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COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community relations is an important, but often overlooked, aspect of public relations. With trust in organizations falling dramatically over the past decade, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer, engaging with the community can be extremely valuable in helping rebuild that trust. But it is not enough to just talk about being a good community citizen; an organization actually has to put boots on the ground to effect positive change in stakeholder attitudes and actions.

The case studies that follow in this section depict several avenues of community engagement. “Lights in the Night” illustrates the connections that arts and culture open for those involved with the experience. “Success, Value, Advocacy” demonstrates the benefit of bringing groups together for a common cause. And “The Cleveland Foundation Centennial Campaign” shows that even long-standing organizations formed with the specific purpose of making the community better need to engage stakeholders proactively lest they fade into obscurity.

LIGHTS IN THE NIGHT: LANTERNS MAKE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Adrienne A. Wallace, Assistant Professor of Advertising and Public Relations at Grand Valley State University and Former Director at 8ThirtyFour Integrated Communications

SITUATION

The ArtPrize competition features contributions from around the world displayed in various venues in three square miles of downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. A free and open event, ArtPrize brings in more than 2,500 entries and attracts more than 500,000 attendees whose votes help determine winners of cash prizes that amount to more than \$500,000.



Source: 8THIRTYFOUR Integrated Communications. Reproduced with permission.

First-time ArtPrize artists Dan Johnson and Mark Carpenter presented a dream to 8ThirtyFour Integrated Communications (8ThirtyFour) in May 2012: 20,000 Chinese sky lanterns, launched at one time by attendees, carrying wishes and hopes as a “community’s entry.” Called “Lights in the Night: Where Hope Takes Flight” (LITN), the approach for this venue inherently brought numerous risks. Obstacles such as fire, crowds, open water (the Grand River flows through downtown Grand Rapids), nearby highways and traffic on secondary roads, pedestrian traffic, and increased waste at the launch location (a park) loomed as significant concerns. But Johnson and Carpenter saw that these potential hurdles could be overcome to offer a safe event that could communicate a message of unity to the community and convey the importance of art.

RESEARCH

Research revealed that only two ArtPrize competitions since 2009 involved performance art, and therefore it was important to research the unique safety aspects of this event. The Grand Rapids fire chief expressed confidence that the product and the approach would not be a threat to the safety of people, places, or things. The team also researched what lanterns could be selected that would minimize litter and related environmental effects (fuel cells that do not drip, flame-resistant structure, etc.). Additionally, research established what lanterns were legal to launch in Michigan. Research from the ArtPrize website gave us the information that we needed to differentiate LITN from other artists’ entries. An interview with the ArtPrize development manager helped provide a profile of the people who come to ArtPrize, including voter demographics, voting statistics, online participation, and behavior/trends from previous years, such as perceptions of performance art pieces and their relative success in the contest.

Further research found that one of the most important factors for success in ArtPrize is location. Mapping out the locations of the finalists in previous years pointed to a locale for the best visibility. The exact venue was chosen after a traffic study of pedestrians and the availability of open green space. After significant secondary research into voter trends, historical perspectives, and historical weather conditions (including consulting a local TV meteorologist), the team was able to settle on five important dates—two dates for “preview launches,” the launch date, and two backup dates for the launch.

As primary research, 8ThirtyFour hosted two small “pre-launch” focus groups, which involved members of the media and their close friends and family. From this research, we observed the effectiveness of lantern launching on two different types of weather days (one cool and breezy, one cool and still), noted the intensity of emotional connection within a group dynamic, and determined further safety contingencies for before, during, and after the event.

ACTION PLANNING

Within a budget of about \$15,000, the client's ultimate goal was not to win the competition, but rather to safely and successfully provide the public with a once-in-a-lifetime experience. From the beginning, a public relations campaign with event execution was more valuable to the client than accumulating votes or winning a cash prize.

The message for multiple stakeholders—including teens/tweens, young families, and young adults—was simple: create a “magical moment.” Tapping into the popularity of the Disney movie *Tangled* (and its memorable use of lanterns), the campaign sought to unite the community in an opportunity to ascribe individual meaning to people's participation in LITN as it was the “community's entry.” We emphasized that the event was a time for community members to offer up their dreams in a night of inspiration that honors the whole community.

