advertisements
- utility bill stuffers
- church bulletins
- table tents or placemats
- public presentations
- news talk shows
- newsletters
- slide presentations
- display booths
- billboards
- theater screen advertisements
- posters
- specialty items
- recognition programs
- teacher/administrator contacts
- students as recruiters (SSB)
- person-to-person recruitment methods
- Student Speakers’ Bureau (SSB)

The local news media will be playing a key role in your plan to increase awareness and promote participation in the adult basic education (ABE) program in your community. They are your vehicle for reaching the public and your target audiences.

**Develop a media list.** This information is available online at [www.wvmediaguide.com](http://www.wvmediaguide.com). Make a list of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the following media people at all your radio and television stations; plus include local newspapers (including neighborhood newspapers, which are usually free and widely read).

### *Daily and weekly newspapers*

- News Editors
- City Editors
- Features Editors
- Education Reporters
- Community Calendar Editors

### *Newsletters of civic organizations*

- Chief Editors

### *Television and radio stations*

- News Directors/Assignment Editors
- Talk Show Producers
- Public Affairs Show Producers
- Public Service Directors
- Community Calendar Editors
- Marketing Executives

**Approach the media.** Get in touch with your media contacts either by telephoning them directly, emailing them or sending them a press release.

To announce an event or activity the best thing to do is to send a press release to the people on your list. **Press releases are your most important tool for getting exposure for the ABE program in the local media.** It costs you nothing. Important things to remember when writing and submitting a press release are:

- Come up with an *interesting angle*--a way of looking at a story that makes it seem fresh or gives deeper insight into the issue. Most people may know that adult education classes exist but what they may not know is how your program works within your community or the special and different things you do. When you sit down to write your release, think about the angle first. Ask yourself what is newsworthy about your program, and make that the focus of your release.

**Press releases, newspaper ads, and classified ads**

*Press releases are an important tool.*

- *Timeliness* is a key to getting your story printed. Old news won’t attract much attention from the press. Timeliness and planning can enable you to *build advanced interest* in a particular event, and *then follow-up* with stories on the outcomes of that event.
- Your release will have to *capture the media contacts’ immediate attention*. They get a staggering number of press releases every day and pay attention to relatively few. If yours is short, direct and lively, it will be noticed. Just lay out the facts and explain why your program is important. If you have numbers to bolster your claim, use them.

Every release must answer the following *questions*:

- Who? (the ABE program)
- When? (day and time)
- Why? (the angle)
- What? (the event or activity)
- Where? (address)

Be sure to include the state ABE logo within the release. (See Appendix D )

Format for a press release: (See Appendix E )

- *Publication Date*  
At the top left, just under the letterhead logo, indicate when the information can be published i.e., ‘For immediate release’ or ‘For release after (date).’
- *Contact Person*  
On the same line, but on the right hand side of the page, put ‘For Information, Contact (name)’ and on the line under it, the telephone number and/or email address of the contact person.
- *Headline*  
The headline should describe the content of the release. Keep it simple. Usually three or four words that concisely describe the content of the article are sufficient. The headline should tell the reader just enough to make them want to know more.
- *Dateline and location*  
At the beginning of the main body of the release, put the name of your town and state followed by a dash, the date and then the copy or text of the release. Use the inverted pyramid style of writing, putting the most important information first, and then expanding upon it in subsequent paragraphs.
- *Length*  
Never make a release two pages if one will do. Edit your material tightly. Make sure it is accurate, timely and not too ‘pluggy.’ Do not split a paragraph from the first to second page. Put “more” at the bottom of the first page. Put “30” or “# #” at the end of the release.

- The last paragraph should contain *general information* about the ABE program and the fact that it is sponsored by the West Virginia Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development.
- The release should be *typed and double-spaced on letterhead* with wide margins so that editors can edit. If it is more than one page, print the second page on the back of the first to give the reader fewer pages to turn.
- Submit black and white *photos* unless you want the release printed in color. Color photos create special problems in the black and white printing process.

