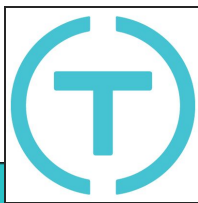


Strategic Communications Proposal: The Chicago Community Trust



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I. Introduction

Founded by Albert Harris and his father, Norman Harris in 1915, the Chicago Community Trust (CCT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to grantmaking, civic engagement and inspiring social change in metropolitan Chicago and its surrounding communities (CCT.org, 2017). It strives to bring business and civic leaders, philanthropic organizations and ordinary citizens together to solve the problems that are of the utmost concern within the community. It works closely with regional affiliates such as the McHenry County Community Foundation, the Lake County Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Will County on diverse projects and initiatives aimed at building stronger, vibrant and healthier communities (CCT.org, 2017a).

The Trust manages assets exceeding \$2.2 billion. Its governing board is comprised of 17 community leaders who supervise its operations (CCT.org, 2017b). It promotes and inspires philanthropy through its professional management of donations, unrestricted endowments, donor advised funds (DAFs) and designated funds. Its trustees committee consists of senior executives of banks who advise the organization on development and community relations issues. Its grantmaking covers a wide range of issues such as education, economic empowerment, health, housing and human services, civic engagement, accessibility, cultural vitality and sustainable development.

II. Organizational Goals

The goal of the Chicago Community Trust is to improve Chicago and its surrounding region by bringing key change makers and service minded individuals together to leverage their knowledge and resources for the greater good of the community. After a review of its website, web presence and other communication materials, we identified the following organizational goals of the Chicago Community Trust.

- I. Improve civic engagement
- II. Inspire more philanthropy
- III. Lead change and development within the region
- IV. Engage residents and recruit more donors
- V. Make Chicago region the most philanthropic city in the country

III. Mission Statement

On its website and some of its communication materials, the Chicago Community Trust describes itself as *“a community foundation dedicated to improving our region through strategic grant making, civic engagement and inspiring philanthropy.”* It also mentions in some sections of its website that it is committed to *“Making good happen. Everyday.”* (CCT.org, 2017). This is a powerful statement because it states a big idea and goals that involves a wide audience. Yet, after a review of the content on the website and social media channels, we concluded the Trust’s mission lacks clarity and is not directly apparent to its stakeholders.

We think what basis of a mission statement that is currently on CCT’s website could be improved by adding more clarity to guide its multiple stakeholders. This includes ordinary citizens who might not understand technical terms like “grant making” and its employees who need to constantly focus on its mission.

Recommendations:

Our recommendation is that the Trust’s mission should be stated in the following concise manner which clearly explains what the organization truly stands for, who its work impacts, and how it does it, where, when and why.

“Our mission is to develop the Chicago region, empower its residents and make good happen in its communities, every single day.”

We suggest that this revised mission statement be incorporated into the introductory section on the Trust’s website and on social media channels using the “About Us” sections on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. This would help to constantly remind stakeholders on these channels what the organization truly stands for and why they need to support its mission.

IV. Communications Goals

Given its broad organizational goals, the Chicago Community Trust is committed to using various relevant communication tools to promote and advance its organizational objectives. While meeting with the marketing and communications team to understand their challenges, they identified the following communication goals of the organization.

- I. Improve community awareness and engagement
- II. Raise more funds and increase donorship
- III. Position CCT as a valuable resource for financial advisors
- IV. Drive traffic to the CCT website

Recommendations

In addition to the Chicago Community Trust’s current communications goals, we believe that one overarching goal to address is to curate language in specific communication channels to speak to directly to that channel’s target audience.

V. Target Audiences

The major stakeholders the Chicago Community Trust most closely interacts include current and potential donors, nonprofit partners and affiliates, civic leadership, financial advisors, social influencers and the media. The target audiences are listed below.