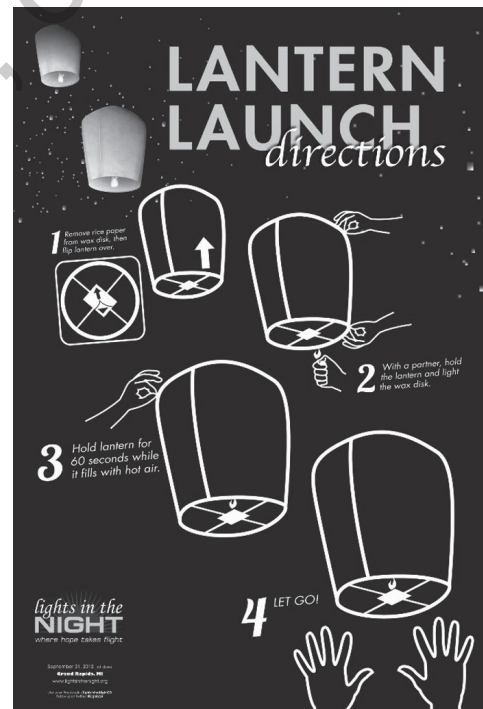
The campaign had two key measurable objectives, both to be achieved by the September 2012 launch:

- Attract at least 5,000 participants to launch more than 5,000 lanterns.
- Attain top 25 or better standing in the ArtPrize competition.

COMMUNICATION

8ThirtyFour grew a Facebook page organically through tagging, following, and jumping on relevant media conversations. Using Twitter more as a listening tool than as a transmission tool provided the team with valuable intelligence to use in developing Facebook-specific conversations, and steered us clear of any pre-event controversy. Using social media in this way kept the event's reputation secure and allowed us to rapidly debunk anything that was untrue on social media or inaccurately reported on local news websites.

As this was our fastest-growing tool and the most cost-effective tactic, we were able to articulate our key messaging in the “notes” section of Facebook, through status updates, answering questions, and delivering sound content throughout. We thought that an e-newsletter and blog might be primary ways of reaching audiences, but found that there was more engagement and shares through Facebook than on other platforms. We adjusted our content calendars (e.g., dumped our blogging duties and began more abbreviated content) and posted more regularly on Facebook. Here we were able to share videos, stories, and instructions as things changed with weather and launch locations. Members of the community began to use language and keywords inspired by our media talking points, and they engaged with the artists' stories of why they offered this lantern launch.



Source: 8THIRTYFOUR Integrated Communications. Reproduced with permission.

At the launch site, we offered launch instructions (mostly for public safety) on large banners at the distribution locations and music courtesy of another performance artist (pianos on the bridges downtown playing classic Americana tunes). We decided to take a huge risk and intentionally left the voting number off of the launch instruction posters as well. While this worked in our favor to create classic conversations on the ground and on social media, it could have massively backfired.

The second thing responsible for this “feeling” on the ground was the movie *Tangled* released by Disney and Pixar earlier in the year. We did not have to go far, or work very hard, to make associations to this film. The movie was basically full of tribal or “cult” knowledge, and both its messaging (about hope) and its ambiance (the light of the lantern) took care of much of the emotional underpinnings.

The campaign pursued a “ground up” media relations tactic. The higher-profile journalists in the West Michigan market were covering the more popular ArtPrize entries, and they were saturated with pitches from across the United States and around the globe. Competition for media outlet attention was fierce. 8ThirtyFour focused instead on journalists who were covering the less popular ArtPrize entries, or who covered a beat that was relevant to the motivation behind LITN and the local community. For example, the campaign held a mock launch at 4:30 in the morning for a local Fox News affiliate and helped *Good Morning America* interview two camera-shy artists.

Following the event, and for the next week, 8ThirtyFour used (with permission) user-generated content for stories, photos, videos, tweets, Facebook status updates, and Instagram posts, with some of it finding its way into traditional news media. Some of the most powerful content came from unexpected places such as registered nurses at the children’s hospital and hospice nurses. To help prevent litter from the event, anyone who found a lantern after the launch was encouraged to follow the instructions on the lantern tag for how to return it. Those who returned

the lanterns received coupons for a free appetizer and were also eligible for raffle prizes (including the Grand Prize—a seven-night stay for two in Redstone, Colorado). Volunteers with the campaign were dispatched to collect lanterns that residents were not interested in redeeming through the bounty program. In addition, when reports of lantern-related trash in the nearby Grand River began to spring up, staff or volunteers fished out those lanterns and, through social media, showed that they did not match the LITN lanterns.



Lanterns released at the Lights in the Night event were environmentally friendly—they were made with no metals, allowing them to be compostable.

Source: Derek DeVries. Reproduced with permission.

EVALUATION

The original campaign objectives were surpassed:

- Attract at least 5,000 people to the event to launch lanterns. Result: ArtPrize estimates 50,000–70,000 people were present at the event.

