

Comprehensive Public Relations Plan

Situational Analysis

Internal

- Document from Terra



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- Statistics about resources, budget, staffing and programs

PR Interview – Sharon Coon, Director II, Cuyahoga Community College

Within Cuyahoga Community College is the Department of Marketing and Communications. Sharon Coon, who is a Director II, made time to speak with me regarding Public Relations for the college.

In the recent past, the public relations and marketing departments were all part of the same department. The department was called Public Affairs & Information (PAI).

According to Coon, last year, there was a departmental split. The leadership changed overall.

Also, the department was de-centralized, assigning personnel at each of the three campuses. She said that there is a photographer, designer, and assistant on all three campuses. They have two full-time photographers that travel to all campuses, giving the marketing and public relations presence on all campuses all week long.

“The setup is like a mini agency on each campus,” Coon said.

The department is part of the organization chart based on the overall administration of the college. The vice president of the department reports to an executive vice president (EVP). The EVPs then report directly to the college president. In this case, they would report to Dr. Jerry Sue Thornton.

Michael Devlin is the vice president in charge of the department. Coon stated her role is production of printed materials and direct mail. Greg Krizman is the executive director in charge of media releases. He was unavailable for questions for this interview.

The publics are broken down into two major areas. The internal publics would be the employees of the college. On the other hand, the external publics would be all current college students, prospective college students and high school students, and area businesses and business leaders.

The marketing and communications department oversees a lot of college communications. They manage all media relations and networking with the technology services for web site maintenance. They also handle photo graphics, printed publications, special events, and branding to name a few. Their requirements are very

broad across all areas and can handle individual pieces of various projects. Several of the professionals have different areas of expertise.

Issue 6 was a major public communication campaign. Coon said they measured the effort with the increase in support percentage by which the levy passed versus levies not passed at the same time. Individuals voted based on faith in support of the college. A lot of support by “Citizens for Tri-C” helped with the passing of the levy. They conducted many of the grass roots campaign support, including media drops and other stuff to go along with campaign. Overall, visibility has increased over the last several years.

Many news releases are posted on the official Cuyahoga Community College web site: www.tri-c.edu/news/docs/default.htm. Click on any of the news stories and open the entire news release.

Focus Groups are the main target in regard to research completed by the department. A good example is the recruiting publications. Prospective students are asked to react to different covers and give input. They also have focus groups for current students during the day, evening, and weekend.

Coon said they want a good cross-section of the population of students.

They ask the student open-ended questions and are asked to evaluate the content and design. Reaction to the publication and what needs to change are important factors in the focus groups.

They also do phone surveys. The college has a general phone center to accept phone calls for questions. The phone center has also become aggressive in being proactive in contacting students and prospective students.

Overall, the college has strategic goals, which are cascading goals. Within the main goals, various goals have sub-goals per department. Coon said one example is their support of current students with technology. Previously, the online schedule was a static document that was only as current as the printed version.

The department teamed with technology support to create a more dynamic scheduling capability. This would drive more students to the web site to allow students more interactive capabilities, including current open classes, number of students enrolled, and descriptions of the class. The web site located at: www.tri-c.edu/courses to assist with class searching. Searching can be done very specific or very broad.

They have also created a very interactive version for recruitment on CD. According to Coon, the CD version works much like the online version. The department also includes recruitment information, including tour information, commercials, etc.

The requirements for employment vary with each position. Generally, for managers, they are required to have a bachelor's degree in Marketing or Journalism, preferably a master's degree. The manager level employee must also have a minimum of five years experience in communications.

Currently, the department does not have internship opportunities available. When the opportunity comes available, the department looks for someone who is studying communications, has worked on their college's newspaper. The prospect must have writing experience and some photography and graphic design experience.

- Copies of Policy Statements and procedures related to the problem.
- Complete descriptions of how the organization currently handles the problem.
- Lists and descriptions of the organizations controlled communication media.

External

A month after sending out a press release stating the Children's Center is accepting Fall enrollment, a letter is sent to parents with the news of those centers closing as of August 8.

Jennifer Gonzalez, reporter with the Plain Dealer, printed May 26 that Tri-C is closing these centers due to budget constraints, and quotes a loss of \$200,000 per year from Michael Delvin, vice president for marketing and communications at Tri-C. This closure eliminates 32 employment positions, and the hands-on experience that Early Childhood Education majors receive. They also report that the families enrolled in the East Center will feel the loss the most, as the Children's Center was a major provider of care in the area. Forty percent of the families enrolled are students at the college.

Parents interviewed by NewsNet5.com expressed anger and frustration at the closure of the schools, in an article published May 12. While the Plain Dealer barely mentions possibility of an emergency planning center moving to current location of the day care center in the western campus, NewsNet5.com reports that many people blame the day care centers' closing to the move.

Tri-C has no posting on their website about the closing of these centers, or of their budget issues.

Assumptions

Even if we are able to get buy-in for a fundraiser to help save the childcare centers, Tri-C may decide it isn't worth the hassle of trying to save them. Also, the students may decide that there's too much risk having their children in a facility that might not last long-term while they are in school. The students may also decide that they can no longer afford attending the college, whereby losing tuition funding and student numbers.

Problem & Consequences

The child care centers at Tri-C are closing due to yearly losses of \$200,000 incurred by the centers, displacing 144 children aged 18 months to 5 years. This, combined with a lack of adequate response from Tri-c, is creating a negative perception of Tri-C in the community and media.

Campaign Goal

- a.) To establish a bi-annual fundraising event that reduces the annual \$200,000 budget deficit by 50%.
- b.) To promote Tri-C as an organization that is concerned and action-oriented regarding community and student welfare.

Audience Identification & Messages

Audience Objectives

Strategies