Campaign Plan for the

Noah’s Arc Foundation

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I. Introduction

*Who is the Client?*

Noah’s Arc Foundation (NAF) was founded in 2010 by Chicago Bulls player, Joakim Noah and his mother Cecilia Rodhe, a former Miss Sweden and an expressive art therapist and an accomplished sculptor. Born in New York City, Joakim grew up in diverse cities worldwide. As a pro basketball player for the Bulls, Joakim plays the key role of “the man in the middle” at the United Center. He has helped propel the Bulls to three consecutive playoff appearances. Beyond his success as an NBA star, Joakim keeps a simple life doing various charity events and endorsements for Adidas. Off the court, Joakim is a philanthropist.

*What Do They Do?*

NAF was created to help engage children, based in the inner-city neighborhoods of Chicago, and assist them in positive self-expression through arts and sports. NAF works to “develop the confidence and foster the passion that exists within every child.” The goal of the NAF programs and workshops is to help children tap into their unique passions and achieve their full potential in all areas of their lives. NAF additionally brings different gangs, different religions and different kinds of people to join forces to address the problems that affect a community through basketball tournaments (USA Today).

Our report will identify NAF’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and review the findings from our survey from which we developed conclusions and actionable recommendations. These recommendations will strengthen NAF as an organization and enhance its overall mission, goals and reputation to attract financial resources and sustain itself in the long-term.

II. Literature Review

The secondary data sources used to conduct the literature review were taken from both traditional and social media coverage on Joakim and NAF. This review helped inform the development of the primary data collection. Of the traditional media sources, most stories reviewed were found in the Associated Press, Crain’s Chicago Business, New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, Sports Illustrated, Chicago Tribune, CBS Sports and Chicago Sports Net. As for coverage on social media, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo and ESPN blogs had information on both Joakim and NAF. The NAF website alone did not connect the viewer with other social media sites that detail stories of Joakim or his foundation.

The traditional and social media reporting could not measure public reactions. Social media tweets, likes and views were the public’s first hand reaction of NAF. No other secondary sources (non-profit or research organizations) that articulated Joakim’s foundation were found. Our literature review included traditional and social media published and shared from April 2013 through May 2014.

*Results on Findings*

For traditional and social media, 100 national and local stories were analyzed. Of these sources reviewed, 50 were from traditional and 50 were from social media sites. Target audiences for these stories were mostly male, basketball enthusiasts and individuals concern for social causes. Both traditional and social media findings ranged from individual interviews of Joakim, to the review of his foundation, or opinions on both the player and foundation combined. The following is a breakdown of both traditional and social media findings:

Breakdown of stories is as follows:

* 90% of stories named and discussed Joakim Noah and NAF positively,
* 90% of the stories were based on neutral or objective reporting,
* 10% of the stories had sports editors or bloggers criticize Joakim for his behavior on court,
* 95% of the stories mentioned NAF’s mission and program’s objectives, but only 10% of public knows what they do, and
* 90% of bloggers thought NAF provided positive outcomes for inner-city kids.

*Traditional Media*

Of the 50 sources reviewed through traditional media, Joakim was viewed as a positive role model for Chicagoans, especially for children living in Chicago. Based on these articles, 86 percent discussed that Joakim dedicates a significant part of his time to NAF. Ninety-four percent believed Joakim was a great defensive player for the Chicago Bulls (USA Today). There were several articles such as those in the Associated Press and Chicago Tribune that noted Joakim’s negative name calling behavior on the basketball court did strike a negative chord with local fans (Chicago Tribune). Only 20 percent of the articles noted this behavior, but sources did not associate it with his foundation. There is still a public disconnect with the NAF’s mission, goals and objectives. Eighty-six percent of traditional media stories noted the NAF mission was still confusing and most did not understand what it did other than help Chicago kids in inner-city neighborhoods. In addition, NAF was looked at as an organization serving underprivileged kids in low-income neighborhoods, but never identified the specific programs or where the foundation was located (USA Today). More importantly, almost 80 percent of articles reviewed noted Joakim’s mother as the primary spokesperson and individual running the foundation. Joakim also lacked in doing major press events for his foundation (Chicago Tribune). Most traditional media interviews of Joakim were conducted as a basketball player and not as the philanthropist he is.

