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Internship

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INTRODUCTION

Small local businesses have always faced the challenge of marketing and generating visibility to the people in their community. There are several tasks that come into play when running your own business, and marketing is arguably the most essential part. The problem is that technology is constantly developing, making it harder to keep up with changes. The rise of social media outlets available can be both amazing and overwhelming.

Working at Charity Wings Art & Craft Center, I've noticed how little people know about us. Even the people who live in the apartments right above don't know we exist or what the organization does. I often hear customers say they've passed by the building many times, but never knew what it was. The students who attend CSUSM (the college located across the street) often make up the majority of people who stop by, and I think that we should be taking more advantage of that opportunity. Visit the arts building every now and then to let them know that they can always use this makerspace for any project that they might be working on.

It upsets me to know how amazing and unique this place is and how little exposure it has. My mentor once told me that "getting a passerby to step foot in the door is the hardest part and only then are they a potential customer." This was what lead me to the question: How can local businesses get the word out and self promote themselves to their community?



BACKGROUND

Charity Wings is a non-profit community art center located in San Marcos, CA. They provide not only a work space, but many materials and tools for people of all interests and abilities to use in their art projects. Their mission is to “be an inspiring place for makers of all ages to Gather, Give Back and Create,” (Elena Etcheverry). Another goal for the art center was to partner with other charities who can benefit from what art can provide for them. The employees are not only extremely supportive and encouraging, but also creative in nature making them excellent resources to go to. They are always willing to help anyone with their art project, be it painting, sewing, jewelry, pottery, or any other crafts one can imagine. They are both encouraging and supportive making it the perfect place to discover or recover one’s creativity. There are many volunteers on any given day not only because of the good cause that Charity Wings is working towards, but also because of the welcoming environment that encourages everyone to be boldly curious and embrace artistic exploration.

The organization was founded by Elena Lai Etcheverry in 2005. Charity Wings originally started out under the name Scrapbook Royalty, helping other non-profits fundraise through their scrapbooking events. Then rebranded in 2011, as the organization steered towards mixed media arts instead of just scrapbooking. Their first event took place in 2006 and raised \$2,500 for the American Heart Association Wear Red for Women Campaign. Since then, Charity Wings has been growing exponentially raising over \$300,000 for 73 worthy causes, and “hosting or sponsoring 37 events and fundraisers benefiting 27 different charities annually as of



2013.” This would not have been possible without the aid of manufactures and local artist backing the organization and helping to provide this unique space (Etcheverry, Elena).

Here are a few definitions of keywords that are used throughout my paper: Makerspace is a place where people with similar interests can work on their projects while having the resources of other people to help them. Marketing is the action of a business that is advertising and promoting their products. Entrepreneur is a person who organizes and operates a business, taking on greater risks in order to do so. Entrepreneurship is the act of being an entrepreneur. Networking is the act of a person connecting with a group (network) of people. 4Ps stands for product, pricing, place and promotion, and refers to the four main marketing strategies needed for a business to function. Market segmentation is the process of separating a group of potential customers into different categories based off of their characteristics and likelihood to respond well to different marketing strategies.

METHODS

Data was collected in the area surrounding Charity Wings and at the CSUSM Arts Building, asking people walking by to take a quick survey. The questions asked were related to whether or not they knew about Charity Wings, how they knew about, if they know what it is, if they have ever been to the art center, etc. Within this survey, there were also a couple questions on demographics to give more of an insight on why they answered in the way that they did. It would not appear strange for someone to never of heard about the art center if they do not live close by, however it would be if they have lived in the immediate area for over three years.



Conductive online research was done focusing on the main topic; the most effective ways for small/local businesses to market and self-promote themselves to their community. Reliable sources were found using Google Scholar. Throughout my time working at Charity Wings I found out about how they are self-promoting and their current marketing strategies are to find potential improvements that could be made.

The first step was to find out how well their current marketing strategy is working. This was found by conducting a survey and taking a poll on a random selection of people passing by. The original targeted number of responses was close to sixty in order to have accurate results, though due to most of the CSUSM students being away on winter break, there were only 14 responses in the end. Still, this helped gain more information about how most people hear about the center; through personal connections, social media, signs outside, etc., which in turn help provide insight on which parts need some changes and which are working really well. The conclusion was drawn from the survey results through analytic induction and reasoning. Overall, the goal was to help improve their system through interviews as well as outside research and resources.

