



Strategic Communications Plan for the
United Way of Central Indiana

Shane Fague

General Info

The United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI) has been serving the community since 1918. The UWCI was originally founded under the name War Chest and after several name changes; their commitment to improving lives and the community has not changed. For more than 90 years, United Way of Central Indiana has supported innovative, practical and efficient agencies and programs in order to address local needs.

Today, the United Way of Central Indiana is in charge of 98 separate agencies covering everything from health services to childcare. These agencies include the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, The Salvation Army, and the Little Red Door Cancer Agency.

The UWCI has 99 board members including such high profile local names as IUPUI Chancellor Gerald L. Bepko and Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay.

Current Mission Statement

United Way of Central Indiana helps sustain vital human services for those who need help most while reducing such needs for future generations.

Preface

Because of how large the United Way of Central Indiana is, I will focus on developing strategic communications for their education efforts. To cover all of the philanthropic aspects covered by the UWCI would be a monumental undertaking

Overarching Goal for My Strategic Communications Plan

The mission of the United Way of Central Indiana is very future oriented. The UWCI rose over \$50 million dollars for the community in 2011, with about 10% of that going towards education efforts. This includes transportation and after---school programs for students. Education is directly linked to the future because students now will be community leaders later. The student population is a partially tapped resource with a lot of room for reaching out for volunteers. My communications plan will focus on the student population for volunteerism and it will work on strengthening the UWCI's relationship with its corporate and high---profile donors.

The key publics targeted by my plan are current corporate sponsors and a younger generation of volunteers.

Situation Analysis

The United Way of Central Indiana is currently in a good position as one of the largest and most active nonprofits in the community.

There are no controversies or drama surrounding the UWCI and their public image is very positive.

All of their problems are easily fixed by better communications in some key areas.

SWOT Report

Strengths:

--- **Brand Recognition** : Forbes reports that the United Way was the largest charity in the United States for the 2011 year. With its sheer size, it is safe to assume that the United Way is among the most recognizable charities in the country as well.

--- **Resources** : The United Way of Central Indiana has no shortage of big name contributors with a long list of familiar Indiana names and faces on their Board of Directors. On a national level, the United Way had 3.84 billion dollars in total revenue, with 99% of those contributions coming from private and corporate donors.

--- **Influence**: With programs such as the United Way Youth Day of Caring, the UWCI has the influence to get students out of school to improve the community for a day.

Weaknesses:

--- **Ambiguity** : The United Way's actions are defined by their satellite agencies and organizations. Many members of the public do not know that the United Way funds these organizations. These organizations include the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis.

--- **Social Media** : Lackluster social media efforts plague the UWCI. Their current efforts are cold and impersonal when intimacy between the organization and its supporters is key.

Opportunities:

--- Social media is becoming a much more effective tool for both businesses and non---profits. It could work as a matchmaking service to match donors and volunteers to organizations that interest them. With the United Way's vast number of satellite organizations it is more likely that both the organization and donors/volunteers will be satisfied.

Threats:

--- Central Indiana, like any fairly large metropolitan area, is saturated with non---profits vying for the attention of potential donors and volunteers.

--- The downturned economy leads to less disposable income which makes it less likely for people to donate money.

Objective 1:

Converting the United Way's "Youth Day of Caring" to the "Youth Week of Caring"

The "Youth Day of Caring" is an event that happens once a year. It is a combined effort from both the United Way and schools in central Indiana. Each school is given a project which includes cleaning up parks, helping construct houses with Habitat for Humanity, and various other urban needs.

What I am proposing is changing this event from a one day affair to a full 5---day affair.

It may be economically unfeasible and educationally disruptive to pull these students out of class all day for 5 days straight. That is not what I'm proposing.

The first four days of the "Youth Week of Caring" will focus on philanthropy education and outlining problems that are within the students' power to help fix. These will not be full day seminars but rather brief assemblies. Ideally, these classes and exercises will be run by college--- age volunteers. The aim is to get students to view the United Way's volunteer efforts as both beneficial and "cool".

Those four days of educational sessions will culminate in a field trip to a project site. With having this day come at the end of the week, the students will be able to see what they've been taught in action. At the end of that day, the students will see their efforts pay off in the form of a clean park or a further developed home for someone in need. The fact that they'll see results with their own eyes may help instill a sense of pride and loyalty to the United Way. This could also lead to a long---term loyalty to the United Way as a volunteer and possible donor.

Milestone 1 : The development of a lesson plan for the week's activities

Possible Barriers : No traditional barriers but it may be necessary to cater the lesson plans for students K---12 with a specific plan for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools.

