Abstract

We have conducted market research on behalf of Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital, using multiple data collection methods. We have compiled our methods, findings, summaries, and recommendations in the following document.

Market research report

A report on our findings for research commissioned by Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital

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**Research Objective**

The primary objective of the research we conducted was to determine whether or not Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital can improve their fundraising efforts, and the ways and means by which to do this most effectively. We wanted to uncover what it is that makes people donate, and what it is that may deter individuals from donating to a charitable cause. Through the research that we conducted we wanted to better understand the giving environment in the primary and secondary service areas for Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital. We wanted to learn more about the messages sent out by the hospital and how they are received and perceived with regards to the populations proclivity to donate.

We will use the research outcomes to develop and follow messages for target audiences that can be incorporated throughout marketing and development communications. Our findings will inform marketing and communications plans and materials, as well as development communications for Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital. The research will help to determine the preferred method of communication for audiences of different ages and demographics to aid in planning a comprehensive communication strategy.

**Research Summary**

The research that we conducted took on two methods; an online survey and focus groups. By using a form of qualitative data collection alongside a method that is quantitative by nature, we hoped to gain as much information as possible about the environment that Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital is operating in.

We found that most people in the four-state area are generous and donate, but not a lot of money in terms of their annual income:

* Most people (93%) in this four-state area donate money to multiple charities (~5 on average).
* People in these states donate about $1,600 a year on average; with the largest single average donation just under $700.
* With an average income of $81,000, people are donating about 2% of their income.

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generatedReasons For Not Donating:

* Lack of money (disposable income)
* Not enough information/clarity on how their money is spent
* Concern for how much of their donation makes it to those in need
* State borders pose a formidable barrier to donating
  + with the exception of St. Jude, no other children’s hospital received any notable proportion of donations outside its area/state.
* Figure 1 highlights these concerns.

Figure 1

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generatedReasons For Donating:

* Experience or a connection with the children’s hospital was the greatest motivator for people donating
  + 51% of donations to Mt. Rumpke Children's Hospital came from parents with a recent experience here
  + 15% came from parents without a recent experience
  + 34% came from non-parents.
* To make a difference – this was the most common reason cited as to why people donate
* Giving to a cause they believe in
* To improve the community
* Figure 2 highlights these feelings.

Figure 2

Reasons People Would Consider Donating:

People frequently commented on the *need* that children’s hospital have for this type of funding. There is a clear disparity between people’s knowledge and the true information – which is of course, children’s hospitals rely heavily upon donations and charitable funding for their operations. A common misconception is that these hospitals are businesses and not charities, and therefore do not need nor deserve people’s hard-earned income.

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generatedAnother common response amongst the participants was that there are other causes more suited to their giving requirements. Figure 3 highlights the reasons that people don’t give and compares them with the reasons people *need* in order to feel comfortable giving.

Figure 3

Figure 3 highlights the need to send out the correct message when soliciting donations. It shows that people would be more willing to donate if the cash flow, following their donation, was more transparent, i.e., the individual would like to see where their $10 went, and thus see what difference it can make. The six reasons highlighted by the red asterisks are all perceptions which can be changed through educating people and having more openness in the donation process.

We also saw that the messages sent out by Mt. Rumpke had a strong correlation with donation likelihood. Through our research we learned that the key message that was being put across in donation campaigns was pivotal in determining whether or not an individual would donate.

**Data Collection Methods**

Quantitative Research

Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital is looking to improve the effectiveness of its donor program. To that end, it wants to understand the current giving environment along with learning which messages resonate most strongly among a target audience of consumers (and employees). In order to obtain the data that we required to assess the giving environment in the primary and secondary areas serviced by Mt. Rumpke we used two methods of data collection.

Firstly, we used a quantitative method of data collection. We developed and produced a survey aimed at gauging the giving environment both in the local area and further afield. We restricted access to the survey through the following criteria:

* Geographically relevant candidates – people living in Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and Michigan.
* Head of household
* Adults – over the age of 21 years old

Using this criterion, we were able to confirm that each person surveyed, would be a reasonable candidate to expect donations from. Of course, not every participant was charitable, but they at least had potential to be.

