Brewing Inspiration to Engage Coffee Fans by Caribou Coffee:

An Evaluation Plan Case Study

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Introduction

Caribou Coffee is a regional specialty coffee and espresso retailer. In 2013, its sales were at an all-time low and it had closed about 80 stores nationwide. Caribou Coffee then hired Exponent PR to revamp its engagement with customers, hoping to drive up sales.

Exponent PR did thorough primary research, coming to the realization that Caribou Coffee's ideal target audience liked when brands invited them to interact. They were able to narrow down the the wants, desires, needs, hobbies and motivations of Caribou Coffee's publics. Through audience mapping, they fleshed out three target audiences:

- "Quality Conscious: Women age 25– 44 who are married and may have children at home. They spend more than $58 each month at coffee shops.

- Morning Commuter: Women and men ages 25–34 and 45–54 who are married and may have children at home. They spend more than $45 each month at coffee shops.

- Treat Seeker: Primarily women ages 25–44, often with children at home. They spend at least $40 per month on coffee. This audience is tapped in, extremely social both on and offline, and already spends a lot of quality time with the brand, whether in retail locations or at home" (Caribou Coffee, pg. 1).

Analysis of Objectives

Campaign Objectives

Exponent PR's year long campaign was called "Brewing Inspiration to Engage Coffee Fans." This campaign had two major objectives:

- "Business Objective: Drive traffic and sales in retail stores.

- Communications Objective: Build sustained awareness of and engagement with the Caribou brand, leveraging media relations and social media channels" (Caribou Coffee, pg. 2).

Campaign Strategies

There were four strategies that broke down into tasks that fulfilled the communications objective, which fulfilled the overall business objective:

Strategy 1: "Engage consumers in product development" (Caribou Coffee, pg. 2)—This was done in person at a mall as well as through Pinterest.

Strategy 2: "Leverage seasonal topics to further engagement (Caribou Coffee, pg. 2)—This strategy focused on three major seasonal events online through Pinterest and Facebook.

Strategy 3: "Create content that reaches beyond the category itself (Caribou Coffee, pg. 2)—This was done with the media relations help of Buzzfeed and influential bloggers I AM BAKER, Ambitious Kitchen and Satisfy My Sweet Tooth.

Strategy 4: "Refresh a cause-marketing program through integrated events and social media engagement" (Caribou Coffee, pg. 2)—This strategy utilized the breast cancer awareness month and internationally acclaimed yarn artist, Eric Rieger aka HOTTEA, through Instagram.

What is an Objective?

"An objective is something that can be documented; it's factual and observable" (Harrison, pg. 1). An objective must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) (Business Matters, pg. 2). An effective objective is also clear, concise, meaningful, reasonable and quantifiable. "Setting quantifiable results objectives will enable you to specify the end result intended and then to measure whether the intended result has been achieved" (Harrison, pg. 2).

Author of *Guidelines for Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives: An Update*, Forrest Anderson, et.al., lists six reasons why effective objectives must be clear, concise and measurable.

1. Objectives create a clearer aim for the focus and sequence of strategies and tactics.
2. Having clear and concise objectives right at the get go lessens the chances for conflict.
3. "Objectives focus resources to drive performance and efficiency" (Anderson, pg. 5).
4. When objectives are clear and concise they make it easier to point out areas for improvement.
5. Effective objectives make it easier for measuring if a PR campaign has met or exceeded expectations.
6. And most importantly, effective objectives connect to the business objectives.

"Just as the implementation of measurable PR objectives brings many benefits, their absence brings considerable risk, not the least of which is the potential for lack of understanding among executives and other team-members; loss of efficiency and dearth of resources" (Anderson, pg. 5).

Objective Strengths

The communications objective focuses on the outputs—"the results, often in the form of media coverage, coming from PR activities such as press releases, special events, collateral material, Web sites and other channels"—and outcomes—which are "recognized widely in the form of awareness, understanding, attitudes, preference and behavior, and are achieved as a result of outputs"—, while the business objective focuses on the business outcomes—effects that make a direct contribution toward the organization's goals and objectives such as increased sales, lowered costs or a higher stock price" (Anderson, pg. 6).