Costs of *newspaper ads* are based on the number of column inches. If you were to look at a newspaper you could count the number of columns going horizontally (normally six or eight). A full-sized newspaper is generally 21-22 inches in length. Therefore, a full-page in a newspaper would consist of 126-176 column inches. The local newspaper will quote you a column-inch price, i.e., \$4.25 per column inch. Using this as a guide, you could expect to pay \$102 for an ad that runs four columns across by six inches down:

- 4 columns across X 6 inches down = 24 column inches X \$4.25 = \$102  
Keep in mind that most newspapers will set the type for you but if you provide camera-ready copy, the price can be negotiated.

Many adults scan *the classified ads* looking for jobs, services, items for sale, etc. Placing an announcement in this section of the local newspaper is a less expensive but effective technique in many communities.

**Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** are free announcements on radio or television considered to be in the public interest. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires stations to devote a certain amount of their broadcast time to PSAs. They can be extremely useful in transmitting brief and uncomplicated messages and announcements. (See Appendix F)

You need to find out from each of your local stations what format they prefer for PSAs.

Format includes the following elements:

- length: 10, 20, 30 or 60 seconds
- dates you would like it to be aired
- how far in advance to submit the information
- to whom it should be submitted
- whether pre-taped spots are acceptable
- what types of slides and other photos are usable

*Newspaper ads can be costly, so use them wisely.*

*Placing an announcement in the classified ads can be effective.*

**PSAs, NCSAs, radio, and television advertising**

*The FCC requires stations to devote a certain amount of their broadcast time to PSAs.*

*Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcements guarantee time.*

**Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcements (NCSAs)** can be purchased through the West Virginia Broadcasters’ Association for less expense than buying actual airtime on your local stations. You are guaranteed airtime and the spots are placed in the run of the schedule on both television and radio. This means they are aired throughout the day and night as time slots are available.

*Purchasing commercial air time is often effective. You can choose the air times.*

An individual radio or television **commercial** message is referred to as a Spot Announcement. You can normally expect to be quoted a price that will be based on the total number of spots you are purchasing. Rates for spots are generally quoted for 60-second, 30-second or 10-second lengths. Rates will vary according to the time of day. The production of a commercial is normally done by the staff at the station. You will be expected to supply the station with the copy (written message). Any music or special effects should be discussed with the station personnel.

*The last step will be follow-up.*

Now that you have developed your media list and approached your local media, **the last step will be to follow-up on your press release, PSA, NCSA, and/or commercial spot.** Give them time to arrive, and then begin making your follow-up calls. Open the conversation by saying that you just wanted to make sure they received the information about your program or event. Ask if there is anything else they would like to know about it. Offer your assistance. Because of the different positions these individuals hold and the different jobs they do, they all will have slightly different interests in your adult education story. The most effective way to approach editors and news directors is to emphasize the story in the way that will most attract them--from their perspective.

### **Open Houses**

An **open house** is an event in which the general public is invited to visit to see for themselves the activities of the students and the functions of the adult basic education (ABE) program. Open house events can be targeted to a variety of audiences: prospective students, potential employers, and many others. The open house also provides opportunities for the direct involvement of board members, advisory council committee members, legislators, and others who influence program operations. Many of the promotional goals and objectives that can be accomplished through the use of this technique are:

- to acquaint prospective students with the programs and opportunities
- to increase community awareness of the need for up-to-date facilities and equipment
- to give students recognition for their work in the program
- to publicize program availability for special population groups

Planning, advanced publicity, and the involvement of key people, i.e., instructors, counselors, students, and advisory council/committee members are critical if the open house is to be successful. If you have developed your yearly promotional plans early and have scheduled activities on a master calendar/timeline, you will be in a much better position to identify related tasks and promotional activities, assign responsibilities, make the necessary preparation and avoid last-minute crunches and conflicts with other school and community activities. (See Appendix G.)