- I. Current donors
- II. Potential donors
- III. Nonprofit partners
- IV. Civic and business leadership
- V. Financial advisors and fund managers
- VI. Employees
- VII. Influencers/the media

VI. Key Messages

To communicate effectively with its audiences, build trust and enhance its reputation among stakeholders, the Chicago Community Trust should emphasize its mission, vision and core values in its messaging. It needs to highlight its achievements, the value it delivers to its partners and affiliates, and the invaluable benefits that its work brings to the community. Outlined below are some of the key messages that the Trust should communicate to its target audiences.

- I. The Chicago Community Trust cares about the Chicago community, its neighborhoods and the region.
- II. It is a trusted partner to business and civic leaders in their efforts to develop the Chicago community.
- III. It is fully dedicated to its programs and initiatives and to the success of its nonprofit affiliates.
- IV. It is a reliable partner for grantees who are passionate about the causes they champion.
- V. It is a valuable partner for financial advisors to consider when making decisions on philanthropic investment options for their clients.
- VI. The Chicago Community Trust has over a century of experience working with stakeholders to build a better, more inclusive and more vibrant community.

VII. Introductory Piece

Please see sample fact sheet in Appendix 1.

To support our goal of creating tailored communication for each target audience, we believe that introductory fact sheets targeted to specific audiences is an effective way to establish relationships with current and potential stakeholders. Depending on the audience, these fact sheets can contain the organization's mission as well as relevant statistics, information on current and upcoming projects, and a story that speaks to the target audience. Below is a list of what we recommend to include in an introductory fact sheet created for financial advisors and potential donors.

- Introduction to Chicago Community Trust
- Opportunities to Give
- Available Philanthropic Services
- Benefits of Donating to a Charitable Trust
- Story about Donors Making a Difference
- Contact information for Tim Bresnahan, Senior Director of Gift Planning

VIII. Stories

Community Engagement Story

On the Table: Students Run Chi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KucvHR9u6bU>

In Brief

This story is about how Marco Galvan attended his first On the Table event in 2014, returned as an ambassador and host in 2015, and attended a breakfast meeting at Maggiano's in 2016. His project, *Students Run Chi* is a youth mentorship program that trains and mentors high school students as it prepares them for participation in the Chicago Marathon.

Result

The goal of the program is to teach the students lessons in endurance which they could use for the rest of their lives. These lessons could be applied to their marriages, college, careers and any situation they might face in life that proves challenging. As a 100% volunteer program, Students Run Chi sought the \$1,000 Acting Up award with the intention to use the funds to pay for shoes, uniforms, nutrition and light hydration during training at the Chicago lakefront till October when the Chicago Marathon takes place. Students Run Chi won the Acting Up Award for 2016.

Recommendations

Our recommendation is to use this story to show how a simple breakfast meeting at an On the Table event could result in a positive impact on different categories of residents of the Chicago community.

- Using Mario's voice, we will develop a video to tell the story of his experience at an On the Table event and the resultant beneficial impact on Chicago's high school students.
- We will use images of actual On the Table events and Students Run Chi training sessions to capture the audience's attention. The mentorship classes, sharing of shoes and other kits to help them with training would be highlighted.
- There will be snippets of interviews with the students to demonstrate the lessons they learned from the program and with volunteers and/or parents to explain how the availability of kits has made a difference to the students' ability to participate and train.
- Finally, we will show the students as they get ready to participate on the day of the marathon, and as they celebrate or share their experiences after the race.
- There would then be a tie-back to how The Chicago Community Trust started it all by making possible Marco's meeting with other community members "On the Table."

Financial Advisor Story

Ray and Susan Gillette: A Second Chapter in Philanthropy

[\(http://cct.org/2015/05/ray-and-susan-gillette-a-second-chapter-in-philanthropy/\)](http://cct.org/2015/05/ray-and-susan-gillette-a-second-chapter-in-philanthropy/)

In Brief

The story of Ray and Susan Gillette highlights the donor audience of the Chicago Community Trust. After successful careers in the advertising field, the two retired and with motivation and determination to give back to the underserved in the Chicago community. The couple worked with the trust to establish grants

and participate on boards and volunteering for various organizations.

Result

The story of the Gillettes proves how the Chicago Community Trust serves a specific audience and that the specific audience has gotten a positive result out of working with the Trust. Since this is a donor story, it also shows how there has been a positive result when it comes to participants earning the grants the Gillettes established.

