

MEJO 332 Public Relations Writing
APPLES Client Portfolio
Keep Durham Beautiful
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I. Background

Keep Durham Beautiful (KDB) is a local nonprofit dedicated to inspiring and engaging individuals to take greater responsibility for their community environment. Founded in 2004 as an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Keep Durham Beautiful is led by Executive Director Tania Dautlick and a 13 member board of directors. As a nonprofit, Keep Durham Beautiful works in close partnership with the City of Durham's General Services Department and Durham County. These partnerships provide grants which allow Keep Durham Beautiful to offer volunteer opportunities, tool lending, education programs, and resource coordination to residents. These activities center around the KDB's three focus areas: litter prevention, recycling and waste reduction, and beautification and community greening.

As part of their litter-prevention programming, Keep Durham Beautiful regularly organizes community litter cleanups and strives to prevent litter at its source. In practice, KDB works closely with local businesses to educate residents on why littering is harmful and come up with litter reduction solutions that go beyond simply picking up trash. Another key tenet of Keep Durham Beautiful's programming is recycling and waste reduction. As strong proponents of reducing, reusing and recycling, the organization offers resources and events which center around finding ways to repurpose items and making small lifestyle changes that can drastically reduce one's impact on the environment. The third focus of Keep Durham Beautiful's programming is beautification and community greening. While maintaining community cleanliness is important for environmental prosperity, it is also important that residents feel proud

of their community and find it beautiful. Through tree-planting drives, educational initiatives and other community beautification events, Keep Durham Beautiful hopes to help individuals become stewards of their land and communities.

II. Overview of Client Communications

Keep Durham Beautiful maintains a website that has comprehensive information on the organization's events, volunteer opportunities and educational resources, among other things. The website provides separate pages of information about Keep Durham Beautiful's Durham BioBlitz and Leave Your Leaves campaigns, volunteer resources, a page for each of their focus areas, as well as a page on how to donate.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Keep Durham Beautiful sent out several newsletters each month informing donors, volunteers and the community at large on upcoming events, service opportunities and volunteer training. The past newsletters are available on Keep Durham Beautiful's website and can be accessed easily. Keep Durham Beautiful uses the marketing service Mailchimp to distribute its newsletters via email. Since October 2017, Keep Durham Beautiful has posted a series of blog posts to their website. However, those have temporarily halted due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While Keep Durham Beautiful does not have a communications or public relations department, the organization has retained the marketing consulting agency Method Savvy to assist with marketing and branding efforts. Keep Durham Beautiful also releases an annual report on their website.

Keep Durham Beautiful operates accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Flickr and Twitter, each containing information about the organization and highlighting photos and commentary from recent events. While each of the KDB's Instagram and Twitter accounts has over 2,500 followers, Keep Durham Beautiful has the largest number of followers on Facebook with just

under 3,500 followers, and therefore primarily uses Facebook to share photos and videos of events. Keep Durham Beautiful has maintained a YouTube channel since December 2018, but has not posted any content to the said channel since May 2020.

III. SWOT Analysis

Keep Durham Beautiful's communication practices are headed in the right direction. The organization's strengths now include its newsletter, website with a dedicated section for upcoming events and the website including plenty of information about volunteering. There is also a Keep Durham Beautiful Facebook page that regularly updates information about the organization. The Facebook page allows people to share these events with their friends on Facebook. These aspects of the organization's website allow them to communicate with people so the community knows how to get involved. This Facebook presence is essential because Keep Durham Beautiful primarily relies on volunteers and other organizations donating their time and money to complete projects. Without strong core communication, the people who would want to help would not know about events and would therefore not volunteer.

The strengths of the KDB's communication tactics are a solid starting point, but there are some significant weaknesses. Keep Durham Beautiful relies on spreading news primarily through their website, newsletter and Facebook pages. There is not much information in the mainstream media to draw people into researching the organization. Through our conversations with volunteers and staff, it appears that Keep Durham Beautiful is a nonprofit that people only find out about by either stumbling upon the website or hearing about it from another person. Facebook allows Keep Durham Beautiful to interact more with its followers, but it still relies on those individual followers to spread information to others. Having information only on these mediums is not enough to ensure the growth of their organization.

There are, however, opportunities for Keep Durham Beautiful to improve their communication practices. One of the options for them would be to start creating more news releases. There is no section on their website for news releases, and they do not appear to have any saved on other platforms. If they started putting out news releases and making their efforts visible to people on their website, they could communicate through the media. News releases would get KDB's name and events to news outlets to get the word out to more people who are not necessarily actively looking for an organization like Keep Durham Beautiful but would volunteer if they knew they had the opportunity. Press releases are also a great way to maneuver traffic to their website where people could find out more about their organization. Another way to improve Keep Durham Beautiful's communications would be to utilize the Facebook page more. The organization only posts a few times a month at the most. If they were to grow their social media presence, it would allow them to reach more people and therefore have a better opportunity to acquire more volunteers and supporters.

The main threat to Keep Durham Beautiful is the lack of volunteers and support for their organization. If they are not actively getting information about their events and opportunities within their organization, they will likely struggle to continue their growth. This problem is rooted in the organization being mostly volunteer-based. Keep Durham Beautiful relies on successful events, like their tree plantings or litter cleanups, to make a difference in the community. They will not be able to make as large of an impact if they cannot attract new members. This would cause their organization's mission to be much harder to achieve. Without a steady increase in supporters, it would be difficult to host successful events and have the finances to fund things like larger cleanups or greening projects. Keep Durham Beautiful has a strong communication foundation and we think our recommendations and analysis will improve

communication between the organization, its supporters, and others who may be interested.

IV. Recommendations

Our biggest recommendations revolve around Keep Durham Beautiful's online presence. With the ultimate public goal of recruiting volunteers and accruing donations, it is extremely important that Keep Durham Beautiful makes it easy for people to get involved. Communication can improve through two main methods: making the website easier to navigate and increasing interactions on their social media platforms.

Keep Durham Beautiful's website is not fully built out, and the content of the website is difficult to navigate. When compared to its competitors' websites, KDB's homepage has similar aspects but appears slightly more cluttered. To highlight KDB's unique capabilities, they should simplify the website pages to make them cleaner-looking and easier to navigate.

Externally, KDB could expand its internet presence through search engine optimization and ensuring that their name is included on the lists of local Durham environmental groups and nonprofits. For an organization that runs primarily on donations, KDB needs to make sure that it is easy to find the donation link within its website. This should be immediately visible on the homepage and in the navigation bar on other pages. To make it easier for volunteers to get involved, the website should incorporate a calendar containing all volunteer opportunities, educational programs and fundraising campaigns consolidated onto a single page. Both of these changes would ensure ease of access for volunteers and patrons to find the information important to KDB's mission.

Keep Durham Beautiful's brand identity is not consistent across its website and social media platforms. While KDB has multiple social media platforms to maintain, the organization's executive director is the sole party responsible for posting content. As a result of her multiple

roles within the organization, it would be beneficial to hire someone specifically responsible for monitoring KDB's social media engagement and interactions. Having one person dedicated to posting content and interacting with followers would foster a consistent posting schedule that is needed to maintain a loyal following. By improving KDB's website layout and adjusting the organization's social media strategies, overall social awareness and volunteer engagement would greatly improve, leading to strengthened relationships with more niche audiences and increased interactions with KDB and its campaigns as a whole.