

WRITING SAMPLE #5 – Case Study / Award Application

CLIENT: SanDiego.com

PROJECT: Brand and Reputation Management

SanDiego.com, although founded 16 years ago, is, in reality, a start-up organization. It went through foreclosure and purchase by a new entity in 2010 and, at the beginning of this year, re-launched its website. Rumors swirled around the business community throughout 2010 about the viability of the organization. To put these rumors to rest, SanDiego.com enlisted CHE to create marketing initiatives to reassure the business community that SanDiego.com was here to stay. The Community Partners initiative and the Yellow Big Ball campaign were launched simultaneously with the intention that it would result in the greatest outcome and succeed in raising the profile of the company, rebranding SanDiego.com as the go-to resource for residents of America's Finest City.

RESEARCH

CHE needed to get the word out that SanDiego.com was not going out of business and would re-launch its website to cater to the interests of San Diegans. Before the launch of the new site, 80 percent of the site's traffic came from outside of San Diego. **The challenge was to find the correct outlet to reach San Diego-area businesses and spread the word that SanDiego.com was here to stay and here for San Diego. (Traditional media outlets were not interested in "covering" another media outlet.)** We researched over 375 events in San Diego and analyzed existing media partnerships that were offered by other media in San Diego. The research revealed a strong need for free media partnerships in the community. It was determined that the most efficient and effective way to educate the masses about SanDiego.com's reinvention was through the platform of event sponsorship.

PLANNING

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

1. Brand SanDiego.com as the **go-to resource made by and for San Diegans** and educate masses about what SanDiego.com is
2. Increase traffic from local San Diegans to the site (Locals only represented 20% of the Website's traffic when campaign began)
3. Educate business community that SanDiego.com is not going bankrupt and fix any negative/inaccurate perceptions of the company that may have resulted from the changes in leadership
4. Establish strategic relationships between SanDiego.com and major organizations in the community, with goal of 100 events in 2011

TARGET AUDIENCES

1. Local Businesses/Organizations, Public Relations & Advertising Agencies, Properties, Event Producers
2. All San Diego Residents and Fans of San Diego

BUDGET:

Base monthly retainer paid to CHE for public relations/marketing consultation: \$2,000; Retainer paid to CHE to manage Community Partners program: \$3,000/month. Additional \$500/event was paid to CHE for Yellow Big Ball street team management.

STRATEGY:

SanDiego.com's Community Partners initiative was created to provide San Diego-area events and businesses with free exposure and advertising on SanDiego.com. The message was SanDiego.com would help stimulate the economy by granting organizations free advertising and promotional opportunities. Those in the business community thus were left with the impression that SanDiego.com, contrary to the swirling rumors, was alive and well.

The cross-promotional nature of Community Partners benefitted all parties. Organizations gained the mass exposure and SanDiego.com gained content on the site—things to do, giveaways and tickets for users and the inside scoop on major and unique events. The Free Stuff page was developed on the site to host Community Partner freebies given to SanDiego.com, attracting frequent visitors, capturing a mass amount of emails and building a stock of prize inventory that SanDiego.com could use as incentive for visitors to come back to the site. All of the content

that resulted from Community Partners would prove to be valuable to San Diego locals and produce more repeat local traffic.

Community Partners was designed to tackle more than just improving the image of SanDiego.com. One requirement was that any approved Community Partner must put up the SanDiego.com logo and a link on its event/organization site—increasing SEO for SanDiego.com and overall site traffic. The second requirement of the partnership was that the Community Partner must place the SanDiego.com logo on all event collateral—which would mean that the brand was being placed indirectly in the hands of hundreds of thousands of people attending various events in the San Diego community.

Furthermore, by establishing a good relationship with almost all properties, marketing agencies and event producers in San Diego, CHE leveraged the trust built with the Community Partners program and executed the Yellow Big Ball campaign. Yellow Big Ball, a 10-foot-high beach ball, was given access/privilege to attend Community Partner events that had received free sponsorship, and the SanDiego.com brand was put in front of the eyes of hundreds of thousands of people in almost every region of San Diego—creating a highly visible message that SanDiego.com was synonymous with San Diego and supported all activities and causes that San Diego has to offer. Accompanied by Yellow Big Ball, the SanDiego.com street team was sent out to personally talk to the people in the community, educating them that SanDiego.com was everything San Diego, encouraging them to use the site often to reap the benefits.

To build awareness of Yellow Big Ball, CHE publicized it as a public figure in social media outlets. SanDiego.com would also use the endorsement of Jagger and Kristi radio personalities to educate San Diegans about SanDiego.com and to encourage the masses to go see the new site and stay connected within the community. Budget for radio advertising was \$2,900/month.

EXECUTION:

- Created Community Partners critical path of execution; prepared all execution collateral.
- Created evaluation questionnaire for applicants with point system to ensure quality control of partnership.
- Produced press releases re Community Partner launch, successes and milestones.
- Targeted hundreds of events in and around San Diego and executed personalized outreach (no mass emails) to prove that SanDiego.com would go above and beyond in their efforts to help out the community.
- Evaluated and presented suggested Community Partners to SanDiego.com staff weekly.
- Exchanged event marks and logos; collected contracts and collateral; performed continuous follow-up and personal interaction with partners in order to establish that SanDiego.com is trustworthy within the business community.
- Brainstormed with event producers on giveaway ideas, wrote copy for giveaways to go on SanDiego.com Website and collected and delivered giveaways to SanDiego.com.
- Coordinated with SanDiego.com production team to ensure all aspects of the Community Partner advertising agreements were fulfilled.
- Collected statistics and impressions from SanDiego.com and created and sent recap to Community Partners to measure ROI and obtained testimonials from partners.
- Produced copy points for radio spots/endorsements utilizing benefits made possible by Community Partners.
- Spotted potential for Yellow Big Ball appearances at Community Partner events and negotiated with event producers regarding logistics of having presence of 10-foot-high ball at events (not as easy as it sounds).
- Took thousands of pictures with Yellow Big Ball and SanDiego.com fans and posted on SanDiego.com and Yellow Big Ball Facebook; fans could view pictures, which would drive additional traffic back to SanDiego.com site and capture more emails.
- Managed Yellow Big Ball Facebook persona, interacting with fans and facilitating “like “contest.

RESULTS:

- Goal of partnership with 100 events accomplished by May, only 5 months after program launched!
- SanDiego.com site traffic dramatically increased—60% of the traffic coming from local San Diegans as opposed to 20% previously.
- Testimonials from San Diego-area marketing firms, non-profit organizations and event producers speak volumes about initiative (included in binder).
- Due to success of program, SanDiego.com has extended the program for remainder of year for exclusively non-profit events and those with charitable causes.