*Competition*

From a traditional media standpoint, we chose a Crain’s Chicago business chart, which featured top Chicago athlete charities, comparable to NAF. Chicago Bears Israel Idonije started the Israel Idonije Foundation which runs a sports camp for kids in Chicago. Jay Cutler, also from the Chicago Bears, began the Jay Cutler Foundation. The foundation based in Valparaiso, Indiana focuses on helping those with diabetes. Kerry Wood from the Chicago Cubs founded the Kerry Wood Family Foundation, which seeks to improve the lives of children in Chicago. The following Crain’s chart breaks down the amount each foundation spends in the areas of programming, management and fundraising:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Israel Idonije | Jay Cutler | Kerry Wood | Joakim Noah |
| Programming | $53,103 | $47,558 | $613,094 | ~$35,000 |
| Management | $101,379 | $15,853 | $108,193 | ~$15,000 |
| Fundraising | $6,437 | $35,669 | - | - |

From this chart, we can see that the Kerry Wood Foundation far exceeds the other foundations in financial support. NAF has the least amount of funding. However, NAF’s programming funds are within range of Cutler and Idonije. This is a valuable comparison to help advise NAF’s spending in the areas of programming, management and fundraising.

*Social Media*

Currently, NAF is utilizing some social media outlets. NAF is not on Facebook but it does have a significant following on Twitter. NAF has about 2,000 Twitter followers. Almost all tweets are positive in tone and almost all note the foundation’s programs and events. Most of the public who follow NAF connect through Twitter. The majority of tweets are either re-tweeted, have comments associated to specific events or show pictures of Joakim interacting with children. YouTube views have ranged from 107 hits to over 77,000 for one video. Of the ten YouTube videos, almost all showcase both Joakim as the basketball player and also note the success of his foundation. All YouTube videos were positive and specifically described NAF’s mission, individual programs and events. There were ten sports blogs, most through ESPN, that noted Joakim’s successes as a basketball player and his foundation’s work. Vimeo had a story on NAF describing its mission with 112 likes. Almost all blogs showed a different spokesperson for his foundation and there was no sole delegate to represent NAF other than Joakim. In addition, the NAF’s website did little to include the successes of the foundation’s events, fundraising, links to social media sites or active interaction with community members or major donors. The NAF website also lacked current “good news” stories of either the foundation or Joakim’s contributions off the court. Overall, most of the foundation’s communication through social media has been through YouTube and Twitter.

III. Research Problem/Challenge

Joakim believes his foundation “is important to be there for people. Making an impact and putting a smile on someone’s face are what's it’s all about.” Based on primary and secondary research, NAF has an image problem. A majority of people both nationally and locally cannot define its mission. NAF has several challenges it needs to overcome. Based on the client’s visit, primary and secondary research and discussions in class, NAF has a low public awareness, which also leads to difficulty in soliciting financial resources. Some of the reasons why this exists:

* First he foundation’s name, “Noah’s Arc Foundation,” generates a communication challenge. The

name does not explain or correlate with the foundation’s mission and values. Although the foundation is Joakim’s last namesake, the public is more likely to correlate Noah’s Arc with the historical Biblical event.

Also, a foundation that combines sports and art is unique and communicating the unifying

theme presents a challenge. NAF has no strategy. The casual reader is unlikely to understand the foundation’s focus on self-expression. NAF’s events may be considered mere recreational pastimes rather than the development of emotional expression. This creates confusion to people on what the NAF does and who they help. How can NAF clarify its mission to both the media and the

public to avoid any misinterpretation of NAF mission and goals?

