



Use of Evaluation Data to Market Extension¹

C.L. Taylor, M.F. Cole and W.R. Summerhill²

This paper discusses to what extent Florida county Extension faculty use evaluation data to market their programs and the organization. Specifically, this paper discusses (1) the levels of data used, (2) the creation of a positive image with audiences, and (3) the use of data to promote Extension, report Extension's impact, and obtain support for Extension.

Florida Extension Service has long used evaluations of programs to determine the programs' impact. The programs' impact is used to decide what improvements need to be made in the programs and to give various groups—clients, the general public, funders—an account of the programs' accomplishments. In using evaluation data to account for its programs, Extension also advertises itself, but Extension has never clearly specified that evaluation data should be used as a marketing tool.

This paper approaches marketing from a rather narrow perspective, at least in the eyes of those educated in the discipline of marketing. We approach this subject as most other people in the academic setting do. According to Kotler (1982), most educators see marketing as a combination of selling, advertising, promotion, and public relations. As educators and curriculum and program development specialists, we tend to hold this same view. We do not consider needs assessment, issue identification, curriculum/program development, and program implementation in our definition of marketing. People other than educators also tend to hold a

somewhat narrow view of marketing. Mauser (1983), a researcher and writer on political campaigns, holds that one cannot market politicians, banking services, symphony orchestras, or industrial products as one would market soap. He maintains that every competitive domain is unique and requires marketing techniques that reflect its special character. Luck (1969) and Carman (1973) feel that to equate marketing with any and all exchanges of value is overextending the proper domain of marketing. So, within this rather narrow context, this paper discusses how 162 county Extension faculty in Florida use evaluation data to help market their Extension programs and enhance the image of the Extension organization.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this paper were gathered from Florida Extension faculty during the summer of 1992. A mail questionnaire containing 13 items was used to gather the data. The questionnaire items were designed to assess the extent to which evaluation data are used to advertise/promote in the mass media and formal reports, to communicate the impact/effectiveness of programs to participating and non-participating clientele, to obtain support from public and private sources, and to create a positive image with the general public, funding bodies, and clientele. Data were also obtained to determine to what extent different levels of data are used to market Extension. The different levels of data are participation/

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2. C. L. Taylor, Professor and Extension Specialist, M. F. Cole, Professor and District Director, W. R. Summerhill, Professor and Director, IFAS Personnel Relations, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Seattle, Washington, November 5-7, 1992.

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involvement, change in knowledge and attitude, change in practice, and impact/end results. Questionnaires were mailed to 290 county faculty; 162 responded to the survey.

RESULTS

Use of Evaluation Data to Advertise in the Mass Media

Advertising's fundamental mission is to help create an awareness of a product and to communicate the product's qualities that one wants known (Fearon, 1991). Evaluative data are consistently used in the mass media to create awareness of a product and to communicate the product's "good" qualities. Every day we see advertising such as 50% more doctors recommend brand X aspirins over other brands. Assuming this is creditable information, it can not be obtained without conducting evaluation research. This common type of advertising exemplifies evaluation data being used to market a product in the mass media.

Mass media advertising covers the use of radio, television, newspaper, shoppers, magazines, billboards, and transit boards. Advertisers believe that because of the weaknesses inherent in each medium, no single medium can do an adequate selling job in today's market place (McGee, 1978). It appears that most Extension educators use a rather narrow spectrum of the media and that they use it for a limited number of purposes. When educators use the media, they do so to inform the public or provide equal opportunity—equal access to information—to all people. This is an appropriate philosophy for an educator, but it hardly matches the aggressive approach of a retailer attempting to increase traffic in the store.

