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| **Elegance is Easy: Reaching New Markets** |
| Strategic Communication Plan |
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| **4/3/2008** |
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Running Head: Elegance is Easy Campaign

Elegance is Easy

Reaching New Markets Campaign

Strategic Communication Plan

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**Executive Summary**

Elegance is Easy is a wedding and special event planning company. They have been in business since 1994 servicing the Greater San Diego County. Elegance is Easy is currently a sole proprietorship; however is in the process of converting into a Corporation. The sole owner of the company is Ryan Quisumbing.

Elegance is Easy has been known for specializing in weddings; however Mr. Quisumbing has decided that he would like to expand his business to offer more services to reach a broader market. He would like to reach the non-profit and corporate sectors in order to gain more clientele as well as give back to the community. This strategic communication program has been designed specifically for Elegance is Easy to spread the word about how the non-profit and corporate markets will benefit from their new and existing services. It has been agreed that a direct marketing campaign is best suited to get the company’s messages across.

The objectives of the company are to develop new clients and partnerships as well as maintain those relationships and become a leader or preferred vendor in the meeting and event industry. The clientele who will be targeted will be qualified vendors, board members, administrative and meeting professionals who will benefit by utilizing the services of Elegance is Easy.

The direct marketing program will brand the company as a one stop shop for not only wedding and special event planning, but also for non-profit organization and professional meeting planning. Messages will be tactically disseminated via a variety of channels such as, but not limited to, e-mails, blogs, newsletters, postal mail and finally a networking event for prospects, clients and vendors to attend; and for Elegance is Easy to showcase their talent, ability and worth as a partner. Thus, developing and building relationships with the corporate and non-profit community.

In conclusion of the campaign a thorough evaluation will be conducted to measure its effectiveness. The success of the campaign will be determined by how many new contracts were signed, how many new prospects were included into the company’s database, and how many people replied to the e-mail campaign and subscribed to the company newsletter.

**Analysis of Communication Situation**

According to an article titled, Why engagement is the only answer, “One of the biggest challenges for any marketer is how to best use the various channels available in such a way that they create value for the brand or product in a demonstrable way - namely by communicating a specific message to a target audience.” Communicating to the specified target audiences of Elegance is Easy (detailed below) through a variety of channels will help brand the new markets in which they wish to reach. Using a variety of channels will create awareness and branding to convince people that Elegance is Easy is the place to go for all their meeting and event planning needs. Since the majority of the company’s successful marketing has been through word-of-mouth, the campaign will take on a more aggressive approach.

It is important to communicate the changes in the company so that people become aware of what Elegance is Easy is offering and to whom they are offering it to. The additional services being offered by Elegance is Easy are as follows:

1. **Presentation Production Service**s – Design, create and prepare customized presentations for meetings in Flash or PowerPoint
2. **Branding & Creative Services** – Design and print custom, creative artwork, pamphlets, binder covers, invitations and signage
3. **Registration Services** – Attendee registration via the Internet, fax, phone, mail or e-mail. Includes tracking, follow-up, and onsite registration services

The new markets that Elegance is Easy plans to reach through this campaign are corporate companies and non-profit organizations. A detailed profile will be described later in this proposal. The purpose of communication here is to reach these markets, build awareness and build long term relationships and partnerships which will be discussed further in the objectives section.

**Objectives**

The short term goals for Elegance is Easy is to build new corporate and non-profit relationships as well as specific vendor partnerships. They already have several social clients, planning weddings, birthday celebrations, and family reunions. However; they would like to launch the offering of their newly added and existing services to begin branding themselves as a one stop shop for meeting and special event planning to social, corporate and non-profit clients alike. By developing new relationships and nurturing exiting ones, Elegance is Easy will have the potential to grow their business by expanding their client base. Elegance is Easy would also like to meet and develop new partnerships or affiliates in order to refer solid and potential business to one another.

In the long run, Elegance is Easy would like to maintain the relationships developed during this campaign in order to lead to lifelong, loyal clients and partnerships. Another long tern objective is to become an industry leader and preferred vendor of many meeting and event professional. In addition, they would like to be known as a servant of the community.

