

A Golden Opportunity



According to a recent study, 9% of public library customers account for over 50% of the libraries circulation. I find this fascinating, but, what does it really mean?

- 9% of customers are avid readers. These are the folks we know & love, and obviously, they know & love us!
- 91% of our customers borrow the remaining 50% of our resources. These occasional customers present a **golden** opportunity. These are the folks we want to encourage to use our resources and services more.

The real challenges are:

- How to move the occasional user (the 91%) into the avid user group, the (9%).
- How to build a lifelong library habit with the occasional customer.

To accomplish this, we truly need to change how we do business; we need to change our attitude and refocus our efforts on positively selling the library product. If we don't, the 91% will find somewhere else to feed their occasional reading or information needs. They will find someplace that has what they need, is easy to navigate, responds quickly and is pleasant to deal with.

So, how do we reach out to the 91% and turn them into regular customers?

- It's all about building positive relationships. Library staff must be approachable, welcoming, and truly engage the customer. Staff members who refuse to use their first name on an identification badge, who doesn't greet customers as they enter or who won't make an effort to address customers by name should not be working in your library. It really is that simple.
- We need to sell the library product ("If you like this book, you will really enjoy this Playaway"). Or, have you tried text messaging reading suggestions to your occasional customers, and offering immediate holds on their selections? You'll be amazed at the jump in circulation!
- We have to make it easy for customers to do business with us. Ask a non-library user to navigate your registration process, or phone in a reference question. You may be horrified at how convoluted we make it, how antiquated our phone answering systems are and how generally frustrating it is to try, and borrow a book.

The bottom line is the 91% represent a **golden** opportunity.