

*Little
Sisters of
The Poor*



C. Aaron Westbrook - Research Methods - Spring '13

Final Research
Report

Executive Summary

This report investigates the underlying motivations behind what encourages people to donate to non-profit organizations, and how those non-profit organizations can recruit and retain donations both in the form of time and money. The Little Sisters of the Poor (LSOP), is a global religious charity that focuses on assisting the elderly poor in local communities with food and lodging. The primary concerns they face are finding loyal volunteers and increasing awareness in the respective community in which they offer their services; Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago, IL. In order to reach our conclusions the necessary research processes needed to be conducted. Qualitative research, which assisted in finding the true motivations behind charitable giving, and what kind of organizations encourage them to donate. Quantitative research, a survey was used to discover the actions our specific demographic of Chicago residents displayed toward LSOP and charitable organizations in general. Secondary research, which is where we discovered studies conducted by researchers related to what motivates volunteers to donate, and how organizations can improve the retention rate of their volunteers.

Introduction:

The Little Sisters of the Poor invests in minimal marketing and rely heavily on word-of-mouth to sustain their humble image. Because the community around them has been evolving over time, I believe they must adapt their marketing strategy in order to remain relevant in a city congested with non-profits. Regardless of their historic presence, Little Sisters of the Poor struggles with a lack of community awareness outside of successfully cultivating professional relationships. In a city congested with non-profits, they need to express what differentiates their mission from their competitors and what makes the investment by individual volunteers worthwhile.

Research will help The Little Sisters of the Poor modify these struggles and will allow them to

increase donations leading to future renovation goals. Through research I hope to discover the tendencies people show toward solicitations for donations, the extent to which caring for the elderly plays in our targeted publics, and how a non-profit can increase awareness and retention. These findings will Little Sisters of the poor further their mission, and help in voluntary retention efforts.

Literature Review

Through the studies already conducted in relation to boosting fundraising volunteerism, donations, and overall interest in a charitable organization; consensus leads one to believe that interaction and ownership of their giving leads to satisfaction and appreciation for the organization benefiting from ones generosity (Cha, Cichy, & Kim). There are a variety of ways organizations can boost their fundraising efforts; both financially and with volunteers donating their time. The most profitable opportunity available is through the means of cause related marketing. This allows companies to invest and partner with non-profit organizations to further and improve their corporate mission and image while assisting those charitable organizations in fulfilling theirs (Wagner & Thompson).

There have been a variety of studies that attempt to compare the correlation between religion and its motivations toward donations. Lim & MacGregor (2012) compared two phenomenon' and the findings showed that non-religious individuals are more inclined to volunteer if they have religious acquaintances who regularly attend services. On the contrary, the research discovered that there is no relationship between the regular attendance of church services by religious individuals and the amount of time/money they donate. However, one key insight that the researchers discovered was that a majority of volunteering opportunities that develop from church organizations did not necessarily infer that the audience was of a religious

background. The findings suggest that secular individuals who had friendships with those who practiced religion on the regular basis were more inclined to donate time toward a charitable organization.

Hiromi Taniguchi uncovered a very intriguing gender difference when it pertained to full time, part time and unemployment status of the respective sex. A woman who is working full or part time is under more distress to give up her time to a charitable organization than a full time working man would be. Women are left with more of a burden to "informal caregiving to family members", whereas the man who is more dedicated to on the clock time at work, experiences less leisure activities. One key insight that Hiromi discovered was that "full time or part time makes no difference in [the] volunteering efforts" for men." Moreover, unemployment, which supposedly frees up substantial time, actually discourages men's volunteering. Given the gender norm that men should go out to work for pay, men who were unemployed might find it unacceptable to heavily devote themselves to nonmarket activities, especially those outside the family."

Once volunteers are acquired, the real challenge comes in retention. Author A. Skogland drew the conclusion that volunteers experience a variety of emotions when giving their time/money. They begin in the "honeymoon" stage, a duration of 6 months where volunteers feel a sense of fulfillment with their giving of themselves and working toward the mission of the respective organization. They then regress to a "post-honeymoon blues" phase where the idealism motivating their initial endeavor has now dissipated. Skogland insist It is the role of the organization to show appreciation and develop a continuous relationship with each individual volunteer. Positive experiences come from volunteers establishing a role identity. Volunteers must feel as if the time they are donating is contributing to the execution of the

organization's mission. Learning new experiences and training all help contribute to the growth sensation volunteers need in order to retain interest in their giving.

