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Social Entrepreneurship: Marketing Hunger Awareness

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SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: MARKETING HUNGER AWARENESS

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Abstract

This paper emerges from a pedagogical philosophy that business students should experience working with a real-world consulting client prior to graduation. An equally important component of this capstone experience is the opportunity for the students to study a problem and to make a set of solution-driven recommendations that will lead to social good.

This research is part of a series of conference papers from graduate students at Molloy College. This paper focuses on the consulting work performed for *Island Harvest*. Island Harvest is the largest food bank on Long Island. The student consultants were charged with recommending a marketing program for the *Coin Harvest Campaign*, with the intent of refreshing this important campaign focused on Hunger Awareness. The goal was to increase the campaign's breadth and depth.

Key words: Hunger awareness, marketing, not-for-profit, social entrepreneurship.

1 PEDOGOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

The educational journey for a Molloy College student provides not only preparation for a professional path, but also for participation as an educated citizen of the world. A democracy must have citizens who understand the collective which serves the society. The professional major within a graduate program should accelerate the student's experience through education. The result is a level of expertise in the student's chosen profession. The curriculum is about depth. The outcome is an individual who is professionally self-sufficient, yet has a yearning for continuous learning.

Through transformative education, Molloy College promotes a lifelong search for truth and the development of ethical leadership (Molloy College Mission Statement). In

2012 the college-wide theme was "Civic Engagement." As a result, the capstone course was redesigned to significantly integrate the college theme with the student learning objectives. A capstone, by its nature, is that last stone put in place; it shows the world that the building is complete. The capstone course is therefore intended to provide the students with an opportunity to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and disposition that have been gained as a result of the business education.

The 2015 MBA Capstone Class was divided into two consulting teams. Each team was provided with a real-world client and a real-world consulting problem. This paper reports on the work product created by the students under the consulting team name of, "*East Coast Consulting Group of Long Island*." Each team used the Bloomberg Philanthropies, "Mayor's Challenge" application to guide the consulting process. This process takes the students through four stages: (1) establishing a solution-driven vision, (2) developing a turnkey implementation plan, (3) determining the impact of the plan, and (4) determining if the solution can be replicated.

2 THE CONSULTING PROBLEM

The consulting firm was charged with building upon the success and the reach of Island Harvest's Coin Harvest initiative. The Coin Harvest campaign focuses on collecting spare change in symbolic brown paper bags throughout schools on Long Island. These bags are essential to the Coin Harvest program because they represent an empty lunch bag for children who cannot afford to bring lunch to school every day. The vision of the student-consultants was to create solutions that will help the Coin Harvest campaign reach its utmost potential on Long Island by efficiently increasing both its depth, which refers to the success within the schools that already participate, and its breadth, by engaging with more schools and developing new commitments to the Coin Harvest program.

To strengthen this campaign, the consulting team needed to lay the groundwork for Island Harvest to reach its maximum potential in social media, outreach to communities, corporate sponsorships, fundraising, education, and awareness of the hunger problem that individuals on Long Island are facing. The goal was to increase the number of participating educational institutions across Long Island as well as the amount of money raised by any one participating school.

3 THE VISION

Hunger on Long Island is often considered a sensitive subject. It is difficult for people to accept the fact that hunger is present so close to home. The team's vision is based on the results of collective research and incorporates programs and concepts that have been used by other organizations. It is *innovative* to Island Harvest because our consulting team is going to create and use resources that the organization did not optimize in the past. Our team saw that improvements in areas, such as communication and active use of social media are a must for Island Harvest to publicize hunger on Long Island.

Our targets are focused on expansion and in-depth promotion of already existing Coin Harvest concepts; however our intent is to also look outside of the program's frame. Our initiative combines existing resources with proposed new ideas. Through implementing new ideas to our client, along with improved and refreshed execution of current movements, increased use of available online programs, applications and intensive social media activities, Island Harvest will increase donations, gain knowledge for the issue at hand and build a valuable network. All actions discussed and proposed by our team will be *bold* to increase student involvement for the Coin Harvest campaign as well as hunger awareness.

4 THE RECOMMENDATIONS

An integrated marketing plan was presented to the client. The consulting team's recommendations included the following components:

- **Enhance the communication that introduces the program to the schools.** This includes developing a letter that invites schools to partake in the Coin Harvest campaign. The consulting team researched and developed a mailing list, which will support this process. Along with the welcoming letter, an informative brochure will be created to send out to all Universities/Colleges and school districts on Long Island. Included in the letter will be a hyperlink to a video that explains the Coin Harvest Campaign, which will hopefully motivate schools to join this mission. Lastly, our consulting team will construct a thank you letter to send out to all contributing schools.
- **Enhance the presence of social media.** The prevalence of social media in the world today creates an avenue for success through inexpensive marketing efforts. Island Harvest is currently

promoting itself through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The Coin Harvest program needs to be incorporated into these three media outlets. The recommendation is intended to create a trend for people to talk about Island Harvest. A Coin Harvest hashtag will help spread awareness. Social media will appeal to the Coin Harvest program's main focus group: school-aged children and young adults. Other forms of social media will be engaged to promote Coin Harvest that will appeal to other focus groups, such as nearby businesses or adults who may not be Facebook or Twitter savvy.

