

LIS 2830

Marketing Plan

Job Services in Houma, LA Public Libraries

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Executive Summary

Houma is a small city located 57 miles west of New Orleans. Houma is one of the larger cities in Louisiana, and is the only major urban area in the Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux, LA Metropolitan Statistical Area. The city of Houma is also the parish seat for the Terrebonne parish local government. At the time of the 2010 Census, the population of Houma was recorded as 33,727. The population is estimated to have increased by 1% (34,040) in 2013. Houma is a fairly traditional community; a region deeply steeped in Cajun and Creole culture and traditions. The majority of the population in this region is employed in occupations relating to the oil and gas industry, followed closely by fishing. Additionally, Houma and surrounding regions are important centers for shipbuilding in the Gulf region.

Public library services in Houma are handled by the Terrebonne parish Library system which handles requests at various branches spread out across the parish/county. Currently, the Houma-Terrebonne Parish Library system does not offer Services aimed at improving the employability of the residents of the Parish.

Accordingly, the Houma-Terrebonne Parish Library system needs to consider crafting a Service that focuses on improving the job skills of Parish residents by offering classes and workshops that allow interested individuals to polish their professional images and better utilize their employable skills. This can be accomplished by holding resume writing classes, mock interviews, skills assessment, and etc. In particular, this type of Service should be especially promoted for underserved sectors of the Houma-Terrebonne population, such as individuals and families living below the poverty line or struggling single parents.

Market Context/Situation

Target Segment

After reviewing available data and current statistics, I feel that the population segment that would benefit most from increased library services in Houma would be members of the community who are unemployed or are below the poverty line. In particular, unemployed single mothers would benefit greatly from Service programs such as job skills workshops, resume writing, mock interviews, and etc.

I came to this conclusion after cross referencing these statistics from the 2010 Census and the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates:

- The number of females who fall below the poverty line is 16, 960 (21.2% of the population) versus males which is 1,985 (12% of the population).
- The numbers for households with a female householder, no husband are extremely high (38.5%).
 - Increases with younger children (51.7% for children under 18; 61.4% for children under 5).

Library Service Description

Library services and programs in Houma are administrated by the Terrebonne parish Library system, which oversees nine branches spread throughout the parish. After reviewing the main website for the TPLS, it appears that services for employment assistance and financial education are not currently offered by the parish libraries. This is a major deficit to the library system of Terrebonne parish which needs to be rectified in order to better serve single mothers and families living below the poverty line.

The primary areas that the Service would cover include:

- Overview of the major employers in the Tri-Parish area.
- Mock Interviews.
- Resume Advice & Proofreading.
- How to Prepare for an Interview.
- Certification classes for common business software including the Microsoft Office Suite of products.

Descriptive Analysis

As previously stated, the Houma-Terrebonne Public Library system does not currently offer Services that deal with vocational training or job skills enhancement. The Programs and Services that cater toward single mothers seem to be focused on prompting the library as a place for them to take their children to for activities. The Houma-Terrebonne Public Libraries need to expand their goals to better serve this community.

Stakeholders who I believe would be very supportive of increased social services for single mothers and others who are below the poverty in Houma include the Catholic Diocese of Terrebonne parish, the Women's Business Alliance, and the Housing & Human Services Department of the Terrebonne parish government.

The Catholic Diocese, in addition to offering relief and assistance programs for individuals and families in need also runs a program called CENTS which "provide individuals and families with limited financial resources the foundation needed to build financial independence through training and ongoing support" by offering classes which teach essential skills in forming and growing a business. Considering the deep ties between the Catholic Church and residents in the region, it makes sense that the Archdiocese would be supportive of library services that are similar to the CENTS program in order to meet the needs of families and individuals they serve.

The Women's Business Alliance focuses on empowering and supporting women to become financially independent and successful. While they do not specify programs or events that focus on single mothers, it makes sense that they would be supportive of financial and business programs that allow women and families in the greatest need to become more financially independent. As the library system is an integral component of the community, and not a direct competitor for resources with the WBA, I feel that both organizations would be able to collaborate in crafting business services programs for single mothers in the Houma area.

The Housing & Human Services Department of the Terrebonne parish government provides financial and housing assistance to individuals and families that fall below the poverty line. While technically a competitor for resources with the parish library system, both institutions have a commitment to providing for the best needs of the community. Also, because of demands on resources, not all applicants can be served by the H&HSD to its best ability. Having other programs at public institutions such as libraries can serve to alleviate the pressure on the parish government, while also highlighting the collaborative spirit of two public institution's working together to better serve the citizens of Houma.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Financial support from Houma-Terrebonne Parish government
- Assistance from potential partner organizations with similar goals for target group.

Weaknesses

- Budget and staff limitations for public library Services and Programs.
- Possible resistance from potential partner institutions, especially from Housing & Human Services Department which competes with Public Library for funding.

