

7.2 Social Marketing Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Shoebox Project (SBP) is a Toronto-based nonprofit operating in Canada, the US, and the UK which coordinates the distribution of essential items and gifts to women living in homeless shelters. Throughout the year, its chapters hold donation drives, encouraging individuals to donate hygiene and beauty items inside decorated shoeboxes. Due to the pandemic, it is currently not feasible to hold a physical holiday donation drive. Instead, individuals will be encouraged to donate online, where they can create “virtual shoeboxes” which will then be delivered to the chapter of their choice.

The priority audience of urban and suburban women will be targeted through social media marketing and paid advertising. Celebrity partners will be featured as virtual shoebox curators and will also promote the drive to their followers. The goal of the 2021 holiday drive is to generate twice as much impact to women’s shelters as the year prior.

Donors will receive exclusive digital thank you cards from their selected celebrity. Additionally, they will be allowed to leave a note with their donation, later handwritten onto a physical greeting card and delivered inside a shoebox to their chapter.

An 11-step implementation plan will guide the drive, followed by an evaluation to determine whether the organization has met its goal. In the areas of budgeting and advertising, real-time feedback allows for fine adjustments to increase effectiveness and lower costs.

STEP 1: SOCIAL ISSUE, ORGANIZATION, BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, AND FOCUS

1.1 SOCIAL ISSUE

Women living in homeless shelters often experience feelings of disconnection from society and low self-esteem. A lack of access to basic hygiene can block motivation to find employment and housing, and to fill other essential needs (SBP, para. 13).

1.2 ORGANIZATION

The Shoebox Project for Shelters (Canada)

- Toronto head office
- 44 Canadian chapters

The Shoebox Project for Shelters (United States)

- New York City headquarters
- 17 US chapters

The Shoebox Project for Shelters (United Kingdom)

- London chapter

1.3 BACKGROUND

Since it began in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has suspended SBP’s physical donation drives. Many chapter coordinators have stepped down throughout the pandemic, leaving the head office desperately attempting to refill the positions. Through their hard work, the organization

has lost only six chapters since its late 2019 peak. Still, during the pandemic, the organization as a whole has experienced declining community engagement and impact.

1.4 PURPOSE

Providing women living in homeless shelters with the basic hygiene items they need for personal care often helps them overcome motivational roadblocks. Additionally, beauty products included in shoeboxes can help increase their feelings of self-worth, another important factor in recovery.

1.5 CAMPAIGN FOCUS

SBP will hold this year's holiday donation drive on its website, where individuals will be able to choose from five representative "virtual shoeboxes" with their contents selected by celebrities. These monetary donations will be split evenly among the head office and local chapters, allowing for the purchase of bulk hygiene and beauty items, assembled into shoeboxes by local coordinators and other volunteers.

STEP 2: SITUATION ANALYSIS

This section was completed based on an interview with the Shoebox Project's Volunteer Manager Cynthia Shantz, CVRM.

2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHS TO MAXIMIZE

- The Canadian head office's team is very small, with only four permanent staff members. There is little sense of hierarchy, with tasks shared between members. These factors make communication easier, increase efficiency, and make it possible for the team to work remotely for about three days per week.
- Chapter coordinators, volunteers who manage local chapters, are required to participate in at least one scheduled national drive per year – the holiday drive around Christmas. Most participate in additional drives and share their data with the head office for inclusion in the annual report. Many chapters are gifted with dedicated chapter coordinators who have served for nearly 10 years in their role.

