

Presbyterian Senior Services

Key Messages and Brand Strategy



In 1962, a small band of volunteers came together to help the senior citizens of a small church community go about their daily lives. What began as an operation in a church basement grew into Presbyterian Senior Services, a larger network of senior centers, caregiver support programs, and first-of-their-kind Grandparent Family Apartments, suitable for elderly persons raising young children.

Since its modest beginnings in 1962, not only has the scope of PSS's mission evolved, but so have its priorities. The organization's stated mission is to enhance the quality of life for older adults, caregivers and families through information, services and support.

Typically, such work might attract individuals interested in volunteering their time and services, but PSS wondered whether their religious affiliation deterred involvement. In their application for a Key Messages and Brand Strategy (KMBS) Service Grant in the December 2010 grant round, Executive Director Rimas Jasin expressed concern for the future of PSS programming, which relies heavily on volunteer support. The KMBS Service Grant was a strong match in that it works to create a memorable identity for the organization, with messaging that highlights the successes of PSS and cultivates donors, volunteers and media, as well as unites the internal staff around the mission and focuses strategic direction.

The Work

The project kicked off in March 2011. The Taproot team was led by Account Director Robert Berger, a brand marketing and strategy consultant with over 25 years of experience in the field. His pro bono team was made up of two marketing managers, a copyeditor and a brand strategist. Rimas Jasin, PSS Executive Director and Deputy Director Katherine Martinez led the client team. Within a few weeks, the Taproot team was able to present discovery findings to Jasin and PSS. The presentation included a competitive audit, used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of PSS in relation to competitors. This information helps identify or establish PSS's unique position in the market. Extensive internal discovery was

Key Messages Snapshot:

50 Word Pitch

For fifty years, PSS has been making a difference in the lives of older adults, their families, and their communities. From modest beginnings, we have grown and changed as needs have grown and changed, to become recognized as leaders in the areas of senior services and caregiver support

also conducted, which evaluated existing marketing, fundraising and communication materials, and programs.

The purpose of the KMBS analysis, which is extensive and relatively academic in contrast to other Taproot Service Grants, is to identify clear and specific marketing goals (volunteer recruitment, for example), and eliminate advertising fluff, leaving only key messages designed to resonate with the relevant target audiences. The result is a comparative breakdown of the key features and benefits of PSS products and services, and the people to whom they are relevant. Developing strategic and standardized messages, and training the organization (especially the board) to convey them effectively is the ultimate goal of this introductory marketing grant.

The Impact

The project drew to a close in September 2011, and while compiling the metrics will take some time, Jasin feels enthusiastically about how the project has set them up for success. With board training complete, a strategic plan to incorporate new wording into messaging materials is underway. The deliverable – a collection of carefully crafted messages organized by intended medium and target audience

– has been incorporated into all online literature and into the recently ordered brochures. The board prospectus has also been updated and board recruitment has become an additional priority. New messaging has also been incorporated onto the “Coming of Age NYC” website, the main avenue for general volunteer recruitment.

“I was very pleased with the results,” said Jasin. “There was really no downside – the process and timeline were accurately communicated, there were no surprises.” Rimas also indicated that the process itself was enormously helpful. “This was a great exercise. Going through the discovery process with the team gave us the opportunity to look objectively at ourselves and how we explain or describe our programming.”

For PSS, Jasin has suggested that plans for the future might include a Naming and Visual Identity Service Grant, a common next step for organizations seeking to redefine their image and branding. For now, however, implementing the deliverables of the KMBS keeps PSS constantly moving forward.

Key Messages Snapshot:

100 Word Pitch

For fifty years, PSS has been making a difference in the lives of older adults, their families, and their communities. From modest beginnings, we have grown and changed as needs have grown and changed, to become recognized as leaders in the areas of senior services and caregiver support. Our multi-service agency now encompasses 7 senior centers, 2 senior residences, and an extensive network of Caregiver Support Programs. Our groundbreaking Grandparent Family Apartments is the first of its kind in the nation, providing safe, affordable housing and supportive programs for grandparents raising grandchildren, enabling those children to reach their full potential.

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