

Preparing CWT Internally for External Greatness

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NEED/OPPORTUNITY / Child Welfare Tshwane (CWT) is a nonprofit organisation that was faced with numerous challenges during the first quarter of 2006, including a name change, change of management, implementation of a transformation plan and lack of funding. After being appointed as its communication agency, Development Communication Solutions (DevCom) conducted a full communication audit to form the basis of a solid communication strategy. The audit found that there was ineffective communication between the staff and the board, and that there was a lack of environmental scanning to inform decisions in the organisation. Furthermore, the audit found that internal communication was below average and used time-consuming methods. The corporate identity of the organisation was old, had not adapted to the changing environment the organisation worked in and did not consistently reflect the name change of the organisation. CWT did not have a marketing or fundraising strategy in place, and sent ad-hoc, fragmented messages to all its stakeholders in its fundraising and marketing attempts. Publications and media relations were also handled on an ad-hoc basis with lackluster results. Summed up, the communication of the organisation was not as effective as it could be, and it had to be improved with no budget and low staff morale as challenges.

INTENDED AUDIENCES / The internal audience was the primary audience for the campaign, including the staff members (80 employees in 10 different offices), volunteers (150) and board members (12). Demographically, 90 percent of the staff and volunteers are female and from the social work profession. The mind-set of the internal audience was negative, as social workers were under a lot of pressure to be communication and fundraising experts in addition to their traditional job duties. DevCom managed to change this attitude, and the confidence and culture rating of the organisation to above average after the campaigns. The rating for sustaining a healthy community also increased from 74 to 79 percent.

Because the largest component of CWT's staff is made up of social workers, specific characteristics are part of the culture of the organisation. Social workers are passionate, dedicated and loyal by nature. The most outstanding cultural characteristic found in all community offices is a feeling of team cohesiveness and support. All teams have a culture of debriefing and motivating each other, and they rely emotionally on the strong interpersonal relationships in their environment. There is also a culture of involving family and other support structures as debriefing agents, and sharing personal lives with colleagues.

The staff will go to any extent provide professional services, helping their clients to improve their situations. Because they solve problems and overcome challenges, social workers tend to be focused on the person and his or her problem. This spills over into their communication and approach to daily organisational activities. There is a large sense of "we are not understood," and this influences the way that the organisation communicates.

Furthermore, social work and welfare have a certain negative associations. Research showed the following:

- ▶ Fear associated with CWT's work (taking children away)
- ▶ Begging
- ▶ Something people only need when they are desperate and cannot cope
- ▶ Services for the disempowered
- ▶ Underprivileged, needy people needing care
- ▶ Those who work in welfare are often perceived to be at a lower intellectual and socioeconomic level

The corporate culture feeds on these negative perceptions, and although social workers try to focus on giving hope, they do not know how to communicate about their profession to actively change this culture. Actively trying to understand, monitor and influence the culture in an organisation is time well spent by any manager.

A study of newspaper clippings published by some of the community offices reflects that the focus of CWT is also on the above mentioned issues—need, desperation and scaring people into giving. This communicates the culture of the organisation to the public as a negative, not as an organisation with a culture of changing lives for the better.

Most of the staff members were rather negative and demotivated when the campaign started; the tools implemented made a direct impact on the daily achievements and the morale of the CWT staff.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES / The main aim of the communication strategy was to create communication tools that would enable the staff and volunteers to create public awareness and enhance existing income sources. The communication strategy empowered the organisation to create communication systems and structures that could be maintained in the long term, ensuring sustainability.

The secondary goal was to ensure that each staff member owns the brand and becomes a fundraiser for CWT by communicating the organization's messages consistently and telling stories about the organisation.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW / CWT approached DevCom to handle marketing and fundraising. DevCom did not go about the fundraising process with basic skills (asking letters, events—i.e., a quick fix) but instead implemented a holistic approach that influenced every individual in the organisation.

- ▶ The gap between the board and management was addressed by two workshops and a strategic plan to resolve issues. Communication effectiveness, in terms of sharing a compelling vision, improved from 71 to 75 percent.
- ▶ A starter pack with templates, marketing material, training guidelines, etc., was implemented to empower staff with the correct internal systems and policies, relieving administrative pressures and

ensuring effective internal communication. This also ensured consistent messaging in the organisation. Internal communication was rated below average on baseline research and moved up to average with re-evaluation. Integrated mechanisms (the starter pack) and the downward flow of communication improved 3 percent from 70 to 73 percent.

- ▶ A new corporate identity was developed with the organisation and its partners. DevCom facilitated this process and used research to focus the development. The corporate identity was launched publicly and, with research, was rated above average. DevCom created guidelines and based all documents in the starter pack on CWT's new identity, facilitating the change easily for the staff and the target audience.
- ▶ DevCom developed a communication strategy, including marketing messages and tools. The team focused on storytelling as a marketing tool and on using those stories in all marketing material. A success chart was developed, using 10 critical questions to enable social workers to write a success story in 10 minutes. In the final research, storytelling was rated above average. The stories were used at the annual general meeting of the organisation, in news releases and in the annual report. Positive feedback from the social workers was also published on the DevCom web site (www.dev-com.co.za).
- ▶ Staff was empowered with correct templates for donor research, and donations were received from the Christmas campaign run in December 2007. DevCom's recommendation was to employ a full-time person in communication, which was done in May 2007. The new staff member took over the implementation of the strategy.
- ▶ DevCom was involved in designing two print newsletters and advised on newspaper inserts, etc. Public visibility through communication tools usage was rated above average in the latest research.
- ▶ CWT received front-page media coverage in the *Pretoria News* at the beginning of the strategy implementation. The organization's name was printed incorrectly, statistics were misquoted, etc. DevCom intervened by creating a media kit. This contained all information (updated statistics, basic contact information, mission, service descriptions, etc.) of the organisation so that social workers can have something to send to media when they are interviewed or receive a request for an interview. Media relations improved and were rated above average. The amount of publicity received during the last three months of the campaign supported this finding.