The Nonprofit world (2008), highlights the best practices to improve peer to peer fundraising and maintain a healthy retention rate. Many of the successful organizations of today have integrated the internet and have personalized (rather than generalize) their messages to each respective volunteer. One can also begin rewarding and acknowledging the top donors that contribute to a campaigns success. That does not necessarily mean that reward should be of monetary value. An organization can become creative in its giving as well by offering discounts to volunteers from corporate sponsors, gifts to those who have contributed the most hours, referred the most volunteers, donated the most money/canned goods/clothing, etc.

Qualitative Research:

Method

In order to gather the necessary information from our target publics, we decided to conduct personal interviews from a sample of our target population. The interview allowed us to analyze qualitative information from a prospective volunteer, and gave insights as to what motivates these individuals to donate time or money to a non-profit organization. These insights also provided data on where our interviewees get informed about donating opportunities.

Four interviewers conducted one on one interviews that observed respondents in a home setting. We wanted to provide a comfortable setting for the interviewees, so that we could analyze authentic body language and engage in a conversational based interview. The interviews that our class initiated allows us to analyze common tendencies and make accurate and informed correlations for our target publics. This will help us to effectively target and market to a demographic that will help LSOP fulfill its mission.

Results

After formulating the discussion questions and probing topics, four interviews were conducted with a focus on Chicago residents and their motivations and rationale behind nonprofits. These respondents averaged 32.5 years of age (all female), and though they were not all residents of the north neighborhoods of Chicago they all resided in the Chicagoland area.

The purpose and need of any nonprofit organization seemed to be a positive reaction across the board. More specifically, most people love the fact and believe that nonprofits are important and they need active participation to fulfill their mission. One interviewee stated nonprofits "are productive organizations that give back to the community for positive reasons". Another was quoted saying "non-profits often don't have the money to pay for the help that they need, so they need volunteers to help support the company and the organization and what it's doing". On the contrary, out of the four interviews conducted only one had participated in any form of donation in the past three months! Others had not participated since January and July respectively.

Another consensus that the respondents seemed to have congruent responses with was pertaining to the question interviewers asked concerning mail solicitations for nonprofit organizations. We asked our respondents what their responsiveness was toward direct mail solicitations and if they read them or threw them away. All respondents stated they threw them away unless it sparked some sort of curiosity from the packaging, wording, or organization: "I put it in my trash, usually unless the subject... unless the company and the subject catches my eye. But usually I'll just throw it out."

When it relates to the Little Sisters of the Poor, respondents could not successfully describe what the organization's mission was solely based off the title. When asked to describe

what feelings they would associate with the organization title Little Sisters of the Poor, one Chicago resident said "sad is the best word I can come up with". None of the interviewed participants had heard of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

(See Appendix B)

Quantitative Research

Method

In order to assist LSOP, it was imperative that we conducted the necessary research to gain insight into the local community's donation and volunteer behavior. From the dates of May 10th through May 20th, we collected this information through convenience sampling via an online survey tool and received a total of 396 respondents. The key demographics from respondents are highlighted below:

- 31 : Average age of respondents
- 24 : Mode age of respondents; signifying that we received an outlier in our research
- 32% of respondents claimed they practice a form of Catholicism
- Up to 56% of respondents had a Bachelor degree
- 246 respondents lived in Chicago; 38% of those respondents reside on the North side.
- 88% had Part time or Full time employment

