



A STUDY OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
STRATEGIES USED BY ORGANIZATIONS THAT
DISSEMINATE INFORMATION AND THEIR
EFFECTIVENESS

Disseminating Resources to Non-Profits Across Canada

A Study of Marketing and Communications Strategies Used by Organizations that Disseminate Information and their Effectiveness

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Abstract

This research is conducted on behalf of the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence in order to determine how non-profit organizations can effectively disseminate training resources to small and medium sized non-profits across Canada. Branding, creating relationships, and social media marketing are elements of marketing that prior research can apply to non-profits that disseminate information. The remaining knowledge gaps on how non-profits find resources, and how to effectively target non-profits via marketing and communications lead to the development of the research objectives for this study. This research is exploratory in nature and uses a qualitative approach by administering interviews over the phone. Ten participating organizations were interviewed using a non-probability sampling method. Analysis of these interviews found that small and medium non-profits find resources through word of mouth, web search, and E-newsletter. Methods that non-profits that disseminate information use to market their services are content marketing, including social media and E-newsletters, events, targeting, branding, and calendars. Key success factors for marketing training resources include quality staff, understanding your target market, and using metrics. E-newsletters are both an effective and cost-effective strategy, and social media and advertising are ranked the most ineffective strategies used by non-profits that disseminate information. F

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research is conducted on the behalf of The Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence (SCNPE) in Kelowna B.C. Chapter 1 provides background information on the client and the sector as well as discusses the significance, nature and scope of the research. The research was completed to help SCNPE broaden its reach by developing a marketing strategy.

1.1 Background

The Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence (SCNPE) enables Okanagan College professors and students to research and identify strategies to ensure sustainability within all realms of Non-Profit organizations. SCNPE began research in 2015, conducting a gap analysis to uncover the areas in the non-profit sector where further education and training were most needed for operational success. This data was used in 2016 to identify resources and develop a curriculum to support sustainability of non-profit organizations in the Central Okanagan. In 2017 SCNPE continued to develop the curriculum as well as conduct more research to identify methods in which non-profit organizations can be encouraged and engaged to participate in training activities and common barriers they face (The Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence, 2017).

SCNPE currently, has developed a curriculum, a database of resources, and several training tools, targeted towards non-profit sustainability that are tested and proven. The next step for 2018 will be to administer its resources to non-profit organizations in need. SCNPE's target market is small to medium non-profit organizations that may have little access to resources and funding. Larger organizations are also included as users of SCNPE's resources but because they have greater funding and their own resources, they are

adopt similar recommendations. The exploratory nature of this research makes it very broad, and transferable to similar contexts.

1.4 Nature and Scope

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides the secondary research component of this report that seeks to answer the decision statement as well as identify the research gaps that will be filled by primary research. In Chapter 3, the methodology used to conduct the primary research, including sample design, is described

5 conclusions are drawn from the research to make recommendations for SCNPE relating back to the initial decision statement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature shows that there is a knowledge gap for research about non-profit organizations that disseminate information. These organizations are different from other non-profits in that their goals and activities are vastly different, eliminating the need for many of the marketing activities that other non-profits employ. There are some similarities in the strategies that non-profits that disseminate information could employ and find similar success as other non-profit organizations and these methods have been noted for this research.

2.2 Definitions

Two key terms must first be defined for the reader to make the most sense of the literature. Those terms are non-profit marketing and dissemination.

2.2.1 Non-Profit Marketing

Non-profit marketing functions traditionally are: fundraising, attracting volunteers, creating relationships, and communication. (Nicolau, 2016) This is important to note because the majority of prior research in the literature is focused on these functions. Fundraising and attracting volunteers are two functions that are not as applicable to SCNPE and other organizations that disseminate information. Creating relationships and communication are applicable to this type of organization and will be analysed the most in the literature review.

2.2.2 Dissemination

Dissemination as defined by the dictionary is “the act of spreading something, especially information, widely; circulation.” Dissemination is a core aspect of SCNPE’s business operations; SCNPE assists non-profit organizations in their search of training programs by having a database of workshops, seminars and online resources (The Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence, 2017).

