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U. Wooten

**STUDENTS**  
Without  
**MOTHERS**

## **2009 Marketing Communications Plan**

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## Introduction

Students Without Mothers (SWM) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to helping high school students without mothers help themselves by empowering them to continue their education. The organization's main purpose is to provide scholarships for college bound high school seniors who are without their mothers. In many cases, the mothers have passed away, but students will also be considered for assistance if their mothers are ill, incarcerated, or otherwise unable to provide the support and guidance young people need.

## Overview

This marketing communications plan outlines a strategy to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase awareness and visibility of SWM in the community and greater Atlanta.
- Drive traffic to the SWM website.
- Increase donations to the SWM scholarship fund.

## Background

Mary Torrence, who knows all about the challenges of growing up without a mother, founded Students Without Mothers in 2004. Mary lost her mother when she was just 14 years old. As Mary cleaned her high school principal's home to earn money for her class ring, she made a promise to herself: when she became successful, she would work hard to help other young people in similar situations.

Mary was reminded of that promise when her own daughter made her aware of a student in a similar situation. This student, whose mother had also passed away, was cooking meals at home and selling them to other students to fund her college application fees. Mary was inspired to do something about it--and founded Students Without Mothers.

SWM helps students with the college application process, visiting colleges, writing essays, and applying for financial aid. Upon being accepted into a college/university, each scholarship recipient receives a \$4,000 scholarship and other resources/necessities such as a lap top computer, school supplies, dormitory items, gift cards/gift checks, and coaching to ensure that the student has the tools to make decisions that will lead to successfully completing the degree program.

The a Life Coaching for Tomorrow's Leaders (LCTL) program is designed to provide both advocacy and support to students who may be struggling to consistently make good decisions. By beginning the process of coaching students during the crucial, formative years, SWMs helps its scholarship recipients to address specific educational, professional and personal successes: discover what obstacles or challenges there might be and; choose a course of action to make sound decisions. SWMs realizes that students who do not have caring mothers at home often need additional guidance and counseling, especially when it comes to their education.

## Project Description

To date SWM has awarded 38 scholarships. This year the organization has over 70 scholarship applicants and the funds to award only 5 scholarships. The application pool is steadily increasing while the scholarship funds are decreasing. The organization needs to increase awareness and raise additional funds.

Mary has identified several activities that will promote awareness and drive fundraising; however she has limited resources and is unable to mobilize her plan of action. I will partner with Mary to provide her with a marketing communications plan that will serve as a roadmap for SWM. The components of the plan include:

- Situation Analysis
- Audience Analysis
- Competitive Position
- Marketing Overview
- Deliverable
- Implementation Schedule
- Creative Platform
- Budget
- Recommendations

## Situation Analysis (SWOT)

I have analyzed the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to clarify the organization's marketing communications objectives and ensure a successful marketing communications campaign. The current market perception of SWM is exceptionally favorable.

Mary Torrence is featured in the March 2009 issue of the Family Circle Magazine. Mary shares her experience losing her mother and her deep connection with the organization's mission. This article will serve as a foundation upon which to strengthen the organization's credibility, increase the organization's visibility, and create a media buzz and most importantly, to generate concern that may garner sponsorships.

In the past Mary has relied on volunteers to assist with her marketing efforts. Although well intentioned, the volunteers have not been able to develop a comprehensive marketing communications plan. Marketing communications efforts have been inconsistent; and therefore the organization has failed to gain and maintain full fundraising momentum.

## Strengths

- Director has a marketing background
  - Mary owns a marketing consultancy so she understands the ins and outs of marketing and can provide clear direction
- Director has over 20 years experience working with Fortune 500 companies and almost 10 years of experience consulting in both the private and public sector
  - Mary can leverage her connections in entertainment and government to build her organization to bring in more donors on referral
- Organization has a diverse board of directors which include well-known names in the Georgia media
  - Names include Tiffany Cochran, former 11 Alive anchor
- Current success in assisting students
  - Success stories can be used to solidify the need for such support and provide verification of funds use
  - Stories present media and publicity opportunities

## Weaknesses

- Little to no visibility throughout the state of Georgia
  - Organization has not achieved significant exposure throughout the state
- Lack of Internet marketing and promotional efforts to bring in regular donations
  - Website does little to promote the need for financial support
  - Organization does not utilize social media and online avenues such as Facebook, Twitter, Digg, and other gathering places often visited by journalists
- No online newsroom
  - Press releases and article hub is not pronounced on the website
- Poorly implemented donor payment portal
  - Client notes that donor payment gateway does not work effectively and online amounts are not correctly disbursed to client's accounts
- Limited staff to assist with marketing efforts

## Opportunities

- Expand reach to include all of Georgia
  - Build relationships with media throughout the state
  - Promote website and get more potential donors to the website
  - Reach guidance counselors and schools through local media for school districts
- Increase potential donors who visit website
  - Get more online donations
- Improve website usability and performance
  - Create a more user-friendly website
  - Showcase successes on website
- Increase online visibility
  - Participate in online publicity efforts
  - Post press releases to online news portals, submit to blog sites, place on website
  - Write news and human articles related to scholarships and tuition and distribute to blogs and free article posting websites

## Threats

- Current economic condition
  - We are in a recession, and potential donors are limiting spending and giving
- Other events held during that time
  - What other fundraising events are being held during that time? Which audiences are targeted?