A **brochure (flier, leaflet, pamphlet)** is an unbound publication which carries a single message with a limited scope. That is, a brochure is meant to have a specific purpose and cannot always contain thorough coverage of any topic or phase of the adult basic education (ABE) program.

One of the advantages of a brochure is that it can be designed for the general public or aimed at a specific audience, i.e.:

- taxpayers, to tell them how their education dollars are being spent
- students, to enhance their interest in your program
- employers, to inform them about a source of skilled workers
- community leaders, to describe how your program is meeting community needs
- special needs or nontraditional populations, to inform them of the opportunities available to them in your program

If well-planned and designed, the brochure will be quick and easy to read, conveying its message clearly and simply. Because of the brochure's neat form and size, people can easily save it for future reference. *Don't attempt to tell everybody everything in a single brochure.* Decide who you want to reach, what you want them to learn, what you want them to do about it, and stick to that information.

Just as important as the look of the brochure is the distribution of the product. Methods of distribution could include mass mailings, personal delivery to select individuals, display boards in retail establishments, literature tables in banks, etc.

If your local supermarkets feature advertising on their **grocery bags**, approach them to see if they would be willing to run advertisements for your ABE program on their bags, particularly during the time leading up to registration or other special events. Since this would be a public service, the advertising and printing *should* be free. Supermarkets are usually willing to display brochures, fliers, or pamphlets at their check-outs, in a designated display area, or they may agree to drop one into each grocery bag. (See Appendix H)

Some **local utilities** allow nonprofit organizations to insert literature into their bills or to print your message on their statements. Each utility may have a specific size and weight of paper that is required for stuffing into its mailings, so it is best to get approval before having the fliers printed. Beware that, *if* they agree to do this, there may be a cost involved for extra postage or handling fees. (See Appendix H)

**Church bulletins** are another excellent way of promoting your local program. Approach the church council to get approval to insert a flier in its bulletin for several weeks during enrollment time or to advertise a special event. Preparing these fliers in-house is a very economical and effective technique. (See Appendix H)

### Printed materials

*Brochures can be designed for the general public or aimed at a specific audience.*

*Some supermarkets will place ads on their grocery bags.*

*Local utilities often insert ads in their mailings.*

*Church bulletins are another excellent way of promoting your program.*

*Don't forget to contact local restaurants, bowling alleys, bars, laundromats, etc.*

*Brag about your program in a class catalog that specifically defines your class.*

*Construct a scrapbook of your activities.*

### **Public Presentations**

Local restaurants, bowling alleys, bars, laundromats and other businesses are often receptive to displaying printed **table tents, placemat ads, scorecards, etc.** promoting ABE programs and special events at no cost. They may offer free games or a discount on merchandise to adults in the community as an incentive to enroll or to remain in your program until they complete their objectives.

**Catalogs** are often overlooked as a source of publicity. Develop your own catalog. It is an inexpensive and effective way to advertise and ‘brag’ about your program. It should include:

- testimonials from satisfied students
- upcoming events and meetings
- announcement of your next session - dates, registration times, etc.
- advertisements for each program offered in the county
- stories about classes, teachers, or student experiences
- any recent awards or recognitions
- two registration forms in each catalog to make it easier to share with a friend

It just takes a little time and effort to construct a **scrapbook** of your marketing efforts. You probably have a few articles lying around already and a scrapbook can serve as an excellent representation of your program. Your scrapbook is more than sentimentality. It is a record of what publicity you get and when. Use it:

- *to keep track of your media coverage* - You will know when to go back to the newspaper, magazine, television, or radio station with another idea or more information.
- *for funding or donations* - Show it to businesses and community organizations so they can see what you do.
- *as documentation* of the history of your program - This is an excellent way for new staff to get a sense of what has gone on before; and for outsiders, it is a quick and enjoyable way to find out what your program is about.

