

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The aim of this public relations campaign is to ultimately increase membership numbers for St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW. St Vincent de Paul Society is arguably an iconic brand and symbol of Australian welfare and non-profit organisations; however, through research conducted, it seems that the general public does not fully grasp what the organisation does. This plan is focused on raising awareness for St Vincent de Paul Society's membership opportunities by providing recruitment support for local Society branches and expanding these recruitment efforts online and via digital channels. On one hand, this campaign serves to update the organisation's recruitment methods so that it can attract younger publics via social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. On the other hand, it also serves to offer people real, face-to-face connections and to highlight the joy of helping others in their local community.

Since the age range for the target public is so polarised – from 18 to over 60 years old – the campaign's strategies and tactics will be divided into two major groups, with the first using online and digital information channels to attract the younger age groups, and more conventional promotional material such as brochures and information evenings utilised for the second group.

A substantial part of the campaign budget will be allocated to website development and print media such as brochures and flyers. However, potential news stories will also be pitched to local newspapers and relevant publications to further publicise the organisation's recruitment efforts. Media monitoring through services like Media Monitors or AAP will also be used as an ongoing method to evaluate the campaign's direction.

## RESEARCH AND SITUATION ANALYSIS

The reason for this public relations campaign is because during the last few years, membership numbers for St Vincent de Paul Society has been on the decline. Statistics gathered from the 2009-2010 St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Annual Report shows that only 7,257 people of the Society were actual members, while the remaining 12,422 were only volunteers. It is in the organisation's best interest to recruit those volunteers into becoming members, since the latter are more active participants and lead a more dynamic role in the Society's structure. In addition, it was revealed that the number of members under the age of 50 accounted for only 8 percent of the entire state, meaning 92 percent of the Society's members were over the age of 50, with an average age of 60.

From information researched through surveys and questionnaires, a majority of the general public only knows about St Vincent de Paul Society through their local Vinnies store. Most of them did not understand the full scope of what the organisation's members do and how vital membership is to the Society. Although the organisation does indeed boast major media events such as the **Winter Appeal** and **CEO Sleepout**, this campaign is focused on the actual members of the Society – the people who form the foundation of the organisation.

Focus group surveys carried out during this campaign revealed that the number one reason people were reluctant to join a particular community or volunteer group was because of time constraints. An overwhelming 82 percent listed "family" and "work" as taking up most of their time, with none to spare for any volunteer work. Using this information, a key message was crafted to address these particular issues.

Research was also undertaken regarding previous membership recruitment campaigns. The preceding campaign contained a motto "time to grow" that was used for 2 years on both internal and external publics. From interviews conducted among existing members, there was negative feedback regarding the bad design layout, ambiguous message and the feeling that the motto did not reflect what they do. The new motto "join us in offering the hand of friendship" boded much better among members who believed it to be a more effective and focused message.

**SWOT ANALYSIS**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Membership recruitment methods are widely spread among Catholic parishes</li><li>- Strong volunteer base</li><li>- St Vincent de Paul is a strong brand and iconic organisation in Australia</li><li>- The website is well established and provides a lot of information</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The Society is not utilising online and digital opportunities to their full potential</li><li>- While the general public recognise the Society as organisation, most do not fully grasp what it does</li><li>- Current volunteers do not have much incentive to become a member</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Online and digital channels are available. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube can all be used to expand the Society's online presence, and specifically appeal to the 18-35 demographic</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The average age for members is about currently 60, and with the decline in membership numbers, this means there will be less and less members to carry out the Society's work in the future</li></ul>

## **PUBLICS: SEGMENTED**

The target public for this PR campaign is divided into two main groups: primary and secondary. The primary group is made up of current volunteers and the general public, while the secondary group is made up of local newspapers and publications such as *Catholic Weekly*, *Vision*, *The Record*, *One Voice* and *Frontline*.

With the current volunteers, strategies and tactics will be based on internal communication while with the general public, the second group made up of publications will help publicise the Society's membership recruitment campaign. The entire primary group will be re-divided into two age groups; the first being 18-35 and the second being 35 plus. This is because both these age groups will require different communication channels to convey the message most effectively.

## **GOAL**

To increase membership numbers in order to sustain the Society's work for the future

## **OBJECTIVES**

- Establish Twitter, Facebook and YouTube profiles by the end of March, 2011, and subsequently have at least 20 followers on Twitter, 100 friends on Facebook and 10 video clips on YouTube by June, 2011.
- Establish website links with Centrelink and local diocese and parish websites in order to boost traffic flow with relevant target publics
- Support recruitment efforts by local members in their parish by providing resources and promotional material. The target is gain two new active members by the end of every month and to determine the commitment of 5 members every fortnight through follow-up activity.
- Building a stronger online presence by expanding website and developing social networking sites so that online membership recruitment information is more accessible. The target is to increase traffic flow to the main website by 15% by the end of July, 2011.