ANALYSIS

Charity Wings Current Marketing Strategies

Charity Wings Art Center is currently marketing through multiple social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Their biggest and most used platform is Facebook because of it is business friendly layout. The page is constantly being used and updated to keep online or non-local customers in the loop, with their videos reaching approximately 2.5 thousand



viewers. Their Instagram page has approximately 600 followers, posting information about the art center, as well as cool photos taken there. Lastly, their Twitter has 300 followers, and is used mostly to gain more attention to their Facebook page. The posts are quick updates on the art center followed by a link that brings the viewer to a Facebook post that gives a lot more information.

Not only are they taking advantage of the potential online marketing has to offer, but they are also promoting the art center through various other obvious strategies. When walking by the Quade, multiple posters can be found advertising not only the art center itself, but also the various events and classes they might have going on. It is extremely hard to get people who are passing by to notice a poster on the wall, and given the fact that some are displayed on printer paper may not be helping. Most do a great job being big and loud, with many people finding out about the place just by seeing the art center while passing by.

Charity Wings does a great job with keeping up with community events and reaching out to the other local businesses. This helps spread the word even more to those who attend these fun local events or like to visit businesses just down the road.

Survey Data Collected

After analyzing the data from survey, it is clear to see that most people, 78%, who were in the area live very close to Charity Wings. 78% of people live within 10 minutes, and out of that percentage, 55% have lived there for only three years or less. The majority of respondents, being 57%, did not previously know about the art center. Though if they have only lived in the area for a short amount of time, or do not live in the area, then it is not as big a concern. Out of those who answered that they do not know of Charity Wings, 75% have only lived in the



immediate area for less than two years. This still begs the the question; how does 25% of the community who has lived there for quite some time, has never heard about the art center?

Out of those surveyed who had previously heard of the makerspace, 57% heard about it from just passing by. This is very useful information because it shows that the area around the center is being advertised the most and is not the biggest concern for improvement. 28% found out about charity wings through someone else, indicating that customer satisfaction is rather high. 14% found out about the art center through CSUSM. 0% of people surveyed answered that they found the art center through social media or online which is not as surprising as it may seem. Everyone who took the survey were local, so there is still a huge market of potential customers coming from online.

For the people who never went into the art center, 50% said it was because they didn't know what it was. This shows that the posters in the area should be a bit more clear on what it is Charity Wings is there for. 20% said they didn't have time, 20% said that they did not have a need to, and the last 10% was because they did not live in the area, all of which cannot be changed.

Pros and Cons to Small Business Marketing

The success of a small business relies heavily on the entrepreneur's personal motivation and drive to continuously improve their company/organization (Zontanos and Anderson, 6). When starting out, there is a lack of market power which forces these businesses to have an unreliable dependency on a small number of customers (Zontanos and Anderson, 4). This is when businesses are most vulnerable with about 67% of businesses survive at least two years and only 50% survive at least five. Though these rates start to flatten out over time (SBA),



adjustments to the marketing and self-promotion of the business still plays a major role in its survival and growth. As if making it through those first five years was not enough, there needs to be a continuous development in marketing strategies and an active search for new opportunities. One of the biggest and most valuable components to success is to actively expand the customer reach (Zontanos and Anderson, 4).

There are many hindering factors for owning a small local business. Not only is there a limited fund for marketing and lack of human resources, but management planning can end up being informal or their strategic orientation shortcoming (Zontanos and Anderson, 4-5). There isn't any segmentation strategy or marketing mix such as the 4Ps; product, pricing, place and promotion. They highlight four main and distinct management processes, and though it is heavily criticized for many reasons, they are necessary for any business to do well (Goi, Chai Lee, 4).

Instead, most business owners would much rather rely on interactive marketing and making personal connections with their customer base. Most entrepreneurs tend to heavily rely on the development and expansion of customers to be through recommendations (Zontanos and Anderson, 5).