You will undoubtedly receive many requests to speak to school and community groups about your adult basic education (ABE) program. This form of direct, personal contact with your target populations is a highly effective technique for accomplishing any number of promotional objectives. Personal contact in a group setting allows you to gear information to the type of audience you are addressing. Unlike more general public relations efforts, you can personally and immediately respond to any audience concerns that may arise from your presentation.

Every **presentation** should be designed to make an impact or impression on the audience. You want to inform them, convince them to take some action, clear up any misconceptions or change a negative image, involve them in the program, obtain feedback on how the program is doing, etc. To make an impact on your audience, the basic rule of marketing applies--you need to know their characteristics and interests, and plan your presentation accordingly.

Specifically, you should consider the following characteristics of your audience:

- average age
- educational level
- occupation(s)
- knowledge of the subject
- interests and concerns
- expectations for your presentation
- resources available

Whenever you make a presentation, remember that your audience's opinion of the program will be influenced by the kind of impression *you* make. One of the few disadvantages of this promotional technique is that if you are not a good speaker, your presentation can do more harm than good. Audiences look for speakers to be ***enthusiastic, straightforward, organized, and above all—well informed.***

Statistics can be highly effective and persuasive, but not if you overwhelm your audience with them. Examples, illustrations, and visual aids can enhance any presentation if carefully selected and well made. ***One student success story can speak volumes.***

A good presentation is well planned and organized. A written outline is a must if you are to avoid rambling and succeed in presenting a tightly organized discussion. Outlining your presentation also enables you to avoid 'reading a speech' - a sure way to put your audience to sleep. You can highlight your key points and examples with a yellow marker, underline, use asterisks or whatever will catch your eye as you glance down at your notes. If you know your topic and have reviewed your notes prior to the presentation, you can maintain eye contact with your audience and speak to them in a confident manner.

Develop a cadre of teachers, administrators, and students who enjoy speaking publicly. This ***Speakers' Bureau*** could be called upon to cover these events representing your ABE program.

*Utilize the Student Speakers' Bureau.*

Many small to medium-sized radio and television stations use their public service time in the form of ***talk shows*** where people and events affecting the community are covered. Station managers are often looking for persons or groups to fill these shows. You may want to bring to the attention of the station special events such as Adult Education Week, Literacy Day, etc. Talk show producers get dozens of calls a day and must make snap decisions. If your story or event sparks their interest, set up a time for the interview. Once you have booked the interview, be sure to make your follow-up phone call a few days beforehand to confirm the appointment.

*Advertise your special activities on a local network talk show.*

*Utilize the theatre troupe, ‘Improv Moments.’*

Adult educators and students from around West Virginia have formed **Improv Moments**, a theatre group that presents various crisis situations that may arise in adult learning environments in an effort to create awareness in the general public. Each scenario is immediately followed by a dialogue between the audience and the cast. The actors remain in character as they respond to suggestions and questions from the audience. This technique is very effective in sharpening the viewers’ understanding of specific issues raised in each scenario.

### **Internal publications**

Promoting your adult basic education (ABE) program within the system is just as important as promoting it to the public. Instructors, supervisors, other administrators, board of education members, advisory committee members, students, and support staff all need to be kept informed about what is happening in your program.

There are many types of internal publications and written communications that can be used to provide needed information and to promote understanding and program visibility.

*A newsletter can build a sense of unity.*

A **newsletter** is an informative ‘letter’ targeted at particular audiences or special-interest groups. It is usually published on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly) and may consist of one or more pages depending on the amount of news to be reported. A newsletter can help build a sense of unity and encourage participation in ongoing activities. A student-produced newsletter provides a wonderful opportunity for students to practice their writing skills and become active participants in the learning process.

The statewide adult education/literacy newsletter, *Networks*, is published quarterly and posted on the ABE web site, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/abe/>. Hard copies are distributed to selected individuals statewide and nationally. Articles advertising special events may be sent to: *Networks* Editor, RESA III, 501 22nd Street, Dunbar, West Virginia 25064; or emailed to [kwinter@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:kwinter@access.k12.wv.us).

