

MEJO 332 Public Relations Writing
APPLES Client Portfolio
Exchange Family Center
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Communication Audit

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Executive Summary

This communication audit was completed by a team of students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, studying public relations, in an attempt to aid Exchange Family Center promote its brand identity. This report details the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats present within EFC's website, social media and newsletter. The EFC is a nonprofit organization with a mission of providing free, bilingual counseling, coaching and training to families in Durham County. Through interviews and observations of EFC's PR efforts, our team compiled a list of recommendations and a SWOT analysis to see where EFC can improve its efforts and where it can capitalize off of them. From January 29 to May 1, 2024, we conducted Zoom interviews with our point of contact to understand what PR efforts EFC could benefit from.

The nonprofit's website excels in the way it is organized. It features a user-friendly menu bar with descriptive tabs, has a prominent placement of a "Donate" button and highlights client testimonials. All of these strengths reinforce the clarity of EFC's mission throughout the site. The weaknesses in EFC are attributed to the outdated content on its website as well as the lack of cohesion in its social media posts. These weaknesses may lead to confusion and frustration for users of its platforms.

The EFC can benefit from creating partnerships with local universities to enhance outreach efforts, maintaining consistency among social media pages and sending out a quarterly newsletter. Each of these opportunities will bolster the organization's engagement. The threats to the organization stem from the lack of website updates and brand identity. There are certain tabs in need of an update, for example, the child abuse in Durham section on the homepage could be updated to better reflect the information EFC wants to convey. Similarly, the infographics used to advertise events should better reflect EFC's brand identity through colors, fonts and logos.

For EFC's website, we recommend it incorporates a banner on all pages of the site. We also recommended that EFC provide regular updates to its website and fix outdated content like the "Reality of Child Abuse in Durham" section as well as fixing the picture formats for the board of directors. For the newsletter, we recommend that the organization implement a quarterly newsletter for updates to clients and donors. For social media, we recommend making a consistent posting schedule to raise engagement through a unified font and color palette.

Introduction

The Exchange Family Center is a local Durham-based nonprofit organization that strengthens family bonds through counseling and therapy workshops. Its mission revolves around preventing child abuse and neglect in Durham by enhancing protective factors such as strong family support, strong social networks, employment and education. Services extend to children from birth to age 17 and are provided in both English and Spanish. The EFC provides services tailored to each family's needs, with various success stories across all ages.

Established in 1992, EFC began its journey toward addressing child abuse prevention and family support. The Family Support Program was created by serving its first families in June 1992. By 1993, EFC had gained significant recognition within the community by serving an average of 16 families each month. As the years progressed, EFC expanded its services to meet the community's evolving needs. In 1998, the Parenting of Adolescents Program was introduced, offering in-home counseling for juvenile offenders and at-risk youth, filling a critical gap in support services. The addition of the Early Childhood Outreach Program in 1999, funded by Durham's Partnership for Children, further highlighted EFC's commitment to addressing the challenges faced by families with young children, mainly focusing on preventing child expulsion from childcare. These initiatives paved

the way for collaborations, training and the adoption of evidence-based models, ensuring the EFC remains a cornerstone for support for families in Durham County.

Currently, EFC serves about 400 families a year, which it hopes to double in the coming years. For 2024, EFC outlined several strategic goals aligning with its vision to prevent child abuse in Durham. These goals are to hire additional staff to increase the range of services and strengthen their internal company culture to foster professional growth and board development. As a nonprofit, EFC relies on volunteers and donations, with many opportunities to help, such as participating in its pickleball tournament or volunteering for professional services such as marketing, development and finance.

Among EFC's partnerships is APPLES Service-Learning, which provides students with opportunities to work with local nonprofits and create content that promotes brand awareness. The EFC also partners with local organizations such as Alliance Behavioral Health Care and NC Partnership for Children.

Methodology

To analyze the effectiveness and clarity of Exchange Family Center as an organization, our group began with an initial assessment of the organization's website and social media. We initially found several of their weaknesses through these forms of communication. Meeting with Olivia Gibney and then Leah Santibañez, the Executive Director of EFC, we gained vital information regarding these particular weaknesses and their goals for moving forward. Working together for several weeks, we assessed several forms of communication within the organization, including its newsletter, website and social media. We decided to focus on these areas based on our initial observation and the goals of our point of contact, Leah. It was our overall mission to supply the organization with the most useful communication audit to help them effectively communicate with their intended audience.

Audit Diary

Date	Activity	Description
1/22/2024	Introduction	We connected with Olivia Gibney, the Development Associate of Exchange Family Center, via email to begin the relationship with our client.
1/29/2024	First Zoom Meeting	In the first meeting with Olivia, she explained the organization's mission and we surveyed her to gauge the needs of the organization. Also, we went over the syllabus with her to explain our role as APPLES service-learning students.
1/30/2024	Client Research	We researched the client to get an understanding of its mission and familiarize ourselves with the interworking of a nonprofit.
2/4/2024	Website Audit	We each conducted a communication audit of our client's website through a SWOT analysis.
2/7/2024	Fact Sheet	We individually created fact sheets to address the organization's frequently asked questions about their programs or upcoming events.