* Second, NAF has minimal traditional and social media coverage. Because Joakim values sincerity over publicity, the foundation has minimal media coverage. The foundation’s social media outlets highlight their outreach events, and the Chicago centric news outlets will occasionally write about NAF. However, this limited media coverage is unlikely to reach a large enough audience to generate substantial awareness and funding. Our media audit finds social and traditional media do not maximize NAF’s potential to showcase events and raise money. What can be done to increase NAF coverage from a media standpoint?
* Third, public perception of Joakim and his foundation need to be separated. Joakim the

basketball player and Joakim the philanthropist must disassociate from one another. How can Joakim serve as the visionary spokesperson for his foundation, while allowing others such as his

mother or the NAF director, to be the everyday voice for his foundation’s activities? Is there a

need to clarify the organizational structure? How can it increase its visibility through partnerships and leveraging existing resources?

* Finally, the foundation needs to focus on raising money and expanding its fundraising network. It is publicized in Crain’s Chicago Business that Joakim’s five-year contract is worth $60 million. The average American earning approximately $50,000 a year will struggle to understand why Joakim’s foundation would need his or her support. Another communication challenge will be explaining the need for financial support beyond Joakim. Of all the media sources identified, none mentioned a need to raise funds for the foundation. What can NAF do to target high profile donors and raise money for future events and the foundation itself?

IV. Method

This study used a self-administered online questionnaire to gather general information regarding non-profits and Chicago athletes as well as gauge awareness and sentiment toward Joakim and NAF. The survey data is based on the responses of Chicagoland residents. The survey was in the field approximately two weeks (Friday, May 9, 2014 through Sunday, May 25, 2014).

*Questionnaire and measures*

The multi-page online questionnaire consisted of two main sections:

1. Awareness and opinion and

2. Respondent demographics.

The survey included measures that collected nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio level data. Our survey included a mix of both open-ended and close-ended questions. Asking respondents if they currently supported a charitable organization (yes/no) generated nominal data. Respondents were asked to choose three of the most important factors they consider before donating to an organization. Demographic questions included information on gender, age, race, education, household income and place of residence.

*Sample*

The sample frame consisted of the professional and personal connections of the students and professor of the DePaul University Spring 2014 Public Relations and Advertising Research Methods course. To solicit participation, respondents could enter to win a $20 Target gift card.

*Respondent Profile*

Our sample included 357 respondents from the Chicagoland area. The sample was evenly divided between men and women. The average respondent’s age was 34 years old. About half the sample was Non-Hispanic/White, 31percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, nine percent were Spanish/Latino, seven percent were African-American and three percent were other races. The respondents were remarkably educated: 46 percent held an undergraduate degree, 23 percent a graduate degree, and eight percent held professional degrees. The sample’s average income ranged between $50,000-$74,999. All respondents reside in the Chicagoland area. Most respondents resided in the North side and Northwest suburbs.

V. Findings

Our survey gathered information from three areas: general information regarding non-profits, general information on Chicago athletes, and specific information on Joakim Noah and NAF. We gathered general information regarding Chicago charitable organizations to understand individual priorities regarding charitable giving, the effectiveness of charity’s communications and general charity awareness. Gauging public sentiment for Chicago athletes provided information on the competition. Finally, we sought specific information on Joakim Noah and NAF to articulate our strengths and weaknesses.