## **STRATEGY**

The driving strategy for this campaign will be to position Society membership as being a benefit for local communities and parishes around NSW. The main approach is to raise awareness of the membership opportunities available within people's communities and Churches. From there, promotion of St Vincent de Paul Society membership will be done through a wide range of publications and online media, with the intent of giving the target public a very good understanding, and then, to ultimately recruit them as members.

## **TACTICS**

Since the age group for the target public is spread over a wide range, different information channels will be required for different groups

For the 18 to 36 age group; social networking sites will be utilised extensively to build a strong online presence and to develop diverse relationships. The main social networking sites to be used are Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. They will all be linked together as well as with the organisation's main website, with each site serving a different purpose. Twitter will be used to provide timely updates on membership promotion and to monitor chatter concerning the Society. Facebook will be used to establish relationships with both potential and current members, as well as provide updates on the recruitment campaign. YouTube will be used as a way to promote Society membership through video clips online.

Create a quick and easy membership fact sheet in PDF format which could also be printed and handed out. This fact sheet will aim to condense membership information into two pages, and will be available on the main website, though promoted through Twitter and Facebook.

For the 35 plus age group; Parish noticeboards, brief notices in local newspapers and information evenings will form the bulk of membership promotion. Most local newspapers have a community calendar section where groups and organisations can list events that are happening during the week or month

Promotional events such as Welcome a Friend program will also be used. In this program, current members are encouraged to bring along a non-member friend or relative to the Society's monthly BBQ, who they think might be interested in joining.

Local media are always looking out for inspirational and thought-provoking human interest stories and Society members usually fall right into that category. The best way to recruit members is to show the local community the impact of membership on a person's life or on their local community. Create press releases that aim to be published in the local media and will be attractive to potential members.

For example, local newspapers love a local hero so one potential story could be full-time worker and family man devotes a couple of nights a week to make home visits. The aim is to write different press releases and create a range of media angles in order to attract diverse groups of people. If the particular age group is around 50-60, then a proposed media angle can potentially be about Society members who are retirees; devoting their spare time to being involved in their local community.

Based on the research / surveys conducted, use the information to tailor a key message that will be central to the campaign. This key message will be the basis for promotional material.

### **KEY MESSAGE**

The key message crafted for this campaign is the focus on real-life connection with other people. In world where iPhones and emails form the majority of our communication with each other, being a member of St Vincent de Paul Society gives you an opportunity to connect with other people on a level beyond computer devices. The organisation is based on home visits to the elderly, unemployed and disadvantaged demographic. This allows a more personal and intimate relationship to be forged between the members and the people they are helping.

## **BUDGET**

- 6 month's worth of campaign work =  $\$27,000 \times (2 \text{ public relations professionals}) = \$54,000$
- Media monitoring services via Australian Associated Press -  $\$500.00 \times 6 \text{ months} = \$3,000$
- Separate website development for membership recruitment =  $\$4920.00$
- Filming and editing video clips for YouTube =  $\$275.00$
- Membership fact sheet printing =  $\$900.00$
- Fact sheet design and layout =  $\$60.00 \times 4 \text{ hours} = \$240.00$



## EVALUATION

- Monitor website, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube daily in order to track traffic flow and determine if changes need to be made in order to increase hits
- Use media monitoring services such as Media Monitors and Australian Associated Press to observe and track news stories relating to the Society
- Conduct ongoing surveys and interviews with current members and volunteers to see how they feel about the campaign's direction, key message and tactics.

## APPENDIX



### St Vincent de Paul Society Membership Fact Sheet

In a rapidly-growing digital world where we connect to each other with so many devices and applications, yet often feel isolated and lack a sense of belonging, St Vincent de Paul Society offers an opportunity to share meaningful services and truly connect with others in a significant and life-changing way.

#### DID YOU KNOW...?

- St Vincent de Paul Society was founded by Blessed Frederic Ozanam in France, 1833?
- The Society has over 15,000 members in Australia?
- Members come from all different types of background and circumstances?
- Much of the Society's work is face-to-face contact?
- The Society welcomes anybody who wants to make a difference in their local community?
- Members dedicate themselves to helping a wide range of people in differing situations?
- There are regular meetings for members where they review their work, and support and encourage one another?
- You can contact your local Roman Catholic Parish if you're interested in becoming a member?

#### TESTIMONIAL

*"Prior to joining I guess I didn't really look at my surroundings and I never really ventured out of my comfort zone. The difference it has made is huge! I am aware so much of the homeless in our area, I am aware of the cultural struggles in our area. My home life has changed because of this, I no longer look at material things as something important" – Sandra (on how Society membership has changed her life)*

Survey conducted with current members

1. What does it mean to be a member of St Vincent de Paul?
2. What difference has membership made on your life?
3. What do you value most about your membership?
4. What made you initially want to become a member?
5. What did you think of the Society's recruitment efforts? Were they vital in making you want to join?