Currently, this story and others like it are on the Chicago Community Trust website.

Recommendations

- With donor stories like the Gillettes, try incorporating a video aspect to it or making the story a complete video. By doing this, viewers will hear the donors in their own words. Likewise, it provides a different angle as to how the Chicago Community Trust shares its information and stories. Video will also provide an opportunity to film their donors and participants involved with events courtesy of the grants in action.
- Hyperlink the organizations named within the story or provide brief bullet points at the bottom of the story with information on the organization the donors wish to work with. By providing easy access to the people, places and events the Chicago Community Trust works with to build its community and philanthropy, it establishes credibility and helps other who read the content learn more about the organizations.

IX. Strategic Approach

The Chicago Community Trust has succeeded in consistent branding and is perceived as a valuable asset to the Chicago community; however, our research shows that lack of clarity and consistent communication may currently hinder the organization's ability to engage target stakeholders and effectively explain its positive impact on the community. Our team believes that organization and consistently scheduled content will be key in creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the Trust and its audiences. In short, our strategy will:

- Plan social media content to consistently communicate with target audiences
- Organize its website to better/clearly communicate with key stakeholders

Potential Challenges

In our meeting with the Chicago Community Trust, leadership explained that it currently has limited time and employees to complete additional communication tactics. Our recommended tactics are meant to streamline the communications process by organizing previously generated content into a pre-set schedule. If new content becomes sparse, our plan allows for reposting of aged content using themes such as "Throwback Thursday" and "Flashback Friday."

The plan also consists of multiple small, disconnected recommendations, allowing the Chicago Community Trust to pick and choose which tactics best suit their current bandwidth.

X. Communication Tactics

Chicago Community Trust Social Media Tactics

To ensure frequent, clear messaging on each social media platform, we have designed a social media “cheat sheet” along with a social media calendar. These resources outline:

- What language to use to inspire engagement and action
- Best content for specific social media outlets
- Frequency of posts to reach greatest impact on each channel

Additional breakdown and recommendations for the Chicago Community Trust’s social media channels is included in the social media audit on page 12.

Channel	Best Performing Content	Frequency
Facebook	Video/Images	1-2 times per day
Twitter	Quotes/Images	3 times per day AT LEAST
Instagram	Images	1 time per day
LinkedIn	Industry Insights	1 time per day (Mon-Fri)

Although the above suggestions are industry recommendations, it is important to note that content should always serve a purpose and be useful to the targeted audience. If useful/informative content is not readily available, it is preferred to post less often than the recommended frequency. The targeted audience should look to the Chicago Community Trust as a useful, reliable resource.

MONDAY (DATE)				
Time	Title	Copy	Link	Clicks
TWITTER				
8:00 A.M.	Story	"We have food on our plates and clothes to wear," Castleberry says. "It doesn't get any better than that."	http://cct.org/2016/12/helping-families-find-their-way-home/	
10:30 A.M.	Relevant News/Facts about Chicago	"Countless studies have found that generosity, both volunteering and charitable donations, benefits young and old physically and psychologically."	http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/health/sc-hlth-0812-joy-of-giving-20150806-story.html	
12:00 P.M.	CCT Info/Fact	We are here to serve the nonprofit organizations, the generous donors and the thoughtful residents who strive to make a difference.	http://cct.org	
5:00 P.M.	Promotion Upcoming/Current Project	Join us May 16, 2017 for On the Table, the fourth annual forum designed to elevate civic conversation, foster new relationships and inspire action.	https://onthetable.com/	
FACEBOOK				
9:00 A.M.	Story	Beacon helped Castleberry overcome homelessness and pave the way toward self-sufficiency. They connected her family with education, mental health and social services that address the complex and interrelated needs of Chicago's homeless families. "We have food on our plates and clothes to wear," Castleberry says. "It doesn't get	http://cct.org/2016/12/helping-families-find-their-way-home/	
LINKEDIN				
9:00 A.M.	Donor Story- Donors who make a difference	Philanthropy or keeping the ladder down is the responsibility of anyone who has ever been helped by someone. — Bill Lowry, co-founder of the It's Time	http://cct.org/2015/05/bill-and-cheryl-lowry-seize-the-moment-for-change/	

**Sample of Social Media Calendar - Please see Appendix 2 for full calendar template*

Chicago Community Trust Website Tactics

To effectively explain the Chicago Community Trust's mission and purpose to its various audiences, we have crafted multiple "elevator pitches." These informational blurbs have been tailored to communicate the Chicago Community Trust's impact based on the stakeholders' needs and interests.