2.2 ORGANIZATIONAL WEAKNESSES TO MINIMIZE

- At the head office, there is a reliance on volunteers to complete social media, website development, and promotional tasks. When volunteers leave, the organization is left without a way to update its online presence, resulting in outdated content on its website and social media channels. A previous volunteer with administrator privileges deleted much of the website in May 2019, and without any capable volunteers, the head office struggled to get the content back online. A permanent position should be created to increase the quality and stability of the organization's online brand.
- Even though there are now six fewer chapters than there were in late 2019, a few have been established during the pandemic and many have transitioned to a new local coordinator. Training challenges have resulted for these chapters, as have coordination problems for the head office. Additional permanent staff are needed.
- Older chapters are used to a high level of autonomy, and some avoid the data reporting measures in place to support annual reporting. To avoid having to use the seemingly complicated spreadsheets, many continue to report their records over the phone or by

email, or have simply stopped reporting them at all. A few chapter coordinators cannot be reached by the head office. If utilized properly, the cloud-based reporting system would simplify the coordination of more than 80 chapters across seven time zones. The current situation leads to accounting errors and inaccuracies. Thus, for the past two years, annual reports have included conservative estimates in place of reported data for these chapters. This leads to a likely underreported total annual impact, which is currently \$2,200,000 CAD, or 44,000 shoeboxes filled with essentials and gifts.

- Beginning around 2017, in its sixth year, SBP began to implement standardized branding guidelines and drive schedules for its quickly growing list of chapters. Local coordinators, who had become accustomed to a higher degree of autonomy in their volunteer roles, were reluctant to implement the changes and did not view them as important to the organization's mission. Some chapters continue to have issues implementing the new branding guidelines and synchronized drive schedules. This creates a continuity and consistency problem.

2.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO LEVERAGE

- SBP was an instant success after its founding. Many people found that they enjoyed putting together shoeboxes as an affordable and visible way to support the organization's rather simple mission. As new chapters launched, they quickly gained corporate interest and many shoebox donations. Early on, SBP gained Dream as a national corporate sponsor and has since added additional national- and chapter- level business sponsors. They contribute the vast majority of the \$150,000 CAD operating budget.
- SBP was founded and popularized by Jessica Mulroney, daughter-in-law of Brian Mulroney, the 18th Prime Minister of Canada. Members of the Board of Directors are usually influential in Canadian popular culture or an affiliate of the Mulroney family. They promote the Shoebox Project to their followers, bringing growth to the organization and making it one of the most well-known nonprofits in Canada. SBP leverages this to increase corporate funding and public involvement.

2.4 THREATS TO PREPARE FOR

- SBP has been unable to hold physical donation drives since the beginning of the pandemic. This has led to a decline in public engagement and financial support, and an increase in its reliance on business sponsorships.
- SBP was founded in 2011, when one Canadian dollar was worth \$1.05 USD. Since then, the Canadian dollar has been on a downward trend, and is currently worth just \$0.80 USD. Since the start, SBP's mission has been to deliver shoeboxes filled with \$50 CAD worth of high-quality items to women living in shelters. Given the declining value of the Canadian dollar as well as inflation, the organization's chapters have been reporting a decrease in the quality and quantity of items included in the donated shoeboxes. There is an aversion to raising the suggested value of the items in each shoebox as this would decrease the number of donations.

STEP 3: PRIORITY AUDIENCE

3.1 PRIMARY AUDIENCE

Historically, SBP has been most successful in gaining shoebox donations from married, middle-class urban and suburban women in their late 20s and older. This demographic is also most likely

to volunteer their time at local chapters during donation drives and recruit those within their networks to donate a shoebox. For this campaign, this same demographic will be the priority audience and will be the target of social media advertisements.

3.2 ADDITIONAL AUDIENCES

SBP will also attempt to engage individuals who have previously shared their contact information at a local chapter drive, national sponsored event, or information table.

STEP 4: BEHAVIOR OBJECTIVES AND TARGET GOALS

4.1 BEHAVIOR OBJECTIVE

In lieu of a shoebox, audiences are encouraged to make a comparable monetary donation (\$100 or less) to SBP via its website.

4.2 KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

First, audiences should know that women living in homeless shelters are often prevented from practicing personal care due to a lack of basic hygiene and beauty items. This contributes to low self-worth, creating a barrier in the way of motivation to seek employment and housing. Second, they should be aware that they can help directly to alleviate this by donating through SBP's web application, from which they will also benefit.

