



Marketing and Communications Strategy

PURPOSE:

This document describes the main communications and marketing objectives for the Catching the Spirit Youth Society for the coming one to three years, the implementation of which will be subject to what is possible via the budget for these activities year to year.

These requirements will be used by the Marketing and Communications Committee and the CTSYS Board in strategic planning and decision-making. The Marketing and Communications Committee will select projeCTS on an annual basis based on priority and how well they fit with the upcoming year's budget.

BACKGROUND:

The Catching the Spirit Marketing Plan in 2009 defined target audiences, key marketing/communications messages, and objectives. In 2010, the plan was updated to reflect the budget and marketing priorities moving forward, and indicated initiatives that would be undertaken in the near term.

Marketing efforts in 2010 – 2011 focused on the following initiatives:

- Updating the CTS brand with graphics and colour scheme that is more compelling to youth
- Redesign of the CTS tri-fold brochure using the new brand
- Creation of a 11 x 17 poster using the new brand
- Updating the home page of the CTS website using the new brand
- Creating a blog for CTS youth to provide a communication tool to connect with other youth to promote leadership, sustainability, and other topics relevant to the program and them

CURRENT CHALLENGES:

The following are key marketing and communication challenges facing CTS in the near and mid-term:

- The CTS website is designed using Adobe Flash, a tool that creates compelling animated websites, but cannot be changed without using the Adobe Flash software. Flash has the following disadvantages for CTS:
 - Requires hiring a consultant to change the website, as doing so requires specialized knowledge and expensive software
 - The website cannot be resized to fit different screen sizes, meaning it effectively cannot be viewed on mobile devices. It also cannot expand to fit larger screens.
 - It cannot be viewed at all on an iPad or iPhone device.
 - The “back” button that most users would expect to return them to the previous screen will not work.
- The CTS website is not well-organized, and it is difficult to navigate to the information that users need most. This was remedied somewhat by the home page changes made in 2010 – 2011, but the problem still exists. It cannot be fixed without completely redesigning and restructuring the existing site. This is effectively the same amount of work as re-creating the existing site. Given the complexity and extent of this work, it would be very complex – and potentially impossible – to complete such a redesign over the course of several years: it must be done all at once, followed by the launch of a new website.
- Building a community of support online is increasingly important as fundraising moves to online voting to select recipients of donations.



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- The existing CTS website does not wholly reflect the new CTS brand, although the home page was updated last year.
- The existing website is not setup so that CTS can track the effectiveness of online or print promotions.
- Few parents of participating youth donate to the program, yet the youth are its strongest supporters. Connecting with this group of supporters could be of great benefit to CTS.

PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCES:

The following groups will be the targets of CTS communications and marketing initiatives:

Youth: Those who are currently eligible to participate in the program (age 12 – 18), especially those whose families may not be able to afford to pay for such a program.

Teachers: Teachers of youth who are eligible to attend the CTS program.

Parents: Parents of youth who are eligible to attend the CTS program. A youth attending the program must have their parent's support and permission. For younger participants, parents will play an even greater role in deciding whether they participate.

Donors: Both current and prospective donors to the CTSYS program. For ongoing program funding, is important to show donors that the program is a success and that it makes an impact in the community. The goal of donor communications is encouraging long-term program funding, not program participation.

KEY MESSAGES

Key messages should align to the short- to medium-term strategic objectives of CTS. The following key messages are proposed for the 2011-12 year:

- All CTS youth and their parents should be aware of the cost per youth, and the current fundraising status for the upcoming year. These messages should drive financial support for the program from those who can afford it. Recommend transparency in our financial situation and the costs/youth.
- CTS gives opportunities for youth to work together, collaborate, and discover how to be a team members and leaders.
- CTS is led by youth, for youth.

OBJECTIVES:

- Build awareness of the Catching the Spirit programs amongst youth, parents, and teachers in order to increase registration at camps and in the Spirit Steward Program.
- Engage youth in promoting the CTS programs so that their ideas, thoughts, and views become a key part of marketing CTS to all stakeholders. Give youth the opportunity to speak for the program, especially to their peers, parents, and teachers.
- Whenever possible, messages to youth should come from youth. This ensures that the messages are speak to what youth care about most.
- Marketing messages should be produced with the input of the Leadership Council.
- Promote CTSYS to current and prospective donors so that they are aware of what makes CTS different, the impact the program has on the community, and therefore why it is a worthwhile recipient of their money. While it is necessary to provide facts about the program, it is more important that this group experiences a message that communicates on an emotional level.