Opportunities

- Create a safe, fulfilling environment for single mothers to enhance their vocational opportunities.
- Improve the image of the Houma-Terrebonne Parish Public Library system as relevant institutions with resources for residents to utilize for personal and professional enrichment.

Threats

- Lack of interest on the part of the residents.
- Securing long-term financial and personnel support for continuation of job skills Service program.
- Freeing up funds in the budget for promotional items and advertisements to market the job skills Service to the community.

Objectives/Goals

1. Nominate and appoint members from the public library staff to serve on a committee that will oversee and manage the job skills Service classes, including determining costs of Service, marketing components, and etc. The Head Librarian, in conjunction with other members of the Library Board of Directors, will interview potential candidates and make nominations to the committee.
2. Conduct a survey to gauge the interest level of library patrons on the implementation of the job skills Service. Surveys cards will be placed near circulation desks in all branches of the Houma-Terrebonne Public Library for patrons to fill out, along with an announcement on the library homepage with a digital survey form that patrons can fill out and submit. Tentatively, this will be accomplished at least two months after the committee that will oversee the job skills Service is formed. The committee will also oversee the creation and collection of the surveys.
3. Begin marketing the Job Skills Service classes in the community using a variety of methods.

Implementation/Action Plan

First Objective: Creation of Committee for Job Skills Service classes.

Actions

- Put out a general email announcement to all librarians in the Houma-Terrebonne Parish Public Library system about the formation of the committee.
- After members have been appointed, committee should begin to put together outline of specific components of job skills Service classes, e.g., topics, potential days/times, finding moderators/instructors/lecturers, amount of funds to allocate from budget, and etc.
- Brainstorm marketing strategies that can be used to promote the Service once it has been approved.
- Reach out to potential partner institutions in the local community.

Resources

- Projected budgetary costs for the creation of marketing materials should not exceed \$10,000 dollars.
- The number of staff allocated to the Service should be at least 5 librarians.

Timeline

- The creation of the committee should be accomplished by second week of August 2015.
- Planning for marketing and components of Service should be accomplished by mid-Fall of 2015 (October-November).

Tracking

- The head of the committee will report directly to the Head Librarian at biweekly meetings.
- All final decisions must be approved by the Head Librarian.

Second Objective: Gauge Community Interest.

Actions

- Conduct an initial community scan and survey to determine library use and the perception of the library in the community, within one month after the formation of the committee.
- Craft an equal number of survey questions geared toward a general swath of the local population and the specified target group.
- Decide upon the format of the questionnaire (physical, digital, mix, etc.), as well as potential costs for creation of questionnaire.

Resources

- Allocate at least \$800 for the design and creation of the questionnaire.
- Designate at least two members of the committee to craft the questions, research costs of creation, determine placement areas, and etc.

Timeline

- Nomination of two committee members to handle creation and distribution of questionnaires will be accomplished by September 2015.
- Mock-ups of questionnaires in multiple formats will be presented to committee by October 2015.
- Pending approval by the Head Librarian, questionnaires should ideally be in place by late October-early November 2015.

Tracking

- Collection and tabulation of results should be conducted biweekly until December 2015-January 2016 by the two librarians in charge questionnaires.
- They will report their results directly to the committee.

Third Objective: Implement Marketing Strategies to Advertise Job Skills Services Classes.

Actions

- Research the most cost-effective strategies and means to advertise the Job Skills Service classes.
- Utilize population statistics, alongside the results of the survey, to pinpoint specific messages that could attract potential/current users of the library to utilize the service.
- Place and monitor advertisements in the library and throughout the community, in both physical and digital formats.

Resources

- Allocate at least \$5,000 dollars from the budget of committee toward research, creation, and placement of advertisements.
- The entire committee will be actively involved in this process, when possible.
- Timeline
- Tentatively, the research and creation phase will begin in late January-early February 2016, following tabulation of questionnaire results.
- The first phase of the campaign will last six months. The success of the Job Skills Service classes will be used as a baseline to determine effectiveness of the marketing strategies employed.

Tracking

- Members of the committee will discuss all solutions with the head of the committee. The head of the committee will, in turn, meet with the Head Librarian to discuss cost, potential benefits, and etc. The Head Librarian will have the final authority to approve potential marketing strategies.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of the marketing strategies and methods for promoting the Job Skills Service classes will be measured by the following criteria:

- Overall interest in the Job Skills Service classes based on the initial questionnaire survey.
- Attendance numbers of the Job Skills Service classes, coupled with the results of satisfaction surveys completed by attendees after completion of the courses.
- Measuring effectiveness of the Service against the time and funds invested in the promotion and administration of classes.

Utilizing these three criteria, changes will be made accordingly to make the Job Skills Service classes more beneficial to the intended target group and help the library save time/funds.

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