Milestone 2 : Getting suitable college---aged volunteers to run the activities

Possible Barriers : The aim is to get students that are studying education at university. This will be mutually beneficial for both the United Way's efforts and the college students' education. In

central Indiana, there are a few colleges close---by and with the UWCI's close relationship with IUPUI through board member Gerald Bepko, their cooperation should go rather smoothly.

There are also many college aged volunteers that participate in the United Way's readUP tutor program. These volunteers are used to dealing with elementary aged students so it should be a natural fit.

Milestone 3 : Trial---running the program in small private schools

Possible Barriers: There are many many small private schools in central Indiana who already participate in the "Youth Day of Caring". Many of these schools are progressively thinking and would be open to this program. Surveys can be given after the week to gauge the effectiveness and fluidity of the event.

Milestone 4 : Approach the Indianapolis Public School system with the results from the private school trials

Possible Barriers : As the result of budget cuts, the Indianapolis Public School system may be reluctant to commit to such a program but it shouldn't be hard to convince them of the benefits. After all, they're only sacrificing their time.

Milestone 5 : Implementing the program throughout Indianapolis Public Schools

When this is done, surveys and summaries will be filled out to gauge the success of the program on a larger scale.

Objective 1 Wrap---Up: If all goes as planned, this program could be an annual tradition. It could also be very effective in garnering loyalty to the United Way from a younger generation as well as instilling a life---long love for philanthropy.

Objective 2 :

Increase Social Media Efforts

Currently, the United Way of Central Indiana has 1,220 likes on their Facebook page and just over 900 followers on Twitter. While these numbers are not terrible, the shared content on these pages is dry and there is little to no open dialogue. The conversational nature of social media makes it a worthwhile resource for any nonprofit. The types of people who use social media are desirable publics to appeal to because of their potential to volunteer/donate and give feedback. There is certainly room for improvement in this area.

Milestone 1 : Doubling the number of followers and likes on Facebook and Twitter respectively

This should not be too difficult but the United Way must start with their internal publics. These internal publics can get support from their friends and family while they branch out to their friends and family. This goal will be reached with relative ease.

Milestone 2 : Increasing the quality of posts on Facebook and Twitter

The majority of posts on the UWCI's social media pages are simply links to stories written about things they have done in the community. There is no effort to spark dialogue in their followers. Keeping an open dialogue is important on social media sites because it can be used to determine what's most important to a community at any given time. Sparking dialogue is also useful when asking for feedback because it is free and people are often willing to give their two cents. While all followers may not volunteer, they're providing free publicity for the organization. Feedback received from social media can help shape future communications.

Milestone 3 : Using social media to follow---up with donors and volunteers after big events

Social media can be used to display tangible aspects of the United Way's work. For example, they could before and after photos of newly cleaned parks or newly built homes and encourage volunteers to post photos from their experience working with the United Way. This creates a two---way communication between the organization and its supporter while adding credibility to their efforts. This may encourage new donors and volunteers to come out of the wood work.

Along with this, I would encourage the UWCI's CEO Ellen K. Annala to address and thank supporters directly. Given the size of the organization, they would benefit from the intimate feeling that the CEO's personal communication could add.

Objective 3 :

Strengthening Our Relationship with Our Highest---Profile Sponsor

While the United Way of Central Indiana already has numerous high profile corporate sponsors, I find it very necessary to maintain their current corporate relationships while strengthening them.

One of the largest sponsors of the United Way is the National Football League. This is true on both a national and local scale. They have teamed up to create the Play60 campaign which encourages children to engage in physical activity for an hour a day.

The city of Indianapolis has a unique opportunity this year because of the massive overhaul that has occurred to our Indianapolis Colts in this offseason. Colts owner and UWCI board member Jim Irsay has come under fire for many of his decisions and his public image could benefit from charity work. The cutting of quarterback Peyton Manning was a huge blow to the community's trust in Irsay. Manning's philanthropy resulted in St. Vincent naming their children's hospital after him.

This proposal will consist of different ways that the Indianapolis Colts could help with volunteer efforts. One part of this could have Colts players visit camps at the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis.

Again, the United Way is only asking for them to sacrifice their time.

These objectives aim to fulfill my overarching goal of improving the UWCI's current relationship with high-profile donors while nurturing a lifelong love for philanthropy in the students of central Indiana.

Both of these desired outcomes fall directly in line with the values and missions of the United Way by strengthening the community and planning for the future.