- Launch 5,000+ lanterns depending on the amount of public participation present. Result: 15,000+ lanterns launched.
- Attain top 25 or better standing in the ArtPrize competition. Result: Finished in the top 5 (with a cash prize of \$5,000).

Of note, in addition to 8ThirtyFour's original objectives:

- LITN was the first performance entry to break into the top 25 in the history of ArtPrize after securing the most votes in a 24-hour period for any piece in the popular vote, and set a record as the first performance piece to place in the top 10.
- The LITN digital campaign netted more than 4,000 likes on Facebook and 500 Twitter followers with a possible reach of more than 150,000 with each post.
- LITN took roughly 25% of all ArtPrize votes cast.
- LITN resulted in more than 250,000 crowdsourced photographs of the event published online, and the event got more than 9,000 mentions in digital news media both domestically and internationally including blogs, vlogs, and traditional media.
- LITN achieved international coverage in the UK's *Daily Mail* and on Norwegian television. Regional affiliate MLive conveyed the mood perfectly, with Editor Julie Hoogland writing:

It was a singular spectacle: Thousands of glowing round Chinese lanterns launching into a black sky. The magical gleams multiplied as they reflected off the Grand River waters beneath and the windows of the city skyline above. . . .

For 20 magical minutes, we were Sparkle City, USA.

Friday had a special feel in Grand Rapids. ArtPrize crowds crescendoed all day, building to the lantern launch.

Rome? Hong Kong? Sydney? Sao Paulo? How I long to travel the world someday. Set sail. See the wonders. But on Friday, I remember thinking it clearly: There is nowhere I would rather be than right here. Right now. Grand Rapids.¹

One of the most important lessons from this campaign is to anticipate what could go wrong and have a plan. For example, because of copyright restrictions about background music, some of the most spectacular and most viewed videos about the lanterns were taken down from YouTube. A video posted to YouTube by Jason Grzybowski, a freelance visual designer from Grand Rapids, netted over 180,000 views within 24 hours of the event, but was taken down due to such copyright claims. In contrast, "official" videos from local media outlets WOODTV 8 and WZZM 13 each had under 3,000 views, showing that we are all content creators and that user-generated content and personal connections were far more valuable in creating word-of-mouth public

relations than content generated via traditional media channels, digital or otherwise. Had 8ThirtyFour not followed alerts and performed searches for new user-generated media every few hours, we would have likely missed some of the most beautiful (and, yes, illegal), meaningful, and heart-tugging media involved with this event. Before they disappeared, we were able to get a quick screenshot for evaluation purposes to establish that online crowdsourced videos featured anywhere from 55 to 180,000 views. It is worth noting that the budget did not allow for, nor did 8ThirtyFour pay for, a photographer or a videographer.

RACE PIT STOP

Discussion Questions

1. The Lights in the Night case study indicates that a public relations campaign with event execution was more valuable to the client than accumulating votes or winning a cash prize. At least one of the objectives, however, keyed on attaining a top 25 standing. How would you rewrite that particular objective to more closely match the campaign goal?
2. 8ThirtyFour made the decision to avoid messaging at the launch site. Do you think this was a good decision? Why or why not? And what environmental considerations was 8ThirtyFour thinking about in making this decision?
3. 8ThirtyFour also intentionally left the voting number off the launch instructions. The firm claimed this worked in the client's favor by creating "classic conversations on the

ground and on social media." What do you think 8ThirtyFour used to measure these conversations? Do you think this decision actually worked for the firm? Why or why not?

Trendlines

A study by the Urban Institute found that, for most people who participate in arts and culture, the experience involves community connections that represent "paths of engagement."² It found that a deeper understanding of those everyday connections can open new opportunities for arts and cultural organizations to build participation. How could 8ThirtyFour build upon the success of Lights in the Night to provide new opportunities in arts and culture in Grand Rapids? Could the momentum achieved by the success of Lights in the Night be used to grow additional paths of engagement not necessarily tied to arts and culture?

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100% Community-Driven, Interactive, and Executed Entry Makes ArtPrize Top 10

Fifteen thousand lanterns lifted into the night sky as part of the ArtPrize entry, Lights in the Night, on September 28, 2012.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Lights in the Night: Where Hope Takes Flight was voted into the ArtPrize top 10 on Sunday, September 30. The epic ArtPrize entry was staged on Friday, September 28, and could not be ignored as over 15,000 glowing orbs lifted into the air from downtown locations garnering attention from around the world.

As described by local artists Dan Johnson and Mark Carpenter, the lantern launch was symbolic of the hopes and dreams of thousands of Grand Rapidsians and visitors/volunteers alike. When eco-friendly Chinese sky lanterns ascended into the sky at 8:00 p.m., thousands looked and formed a new instant community in what was arguably the most awe-inspiring and breathtaking ArtPrize experience in history.