Qualitative Research

Mt. Rumpke Children’s commissioned qualitative research among key target audiences to gain their reaction to messages developed internally. We did this research by conducting focus group studies. We used four different groups on different dates, each with some demographic that we deemed to be important or useful. In total we spoke to 27 individuals about the messages sent out by Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital and how they were being perceived; whether they resonated with the individuals, whether they felt the message was too strong/weak, or whether they felt the message was relevant/irrelevant. The groups were determined by the following criteria:

* Group 1 – 30-50 years old, mid-level donors
* Group 2 – Mt. Rumpke Children’s Hospital employees
* Group 3 – 55+ years old, mid-level donors
* Group 4 – Non-donors, women 40+, working outside the home, $75k+ income

Each of the groups spoken to was chosen in order to understand more fully the feelings and thoughts regarding donating to a children’s hospital, coming from a specific area of society. We showed each group six messages that Mt. Rumpke could use in their donation efforts. Each group saw the same messages. We then listened to and recorded the responses of the participants. Focusing on *how* the message made them feel, *what* it meant to them, and if it would make them more likely to donate.

**Key Findings**

Overall

* Nice City MSA people are most likely to give only to causes in which they believe.
* Almost half of the people in the four-state area say that no specific request appeals to them.
* Mail solicitations remain the single most effective appeal – specifically with previous donors.
* A quarter of all people in these four states feel that children’s hospitals get enough money from major donors and thus don’t need their money.
* Universities and schools are not seen as needing money from people like these.

Statistics for Children’s Hospitals

* **1/5** people who have donated to a children’s hospital have done so because of an experience with the hospital.
* **8%** of donators do so because of a working relationship with the hospital or at least healthcare.
* **40%** of people give to children’s hospitals because they believe in their mission; and it does not matter if they have children or not.

Key Messages

* The most *positively* responded to message was: “Annie is alive/thriving today because of past donations that helped us.”
  + People were able to get behind this message and feel as though their donations were really impactful.
  + True success stories emanating from charitable donations gives people a sense of pride and purpose, which in turn means they are more likely to engage with the donation process.
  + This message is very “personal” and “emotional” according to study participants, it connects the potential giver directly to someone who has benefitted.
  + One non-donor said, “Bingo! I love that. It pulls at the heartstrings.”
* Secondly was the message: “Every gift matters. Contributions of any size combine for big impact.”
  + The first part of the message allowed donors to feel important and useful.
  + The second part made them feel comfortable to give as much or as little as they could. A big issue voiced in the focus groups was the demand for a certain dollar amount.
* The message that was most *negatively* received was: “Charitable giving accelerates our efforts – resulting in better treatments sooner.”
  + People tended to think this was clumsy and misleading.
  + They said it sounds like they aren’t currently putting in all of their effort.
  + There was a disconnect as to why charitable dollars would be needed to recruit and pay doctors.

**Recommendations**

1. Universities and schools are not seen as needing money from people like these. Appeals for money on the part of Mt. Rumpke Children's Hospital should focus on PATIENT CARE not on academic pursuits. Centre the campaign and its’ messages more on the work you are doing to heal children and the charity care that you provide, and NOT any academic or research needs.
2. Mt. Rumpke Children's Hospital needs to clearly explain to people why they need to believe in Mt. Rumpke Children's Hospital’s causes (whether they have children/experience or not).
3. To convert non-donors into donating, requires general education and a convincing argument that their money is:

* going to a good cause
* not wasted
* going to a charity that truly helps people they may know (or them personally)
* going to the charity and not the fund-raising organization

1. For those who do not donate to children’s hospitals, in addition to a general lack of “connection,” there are several misconceptions that must be cleared up and overcome for any appeal to be successful:

* children’s hospitals are a business not a charity
* they get enough money from large donors
* they don’t have an urgent need for funding from individuals
* concerns over how donations will be used
* donation won’t be useful
* they get enough money from the government.

Without clearing up these misconceptions, any other direct appeals for donations will get lost.

1. From the focus groups we found that a large majority of donors, do not wish to receive a gift in return. They would rather their money be spent on the cause. To overcome this, I recommend a monthly ‘donor’s newsletter’ outlining all of the great work Mt. Rumpke has been able to do in the past month thanks to people like them. This would replace any need to give a gift, and instead gives them something much more valuable: VALIDATION.