This campaign will help facilitate the company’s short and long term objectives. They will have the opportunity to network with people, corporations and organizations they were not able to by word-of-mouth marketing. By meeting more people however, their reach by word-of-mouth marketing will expand exponentially. By keeping in touch with new clients after the campaign is over, Elegance is Easy will be more apt to nurture and build the types of relationships it desires as well as weed out those they do not wish to be involved with. In regards to servicing the community, Elegance is Easy will be able to stand out in a different light as they reach out to volunteer their services and offer a reasonable rate to non-profit organizations. Elegance is Easy will grow in the years to come as a result of this campaign.

**Target Audience**

As stated previously, Elegance is Easy has reached their desired amount of social business, therefore the clientele that is being targeted for this campaign are members of both corporations, including small businesses and non-profit organizations. Some corporations have their own in-house meeting and event planners, others outsource them. Companies on a tight budget will assign the task to an executive assistant or the human resources department. Non-profit organizations may have an event coordinator or meeting planner on board. However; if there is not the particular event or meeting planning duties might be assigned to a committee chair, a board of director or an administrative assistant. According to Toh, DeKay and Yates (2005), “Corporations and associations have outsourced meeting-planning functions to third-party planners...While the corporations and associations remain responsible for the meetings' content, independent planners typically handle all other details, in particular, finding venues and negotiating contracts.” In particular, those individuals who typically plan major meetings or events; or individuals who are responsible for a portion of a meeting or event will be the people the campaign will reach. In addition, the decision makers whether it be a CEO of a small business or executive director of a department will also be important to reach in through this campaign. The support of the decision makers will help get Elegance is Easy passed barriers such as gate keepers or receptionists. If decision makers are impressed with Elegance is Easy, they will have a better chance at turning prospects into clients.

A variety of vendors and venues will also need to be reached as a part of the company’s objectives is to develop partnerships or affiliates with vendors in order to refer solid and potential business to one another. The vendor and venue audiences will be the broader audience of the three as there are several to consider. For the purpose of this campaign, Catering Sales Managers from major hotel chains will be the target market in regards to venues; and Account Managers from event production companies who offer a variety of services from audio visual to staging and lighting rentals will be classified as the vendor target.

The plan is to strategically get in front of these people and convince them that they need the services of Elegance is Easy by promoting the benefits, which brings us to our key messages.

**Key Messages**

The key messages that will be driven to the target audiences are as follows:

1. Benefits of outsourcing Elegance is Easy to handle the details
2. High return on investment (ROI) both financial and non-financial
3. Save companies and organizations time & money

The benefits of Elegance is easy are endless. They will vary depending on the needs of every client. In general, the main benefit will be that corporations and non-profit organizations can place more focus on their main objectives or content, as mentioned in the quote above. The logistical responsibilities such as, but not limited to, selecting a venue, arranging travel, designing the stage set and décor, and hiring entertainment of the meeting and event planning will be transferred to Elegance is Easy. This leaves companies and organizations to center their attention on the messages they want to get across in their particular event, such as increase sales, recognize customers or motivate employees.

The second message being conveyed is the high return on investment both financially and non-financially. By non-financial ROI, we are referring to such things as boosting employee morale and employee retention. According to Sadie Blanchard (2005), “Workdays can be long and irregular. Planners might log more than 40 hours per week in the days or weeks leading up to a meeting and fewer hours after finishing one. During meetings or conventions, planners' workdays may be very long, possibly starting as early as 5 a.m. and lasting until midnight. Weekend work is sometimes required.” This type of work schedule can tire anyone out, let alone decrease morale and make people want to leave their jobs. However with the help of Elegance is Easy planners and the companies or organizations they represent can rest assured that a professional with experience is handling the details for them.

Financially, companies and organizations have a budget of what can be spent and a bottom line of how much they want to make. Elegance is Easy will ensure that a client remains in the budgetary constraints as well as ensure they receive the most bank for their buck. This goes hand-in-hand with the reason why partnering with vendors and venues is important. Elegance is Easy plans to use the relationships they build with vendors and venues during this campaign to be better negotiate rates and fees for their clients. Also, since Elegance is Easy specializes in planning meetings and events, they can offer alternative suggestions to their clients to help them save time and money which is the third benefit of utilizing their services.

Although these are the three main messages there will be sub messages that will be presented as talking points to the media from the company’s chosen spokespeople.

