THE 5 PS OF MARKETING

**Publics**—Lauffer (2009) adds publics as the fifth P of marketing to recognize the unique character of nonprofit organizations. This characteristic applies as well to human service organizations regardless of their sector. While businesses are concerned with the consumers of their products, human services have other stakeholders that must be taken into account. Many times, it is not the client who is paying for the services provided, but the services are paid for by a third party through a contract; or, in the case of nonprofit organizations, the services may be paid for through donated funds. Therefore, it is not only the client (consumer) that must be taken into account in a marketing plan but other stakeholders as well, such as donors, funders, volunteers, and the community at large.

**Products**—Products may be tangible goods such as food or services such as counseling or case management. The product may even be something as intangible as conservation or social justice. Regardless of the product offered by the organization, the expectation is that there will be an exchange of resources from the consumer (or a third party) for the organization to have the capacity to offer the products (Hardcastle & Powers, 2004). Often, the product that is promised to the funder or to the community is a change in the conditions in the community. For example, if the desired impact is a reduction in childhood obesity or a reduction in teenage pregnancy, then it is an important marketing strategy to be able to demonstrate that the products provided are effective in producing the desired change. This is one reason why program evaluation is a critical component of agency functioning (see Chapter 7).

**Price**—Price has to do with the cost of providing the services in comparison to other providers of similar services. The human services administrator must have knowledge of the fees of other organizations providing similar services and of the unit costs (see Chapter 8). There is also the question of the reasonableness of the price of providing services. As government agencies and third-party insurance payers seek out contractors, they seek to find the best services they can find at the lowest cost. Part of a marketing plan is to make the case that the services provided are quality services at a reasonable and competitive price.

**Place**—What is the geographic location of the agency and what is the geographic area served? There are several issues related to “place.” Government contracts are restricted to the area of their governmental jurisdiction. Similarly, many corporations are interested in supporting organizations in the area where they have their headquarters or where their consumers are located. For example, think about utility companies that will provide grants in the states where they provide services. In some cases, foundations, donors, or even government agencies will restrict their gifts to an area that they perceive as having the greatest need.

There is also a practical and political dimension to where the human service organization is located. Is the agency or branch located in an area that is convenient for the population that it seeks to serve? Is there public transportation available so that the services are accessible?

The administrator of a human services organization was being interviewed on local TV about the agency’s new office location. The reporter made the point that the new office building was located in a very affluent part of town, but that its mission was to serve poor people. When the reporter asked the administrator why that location was selected, he said, “Because most of our employees live in this area”—not a good marketing strategy.

Think about “place” as aligning the needs of the clients served and the resources that can be attracted based on the geographic location of the agency and geographic area served by the agency. Think about the possibilities that exist within that common space.

**Promotion**—Promotion is the communication between the agency and its various publics. Promotion takes many forms. It is the agency newsletter, the website, the fundraising letters, and the funding proposals. It is public speaking, participation in community activities, special events, and TV interviews. Promotion is about building relationships—with board members, with donors, with funding sources, and with the community. In the last chapter, we talked about the concept of “friend-raising.” It is the same concept in marketing. Promotion is the art and the tools of persuasive communications to interpret the mission of your organization to others and to gain their support of your efforts. Promotion is about motivation and inspiration. As a human services administrator, it is the power of your conviction for the services that you provide and your commitment to those you serve that will inspire others to join you in your life’s work.