*General Non-profit*

* + Of the respondents surveyed, 69 percent currently support a charitable organization
  + The most important factors our respondents consider before donating include:
    - Who the organization is helping,
    - The mission of the organization,
    - The impact of donations, and
    - The reputation of the organization.
  + Our respondents typically learned about non-profit organizations through the following:
    - 67% through a friend or family member,
    - 61% from social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram),
    - 32% at an event where it was mentioned, and
    - 31% by reading an online news story.
  + Only 49 percent of the respondents heard of a charitable organizations in the Chicago-land that support Chicago’s disadvantaged youth. Frequently known organizations include:
    - Boys and Girls Club,
    - Grip,
    - Big Brother/Big Sister,
    - Year Up, and
    - YMCA.
  + The respondents considered the following the most important services to provide to disadvantaged youth in Chicagoland:
    - Academic enrichment,
    - Life skill building, and
    - Mentoring opportunities.
  + The respondents were most familiar with the following Chicagoland charitable organizations:
    1. Jay Cutler Foundation,
    2. Noah’s Arc Foundation, and
    3. Charles Tillman Cornerstone Foundation.

*Chicago Athletes*

* + Seven Chicago professional athletes (Israel Idonije, Kerry Wood, Jay Cutler, Joakim Noah, Ryan Dempster, Charles Tillman and Brent Seabrook) were listed and the respondents ranked their character. The respondents consider the following athletes to have the best character:
    1. Joakim Noah
    2. Jay Cutler
  + Over 50 percent of the respondents consider celebrity endorsement to have no effect on their likelihood of supporting a charitable organization. About 35 percent of the respondents consider celebrity endorsement to have a moderately positive effect on their likelihood of supporting a charitable organization. Less than four percent of the respondents think negatively of celebrity endorsement.

*Noah’s Arc Foundation*

* + 63 percent of the respondents did not know that Joakim Noah co-founded NAF.
  + Those who had heard of NAF think positively or neutrally of the organization. Some comments include:

* + - “I admire the foundation’s efforts to help disadvantaged youth in Chicago. I think that it is truly unique to combine art and sports under one organization. Joakim Noah’s dedication to Noah’s Arc is inspiring.”
    - “I think that their mission is great, and I’ve actually been to a couple events that they have sponsored. They have minimal marketing though, and if it weren’t for my Bulls fandom, then I don’t think that I would know about it.”
    - “I think he’s done a great job of not only highlighting struggles of inner-city youth, but also has served as a hard-working, humble ambassador of the entire city of Chicago.”
    - “I have not heard very much about this organization. I’m aware that Joakim Noah founded the organization, and that they do work to help youth, but I do not know much about the organization beyond that.”

VI. Discussion

NAF is dedicated to helping Chicago’s inner-city children develop a stronger sense of self and tap into their unique passions through the powerful combination of art and sports. NAF additionally brings different gangs, different religions and different kinds of people to join forces to address the problems that affect a community through basketball. Based on our analysis of survey results and guided research questions, we concluded that there is a need to:

* + Redefine organization/structure,
  + Amplify NAF awareness,
* Leverage potential/existing resources, and
* Increase revenue with a large-scale fundraiser.

Based on these findings, we provided the following recommendations in order for NAF to sustain itself in the long-term and provide socially equitable resources to inner-city children from Chicago. Moreover, with a well-defined mission and organizational structure, the foundation will develop a solid base of financial supporters, media followers and publics with a well-defined mission and organizational structure.

*Redefine Organization/Structure*

Based on our primary and secondary research, more than half (63 percent) of those surveyed did not know what NAF was or that Joakim is associated to the foundation. Most of our sampled publics and secondary research discovered that NAF mission and objectives were unclear. Our recommendation is to acutely redefine NAF and its structure. This can be done by the following: 1) have short, mid-term and long-term strategies with well-defined goals and 2) rebrand the foundation by changing its name to the “Joakim Noah’s Arc Foundation.”

A defined strategy, which NAF currently does not have, forms the foundation of not only day-to-day operations but would distinguish NAF from its competition and contribute to its long-term success. The strategy would serve as a jump-off point for annual business planning and become the nucleus around which an annual business plan is developed. It will also form a framework to consider mid-term deviations from the plan. In addition, it will help set a consistent direction for key functional areas (which will later be explained in our third recommendation). A strategy should endure year after year, and hence will tie together one year’s business plan to the next. This will also enable NAF to build upon its sports and arts accomplishments and potentially add on to them. By having a well-defined name and strategy gives the foundation a clear mission and provides leadership and its supporters with a template to potentially plan for future programs and events, build awareness and more efficiently budget its finances.

