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Content Creator & Brand Storyteller

Rebranding a Regional Social Service Organization with 100+ Years of Service

Overview

I was hired to lead the marketing and communications team for a regional nonprofit. I was chosen because I had hands-on brand engagement experience in the retail and hospitality industries. The board and executive team thought my background made me ideal to lead a much-needed rebrand for the 100+-year-old organization.

The Organization

Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio (LSS) is a social services organization with 20+ programs and locations in 25+ Ohio counties. Programs include food pantries, homeless shelters, domestic violence services, senior living facilities, and affordable housing. The yearly budget is \$50+ million, funded by federal grants, corporate and individual donors, and billable services. LSS employs approximately 500 people, including a centralized marketing team of three people.

The Challenge

LSS' size and complexity hindered its ability to communicate its impact as a whole. Many community members were not aware that certain programs were connected to LSS. In addition, the organization's age was reflected in its supporters, mainly older Lutheran church members. Their congregations were diminishing, as was LSS' donor base.

After research, my team uncovered these brand challenges:

- A lack of consistent messaging
- Lack of awareness of LSS' scope of services
- Outdated logo, design elements, and websites
- A need for a stronger, more integrated marketing strategy

These challenges were manifested in:

- 15+ outdated and disjointed logos
- 11 outdated and disjointed websites
- Siloed program marketing
- Little brand identity in the community
- Little clear internal knowledge about LSS at the program level
- Most donors are only aware of the program they supported and were not aware of the impact their donations had on the community

We knew that establishing a more unified messaging platform and a more modern visual identity would strengthen LSS' ability to gain greater recognition in the communities it serves.

The Strategy

- ✓ Wrote the LSS Brand Proposition (“who” we are)
- ✓ Wrote program and constituent Value Propositions (“what” we do)
 - ✓ Established a new brand architecture
 - ✓ Created a new visual identity
 - ✓ Wrote a new messaging platform
 - ✓ Built a new integrated LSS website
- ✓ Integrated all LSS marketing into one cohesive marketing strategy

The existing LSS mission statement and core values remained our guiding principles behind everything that we did and kept us grounded throughout the process.

New Brand Architecture

Before the rebrand, each program had its own brand identity. The team chose to organize under a master/sub-brand hierarchy for these reasons:

- ✓ To build brand recognition as one of the largest and most effective social service nonprofits in Ohio
- ✓ To build more awareness about the scope of services offered throughout LSS and the numerous opportunities to engage with the brand
 - ✓ To leverage existing individual program brand awareness and transfer it to other programs and to LSS as a whole
- ✓ To enhance marketing consistency throughout all programs under the LSS Network of Hope umbrella

New Visual Identity

The existing design identity was very traditional and did not showcase LSS as a modern and forward-thinking organization. The team wanted to create something fresh and aspirational to represent LSS.

The new look uses soft, clean lines and a modern typeface that is sophisticated and welcoming while the new colors are energetic and bold.

The new logo combines the traditional imagery of a dove and the aspirational flame of a torch to highlight LSS as a market leader providing the essentials of life to people in need.

our new logo



New Digital Experience

The team created a comprehensive digital experience to drive engagement and awareness. The team spent considerable time and thought strategizing how to redirect the 11 existing URLs without losing traffic and search rank.

The new website featured:

- ✓ One URL (current domains redirected)
 - ✓ One donation page
 - ✓ One volunteer page
 - ✓ One employment page
 - ✓ Cohesive navigation
 - ✓ Mobile responsive pages
- ✓ New stories using the new brand messaging platform
- ✓ Complementary social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn)

New Brand Messaging Platform

The Network of Hope was created as a descriptor to succinctly define the agency scope and tie all programs together under an umbrella that embodies the mission and values.

A new brand personality was identified and new marketing headlines and positioning statements were created for the agency and for each program. Constituent messages (donor appeals, volunteer recruitment, employment ads) were consolidated and updated. All messaging silos were eliminated.

Internal Brand Launch

The new brand was launched internally through a series of “launch parties” where the brand team presented the brand to staff at team meetings. We thoroughly explained the new strategy, including why we were doing this, and gave them tools to communicate the change to constituents. Most staff members embraced the new brand with enthusiasm. These meetings were critical to the success of the external brand launch.



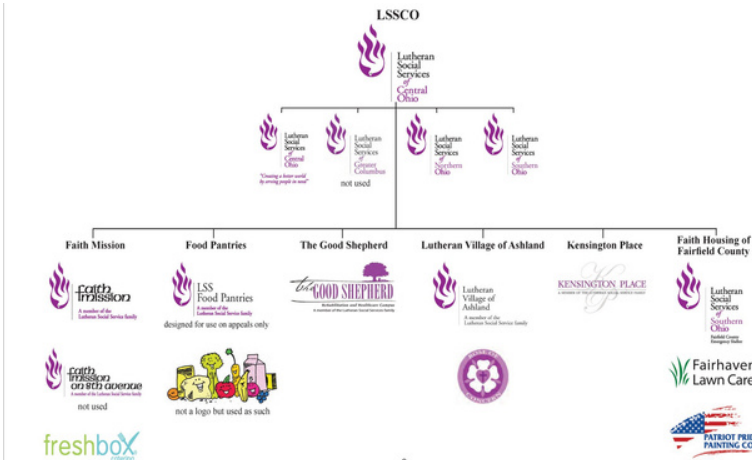
External Brand Launch

The new website and social media channels went live in March 2017. The external implementation was completed in phases over more than two years. This included rebranding all printed materials from business cards to building signs, updating individual program marketing and communication strategies, and consolidating communication strategies to reflect a unified brand. The team also added new engagement strategies to enhance the updated brand including advocating for public policy change, capital campaigns for program expansions, and targeted PR campaigns.

The Results

The Network of Hope rebrand showed immediate positive results in community perception and recognition.

Before...



After...



Brand engagement is favorable... according to donor and community surveys

Overall Net Promoter Score = 67
Donor Net Promoter Score = 74

Perception of LSS' brand personality shifted from "traditional" to "innovative" and "well-meaning" to "effective."

84% liked the "LSS Network of Hope" name.
60+% said it helped them understand the scope of LSS' impact.

Digital engagement increased... according to Google Analytics

Traffic to the new website increased 35%
2x increase in pageviews per session
8% decrease in bounce rate

Online donations have almost doubled in four years.

Overall, the new brand built positive community awareness and engagement and has set LSS up to grow its impact on behalf of people in need for another 100 years.

Let's work together to create a strategic brand that reflects your mission memorably and authentically. Contact me today at phgeorgiana@gmail.com.