Elevator Pitches:

Donors & Financial Advisors:

"Committed to working with you every step of the way to find grant opportunities that make your vision of fostering a lasting community change in Chicago a reality."

Nonprofit Partners:

"Dedicated to bringing businesses, local governments and local organizations together to solve pressing

issues in the Chicago community through conversation and sharing of resources.”

Public/Future Civic Leaders:

“Working with you to lead change in Chicago by inspiring philanthropy and engaging residents in service to create a vibrant, strong and healthy community.”

LinkedIn Strategy and Tactics

Chicago Community Trust leadership specifically requested a strategy to better align its LinkedIn profile with financial advisors, as most of the Trust’s donors are referred by this audience. Therefore, our team has crafted a plan that positions the Chicago Community Trust as a reliable resource for financial advisors through content using industry knowledge and storytelling to appeal to both the mental and emotional needs of advisors.

Because LinkedIn is most commonly used as a social channel for professionals, it is imperative that the Chicago Community Trust’s content on this site provides useful information to establish a relationship with its target audience. In this case, the primary target audience is financial advisors and potential donors with the secondary target being current and potential nonprofit partners.

Recommendations

To become a reliable resource for financial advisors and potential donors, we recommend that the Chicago Community Trust provide advice to financial advisors through weekly bylined articles (i.e. long form posts) from Tim Bresnahan. As stated in our meeting, the Trust has previously-written content that will provide a steady base for posts. The topics of future articles can be determined by monitoring the engagement of these posts. Highly popular topics can motivate more in-depth information in future posts. Furthermore, time of year/season can also play a role in determining relevant article topics. For example, during the first few months of the year when taxes are weighing heavily on the minds of all, the Chicago Community Trust can publish articles focusing on the tax benefits of philanthropic endeavors. The goal of these posts are to make financial advisors’ jobs easier and to build trust with this unique audience. By becoming a reliable resource for financial advisors, they will be more likely to turn to the Chicago Community Trust for their clients’ needs.

Because LinkedIn is also popular among other key stakeholders and non-profit partners, all communication cannot revolve around financial advice for advisors. The Trust can also regularly post content that showcases donors that make a difference. This will appeal to the emotional side of financial advisors, as well as displaying how nonprofits will benefit from partnering with the Chicago Community Trust.

Our research suggests that the Chicago Community Trust should post 20 times per month, or once a day Monday through Friday, which should allow it to reach 60 percent of its target audience (Lee, 2014). These posts can include long form posts (bylines from Bresnahan), links to relevant stories on the Chicago Community Trust website, or links to relevant news articles and blog posts.

Beyond LinkedIn

Informational content can and should extend beyond LinkedIn into financial trade magazines to further the relationship with potential donors and financial advisors. Possible outlets to contribute to include *Financial Advisor*, *Financial Planning*, *Investment Advisor*, *Wealth Management*, *Investment News*, and

Research. The Chicago Community Trust can submit bylines to these publications or make Bresnahan available for interviews. Positioning Bresnahan as a published thought leader in this sector will increase his credibility and also increase the reach of his articles.

XI. WEBSITE AUDIT

Please see Appendix 3 for additional information and audit template.

Branding & Consistency

Findings

Through the website audit, we found that the information regarding the organizational and communication goals, target audiences and key messages of the Chicago Community Trust is present, but it is scattered and not clearly defined. One of the strongest aspects of the Chicago Community Trust website is its consistency with color and image. The images prove how the Chicago Community Trust is committed to service and helping the Chicago area through a wide-ranging audience from the younger generation to the older.