Relatively few faculty in Florida use evaluation data to a great extent in marketing their programs. Data in Figure 1 gives some insight into the extent to which county Extension faculty use evaluation in the mass media to market Extension programs. Thirteen percent of the faculty indicated they used evaluation data "much," 40 percent said "some," 36 percent responded "little," and 11 percent said they used "no" evaluation data in the mass media to advertise or promote their Extension programs. It is apparent from these findings that county Extension faculty are making relatively little use of evaluation data to advertise and promote their programs in the mass media. One faculty member commented, "I don't feel

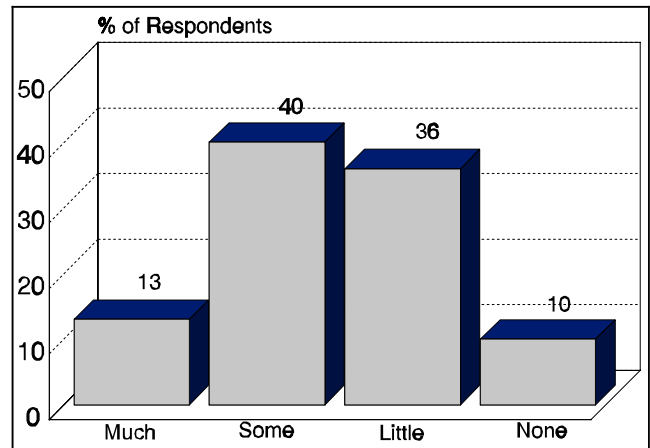


Figure 1. Use of Evaluation Data to Advertise in Mass Media.

in the truest definition that evaluation data will get more people to a program, but program content and description will." Another faculty member stated, "My programs are not relevant to the general public. They are for specific audiences so mass media are not used to advertise programs."

Use of Evaluation Data and Reports

Extension faculty in Florida reveal that they use evaluation data in reports more than in the mass media. One might expect this finding since report writing is expected of several different groups, including Extension administration, local government officials, advisory committees, and clientele groups. One faculty member said, "These data are used to 'sell' the Extension story to elected officials, community leaders and clientele." Using evaluation data in reports requires skill if results are to be maximized. Danbom (1991) believes that reports provide a challenging opportunity for a business or agency to promote its impact or value. He also feels that information such as evaluation data must be coordinated with pictures, graphics, and the general formatting of the report if it is to achieve the intended objective. Data in Figure 2 points out that 39 percent of the county faculty use evaluation data "much" in reports to market their programs. Another 40 percent said "some," 16 percent indicated "little," and five percent revealed they do not use evaluation data in reports.

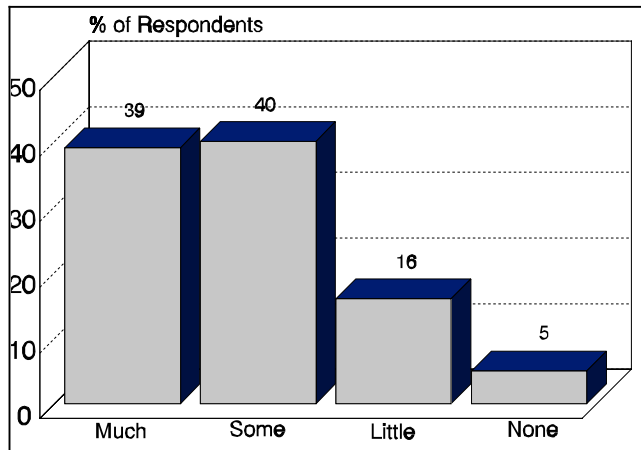


Figure 2. Use of Evaluation Data in Reports.

Use of Evaluation Data to Report Impact to Non-involved Audiences

An aggressive marketing strategy focuses some of the organization's resources on potential new customers. In the case of Extension, these would be potential clientele, people who are not involved in local Extension education programs. County faculty in this study were asked to indicate the extent to which they used evaluation data to communicate the impact of their programs to people who are not participating in Extension programs. Sixteen percent of the faculty reported that they use evaluation data "much" for this purpose. Another 45 percent indicated "some," and 31 percent and eight percent marked "little" and "none," respectively (see Figure 4).

