Stepping Toward a New Success

Public Relations Presentation

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**Background Information:**

The YMCA is a nationally known organization which strives to promote the values of healthy lifestyles and responsibility. The YMCA is a leading nonprofit organization that is dedicated to the strengthening of communities through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Their mission statement reads: “To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.” A major cause of the YMCA is to strengthen their surrounding communities as they work side-by-side with neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of gender, financial status, and background, has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

The Ashland YMCA was founded in 1905 on Main Street; however, the organization moved to Miller Street in 1956 thanks to a generous donation of land by the Myers family. The new YMCA officially opened in January 1956 and this marked the first time that females were permitted to use the facilities. Since its reopening in 1956, the YMCA has expanded five different times by adding new facility spaces and equipment. The Ashland Y has 2,852 members, which ranges from preschoolers to senior citizens. All of these members have been committed to a yearlong membership to the YMCA. When dealing with the building itself, the YMCA occupies 65,000 square feet of space; 45,000 square feet of that space can be used for different programs, events, and activities. The Ashland Y employs seven full time staff members, while one-hundred individuals are employed as seasonal or part-time staff. In regards to promotion and advertising campaigns, the YMCA publishes event and program brochures three times a year. Additionally, the YMCA utilizes a website ([www.ashlandy.org](http://www.ashlandy.org)), a Facebook page, and a monthly e-newsletter to communicate information.

The Ashland YMCA is, of course, surrounded by the city and community of Ashland. Ashland has a population of 21,249 people, and these individuals can be broken down into households and families. Figure 1.1 illustrates the categorization of the population.

**Figure 1.1**

5,262

Within the household population, the median income is $34,250 and the median income for the family population is $42,755. Please see Figure 1.2 for a graphical representation of the median incomes of the population.

**Figure 1.2**

$42,755

$34,250

In regards to ethnicity in the city of Ashland, 96.35% are Caucasian, 1.19% are African American, and 1.85% is composed of other races. See Figure 1.3 for a graphic depiction.

**Figure 1.3**

Other Races 1.85%

African American 1.19%

Furthermore, Ashland has recorded the specific percentages of different age ranges in the city: 22.6% are eighteen years of age and younger, 15.4% are between eighteen and twenty-four years, 25.1% are between twenty-five and forty-four years of age, 20.3% are between forty-five and sixty-four years of age, and 16.6% are sixty-five years of age and older. See Figure 1.4 for a graphic representation of the Ashland age demographic.

**Figure 1.4**

65 +

45-64

25-44

18-24

18-younger

Focusing on the Ashland YMCA and their products and programs, the Y offers 150 programs and events each year. Many of these programs include child-care, preschool, gymnastics, swimming, youth and adult fitness, dance classes, personal training, youth sports, and many other services and activities. A trend can be seen that the Ashland Y offers more physical classes in comparison to social classes, such as sewing. The Y is a partner with the Youth Program, which is a way that the Y gives back to the community. The Ashland Y provides memberships to underprivileged families at no charge, so they can have access to the different activities and services. In 2011, the Y passed out 186 memberships to families that could not afford to purchase a membership to the facility. Additionally, the Y offers a SilverSneakers program, which is described as a health insurance program. Insurance programs pay health facilities, such as the Y, to allow their members use the facilities at no charge. Currently, the Ashland Y has over 600 SilverSneaker participants.

Furthermore, the Ashland Y has a playground, a large multipurpose field, and recreational and Olympic-sized swimming pools. The Y also has a gymnasium, which is used for golf, tennis, volleyball, and other large, team sports. Banquet rooms can be found on the lower level of the Y which can be used for fitness classes, children birthday parties, and meetings. Lastly, adult fitness rooms on the lower level of the facilities mainly focus on mothers who like to participate in Zumba and muscle toning classes.

Currently, the Ashland Y’s marketing situation can be seen as limited. To find information about the Ashland Y and the different programs and activities they offer, individuals can log onto [www.ashlandy.org](http://www.ashlandy.org) or people can ‘like’ the Y’s Facebook page, which can be found under ‘Ashland YMCA.’ Also, a newspaper-type brochure is published three times a year and is included in the local newspaper, The Ashland Times Gazette. Additionally, an E-Newsletter is sent out monthly to members to update them on the current activities that are being offered. Lastly, there is minimal broadcast presence on the local radio station WNCO.