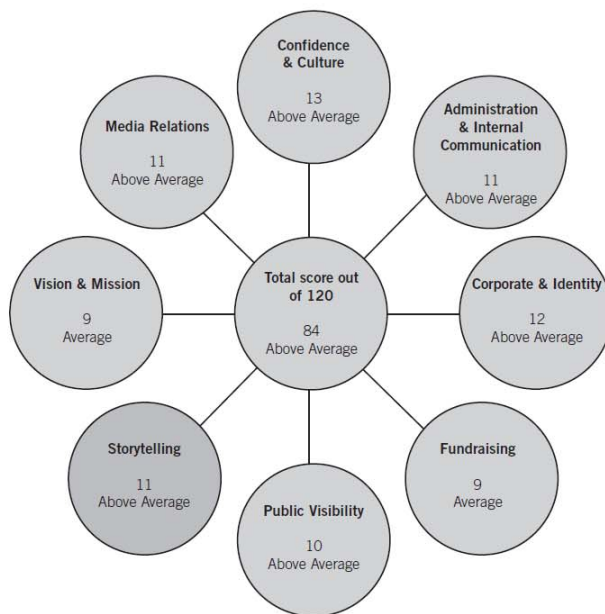
IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES /

- ▶ DevCom had no approved project budget. Expenditures were kept to a minimum by using networks and sponsors and hosting only one event. In addition, CWT paid for some of the printing. This was a huge challenge that DevCom had to overcome, but in the end the communication activities were implemented successfully using available resources.
- ▶ The CEO who appointed and managed the relationship with DevCom resigned in the middle of the campaign, and the chairperson of the board passed away. This resulted in a change of manage-

ment and a refocusing on these efforts by the new management. DevCom managed this shift by focusing on the research. The needs identified did not change with leadership, and DevCom continued implementing the programme with an above average success rate.

- ▶ Due to the nature of this environment, emotions are very important in the organisation. This also came out in the communication audit of the organisational culture. It was challenging to manage expectations, emotions and personal agendas. DevCom did this by refocusing all issues on the task at hand with weekly status meetings, feedback reports and daily communication to all stakeholders.
- ▶ Technology and infrastructure is key in the process of internal and external communication. The audit showed that this was a definite weak point of the organisation. With thorough motivation and planning, DevCom managed to ensure that new computers, printers, etc., were purchased and that the infrastructure was significantly improved.

MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION / After a year of intensive strategic communication initiatives, DevCom has measured the value of the communication tools that were implemented. The communication tools, as a whole, were rated above average. The entire communication infrastructure implemented by DevCom during the past year has thus far yielded results. DevCom used an evaluation questionnaire that was completed by all management staff to rate the communication tools at the beginning and end of the campaign.



The questionnaire was developed to rate the use of the tools, the impact the tools had, etc. Each subgroup in the diagram below is scored out of 15 points. Scores between one and five reflect a low success rate, scores between five and 10 rate the communication tool as average, and scores between 10 and 15 represent tools that had above-average impact on the employees. The total is scored out of 120 points. In this case, scores ranging between one and 40 reflected a low success rate, scores from 40–80 showed an average use, and scores from 80–120 showed an above average impact in the organisation.

The information was confirmed by repeating the communication effectiveness questionnaire, which again showed an overall improvement in communication effectiveness.

Some of the qualitative feedback received from the social workers reflects their positive attitudes:

- ▶ “DevCom has taught CWT a lot about marketing and has changed the perspective on marketing. They have also broadened my mind on fundraising ideas.”—Nicolene Milton, manager of Mamelodi Office
- ▶ “Involvement of DevCom at CWT has a great impact on developing managers and the secretaries. All presentations were informative more especially in making us aware of the CWT product. We have learned about the brand more especially focusing on its vision, mission and how to market ourselves in a corporate world. More especially in the Metropolitan area. We still need to learn more about writing proposals and marketing.”—Phinah Kgosana, manager of Mid City Office
- ▶ “The standardisation of marketing material and the development of a unified method of communication within CWT had a major impact on how we do business and on how we are viewed. On Elandspoort itself, the assessment DevCom did last year gave me ideas on how to improve service delivery.”—Tasleem Daffurn, manager of Elandspoort Office

A SUCCESS STORY / One of the main challenges identified in a communication audit for CWT was the ability to tell the success stories that occur on a daily basis. Because of the problem-focused nature of the work social workers do, identifying and telling success stories was a huge challenge for them. The high case loads, lack of computer equipment, etc., added to this problem.

DevCom’s innovative communicators considered all the developmental and communication aspects of the challenge and developed the success chart for each CWT office. This chart is placed in a relaxing environment (tea room, staff room) with a whiteboard marker. The staff can document success stories by answering the 10 critical questions.

Feedback received from the therapy unit indicates that this tool is really making a difference.