2.3 Non-profit vs. for profit marketing

Marketing strategy varies from business to business. Researchers have analysed marketing in the for-profit and non-profit sectors to determine whether similar strategies can be employed to have similar effects in different settings.

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solved by more effective marketing on behalf of the organizations that disseminate information. Therefore the first research objective has been developed as follows:

RO1: Determine what strategies small and medium sized non-profit organizations use to identify and use training resources.

Article Title

2.5 Targeting Non-profits via Marketing

One of the major gaps in the literature is the lack of research on how to market resources to non-profit organizations. Some strategies have been identified in popular media that can be considered for this research, but the limitations of the sources should be noted. These three articles outline tips for marketing or selling to non-profits and a theme has been identified in each sources list of strategies that can be found in Table 2.1. The themes identified in the table are saving time and money, networking, authenticity, and value proposition. These are all strategies that SCNPE could consider employing in its marketing strategy; however more research is required. This research gap has led to the creation of the second research objective.

RO2: Identify marketing and communications methods used by non-profit organizations that disseminate information.

In formal research, three other themes have been identified that may be effective methods for SCNPE to utilize; branding, creating relationships, and social media.

2.5.1 Branding

In previous research, brand orientation has been identified to correlate with success in the non-profit sector. Napoli (2006) defines non-profit brand orientation as the organization-wide process of generating and sustaining a shared sense of brand meaning that provides superior value to stakeholders and superior performance to the organization. Non-profit brand orientation entails putting the brand at the centre of an

organization's decision-making process and focusing on the internal and external activities necessary to build and sustain a strong brand.

Napoli (2006) was able to identify that organizations classified as high performers considered themselves to be effective brand managers, using many of the elements of non-profit brand orientation. The organizations that classified as low performers considered themselves poor brand managers. This research tells us that non-profit brand orientation is an important tool that SCNPE should utilize.

Three elements of non-profit brand orientation create good organizational performance. These elements are orchestration, interaction, and affect. Orchestration is the process of implementing integrated marketing activities that deliver consistent brand messages to internal and external stakeholders. It also creates a brand portfolio that is understood by staff. Interaction is the degree to which an organization utilizes feedback to improve and create value. The last element, affect, measures whether an organization understands the attitudes and feelings of its stakeholders, and what they like and dislike about the brand

an online context (Mills & Plangger, 2015). Another factor to consider about branding, is that the brand conveys security and performance in the best interests of the clients. Mills & Plangger (2015) suggest that social media provide both the opportunity and the arena, online, of enabling online service firms to build and enhance brand trust and relationships.

2.5.3 Social Media Marketing

Mills and Plangger (2015) suggest that online service brands consider social media not as an extension of a website, but as a separate component of marketing initiatives related to customer relationship management. Social media allows for two-way communication, which can help a brand develop rapport with its customers, but it should also be noted that an organization should be aware that they can't control what customers say about them online (Mills & Plangger, 2015).

Research suggests that almost two-thirds of social media users learn about brands and services on social media, and that 17% feel more connected to brands they've seen online. Mills & Plangger quote this research finding from 2012; since social media has penetrated a higher percentage of users in the last five years it is expected that these numbers have increased. Research on social media at the organizational level has not grown rapidly (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

2.6 Effectiveness

There are no pre-existing benchmarks identified in the literature as to what makes an effective marketing strategy in this context, which has led to the creation of the third research objective:

RO3: Evaluate the perceived effectiveness of marketing and communications methods used by non-profit organizations that disseminate information.

2.7 Conclusion

Elements of marketing orientation, branding, creating relationships, and social media can help SCNPE with its decision to employ marketing and communications methods in order to effectively disseminate its resources to small and medium non-profit organizations.

