



IN-HOUSE ISSUES

## SELLING YOUR SERVICES

Just because you have a built-in client base doesn't mean you can skip marketing your in-house design department.

The legend goes that blues master Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads in exchange for prowess in playing the guitar. Relax—you won't have to sell your soul. But if you want to manage a successful in-house creative team, you'll have to learn how to sell your services to stay competitive and let your clients throughout the organization know you're there.

There are two reasons why it's important to market your in-house creative department:

1. To get work.
2. To tell everyone about it.

It's that simple. The first thing you need to do is to advertise your services, explaining exactly what you do. Next, do good work. Better yet, do outstanding work. And then, finally, tell everyone about the great work you're doing. If you're doing it right, the cycle will feed itself.

Twelve years ago, my in-house department at Wyeth was located in the basement of our corporate headquarters near the print shop. We never advertised our services, and only a small percentage of employees knew we were down there. And the ones who did know kept it to themselves for fear that if everyone else found out, they would have to camp out the night before to get their jobs in the queue.

When there was an opportunity to move above sea level to a main floor, I jumped at the chance, although I knew I had some work ahead of me. We were now a part of the crème de la crème, rubbing elbows with marketing, information services, public affairs, human resources, sales promotion, etc., and we essentially had to reinvent ourselves. What follows is a collection of strategies that worked for me and can help you market your in-house department to your company.

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER THOMAS RYAN [www.peterthomasryan.com](http://www.peterthomasryan.com)

## WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?

One of the first things to do, if you haven't already, is develop a mission statement that defines the essence and strategic vision of your department. This brief but meaningful statement should clearly express the purpose and values of your department. Also, consider the name of your group and make sure it accurately reflects the services you provide. Then design a logo that supports the name. Make it a team project and award a free lunch to the designer who comes up with the winning logo. Develop a stationery system and templates that you can use for all internal/external correspondence. Then create signage for your space so there's no mistaking your mission.

## YOUR GREATEST HITS

Now that you've defined who you are, you need to tell everyone what you do. Design a brochure that highlights your capabilities and shows off your work. Years ago, I began a series of quarterly brochures that feature our best work. Each edition includes about eight projects and provides a brief back story, the designers involved and an image of the finished piece. It's a great vehicle to let employees know what we're up to. Most internal stakeholders only see the work you're doing for them and are very surprised when they learn of your other projects.

Also, outline your department's competencies and be very clear about what you can and cannot do. For example, if you have a designer who has excellent illustration skills, or another who is an experienced photographer, then advertise it. Know your strengths and where you and your team can shine. You don't want to overextend yourself by trying to take on too much, but it's to your advantage to become a resource for all things creative. Be the "go-to" person, and let it be known that if you're not able to accommodate a request, you'll find someone internally or externally who can. Either way, you come out on top.

## SELL-EBRATE!

A good way to get people to know you're around is to have an open house. And it's easy. Pick a day when you and your team can spend an hour or so entertaining clients. Have some snacks: candy, popcorn and drinks. Food is always a great way to bring people together and get them to relax. Then show off your work. Scatter a few portfolios around for your clients to peruse, and make sure you have plenty of brochures handy.

Frame some of your best work and hang it up. If your budget allows, provide a few giveaways, such as pens, mugs or T-shirts. Share your passion with your clients. Let them know that you're available and want to find ways to partner with them on upcoming projects. Your proactive stance will be a positive gesture toward building trust and will help you form solid working relationships with your new clients.

## AND THE WINNER IS...

Although some people may disagree, I find that winning design and business awards enhances the credibility of an in-house creative department. My team



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has been recognized with many design awards that not only acknowledge the great work we do, but also feed the team's collective creative soul. When our work has been validated by professionals in the industry, it boosts morale, keeps everybody motivated and recharges our creative batteries.

When someone on your team wins an award, don't keep it to yourself. Send a note to your boss and to your boss' boss. Write a press release, contact your public affairs department and have them include it in your company's newsletter or business update. Also, contact the client who initiated the project with your team and include them in the celebration. Make sure you send them a copy of the award so they can show it off to their colleagues. Finally, proudly display your award certificates and statuettes in your office or workspace for all to see.

### SURF'S UP

Don't have a department website? Create one. Make it a group project. Over the years my team has developed many websites for our department, and it has become a vehicle for designers to strut their stuff. Include your mission statement, location, standard operating procedures, capabilities, photos and contact information for your team members, plus samples of your work. Make it easy for employees to download a requisition form to initiate project requests. Also ensure that your website is listed in the right places so employees can find it.

If you don't have the resources or opportunity to develop your own department website, create a CD-ROM with either a PowerPoint or Flash presentation that highlights your team's capabilities and services. It could be a companion piece to your website if you have one or, if you don't, a nice takeaway for your clients. Create a display for the CDs in your office or work area and advertise their availability.

### NOT THE FINAL WORD

These are just a few of the things that I've done to get the word out about my in-house creative department. Remember, it's an initiative that requires constant attention and ongoing maintenance. There will always be new clients and new hires and new opportunities to educate others about your services.

It's smart to periodically host an open house, update your website and capability brochure, and even refresh your department logo. Involving your team also will give everyone a sense of ownership and pride when business picks up and you begin to attract new clients and new work. If you take the time to develop a smart marketing strategy, you'll find that you can sell your department without selling your soul. **HOW**

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