2/13/2024	Group Meeting on Facetime	Our group met on Facetime to discuss content for our next meeting and create our project management timeline.
2/14/2024	Second Zoom Meeting	Our team reviewed the website audit with Olivia. We also discussed what our individual media kit pieces would be based on EFC's needs
2/25/2024	Newsletter Templates	We created three newsletter templates for EFC.
2/26/2024	Third Zoom Meeting	We presented three newsletter templates to Olivia and got feedback on how to combine them to fit EFC's needs. We also reviewed our project management timeline with Olivia.
3/4/2024	Fourth Zoom Meeting	Olivia announced that she would be leaving EFC and introduced us to Leah Santibañez, our new point of contact. We discussed our work thus far and gained insights from Leah on future directions.
4/1/2024	Revise Newsletter Templates	Class was not held during this day so our group met to prepare for our next meeting with Leah. We fixed our previous newsletter templates to reflect feedback.
4/2/2024	Fifth Zoom Meeting	Presented the new templates to Leah and discussed what she wanted to see in the media list.
4/8/2024	Profiles	Our group wrote profiles on different individuals who work or volunteer at EFC. This provided the organization with content that they could use to update the staff page on the website or to include in a quarterly newsletter.
4/15/2024	Direct Mail Campaigns	Each member of our group wrote a direct mail campaign letter that the EFC could potentially send out to individuals who have signed up with their email. Some emails were information about the services offered at the organization, explaining volunteer opportunities and encouraging individuals to get involved.
4/23/2024	Sixth Zoom Meeting	In the sixth meeting of the semester with Leah, we wrapped up our final media kit pieces for her and the organization.
4/23/2024	Interviews	Individually, each member of the group interviewed a member of our client's organization. After each interview, a profile was written up as a piece from the media kit that the organization can use as a promotional or informational tool.
4/30/2024	Seventh Zoom Meeting	In the seventh and final meeting with our client, we expressed our gratitude for working with the organization. We also went over our communication audit and the recommendations for EFC.

5/1/2024	Communication Audit	Our group completed the communication audit along with our portfolios and submitted it on Canvas.
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SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

One of the Exchange Family Center's strengths is the organization of its website. There is an easily navigable menu bar with descriptive tabs that outline the organization's important information. This includes information like its programs, how to help and upcoming events. The website's organization allows clients to easily find the information they need at first glance.

With donations at the core of any nonprofit, EFC makes sure to promote its "Donate" button. On every single page of the website, the button is displayed in a footer, a header with big bold letters on the homepage. By doing so, EFC provides a streamlined process for donors. The social media is also in each footer allowing clients to easily navigate to different sites.

The nonprofit also showcases its success stories from clients on the homepage and in the "professionals" tab, demonstrating the tangible impact of EFC's work. This transparency allows clients to quickly witness the positive outcomes achieved by its services— instilling trust and motivating potential clients.

The mission statement and services of EFC are clearly stated throughout the website through every piece of content. The "Professionals" tab details all of EFC's services to clients with a breakdown of the prices, hours and therapy approaches depending on age. The mission statement is also easily found and descriptive in its goals and how to achieve them. A strong mission statement that is cohesive with the overall site is demonstrative of the EFC brand.

Weaknesses:

As a nonprofit organization, there are several internal weaknesses to the potential growth of Exchange Family Center that stem from the lack of cohesion and brand identity throughout its platforms. For example, under the "Board of Directors" tab each picture is very different with some ranging in professionalism. Unlike the staff pictures, which are all uniform in their lighting and format.

The organization's social media presence also suffers from a lack of cohesion. The EFC has accounts on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. The social media posts that are put on all platforms are absent of a unified color scheme. The posts use random colors and templates that contribute to a visually unappealing online presence and call into question the professionalism of the organization. Additionally, the organization rarely displays their logo on their social media posts.

Furthermore, there is a section on the homepage titled "The Reality of Child Abuse in Durham." This section is outdated with a link for users to, "find more here" leading to a confusing document with no information on child abuse in Durham. Since this link is displayed on the homepage, it is likely users have clicked this and been frustrated with the lack of information.

Opportunities:

As a growing nonprofit organization, Exchange Family Center has areas it can grow. The location in Durham is opportunity-filled due to being near three major universities that can be marketed to students for volunteers and internships. The EFC could create partnerships with Duke University, North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Firstly, the partnerships can tap into a pool of students who could serve as interns who can bring new perspectives

to areas like communications. Secondly, these collaborations could introduce EFC to a group of student volunteers for its community events.

