Client Research Assignment

Abby Beaudin

Janet Jenkins

Missouri State University

The Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks is an organization that began in Springfield, Missouri to provide resources and support for local individuals and families affected by breast cancer. The organization was founded in 1999 by Mary Beth O’Reilly and Joni Scott in honor of Kristen O’Brien Hardy who lost her life to recurrent breast cancer at 31 years old. Mary Beth O’Reilly is considered BCFO’s key community leader. The organization promotes breast cancer awareness for individuals under 40, increases knowledge of treatment options, and provides information not included in present breast health campaigns. The Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks is the key community leader in promoting breast cancer awareness, however, in order to successfully achieve their objectives; they need to reconstruct their communication tactics and public relations strategies.

After meeting with Julia Stalder, Event Manager for BCFO, she provided information about their audiences, communication outlets, public relations tools, as well as internal communication practices. Julia described the primary target audience for BCFO as breast cancer patients, survivors, and their families. She also included the underrepresented audiences of children and men who are often not included. From a public relations perspective, their audience is too broad and they are unsure how to narrow it down to a specific target audience. BCFO would benefit from understanding that each message should be created for a specific audience instead of the entire “breast cancer” audience.

When it comes to researching the organization, Julia said that they want to portray their organization as an open door policy where anybody is welcome who needs guidance or information about breast cancer resources. BCFO has a Board of Directors as well as an investment committee who contribute to the organization. Their mission statement is to “give help and hope to people affected by breast cancer”; they want to give a hand, not a handout. When asked to describe BCFO’s internal communication, there is a lot of face-to-face meetings as well as employee e-mail blasts. Their biggest strength is having the ability to collaborate well together to get things done but they try to do too much which creates disorganization and chaos. Their organizational structure is set up so each employee has their own areas of interest to work with. For example, some employees focus on face-to-face communication with other businesses in the community, other employees focus on communicating with patients and their families, and other employees focus on answering phone calls and office work.

When asked what the most effective way to communicate with one another was, Julia said that their Monday morning meetings are the most important because they outline a master monthly plan on what needs to be done and who is going to do what. From a public relations perspective, it would be more effective to hold weekly meetings in order to set objectives, understand how long those objectives are going to take, and be able to gauge where they are at on a weekly basis. This way they would be held accountable to measure progress on a weekly basis versus a monthly basis. This would also create more consistent communication as well as advocate responsibility among employees and managers.

The issue with BCFO is they do not understand how to target a specific audience, when they set objectives, if they even do, do not understand how to organize them to result in success. According to Julia, BCFO does not focus on their public relations tactics. Their main focus is on the physical organization instead of organizing internally with everything from community relations, print collateral, and event planning. They need to understand how to organize internally before they can produce effective messages for their target audiences. However, the need to narrow the audience within their organization is still an issue. For example, when asked who BCFO wants their audience to be in the future, they said they want to grow their audiences with patients, families, businesses, individuals, and sponsors because this will increase awareness and involvement to decrease breast cancer diagnosis. However, having this many target audiences is ineffective and extremely broad; it needs to be narrowed down and focused.

BCFO’s public relation tactics are very traditional and old school. Their public relation tools consist of direct mail, email blasts, website data, physical drop with brochures, networking, public service announcements on radio, and print media. Although these methods have paved the way for their public relations, they are not as effective as they once were and are not being utilized as often. BCFO needs to modernize their tactics and implement social media as a news sources. This brings up the subject of social media. BCFO currently has a Facebook but does not understand how to write for this specific outlet. Instead of writing paragraphs in the status box, information should be short, concise, and catchy. When asked what media they do not use, Julia said they have not started a Twitter account because they just haven’t gotten to it and are unsure who their audience would be. If BCFO narrowed down their target audience to women in their mid-20’s, this could be a starting point to launch a network of new involvement.

When considering BCFO’s print collateral, they are very creative with their ideas. However, the information can be confusing when it is not edited critically. After working on their event “A Time to Share” in COM379, we found multiple errors on their brochures, newsletters, and post cards with conflicting registration and reservation dates. Using both words to register and to reserve could be very confusing to anyone outside of the organization. On one of their event post cards, they had upcoming event dates with pictures and some sponsors listed, however there were others with no sponsors. Since they ask $10,000 for a title sponsor, the sponsor should be locked at least a year in advance. When considering their event planning, they have a lot going on with little organization. The main issue is the lack of structure and objectives with planning and execution. They have objectives for execution but do not understand how to achieve them in the most effective way.

BCFO is a great organization that offers substantial resources to breast cancer patients and families. However, if they implemented a more effective public relations program and organized their communication tactics, internally and externally, they would be much more successful in achieving their objectives.