

Public relations in
non profit
organisations
marketing essay



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First this essay will explain the role of public relations in non-profit organisations and provide a brief description of our campaign; second the campaigns strengths and weaknesses will be discussed; third the campaign will be discussed in relation to public relations theory; and finally a conclusion summarising the main points discussed in this essay

Public Relations and Non-Profit Organisations:

Public relations can play an important role for non-profit organisations, providing the support to create new, and maintain existing relationships necessary to meet organisational goals, meet fundraising targets, and develop organisational awareness.

As Broom, Center, and Cutlip state, there are five functions the practitioner aims to carry out within non-profit organisations, these are to:

“ Define or ‘ brand’ the organisation, gain acceptance of its mission, and protect its reputation.

Develop channels of communication with those an organization serves.
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Create and maintain a favourable climate for fundraising.

Support the development and maintenance of public policy that is favourable to an organization's mission.

Inform and motivate key organizational constituents (such as employees, volunteers, and trustees) to dedicate themselves and work productively in support of an organization's mission, goal, and objectives." (Broom, Center, & Cutlip, 2006, p. 449)

Campaign Description:

Intentio PR designed a campaign to achieve two goals; first to increase the amount of funding Parent to Parent receives through creating relationships with the business community; and second to increase awareness of Parent to Parent through the relationships and campaigns developed with the business community.

Therefore, Intentio PR's key campaign goal was to increase the amount of funding Parent to Parent receives, while simultaneously increasing awareness of Parent to Parent and their services to key audiences.

Intentio PR proposed three projects to achieve these goals:

A redevelopment of Parent to Parents website to be more interactive, and to allow for a better donation function.

A cause related marketing campaign with Huggies, where a certain amount of each Huggies product purchased was donated to the organisation

A relationship with TradeMe, in which users can donate the auction success fee or entire proceeds for an auctioned item to Parent to Parent.

Campaign Strength and Weaknesses:

Prior to the development of Intentio PR's three campaigns, Parent to Parent's current situation was researched, more specifically research concentrated on their purpose and mission, their current financial situation, and their sources of funding.

The information gathered from this influenced our next stage of research as we found that there was a problem with funding, and that businesses were not approached for funding, focussing efforts on grants and applications instead.

Stemming from our organisational information, we then conducted research that looked into what motivates businesses to provide sponsorship to non-profit organisations, what they see as essential to this relationship, and their level of awareness for organisations providing services to the disabled.

Research also looked into the funding and sponsorship situations of the regional Parent to Parent offices.

We encountered difficulties in relation to this research in regards to response rates, from both business, and the regional offices contacted to participate.

Although not sufficient to produce any significant generalisations to either of the communities surveyed, the information gathered did produce enough relevant data to help in the formation of our campaign goals and objectives.

The goals for this campaign fit in to two management situations that Smith describes, a task management goal focused on obtaining more funding, and reputation management goal which is focussed on Parent to Parents awareness and perception (Smith, 2002, p. 69).

Although our campaign had a goal derived from our previous research and worked, as Smith states, to "...provide the direction while objectives pinpoint the destination" (Smith, 2002, p. 67) I believe we could have developed more specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) objectives for the three campaigns developed.

Consequently, this would have allowed for us to develop more specific and detailed campaign evaluations, which lacked any specific criteria to measure success against.

The reputation or awareness objective that was listed could have been improved by specifically stating who the community mentioned is, for example ' amongst all parents of disabled children'; and by providing measurable targets for the objective, for example ' an increase of awareness by 60%', although previous awareness levels of the organisation amongst the target audience for the objective would be needed as the standard to be measured against.

Public Relations Theory:

Although we attempted to use the four step process, that is research, planning, action, and evaluation, our campaign was lacking in areas such as planning and evaluation that would have brought it together.

Five theories I would use to describe and evaluate aspects of Intentio PR's campaign would be systems theory, the two-way asymmetrical model, social exchange theory, social learning theory, and situational theory.

Systems theory can be used to examine both the internal and external relationships an organisation has with its employees and customers.

Baskin, Heiman, Lattimore, and Toth describe organisations as “ made up of interrelated parts, adapting and adjusting to changes in the...environments in which they operate. Organisations have recognisable boundaries, within which there must be a communication structure that guides the parts of the organisation to achieve organisational goals.” (Baskin, Heiman, Lattimore, & Toth, 2007, pp. 44-45)

These organisations can be considered either open or closed systems; open systems allowing the flow of information from outside stakeholders, and how these relationships with outside stakeholders might affect the organisation; closed systems choosing to focus on past decisions and how these have performed when making decisions, preferring not to seek new information from outside of the organisation.

Our campaign would be based on an open systems theory, with research in to outside organisations and how these relationships are established, and maintained being conducted, as previously discussed; also, we seek to establish new relationships with Huggies, and TradeMe to increase funding and awareness.

As surveys were mainly used to explore relationships with businesses, and the information found used to develop or influence our campaign design, the two-way asymmetrical best describes our research and development model, as Tench and Yeomans state “ Feedback from audiences is important in this model of communication, but it is used to adapt communication strategies to be more persuasive, not to alter the organisations position.” (Tench & Yeomans, 2006, p. 147)

Intentio PR’s cause related marketing campaign with Huggies establishes an exchange with the consumer of the Huggies product; for every product the consumer purchases, \$2. 00 will be donated towards Parent to Parent.

Therefore, the act of buying this product (the cost), results in them helping out a charitable organisation (the reward).

I believe this is an example of the social exchange theory, which uses the “... economic metaphor of costs and benefits to predict behaviour. It assumes that individuals and groups choose strategies based on perceived rewards and costs.” (Baskin, Heiman, Lattimore, & Toth, 2007, p. 48)

I believe the social learning theory, which states that “ we can learn new behaviours merely by observing others” (Baskin, Heiman, Lattimore, & Toth, 2007, p. 50), is applicable to our TradeMe Team Up campaign.

Although there will be a media release and other promotional material in relation to this campaign, the main method in which TradeMe members are going to learn about these donation features are through observing and

adapting this behaviour from another member who has used these features on their auction(s).

Both VanLeuven; and Baskin, Heiman, Lattimore & Toth state that “ the more positive and rewarding the consequences, the more likely the behaviour will occur.” (VanLeuven, 1989, p. 196)

Therefore the probability of the observing TradeMe member adopting this behaviour (the donation feature) is more likely if they believe the reward (donating money to a charitable cause) is a sufficient or positive reward for performing the task; the goal of the promotional effort for this campaign should consequently be to align TradeMe Team Up campaign as so.

Situational theory, according to Tench, and Yeomans; and Baskin, Heiman, Lattimore & Toth (2007, p. 46-47), divides an organisations publics according to those publics “ who actively seek and process information about an organisation or an issue of interest, and those publics that passively receive information...as the situation, problem, opportunity, or issue changes, the public’s, with which the organisation must communicate, change.”

The redevelopment of Parent to Parents website is aimed towards the active information seekers of their publics; the new website design allows for easier navigation of the site, and easier access to relevant information, such as events, regional information, and organisational information.

It would be the active users of this website, who are also TradeMe members, who would be the early adopters of the donation feature of TradeMe Team Up.

Conclusion:

Theory establishes a framework through which common phenomena can be described and analysed.

This essay has described the public relations campaign designed by Intentio PR, and has worked to relate the various components that it comprises to relevant public relations theory.

I believe the campaign we produced could have been improved if we had used or referred back to the theory discussed previously, and if we had designated SMART goals to each of the campaigns.