**Campaign Type and Channel Messages**

The campaign type that has been chosen for Elegance is Easy is a combination of Direct Marketing. The direct marketing campaign will integrate a variety of channels to meet their objectives and target markets. Referring to the article found in *Precision Marketing*, Why engagement is the only answer (2008), “By mixing email with mail and other printed matter as part of an integrated campaign marketers are giving themselves a better chance of delivering that relevant message to consumers. Furthermore, by linking messages across multiple channels marketers gain three benefits; increased message exposure and (by linking the messages together) increased relevance through a sequential dialogue.”

The following channels and messages for each channel that have been chose to be integrated into Elegance is Easy’s campaign are as follows:

*E-mail, Postal Mail and Personal Phone Calls*. The campaign will be launched by both e-mail blasts and postcards sent via mail to clients and prospects at their place of business followed up with a phone courtesy call. According to the Direct Marketing Association (2007), “As most marketers devote tiny amounts of their budgets to their e-mail efforts, the channel continues to deliver insane returns on every dollar spent, ”(Magill, 2007). Sending out e-mails and postcards in the mail will help in the branding and awareness of the company’s plans to reach new markets. They will also lead prospects and clients to the company website, entice them to sign up for the newsletter and read the daily blog posts. Both channels will also act as an invitation to attend the open house. Personalized e-mails and follow phone calls will bring the communication with prospects and clients full circle, letting them know their business is appreciated and to thank them for subscribing to the newsletter, blog or registering for the open house. E-mails, postcards and follow up will be conducted each week the campaign is in progress.

*Blogs Posts and Newsletter Subscriptions.* Blogs will be posted about the company’s new and existing services. There will be at least three posts a day for the entire campaign offering tips on meeting/ event planning, outsourcing vendors and working with clients, etc. The blogs will constantly direct prospects to the company website as well as offer subscriptions to the quarterly newsletter. Finally, the open house event will be advertised on the blog site allowing people to register and post comments or questions. The blog and newsletter are channels that will be available to the public even after the campaign has ended, offering continuous value.

**Campaign Staff & Financial Resources**

In order to make this campaign a success, Elegance is Easy will need qualified staff and financial resources. In order to be cost effective, Elegance is Easy will work with their current partners and promote one another’s services. Since, Elegance is Easy has worked with Humphrey’s Half Moon Inn & Suites on several occasions, they have agreed to become a partner in the campaign. They will provide $4,000.00 towards the campaign in exchange for having their logo on all collateral sent to clients and prospects. In addition, Humphrey’s has agreed to host the open house for Elegance is Easy at no additional charge since they will be able to showcase their beautiful waterfront property and meeting space. Elegance is Easy has arranged for THE ALLSTAR GROUP, an event production company to provide all of the décor for the open house in exchange for exposure on collateral as well. The printing company where Elegance is Easy prints all of their material, Overnight Prints has also agreed to help sponsor the direct mail portion of the campaign providing printing services for postcards and invitations to be sent to clients again in exchange for exposure.

The staff will consist of college students interested in marketing, promotion and event planning. By taking students under their wing and offering work experience, Elegance is Easy will be demonstrating their desire to service the community, which is one of their long term objectives.

**Talking points for Mr. Quisumbing when approached by the media and external publics:**

* Elegance is Easy is a value-based company and treats all of their vendors, clients and partners with the respect they deserve
* Elegance is Easy is experienced and educated in the event and meeting planning industry so they will have no problem meeting the needs of corporations or non-profit organizations
* Our services will benefit the community in a sense that we build partnerships and offer different solutions to everyone

**Media Targeted & Media Involvement**

A portion of the $4,000.00 provided by Humphrey’s will go towards advertising for four weeks in the San Diego Business Journal, a local business newspaper that will be expected to create buzz in the corporate community.

Television interviews will be scheduled to reach and attract the non-profit organizations. Press releases will also be sent out that will focus on the efforts that Elegance is Easy has already made to contribute to the community as well as plans to contribute for the future and during the campaign.

Press releases and editorial stories will be sent to the local newspaper and trade magazines, such as *Compass* and *Special Events* to create a start buzz and awareness of what Elegance is Easy is doing to revamp their image and how others can do the same.

The national and local meeting and event association websites now have blog posts where companies like Elegance is Easy can blog about topics of interest as well as what’s going on in their company. This will be a great way to attract vendors as well as a step into becoming an industry leader.

