Canadian Cancer Society Marketing

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# Table of Contents

Marketing and the Canadian Cancer Society 3

National Marketing 3

Waterloo Region Unit Marketing 5

Website 6

Email 7

Facebook 8

Other Social Media Outlets 8

Recommendations 9

References 12
Marketing and the Canadian Cancer Society

“The core concept of marketing is the exchange of value between two parties: the buyer and the seller” (Cyr & Gray, 2009). For the Canadian Cancer Society, they are the seller whereas Canadians are the buyers; as a not-for-profit organization though, no money is made. Their mission is to “eradicate cancer and enhance the quality of life of people living with cancer” (Canadian Cancer Society, 2011). To do so, marketing is key to reaching Canadians in order to provide information and support.

The Canadian Cancer Society is nationwide. However, it does divide into 11 divisions across Canada, and then within each division, there are different units. When it comes to marketing, there are nationwide marketing tools such as the print materials offered, as well as unit marketing tools which relate to smaller events and social media marketing. For the purposes of this marketing analysis, focus will be on National Campaigns, the Ontario Division, and the Waterloo Region Unit.

National Marketing

Across Canada, the same print material is provided to all units and divisions of the Canadian Cancer Society. This nationwide material is mostly informative. The organization does a lot of research about curing and preventing cancer, and the findings are provided in reader friendly pamphlets. They have organized their information by colour code to best address the needs of Canadians. Different colours represent different themes: purple; living with cancer, pink; women’s issues, olive green; advanced cancer, orange; sun protection, teal; men’s cancers, green; health, dark orange; understanding diagnoses, royal blue; facing cancer, and light purple; blood cancers. By colour coding
the informative material, individuals will have an easier time finding which ones they need.

Pamphlets including fighting cancer and volunteering too are a nationwide print material. However, the Waterloo Region Unit will add a sticker that has their unit name and phone number to the materials they have at their location. This provides individuals with added resources as they will be able to easily find support in their local area.

The Canadian Cancer Society also hosts nationwide events and promotions that raise funds for cancer research, as well as raise awareness about cancer in society. These include events such as Relay for Life, and Cops for Cancer, as well as awareness promotions including the Thingamaboob. Each of these has their own marketing, including print material and social media pages. They also all have their own designated pages on the organization’s website. Although these are nationwide, the events are promoted per unit as well. This is done through their website and social media sites which include information such as dates, times, and registration information.

As well, monthly awareness campaigns are national. Examples include: March is Colorectal Awareness month, April is Daffodil month, and October is Breast Cancer awareness month. Each unit of the Canadian Cancer Society is provided with the same print material to raise awareness about each month and theme. As well, they are promoted through social media outlets.

Another source of fundraising and raising awareness comes from the Canadian Cancer Society’s merchandise. They sell merchandise that relate to their events, causes, and the society, which all raise funds for cancer research and prevention. Merchandise
includes t-shirts, travel mugs, tote bags, and jewellery to list a few. However, the products not only raise funds for the Canadian Cancer Society, they in turn raise awareness as well. When people buy and use the Canadian Cancer Society’s merchandise, they become walking advertisements as other people will notice the daffodil or logo, and be reminded of their existence. Also, it may spark conversation and or encourage others to take part in volunteering or donating to the Canadian Cancer Society.

Because the Canadian Cancer Society is a not-for-profit organization, one of their main means of marketing is Cause Related Marketing (CRM) (Canadian Cancer Society, 2011). This is when a not-for-profit organization partners with a for-profit company. CRM benefits both parties; for-profit companies enhance their image, gain a wider consumer base, and differ from competition while not-for-profit organizations receive a portion of sales, or an exchange of participation for donations. The Canadian Cancer Society will partner with for-profit organizations that are meaningful, educational and support their mission to eradicate cancer, and enhance the quality of life of persons living with cancer (Canadian Cancer Society, 2011).

