



Turning Evaluation into Advocacy

In addition to helping you assess to what extent you met your space reconfiguration and program goals, evaluation may also be a powerful tool for talking to community stakeholders about the vitality of your library.

The 2018 update to the *From Awareness to Funding* report found that a majority of US voters believe public libraries are essential to communities and are a source of civic pride. That's great news! *However*, that trust and satisfaction doesn't always translate into support for library funding at the ballot box.

These findings from the report make it clear that there's plenty of room for libraries to step up their advocacy. *We* know we do great things but it's critical to keep telling that story to all the stakeholders in our communities.

From Awareness to Funding report: <https://www.oclc.org/research/awareness-to-funding-2018.html>



*Evaluation is your best **advocacy** strategy!*

- Data
- Products
- Stories, quotes
- Photos

The data, stories, and photos that you collect communicate the importance of your program, service, or initiative to potential users, policy makers, resource allocators, and library board *so that*:

- They are encouraged to participate in and contribute resources to the library
- They see the library as a vital community institution and promote it to others
- They are more likely to vote in favor of library bonds, levies, millages, and referenda

*Evaluation is your best **advocacy** strategy!*

Who are your stakeholders?

“I honestly think that *everyone* in our community is a stakeholder.”

—library staff



Every library has a wide community of stakeholders that extends far beyond your patrons. There are members of your community who may be avid supporters of the library without actually using its services. Conversely, there are library patrons who use and love the library, but do not advocate for it at city/county council meetings or vote for its levies at the ballot box.

It's important to be aware of the power of promoting the library's value to everyone in your community. The following is a list of common stakeholders. You may have more to add to your list.

- Parents, families, and caregivers
- Educational organizations (Colleges, schools, teachers, home schools, etc.)
- Community organizations (Immigrant, faith-based communities, etc.)
- Local and state elected officials
- Local business people
- Healthcare providers
- Community leaders and people of influence
- Cultural and special interest organizations

Telling your *advocacy* story

1) Keep the message simple and short


You have **30** seconds
to **WOW** someone with
the **transformative services**
your library **Smart Space** offers



It matters how you tell your story. There are some basic recommendations to keep in mind.

Keep the message simple and short

There is a mantra that says you have 30 seconds to hook someone's attention before they will tune out and not hear what else you have to say. It's important to cut right to the essence —how the actions your library is taking speak to the values and priorities of a particular stakeholder. Think of it like a 30-second commercial. Pack as much punch into your words and phrases as you can.



Telling your *advocacy* story

2) Tailor the message to each audience

- What resonates with their priorities and values?
- “You DID Listen to Us!”
 - We did listen, and this is the result
- “Yes, We Listened, and YOU Noticed!”

The slide features a decorative bar at the bottom with three segments: orange, yellow, and green.

How you tell the story of your Smart Space will vary according to who you are telling it to. To really get through to any individual or group of stakeholders, it’s important to think about what their priorities are, what they value in the community.

The insights you gathered in the community discovery activities should provide a wealth of clues for how to talk persuasively to a variety of people.

- Look back at what you learned about your community
- Take this opportunity to connect the dots for them—how you listened to their input and responded to it

Telling your *advocacy* story

3) Emphasize the benefits

- How does your library change lives and benefit the community?



It's easy to fall into the trap of only describing details about your service or program. It's better to state right up front how the service/program will *benefit* the specific audiences served (children, teens, families, adults, seniors, the whole community). Once you've hooked the stakeholder's attention, you can fill in the details. Your outcome statements are good foundation for identifying benefits.

- Avoid reciting statistics, e.g., "we had 23 K-8 children and 15 teens in our robotics program..."

To illustrate, consider these statements about a makerspace for teens:

- *Weak*: "We have a 3D printer and 10 different robotics kits for teens in our new makerspace."
 - This statement is just an equipment inventory and doesn't say anything about how those tools will benefit the direct (teens) or indirect (other community member) stakeholders.
- *Strong*: "When teens work together to build robots in our new makerspace, they are increasing their technical and engineering skills, which will prepare them for greater success in their adult lives."
 - This statement speaks to the immediate benefit to teens (short-term outcome) and the longer-term benefits to the community at large.