## **Audience Analysis**

Student Without Mothers has three audiences – potential donors, students and school counselors. Considering the organization is faced with an applicant pool that exceeds the funding, the organization's primary concern is engaging the primary audience.

### **Primary Audience**

SWM relies on financial contributions to fund its scholarships. The primary audience consists of various foundations, corporate sponsors, individual donors and in kind givers.

### **Secondary Audience**

SWM's secondary audience is comprised of students and guidance counselors. The availability of scholarship funds is important to students who have lost their mothers.

## **Competitive Position**

There are organizations that focus on assisting students of single parents, students with disabled parents, and other disadvantaged students; however I have not identified another organization that is designed to assist students without mothers. Although SWM does not have any direct competition in terms of its organization's purpose, SWM is competing for funding.

It is important for the organization to position itself as a trusted organization with a heart. Emphasis must be placed on the organization's successes to date. The organization must seize every opportunity available to showcase the achievements of the students who have been helped by the organization. The organization has taken its first steps in differentiating itself from its competitors by starting off the year with an aggressive marketing plan which includes the release of a feature article in a nationwide publication and making sure its successes are known by including student updates in its monthly newsletter which reaches over 5,000 recipients.

## **Marketing Overview**

### **Marketing History**

Most of Students Without Mothers marketing support has come in the form of in-kind gifts from sponsors and board members. Existing marketing collateral is among the in-kind gifts received.

### **Marketing Collateral**

During start-up, the organization's sponsors and board members provided design and printing at no cost. This collateral is still in use today and includes advertisements, letterhead, logo design, business cards and a newsletter. The newsletter is now produced electronically using Constant Contact.



## **Fundraising**

SWM holds three major fundraising events each year:

### ***Annual Reception/Fundraiser***

To gain donors, the organization hosts an annual fundraiser and sells corporate sponsor packages and individual tickets. This is the main fundraising event for the organization. The event is held in May. The organization also sells wall calendars. This accomplishes two goals. It promotes the organization and helps the organization raise money for scholarships.

### ***Silent Auction***

Sambuca Jazz Café in Buckhead supports SWM by hosting their annual silent auction. The event is held in December and is designed to raise funds for the scholarships. There is no cover charge for the event and each guest has an opportunity to bid on exceptional gifts that are donated by corporate sponsors.

### ***Annual Shopping Event***

SWM participates in the Annual Macy's Shopping Benefit and Annual Bloomingdale's Shopping Benefit that takes place in September and October respectively. In partnership with Bloomindales, the retailer donates shopping passes and the agency sales them at \$10 each. In addition to the proceeds from selling the passes, the retailer donates \$5 per redeemed shopping pass to the organization. In partnership with Macy's, the retailer donates shopping passes and the agency sales them at \$5 each. In addition to the proceeds from selling the passes, the retailer donates \$2.50 per redeemed shopping pass to the organization. Both retailers make the shopping day experience a fun filled event by hosting fashion shows, cooking demonstrations and offering significant discounts and promotions throughout most departments.

## **Internet Marketing**

The Internet marketing efforts of SWM consist of a website, [www.StudentsWithoutMothers.org](http://www.StudentsWithoutMothers.org). This website also aids in fundraising efforts; donations are accepted via the website. The client reports that the website is undergoing a redesign to make the website more visitor-friendly. The client requests new website copy that will appeal to donors, volunteers and students.

## **Publicity**

Family Circle Magazine featured the organization in its March 2009 issue. Local publications also have featured the organization. Since the organization assists students statewide with scholarships, media reach must expand to include the entire state of Georgia.

## **Deliverable**

### **Annual Report**

The organization was founded 5 years ago and Mary has not had the time or resources to produce an annual report. She would like a concise report, not to exceed 6 pages, that introduces the SWM Life Coaching program, addresses the organization's accomplishments, the student's accomplishments, finances from 2008, a message from the founder, pictures and an overview of the scholarship program.

### **Annual Report Project Plan**

This copy strategy will serve as a guide for the content and style of the annual report.

#### ***Audience***

The annual report is presented to donors as the primary audience. A secondary audience is the news media.

#### ***Purpose***

The purpose of the annual report is to provide prospective donors with information regarding the organization's efforts for the previous year. It will show the organization's current financial situation and outlook for the future. It also will serve as a media opportunity for SWM.

