Communication Plan:

John Mayer

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**BACKGROUND**

John Mayer is a 33-year-old recording artist with a successful global music career. Despite often being the subject of tabloid fodder, Mayer is well respected in the music world and is known for his exceptional guitar, song writing, and producing skills. Originally from Fairfield, Connecticut, Mayer attended the Berklee College of Music for one year prior to pursuing a solo music career in Atlanta, Georgia. After several years in Atlanta, Mayer landed a recording contract with Columbia Records’ Aware Records. Since being signed by a major record label, Mayer has achieved international success; two of his pop albums have gone mutli-platinum, and he has won seven Grammys including Best Pop Vocal Album and Best Male Rock Vocal Performance.

In the music community, John Mayer is well respected. His music is acoustic based with heavy influence from blues and jazz. Mayer is primarily a solo artist yet has experimented with joint projects such as The John Mayer Trio in 2005. Mayer has dabbled in other realms of entertainment such as standup comedy and writing.

In addition to entertainment, Mayer has great interest in philanthropy as well. His “Back To You” Fund otherwise known as the John Mayer Auction, which, according to the website www.JohnMayerAuction.com, auctions front-row concert tickets, backstage passes, and fan memorabilia, is a non-profit organization that donates “100% of the net proceeds” among “a wide range of organizations, which support programs in health care, education, support for the arts, and development of talent.“ Mayer also has a passion for environmental issues. In 2007, Mayer founded Another Kind Of Green, a green effort that according to its mission statement at www.AKOG.ORG, spanned “from the belief that small steps toward environmental sustainability can effect widespread change when multiplied by a great number of participants.” Another Kind Of Green works on integrating green practices into concert venues and music tours. Another Kind of Green was implemented onto Mayer’s 2010 Battle Studies Summer Tour but received little to no press or recognition.

Mayer has also been extremely active on social media. He has a blog on his official website, which is linked to an account on the popular blog website Tumblr.com. He updates this blog semi-regularly. His Twitter page was extremely popular as it had 3.7 million followers until he deleted it in September of 2010. According to a CBS News article titled “John Mayer Deletes Twitter Account, Leaving Behind 3.7 Million Followers,” published on September 14, 2010, his representative claimed that Mayer deleted his Twitter at the end of his most recent tour in order to refocus on creating new music in the studio. Mayer had previously used his Twitter page at least once a day, often apologizing for his transgressions with the media and announcing free concerts for fans.

Professionally, Mayer has had a very successful career. Yet as with many successful professionals in the entertainment business, Mayer’s personal life is often the topic of gossip and criticism. In addition, he has had a tumultuous relationship with the media. Specifically, Mayer’s romantic life has been the subject of many gossip magazines, blogs, television shows, etc. Mayer’s romantic activities have not been inconspicuous as he is often seen out in public with the woman he is dating. In the past, Mayer has either publically dated or been romantically linked to high profile celebrities such as Jennifer Love Hewitt, Jennifer Aniston, Jessica Simpson, Kim Kardashian, Taylor Swift, and Minka Kelly.

Mayer’s relationship with the media is complicated. He has frequently been overly candid in interviews, particularly about his personal life, which has resulted in public relations trouble. For example in February of 2010, Mayer commented on his relationships with singer and reality star Jessica Simpson and actress Jennifer Aniston in a Playboy Magazine interview titled “Playboy Interview: John Mayer.” The interview was littered with crude and disheartening remarks about his relationship with both women. For example, he referred to his relationship with Simpson as a “drug” and infamously referred to their personal relationship as “sexual napalm.” This comment brought him negative publicity. In the same interview he described intimate details of his relationship with Jennifer Aniston, such as how his Twitter use attributed to the end of their relationship. The comments about his romantic life were among other candid responses to inappropriate and sexually charged questions. Mayer also spoke about his occasional marijuana and used an extremely inappropriate racial slur during the interview.