*A bulletin can be used to focus on a specific event.*

Like the newsletter, a **bulletin** is an informative document that can be targeted at particular audiences or special-interest groups. It differs from a newsletter in that it usually focuses on one subject or event and is published as the need arises, rather than on a regular basis.

*Recognition of accomplishments is an essential part of your program.*

Providing recognition through **letters of commendation or certificates for accomplishment and service** is an essential part of any promotional program. Not only do they reward the recipient, but they can motivate others and project a positive public image. Submitting a press release to local media creates awareness and reinforces the importance of your program as well as the importance of the individual’s accomplishment.

The West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) presents a *Certificate of Appreciation* to anyone outside the realm of adult education to recognize their interest, support, and dedication to adult education/literacy. For more information about these certificates, call the Adult Education Hotline, (800) 642-2670 or log-on to [www.wvaea.org](http://www.wvaea.org).

We have all heard the cliché, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” When selecting promotional techniques for your program, you should incorporate a variety of visual media designed to attract attention and excite the interest of your audiences.

When using pictures or videos of students, teachers, administrators, or any person in your marketing materials, a **Media Release** is required from each individual. This release grants permission for you to use these photos or videos for the purpose of advertising and promoting your program; and it protects you, your program, your county, and the State Department of Education from legal actions. A sample Media Release Form is included in Appendix I .

**PowerPoint/slide/tape presentations** are effective means of presenting an overview of the total program or of one particular component of your program. They can show local programs and students in action and can be changed easily to update the information presented. Such presentations can be used at in-service meetings, open house events, and meetings of civic groups and other audiences to introduce your program.

PowerPoint/slide/tape presentations can be developed relatively easily and inexpensively. The more professional the technical quality of the slides and accompanying audiotape the better, of course, but perfectly acceptable productions can be done by nonprofessionals. Some very effective slide presentations can be developed that use live narrative rather than audiotapes by tailoring the remarks to your audience and the level of interest shown.

Another method of presentation, more sophisticated, and somewhat more expensive is a **video tape presentation**. It might even be possible to have graphics, final editing and narration added by a local television studio.

**Displays** can reach audiences that might not take the time to read an article or listen to a presentation. If well designed, they can have dramatic impact with color, pictures, and movement that capture the viewers’ attention and elicit an active response. A display that uses student work or live action can present information and create a change in the viewers’ attitude in just a few minutes.

**Audiovisual media, posters, and billboards**

*PowerPoint, slide, and tape presentations are an effective means of presenting your program.*

*Set-up a display at local job fairs, county fairs, or other community function.*

Displays can be placed in schools, at local fairs, at shopping malls, in store windows, in libraries—anywhere they will have high visibility for the audiences you want to reach. They are often prepared for special occasions such as open houses or Adult Education Week.

A booth exhibit that can be collapsed to fit in the back of a van or station wagon is an excellent aid for publicizing the program at meetings, conferences, and fairs to create awareness of your local program. You can display handouts, brochures, and giveaways such as pens and pencils, pocket calendars, dictionaries, or key rings featuring the ABE logo and a phone number to call for more information. The giveaways can be funded by local businesses or charitable organizations.

Many promotional objectives can be accomplished using this technique. Displays focusing on student recruitment can present details of the program’s length or requirements.

- Public information about the adult education program can be provided to employers, taxpayers, community leaders, etc. Statistics about numbers of students, types of program offerings, facilities required, cost per student, etc. could be presented.
- Student work and projects can be displayed, illustrating the skills and knowledge being learned. Such displays can be highly motivational and reinforcing for students.
- Displays that perform a service to the community can indirectly promote a positive image for the program. Such displays can either provide information or can render an actual service right on the spot.