**Waterloo Region Unit Marketing**

Another marketing and awareness method that is used across Canada is Information Outreach. Although this is a nationwide initiative, it is done through each unit. The Waterloo Region Unit will recruit volunteers who are outgoing, social, and believe in the cause to host displays or speak at functions. Organizers of events are able to contact the unit’s office to request information outreach from the Canadian Cancer Society. All volunteers are trained and qualified to participate in the outreach events. As
well, outreach volunteers will participate in door-to-door campaigning, as well as telemarketing to raise awareness and receive donations for the Canadian Cancer Society.

Events are also held to raise awareness and funds for the Canadian Cancer Society on a Regional basis. For these smaller events, they involve just the Waterloo Region Unit and the people who plan and host the event. The event planners will often do their own third party marketing (personal communication, 2011). However, the Waterloo Region Unit will advertise all upcoming events on their website and on their facebook page as well, in order to promote all events regarding the society.

Website

The Canadian Cancer Society website is a major marketing tool that is used. It is a national website that prompts the viewer to choose their division upon arrival. However, the site can be viewed from a Canada-wide perspective as well. Both the division and national pages of the website are very informative and user friendly for those facing cancer, family members, and those looking to volunteer. Information can be found based on different cancers, as well as research and major headlines are easily found.

From the Ontario division page, the viewer can type in their postal code to find their local unit. Doing so will bring the reader to their unit’s page on the website which provides the address and contact information, hours of operation, as well as quick links to volunteering, events, and community support services. All of these links can also be navigated to by using the right-hand side links. For the Waterloo Region Unit, these links include: Event Calendar, Volunteer Opportunities, Support Services, Hold your
Own Event, National Event Links per Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener, Subscribe to the Hope Blooms Newsletter, and Make a Donation. This division page is very informative in regards to marketing volunteer positions, upcoming events in the Waterloo Region, and support services available.

In conjunction to the main website, www.cancer.ca, there are additional websites that are hosted by the Canadian Cancer Society. With more than one website, the Canadian Cancer Society is able to reach, market to, and support more Canadians. One of which is www.fightback.ca. This website gives people the opportunity to read stories of individuals who have dealt with cancer. It also provides information about cancer, volunteering, and donating as well (Canadian Cancer Society, 2011). The third website hosted by the Canadian Cancer Society is www.shopcancer.ca. This website hosts the different merchandise and products offered, which can all be purchased off this site. Similar to the other websites, there is also a page for online donations (Canadian Cancer Society, 2011).

**Email**

As found from the website’s links, individuals are able to subscribe to the Canadian Cancer Society’s Hope Blooms Newsletter. This is a monthly email newsletter that provides updates on cancer research breakthroughs, tips on preventing cancer, information about upcoming events and monthly or weekly themes, as well as profiles of current volunteers in the community, and opportunities to get involved (Canadian Cancer Society, 2011). This is an email that is offered nationally, yet is monitored by units as it promotes volunteers in the community and upcoming community events.
Facebook

Facebook is one of the most popular forms of social media that keep people connected, and the Canadian Cancer Society does use it as a marketing technique. There is a national page which is liked by 21,587 people. This page posts resources for people to use, as well as allows people who like it to leave comments on the wall regarding their involvement, upcoming events, and resources of their own. The national facebook page likes each of the division pages, so as to easily link to one’s division. However, there is not an Ontario division facebook page.

The Waterloo Region Unit of the Canadian Cancer Society has its own facebook page. On their wall, there are posts about upcoming events and successes within the community, which are posted every one to two weeks. This page has 126 people who like it. Also, the Waterloo Region Unit likes the Canadian Cancer Society page, as well as supporters, national events, and partners’ facebook pages.

Other Social Media Outlets

Although facebook is one of the largest social media outlets, the Canadian Cancer Society also uses Twitter and Flickr. There is a national twitter account that can be followed (@cancersociety), as well as some unit and division accounts. However, the Ontario Division and the Waterloo Region Unit do not have their own twitter accounts. The national twitter feed includes tweets about events, research updates, and resources. There are 10,464 followers for the national twitter feed.