"The response was unbelievable; lines were wrapped around the park and down the street with people waiting to get a lantern. People showed up hours early to find a spot and wait for the signal," said Johnson. "We had to shut down Bridge Street Bridge and parts of Pearl Street to make room for all those in attendance—it was magical."

Lights in the Night Grand Rapids was the first ever 100% community-driven, interactive, and publicly executed event in ArtPrize history. Over 15,000 lanterns were launched into the Grand Rapids sky, with the community itself becoming the ArtPrize entry.



Source: 8THIRTYFOUR Integrated Communications. Reproduced with permission.

"When the community came together to launch the lanterns, it mimicked life in the most profound way, with all of us uniting to lift the hopes and dreams of our community . . . that to me is art," said Carpenter.

Facebook fans agree. One fan posted, "There is something to this that touches to the very heart of what it means to be an American. It took everyone working together to make your vision happen. Thanks for taking what you could see and making all of us a part of the art."

Another fan commented, "Art is created to invoke feelings . . . whether performance, visual, or otherwise. This piece was art and was simply stunning!"

The lanterns are **100% biodegradable** and have a burn time of approximately 5–7 minutes with a radius of less than 2 miles, and then float gently to the ground. The community is encouraged to return lanterns to The B.O.B. (Big Old Building) where they will be honored with a special gift from the Gilmore Collection and entry into a Grand Prize drawing for a dream getaway, thus completing the lantern's journey.

SUCCESS, VALUE, ADVOCACY: BUILDING AWARENESS FOR STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

*Christie M. Kleinmann, Associate Professor, Belmont University**



Source: Student Veterans of America. Reproduced with permission.

SITUATION

Student Veterans of America (SVA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to ensuring student veteran success on the college campus and beyond. SVA provides a variety of resources to help student veterans excel in the classroom and succeed in the workforce, and though this nonprofit's work is imperative to student veteran success, it is not a well-known entity. Belmont University's student public relations agency Red, White and Bruin (RWB) sought to increase awareness of this nonprofit and positively affect SVA's work with student veterans on college campuses in the Greater Nashville community.

RESEARCH

Secondary research showed that SVA was not well known throughout Nashville. There were only five chapters affiliated with Nashville universities, and there were no mentions of the nonprofit in local news networks' archives. Although this nonprofit had little presence in the Nashville community, the colleges and universities in the region displayed a strong commitment to student veteran education through their participation in the Tennessee Veteran Reconnect grant, which was designed to provide financial assistance to veterans returning to school. This information provided an opportunity for RWB because it showed that student veteran education already had some resonance in the community. As a result, the campaign sought to explain SVA's mission to support student veteran education as well as heighten the awareness of this organization in the Greater Nashville area.

An environmental scan supported RWB's previous research and identified a state-wide commitment to educational benefits for student veterans. Tennessee governor Bill Haslam expressed the desire that Tennessee would be the premiere state for student veteran success nationwide. This desire was supported by two important initiatives. One was

*Special thanks to the members of the Red, White and Bruin agency: Haley Charlton, Julia Couch, Lindsey Barchent, Haley Hall, and Jessica Martin.

the Yellow Ribbon Program, which originated from the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 and offered financial assistance for post-9/11 veterans wishing to return to school. The initiative enjoyed widespread support among community colleges and universities in the Greater Nashville area. The other sign of commitment was the Tennessee Higher Education Commission award of \$1 million to veterans' education, with nearly half of that sum dispersed among five institutions in Middle Tennessee.

Primary research clarified the campaign opportunity and helped identify the key campaign stakeholders. RWB created two surveys—one for civilian students and one for student veterans—that used quantitative, Likert, and semantic differential scales to ascertain the level of awareness and acceptance of SVA. Survey results found that 61% of civilian students and 47% of student veterans were unaware of SVA. In addition, only 27% of civilian students were aware of a student veteran group on their campus, while only 21% of student veterans felt SVA was an important part of the student veteran experience. These percentages showed that RWB had the opportunity to grow awareness exponentially among both groups.