Although promotional displays need not be elaborate and complex undertakings, most do require extra time, effort, and staff; and they can be expensive to construct and maintain. If done haphazardly, the effect can be lost.

Highway **billboards** are very significant promotional tools for special events, enrollment periods, etc. They are visible and catch attention easily if bold color and large print are utilized effectively. You must both catch the eye of the passerby and get your message out in a very short amount of time. Also, you should state only the most useful information, i.e., who, what, when, where, why – in the briefest form.

Sometimes this space will be donated for a limited time. If so, the printing of the billboards will be your only expense. Prices range from \$50 to \$300 per billboard depending upon the number ordered.

For information regarding availability of space, contact the WVABE Public Outreach Coordinator at (800) 257-3723 ext. 201 or [kwinter@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:kwinter@access.k12.wv.us).

*Highway billboards are visible and catch attention if done well.*

*Posters and specialty items* such as bumper stickers, table tents, labels, pens, and stickers can make a strong visual impact and give your program added visibility around the community. The message cannot be lengthy, complex, or too subtle. The drawing or photograph should speak for itself, with a minimum of explanation in a brief caption or a few sentences. Posters and table tents can be displayed in local supermarkets, laundromats, hospital emergency rooms, human service agencies, schools, gas stations, restaurants, etc.

*Posters and specialty items can give your program visibility throughout the community.*

You can advertise on the *big screen theaters* for a very reasonable price. Your ad will be shown two to four times before every feature movie. Active moviegoers will see your ad on the screen in a soft-sell approach. This works because viewers cannot skim channels and miss what you paid for; all coverage is local... no demographic waste; viewers change each day; and it has more impact than television. Plus theater screen advertising delivers your message to a relaxed and attentive audience. Your business and your message become the ‘movie star.’ Contact your local movie theater for more information.

**Theater screen advertising**

Giving students and staff recognition for their accomplishments and efforts should be an integral part of your promotional program. Special award ceremonies can be planned for outstanding students and instructors. Many counties have set aside time to recognize the achievement of specific individuals. These awards can be presented during open house events or other occasions such as a *graduation/recognition ceremony*.

**Recognition programs**

The West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) presents awards at the annual adult education and family literacy conference to outstanding teachers, administrators, service personnel, and students involved in the adult education program. The WVAEA, Inc. also presents *Certificates of Appreciation* to deserving individuals at any time throughout the year. For more information, call the Adult Education Hotline, (800) 642-2670 or log-on to [www.wvaea.org](http://www.wvaea.org).

Although many of the tasks involved in promoting your program can, and should be, assigned to others, there are certain public relations activities you just can’t delegate. These are the informal, one-on-one contacts you make with members of the community, businesses, and civic organizations.

**Informal personal contacts**

All the methods of promotion mentioned previously are effective, useful and creative; but perhaps ‘*word of mouth*’ is the most effective promotional technique used in many communities. Some of the most effective messengers for student recruitment are present or former students themselves.

*Perhaps ‘word of mouth’ is the most effective promotional technique.*

*Utilize the Student Speakers' Bureau.*

Students from adult education and literacy programs throughout the state have joined efforts to form *BOLT (Building Opportunities for Learning Together)*, the student affiliate of the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) These students are increasingly demonstrating their power as participants, publicists, and planners in their local programs. The pride, energy, and enthusiasm shown by these students have tremendous impact on their neighbors, friends, and relatives who could possibly benefit from your adult education program.

One of the goals of BOLT is to provide assistance with recruitment and retention activities for adult education and literacy programs. Some of the services offered by this group include assisting with orientation of new students, conducting follow-up with non-attendees, providing student support, tutoring other students, and providing teacher support. A *Student Speakers' Bureau* has been established. Members of the bureau will speak at ceremonies, local school board meetings, local organizations, etc. Call (800) 257-3723 ext. 201 for information on how to contact a member of the bureau.

