

Vibrant Communications



# Program Planning Project: Whole Foods

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## About Us:

We are Vibrant Communications, a revolutionary strategic communications firm that focuses on providing superior public relations through multiple mediums to reach the maximum publics. Sarah Avery is our president, Reed Gaudens is our account executive, Stefanie Reynolds is our vice president and our remaining staff team members, Michael Downss, Matt Seidel and Rachael Lang are our account coordinators.

## About the Client:

Whole Foods is a retailer focused on providing natural foods to health-conscious consumers. Through their focus on environmental stewardship, superior customer service and employee satisfaction, they are revered as a leading food retailer in the market.

## Public relations efforts:

Whole Foods aims to be a leading and respected educator regarding natural food choices. Their public relations efforts reflect this goal because several campaigns involve exposing consumers to alternative healthier ways to cook common meals, education on how to recognize organic food, as well as recent efforts to approve GMO labeling on all

foods (Rudawsky, 2013). Their primary external publics are wealthier, college-educated consumers in the Baby Boomer generation (Sachs, 2012).

Communications efforts at Whole Foods have included extensive involvement with social media, through which they offer many how-tos and recipes with natural foods. They also place significant importance on their environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility efforts. They ensure that each store participates in recycling and waste-reducing practices, as well as financially support and sustain local farmers and producers (Whole Foods Market IP. L.P.).

## Evaluation of public relations efforts :

Overall, your organization's public relations efforts have led it to its strong position in the market, but in the future, it can benefit from focusing on stronger grassroots efforts to cultivate a closer bond with local communities.

## SWOT Analysis:

After researching Whole Foods' current demographics, sales numbers, and brand marketing styles, we came up with the following SWOT analysis. All of the following information came from our own insights after analyzing secondary research.

A strength is their dedication to providing exclusively natural, high-quality foods. This demonstrates to the customers that they are trusted experts in the industry of organic foods. A second strength is the fair labor that they require of their farmers. This is consistent with their image of being a humane company. A third strength is their high rate of employee retention. Since employee retention is highly related to employee satisfaction, which means that Whole Foods is committed to giving superior customer service through employee empowerment. (Martin, 2008)

One weakness is the pricing perception, because they may lose potential customers due to the “whole paycheck” mentality (Jakab, 2013). A second weakness is lack of accessibility to the average customer, since they’re only placed in major regions. A third weakness stems from the perception that Whole Foods is not looking to expand their demographics, since their consumers are primarily affluent. (Sachs, 2012)

One opportunity is expansion of store presence nationwide, as they have plans of building 30 more stores in 2014. (Guenette, 2012) Another opportunity is the growing attractiveness of the health food industry to potential consumers, which will expand their customer base. (Meador, Britton, Phillips & Howery, 2008) A third opportunity is promoting brand awareness through community service, which strengthens their market share. (Meador, Britton, Phillips & Howery, 2008)

One threat would be the economic downturn, because it affects customer spending (Guenette, 2012). A second threat is the fact that organic and specialty-labeled items are not strictly regulated, so that can lead to lack of product clarity to the customer (Howard, n.d.). A third threat is the high price of organic foods, because Whole Foods could lose customers to competitors that sell similar products at lower prices (Craddick, 2013).

## Public relations program plan:

The goal of the program plan that our firm designed for Whole Foods is to ensure they are viewed as the premier organic food retailer in the country.

The first objective is to increase consumer sales by 15% through strategic campaigning over the period of a year. A tactic to support our first strategy is to employ a PSA that announces the details of how lower-income families are vulnerable to obesity, due to lack of access to healthy foods (Larson, 2010). A second tactic would be to create and publish a monthly e-newsletter on our website that would include information such as healthy living alternatives, natural food options, etc. Our second strategy would be to increase consumer sales through grassroots efforts that involve non-metropolitan communities nationwide.

One tactic to support it would be to promote healthy living by sponsoring local fitness events, including little league baseball games, gymnastics, volleyball tournaments,

etc. A second tactic for it would be to secure press coverage of a road show that we would facilitate, which would include a team of trained marketing professionals and chefs that would spend 3 months on the road traveling nationwide to conduct cooking classes with all-natural foods, while partnering with local organic farmers.

Our second objective is to increase positive attitude among potential customers about the affordability of Whole Foods products by up to 15% over the period of 6 months. Our first strategy is to establish a stronger presence online through personal social media campaigning. One tactic for this would be to reach out to influential “mommy” bloggers by introducing them to our stores and upgraded products. The second tactic would be to use Twitter to inform consumers of recent health food and environmental developments.

## Program plan evaluation:

We would evaluate whether or not we have met our target goal and objectives through quantitative methods, which would provide us with the numbers in sales growth that has been achieved by the end of our defined time period, and we will also employ qualitative methods, which include administering a survey to the larger community to determine whether or not we have expanded our customer base to our targeted audience.

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