In an interview with Rolling Stone Magazine published on January 22, 2010, titled “John Mayer In His Own Words,” Mayer publically noted that “I love being a famous musician but I don't like the [intimate details of my] relationship to be known. It just makes me severely, severely uncomfortable, as I believe it would make anybody uncomfortable.” This quote was given exactly one month before John Mayer’s controversial Playboy Magazine article was published. In addition, throughout the Rolling Stone Interview, Mayer still alludes to details of his personal life.

**SITUATION ANALYSIS**

While both the Rolling Stone and Playboy Magazine interviews came under fire in the early months of 2010, Mayer has recently been in the news again. However, this is not due to an inappropriate interview. One of the most high profile personalities Mayer has been linked to is country music star Taylor Swift. Swift, currently age 20, has achieved similar musical success as Mayer, winning Grammys and other awards, as well as being credited with the difficult crossover from country music to Top 40. Her overall superstardom can be attributed to her wholesome reputation. She is often referred to as “America’s Sweetheart,” and is known for writing heartfelt love songs. Unlike her other young counterparts such as Miley Cyrus or Lindsay Lohan, Swift has steered clear of the temptations of Hollywood and has lead a family-driven, grounded life thus far.

On October 25, 2010 she released her third studio album entitled “Speak Now.” It was slowly released to critics for review, who found particular interest in one song, “Dear John.” Swift and Mayer were rumored to have been dating in late January of 2010 while they collaborated professionally on one of Mayer’s songs, “Half of My Heart.” Mayer and Swift did not confirm the relationship and it remains unverified gossip to this day. Yet critics were shocked to hear the release of “Dear John,” which is said to chronicle the relationship between Mayer and Swift. Below are some of the comments from critics regarding the song:

*“Six and a half minutes long and flagrantly provocative, it’s a deeply uncomfortable song, its protagonist anguished and violated. ‘Don’t you think I was too young to be messed with?’ she asks. ‘The girl in the dress/Cried the whole way home.’… Still, whatever he did — or whatever Ms. Swift would like to suggest that he did — must have been brutal.“* – The New York Times

*“The already-much-dissected bluesy guitar ballad "Dear John" deftly skewers* [*rumored ex-paramour John Mayer*](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/celebritology/2010/10/is_taylor_swifts_dear_john_abo.html) *("All the girls that you've run dry/Have tired, lifeless eyes/Cause you burned them out"), whose already battered reputation may never recover.”* – The Washington Post

*“Dear John,” is the one that parents may be reluctant to let their tweens hear—not because there’s any sexual explicitness to it, but because its ravaged emotions in the wake of an ill-advised fling feels like a cold slap in the face to kids who’ve barely exited the Disney princess years. It’s a brilliant song, and not necessarily an easy one to listen to…It would be a pretty devastating track with or without the knowledge that it is allegedly about John Mayer, with whom Swift was rumored to have a brief tryst.”* – The Holly Wood Reporter

*“Swift is naming names during the media cycle accompanying this release -– the guitarist John “The Player” Mayer is the cradle-robber in “Dear John…”* – The LA Times

Swift never officially confirmed that Mayer was the subject of the song. Media outlets continue to speculate that the harsh lyrics are about him. This had less than stellar results for Mayer in the press.

Because it was unknown that Swift had intentions to release a song about Mayer, he was unable to coordinate any preemptive attempt to allay the bad press. Since the release of “Speak Now,” Mayer has remained silent about the controversial song. It is important to note that upon completion of this plan an additional story about Mayer’s love life had began to break. Entertainment news and blogs now claim that Mayer has had a romantic relationship with married, Food Network star Giada De Laurentiis. Mayer’s representative told the press that this rumor was untrue but this has not stopped speculation.

Because of his controversial status in the media and in response to the Taylor Swift song crisis as well as the budding news story concerning Giada De Laurentiis, we have constructed the following strategic communication plan for Mayer to overcome his unfortunate public reputation as a “womanizer” or “ladies man.” This plan seeks to transform Mayer’s image in the mainstream media from negative to positive.

**OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this strategic communication plan is to overhaul John Mayer’s public persona as a celebrity “womanizer” or “heart breaker.” Despite his past discretions with the media this plan will work to refurbish his reputation as one of Hollywood’s “bad boys” and refocus Mayer’s reputation on the successful, talented musician he is. In addition to shifting media focus from Mayer’s personal life to his musical career, this plan also intends to incorporate Mayer’s passion for philanthropy into his musical endeavors.

The target audience of this campaign should be not only then general American public and American news and media organizations, but more specifically, avid celebrity and entertainment enthusiasts ages 18 to 34. This targeted population is often the celebrity opinion leader among large social groups and would be more likely to spread word of Mayer’s new endeavors among their respective social groups. Furthermore, aspects of the campaign should also appeal to young women being that they are mostly likely to have been negatively affected by Mayer’s comments on his romantic relationships.

The campaign would, of course, also target already Mayer fans that would be most likely to purchase a John Mayer album and concert tickets. In addition, this plan should take serious aim at potential Mayer fans that have strayed from his music due to his reputation.

 In order to successfully implement this plan, we present the following recommendations:

**Recommendation One:** In order to maintain relevancy, we advise that Mayer release a new album within the next three months. Doing so will ensure that Mayer receives adequate press in relation to the recent media blitz over the release of Swift’s identifying song and the burgeoning news story concerning De Laurentiis.

**Recommendation Two:** We advise that a subsequent tour be planned and executed in support of the previously mentioned album. This will fully maximize press opportunities and media exposure to support the renovation of Mayer’s public image.

Should this be of interest to the client, we further suggest the following strategies to ensure maximum effectiveness.

**STRATEGIES**

**Strategy 1:** Create a marketing and communication plan for John Mayer’s new album based on his philanthropy efforts.

**Strategy 2:** Create a marketing and communication plan for a national tour supporting John Mayer’s new album based on his philanthropy events.

**Strategy 3:** Pursue a press tour in support of both the new album and tour.

**Strategy 4:** Reactivate Mayer’s social media presence.

**Strategy 5:** Maintain privacy concerning Mayer’s personal life.

**TACTICS**

Tactics to be achieved should be in correlation with Mayer’s desired philanthropies. In order to achieve each strategy the following tactics are suggested:

**Strategy 1:** Create a marketing and communication plan for John Mayer’s new album based on his philanthropy efforts. The marketing plan should integrate The John Mayer Auction, Another Kind of Green, and other environmental Philanthropies.

**Tactic 1**: Advertise for online purchase of Mayer’s new album in MP3 format through mediums such as Amazon.com and iTunes in order to eliminate paper production CD materials.

**Tactic 2**: Release a limited number of CDs to eliminate paper production. This will not only make the CD more exclusive but will also be environmentally friendly.

**Tactic 3**: Make album artwork and materials that would normally be included with the purchase of a CD available online with the purchase of the album in MP3 format.

**Tactic 4**: For every album sold strictly online, one dollar will be donated to Another Kind of Green or the environmental philanthropy of Mayer’s choice.

**Tactic 5**: The John Mayer Auction will auction off backstage passes, signed merchandise, exclusive concert tickets, as well as copies of the limitedly released CD format of the new album. As always, the profits from this auction will be donated to the philanthropy of Mayer’s choice.

**Strategy 2:** Create a marketing and communication plan for a national tour supporting John Mayer’s new album based on his philanthropy events.

**Tactic 1:** The entire tour will be environmentally friendly and should include all of Another Kind of Green’s initiatives, which, according to their website are consisted of but are not limited to: “Extensive waste reduction and recycling backstage food backstage, biodegradable and compostable catering products, local and organic food backstage, reusable water bottles for band and crew to reduce plastic bottle waste, eco-friendly merchandise, non-toxic cleaners and post-consumer recycled bathroom tissue on tour buses, calculating and neutralizing the carbon footprint from tour buses, trucks, flights and venue energy use by supporting renewable energy.”