*Coordinate with local service clubs to implement a door-to-door campaign.*

Local *service clubs* such as Altrusa, Jaycees, Lions, and Rotary may organize and implement a **door-to-door recruitment campaign** project. Plan to provide volunteer canvassers with tips on how to handle the door-to-door approach and what to say. Plan to provide simple printed information to be left at each household, and top off the day with refreshments and/or entertainment for all who participate.

*Contact local employers.*

Contact **employers** who possibly have employees who could benefit from adult education services. Ask them to post information or to place fliers in employees' pay envelopes.

**What messages should be conveyed in recruitment?**

Follow these tips when planning your promotion campaign:

- Determine your target population.
- Know the needs and wants of your target population.
- Know what message you want to convey.
- Be familiar with local resources for advertising.
- Determine the best method to reach a specific audience.
- Never promote services you cannot or will not provide.
- The most crucial aspect in promoting adult basic education (ABE) programs is consistency. Even though each program is unique, a consistent theme and design should be obvious in all marketing materials. If our adult education programs are to be positioned at the top, we must have and maintain an identity that separates us from all other providers of adult education services, GED<sup>®</sup> preparation, and workplace skills.
- To assure this consistency in advertising, any materials developed by a specific county or program **must** utilize the logo that has been adopted and utilized statewide. (See Appendix D)

*The most crucial aspect in promoting adult education programs is consistency.*

- Use familiar names and faces.
  - Enlist well-known local people, such as your mayor or county board member, to serve as spokesperson for your promotional material. The encouragement of well-respected community members could be a powerful motivator to many potential students.
- In selecting promotional techniques and developing materials that will reach your intended audience, keep in mind the **AIDA formula: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action.**
  - **Attention** – No matter how important your message, people will not listen to it unless you first gain their attention. We are all constantly bombarded with information and stimuli by radio, TV, newspapers, billboards, junk mail, and other media. No matter how visually appealing a display is, it won't attract much attention if it is 'hidden' in a mall where few people shop, or competing with glossy professional advertising during Christmas week. Your message can be made to stand out through the use of such devices as color, picture, style, catchy slogans, phrases, or questions and repetition.
  - **Interest** – If you want your audience to think about your message, you need to appeal to their interests, both in the content of the message and in the way it is presented. How much do you know about your target groups? Now is the time to get to know them better. The best way to find out about your target group is to talk to them. Talk to people who come to the learning center. Ask them what they think is important about the ABE program. Ask what they think is not. What made them decide to pursue their education? Make a list of what sparks your students' interests and another list of what does not. Then think up ideas that take advantage of what appeals to them and avoid what doesn't. (See Appendix B)
  - **Desire** – You want the members of your target audience to reach the point where they want to do what you are asking them to do. The message, then, must be reasonable and so well presented that it can't be resisted. For example, studies show some adults simply don't think further education will improve their lives, while others think they don't have the time because of job and family responsibilities. A good marketing plan will take these attitudes into account and turn them around by stressing the potential long-term financial benefits of a GED® Diploma or upgraded skills.
  - **Action** – Your message and the method you use to present it should encourage your audience to take a particular action. You need to tell people what to do and how to do it.

*Use familiar names and faces.*

*Use the AIDA formula when developing materials.*

*Stress the difference between the adult program and the regular school system.*

**Practical considerations** such as child-care and transportation services available, assistance available from community agencies, and counseling services available should be conveyed somewhere within the advertisement.

Recruitment to adult basic education (ABE) programs is not simply a matter of making information about educational opportunities available; it is a matter of changing the image of education and learning.

All advertising and recruitment should ***stress the difference between the adult program and the regular school program*** where the adults once failed.

*Emphasize students' needs and interests.*

**Emphasize students' needs and interests in promotions.** For example, highlight individualized, self-paced instruction rather than academic course descriptions, student requirements, and competencies. Use success stories and personal statements from students and graduates.