In a perfect world, if the communications objective was successful, it would have made the business objective also successful. This is another strength of Caribou Coffee's campaign objectives.

Lastly, the objectives also highlight who the campaign would target and what channels it would use to target its audience.

Objective Weaknesses

The largest weakness both objectives share is that neither of them are SMART. How does Caribou Coffee expect to measure its end results when it has nothing to compare it to in its objectives?

Adding more specific, quantifiable, time-based wording to the objectives would make it SMART and effective. KPIs need to be considered as well.

In Angela Jeffrey's white paper, *Social media measurement: a step-by-step approach*, she "paraphrases some KPI guidelines from Paine (2011, pp. 85, 87-88):

- If goals/objectives focus on measuring sales, KPIs might include the % increase in conversion rates, click-throughs to a specific URL, increase in conversations, online donations, membership sign-ups, etc.

- If goals/objectives focus on brand engagement, KPIs might include the ratio of posts to comments; increase in unique visitors; number of returning visitors; number of pages downloaded; number of download requests; sessions lasting longer than five minutes; number arriving from a Google search; subscribers or email addresses left on one's site; percent recommending the brand, or shouting it out.

- If goals/objectives focus on improving relationships, KPIs need to include surveys to see increased satisfaction, percent improvement in willingness to recommend, increase in trust or satisfaction scores, and percent willing to do business again" (pg. 8).

Evaluation Plan

Research and Planning

Although research is the first step, many practitioners see evaluation as something to be done at the end of a campaign. However, it is not. "For evaluation to be truly effective and genuinely meaningful it has to go right through from start to finish...It is important to evaluate objectively and accurately the position you are starting from BEFORE you commence the campaign" (Business Matters, pg. 1-2). "A practitioner must [also] decide who to measure against, whether it is just his own organization over time, or against competitors" (Jeffrey, pg. 9).

Evaluating the Business Objective

For the business objective, it would be good to see what Caribou Coffee's sales were at a year ago and project the specific goal to reach there again in sales with this campaign.

Evaluating the Communications Objective

For the communications objective, there are multiple ways to go about evaluating based on each strategy. However, all of them involved some level of social media.

Evaluating the Strategies

To measure the effectiveness of these strategies under the communications objective, we need to look at the web analytics and metrics. Web analytics offers very detailed statistics about a multitude of things like "exactly what sort of coverage is getting target audiences to visit an organization s website and complete business goals" (Duncan, pg. 20).

Web "metrics of engagement include the number of unique visitors coming to the organization's site from a story, the amount of time visitors referred from a story spend on the site, how many pages or which pages they read, and whether visitors from the story are helping the organization

reach a goal, such as purchasing a product, registering for email alerts, or downloading white papers" (Duncan, pg. 4).

Audience impressions is also an easy thing to measure that can prove the worth in these objectives. Audience impressions "consists of collecting print circulation figures, broadcast gross impressions and Internet "daily average visits," and totaling them up as an estimate of audience reached" (Jeffrey, et.al., pg. 4).

With these data, Caribou Coffee will be able to more easily measure the effectiveness of its strategies and objectives online, which aims to increase its awareness and engagement with customers, thus increasing its sales.

Overall Recommendation

My overall recommendations for effectively evaluating this campaign would be to:

- Have SMART objectives. Caribou Coffee's current objectives are too broad. Narrowing them down to be clear, concise and measurable leaves less room for error throughout all stages of the campaign.

- Know where Caribou Coffee is currently at in sales, in online engagement and in the customer's perspective of its brand, so after the campaign it has something to compare its end results to, ensuring easy measurement for success.

- Evaluate at the beginning and throughout the campaign, not just at the end. "This is because you always need a baseline from which to measure the effectiveness of the campaign from. It is for this reason that pre-campaign measurement as well as post-campaign measurement should always be seen as a vital component in the process" (Business Matters, pg. 1-2).

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