When researching the current trends in opinions and attitudes, it is quite obvious that social media is the dominating trend in advertising and promotions today. Based on research and statistics, females and individuals ages 18-34 years are the most active of the social networkers. Americans ages 35-49 years are also active users of social media. The top 5 U.S. social networks and blogs are as followed: Facebook, Blogger, Tumblr, Twitter and Linked In. Please refer to Figure 1.5 to see a breakdown of these social networking sites.

**Figure 1.5**

Linked In – 325,679

Twitter – 565,156

Tumblr – 623,525

Blogger – 723,793

Facebook – 53,457,258

The statistics revolving around the empire of social media are astounding and the numbers support that having a social media presence is critical to disseminate information. Facebook has overtaken Google as the most visited site as 175 million users log into the site every 24 hours. Also, more than 1.5 million pieces of content (blog posts, web links, photos, etc.) are shared through Facebook on a daily basis. Marketing on Twitter has jumped from 3% of companies in 2008 to 49% in 2009, and twenty-five billion tweets were sent in 2010. Additionally, YouTube is the second largest search engine since two billion videos are watched on the site every day. Also, it must be noted that when compared to the average adult Internet user, active adult social networkers are 18% more likely to work out at a gym or health club.

Having a social media presence is extremely important in order to create a dominate presence. Through the use of Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and blog postings, organizations can advertise and promote different specials, activities, and programs within a matter of seconds in an appealing and creative way. In today’s advanced technology-driven society, individuals expect their information to be accessed quickly and that is why social media can be used to a great advantage. Furthermore, online payment is a current trend since individuals can pay for services or products right from the comfort of one’s home.

**Situational Analysis**

When reviewing the current situation of the Ashland YMCA, around 2,900 members take part in over 150 programs and activities that the Y offers on a yearly basis. The Ashland Y’s biggest demographic is individuals ages sixty-five and over, while their lowest demographic is individuals that fall between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five years. Also, local college students do not use the Y’s facilities, since they are able to use the Rec Center at Ashland University. The Y’s largest competition is the Kroc Center, which is located only a few short minutes away. Both facilities are nonprofit and they offer many similar classes and activities. The Kroc Center is affiliated with the Salvation Army and it is an evangelical part of the universal Christian church. In keeping with the mission of The Salvation Army, The Ashland Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center provides a state- of- -the art facility, community programs, and services that encourage positive living, the strengthening of families, and the enrichment of seniors’ and children’s lives. Based on the current situation, the goal is to increase the brand awareness of the Y in Ashland and increase the number of bodies that walk through the front door of the Y. Challenges such as a lack of technology, reluctant upper management, and no consistent voice are some of the aspects that might pose problems when attempting to formulate a successful campaign. Despite the challenges, there are several opportunities that have been presented. Through the public relations campaign, the Y desires to promote the qualities of community, health, dedication, relationships, and service to the Ashland community members. The Y is open to partnerships with others around the community and they are also open to broadening their media presence in order to target specific age groups.

Pioneering a public relations campaign might be a challenge due to some difficulties that surround the Ashland Y. There is a limited amount of technology access in the building, thus it would be a challenge to create a solid social media presence. Also, upper management is hesitant to change; they like how things were done in the past and they want to continue with their familiar methods. Also, due to the limited number of full-time staff, multiple responsibilities fall onto a single person, which can result in unhappy employees if they are buried in numerous projects. Lastly, the state of the economy poses a significant challenge for the public relations campaign. Money is tight in many family situations and families are hesitant to spend money on recreational items, instead of focusing their funds toward school and other necessities.

**Core Problem/Opportunity**

While risking the missed opportunity of gaining potential members, the core problem is being able to increase brand awareness of the Ashland YMCA to local community members, in the midst of dealing with a disinclined upper management and a minimal budget.

**Goal**

The Ashland YMCA’s goal is to increase awareness of their facility and programming activities to the Ashland community in order to amplify recognition and membership sales.

**Objectives**

* Employ a social media campaign by using Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and blogs to raise awareness of the Ashland YMCA and their multiple activities and programs.
* Create eye appealing print publications to disseminate information via newspapers for senior citizens and brochures to elementary classrooms.
* Construct promotional video to add a visual element for advertising purposes.
* Increase class participants by 3%-5% within the first quarter of the year.
* Heighten brand awareness through logo identification and the YMCA’s values.
* Target senior citizens to advocate health benefits, such as cardiovascular health and muscle strength.
* Target younger children to advocate the benefits of staying healthy while also having fun in a social aspect.

**Key Publics**

* **Parents**

1. Males and females over the age of 25 who have a young child or young adult.

2. We want to target this public because parents would be exposed to events and activities that their children could enroll in. Parents will be interested in knowing that their children can participate in an activity and remain social and physically fit. Also, parents will be aware of the classes and services that are offered to them.

