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Marketing and Delivering Child Care Programs to Nassau County

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ABSTRACT

The MBA capstone program at Molloy College requires students to apply what was learned in the classroom to a real-world consulting project that assists a non-profit organization serving society. This capstone experience supports the mission of Molloy College that is rooted within the Dominican tradition and emphasizes the four pillars of study, spirituality, service, and community. This project exposes students to an industry outside of their typical experiences and encourages them to create real solutions that have a direct benefit on the local community.

This paper summarizes the work of this MBA capstone group as they designed a comprehensive marketing/awareness plan and a nutritional education program for the Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc. (CCCN). The marketing plan presented in this paper includes extensive enhancements to CCCN's social media program, "old school" print media, and community outreach partnership efforts. The nutritional program utilizes new partnerships and introduces the concept of utilizing an innovative mobile farmer's market to bring nutritional awareness to children and families across Long Island.

Keywords

Education, child care, consulting, not-for-profit, marketing, farmer's markets, child nutrition

1 PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

The educational philosophy of the MBA program at Molloy College includes mentoring future organizational leaders that demonstrate solid business skills and the ability to apply them for the greater social good. The result is a transformative educational experience that benefits both the students and the local communities of Long Island. The program accomplishes this pedagogical philosophy through a project-based paradigm integrated with the school's mission that is "rooted in the Dominican tradition of study, spirituality, service and community" (Molloy College Mission Statement, n.d.). During a college-wide "Civic Engagement" theme in 2012-2013, the MBA capstone course was developed to complete the transformative educational process and give back to the community. This capstone course provides the students with an opportunity to integrate with the community and demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and disposition learned in the classroom through real consulting services.

The 2017 MBA capstone class was divided into two consulting teams serving one client. The teams used the Bloomberg Philanthropies "Mayor's Challenge" application as a general guideline for the consulting process. These guidelines include the following phases: (1) establishing a solution-driven vision, (2) developing a turnkey implementation plan, (3) evaluating the impact of the proposed solution, and (4) determining if the solution can be replicated to other cities or organizations (Bloomberg Philanthropies Competition Overview, 2017).

2 THE CLIENT and CONSULTING PROBLEMS

The client for these projects was the Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc. (CCCN). Established in 1972, the CCCN is a private, not-for-profit organization that is a referral source to families living and/or working in Nassau County requiring child care services. The CCCN informs families about child care choices and financial options that may be used if they are unable to afford care for their children. The organization supports the child care workforce through programs focused on education, health, safety, and nutrition. The CCCN offered/referred child care resources to 1,364 families and assisted 1,857 children during the 2014-2015 fiscal year (Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc., 2015).

The projects began with the MBA capstone consulting teams meeting with the CCCN representatives. During this meeting, the client presented the following two problem areas: (1) overall marketing and community awareness efforts, and (2) Farm-to-Preschool nutrition educational program. One of the teams was dedicated to each of these problems. The following sections provide detailed descriptions of these problems and the consulting solutions recommended by the capstone consulting teams.

3 MARKETING and COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Despite the multitude of quality services provided by the CCCN, there have been many challenges associated with marketing to its target communities and audience. As a non-profit organization that relies heavily on government and independent donors to fund its programs, events, and advertisements, the CCCN has limited financial and personnel resources available to develop and implement a marketing program. The team was asked to provide strategies that would capture the attention of diverse target markets (millennials, grandparents, and families with young children) and expand the awareness of the CCCN so it can better serve prospective families with young children. The team's proposed marketing and community awareness plan consisted of: (1) increasing CCCN's social media presence, (2) utilizing print media to increase the overall awareness of CCCN, and (3) developing partnerships with local businesses and college departments. Each of these recommendations is presented below.

Social Media

The CCCN currently uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest for its social media marketing, but has not been as active or effective as they would like at attracting followers. As a result, the consulting team developed a marketing plan to help CCCN spread awareness and gain more followers among its social media platforms. This plan included the following recommendations:

- Update Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest more frequently and consistently to reflect news concerning the CCCN and the community it serves. To gain the most followers and audience feedback, it was recommended to strategically time posts for when there is most traffic (1-3 pm mid-week) and highest audience engagement (Thursday and Friday).
- Tag posts on all social media platforms with other users and/or locations to further increase audience engagement.
- Create and post webinars to further increase audience engagement. Webinar-based learning is an effective tool for engaging audiences and disseminating healthcare-based learning. The team recommended that the CCCN produce a variety of short (10-20 seconds) and long (2-10 minutes) webinars.
- The short webinars will be used to maintain the target audience through continuous posts throughout the business week. To maintain user engagement, at least one short webinar post should be made daily.
- The CCCN should create and post a 2-minute webinar every Tuesday called "2-Minute Tuesdays". The regularity and length of the webinar should allow for better memory retention and engagement of CCCN's audience.
- The long webinars will be used to provide CCCN's audience with comprehensive information related to healthcare, trainings, and product or service updates offered by CCCN. At least one long webinar should be posted each week to provide the target audience with a steady stream of free, informative videos.
- Finally, CCCN should use the social media management program Hootsuite to efficiently and autonomously maintain all its social media profiles. Hootsuite regularly updates all profiles with social media content that a moderator uploads to the program. Employee(s) can pre-schedule social media posts at a time when there will be highest audience engagement.