ACTION PLANNING

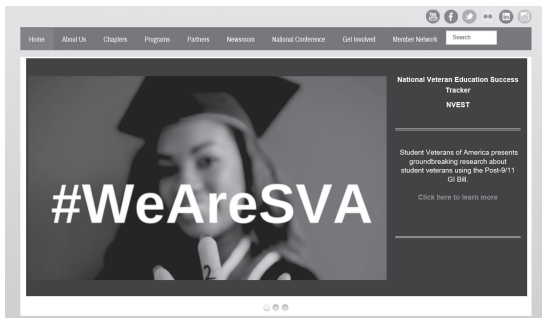
Primary and secondary research suggested that the campaign's major stakeholders, civilian students and student veterans, were segregated from, and knew little of, one another. The campaign's goal was to raise awareness of SVA and its role in student veteran success as well as highlight the value of student veterans on college campuses in the Greater Nashville area. To help create and maintain mutual understanding, RWB's campaign focused on how SVA could help student veterans learn about SVA resources available to them and how civilian students could support their veteran peers. RWB focused on students at Belmont, Lipscomb, Vanderbilt, and Tennessee State universities. Success, value, and advocacy were the key messages for the campaign. "Success" meant providing students with the support necessary to reach their full potential. "Value" signified recognizing the worthiness of others—especially as individuals add value and contribute to a shared community for student veterans. "Advocacy" pointed to the campaign's active support for student veteran success. In addition, the SVA messages reiterated the acronym for the Student Veterans of America, further raising awareness for the nonprofit in a subtler manner.

The campaign began on February 15, 2016, with four objectives:

- To increase awareness of the SVA among student veterans in the Greater Nashville area by 20% by March 15, 2016
- To increase awareness of the SVA among civilian students in the Greater Nashville area by 20% by March 15, 2016
- To increase student veteran understanding of the student veteran community by 10% by March 15, 2016
- To transfer awareness and conversations about the student veteran experience to a digital space by gaining 500 interactions across social platforms by March 15, 2016

COMMUNICATION

SVA's mission and values were shared via red, white, and blue support ribbons attached to information cards throughout the 30-day campaign. In addition to the support ribbons, RWB successfully launched a student veteran Week of Honor, February 21–27, across the state of Tennessee. The week began with the reading of a proclamation signed by Governor Haslam during a news conference at the Tennessee State Capitol. A student veteran Week of Honor video was then released on social media, using #StudentVetsWeekTN, as well as a video encouraging students to wear the campaign's red, white, and blue ribbon to support the SVA and, in turn, student veterans.



Source: Student Veterans of America, www.studentveterans.org. Reproduced with permission.

RWB posted pictures of civilian students wearing the SVA support ribbons and included quotes from each individual about what the Week of Honor meant to them. The campaign then launched a social media event in early March titled Benefits Week, which used Twitter and Facebook to offer trivia and facts about G.I. Bill benefits.

The campaign also offered multiple opportunities for civilian students and student veterans to engage in conversation. One such opportunity was with the academic keynote address of retired Lieutenant General Keith Huber. The event morphed into a dialogue between civilian students

and student veterans, allowing the two groups to gain a better understanding of the other through a Q&A opportunity at the end of the address. The event concluded with a private roundtable bringing together Lieutenant General Huber and student veterans from various universities for a more intimate conversation.

RWB utilized many one-way communication tactics, including traditional print tactics as well as digital resources. For instance, red, white, and blue ribbons/information cards were provided at every event, and students were encouraged to wear the ribbons during the campaign. RWB also disseminated fact sheets about the organization, which included different examples of SVA involvement for civilians and student veterans. The campaign's social media links were also included in campaign materials in an effort to engage stakeholders in online conversations.

Finally, RWB distributed digital newsletters for student veterans at the beginning and the end of the campaign. These newsletters created virtual bookends that served as information hubs for student veterans. The newsletters contained information about the campaign, interviews with Nashville student veterans, quick facts about veteran education benefits, and links on how to become involved with SVA chapters in the Greater Nashville region.



Source: Twitter/@HopeFloats019/@RedWhiteBruin. Reproduced with permission.

EVALUATION

Post-campaign survey results were used to determine if the objectives were met. Specifically, the campaign accomplished many things:

- Increased the level of awareness of the SVA among student veterans by 33%
- Increased the level of awareness of the SVA among civilian students by 51%
- Increased student veteran understanding of the student veteran community by more than 23%
- Created conversations about the student veteran experience in a digital space by gaining 13,036 total interactions from Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube

Other results included the following:

- The news conference for Student Veterans Week garnered media coverage on Nashville's Fox 17 evening news; *The Leaf Chronicle* in Clarksville, Tennessee; Belmont University News; and *Tower Notes*, a community newsletter published by Belmont University.
- The social media component for Student Veterans Week reached 2,138 and provided 184 interactions.
- Student Veterans Week videos reached more than 1,100 users and garnered 266 interactions. In addition, students wore the support ribbons and shared their pictures on social media, reaching more than 5,500 users and gaining more than 1,100 interactions.

