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MARKETING GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES

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To Liz and Sharon

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Preface

This is the first comprehensive book to focus exclusively upon the marketing activities performed by government and social service agencies. Its purpose is to demonstrate how the concepts and techniques of marketing relate to the delivery of government and social services.

The authors brought complementary backgrounds and perspectives to the preparation of this book. John Crompton brought knowledge of government and social service agencies gleaned from 20 years of work experience and academic interest in that arena. Charles Lamb is the M.J. Neeley Professor of Marketing at Texas Christian University. His expertise in marketing for non-profit organizations is widely recognized.

It is normal practice when two people collaborate on a book for them to divide the work so that each takes primary responsibility for a predetermined number of chapters. Because of the different perspectives of its authors, this book did not develop in that way. Each chapter was a source of creative conflict and went through a series of iterations. The debate, argument, and long gestation period facilitated the development of insight. As a result, the five-year period during which the book was written has been a time of intellectual adventure and an exciting learning experience for both of us.

In the past seven years, more than 10,000 practitioners have participated in over 100 workshops which the authors have conducted either independently or together. We are pleased with whatever benefit they may have derived from exposure to the developing ideas for this book, but we are most grateful to them for their feedback and input. They have been tolerant of our occasional naivete, forthright in their criticism, and generous in sharing their ideas and illustrations. Hence the content of this book has been repeatedly revised and thoroughly tested. We are convinced that its conceptual foundations are well-rooted, but believe its major contribution is its pragmatic approach. The book is intended to be primarily a "hands-on" reference guide for administrators. It has also been well-received by students in our university classes who have also provided us with useful feedback.

Given the eclectic nature of government and social services, it is not possible

to tailor each example to the reader's particular type of agency. The examples should be regarded as being generic, rather than being illustrative only of the service and situation cited. The reader has to make the transition from cited illustrations to the context of his or her own agency.

We anticipate managers will receive three major benefits from reading this book:

1. *A general orientation to the field of marketing.* Few public sector managers have received any formal training in marketing because marketing's relevance to government and social service agencies has been recognized only recently.

2. *New ideas for solving problems.* The marketing perspective used here is likely to be new to many. Management in many public services has historically been inbred. The majority of police, recreation, and library managers, for example, have spent their entire working lives in a single area. Such narrow exposure restricts a manager from sharing the experience of his or her peers in other service areas who may have faced similar situations. In this "hands-on" book, concepts are explained; but the emphasis is on application of these concepts in a large number of practical illustrations and case studies from a variety of services.

3. *A frame of reference within which to view all service delivery decisions.* Marketing doesn't consist of isolated activities, but rather of orchestrated efforts that integrate a number of related activities. Managers will recognize seemingly independent decisions are related when seen in the context of the total set of marketing activities.

Often the biggest obstacle to introducing marketing into an agency is the word "marketing" itself, which can carry negative connotations associated with hucksterism. Though a gross misrepresentation, the semantic problem cannot be ignored. We suggest that ideas from the book be introduced gradually without any reference to marketing. In this way techniques can be implemented quickly without resistance from personnel who would react negatively or feel overwhelmed by "marketing." Once the innovations are successful, you can announce that marketing is in fact being practiced and practiced well.