*Confidentiality of students' information is protected.*

**Confidentiality** of students' inquiries and enrollment should be emphasized in recruitment procedures.

*Present a realistic picture of the possibilities offered in your program.*

Recruitment communications should ***present a realistic picture of the possibilities*** for self-improvement, employment goals, and hopes related to children, taking into consideration the various perceptions of prospective students. Some students perceive education programs in many geographic locations to be of no benefit or that the education process is too long to be of immediate assistance. On the other hand, overoptimistic expectations that are quickly overturned after entry into the ABE program may prove to be devastating.

*Location and decor play an important part.*

Seemingly unimportant things may influence students' choices of whether to attend or not. ***Location and decor*** play an important role.

**\*One note of caution:** Aggressive outreach and recruitment activities may bring in a lot of new enrollees, but a report by the Adult Education Development Association says a greater proportion of these enrollees tend to drop out. Why would that be? The answer may simply be that advertising techniques represented a false picture of what could be expected from the program; or the answer may lie in the fact that no formal retention plan was utilized to determine if the program provided what these students needed once enrolled.

Is it a good idea to cut some promotion? Yes, with limited budgets and time, some promotion can be cut. But your overall promotion *efforts* should not be cut! Your basic strategy is to look for unproductive promotions and eliminate or reduce them, and move those resources over to your most productive promotions.

**Out with the old; in with the new.**

### How do I do that?

Begin by analyzing your promotion efforts to date. Be sure you ***track all advertising efforts for effectiveness.***

*Critical to any promotional campaign is 'tracking.'*

- Look at the records of each promotion method you have utilized.
- Then shift your energies from the least to most productive methods.
- Determine the cost effectiveness of newspaper and church bulletin inserts.
- Utilize the statewide brochures provided by the Department of Education.
- Utilize the statewide posters provided by the Department of Education.
- Generate more television and radio PSAs and/or press releases.
- Increase customer service training for your staff and/or existing students.
- Emphasize the importance of each learner and each class.
- Call people whose classes have been canceled and invite them to your class.

Do not assume you know how people receive your brochures, fliers, posters, etc. Critical to any promotional campaign is ***tracking***. By tracking, you will know what works and what doesn't, and how effective specific methods are to different market segments. Tracking means coding each method in some distinct way so you can tell the number of responses generated by each method. There is no need to waste time, money, or effort on those efforts that do not work for you. (See Appendix J)

### ***Some examples of tracking methods:***

- Color-code or use colored dots on registration forms.
  - Example: blue went to local groceries  
green went to gas stations  
yellow to laundromats  
red was a newspaper insert  
purple was a church bulletin insert; etc.
- Make your address a little different on each location's allotment.
  - Example: 501 22nd St., Dunbar, WV 25064  
501 22nd St., Dunbar, W. Va. 25064  
501 22nd St., Dunbar, West Virginia 25064
- Use a different phone number. If you have three lines coming into your classroom, use the number of the third line. If anyone calls to register on that line, then the only way that person could have gotten that number is through the publicity method you are tracking.

- Make up a person’s name to ask for. This personalizes your enrollment procedure and makes it easier for people to call. Whenever a caller asks for that person, just say he or she stepped away from the desk, and ask if you can help.
- Ask the individuals how they heard about the program. If they saw a poster, ask them where they saw it; if they saw it on TV or heard it on the radio, ask them what station. You can even ask them the time of day--morning, afternoon, evening. (See Appendix J)
- Track a specific method of promotion once to determine its value; next session, track another method. After compiling the results of your tracking efforts, eliminate those promotional methods that were not effective and put more emphasis upon those that were.

*Correct placement of promotional materials is essential.*

**Tip:** Placement tip for brochures, fliers within stores:

More people exit a store on the right than on the left. You want people to pick up your ads as they leave the store, so put the majority of your ads close to the right exit door rather than the left.

Don’t be discouraged by failures in your promotional campaigns. Many efforts start slowly and over the years snowball into grand events. Remember that persistence and learning from experience will be keys to successful promotion.