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Mark Arnold

Marketing
Pro *of the Year*

A Fortuitous Comeback

Dianne Molvig

Mark Arnold was named marketing professional of the year at the 2006 CUNA Marketing & Business Development Council Conference in Orlando, Fla. Arnold is senior vice president of marketing at \$220 million asset Neighborhood Credit Union in Dallas. He's a speaker, instructor, and author for numerous state and national credit union events and publications.

Arnold shares his thoughts on marketing with *Credit Union Magazine*.

CU Mag: What are the most satisfying aspects of working in marketing?

Arnold: It's fun. You can have fun with your promotions and with your staff. Not taking yourself too seriously is part of it.

Once a year we have a special blowout promotion. When we launch it,

we have a staff party. We don't call it a meeting.

Instead of getting up there in a coat and tie and saying, "These are the five components of the campaign, and you will do this," I've dressed up as everything from Darth Vader to a Beach Boy.

When we changed our name from Dallas Postal Credit Union to Neighborhood Credit Union, we had a staff party to launch the campaign. When you think of the word "neighborhood," who naturally comes to mind? Mr. Rogers.

So I dressed up as Mr. Rogers and walked in singing, "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood." I did the whole routine. People were rolling on the floor laughing.

But from there, we

talked about the promotion and the staff's role in it. Marketing can't be successful unless you're having fun and making people want to be involved.

CU Mag: Fun requires creativity. How do you keep your creativity alive?

Arnold: I read a lot. To be a leader you have to be a reader. You have to read about what others are doing, even outside the financial services industry.

I also go to conferences. At the CUNA Marketing & Business Develop-



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ment Council Conference, it was great to walk around and see all the Diamond Award winners. That sparks your own ideas.

All of us get inundated with mail and marketing at home, too. If one of us [on my team] sees something that catches our eye, we bring it to the office.

We used to have a "Book of Knowledge." Anytime we saw a campaign we liked, we'd put it in the "Book of Knowledge."

Now it's the "Drawer of Knowledge." When we get stuck for ideas, we open the drawer, leaf through it, and maybe find something that sparks our creativity.

CU Mag: You said reading is important. What sorts of books do you read?

Arnold: My goal is to read at least one business book every month. Many are about marketing or leadership.

I also require my direct reports [two vice presidents and two managers] to read regularly. Right now we're going through "Developing the Leader Within You" [by John Maxwell].

I want my staff to be not just managers, but leaders—and readers. So we're reading a chapter a month. And then once a month, we get together over lunch and talk about it.

I firmly believe you have to be a continual learner. You have to be in an environment where you continually learn.

CU Mag: It sounds as though you're creating that kind of environment for your direct reports—to make sure learning can happen.

Arnold: It's a challenge because you get wrapped up in the day to day. I call it the "tyranny of the urgency."

You get to the end of the day or the week, and all you've done are the urgent projects. You haven't taken time to learn, to focus on long-range issues and your vision—the things that help you succeed in the future.

We have to create ways to take the time to think, to look at the big picture, to read and learn, and to feed off each other. That's critical.

CU Mag: Who are your mentors?

Arnold: The first to come to mind is Terry Young, now vice president of communications at Southwest Corporate Federal Credit Union.

My first credit union job was as a mar-

keting assistant at another credit union. I was juggling lots of responsibilities, and I was struggling. I loved what I was doing, but I felt my head was below water many times.

One day my boss called me into her office, looked me dead in the eye, and told me, "Mark, you're going to be a failure in the marketing industry. You need to get out of marketing."

She had me transferred out of marketing into collections, and I worked there and in loans for three and a half years. But I was miserable because I wasn't doing what I was passionate about.

So I took a pay cut to leave that credit union and work for the Texas Credit Union League as a communications coordinator. Terry Young hired me. He wasn't just my boss. He was my mentor and still is to this day.

Another mentor is my CEO, Chet Kimmell. He allows me to succeed and fail. He's there when I swing for the fences and hit a home run, and he's there when I swing and miss. What more could I ask from a CEO and a mentor?

I'd also say my father, John Arnold, played a mentoring role, especially on the leadership side. He's a former CEO at Southwest Corporate Federal Credit Union, now retired. I learned a lot about leadership growing up and watching him.

CU Mag: How did you muster the courage to try marketing again after your first boss said you couldn't cut it?

Arnold: That was devastating. Did I question myself? Absolutely. Was my self-esteem shot every which way? Yes.

But when I got with Terry [Young], I realized I wasn't a failure. I had the skill set, and I wanted to succeed. I just needed someone to help me develop my skills.

That story [about my first credit union job] illustrates four points:

1. **Expect** bumps in your life, even if you're doing what you're passionate about. You have to be willing to overcome challenges.

2. **Do** what you're passionate about. I firmly believe that if you do what makes you happy, the rest takes care of itself.

3. **Find** mentors in your life.

4. **Be** a mentor: No matter where you are in your career, be a mentor and make a difference in someone else's life. ●

BEST OF SHOW



COMPETITION'S BEST

Television
"Image" campaign
Spokane Teachers CU,
Liberty Lake, Wash.



BEST ASSOCIATION ENTRY

CU Association/League
Marketing Campaign
"CU's Care" campaign
Oklahoma CU League



BEST USE OF ART

Annual Report
"Making History in the West End"
Alternatives FCU, Ithaca, N.Y.



BEST USE OF HUMOR

Television
"Car Sales (Mechanics)"
Langley FCU, Newport News, Va.