- **AmazonSmile.com** *AmazonSmile* is an initiative created by Amazon.com. All eligible purchases made through that website are subject to a 0.5% donation to any enrolled charitable organization. AmazonSmile.com has the same products, prices and services as Amazon. Island Harvest has already registered as a participant, however the awareness and information available about the possibility of donating through AmazonSmile.com is very low. Students and parents who purchase textbooks, school supplies, and other items through AmazonSmile.com can support Coin Harvest, as Amazon will donate 0.5% "change" to a charitable organization of the buyers' choosing. Since there is a strict Amazon policy that applies to any promotion of AmazonSmile.com, our team believes that our client has to intensify its promotion through website, social media, and verbal communication to subsequently increase donations. AmazonSmile.com provides marketing tools advice for registered and participating organizations. Additionally, the *AmazonSmile* program has the potential to increase revenue for Coin Harvest through customers that utilize a subscription renewal service for specific merchandise and spend a specified amount each month.
- **Roll out a new campaign titled: "Hungerween."** This recommendation will significantly increase the Coin Harvest reach. The "Hungerween" trick-or-treat fundraiser event for Coin Harvest builds on the campaign developed by UNICEF. This idea originated as the "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF" strategy. This recommendation is more focused than UNICEF's because students trick-or-treat on Halloween for candy and other foods, and the money raised by students from the "Hungerween" fundraiser will go towards food for hungry Long Islanders. Students will be provided with specially-designed boxes that will be carried along with their candy bucket when they're trick-or-treating on Halloween. Collected coins in these "Hungerween" boxes will be donated to the Coin Harvest campaign. Also, if the students do not wish to keep their "Hungerween" boxes, then

these boxes will be recycled back to the Island Harvest organization so that they can be used again in the future.

- **Peer Challenge Campaign.** Among the most successful peer challenge campaigns was the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. This new campaign will build upon the success of the ALS campaign. This campaign also draws from a Polish tradition that occurs before the Lenten Season begins. Creating a “Coin Harvest Doughnut Challenge” campaign where individuals try eating glazed doughnuts without licking their lips or wiping their mouths is another approach to increasing both “depth” and “breadth.” Each participant will record himself/herself eating the doughnut and nominating family/friends to partake in this challenge. The video clip will be posted onto social media applications, such as Facebook and Instagram and hashtags will be used to advocate the campaign. The “Coin Harvest Doughnut Challenge” is an enjoyable and entertaining activity that will help raise money and awareness for Coin Harvest.
- **Go Green and Raise Money.** Children can raise money for the Coin Harvest by collecting, in special recycling bins provided by Island Harvest, the bottles and cans they use in their schools. On a regular basis, volunteers from Island Harvest would arrange to pick-up bottles/cans and return them to designated recycle locations, earning \$0.05 cents on each bottle/can and subsequently raising money for the Coin Harvest fund. Our team suggests an on-going bottle recycling program; however one-time bottle drives are possible as well. Recyclable bottles and cans can be collected in two ways:
 - All Deposit Bottle and Can Return Company is a New York State redemption center located in Brentwood, N.Y. All Deposits can arrange pick-ups on a regular reoccurring basis or on an as-needed basis. The company offers \$0.04 cents for each collected bottle and sends a check for the accounts that reach the minimum of \$50.
 - An Island Harvest representative can provide pick-ups and deliver bottles to redemption locations, such as local supermarkets or the above mentioned All Deposits location. Revenue from each bottle delivered by our Client is \$0.05 cents per unit.
- **Foodtweeks.** This is a free application that not only helps to reduce calories and make healthy meal choices regardless whether users are dining in restaurants, shopping in grocery stores, or cooking at home, but it also gives users a chance to “donate” unused calories to local food banks so

they can provide meals for individuals in need. Every time users share their “tweeks” through Facebook and/or Twitter, Foodtweeks doubles or triples their donation. Foodtweeks is advertiser-supported. Advertisers have a chance to present their healthy choices at the users’ decision-making moment, while users may receive a series of free discount coupons from restaurants, grocery stores, and some packaged food producers. Our team encouraged our client to take this opportunity to register and participate like other food banks do in America. Island Harvest should actively popularize this idea through social media, the Island Harvest website, and during any type of charitable events in order to gain more Foodtweeks users.