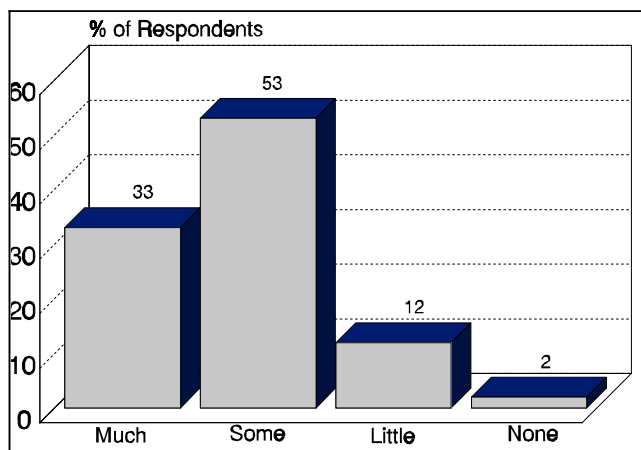


Figure 3. Use of Evaluation Data to Report Impact of Extension Program to Participating Clients.

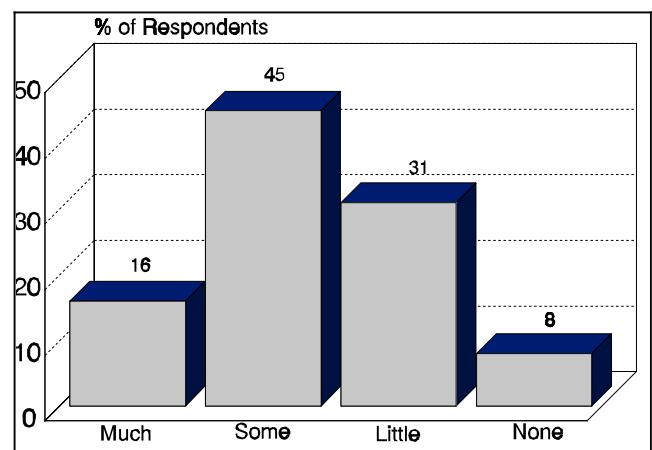


Figure 4. Used Evaluation Data to Report Impact to Non-participating Clientele.

Use of Evaluation Data to Report Impact to Participating Clientele

In the western world, it is generally held that to be accountable is to report on (1) management, (2) efficiency and productivity, and (3) honesty, trust and integrity (Friedman, 1973). A study of U.S. Extension personnel revealed that they ranked these three functions in the following order: first, honesty, trust and integrity; second, efficiency and productivity; and third, management (Taylor and Summerhill, 1989). Participants in this study were asked to indicate the extent they used evaluation data to report impact/effectiveness to clientele involved in Extension programs. Thirty-three percent indicated "much," 53 percent reported "some," 12 percent marked "little," and two percent revealed that they did not use evaluation data in reports to their clientele (see Figure 3).

Use of Evaluation Data to Maintain Public Support

It is important for public agencies that are supported by public funds to obtain and maintain support from the public. Maintaining public support is also a major concern of private, corporate businesses. Lowegard (1989) asserts that if corporate businesses are to maintain public support, they must exhibit corporate responsibility for the environment, education, and public health of the community. Figure 5 indicates that 38 percent of the county faculty in Florida use evaluation data "much" to maintain public support. Another 41 percent use evaluation data to "some" extent for this purpose. Nineteen percent and two percent use evaluation data "little" or "none," respectively, to maintain support.

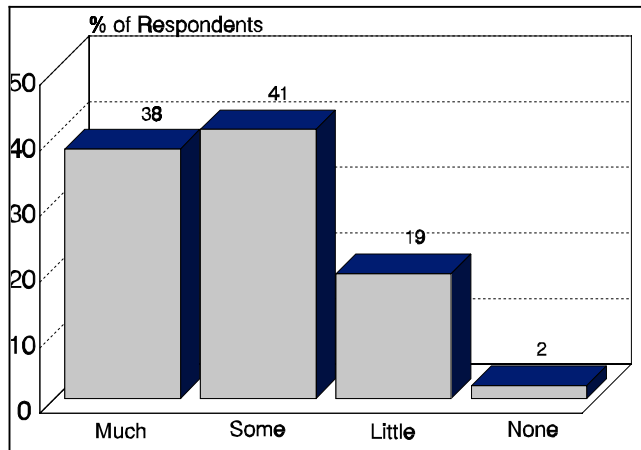


Figure 5. Use of Evaluation Data to Obtain Public Support.