**Tactic 2:** All merchandise sold will cut a profit to Another Kind of Green or the green philanthropy of Mayer’s choice.

**Tactic 3:** All promotional materials used to support the tour including posters and/or billboards, etc. should be environmentally friendly.

**Tactic 4:** Push the venues for use of environmentally friendly practices. **Tactic 5:** Create a fan initiative such as a contest promoting environmentally friendly practices. For example, fans who are attending a tour date should be encouraged to bring reusable bottles rather than purchase bottled beverages. One lucky fan caught using their reusable bottle will have their seats upgraded and win a prize.

**Strategy 3:** As Mayer has previously pursued tours with environmental efforts, it is important to note that they have lacked sufficient press and media coverage. A high profile press tour in support of both the new album and tour, mainly covering the environmental efforts and fan auctions, should be heavily pursued.

**Tactic 1:** Press tour should include woman friendly shows such as The View, The Talk, and Good Morning America.

* NOTE: Good Morning America should be high priority due to their Fall and Summer Concert Series, which showcases artists in New York City.

**Tactic 2:** The focus of these interview will be, primarily, for Mayer to discuss his new album, supporting tour, and how his philanthropy efforts have been integrated into both.

**Tactic 3:** Mayer will under go extensive media training in preparation to answer questions about his personal life appropriately. He should also be able to properly answer questions about his previous transgressions with the media. He should not divulge intimate details of his dating life. It is recommended that his answers concerning questions about his personal life remain ambiguous and that interviews and press events maintain professional discussion.

**Strategy 4:** Reactivate Mayer’s social media presence.

**Tactic 1:** Reactivate Mayer’s Twitter page. Use this page as a marketing tool to promote the new album and tour. For example, use Twitter as an active way to reach out to fans concerning the John Mayer Auction and Another Kind of Green contests described in Tactic 4 of Strategy 2.

**Tactic 2:** Renew regular use of Mayer’s blog. Upon completion of this plan, Mayer’s most recent blog post was published on September 12, 2010. A blogging campaign that would showcase stories on the inner works of making his tour as green as possible would be effective. This could also be useful as a video blog. Other initiatives such similar to this should also be considered.

**Strategy 5:** Maintain privacy concerning Mayer’s personal life.

**Tactic 1:** Mayer should not divulge details about his dating life.

**Tactic 2:**  It is recommended that while pursuing this plan, Mayer refrain from dating anyone, particularly anyone that is considered by the media to be high profile. Should he choose to do so, he should not comment on his relationship and the relationship should remain as inconspicuous as possible.

**TIMELINE**

Because Mayer is currently a topic of discussion in the media, it is imperative that this campaign be conducted in a timely manner. The following timeline is recommended:

*Between the months of December 2010 to March 2011:* Release of Mayer’s new album.

*One to two months following the release of the album:* Announcement and subsequent tour in support of Mayer’s new album.

* NOTE: During the month of April, the country celebrates Earth Day. Earth Day would be an ideal time to showcase and tie-in special events with Mayer’s environmentally friendly tour.

*The press tour should be conducted one month before the release of the album and one month before the start of the tour.*

**CONCLUSION**

In order to refurbish Mayer’s image and reputation in the most authentic way possible, it is imperative that these suggestions be conducted in a timely manner.

Timing aside, we believe that John Mayer’s past digressions with the media do not accurately portray him as an artist, philanthropist, and over all personality. This plan intends to assertively shift media focus from Mayer’s personal life to his musical endeavors as well as his philanthropic efforts. We believe that doing so will improve Mayer’s all around image in the press from negative to positive and thus may lead to increased record sales, increase public participation in his philanthropies, and increased respect among the entertainment media.