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LIMITATIONS

The above objectives must be achieved in the context of limited program funding for marketing and communications. As a result, use of the following media will be kept to a minimum:

- Advertising in community papers and other print media
 - Tends to be expensive, and it is very difficult to measure its impact and effectiveness.
- Direct Marketing
 - It is expensive to create the print materials needed for such a campaign, as well as to distribute them. It is also difficult to measure its impact and effectiveness. Creating paper marketing materials that will be thrown out is not in line with the environmental stewardship objectives of the program.
- Promotional Items
 - Promotional gifts or giveaways tend to be expensive to produce if they are of sufficiently high quality that they will not be soon thrown out.
 - It is questionable whether the recipient of these items would be any more likely to participate or support the program. Free items are often perceived to be of no value.
 - Any promotional give-away initiatives will be evaluated on the basis of cost, their ability to increase awareness, and how they impact the overall CTS brand.

INITIATIVES

BACKGROUND

In 2010, we undertook a process of defining the CTS brand as a key first step in building new marketing materials for CTS. The materials that were re-designed with the new CTS branding were:

- Tri-fold brochure – designed for distribution to parents and teachers.
- Posters – designed for youth, and intended to draw them to the CTS website
- Website – designed for both youth and parents/teachers. Due to fiscal limitations, this update was limited to:
 - The home page
 - Some minor updates for accuracy
 - Addition of the CTS Wordpress blog site
 - Transfer hosting to a new provider which provides CTS control over site updates and general administration

The following initiatives have been identified for 2011 and beyond:

BRANDING

We have defined visual elements and messaging for CTS marketing materials. This branding process will continue, but must remain consistent with what has been completed to date. All materials that may be seen by youth, parents, teachers, or donors must remain consistent with this brand. That said, as new materials are created, the brand will also evolve; new visual elements may be added to the “look and feel” that represents CTS. Importantly, these must remain consistent with what has been completed before.

In 2010, the following were not updated as part of the new CTS brand. It is planned that this work will be done in 2011-12:

- Update the CTS logo using design elements produced by youth in the 2011 summer season.



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- Evaluate naming and naming conventions (CTS, Catching the Spirit)

PRINT MATERIALS

- Initial design work has been completed for a second poster. This will be completed in 2011-12.
- At least one more poster design will be produced to promote the 2012 CTS season.
- Update the tri-fold brochure for the 2011 season.
- Evaluate producing CTS-branded materials for sale or give-away. Potential items include t-shirts, buttons, and stickers.

ONLINE MATERIALS

- On Jun 17, CTS was awarded the “Grant for Change”, which will match up to \$5000 for the design of website and related materials. Subsequent discussions determined that a new CTS website would cost approximately \$6000, which would be delivered to CTS at a cost of \$3000 via the grant. If the Board elects to pursue this opportunity (notice must be given by Sep 17 or the Grant award will be forfeit), this will be a focus of marketing work in the Fall of 2011.

FUNDRAISING MATERIALS

- Update the existing CTS background and profile information currently provided to donors to better convey the benefits of the program, and convey excitement about what CTS is accomplishing. This would replace the existing profile/background information submitted in grant applications. **Due: Jan 2012**
- Create a 30-second “elevator pitch” to be provided to Board members and other stakeholders to ensure consistent messaging about the program, its benefits, and key attributes. **Due: Dec 2011**

SOCIAL MEDIA

The following social media campaigns/initiatives will be evaluated implemented prior to Spring 2012. To support these, a monthly budget of \$100 from Mar – Aug 2012 has been requested. Additional prizes would be solicited from donors (ie. MEC, WildPlay, ZipTrek, etc). The goal of these campaigns is to build an online community with whom we can communicate regularly.

- Facebook promotion campaigns:
 - **Marketing objective: “Friend” us on Facebook, don’t just visit our site to share photos.**
 - Randomly selected post to our wall or via Twitter on a given day each week will receive a prize
 - Prize given to the person who posts the best idea to improve their community or their environment
- Blog campaigns:
 - **Marketing objective: Contribute to the blog, and read/comment upon existing content.**
 - Best creative blog post describing how CTS made a difference in their lives, in how they see themselves, or relating to leadership. Winner each week is recognized on all social media channels, and gets a prize
- YouTube
 - **Marketing Objective: Create video “stories” about your CTS experience that can promote the program to donors and potential participants.**
 - Campaigns to get youth to produce videos about CTS. These videos would, at least initially, have two themes:
 - What was it like to participate in the CTS program? What will you remember most?
 - Tell the story of your experience at CTS.
 - What do you know now, that you didn’t before?



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- Video created by youth on topics relevant to the program. A video question or issue would be posted every 2 weeks by the youth leaders, for response by the CTS community (either by posting a video response or via text). The favorite response of the youth leaders would be featured in the next week's video. Contests would be run to award the favorite video response to a question on a periodic basis (especially early-on). Topics could include:
 - Environmental/sustainability issues the youth leaders feel are important to youth
 - Discussions on how youth can make a difference regarding environmental or social issues
 - Youth leadership, diversity, collaboration and teamwork
- Compile/edit the videos described above to build a presentation about the impact of CTSYS on the lives of youth. Post this on the YouTube site, and distribute to current and prospective sponsors. This could also be distributed to teachers and other stakeholders.