Beyond these evaluation measurements, several lessons were also learned from this campaign:

1. **Keep the central purpose central**—Great ideas and honest enthusiasm can easily alter the campaign's focus. If a new idea does not fit the purpose, it should not be part of the campaign.
2. **Understand your audience**—Practitioners should seek key figures within their campaign's stakeholder groups to help them understand the often complex nature of their audience.
3. **Measure, measure, measure**—Strategic measurement is key to showing campaign success. To do so, practitioners need clear definitions of what they want to measure, and then measure those things often.
4. **Recognize emerging opportunities**—Additional organizations in the Greater Nashville area wanted to participate in honoring student veterans during the Week of Honor. This desire was recognized too late. Practitioners should continue to scan for challenges and opportunities throughout the campaign process in order to make timely campaign adjustments.

5. **Leave a legacy**—For RWB, this campaign’s success was about leaving a legacy where student veterans would feel valued and find community, and where civilian students would recognize the value of student veterans and be provided with tangible means to honor student veterans.

RACE PIT STOP

Discussion Questions

1. The campaign’s goal was to raise awareness of the Student Veterans of America and its role in student veteran success as well as highlight the value of student veterans on college campuses in the Greater Nashville area. Why was it necessary to raise student awareness of SVA *among civilian students* to achieve this goal?
2. One of the campaign strategies was to engage student veterans and civilian students in dialogue, yet the one event designed to do so slowly “morphed” into that dialogue. What could the planners have done to ensure that dialogue occurred from the beginning?
3. A campaign tactic was to distribute digital newsletters for student veterans at the beginning and end of the campaign. Was this an effective strategy? Why or why not?

Trendlines

In the spring of 2017, two University of Florida scholars—Ann Christiano and Annie Neimand—wrote in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* that “too many organizations concentrated on raising awareness . . . without knowing how to translate that awareness into action by getting people to change their behavior or act on their beliefs.”¹ They pointed out four elements crucial to a successful public interest campaign: (1) a clear layout of objectives, tactics, and evaluation methods; (2) narrow targeting of audiences; (3) campaign messages with clear calls to action; and (4) having the right messengers to carry forth those messages. With these steps in mind, could this campaign have been translated from awareness into action? Why or why not? What elements would need to be changed to make the transition toward emphasizing audience action?

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THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN

Michael Murphy, Chief Marketing Officer, Cleveland Foundation

Emily Foote-Huth, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Cleveland Foundation

SITUATION

Established in 1914 as the world's first community foundation, the Cleveland Foundation's centennial was a milestone not only for the organization, but also for the place-based philanthropy movement it pioneered. Cleveland Foundation founder Frederick Harris Goff envisioned an alternative to the private foundations established by ultra-wealthy individuals. Community foundations pool contributions from a group of donors to create a permanent endowment, managed by independent citizen trustees and dedicated to serving the needs of a designated geographic area. This model now includes nearly 1,848 community foundations around the world, spanning every continent except Antarctica. Seizing this landmark opportunity to leverage the centennial spotlight, the Cleveland Foundation developed a campaign to celebrate its 100-year history and the birth of the community foundation field, while elevating the foundation's reputation locally and nationally as it entered its second century.



Source: Cleveland Foundation. Reproduced with permission.

RESEARCH

Focus groups and interviews with board members, foundation leaders, and other key stakeholders revealed that, despite the foundation's long-standing presence and widespread impact in the community, many were unfamiliar with its catalytic role supporting key community assets and institutions. Measures of external engagement with, and awareness of, the Cleveland Foundation brand also indicated that there was room for growth in these areas. For example, an external survey of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, residents conducted in 2011 revealed that the Cleveland Foundation was not among the top five nonprofit or charitable organizations that county residents identified as making the biggest difference in Cuyahoga County, despite the foundation being among the largest funders of nonprofits and charitable causes in the county (and country). Before launching the centennial campaign, the foundation's Facebook page influence was ranked 13 among 17 local and philanthropic sector pages with similar audiences and content. The foundation identified its centennial campaign as an opportunity to reintroduce the Cleveland Foundation brand to new audiences and reinforce its value proposition to existing stakeholders.

ACTION PLANNING

The overarching goals of the Cleveland Foundation's centennial campaign were to increase awareness of the foundation's history of impact and current leadership in the community among members of the general public in Greater Cleveland. The foundation also sought to underscore its reputation as a philanthropic leader among such national peers as the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and Knight Foundation. To accomplish these

goals, the foundation planned to increase its visibility and engagement with Greater Cleveland residents in strategic settings that showcased the foundation’s long history of support and impact in the community. The foundation also planned to engage with its national philanthropic peers in strategic settings to deliver the message that the foundation has been—and continues to be—a pioneer in the field of community philanthropy. The following objectives were set, to be achieved between January and December 2014:

- Increase earned media impressions by 50% year-over-year between 2013 and 2014.
- Increase public engagement with the foundation’s social media and web properties by 20% year-over-year between 2013 and 2014.