The organization has many different social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, that could be leveraged in a way to increase engagement and make more people aware of their mission—leading to increased donations. Despite their presence on social media, EFC currently lacks a cohesive theme across its posts. By utilizing the social media templates we’ve developed, the organization could have a more consistent and impactful online presence. Here, they could also promote the events.

The organization could stand to gain from sending out a consistent newsletter. On the website, the EFC has a “sign up for news and events” function, but the newsletter has been inactive in recent months. With the new template our team created, EFC could create a stream of consistent communication with potential donors and EFC clients.

Threats:

Exchange Family Center has many strengths from its mission statement to its easy-to-navigate website. However, many factors threaten these strengths stemming from the lack of updates on the website and social media organization. For example, throughout the entire website, there is a newsletter sign-up tab at the footer of each page, but this newsletter is inactive. Clients might find this feature frustrating when they sign up for the newsletter expecting a message within 2-4 months only to receive nothing.

This highlights a larger issue with a lot of the content on the website in need of an update. In the annual reports section, the last annual report uploaded is from 2020, which may cause clients confusion in the lack of transparency or whether EFC is still operating. Also, on social media, the information is outdated regarding the “Return to Play” event which was canceled. There is still an infographic with the incorrect date and time with no update on the cancellation.

In looking at EFC’s social media, specifically its Facebook page, there is no brand identity communicated through its infographics or posts. Each infographic promoting an event or cause is completely different in color schemes and fonts. This makes the social media page look jumbled with little coordination. The Return to Play infographic, while informative, does not match the brand of EFC causing clients to question the overall professionalism of the event. Furthermore, on social media, there is very little engagement with the posts it makes, forcing clients to question the validity of the organization or the events.

Recommendations

Website:

An organization's website is crucial to its PR efforts in providing clients with accurate information regarding the organization. Exchange Family Center has an organized website with plenty of information from events, to ways people can volunteer and help. However, if made, a few improvements can shift the user's experience. One example is the way they advertise events. Social media is a great way to promote events to different audiences however the website can also do this with the presence of a small banner on every page a user might click on. There is already an “Events” tab on the website, however, for upcoming events within the same month, the banner can notify clients of upcoming events even when they are not searching for it.

While an organization's website is the cornerstone of any nonprofit, its homepage is the most important aspect as this is a client's first experience with the organization. The homepage is great, detailing EFC’s success stories and some of the services they offer however one issue is the presence of

the child abuse in Durham section. While this section is important in detailing why EFC's mission statement centers around abuse and neglect, the link to "find out more" is confusing. The link forces users to click on another page, find their county and then pull up a confusing report that highlights very little on the "Reality of Child Abuse in Durham." To fix this, make the child abuse in Durham page a separate tab and then make a document compiling the statistics EFC wants their clients to know about child abuse for better readability.

Regarding professionalism, EFC maintains its brand identity throughout the website; however, the board of directors page needs a slight update. Maintaining consistency across the website to enhance its overall cohesion is essential. While the staff page offers a sense of professionalism with its uniform headshots, the same cannot be said for the board of directors page. Here, the headshots were captured in varying locations, with lower-quality cameras and failed to align with the organization's desired professional brand image. We recommend that the organization redo this page by acquiring updated headshots for the Board of Directors, ensuring a more cohesive and polished team representation.

To maintain engagement, it is important for the EFC to regularly update the website with its latest events and annual reports. The last annual report that the EFC displayed on its website dates back to 2020. This may raise concerns among clients and donors regarding the organization's transparency in recent years. Additionally, the EFC hosted a pickleball tournament on April 14 but has yet to remove the corresponding tab from their website. To ensure consistent communication and eliminate confusion, we recommend that the EFC prioritize keeping its website up-to-date with current information.

Newsletter:

Our team recommends that the Exchange Family Center send out a quarterly newsletter using the template we created for it. This is a beneficial way to communicate with community members about new or upcoming events, a background about the organization, new leadership hires and information on how to get involved. If, however, the organization does not believe it will be able to get this newsletter running within the next month, we recommend that it take away the "sign up for news and events" function on its website.

Social Media:

Exchange Family Center is present on several kinds of social media, including Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. The organization often features its community events, such as its pickleball tournament as well as company updates. Some of its more effective posts include those that feature its in-person events, such as their day at Karma Keg. Its calendar posts, as well, are extremely effective at giving insight into the inner workings of the company.

Some of the graphics, however, fail to highlight the overall mission of the company. There isn't a consistent theme to the organization's graphics. With updated graphics and a cohesive theme that exemplifies the brand of EFC, it can continue to provide updates on its events and organization effectively. A consistent posting schedule with company updates, events and mission graphics would also aid in creating engagement across different platforms with a younger audience of volunteers.

We provided EFC with six Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn templates to use in the future. These include calls for volunteers and donations as well as general graphics highlighting the mission of EFC with a cohesive color palette, font and format. This will help EFC to effectively share its mission through a unique design theme.