Online marketing strategies

Over half of all social media users follow brands on their account as of 2011. Technology is constantly upgrading, and with it so is marketing. As new and inventive online resources are being created, there becomes more and more opportunities for companies to promote themselves. Social media has provided entrepreneurs with a means of easily market their business to a wide number of people at a fast pace. Many companies -if not all- have already turned towards using these outlets to their advantage, with one in every five small



companies actively using social media as part of their marketing strategies as of 2011 (Neti, 4). Social media is about networking with people that creates trust between the respective parties while convincing them to buy into the companies products or services (Neti, 2-3).

The beauty of these social network is that the cost can be free making it perfect for small businesses. People are able to give reviews on the organization which can help influence other potential customers because of the reliability on the comments being honest, versus traditional marketing methods of hiring actors or producing fake comments (Harris and Rae, 26). Though this transparency can help gain customers trust, it is a two way street. If an individual wanted to post a terrible review, they completely have that right and it will then be open for all to view (Harris and Rae, 25). Look on the bright side; information posted can act as research data to know what is being done right, and what needs improvement. Using social media platforms is future of marketing if it isn't already (Harris and Rae, 26).

Small Business Marketing Strategies

Many small businesses are using relationship (or relational) marketing as their main marketing strategy. It is not so much about gaining new customers as it is about developing and maintaining closer relations with the ones they already have. (Zontanos and Anderson, 6). Acquiring new customers is an expensive and difficult task which can cost as much as five times more than retaining an already existing customer. The main goal is to try to turn every new customer into a regular, long-term customer. Most people leave a company not necessarily because of the product itself, but because of the unsatisfactory customer service (Marketing Schools). With relational marketing, there is more of a wiggle room to be flexible with responding to any inquiries. This creates loyal customers because they are more than potential



money, they are a person (Zontanos and Anderson, 6). The one-on-one conversations leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction making it potentially the best route for small businesses. It also allows an easy access to obtain reliable market information (Zontanos and Anderson, 7). The internet is a great resource to turn to in order to conduct regular polls and gather feedback to improve on internal operations and company practices. With social media playing a major role in effective communication between the business and their customers (Marketing Schools).

Entrepreneurial Networking helps to enhance survivability and gain success. There is a great importance of informal relationships though the process is not well researched or documented. This concept of marketing through relations is not in any way new, but only recently has networking theories been applied by entrepreneurship scholars. Any smart business owner would take the time to invest in social interaction with potential benefactors or customers. It is best received through bonding, empathy, reciprocity, and trust (Zontanos and Anderson, 7).

ACTION PLAN

The research conducted can not only apply to my internship site, Charity Wings, but also any small or local business that is trying to find ways to market themselves to their community.

Specifically to my internship, I would recommend making a poster that is generous in size and explains what it is that Charity Wings does in a clear and concise way, such as “Community Art Center.” This is because most people find out about Charity Wings by seeing the building, but most don’t realize what it is. My research was focused around advertising to the locals, so I would suggest reaching out to more schools in the area to get more potential student customers. Not only to art classes at college, but grade schools as well. Talk to the professors,



principals, or teachers to see if it would be possible to do a quick presentation to inform students of the space, or set up a mini exhibition on a table where complete with a couple posters, cute crafts, and business cards or flyers they could take. For younger kids, you might be able to do a mini class where they make a quick craft to get them interested in using the art space.

Some remaining questions I still have is to see if there is a way to get locals to see the companies social media pages. Charity Wings does a great job keeping up with their multiple social media platforms that helps attract new online customers, but it would be great to expand its reach to people living in the area. This is a topic that can be further explored through more online research and experiments in the future. I would also like to use the survey already created to gain more responses. Sadly, this would have to continue after the relocation of Charity Wings and once they get back on their feet.