Telling your *advocacy* story

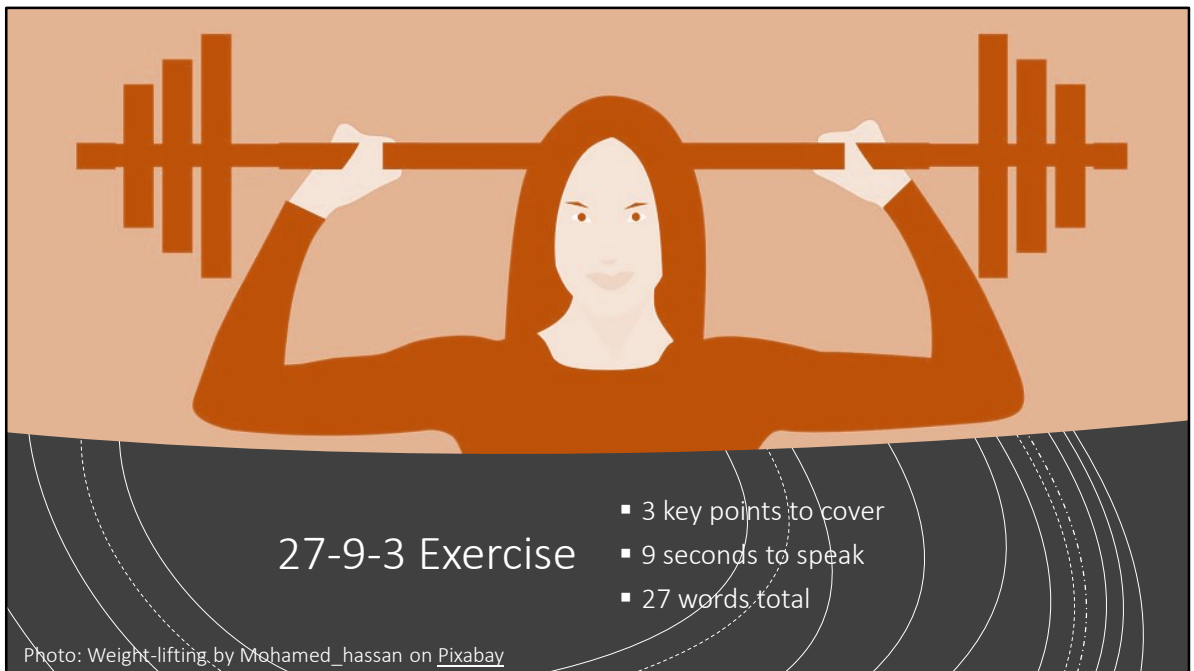
4) Express your enthusiasm

- It's contagious 😊



Don't be shy about expressing your genuine enthusiasm for your work, your Smart Space, or how you are serving the community. Avoid sounding like you're at a job interview.

Enthusiasm is contagious.



Take the 27-9-3 Challenge

Go to [https://www.powerprism.org/27-9-3 Worksheet.pdf](https://www.powerprism.org/27-9-3_Worksheet.pdf) to download a form for the challenge.

The idea is to cover **3** key points in **27** words, which you can speak in **9** seconds. It's great discipline!

- First, identify a particular audience for your persuasive message.
- Then, think about what might appeal to their direct self-interest—why would they care about your library service?
- Next, formulate 3 key points you'd like to convey, based on:
 - What you want them to understand about your program
 - What you want them to feel about it, how to tap into their emotions
 - What do you want this audience to do after hearing your message — Attend library programs? Collaborate on programming? Support your Friends' Group? Vote for a levy?
- Now write your concise message.
 - Practice speaking it until you sound conversational and natural ...and enthusiastic

Practicing and delivering your advocacy messages is somewhat like lifting weights. If you keep at it, you'll get stronger and more confident over time.

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Thank you!