3. The Ashland YMCA has a fair relationship with parents. While the Y offers classes and services geared toward parents, there is still great room for improvement. Parents can fall between the Y’s lowest demographic, ages 25-35, thus a stronger relationship can be formed.

4. A third party that could influence parents is the parent’s own children. If children are enthusiastic about going to the YMCA to participate in activities and programs, parents might be influenced and more inclined to take a class or participate in an activity while they wait for their children.

5. Parents can help contribute to blogs that the YMCA writes by sharing their personal experiences with the Y. Additionally, parent can help the campaign by increasing class participants by 3%-5% and parents can give testimonials for the promotional videos that will be created.

* **Senior Citizens – Ages 65 and older**

1. Males and females ages 65 and older.

2. Even though senior citizens is the YMCA’s biggest demographic, we want to continue to increase their participation in classes and activities. We want to advocate the advantages of the SilverSneakers program and the campaign is motivated to support the importance of strong heart –health amongst senior citizens.

3. The Ashland YMCA has a very strong relationship with senior citizens. Currently, senior citizens are the Y’s largest demographic, but there are always opportunities to build a stronger relationship.

4. The senior citizens’ medical physicians are a third party that can have a great deal of influence on senior citizens. If medical professionals advocate the importance of living a healthy life style, they may tell their patients, (senior citizens), to go to the YMCA and begin to work -out on a regular basis.

5. This key public can help with the creation of blogs and promotional videos when they share their personal experiences about using the facilities at the Y. Also, senior citizens will help the campaign advocate the importance of cardiovascular health and muscular strength, so they can live a healthy and prolonged life.

* **Children – Ages 18 years and younger**

1. Males and females ages 18 years and younger.

2. The campaign wants to target this public because we want to increase the number of young participants in classes. The campaign also wants to acknowledge the social and physical benefits of participating in activities and classes at the Y. Additionally, the campaign is motivated to illustrate to children the variety of activities they have access to, which may introduce them to something they truly enjoy. This concept will adhere to the important principle of creating a well-rounded individual.

3. The relationship between children and the YMCA would be considered fair. There is certainly room for improvement because there are multiple resources, specifically geared toward children, which children have access to. While schools have their own activities and sports teams, the YMCA has an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with children by illustrating the positive benefits of being a part of multiple activities, clubs, and sports in a community atmosphere.

4. Friends can be considered a third party that influences children. These targeted children might find themselves in a situation where their friends are taking classes at the YMCA, and they want to join in on the fun. Also, parents can be a third party because they can influence their children by telling them the fun, social benefits of joining a sport or participating in a class. Parents can motivate their children to take a class that might become their favorite hobby. Pediatricians can also be a third party of influence because they can advocate the importance of participating in activities to remain physically fit.

5.) This key public can help the public relations campaign by appearing in different promotional videos and pictures that are posted to the website or other social media outlets. Additionally, they can assist the campaign in the advocacy of living a strong, healthy life amongst children, especially at young ages. Furthermore, if children become involved in the YMCA’s programs and activities, perhaps they can persuade their parents to partake in some events as well.

* **Individuals ages 25-35 years**

1. Males and females ages 25-35 years.

2. The campaign is motivated to target this public because it is the Y’s lowest demographic. The campaign wants to stress the importance of strengthening their health and social aspects of their lives. Joining the YMCA can not only improve one’s cardiovascular and muscular health, but these individuals will also receive the benefits of being a part of a social community.

3. There is a dismal relationship with this key public and the YMCA. This age group is the lowest demographic of the YMCA in their programs, thus significant improvement needs to be made.

4. Other individuals who are a part this key public can have a great influence. This target public may have friends in this same age group who participate in classes and activities at the YMCA. Friends might encourage friends to join along in the classes, which can increase class participation.

5. This target public can help ensure the success of the social media campaign by becoming a friend on Facebook or following the YMCA on Twitter. Also, these individuals can help enhance the promotional videos by sharing their personal testimonials and experiences with the YMCA. Ultimately, this target audience can help increase class participation within the variety of classes the Y offers.

**Messages**

* **Parents**
* **Primary Messages:**

1. “Treat yourself to a night of fit-family-fun at your local YMCA!”

2. “Rejuvenate your mind, body, and spirit at your local YMCA!”