#### ***Expected Benefits***

- Build donor trust by showing the organization's financial capabilities and proof of use of funds
- Presents a publicity opportunity when announcing the release of the report
- Excellent leave behind and mailer to send to potential donors
- Supports grant writing efforts

#### ***Key Messages***

- Message from founder
- Overview of scholarship program
- SWM's year in review
  - Organizational accomplishments
  - Scholarship recipients
  - Student accomplishments
  - Events and publications
  - Volunteer projects
- Life coaching program overview
- Financial statement
- Board of directors
- Sponsors/Donors
- Looking ahead to 2009

**Source Material**

- Web content
- Weekly meetings (information gathering from Founder)
- Life coaching program outline
- Financial statement

**Visual Elements**

- Group photograph of scholarship recipients
- Group photograph of board of directors
  - Pull Quote – Testimonial from board member
- Head shot of founder with caption
- Scanned signature of founder (for message from founder)
- Image – Student in the spotlight
  - Pull Quote – Testimonial from featured student
- Image – Organizational volunteer
  - Pull Quote – Testimonial from volunteer
- Images from 2008 Annual Fundraiser
- Graph/Chart illustration (financial report)

**Budget**

| Deliverable   | Quantity | Specifications                             | Size                       | Type                           | Cost    |
|---------------|----------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| Annual Report | 50       | 6 (8 ½ x 11) pages front and back in color | 11 x 17 folded and stabled | Print                          | \$300   |
| Annual Report | N/A      | 6 (8 ½ x 11) pages in color                | 8 ½ x 11                   | Electronic (for web and print) | No Cost |

**Implementation Schedule**

| Date                      | Deliverable                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| February 23 <sup>rd</sup> | Marcom Plan Draft                    |
| March 16 <sup>th</sup>    | Marcom Plan                          |
| March 30 <sup>th</sup>    | Annual Report Project Plan           |
| April 13 <sup>th</sup>    | Annual Report Draft                  |
| April 20 <sup>th</sup>    | Annual Report                        |
| April 28                  | Marcom Final Report and Deliverables |

## Marketing Communications Roadmap

Although I am limited to producing one deliverable I have developed a roadmap that identifies additional communications tools that address the organization's marcom needs as outlined in this plan.

| Communication Tool   | Description  | Projected Completion Date |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Press Release Series:<br><i>Announce speaker for fundraiser</i><br><i>Announce host for fundraiser</i><br><i>Announce scholarship recipients</i><br><i>Announce life coach program</i> | This series of press releases will help the organization build relationships with media throughout the state and gain more visibility for the organization and its programs. These press releases will also become the foundation for the organization's online newsroom.  | April – May 2009          |
| Fundraiser Advertisement   | This is a major event meant to raise money for future scholarships, to present scholarships, and to recognize donors and sponsors. The fundraiser advertisement will be a one page web optimized electronic correspondence.  | March 2009                |
| Website Content  | The purpose of the website redesign is to present a professional, more user-friendly website that donors, the media and scholarship seekers can find and use more efficiently to complete their respective tasks.  | April – May 2009          |
| Social Media Campaign  | The social media campaign will include setting up Facebook, Flickr, MySpace and Twitter pages. In addition, it also includes a blogging effort. The purpose of the social media campaign is the get the organization more online visibility and help the organization create an online community of donors and prospective donors. | May – June 2009           |
| Promotional Video  | Similar to the current video that is on the homepage of the website SWM with produce a new video with testimonials from new SWM scholarship recipients.  | July 2009                 |

## **Creative Platform**

### **Campaign Themes**

SWM is a small organization and its theme is consistent with its mission: Helping Students Help Themselves. The SWM logo is representative of a student embracing education and using academics as the building block for a better life.

### **Style and tone**

The marketing communications tools are intended for various audiences and therefore require varying styles and tones. The communications that are designed for corporate sponsorship are more formal to build ethos and credibility. The communications that are designed for individual donors are informative; yet more casual.

### **Constraints**

Due to the budget limitations the only constraint is the Annual Report. I will create a fully illustrated all color report for the web and to be sent electronically. In order to save money on printing costs I will create a black and white version of the report for print.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

I will meet with Mary weekly to gather input and feedback on the marcom plan and annual report. Mary will review the marcom and the annual report to ensure that both effectively carry out the goals of the organization.

### **Measurement**

This project will be successful if the organization experiences the following changes as a result of the execution of the marketing communications tools outlined in the marcom plan:

- More calls into the organization
- More emails to the organization
- More hits on the organization's website
- Positive feedback from the board of directors
- An increase in donations

## **Recommendations**

Based on the SWM's goals, the following opportunities exist:

- Expanded market reach to bring in donors through Internet marketing and social media
- Increase the organization's visibility via traditional and online publicity and by expanding its media relations efforts across the state
- Enhance the organization's reputation by demonstrating its usefulness and benefit to students as they attempt to go to college during tough economic times
- Build trust so that donors will invest money and provide in-kind donations to the organization