A New YMCA Vision for a Great Future
YMCA Communications Team / YMCA of Greater Toronto / Toronto

PROJECT SUMMARY
The YMCA of Greater Toronto’s 2009–2010 annual report, A New YMCA Vision for a Great Future, was created and designed to help highlight the launch of its new 2020 strategic plan, Strong Start Great Future—making its community home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults.

The 2020 strategic plan was the result of research conducted to identify the key determinants of health for the people of the greater Toronto area.

The report is designed to provide a clear and compelling case for support while outlining the YMCA’s values and its commitment to diversity, social inclusion, and an open conversation with the community. The theme is carried through the report by highlighting the five advocacy issues identified as strategic priorities: childhood obesity and inactivity, youth unemployment, child care access, poverty, and education. A problem/solution approach was the creative approach taken to clearly demonstrate the YMCA’s role in the community.

INTENDED AUDIENCES/STAKEHOLDERS
The primary audience included major gift donors, corporate partners, government and community stakeholders, and volunteer leaders. The secondary audience included internal staff and media as a conduit to the general public.

The team took into account key characteristics of stakeholders as segmented by Environics Analytics—high-profile and net-worth individuals (with household incomes more than double the average at US$219K and above) who have great community influence. They also knew that these stakeholders had an affinity for the health of children, youth and young adults, and that people were looking for a brand affiliation with the YMCA. The majority (78 percent) of stakeholders have families and are university educated, and 32 percent belong to a diverse/immigrant population (19 percent are visible minorities). Social values include a strong sense of belonging to the local community and the global village. The environment and physical health are very important to this group, and they are conscious of both of these daily. More than others, they consider the legacy they will leave behind.

OBJECTIVES
The two key objectives for the 2009–2010 annual report were to launch the new 2020 strategic plan, Strong Start Great Future, and steward major gifts by clearly demonstrating “where the money goes.” The team included positive outcome messages to substantiate and validate donor support to date, while outlining the impact they hoped to make and building urgency for sustained support over the years to come.
KEY MESSAGE STRATEGY
The YMCA’s new 2020 strategic plan, Strong Start Great Future, was the foundation for the themes in the annual report. This new direction placed special emphasis on supporting young people through their life-stage transitions and responding to five key social issues that emerged during the strategic plan consultation process.

Key messages, or what the YMCA wants the primary audiences to think and feel about them, were as follows:
- The YMCA is a charity that positively affects the health of children, teens and young adults in our growing, diverse communities.
- The YMCA is a powerful, influential and collaborative leader, equipped and perfectly positioned to make a significant difference in my community’s health.
- With my support, the YMCA can achieve high-level, high-impact changes.
- The YMCA is empowering me with the knowledge and tools to play an active and effective role where it matters most to me—my life, my family and my community.
- “See clearly. Get involved” to inspire audiences to engage with our YMCA and join in.

CREATIVE RATIONALE
The creative design of the annual report played on the “20/20” idea. The team designed the annual report to look like an optometrist’s eye test chart. The theme is carried throughout the report through the five advocacy issues that were identified as strategic priorities: childhood obesity and inactivity, youth unemployment, child care access, poverty, and education.

Each advocacy issue is presented in an attractive four-page spread that begins with an out-of-focus photo and boldly presented statistics to name and identify the emergent issue that the association’s new strategic plan will address. When a reader opens the spread, the in-focus photo (as in 20/20 vision) outlines the YMCA’s position on that specific emergent issue, along with the organization’s track record and accomplishments, which aimed to position the YMCA as a trusted, credible charity that has a solution to offer.

Each photo in the annual report was carefully planned and considered in order to be representative of the diversity of the community, as well as representative of the age ranges the YMCA works with (children, teens, young adults and adults).

The report ends with a clear call to action—“See clearly. Get involved”—to inspire audiences to engage with the YMCA and join in the mission to make the community home to the healthiest children, teens, and young adults.

The YMCA showed its fiscal responsibility by including its audited financial statements; a financial Q&A; and recognition for all of its donors, community partners and volunteer leadership groups.
RESULTS
The YMCA uses its annual report in many ways; it assists the association with communication and marketing, fundraising and philanthropic initiatives, and community collaboration efforts.

Fundraising results are to be evaluated in March 2011, but in the first three months following release of the annual report, the association has seen:

- A 5 percent increase in major gifts prospects.
- A 230 percent increase from 10 major gift fundraising volunteers to 33.
- A 23 percent increase in fundraising revenues (primarily major gifts) compared to the previous year.

In October 2010, the region held municipal elections. The annual report was critical in educating and engaging a significant increase in new government stakeholders and support for the YMCA’s policy advocacy efforts.

The feedback from corporate and community partners was overwhelmingly positive. Below are a few examples.

“This is a fantastic and beautifully branded report. Thank you for sharing, and we appreciate the reference to Youthvision. The YMCA runs so many incredible programs for the community. Keep up the great work!”—Monique Giroux, senior director, community investment, CIBC

“Thanks so much for forwarding the annual report…. I think it’s the best one I’ve ever seen. The clarity of the problem/solution format is so singular and impactful you will definitely increase awareness of the strategic issues. And the cover format is impossible not to read, want to open….”—Darcia Joseph, YMCA volunteer, past president of Young & Rubicam, Canada

- Six thousand copies of the report were printed on FSC certified paper to minimize the environmental impact.
- Three hundred key stakeholders received copies at the 2009–2010 annual meeting in September 2010.
- Previous major donors were mailed a copy of the annual report.
- An electronic version was created to widely share the report with additional stakeholders.
- An online poll was created to engage stakeholders by asking them to vote on the most critical issue for their community, as well as offline polls within YMCA centres.
- Community consultation and engagement meetings were held with civic leaders, key stakeholders and community partners.

In a 16-week period ending 24 September 2010, the communication team, together with its creative agency, SOS Designs, pulled together this annual report from concept to print on time and on budget. The total budget was CDN$40,000 including tax.