* **Secondary Messages:**

1. The YMCA offers tons of unique physical fitness classes such as yoga, cycling, zumba, and cardio dance for adults.

2. In Ohio alone, 65.7% of adults are overweight. The national average of individuals who are overweight is 63.1%.

3. Heart disease alone makes up more than half of all cardiovascular events in males and females under the age of 75.

4. Moderate, regular exercise reduces morality rates by 30%-50% among adults ages 30-60 years old.

* **Children (18 years and younger)**
* **Primary Messages:**

1. “Come spend a day and play at your local YMCA!”

2. “Come make new friends while you play at the YMCA!”

* **Secondary Messages:**

1. Fifteen percent of children ages 6-19 are seriously overweight when compared to the national averages.

2. Children who exercise feel better about themselves, are more attentive in school, sleep better at night, and develop healthy bones and muscles.

3. When children ages 2-4 participate in some sort of physical activity, this helps develop and strength their motor skills.

4. Ten percent of all preschool children, ages 2-5, are overweight.

* **Senior Citizens (Ages 65 and older)**
* **Primary Messages:**

1. “Treat your heart to a healthy lifestyle by becoming a SilverSneakers member at your YMCA today.”

2. “Rejuvenate your mind and body during classes at your local YMCA.”

* **Secondary Messages:**

1. The Ashland YMCA offers the exclusive SilverSneakers program where senior citizens can participate in cardio circuit and swimming programs.

2. Moderate exercise and weight loss reduces blood pressure and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease.

3. Regular physical activity helps promote mental activity.

4. A sedentary lifestyle has been shown to be a preventative cardiac risk.

* **Males and Females Ages 25-35**
* **Primary Messages:**

1. “Get in shape to look great. Now’s the time, don’t wait. Join your local YMCA today!”

2. “Be yourself and enjoy your stay. Come to the YMCA today!”

* **Secondary Messages:**

1. Physical fitness builds strength and stamina and helps one feel energetic over the course of the day.

2. Fitness leads to less stress and more happiness over the course of one’s day.

3. Research has shown that exercise can slow or help prevent heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and loss of muscle mass.

4. Not only does exercise help fight heart disease, but it also creates a stronger heart: the most important muscle in the body.

**Strategies and Tactics**

**Parents:**

* **Strategy:** Have a YMCA employee come and speak at local churches to parents about the benefits of joining the YMCA.
* **Tactics:**

1. Utilize local television, radio, and newspaper outlets to advertise and promote the talks.

2. Create and hang posters in local businesses, restaurants, and doctor’s offices.

3. Design informational brochures to send home with parents at the end of the talks.

4. Contact local YMCAs to donate door prizes and incentives for parents that attend the talks.

* **Strategy:** Hold a YMCA open house to expose parents to the unique programs that are available to them and their children.
* **Tactics:**

1. Use local television, radio, and newspaper outlets to promote the YMCA open house.

2. Create and hang posters in local businesses, restaurants, and doctor’s offices promoting the Open House.

3. Design informational brochures and deliver them to local elementary and middle schools for children to take home to their parents.

4. Advertise the Open House on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

5. Advertise that parents who are already members can bring a friend to the Open House, and if the friend signs up for a membership, the parent who is already a member will receive a nice incentive.

**Younger Children (Ages 18-younger)**

* **Strategy:** The YMCA offers free field trips for local elementary and middle school students to explore the Y’s facilities.
* **Tactics:**

1. Contact local elementary and middle schools to promote the option of free YMCA field trips.

2. Create informational pamphlets to distribute to physical educational teachers which explain the benefits and opportunities of taking a field trip to the YMCA

3. Orchestrate small tour guide groups to take small groups of students around the facilities.

4. Have mini-interactive areas for students to try out different sports and fitness classes.

* **Strategy:** Hold a kids only YMCA open house where children can come to the YMCA and participate in sports and fitness classes.
* **Tactics:**

1. Advertise the open house through local media outlets: newspaper, television, and radio.

2. Invite target public on Facebook to attend the event and encourage them to follow the YMCA on Twitter where tweets will be sent advertising the open house.

3. At the open house, have the gym open for children to play basketball or volleyball, have the swimming pool available for open swims, and have classes open for students to participate in fitness/dance classes.

4. Offer incentives and prizes to children who come and participate in the activities.

**Senior Citizens (Ages 65 and older)**

* **Strategy:** Hold informational sessions about the SilverSneakers program at local churches and community centers.
* **Tactics:**

1. Advertise if current members of the SilverSneakers Program brings a friend,(who is a senior citizen), they will receive some sort of incentive.

2. Promote the informational sessions in local newspapers.

3. Hang eye-catching posters in local businesses, restaurants, community centers, doctor’s offices, country clubs, and local legions to advertise the informational sessions.