Gaps in the research surrounding how non-profits find resources, how to target non-profits in marketing, and marketing methods used by organizations that disseminate information, have been identified and have led to the development of the following research objectives:

RO1: Determine what strategies small and medium sized non-profit organizations use to identify and use training resources.

RO2: Identify marketing and communications methods used by non-profit organizations that disseminate information.

RO3: Evaluate the perceived effectiveness of marketing and communications methods used by non-profit organizations that disseminate information.

The next chapter, Chapter 3 the methodology that will be used to conduct the primary research to address these research objectives is discussed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the research was designed to fit the research objectives. It describes the sampling and data collection methods used to collect the primary research portion of this report. It also discusses instrument evaluation and provides the framework of analysis used to interpret the data in the following chapters.

3.2 Research Design

As discussed in the literature review, there is little information available about marketing such a niche service. For this reason, the research is exploratory in nature. A qualitative research method is more appropriate to explore the topic and gather as much in-depth information as possible. A qualitative method will allow for certain insight and experience to be collected from the sample that would not be possible through survey research. Because it is a niche service lots of probing and clarification will be required to get the right information from participants.

3.3 Sample Design

The population of interest is all non-profit and for-profit organizations that disseminate information to non-profits across Canada. The sample consists of ten non-profit organizations. For exploratory research this is an appropriate sample size as the focus is more on collecting in depth information and experience which would likely become repetitive after more than ten interviews. A nonprobability sampling method was to purposely select respondents that fit certain criteria. The sample was selected by the interviewer based their ability to meet the following criteria:

- Has been established for more than 3 years.
- Disseminates information to other non-profit organizations.
- Has an observable marketing strategy.

The purpose of this method is to ensure that respondents are of similar nature to SCNPE so that the data collected can be used to make recommendations that SCNPE is able to implement. This research is at the organizational level, therefore the unit of analysis is the organizations that take part in the interviews. Executive directors, CEO's, and Marketing Directors/Coordinators will answer the interview questions on the organizations' behalf.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The data was collected through individual interviews over the phone. Ten interviews took place for the research. Participants were asked a total of nineteen questions; these questions can be found in Appendix A. The first seven questions are demographic type questions and the remaining questions pertain to their respective research objectives. The last question of the interview asks participants if there is anything else they would like to add to ensure time to reflect and ensure all relevant information has been provided. On average the interviews took 25 minutes to complete. The student researcher recorded the data collected during the interviews by taking notes in a word document as well as using a phone call recording application to ensure that nothing was missed or misinterpreted.

3.5 Instrument Evaluation

Reliability and validity are difficult to measure in qualitative research due to its open-ended nature and difference in human reaction. A measure is reliable when different attempts at measuring something converge on the same result (Zikmund, Babin & Carr, 2013). Statistical testing is not used in this research due to its small sample size, qualitative and exploratory nature. For this research multiple questions are asked for each research objective in order to frame the concepts differently and gain different perspectives. This method works on an individual basis to ensure participants converge on consistent responses to the objectives. The student researcher is the only person conducting the interviews and follows the same structure for each participant to ensure consistency and reliability. The sample and interview questions have been chosen carefully to ensure that the data collected will directly relate to the research objectives to ensure valid responses are captured.

3.6 Analysis

Seven demographic questions are asked at the beginning of the interview and are used to segment and compare respondent's answers. Aside from these questions the majority of the data set consists of string variables (responses to open-ended questions). These variables are analysed by coding the responses for repeating words, concepts, and themes. For further analysis of the data, concepts from Chapter 2 are revisited to compare.

Similarities are noted and used to make recommendations to the client about best practices when it comes to marketing and communications strategies in Chapter 5.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, a qualitative method is used to conduct this exploratory research. Interviews were conducted with a sample of ten organizations that disseminate information. This sample was chosen using a non-probability sampling method to select a sample most appropriate for the study. Grouping and text analysis will be used to interpret the data as accurately as possible and the analysis will be used to make recommendations to the client. The next chapter, Chapter 4 will provide the analysis of the data.