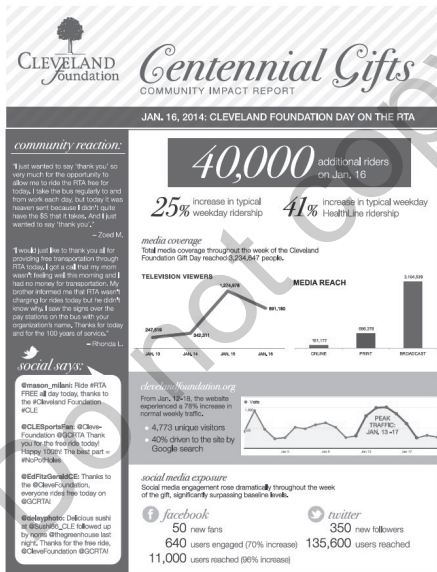
COMMUNICATION

Tactic: Digital Communications

On January 1, the foundation launched an internet microsite, with help from the Cleveland graphic design firm Nesnadny + Schwartz, commemorating the joint centennial of the Cleveland Foundation and the community foundation movement. Graphically powerful and easy to navigate, this legacy site (www.clevelandfoundation100.org) provided rich content that was repurposed for other communication channels, including a social media campaign and the foundation’s centennial annual report.

Tactic: Community Relations

To thank Greater Cleveland for a century of support and celebrate the foundation’s ties with many of the community’s premier assets, the foundation’s cross-disciplinary centennial team developed the concept of giving a gift to the community each month during the foundation’s 100th year. The monthly gifts provided free access to some of the community’s premier assets and attractions, from a day of free public transportation on the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority to tickets for a Cleveland Orchestra concert at the Blossom Music Center. By providing free access to these community assets, the foundation could introduce itself to new audiences while taking the opportunity to educate attendees about its role in building and enhancing these grantee organizations over the years. The foundation secured a free partnership with Cleveland Fox affiliate WJW-TV 8 to reveal the gifts each month on the city’s top-rated morning news show. Cleveland Foundation leadership became familiar faces for Fox 8 viewers as on-air guests each month to announce the gifts.



Source: Cleveland Foundation. Reproduced with permission.

Tactic: Special Events

To highlight its centennial nationally, the foundation convened a conversation on May 12 in Washington, DC, attended by 22 philanthropic leaders from across the country, representing community foundations as well as private philanthropic institutions, the federal government, professional organizations, and higher education. Attendees engaged in an on-the-record dialogue with *Chronicle of Philanthropy* editor Stacy Palmer about the next century of place-based philanthropy. The next night, the foundation convened a public town hall in Washington, DC, inviting the community to NPR's national headquarters to participate in a similar conversation and preview an upcoming documentary from Cleveland's National Public Radio/Public Broadcasting Service affiliate on the Cleveland Foundation's first century. The conversation was streamed live to Cleveland, where a similar gathering for VIP Cleveland Foundation donors was held.

Tactic: Centennial Meeting Presented by KeyBank

On June 11, 2014, the Cleveland Foundation hosted a once-in-a-century celebration at Cleveland's Playhouse Square theater district. The Cleveland Foundation Centennial Meeting presented by KeyBank featured a historic address from the Cleveland Foundation president and a keynote speech by retired general and former secretary of state Colin Powell. A record 1,200 individuals attended this Centennial Meeting.

Tactic: FRED Talks

Honoring the legacy of Cleveland Foundation founder Frederick Harris Goff, the foundation launched a series of quarterly "idea incubator" events called FRED Talks. These gatherings invited the community to listen to, engage in, and contribute to conversations with local and national thought leaders. The ideas generated from FRED Talks informed the foundation's grant-making strategies, harkening back to Goff's early practice of conducting surveys on community issues. The launch event in the FRED Talks series, "E3: Education, Economic Development, Empowerment," focused on opportunities for communities to connect young students with real-world work experiences that better prepare them for tomorrow's workforce.

Tactic: Council on Foundations' Fall Conference for Community Foundations

The Cleveland Foundation was a presenting sponsor of the 2014 Council on Foundations' Fall Conference for Community Foundations, the largest annual gathering of associates from community foundations around the world. Staff from the Cleveland Foundation, a



Source: Cleveland Foundation. Reproduced with permission.