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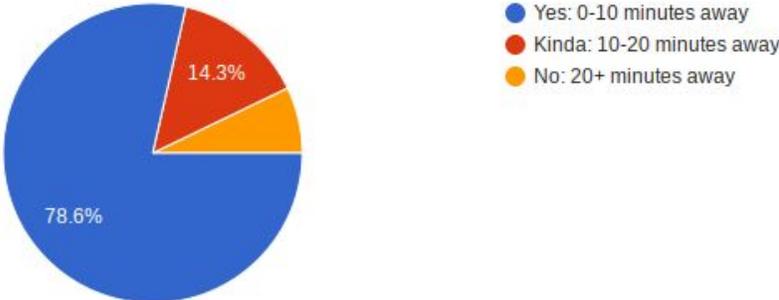
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Appendix

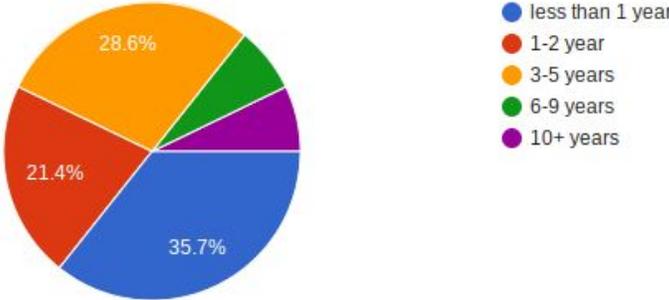
1. Do you live in the area?

14 responses



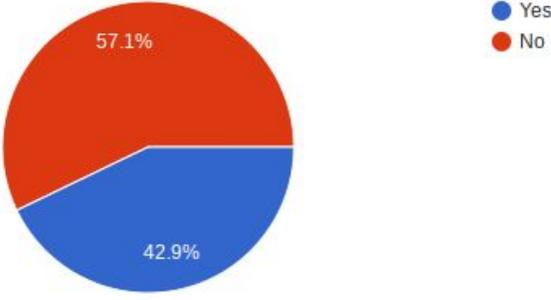
2. How long have you lived there?

14 responses



3. Have you ever heard of Charity Wings?

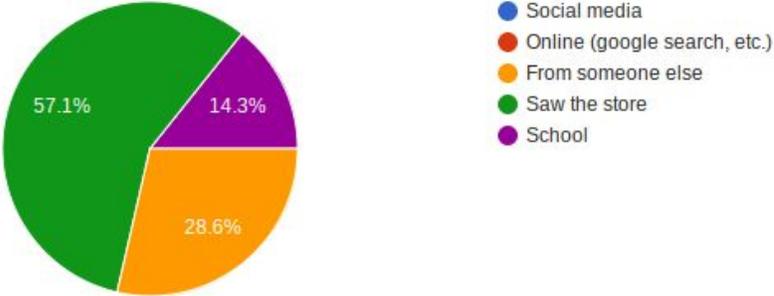
14 responses





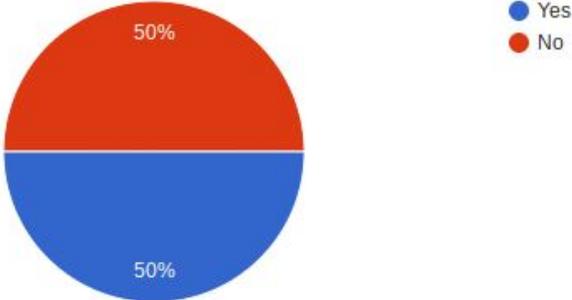
4. If Yes - How did you hear about us?

7 responses



5. Do you know where we are located?

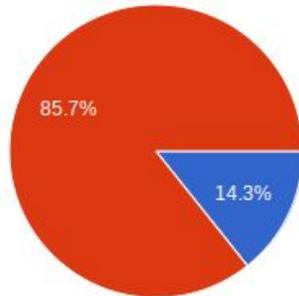
14 responses





6. Have you ever gone in the art center?

14 responses



- Yes
- No

- Didn't know about it (5)
- Internship
- No time (2)
- Not interested
- Haven't needed to
- Don't live here
- Unanswered (2)

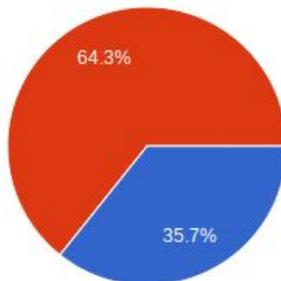
Why or why not?

14 responses

- Don't know about it (2)
- My internship :)
- Haven't had the time.
- Didn't know about it.
- .
- Don't know about it.
- Ra
- Haven't had time
- Not interested
- Didn't know it was there
- Haven't needed to
- I don't live here.
- No time

7. Did you previously know that Charity Wings is an art center?

14 responses



- Yes
- No