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4.4.2 Social media

Five social media platforms were mentioned by respondents, those platforms are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Snapchat. Table 4.2 provides the frequency by which each platform was used by the ten respondents in their marketing strategies. Facebook and LinkedIn were the most common platforms, used by 7 organizations, followed by Twitter, used by 6. Instagram and Snapchat were each used by 1 organization.

Social Media Platforms											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Facebook											7
Twitter											6
LinkedIn											7
Instagram											1
Snapchat											1

Table 4.2 Most Common Social Media Platforms

Facebook and Twitter were both popular for content marketing, sharing useful content, as well as promoting upcoming events. One organization mentioned using the testimonials feature on Facebook as a way to engage new clients. Two of the ten participants mentioned that they have used Facebook for advertising campaigns.

Of the participants using LinkedIn, many of them expressed how useful it is for developing their B2B professional networks. One organization has started its own professional network using LinkedIn Groups to reach its target market, where it can post content on a regular basis. They post primarily external links, useful content and job opportunities.

Snapchat was only mentioned by the one organizations that uses it, and it was not elaborated on. Other organizations however commented that Instagram was not for them because they are not a visual organization and the messages that they are trying to get across are too complex to be summed up by pictures.

4.4.3 E-Newsletters

E-newsletters was a very popular and highly regarded tool used among the participants. Of the participants 9 of 10 used E-newsletters to communicate with stakeholders. One organization prepares its E-newsletter in the following fashion:

It gleans information that's pertinent to the non-profit sector. Highlighting things we believe are of the most importance and in the best interest of our target market. It highlights what [our organization] is doing, employment opportunities, how to segments, funding sources and where to apply for grants. There's a housing section, a local info section, research section, resources

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter uses the literature review and the findings discussed in Chapter 4 to draw conclusions about the research objectives and decision statement. Recommendations are made for SCNPE based on the findings and limitations are discussed.

5.2 Conclusions about research objectives

RO1: Determine what strategies small and medium sized non-profit organizations use to identify and use training resources.

Small and medium sized non-profits identify training resources using three main methods; word of mouth, E-newsletters, and web search. The results of the interviews identified these three methods as the most common ways that their clients, most of whom are small and medium sized non-profits, find out about training services.

RO2: Identify marketing and communications methods used by non-profit organizations that disseminate information.

Non-profit organizations use a variety of methods to disseminate information. The literature review identifies that traditional marketing does not work in a non-profit setting and that rather a societal orientation is necessary. To achieve/Headn 301.604 s2(hi)6(i4(e)9()5(ttudn 301.604 s2(hi)6(i4(e))-5()TJETQeW*nat79

Word of mouth, networking, and building relationships are an important method that non-profits use for disseminating information. The literature identifies trust as an integral part of building relationships. Content marketing provides an opportunity to build trust and establish a relationship. Every organization interviewed used content marketing in some capacity as part of its marketing strategy.

Social media was one form of content marketing discussed. The most common social media platforms used by participants are Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Social media allows for two-way communication, which is identified as a key success factor, to develop brand and establish rapport with clients. However, participants in this research believe that social media is not a very effective tool. E-newsletters, are being used by the majority of non-profits that disseminate information and are highly regarded as an effective tool.

Segmenting and targeting are methods that non-profits use to ensure the right messages are getting to the right people at the right time. Participants say understanding your target market is key for marketing to non-profits.

Many organizations plan their communications using a calendar to map out marketing activities throughout the year. Attending and hosting events are common, and non-profits often tie their marketing timelines to events that are happening.

RO3: Evaar

The following recommendations answer the decision statement by stating what marketing and communications methods SCNPE should use to effectively disseminate its resources. The recommendations are supported by the conclusions drawn above from the literature and findings from the primary research.

Recommendations:

1. Create a Marketing Role

SCNPE should allocate a staff member or volunteer to be held accountable for maintaining marketing activities.