In addition, potentially rebranding NAF to the Joakim Noah Arc Foundation would link both the organization and the basketball player to the cause. Most respondents believed that “Joakim Noah’s dedication to Noah’s Arc is inspiring.” This response proves it would be a great opportunity to consider de-linking the religious cause and therefore renaming the cause to “Joakim Noah’s Arc Foundation.” This puts any religious affiliation aside and puts Joakim at the forefront of his organization and as an ambassador for disadvantaged youth in Chicago. This would then reintroduce and highlight all of the foundations current sports and arts commitments potentially gaining new followers, donors and volunteers to commit to Joakim’s cause.

*Amplify Awareness*

Our research indicates that 61 percent of respondents learn about non-profits through social media. Our secondary research states NAF has minimal coverage through traditional media outlets. NAF has the potential to increase its awareness through the use of amplifying its traditional and social uses of media. From a traditional standpoint, one recommendation is for NAF to purchase and utilize the “Community Workshop Media Guide: Getting on Air, Online & Into Print." This news media guide could potentially connect NAF to journalists all over the nation and specifically to news outlets in Chicago and in the Midwest region.  The guide is a 250 page directory of television, print, radio and online reporters. It also provides tips to prepare and manage communications projects. With this resource, NAF could send out press and photo releases to these outlets, both locally and nationally. The key is to reach multiple news outlets that have not been exposed to NAF and that could be introduced to upcoming events, strategy and workshops. For example, an excellent opportunity to distribute these press releases would be during the release of the documentary that is currently being filmed about several students that take part of NAF’s social programs. This would allow NAF to recruit volunteers, reach out to domestic households who can benefit from NAF and market to donors. Furthermore, media kits should be on hand for high profile events, such as the Championship Peace Tournament and the annual fundraiser at City Winery. It would be recommended that media kits are arranged in a NAF labeled folder with a press release, schedule of the specific event and the public relations director’s business card. A DVD with NAF images is optional.

NAF succeeds in several social media fronts such as with Twitter and YouTube. However, it lacks the presence in other social avenues, and we recommend creating a Facebook page, along with Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn, and Pinterest accounts. Most of our survey respondents (61 percent) use social media and are highly educated. Most respondent who are Millennials, are tied to social causes and stay true to the traditional aspects of the social media, while practicing and infusing new changes of the digital world and social media era. Because of social media and the 24/7 coverage of news and information, Millennials provide feedback, chime in with their thoughts and opinions to create a two-way conversation. This is an opportunity for NAF to expand on their social sites and disperse the positive messages through art and sport events. The intent is to keep the conversation about NAF ongoing.

NAF also needs to revamp its website. The site should have social media links connecting to all active social channels that are updated regularly. Additionally, a page of all NAF’s programs and corresponding descriptions should be included. Other pages should feature a calendar of events, a donation page and a link solely dedicated to the annual fundraiser page.

*Organizational Structure & Leveraging Partnership/Existing Resources*

Most of our respondents know of Joakim Noah, but few (37 percent) knew he has a foundation. There is public perception need of Joakim and his foundation to be separated. Our secondary research shows Joakim’s on-the-court persona tends to dominate any of the social causes he is part of. Joakim the basketball player and Joakim the philanthropist must disassociate from one another. There are several ways to do this. Joakim will need to take lead for his foundation, which means he must provide the vision and be the passion of the organization. He must designate a Chief Communications Officer or spokesperson (Cecila Rodhe or an NAF director) to do all media interviews when it comes to individual programs and events. Though Joakim is reluctant to do media interviews and has a cadre of reporters he prefers, he will need to do the high profile events, fundraisers and take part in interviews where there is an opportunity to showcase all the good NAF does. Our research shows that many people (43 percent) consider celebrity endorsement to have a positive effect on a nonprofit organization. The need for a clear organizational structure and an active board will define for NAF leadership and director of operations line of responsibility.