These recommendations should help the CCCN maintain a very active social media presence and better reach its millennial target market while incurring very little additional costs. The only costs involved would be the time required to maintain the social media postings and create the webinars, and a \$19 monthly fee for the Hootsuite subscription service.

Print Media

Print materials and publications offer current and potential customers a brand experience that cannot be replicated through web-based advertising. Print media is a physical form of advertisement that can stay in the homes and offices of consumers for years. Print media also brings the aesthetic qualities of font, color, images, and textures of established brands to life. The consulting team helped CCCN spread awareness by setting up distribution strategies of low cost print media, such as business cards, flyers, and stickers, to the community. Print media can reach audiences that are not normally accessed by social media and connect the CCCN to millennials, grandparents, and families with young children. This plan included the following recommendations to distribute print media in places with high concentrations of families with children:

- Place business cards and flyers at local physician's offices, targeting obstetricians/gynecologists and pediatricians in the communities of Hempstead, Roosevelt, Freeport, Elmont, and Westbury/New Cassel. These offices estimated approximately 195,000 annual patient visits, thus providing significant exposure to families with potential child care needs.
- Several Nassau County public libraries located in communities that CCCN serves agreed to allow placement of informational packets that include business cards and flyers. These locations included the public libraries in Freeport, Roosevelt, and Hempstead. These libraries reported a total of 37,662 annual visits.
- Place flyers on the bulletin boards at key public transportation stations so that additional working parents may become aware of CCCN's services. The Long Island Railroad (LIRR) stations in Hempstead and Freeport were recommended due to their location with respect to CCCN services and high traffic exposure of 2,514,500 annual visits.
- Finally, this "old school" print media marketing approach should connect to the social media strategies using QR codes. These codes can be included on the flyers to direct potential customers to the CCCN website.

These print media recommendations should help the CCCN reach its targeted market audiences with little resource requirements. Once production of the materials has been completed, the CCCN will need to dedicate time to distribute the materials to the

doctor's offices, libraries, and transportation hubs. The projected three-year production and cost breakdown of this plan included: 4,500 flyers (\$274.44), 12,600 business cards (\$249.98), and 3,000 stickers (\$674.98).

Partnerships

Given the CCCN's need to improve its marketing efforts with constrained resources, it was recommended to utilize partnerships with local schools and businesses to share resources and gain access to additional communities and families. The consulting team designed the following partnership opportunities that CCCN can use to increase public awareness about its services:

- Partner with Molloy College to assist with its annual Halloween Family Fun Fest, a popular event hosted by the Madison Theater. This event includes fun activities for children to safely celebrate Halloween. The consulting team designed a booth that CCCN can use to participate in this celebration while also promoting its services. With approximately 500-600 children plus parents, it was estimated that 1,000 people attended this event in 2016. Based on the past performance, it was projected that the CCCN can generate donations totaling \$300-\$1,800 each year at this event.
- Partner with Molloy College to advertise through its "Bag Day" event. "Bag Day" at Molloy College is a community service event where students and faculty members team with Interfaith Nutrition Network to donate food and school supplies to surrounding neighborhoods. Bags are left at homes with instructions that donated items can be placed in the bags and will later be retrieved. The CCCN can sponsor this event by including flyers with basic information about the organization and the services it provides in these bags. Molloy College has historically distributed bags to approximately 5,000 homes in the surrounding communities of Hempstead, Rockville Centre, and Baldwin. These communities are particularly attractive to the CCCN as there are approximately 11,392 children enrolled in grades K-8, thus exposing them to families that could potentially use their services. It was estimated that 5,000 CCCN flyers could be produced for only \$98.
- A final partnership with Molloy College would be with its Computer Science and Communications programs. Students in these programs would help the CCCN with its website, social media, and public relations. This arrangement benefits both organizations since students will gain real life experience and the CCCN will receive a free service, while revamping its website and gaining feedback on its social media marketing practices.
- Recommendations were also made to team up with local businesses such as Earth Arts in Long Beach, an organization that hosts children's art classes, parties, and events, and has a strong community service background. This collaboration would be at no cost to the CCCN, strengthen its offerings, and provide awareness to new communities. Earth Arts would also be able to collaborate with CCCN to add face-painting to its Halloween Family Fun Fest booth.

These recommendations incur very little cost and have the potential to enable the CCCN's message to reach a significant number of new customers within its target markets of millennials, grandparents, and families with young children.