- **CharityMiles.** Charity Miles encourages users to engage in healthy and charitable living. For every mile an individual walks, runs, or bikes, the Charity Miles corporate sponsors will donate a specified increment of money (\$0.10/mile for biking and \$0.25/mile for running or walking) to a registered charity or non-profit of the user’s choice. Our team encouraged Island Harvest to register with Charity Miles, and deposit any revenues to the Coin Harvest totals. A 5k Run would be a great opportunity for Island Harvest to raise awareness and funds. A 5k run could be held at a variety of locations. Our team suggested Long Beach or Eisenhower Park, however other locations are recommended for the future as well. Additionally, an entry fee of \$20 (on average), is required to use the Charity Miles application in order to donate to Island Harvest. Our team anticipated at least 1,000 participants, which creates an income of at least \$770 donated through Charity Miles and at least \$20,000 received from registration fees. To bring more attention and raise participation, this event can also be at the time of annual Gala when winners of the Coin Harvest campaign are announced and awarded. “Charity Miles” 5k Run will not only promote a healthy lifestyle and raise funds at the time of the event, but also will increase popularity of Charity Miles application, and consequently increase donations to Island Harvest in the future.
- **Partnership with New York Islanders/Long Island Ducks.** Our team believes that sports events are great opportunity for fundraising. If the prize for the class or school that raises the most money for the Coin Harvest campaign included an opportunity to meet a team player in person at school or right after a game, it would be great experience that could also encourage him or her to be more active in that campaign. Our team developed an extended partnership with the New York Islanders and Long Island Ducks. The Islanders have supported Island Harvest in the

past; therefore our team anticipates fundraising success with this organization.

5 FACTORS THAT COULD DERAIL THE PLAN

An essential component of the consulting work is to make the client aware of risk factors.

- **Ability to spread the word via social media.** Social media can take one piece of information and reach millions of people within minutes. If Island Harvest does not effectively develop a hashtag or trend that attracts people to participate, its hunger awareness message will not spread. To lower the risk, our consulting team actively monitored the social media outlets for trend words and ideas that spark an interest at various age levels. Our team has looked at the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge and worked to create a powerful, challenge-like trend, such as the doughnut eating contest, that will have all of Long Island's youth talking about hunger on Long Island.
- **Concerns or lack of participation from parents and teachers.** Children often cannot travel around their neighborhoods without the help of a parent, guardian or teacher (during school hours). Our team designed and created a quasi-replica of UNICEF's Halloween coin collection, but must find a way to comfort parents that their children will be safe while collecting candy as well as coins. It is also imperative that parents at home and teachers alike are aware of the fundraising efforts that our schools are putting forth, so they can encourage their children to engage in certain behaviors to collect donation money or even to help strengthen the campaign at their schools. Without reaching the parents and teachers, Island Harvest will find only limited success.

6 IMPACT ON SOCIETY

There is a need for this solution in other cities because hunger is an on-going problem in many cities throughout the United States. The United States of America is one of the richest economies in the world (measured by Gross Domestic Product). Based on statistics provided by FeedingAmerica.org, as of 2013 there are still:

- ✓ 14.5% of people in poverty; 19.9% of children under the age of 18 in poverty.
- ✓ 14% of households were food insecure.
- ✓ 33.3 million adults and 15.8 million children are living in food insecure households.
- ✓ Households with children reporting a higher rate of food insecurity (20%) compared to those without (12%).
- ✓ Food insecurity exists in every county in the USA, ranging from 4% in Slope County, ND to 33% in Humphreys County, MS.

The concept of the Coin Harvest initiated by Island Harvest, along with proposed modifications and

improvements by the East Coast Consulting Group of Long Island is an idea that can be implemented in any schools or educational institution. The UNICEF campaign, which proved to be successful across the country, was one of our inspirations.

The most exciting outcome of developing the Coin Harvest initiatives is that fewer children on Long Island will go to bed hungry. By using new methods to channel audiences, new demographics will be exposed to our purpose. Our team established an initial presence on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Individuals of all ages and geographic locations will be informed of our worthy cause, using powerful, real-life images and influential messages. Younger generations using these social media platforms will be a main target, creating an audience to serve our cause for years as Long Island's youth grows up. This will provide us with free and widespread advertising.

By effectively targeting today's youth, Island Harvest can create a sustainable source of funding. As a result, many students won't go to school hungry, and will be better able to concentrate academically, which will give them the opportunity to succeed. Also, people who have received kindness and compassion from others are more likely to adopt a "pay-it-forward" mentality and help others in the near future, which is exhilarating because the world can become a better place with the help of one person at a time.

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REFERENCES. Will be supplied upon request.