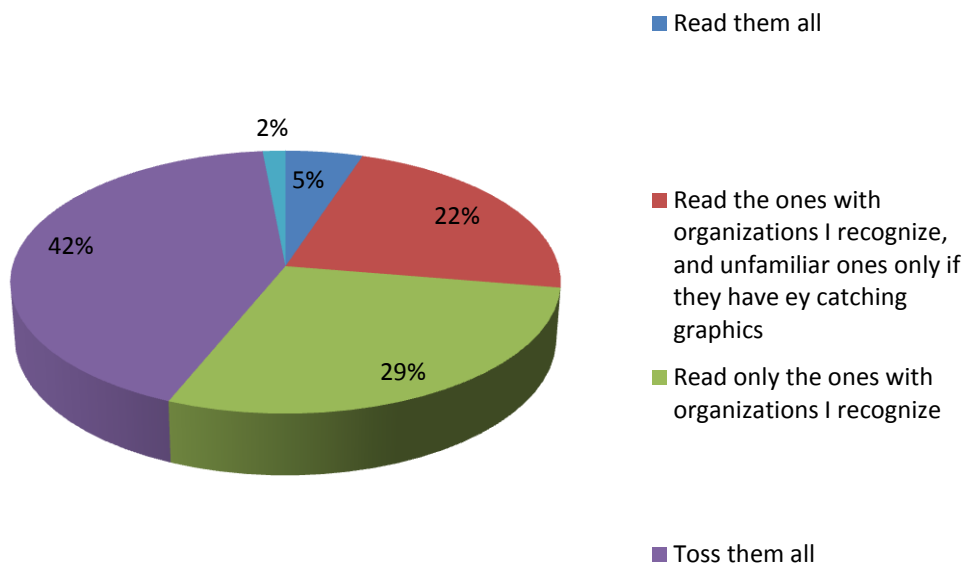
Results

Consistent with the qualitative results our interviews gave insight to, we found out that a majority of people in the Chicagoland area had no knowledge of the organization and its

mission. More than 85% of respondents did not know what the Little Sisters of the Poor organizations was.

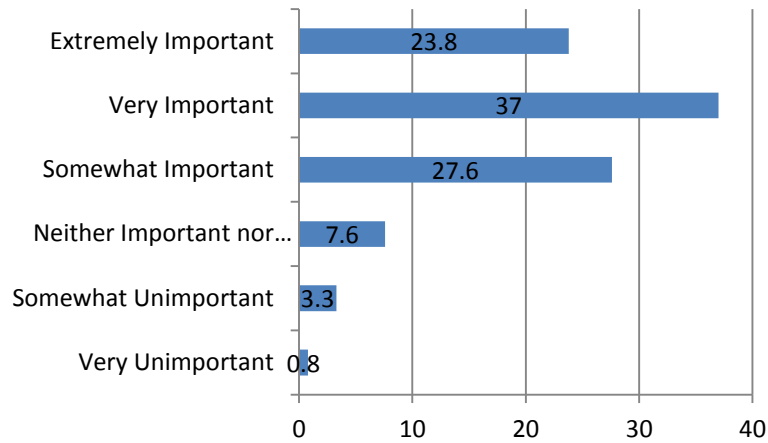
Also similar to our qualitative interviews, respondents mentioned that if they did not recognize the organization soliciting their services to them through direct mail then a majority of those mailers are thrown away. In fact, nearly 42% of the individuals surveyed stated that they throw direct mailers out regardless of the fact that they know of the organization or not (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 – Direct Mail Solicitation



Respondents within the community believe that it should be top priority to care for the elderly. That being said, it was not a surprise that over 60% of the quantitative respondents claimed that it was very important that an organization's mission was focused toward caring for that demographic (see Figure 5.2)

Figure 5.2 – Caring for the elderly is...



Another development worth noting was the amount of time and the percentage of people surveyed that actively donate both time and money to a non-profit organization. According to our research, nearly 51.9% of respondents donate to charities and nearly 69% of those respondents volunteer their time on an average of up to 2 hours a week.

Discussion

With our findings we can provide insight to The Little Sisters of the Poor to help them further the mission of their organization. From the quantitative and qualitative research we were able to extract, it was a pleasant surprise to discover the willingness and proactive approach Chicago residents displayed toward community service and volunteering/donating to organizations of their choice. Congruent with our qualitative respondents mentioning that they support organizations whose mission "supports people and being able to become a more productive person", our quantitative data displayed that over 60% of respondents preferred organizations that were administered to help the elderly. This poses a great opportunity for The Little Sisters of the Poor. Being an organization dedicated to assisting the elderly, their mission is in line with what many residents consider important.