2. Plan

SCNPE should create a marketing calendar each year of all the marketing activities to take place throughout the year for staff and volunteers to stick to. This plan should include branding guidelines to ensure consistency of brand voice. The timeline should be planned around events SCNPE is participating in and hosting.

3. Content Marketing

SCNPE should begin an E-newsletter for marketing content.. E-newsletters are discussed in every research objective. They are one of the top methods non-profits use to find resources, they are used by most non-profits to disseminate information, and they are rated as one of the most effective and cost-effective marketing tools. SCNPE should be well advised to implement an E-newsletter that current and potential clients can opt-in via its website.

4. Search Engine Optimization

SCNPE should optimize its website content for search engines. Web search is one of the most common tools that non-profits use to identify resources. If SCNPE does not appear on search engine results pages they could be missing out on potential web traffic and new clients.

5. Target Market Research

Understanding your target market is key for non-profits that disseminate information. SCNPE should ensure it has an extensive knowledge of its target market before implementing any of these strategies outside of the Okanagan. Further research may be required to ensure a full understanding.

5.4 Limitations

It is important to note the limitations of the primary research conducted for this research. As an exploratory study a qualitative approach was used, and due to the capacity of the student researcher only ten interviews were conducted. These ten participants' responses may not be representative of the entire population. It is impossible to measure the statistical significance of the data collected in this research due to its small sample size.

5.6 Conclusion

As the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence embarks in 2018 to expand its reach and market its training resources to small and medium non-profit organizations across Canada, this research can provide a useful guide of recommendations. If SCNPE creates a marketing role within its organization, plans effectively, utilizes content marketing and search optimization, and does some target market research, it can expect to effectively market and disseminate its resources.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your corporate structure?
 - a. Non-Profit
 - b. Charity
 - c. Foundation
 - d. For Profit
2. How many employees work for your organization?
3. How many volunteers work for your organization on a regular basis?
4. What geographical reach does your organization serve?
 - A. Local
 - B. Provincial
 - C. National
5. What type of training services do you offer?
6. Does your organization have an allocated marketing budget to promote these services?
7. How much each year does your organization spend on marketing these services?
8. How do your clients find out about the services you offer?
9. Please describe your organizations marketing strategy
10. Please describe your organizations communications plan
11. Who decides on these strategies and evaluates them/keeps them up to date?
12. Do you do any preliminary research before implementing new strategies? If so what kinds?
13. What would you say are some key success factors of marketing your services and why?
14. What would you say is the most effective marketing tool used by your organization and why?
15. What would you say is the least effective and why?
16. Which one is the most cost effective/gives you the best return on investment/bang for your buck?
17. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of your marketing strategy (1-10)? With 1 being extremely ineffective and 10 being extremely effective.
18. Where does your organization go to look for training resources?
19. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix B: Training Resources

This is a list of organizations and websites interviewees use when they need to identify training resources.

Institute of corporate directors
Vantage point
Non-assistance Fund
Center for Innovation Content Institute
Volunteer Canada
Imagine Canada
Charity village
Lynda.com
Hubspot
Nonprofitmarketingguide.com
Board Source
Net Squared
Skill Share

Appendix C: Key Success Factors

This is a list of all of the respondents' (concise) answers to the Key Success Factors question.

Planning, clarity of goals, articulation, having a budget and or hr, ensuring message is clear for audience.

Understand audience, don't use negative language, focus on client experience not promoting us. Focus on the market, develop personas.

The opportunity to build a relationship and demonstrate expertise before trying to sell them something.

Knowing our market. Combination of strategies/platforms to reach different markets.

Understand your audience, engage and respond, make it two-way, look carefully at your metrics.

Having a position in the organization, having the processes in place, having the right tools, make sure everything is integrated.

Consistency, responsible staff, branding, dependability.

Being resourceful, building efficiencies, repurposing content, having a plan/calendar, getting the right message right time to right people, understand your market.

Team on same page, processes in place, looking at metrics and tweaking, open, adaptable to respond, coordinating efforts, targeting and exclusions, merit based content, webinars similar to events happening soon.