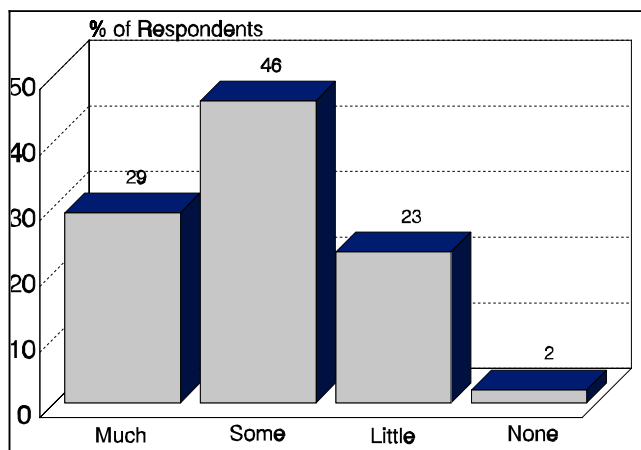


Figure 6. Use of Evaluation Data to Obtain Private Support.

Use of Evaluation Data to Obtain Private Support

Extension must develop strong support from the private sector if it is to remain a viable organization in the future. The traditional triad of county, state, and federal funding may no longer be adequate to support a dynamic Extension organization. A new funding paradigm that makes the private sector an equal partner is more likely to be required in the future (Boldt, 1992). According to this study, just over a fourth (29%) of Florida faculty are using evaluation data to any great extent in the effort to obtain support from the private sector (see Figure 6). Another fourth of the faculty are making little or almost no use of evaluation data.

Use of Evaluation Data to Create and Maintain a Positive Image

Extension is concerned with creating and maintaining a positive image with many aspects of our society. However, in this section we discuss creating a positive image with the general public, funding bodies, and clientele. It is important for Extension to cultivate a positive image among its various audiences. The business world believes that image is everything (Hadden, 1992) and that it must be managed efficiently. Lamons (1992) contends that it is the role of management and employees to pay attention to their company image, for if they don't care about their company image, no one else will. He believes that a strong, positive image is key to increasing profits. He also contends, however, that most CEOs often feel that they must attend to more important concerns, such as budgets and quarterly reports. Consequently, many times image is forgotten or is not consistent with objectives of the company.

It seems as though Extension is also afflicted with the syndrome of "doing important things" and marketing their Extension program or improving the image of the organization may not be one of them. Lamons (1992) urges top corporate leaders to take charge of promoting their company's image. This suggests that Extension's leadership at the federal, state/territory, and county level should take charge of creating and maintaining a positive image. Building a positive image is not simple—it requires expertise. Some corporate managers (*Agency Sales Magazine*) believe that advertising to build and maintain an image is quite different from advertising to sell a product and that a firm or organization must know the difference between the two. This notion suggests that Extension would need to present its evaluation data in a context appropriate to its audience. That is, it might be presented in one context when attempting to attract potential non-participating clientele and in another when attempting to create a positive image with the general public. Less than one-fourth (24%) of the county faculty in Florida reported that they used evaluation data "much" to create a positive image of Extension. Forty-nine percent said they used evaluation data "some," and 23 and 4 percent, respectively, indicated they used evaluation data "little" or "none" (see Figure 7).