The main challenge is that they have not found out the proper ways to solicit volunteers or donations from the community. As our research shows, respondents are not likely to respond to mailer solicitation; they are inclined to dispose those whether they recognize the organization or not. Our qualitative data indicates that many of the residents are educated about their community and efforts within the community through the internet and through newspapers. The Little Sisters of the Poor should take into account the changing environment their key publics are exposed to. We are in a technology savvy society and marketing efforts must work even harder to differentiate their communication efforts from traditional approaches.

It is understandable that a conventional organization such as LSOP would not partake in a revolutionary marketing tool, however they should adapt for the betterment of the organization. LSOP should also investigate opportunities in developing open editorials in major city publications. This will allow the organization to have control over the message, and mandate the placement of each article and respective publication.

LSOP should also consider taking its message to the internet. The impact social media has on organizations and a company is tremendous. Developing accounts on some of the major social networks allows the Little Sisters to advertise at minimal or no cost. Within these social networks, signing up as a business account gives you the ability to develop key insights into your active demographic through evaluating your followers/friends and interactions. Rather than assuming your demographic fits a specific profile, you in fact have a detailed analysis of who is engaging in your not for profit's mission.

We also discovered that those who are religious does weigh a little heavier when it refers to donating time/money, or the willingness to consider giving up that time/money to a charitable organization. Through the secondary research conducted; those who are religious

have more of an impact on their secular acquaintances and their willingness to donate their time or money. In fact, non-religious individuals are more inclined to donate their time than those who continuously practice religion or attend services regularly but do so because the religiously active acquaintance plays as a motivational force.

The willingness to donate to organizations is evident in the amount of hours and percentage of respondents who currently seek out volunteer opportunities, the disconnect seems to come in peoples knowledge of LSOP and its mission. Seeing that nearly 60% of respondents stated that caring for the elderly was a major concern, if LSOP furthered their marketing efforts and adapted those to 21st century tactics, I know unequivocally that they will see a positive return in the donations and volunteers that will assist them in fulfilling their mission.

References

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Bibliography (Interview Guide)

Warm Up Questions:

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. How long have you lived in Chicago?
 - a. Have you ever lived in the Lincoln Park area?

Questions:

1. Do you ever volunteer or donate?
 - a. Probe: If so, where do you volunteer/donate?
 - b. Probe: If so, when was the last time?
 - c. Probe: How do you donate? (time, money, food, clothing, etc.)
 - d. Probe: Why do you decide to volunteer with/donate to this organization?
 - e. Probe: How did you hear about this organization?
2. Are you familiar with any non-profit organizations?
 - a. Probe: Which ones? If not, is there a reason?
 - b. Probe: How did you hear about them?
 - c. Probe: Have you ever donated to or worked with any of them?
3. Do you think it is important to support organizations/non-profits?
 - a. Probe: Why or why not?
4. When considering the mission of many nonprofits, what would rank high on your list of organizations that you would donate time or money to?
 - a. Probe: If a representative approached you from that respective organization, what is the likelihood you would donate time/money?
 - b. Probe: Which one would you prefer?
5. How would you react to being approached by a member of an organization asking for a donation (monetary or otherwise)?
6. What do you do with the direct mail solicitations?
 - a. Probe: Do you toss them?
 - b. Probe: Do you read them and then recycle them?

- c. Probe: Have you ever donated to an organization via a direct mail solicitation?
- 7. How often do you check your email?
 - a. Probe: What percentage do you actually open per day?
 - b. Probe: Do you ever open an email when you don't recognize the sender?
- 8. Do you have any religious affiliation?
 - a. Probe: If so, what religion do you practice?
 - b. Probe: How often do you attend services?
 - c. Probe: Are other members of your family religious?
- 9. Have you ever heard of Little Sisters of the Poor?
 - a. Probe: If so, how did you first hear about them?
 - b. Probe: If not, what do you think of when you hear "Little Sisters of the Poor?"
 - c. Probe: What feelings do you associate with that phrase?