4.3 BELIEF OBJECTIVE

Audiences need to believe that their donation can make a difference in the life of a woman facing homelessness, and that the benefits they receive from donation outweigh the costs of doing so.

4.4 SMART GOAL

During the 2021 holiday peak season (November and December), SBP will receive sufficient monetary donations through its "virtual shoebox" website application to allow it to have twice the impact as it did during the prior year's peak season.

STEP 5: PRIORITY AUDIENCE BARRIERS, MOTIVATORS, AND COMPETITORS

5.1 BARRIERS

The principal barrier associated with adopting the behavior is financial – we must convince the audience that direct donation (and specifically, to SBP) is a good use of their money. A secondary barrier is transparency – the audience is much more likely to donate if they know specifically where their money will go.

5.2 BENEFITS

- Donators who select a virtual shoebox (a \$100 donation) will receive a digital thank you card written by the celebrity who curated their shoebox. Those who choose to donate more than \$20 will receive a tax-deductible charitable gift receipt in accordance with Canadian law.
- Donors can type a note for a local woman living in a homeless shelter. SBP will then write it in a physical greeting card and deliver it inside a shoebox to the selected

community. Alternatively, donors can send their own photos, cards, and other documents by email to be included in their shoebox.

5.3 MOTIVATORS

- With five major celebrities curating virtual shoeboxes, audience members will likely identify strongly with one of them and wish to receive their exclusive digital thank you card.
- For those who are not able to donate this amount, they will still likely donate more than \$20 in order to receive a tax benefit. (In Canada, charitable donations under \$20 are not tax-deductible.)
- SBP's website contains many prominent inspirational stories from recipients about how receiving a shoebox helped them on their path to recovery. This personal touch extends to the point of donation, where the donor is encouraged to write directly to the person their donation will support. Donors may enjoy this opportunity to engage.

5.4 COMPETITORS

The primary competing behavior is to ignore calls to action. Audience members might also choose to donate to another charity or nonprofit.

5.5 INFLUENCERS

Celebrities who have curated virtual shoeboxes include Kim Cattrall, Tynomi Banks, Michael Bublé, Simu Liu, and Elisha Cuthbert. As November nears, they will increasingly promote SBP to their followers. As usual, members of the influential Mulroney family and their affiliates will also promote SBP ahead of the holiday season.

STEP 6: POSITIONING STATEMENT

Audience members should believe that donating to SBP's virtual drive is an effective and worthwhile way to make a crucial difference in the life of a woman experiencing homelessness.

STEP 7: MARKETING INTERVENTION MIX STRATEGY (4PS)

7.1 PRODUCT

In return for their support, donors receive:

- A tax receipt for donations in excess of \$20
- For donations of \$100, an exclusive digital thank you card from their selected celebrity
- Connection with those they support by including a note with their donation
- The service of purchasing bulk items for shoeboxes on their behalf, assembling them into shoeboxes, and handwriting their notes on cards for inclusion inside
- Confidence that SBP will use their donation to help local homeless women in their community

7.2 PRICE

The cost of adopting the behavior is equivalent to the amount of one's donation. For most, this will be over \$20 and not more than \$100. The time required to donate is less than that required to

assemble a shoebox oneself and requires little physical effort. The monetary incentive is a potential tax deduction. An exclusive thank you card serves as a nonmonetary incentive.

7.3 PLACE

The virtual shoebox drive will take place online at SBP's website, easily accessed through any computer or mobile device. It is perhaps the most convenient way to donate, again requiring less time and effort than assembling a shoebox oneself.

7.4 PROMOTION

- Social media will be the primary means of promotion, though major news media will often cover the organization's holiday drives as they draw near. Since the organization's founding, the most important messengers have been members of the Mulrone family and their affiliates. This year's drive should also include the five celebrity shoebox curators as messengers.
- Curators' messages will be conveyed directly from their main social media accounts, showcasing their collaboration with SBP and encouraging followers to donate for an exclusive thank you card.
- SBP's main social media channels will be employed, as will that of local chapters and their coordinators. Paid social media advertisements will be ran for the identified target demographic across major cities.
- Messages from SBP social media accounts and advertisements should hook potential donors with an interesting headline – for example, "What's in Michael Bubl's Shoebox?!". The successive text might read "Help local women facing homelessness through our VIP-Curated virtual shoebox drive".