Guests at the Cleveland Foundation's Centennial Meeting and monthly gift days were invited to share a message and sign their name on a giant birthday card.

Source: Cleveland Foundation. Reproduced with permission.

number of whom served on the conference's advisory committee, worked closely with the Council on Foundations to plan programming that would showcase Cleveland as the birthplace of the community foundation field. Cleveland Foundation leadership presented eight sessions and a meeting of all participants, and hosted 120 conference attendees on four site tours that highlighted community projects, neighborhoods, and assets around Cleveland.

EVALUATION

A marketing and communications team tracked a variety of metrics to evaluate the performance of the centennial campaign. Between January and December 2014, nearly 61 million total impressions were generated through media outreach and across print, broadcast, and online platforms. This represented a nearly 200% year-over-year increase in media impressions from approximately 21 million impressions in 2013, far exceeding the goal of a 50% increase. Media impressions generated through monthly gift promotion alone totaled 22 million, and the Council on Foundations conference by itself received media coverage across online, print, and broadcast channels totaling 2.82 million impressions. The partnership with Fox 8 to announce the gifts each month amounted to nearly one hour of free airtime.

The foundation's centennial year activities also translated into strong growth in digital engagement across the foundation's online properties. Throughout the year, the Cleveland Foundation's social media properties grew their audience and influence significantly. The foundation's Twitter followers grew by 51.9%, from 10,894 on January 1 to 16,551 on December 17. Its Facebook followers grew by 103.6%, from 3,457 on January 1 to 7,038 on December 17. By the end of 2014, the foundation's influence rank on Facebook had moved from 13 to 8 out of 17 ranked local and sector pages with comparable audiences and content.

Contributing to this growth in social media engagement was the foundation's use of social media at its centennial year events. The foundation's tweets of its special events earned 61,723 impressions and 499 engagements. Social media was especially effective over the course of the Council on Foundations conference.

The Cleveland Foundation's posts on its social media properties drew more than 28,000 impressions on Facebook and 15,000 impressions on Twitter. The Cleveland Foundation's centennial history microsite attracted 13,111 unique visits, and held the attention of readers for an average duration of two minutes and 29 seconds. Content from the history site was repurposed for a social media campaign, which generated 446,933 impressions and 7,777 engagements throughout the year. The foundation's homepage, ClevelandFoundation.org, experienced year-over-year growth in traffic of more than 31.4%, from 206,306 sessions between January 1 and December 31, 2013, to 271,163 sessions between January 1 and December 31, 2014.

While the centennial history microsite remains a valuable reference tool for information about the foundation's history, its value likely would have been enhanced had the

microsite been more fully integrated into the foundation's main website. As a separate domain, the microsite has a limited shelf life and potentially cannibalizes traffic from the foundation's primary website.

The foundation's centennial marketing and communications strategy also could have benefited from the use of stakeholder perception tracking and reporting. Although the centennial campaign heightened the foundation's profile among target stakeholders, it would be valuable to more closely measure and track the effect of the centennial activities on stakeholders' perceptions of the foundation.

RACE PIT STOP

Discussion Questions

1. The campaign had two goals: (1) increase awareness among the general public, and (2) underscore the Cleveland Foundation's reputation among its national peers. Do you think the campaign would have been more effective if it had more narrowly targeted its stakeholders? Why or why not?
2. One of the objectives focused on "increasing earned media impressions." Is this an effective measure of awareness? Why or why not?
3. Another objective sought to strengthen digital engagement with the foundation's social media and web properties. Is this an effective measure of action? Why or why not?
4. The case study included several tactics. What strategies would these tactics fall under?

Trendlines

Individual donations to nonprofits and charitable organizations went up about 4% in 2016, with

giving to foundations up by 3.1%.¹ Millennials (born between 1982 and 2000) are a potentially key stakeholder group for such giving—84% of them made a charitable donation in 2015.² With such an important group, practitioners need to keep in mind six key factors about millennials: (1) they are consistently connected through digital platforms, (2) they have a strong preference for sharing information with others, (3) they care more about results than about the the institutions they give to, (4) they find stories particularly relevant (i.e., they want to know how their personal stories relate to the nonprofit's cause), (5) they keep track of causes through social media, and (6) they want to know how donations are being used.³ Consider a nonprofit that you care about. If that organization is not sure that millennials are a key audience, how would you help it make such a determination? Once you have identified some important millennial groups, what advice would you give this nonprofit on how to best approach them? It is apparent that millennials consume information through digital platforms; however, what else would you recommend to complement online approaches?

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3. Ibid.

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