* **Strategy:** Have the YMCA hold a free senior citizens night. Senior citizens can come and participate in SilverSneakers programs with their local doctors and physicians.
* **Tactics:**

1. Contact local doctors to come and participate in the SilverSneakers activities.

2. Advertise the open house in local newspapers.

3. Distribute informational flyers in local doctor’s offices and hospitals.

4. Hold an informational session immediately following the SilverSneakers class, so interested individuals can learn specific details about the program. Also, have a Q and A where doctors can explain the importance of staying physically fit.

5. Pass out a free pill holder to the senior citizens who participated in the open house.

**Males and Females Ages 25-35 (College Students ages 18-22)**

* **Strategy:** Organize an open house specifically geared toward the demographic of males and females, ages 25-35.
* **Tactics:**

1. Advertise through local media outlets, such as newspapers, television, and radio.

2. Attract friends on Facebook and followers on Twitter, and promote the open house.

3. Create a promotional video of the open house and post on Facebook and YouTube.

4. Hang posters in local businesses, restaurants, community centers, and doctor’s offices to advertise the event.

* **Strategy:** Market the YMCA Buddies Program to Ashland University students in regards to community service hours.
* **Tactics:**

1. Work with the Ashland University Community Service Office to illustrate how this program can help fulfill community service hours.

2. Hold a Community Service luncheon on campus where interested students can come and hear the details from a YMCA employee of participating in community service through the Buddies Program.

3. Advertise with the University’s Education, Greek Life, and Community Service organizations.

**Strategies and Uses for General Membership:**

**General Membership:**

**Current Online and Social Media Presence:**

**Website**: [www.ashlandy.org](http://www.ashlandy.org)

Positive Components:

* Bold colors
* Event calendars- Links to specific classes and programs
* Quick Links Page – Information listed nicely under major headings
* Clear headings on the homepage

Suggestions for Improvement:

* Links to Facebook, Twitter, Blog page, YouTube, and Flickr sites
* Picture Gallery – Snap shots of members participating in classes
* Video Gallery – Short video clips of different activities and classes

**Facebook**: Ashland YMCA

Positive Components:

* Regular status updates about classes, programs, and closings through news feed

Suggestions for Improvement:

* Spotlight on member of the week
* Post pictures of members in classes
* Post links to YouTube page to watch videos
* Fun facts about the Ashland YMCA and/or fun health facts
* Promote classes, activities, and programs (Quotes from members)
* Update the event calendar/page

**Future Online and Social Media Presence:**

**YouTube:** AshlandYMCA

Uses:

* Visual component to show potential members different classes and facilities
* Record short segments of classes, events, and programs
* General videos about the YMCA (National Organization)

**Twitter Page:** AshlandYMCA

Twitter Handle: @AshlandYMCA

Uses:

* Promote daily classes and programs
* Upload photos instantly of members participating in classes and programs
* Post links to videos of classes, etc. (Connect to YouTube)
* Announce special programs or promotions

**Flickr Page**: AshlandYMCA

Uses:

* Upload pictures of children classes
* Upload pictures of adult classes
* Upload pictures of SilverSneakers classes
* Upload pictures of facilities
* Upload pictures of special programs, events, etc.

**Blog Page**: Ashland YMCA

Uses:

* Weekly blog postings
* Features of different classes and programs
  + Who
  + What
  + When
  + Cost
  + Pictures of classes
  + Video of classes in action
* Spotlight: Member of the Week (Children and/or adult)
* Post pictures and videos
* Upload PDF versions of print materials
* Links to Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr

**Calendar**

* **See attached excel sheets**

**Budget**

* **See attached excel sheets**

**Conclusion**

Our public relations group is strongly committed to helping the Ashland YMCA climb toward reaching a successful new level of community, health, dedication, relationship, and service in conjunction within the Ashland community and its current members. We firmly believe that with the new implementation of strategies and tactics, the Ashland YMCA will be able to strategically target specific groups and introduce them to the wide variety of physical and social activities available to them. Not only will these target publics will able to grow as individuals, but they will also be able to grow as a contributing member of society. We are dedicated to helping increase awareness of the Ashland YMCA, and ultimately increase the number of YMCA membership sales.

**Colored Diagrams**

**Figure 1.1**

**Figure 1.2**

**Figure 1.3**

African Americans 1.19%

Other Races 1.85%

**Figure 1.4**

18-younger

18-24

25-44

45-64

65 +

**Figure 1.5**

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