It is also essential that once NAF has designated roles and responsibilities at NAF that it continues to partner with its current and group affiliate/resources. Even though most of our respondents have not heard of NAF, they have heard of non-profits are that dedicated to youth such as Boys and Girls Club and YMCA. Building respondent awareness also has potential to build and leverage partnerships. These partnerships could expand NAF awareness and create potential donors as well as volunteers to assist in NAF operations. Listed below are some suggestions:

* + City of Chicago (Mayor Rahm Emanuel),
  + Chicago Bulls,
  + Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka (Topinka's Culinary Kids Initiative to educate grade school children on the importance of healthy diet),
  + Good City Chicago (Brings together non-profit leaders, social entrepreneurs, philanthropists and business persons to share best practices and inspire on a local, national and global scale),
  + Coach Eric Morris (Chicago Public School teacher/coach can be used to mentor/coach young people),
  + Chicago Park Districts,
  + YMCA, and
  + Chicago's Arts Community.

*Fundraising*

Running a foundation requires fundraising and a need to develop and maintain relationships with donors, which continue to be the lifeline for any non-profit. These donors need to feel a connection to their preferred organization. In turn, when a foundation does fundraising events, it provides "face-time" with supporters, sometimes setting the stage for large gift contributions and is an opportunity to bring in new donors and generate much publicity.

Almost 50 percent of our respondents know of a charitable organization. This assesses that there is a potential to donate, especially when the average salary of our respondents was $50,000-$74,999. But donations alone cannot come from the average income earner. Large donors need to partake in providing financial contributions to the NAF. Here are some opportunities on how this can be done. Based on what NAF Executive Director Shannon Pagels mentioned, one way to gain new donors is through their annual fundraiser. We recommend it take place at the Chicago Art Institute. The event will provide an opportunity to have elected officials, sports figures and celebrities at the reception. NAF must ensure the Chicago Bulls organization and the press is at the event. Thus, it will create a network of large financial contributors. A short video of testimonies from all NAF participants (children, staff, athletes, etc.) will also be featured giving donors an inside glimpse of the many programs of NAF. A keynote speech will then be delivered by Joakim. A silent auction and raffle will take place. Prizes can include a dinner with Joakim, Chicago Bulls tickets and several donated items. Fundraising opportunities will include: event tickets, corporate sponsored tables, advertisement space in program books, and works of art by Cecilia Rodhe and students can be auctioned. NAF swag bags will be distributed at the end of the program.

*Limitations*

Because this survey was not professionally conducted, the obtained research contains some limitations. First, because a survey link was publicly shared rather than personally emailed, we could not determine a response rate. All respondents were acquaintances of the class, and therefore the sample frame is non-random. The amount of Asian/Pacific Islander respondents is also over indexed. Because the sample is not random, the results cannot be generalized to describe the Chicagoland population.

There are two possible confounds in our survey. The first possible confound is that “Noah’s Arc Foundation” was mentioned in the introduction to the survey. Mentioning the name may have skewed more people to claim they knew of the organization, though the introduction was the first time they heard the name. Another possible confound would be if respondents claimed to know the Jay Cutler Foundation, even if they only knew Jay Cutler, the athlete.

Overall, there are many foundations in the Chicago that have similar missions and goals similar to NAF. Based on our primary and secondary research, most reporters, bloggers and the public still cannot identify what the foundation actually does. There is still a need to either do press events or heighten social media outlets to consistently showcase the foundation’s mission, goals, programs as well as it success rates (metrics). Now that NAF is four years old, program’s outcomes can be revealed to publics through media and press events. This is an opportunity to showcase NAF potential and by doing so, follow our four recommendations that would enhance NAF’s credibility, visibility and potentially raise resources for its future existence.

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