4 FARM-TO-PRESCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

The CCCN's Farm-to-Preschool program is an expansion of the national farm-to-school model and encompasses a wide range of programs and activities. This program has the following goals: influence the eating habits of young children while their preferences are forming; create healthy lifestyles through good nutrition and experiential opportunities such as gardening; improve healthy food access at home and within the community; and ultimately influence policies to address the childhood obesity epidemic through a local food lens. Coupled with the generosity of private donors, healthy foods have become more accessible to families within low-income communities mostly because of grants from the New York State Department of Health and the Nassau Department of Social Services. This program operates for 15 weeks during the summer with farm stands located in Elmont, Merrick, Amityville, and Bay Shore. However, due to recent curtailment in government funding from \$60,000 in 2017 to a projected \$33,000 in 2018, the number of farm stands will be reduced and the future of the program is in jeopardy.

To ensure that operations continue, it is important that CCCN establish a wider, more diverse network of funding sources, develop and broaden relationships with additional companies, and open new locations to increase awareness and reach more communities. The consulting team developed recommendations aimed at: (1) developing partnerships to create a new farm stand, and (2) design a mobile farm stand program called *Fresh Truck Long Island*.

Partnerships for New Farm Stands

Due to lack of funding for the 2018 fiscal year, local partnerships are necessary for the Farm-to-Preschool program to thrive. The first phase of this plan included creating a unique partnership between the CCCN, the Hispanic Brotherhood of Rockville Centre, Inc. (Hispanic Brotherhood), Compare Foods, and the Molloy College Athletic Department. This solution will allow the program to expand to more locations, collaborate with businesses, and increase its staff. The details of this phase are presented below.

- The Hispanic Brotherhood is a not-for-profit organization established in 1984 to assist the growing population of immigrants from Spanish language cultures. The agency provides a wide range of resettlement services, an After-School Child Care and Tutorial Program, Summer Child Care services, and the Hispanic Brotherhood Senior Citizen Club.
- Compare Foods is a supermarket located in Freeport and known for giving in-kind and monetary donations to local programs. Compare Foods provides customers with the freshest quality grocery products at low prices.

- The Molloy College Athletic Department is comprised of student-athletes that support the school's mission by engaging in volunteer activities to benefit the local communities.
- The Hispanic Brotherhood, Compare Foods, and the Molloy College Athletic Department have agreed to aid in facilitating the creation of a new farm stand to be located at the Hispanic Brotherhood, with \$400 of fruits and vegetables donated by Compare Foods, and volunteers provided by the Molloy College Athletic Department. The farm stand would operate three hours per week for 15 weeks, attract approximately 400 visitors per day, and generate a projected profit of \$5,950 per year.

Fresh Truck Long Island

The second phase of the nutritional program recommendations included launching a mobile farm stand venture called *Fresh Truck Long Island*. This mobile market is a unique way of providing food to communities with scarce access to fresh produce. The plan uses a former school bus that will be converted into a mobile farm stand for the delivery of fruits and vegetables to low-income neighborhoods. Inspiration for this innovation came from *Fresh Truck*, a not-for-profit organization in Boston, MA and *Breakfast Truck*, sponsored by Long Island Cares. Details of this phase are presented below.

- This program requires the following steps and expenses: acquiring and retrofitting a school bus; purchasing display food baskets and a fire extinguisher; labor costs for driver; and insurance, repair and maintenance, gas, and permits. The first-year startup costs are approximately \$66,160, with subsequent operating costs of approximately \$39,000 per year. *Fresh Truck Long Island* would operate year-round and reach approximately 10,000 visitors.
- *Fresh Truck Long Island* can be funded by The Robert Johnson Foundation's *Pioneering Ideas Brief Proposal* grant, which provides between \$3,000 and \$23 million in grants for innovative ideas in need of funding.
- Without full funding, this initiative could still be implemented on a smaller scale with an operating cost of only \$3,850 per year. Instead of purchasing a truck, one would be rented for one day per week for 15 weeks. This smaller scale plan would still expose the program to approximately 400 visitors per day but would only attend to one location.

Fresh Truck Long Island is a way to use a mobile farmers market to teach nutritional values while having fun. By adopting a proactive approach of bringing produce to the community in mobile units, the Farm-to-Preschool program could operate year-round and serve more communities than with a stationary farm stand.

5 CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSION

This paper had two primary objectives: (1) introduce the reader to the CCCN organization and its important role in providing child care services to families living in Nassau County, and (2) demonstrate how the Molloy College MBA program provides its students with a comprehensive capstone experience while serving the community.

The recommendations presented in this paper were developed to address two primary issues: (1) improve the overall marketing and awareness efforts of the CCCN to local communities, and (2) develop strategies to salvage its Farm-to-Preschool nutritional program currently in jeopardy due to funding reductions. Through this MBA capstone experience, the team members worked outside of their prior areas of experience and provided implementable solutions that included social and print media marketing plans, strategic partnerships, and an innovative mobile farm stand: *Fresh Truck Long Island*. These students applied the skills, knowledge, and disposition learned in the classroom and participated in a truly transformative learning experience that lived the mission of Molloy College and will benefit the lives of children and families throughout Nassau County.

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Additional references will be supplied upon request.