STEP 8: EVALUATION PLAN

8.1 PURPOSE FOR EVALUATION

The evaluation will measure the effectiveness of the 2021 holiday drive – specifically, whether it met the goal of having at least twice the impact of the previous year's drive.

8.2 AUDIENCE FOR EVALUATION

With approximately the same level of corporate sponsorship as last year, the difference will be made during this year's holiday drive by individual donors, the audience for evaluation.

8.3 WHAT WILL BE MEASURED

The evaluation will principally measure outcomes to determine whether the goal was met. Monetary inputs (for advertising) and return on investment (number of clicks, clicks per donation) will also be measured.

8.4 HOW MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN

The cloud-based data reporting system will be used to compile donation numbers from each chapter. This will allow for comparison to the prior year's data to determine outcomes. A preset advertising budget will act as an input. Return on investment from that budget will be measured by a combination of analytics tools and software.

8.5 WHAT MEASUREMENTS WILL BE TAKEN

Important outcomes data to collect includes the number of shoeboxes donated during the holiday season across all chapters, the total individual monetary donations, and the average individual monetary donation. The input data is the advertising budget split across platforms. Return on investment data includes clicks per donation by social media platform, average donation amount sourced by social media platform, and the percent of donations sourced from social media.

8.6 COST OF EVALUATION

Evaluation will incur no additional monetary cost.

STEP 9: BUDGET

- Web development and social media marketing will incur no additional cost.
- For the social media advertising budget, it is better to start out relatively small to gauge the effectiveness of the initial settings and level of engagement. Adjustments can always be made to demographic and geographic target categories.
- The average cost per click on Facebook is about \$0.44 CAD, meaning that targeting a small priority audience for social media advertising is a necessity (Lua, para. 12).
- The advertising budget should be appropriate relative to the organization's operating budget, the estimated effectiveness of such advertising, and the social marketing plan goals.

STEP 10: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- SBP staff will jointly create a detailed social media promotion plan for the virtual drive, including guidelines for celebrity curators.
- SBP will reach out to identified celebrity curators to develop a curated virtual shoebox and agree to a social media promotion plan.
- The volunteer coordinator will instruct the web developer to create the required section and pages on the website, including the checkout sequence.
- The administrative assistant will begin scheduling social media posts regarding the drive across SBP's national accounts. She will email a newsletter to chapter coordinators, reminding them to share or copy these posts to their local chapters' accounts.
- By late October, the administrative assistant will begin running paid targeted advertising to the identified demographic and geographic categories.
- By early November, social media marketing is in full swing and donations are beginning to come in. The administrative assistant makes changes to advertisement settings as needed. Celebrity curators promote the campaign on their accounts.
- The executive assistant takes care of writing out the submitted notes onto greeting cards and having them delivered to local chapters. She also emails digital thank you cards and donation receipts.
- Distribute funds weekly to local chapters for the purchase of bulk personal care and beauty items. Local coordinators are responsible for assembling and distributing shoeboxes.
- The administrative assistant should periodically remind chapters via email (and other means, if necessary) to record their donation data throughout the holiday season.

- After New Year's Eve, the executive assistant will compile the results and produce numbers and statistics indicating the impact of the program.
- Regardless of whether the goal was met, the administrative assistant will publicize the number of shoeboxes donated and monetary impact of the holiday drive.

References

Lua, A. (2020, June 30). How much does Facebook advertising cost? The complete guide to Facebook ads pricing. Buffer Library. Retrieved August 13, 2021, from <https://buffer.com/library/facebook-advertising-cost/>

The Shoebox Project. (2021, August 12). About Us – Impact. Retrieved August 13, 2021, from <https://www.shoeboxproject.ca/about#impact>