County Extension faculty in Florida are more focused on creating a positive image with funding bodies than with those participating in the programs or with the general public. Almost half (45%) of

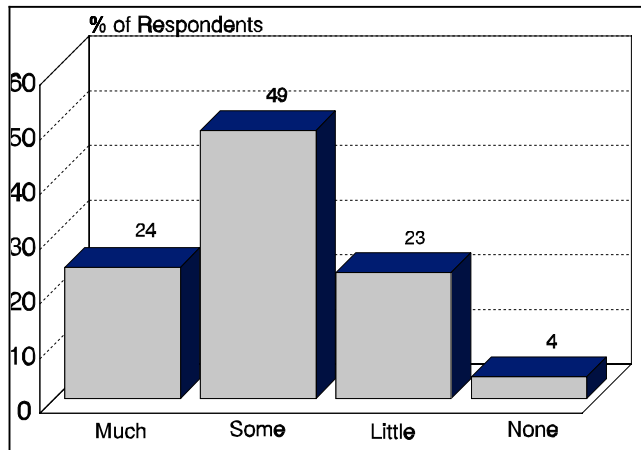


Figure 7. Use of Evaluation to Create a Positive Image with General Public.

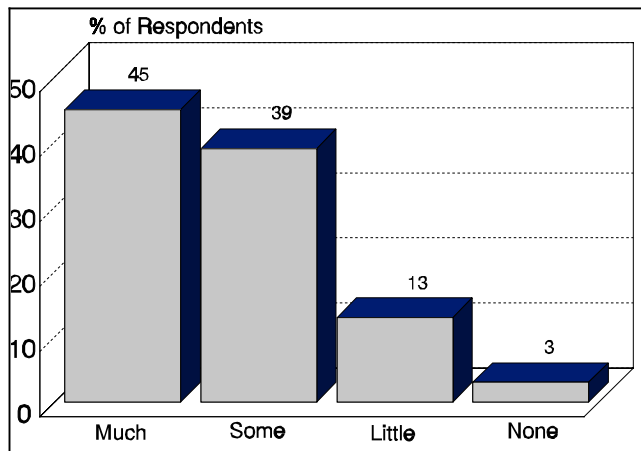


Figure 8. Use of Evaluation Data to Create a Positive Image with Funding Bodies.

those responding to the study reported that they used evaluation data "much" to create a positive image. Another 39 percent of the faculty indicated they used evaluation data "some" to create a positive image with funding bodies. These and other findings may be observed in Figure 8.

County faculty tend to place slightly more emphasis on using evaluation data to create a positive image with their clientele than with the general public but much less than with funding bodies. Faculty may feel it is somewhat unimportant to attempt to sell themselves to those with whom they work closely. Communicating the impact of a program to the participants may appear to be using valuable resources to point out the obvious. Slightly over a fourth (26%) of the faculty reported they used evaluation data "much" to create a positive image with

their clientele, and over half, 55 percent, indicated they used evaluation data "some." See these and other findings in Figure 9.

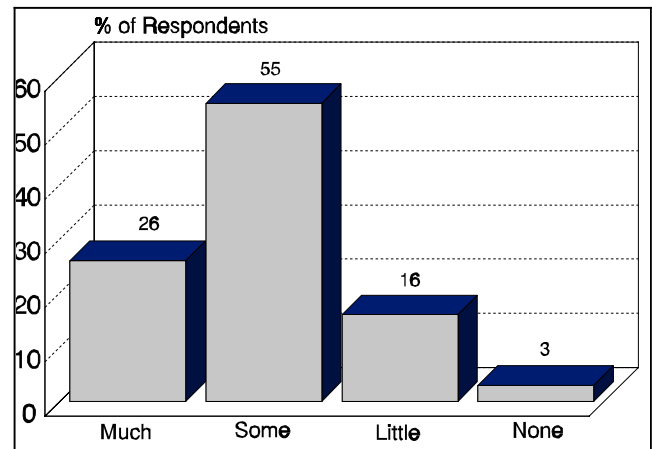


Figure 9. Use of Evaluation Data to Create a Positive Image with Clients.