**Implementation Plan**

*Foundation & Preparation*. All three audiences will be gathered from the Book of Lists, a directory provided by the San Diego Business Journal, the San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau web directory, San Diego chapters of the International Special Event Society and Meeting Planners International. A database will be created in order to from these lists to reach individuals or groups in the target market. A meeting will be held with strategic campaign partners to gather pertinent contact information and logo design. Staff members will also need to be brought in at this time to begin kicking off the campaign.

*Design & Content Develop.* In this phase, Elegance is Easy and their campaign partners will decide on a design which will reflect the goals and objectives of the companies involved. They will then need to be printed. Staff will write the content for press releases, blog posts and newsletter to ensure information will be available for the web.

*Media Planning.* The media will need to be contacted in order to inform them of the events that will be occurring. Elegance is Easy should be on top of current events in order to place an angle on their story to tie in with that of the daily news. For example, if a local non-profit organization is in need of volunteers for an upcoming they should be the first people to volunteer. Advertisements should also be purchased and editorials and press releases should be in the hands of the correct media personnel for review.

*Kick Off to Completion*. Once all of the logistics are complete, the campaign will be launched. It will begin with e-mails being and postcards being sent to the targeted people in the database. The initial newsletter will be posted on the web to entice readers to subscribe. Blogs will be posted three times a day to keep coming back for more. Staff will also respond to any questions, comments and/or concerns of readers. This will let people know that there is someone on the other end of the conversation. A few questions and comments will be planted to get the discussions started. The next plan of action would be to contact people who have visited the blog site and registered for the open house event to thank them and also to verify their registration. This is a reason to call the person to possibly set up a sales meeting and build the relationship. Finally, the open house will be planned out with Elegance is Easy and their campaign partners. A short presentation on the company’s plan and services will explained by Mr. Quisumbing and he will have the opportunity to personally recognized guests, staff and participating vendors. Immediately after the event, another postcard and e-mail will be sent to thank those who attended to once again come full circle with the communication.

The order of this strategy has been chosen to again build brand awareness and place the company’s services in the minds of their new target markets.

**Campaign Timeline**

The timeline for this campaign is approximately five weeks (see Appendix B). The implementation and actual campaign will take up four full weeks while preparation and post-evaluation will take up one week together.

**Mid-Campaign Performance Review**

To identify what may not be working for the campaign a mid-performance review will be conducted. It will entail the same questions as the final evaluation on a smaller scale and will occur in the second week. It is important to review the progress of the campaign to ensure that the objectives will be met. The amount of subscriptions, number of attendees registered for open house, number of new inquiries, the number of clicks from the initial e-mail to the blog to the website to subscribe to the newsletter, will be reviewed to determine the success of the campaign at that moment. Should numbers be in the high range, then the campaign is working, if there is not a good turnout then some changes will need to be made and the campaign re-evaluated.

**Post-Campaign Evaluations**

The success of Elegance is Easy’s campaign will rely heavily on the number of new contracts received as new business. The number of new prospects that have been added to the company’s database, the number of e-mail and newsletter subscriptions and the number people who attended the open house event.

Letters will be sent to every new client and prospect received to thank them for subscribing, participating and/or attending the open house. They will also be asked if they would like to participate in a survey (Appendix A) in exchange for coupons from the participating vendors.

**Closing Statement**

In Conclusion, Elegance is Easy will reap the benefits of this Strategic Communications Campaign. As long as they continue to follow up and build relationships with the prospects they meet in the next four weeks and plan for a campaign similar to this one every quarter, they will succeed in reaching their long term objective of becoming an industry leader and community server.

**Appendixes**

Appendix A - *Post-Campaign Survey*

Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Industry: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale from 1-5, 1 being very unlikely and 5 being very likely, how likely are you to utilize the services of Elegance is Easy in the near future?

1 2 3 4 5

Which services would be most beneficial to you? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale from 1-5, 1 being very unlikely and 5 being very likely, how likely are you to refer Elegance is Easy to a colleague?

1 2 3 4 5

If you attended the open house, what did you like/dislike about the presentation?

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Thank you for your opinions. They are much appreciated and will assist us in becoming more accommodating to your needs. Please choose the vendor you would like to receive a coupon from.

Appendix B – Campaign Timeline

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