The success of Extension programs is due to the loyalty of committed participants, volunteers, and lay leaders, as well as support from local decision makers and elected officials. Since its inception, Extension has been fostering those relationships with core constituencies. Unfortunately, in some cases, these core constituency groups did not include people of color or limited-resource audiences. If Extension is to truly build relationships with these diverse audiences, time and attention must be invested in establishing mutually beneficial relationships. A basic understanding of diversity is crucial when developing strategies for relationship marketing.

Relationship marketing involves the use of one-on-one communication to earn the loyalty of your target audience. While personal marketing (discussed in EDIS fact sheet, FCS9222, Personal Marketing: A Strategy for Marketing Programs to Diverse Audiences) helps you to get your message across in a way that will be better received, relationship marketing helps you to strengthen your relationship with your target audience (DeYoung, B. & Boldt, 1998). Relationship marketing is high-touch (as opposed to high-tech), person-to-person.
communication, and it is the most powerful and
time-consuming marketing technique.

Relationship marketing suggests that once your
program takes off, your intentions are to be there for
the long haul (not just while you have a targeted
grant, as may have been the case with many other
programs in the community). Diverse communities
are accustomed to the short attention span of
programs that come in, make a lot of promises, then
leave after one or two years when their grants run out.
Consequently, many lose confidence in organizations
and agencies. We must show our audiences how
Extension is different, and that we are committed for
the long-term.

**Customer Retention Marketing**

Customer Retention Marketing (CRM) is the
foundation of relationship marketing. In Extension,
the goal of CRM is to convert the target audience into
loyalists and loyalists into enthusiasts, advocates, and
donors. This can be accomplished by following these
steps:

**Step 1**

You will first need to identify the diverse
audience with whom you wish to build a relationship.
Then you will need to find out the answers to key
questions:

- What does this audience know about Extension
  and/or your program?
- How does this audience feel about Extension
  and/or your program (positive or negative)?
- What needs does this audience have that your
  program can meet?

**Step 2**

If they know about Extension and your program,
and have favorable feelings towards it, then you will
have to maintain a good relationship with your
audience by keeping in touch with them through
impersonal marketing techniques like mailings,
flyers, and so on.

If they know about Extension and/or your
program, but have negative or indifferent feelings
whilst, then you will need to change this negative
image before you can build trust. If the audience does
not know much about Extension and/or your
program, then you must inform them. This can begin
to happen when you apply The Six P’s technique of
personal marketing, with special emphasis on
promotion and price. (The Six P’s are covered in
EDIS fact sheet FCS9222, Personal Marketing: A
Strategy for Marketing Programs to Diverse
Audiences.)

**Step 3**

Identify the assets that individuals or institutions
in the diverse audience possess. Use the assets of
these individuals and institutions to carry out your
programs. Volunteers can have short- or long-term
assignments. These experiences help build program
ownership and foster even more participation. (EDIS
fact sheet FCS9225, Maximizing the Assets of A
Diverse Community, deals specifically with how to
identify the individual and/or institutional assets of
diverse audiences.)

**Step 4**

Actively solicit the increased participation and
involvement of community members to foster greater
loyalty to the program. To increase and maintain
involvement, community members will need to be
able to identify the ongoing benefits of the program.

**Step 5**

Encourage greater support from community
members. Loyal individuals are more likely to
advocate for the program and/or donate resources to
the program.

Each of these steps takes time and attention.
Relationship marketing must be nurtured.

**Conclusion**

Relationship marketing is one of the most
time-consuming but effective strategies for marketing
Extension programs. Relationship marketing is a
process, not a one-time event; clientele must
understand that you are committed long-term and that they can depend on you to provide education.

To be effective, you must establish a relationship with the audience you are targeting by making a connection with them over time. In order to build a relationship, as with any other relationship in life, Extension needs to be constantly in touch with its audiences. By making a connection with diverse audiences, Extension can build strong community networks that promote the programs we market beyond the limited scope of small workshops and community meetings.

References