A major weakness of the website is its lack of a clearly defined mission statement, which hurts the diverse audiences the Chicago Community Trust wants to target. Including a brief statement on the homepage that clearly states the mission statement would help viewers grasp the concept of the Chicago Community Trust.

Language is consistent on the website, but can be hard to grasp and may appear foreign to visitors unfamiliar with grants, advising and financial knowledge. The “What We Offer” page was the most beneficial in explaining the full breadth of the organization’s work because it broke down what it does for donors, potential donors and participants.

The staff page was enjoyable and easy to understand and access. Providing brief bios of all CCT employees helped put a personal tone to the internal workings of the Chicago Community Trust. It also provides the Chicago Community Trust with a lot of credibility as it recognizes the many accolades listed in staff members’ credentials.

Recommendations

Develop a clear mission statement and clearly display it on the homepage and about page of the website.

Rework language for the specific audiences the Chicago Community Trust caters to. We recommend developing additional tabs on the Chicago Community Trust homepage that states, “Donors”, “Prospective Donors” and “Civic Leaders”. Within those tabs, provide information tailored to speak to each individual audience group about their current or potential role with the Chicago Community Trust. One possible way to execute this would be to develop a 30-second “elevator pitch” for each of your audience groups as noted above in the website tactics.

Engagement

Findings

Throughout the Chicago Community Trust website, stories and images are present that show how the

Trust is engaged with members around the community. As a staff, the Chicago Community Trust writes stories and articles that provide a personal feel and thought provoking discussion surrounding subjects like education, homelessness, public safety and more. The site also writes about donors and the projects they work on to help the Chicago community.

The website makes it easy to click around and see the diverse work of the Chicago Community Trust with its stories, but it also lacks organization when it comes to the specific subjects or people the stories are about.

Recommendations

Condense stories to primarily one page - the story page. Within the page, list specific topics like education, homelessness and public safety. Provide relevant stories under each heading.

For the “Insights” page that also provides stories, consider featuring a specific topic for the month that are listed as viewers scroll toward the bottom of the page. Picking one topic, like housing for example, the CCT can provide a clearer understanding of the subject as well as consistency when sharing news and stories on the website.

Frequency and Schedule

Findings

Information seems to be updated on the site. You can tell the Chicago Community Trust is active on its website due to the amount of current stories available throughout the pages and the datelines that follow. There is not a 2016 Annual Report on the website yet.

Recommendations

Determine how to provide a timeline of recent news or stories published on the Chicago Community Trust website. Developing a cleaner grid for how the stories are displayed on the website could be a solution. Likewise, by organizing the stories in a fashion similar to the recommendation in the “Engagement” description listed above, date lines will enable viewers to easily see most recent news.

XII. SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT

Please see Appendix 4 for additional information and audit template.

Branding & Consistency

Findings

Through the social media audit, we found that branding was consistent across all Chicago Community Trust social channels. The language and imagery used were consistent with that used on the organization’s website and promoted the communications goal of driving traffic back to the Chicago Community Trust website through the various social media channels.

Specifically, the language on each channel spoke directly with the intended audience for the most part. Facebook and Twitter, for example, are all managed to speak with the general consumer audience and briefly review the organization’s mission to spark interest.

On the other hand, the intention of the LinkedIn page is to speak directly with a professional audience

including potential donors, nonprofits, and especially financial advisors, and the language used in the organization’s biography is appropriately formal and informative.

The branding present in the organization’s social media channels portrays a brand that is community driven and caters to diverse groups within that community.

Recommendations

If Instagram is only used for one specific campaign, as mentioned in our meeting with Chicago Community Trust communications team, the campaign should be described within the bio section and provide a website link to an additional information page on the CCT website. This will allow for higher engagement by educating the audience and will also support the organization’s goal of driving website traffic.

Engagement

Findings

Engagement across social media channels falls into the average/slightly below average range. Data to calculate engagement rate was available for Facebook and Twitter, with Twitter having an engagement rate of 0.67 percent and Facebook having an engagement rate of 1.1 percent. Media standards suggest that average engagement rates on these platforms is 1 percent engagement, meaning that Facebook is on par with the industry, but there is room for improvement on both platforms.