Kinds of Data Used to Market Extension Programs

County Extension faculty were asked to rate the use of four different kinds of evaluation data. The rating scale ranged from "0," "do not use," to "5," "used most." The kinds of data included (1) participation or involvement, (2) changes in knowledge or attitude, (3) changes in practice, and (4) end results. Data of this nature come from different levels of an Extension program. Participation data are considered to be the lowest of these four and end results is considered to be the highest. Participation data are considered to be the least difficult to obtain and end results data, the most difficult.

Participation or involvement data can usually be obtained in the shortest period of time and generally end results data require the longest. One faculty member commented that "4-H is long term results so it is very difficult for me to obtain." Another faculty member wrote, "Many [Extension faculty] are hesitant to claim that some program was solely responsible for an end result."

We believe the Cooperative Extension Systems throughout this country have an abundance of data at each of these levels. We also believe that most of it is objective and of high quality. Mckenna (Harvard Business Review, 1991) feels the new marketing strategy for the 1990s is based in sound information about the product and on incremental improvement, rather than on simple market-share tactics, raw sales,

and one-time events. This suggests that "snake-oil" tactics are not for the 1990s. McKenna feels the new market strategy will draw heavily on the knowledge and experience of the organization. This concept appears to be different than some of the strategies outlined by Duro and Sandstrom (1987). Much of their focus is on "blood and guts" marketing tactics, such as "act aggressively, aim for surprise, intelligence work, guerrilla attack and burnt grass." If McKenna's theory is a reasonably accurate assessment of the 1990s, the Cooperative Extension Systems throughout this country have a great opportunity. Extension's information is research-based and has a high validity rating, and its personnel have a reputation for objectivity and trustworthiness.

County faculty in Florida reported that they used participation or involvement data the least and practice change data the most in an effort to market Extension programs. Participation data received a mean weighted score of 2.7 and practice change data received a mean weighted score of 3.2. End result and changes in knowledge and attitude scores each received a mean weighted score of 3.0. These findings are shown in Figure 10. The findings are different than what was predicted by the authors. We thought participation or involvement data would be reported as the most-used data and end results data the least, because participation data are considered to be the least difficult to obtain and end result data the most difficult. One faculty member commented, "End results are the hardest to measure because you don't know what they do after they leave your training sessions." Also, participation data can usually be obtained in the shortest time period and end results data requires the longest period of time to obtain.

SUMMARY

This paper focused on marketing from a rather narrow perspective, at least from the viewpoint of the whole discipline of marketing. Faculty reported that they used participation or involvement data the least and practice change data the most. About half (45%) of the faculty are using evaluation data to a "great extent" to create a positive image with funding bodies, significantly more than they do with clientele and the general public. More faculty (39%) are using evaluation data to a "great extent" in reports, fewer (13%) to advertise and promote their programs.

Generally, about one-third of the faculty are using evaluation data extensively to market their Extension programs.

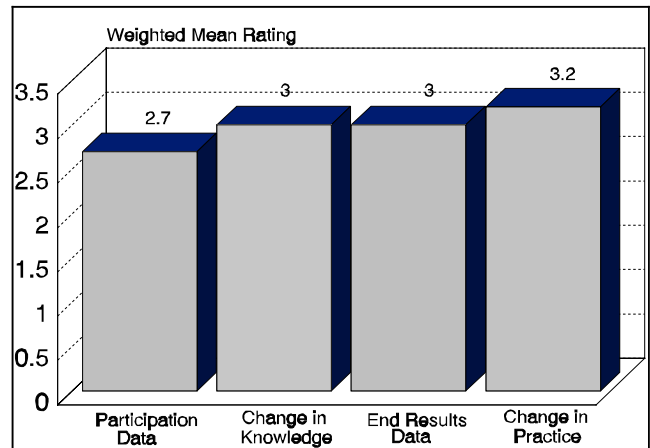


Figure 10. Weighted Mean Rating of the Extent to Which Different Kinds of Data are Used to Market Extension Programs.

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