The Ontario Division of the Canadian Cancer Society does have a Flickr account that has up-to-date photos from different events from around Ontario. Yet the Waterloo
Region Unit does not have their own account; photos of their events however can be found on their facebook page.

Recommendations

The Canadian Cancer Society uses a variety of marketing methods which align with their mission. The national print materials keep people informed of up-to-date research about how to prevent cancer and live healthier lives. The national events are annual which people will look forward to participating in each year. Community Outreach is an inexpensive marketing tool that raises awareness from door to door, and event to event. Cause Related Marketing partners with for-profit companies to raise awareness and funds all in one. And the website is full of information, which is easy to navigate and user friendly. All of these marketing tools that are used are effective for the Canadian Cancer Society as a not-for-profit organization as they are inexpensive, yet still provide information and support for all Canadians, whether battling cancer or not.

The use of social media however does have room for improvements. Both the Ontario Division and the Waterloo Region Unit can create their own Twitter accounts. However due to the amount of followers for the national Twitter account (10,464) versus the national facebook page (21,587) proves that facebook is more commonly used. Due to this information, it is believed that facebook is a more valuable marketing tool to put time into. Also, because the organization is majority volunteer run, it would be difficult to maintain too many social media sites.

When a facebook user first types in ‘Canadian Cancer Society’ into the search engine on facebook, they are immediately directed to a Closed Group for the Canadian
Cancer Society. To see what happens in this group, one must request to join the group. This can deter people from looking for the actual Canadian Cancer Society page, and may give a negative impression on the society. The first step to enhancing the use of facebook would be to contact the person who created the closed group, and have it deleted, as this is not the official Canadian Cancer Society facebook page.

Another issue that was found is that the Ontario division does not have its own facebook page. Most of the divisions across Canada do have their own facebook pages which can all be linked to from the national page. However, a downfall to the division pages is that although they ‘like’ their supporters, events, partners, and national pages, they do not like their unit’s pages. This means that many people will only follow the national and the division pages, yet won’t look for their unit’s page.

The Waterloo Region Unit does have its own facebook page. When searching the Canadian Cancer Society on facebook however, the Waterloo Region Unit does not appear on the first page of results. The link to it can be found from their website though. The difficulty of finding their page is reflected through how many people follow them; 126. Their page however is well-maintained, and new updates and events are posted every one to two weeks. Having an Ontario Division facebook page may help to enhance their following if they were liked on the division page. Also, it would be beneficial to include their facebook address on their information stickers that are put on the print resources available at their office.

Lastly, the Waterloo Region Unit may be able to enhance their facebook following by better optimizing their facebook page. On facebook, there is the option to add more tabs to include more information for the viewer. Currently on the unit’s page, their tabs
include: Wall, Info, Friend Activity, Photos, and Events. These are all fairly basic tabs for a facebook page to have. However, other unit and division’s facebook pages also have tabs that include: Donate, Twitter, Youtube, Videos, Causes, and Individual Event tabs. Although not all of these tabs are applicable to the Waterloo Region Unit’s page, many would be valuable. Having a Donate tab will allow followers to donate online to the Canadian Cancer Society. This is beneficial because if followers see that there are events coming up that they won’t be able to participate in, they will still have the ease of donating online. The Videos tab would be beneficial to add videos of events that capture the fun, excitement and even testimonials and stories from individuals who have seen cancer firsthand. The Causes tab links viewers to www.causes.com which encourages individuals to make a change in the world and raise money and awareness for different causes all over the world (Causes, 2011). Lastly, the Individual Event tabs are beneficial for readers to learn more about each event, which will encourage them to participate and get involved. Many people will find getting involved easier if they know more about the event.

The Canadian Cancer Society does have a strong and diverse marketing strategy, yet there is always room for improvements. However, for improvements, there needs to be time and knowledge about how to create them. For not-for-profit organizations, time is difficult to find, as well as finding a volunteer to update the facebook page, or create and maintain the Ontario Division page. Overall, the Canadian Cancer Society has a solid marketing foundation, and they are successful. Although recommendations have been made that would enhance their following, they are not vital to their success.
References