Through our analysis, we found that top-performing posts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram each contained text that provided more context about the image or article attached to the post – not those that simply restated the title of the article. On Instagram, it was also apparent that posts containing multiple hashtags related to the image inspired much higher engagement.

Although LinkedIn is not currently being used to reach the organization’s goal for the outlet, insights can still be used to tailor future posts. The top-performing post was one that linked to an upcoming conference and asked people to follow a link for more information.

Recommendation

Because the goal of the social media channels is not only awareness, but also action, the CCT should imitate previous posts that have inspired the most engagement. The organization should also use messaging that asks people to act and inspires them to change how they feel and think about the suggested topic.

1. Chicago Community Trust informed our team that the overall goal of the organization’s social media channels was to drive traffic to its website. However, we noticed that the majority of posts do not contain a call to action. We recommend that future posts regularly ask people to “click,” “read,” or “learn more” and attach relevant links back to specific stories or the organization’s website. By telling followers *how* to find more information, they will be more likely to click through to the website.
2. Although Instagram is specifically attached to a separate campaign, this channel can also be used to drive traffic to the organization’s website. Posts should regularly state, “Click on the link in our bio to learn...” which gives followers a way to further interact with the organization’s mission.

3. Though we do not recommend using “click bait” tactics, we believe that the “teaser text” within posts should contain compelling information that sparks interest. Copy should leave people feeling inspired, as the mission of CCT is to inspire change within Chicago. This is evident in the posts with the highest engagement. These posts also shared stories that may inspire people to take part in the CCT mission. One example of this is in Facebook’s top performing post, which reads:

#1 in our Top Five Most Read Stories of 2016 features Berto Aguayo, a former south side gang member that discovered leadership, law and local politics through Mikva Challenge.

“I shouldn’t be the exception,” Aguayo says. “Someone believed in me, gave me an opportunity. That’s what I hope to do.”

Thank you for joining us on this journey as we looked back on our top stories of 2016!

This post discusses an issue that is a current news topic, highly relevant to Chicago, and hints at the story of an underdog. Future posts should contain just enough of the story without revealing the solution to engage followers.

4. Instead of describing imagery on Instagram, posts can provide background information on the subject of the posts. Connect people with the emotion of the beautiful imagery, and they may be more likely to engage.
5. LinkedIn should be used to provide followers with relevant, useful information to inspire top engagement. However, storytelling tactics can be used occasionally to reveal how donors’ lives have been affected. This will not alienate your nonprofit stakeholders, as the storytelling will also reveal how nonprofits have benefited from financial donors.

Frequency and Schedule

Findings

Time of Day: Top performing posts were most often published in the morning, during prime commute times and during lunch hour at noon.

Posts per week: Excluding LinkedIn, all outlets regularly posted two to three times per week. Posts on LinkedIn were rare and were mostly related to job openings at the organization.

Recommendation

Time of Day: Because most engagement occurs in the morning, we recommend that the Chicago Community Trust post in the morning between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. If multiple daily posts are scheduled for one channel, we recommend clustering these posts during morning and evening commute times and during lunch break hour (approximately noon).

Frequency: When determining how often to post on each channel, there are multiple viewpoints on finding the balance between being informative and being bothersome to followers. We recommend that Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn channels should post daily during the workweek to remain top

of mind.

Considering the current engagement rate on Twitter is below average at 0.67 percent, the trust should aim to increase engagement. Because the “lifespan” of a tweet is much shorter than posts on alternative social channels, Chicago Community Trust should aim to post three to four times per day on Twitter. By posting more often, the organization will have a higher chance of engaging with more of its followers.

Facebook is currently the channel that creates the most engagement. Chicago Community Trust should take advantage of this audience by remaining top of mind through daily posts using recommendations above. If new content is not readily available, the organization can use social trends such as “Throwback Thursday” or “Flashback Friday” to repost/share some of the organization’s most inspiring projects.

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