The cost of government in the United States has become the biggest single item in the family budget—more than housing, food, or health care. The consistent increase in the size of government between 1949 and 1982 is shown in Figure 1. Together federal, state, and local governments collect revenues that amount to more than one-third of the U.S. gross national product and employ nearly one out of five nonagricultural civilian workers. As the size of government has increased, so has the public's criticism of its efficiency, effectiveness, and equity. Marketing is not a panacea for all the financial, service delivery, and accountability problems confronting agencies, but it can definitely help alleviate those problems.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT TRENDS, 1949-1982
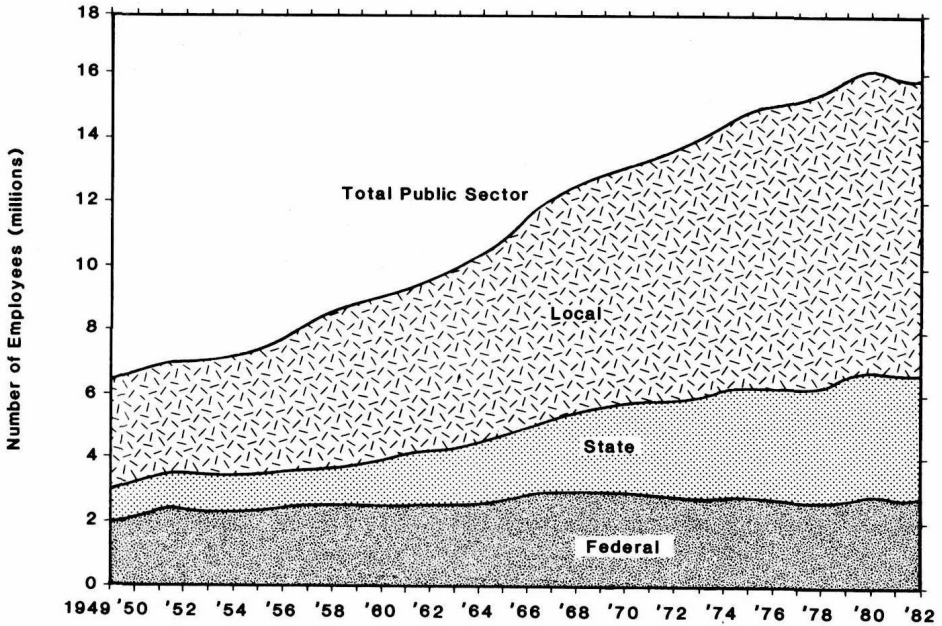
Figure 1.   Public Employment Trends, 1949–1982. (*Source:* Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce. Government Employment G.E. 82. No. 1 Public Employment.)

This book is directed to managers at all levels of government with responsibility for all sizes of jurisdictions. Government and social services are not part of a homogeneous sector. Instead the sector delivers a myriad of diverse services. Although there are differences in the environments within which each manager operates, the principles discussed in this book are broadly applicable across the public sector spectrum. Most agencies identify the client groups whom they serve; develop and eliminate services; decide upon the appropriate prices to charge; schedule and locate their programs and services at several locations; and promote or communicate their availability through brochures, announcements, or public contact. The large number of application examples from many different service areas will assist readers in making the transition from principle to application in their own field.

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Contents

ONE

What Is Marketing?

Many people think the term *marketing* connotes an activity that is only appropriate in commercial profit-seeking enterprises. They do not distinguish marketing from hard selling and envision both as crass exploitation, the foisting of unwanted goods and services on unsuspecting people, the superficial glitter of billboards and neon signs, commercials on television, and aggressive high-pressure sales people. Seen in this light, marketing is considered unprofessional and unethical for government and social service agencies (see Figure 1.1).

Such negative associations reflect an inaccurate view of marketing. Marketing is two things. First, it is a philosophy, an attitude, and a perspective. Second, it is the set of activities used to implement that philosophy. Acceptance of the philosophy is a prerequisite for successful implementation of the activities.

This chapter is intended to remove any misunderstanding of the nature of marketing and to explain why marketing is relevant to government and social service agency administrators. First is an exploration of the philosophy of marketing in which the so-called marketing concept is introduced and its evolution traced. Because of its importance to all government and social service agency marketing efforts, the basics of a marketing orientation are outlined and then contrasted with an alternative orientation that agencies often adopt. Next, we define the term *marketing* and explore the concept of exchange that underlies all marketing actions. Following that is an introduction to the set of activities that comprise marketing. Relationships between these activities are illustrated by a family planning service example. The final section of the chapter briefly reviews the use of marketing to discourage, rather than encourage, service usage.

EVOLUTION OF THE MARKETING CONCEPT

The philosophy of marketing is simple and intuitively appealing: the social and economic justification for an organization's existence is the satisfaction of cus-

1