



PRL 206 Final Paper

Make-A-Wish CNY

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Interviewee: Dyana Smolen- PR/Communications Manager



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Question 1

Part One: In no more than two typewritten pages, describe your chosen organization, giving its purpose, size, major product/service, location (s), historical origins, any unique features, name of CEO, name of top public relations practitioner, any other pertinent or interesting facts about the organization. (If a mission statement is available to you, include it in the appendices).

My chosen organization is Make-A-Wish CNY. Make-A-Wish is a not-for-profit organization that grants the wishes of children under the age of 18 who have been diagnosed with life-threatening medical conditions in the United States and around the globe. The mission of Make-A-Wish is to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy, and to stretch every dollar to service as many children as possible. Make-A-Wish believes that “a wish experience can be a game-changer for a child with a life-threatening medical condition.” It firmly holds the belief that a wish is more than just a “nice thing”; rather, making a child’s wish come true can give them the courage to go on. The key values of MAW include integrity, child focus, excellence, community and inspiration. Make-A-Wish has had a presence in the United States since 1980; however, the CNY chapter, and focus of my paper, began in 1985.

The CNY chapter of Make-A-Wish currently services fifteen counties. Located at 5005 Campuswood Drive in East Syracuse, the chapter reaches as far north as St. Lawrence county, and as far south as Broome county. Its first organizational meeting was held on May 16, 1985 in an office located on Harrison Street in the city of Syracuse. Make-A-Wish CNY serves as the 33rd chapter nationally. Its founding board was comprised of seven members, including Bill Coon, Don Hamilton, Don Lawless, Jack

Orr, Lynda Sturrick, and Susan Tormey, who served as the chair. Within its first year, Make-A-Wish CNY was able to grant a wish to a young boy, enabling him to travel to Disney World with his family. Even more impressive, \$9,755 was raised within the first year by the CNY chapter toward its wish kids. For the first few years, MAW CNY granted around 100 wishes each year, granting its 1,000th wish in 2007. Today, there have been over 1,500 wishes total granted by the CNY chapter, and it has been recognized by the national office for its outstanding fundraising performance under current CEO, Diane E. Kupperman. At the national level, Make-A-Wish is the largest wish-granting organization in the world, with a wish being granted about every 38 minutes. Make-A-Wish also services children internationally, with affiliates in 36 different countries around the globe.

Make-A-Wish was initially founded by Tommy Austin, a customs agent. The story began when the son of a good friend of Tommy's was diagnosed with a fatal form of Leukemia, and told that he only had weeks to live. This young boy, Chris Grecius, had a long time wish to become a police officer, and Tommy set out to make this possible for him. With the help of the Arizona DPS, Tommy was given permission to grant Chris' wish. A patrol car and motorcycle were brought in for Chris to ride, and he was driven to DPS headquarters in a special police helicopter. He was given a tour, a "Smokey Bear" hat, a badge, and a custom fit uniform, and with this the first ever wish had been granted. Chris passed away only a few days later, but his story triggered the idea to create a wish-granting organization. That summer, a number of the men who had been involved met again, marking the beginning of Make-A-Wish.

Today, the Chief Executive Officer of Make-A-Wish is David Williams, and the top communications practitioner is John Vranas. However, each individual chapter works as an independent nonprofit organization, and the CNY chapter does not report directly to either of these two men. Rather, these positions serve as a means of guidance and support to the chapter's PR and communications staff when needed. At Make-A-Wish, each independent not-for-profit organization (61 total in the United States) stands together under one shared vision and mission. The national office serves to establish guidelines for wish-granting standards, provides legal support, and establishes the overall direction for the organization, but each chapter has its own board of directors, staff and volunteers.

Additional information on Make-A-Wish processes, as well as a fact sheet, can be found in the appendices.

Part 2: According to systems theory, would you classify your organization as an open system or a closed system? Justify your classification, using the specific criteria for open/closed systems studies as one of the Theories this semester.

The CNY chapter of Make-A-Wish CNY can be classified as an open system because it “exchanges inputs and outputs through boundaries that are permeable” and interacts with its environments. MAW CNY follows a “holistic approach” and challenges its established practices when it encounters a problem. It realizes that its subsystems affect one another and are affected by external systems as well. Not only this, but it seeks feedback and quantitatively measures its progress.

When conducting my interview with Dyana Smolen, the CNY chapter's PR/Communications manager, I asked her to provide some examples of why she believes her organization is an open system. Before I had even asked this question, she had

touched greatly upon the idea that her organization is mission driven, and that there is a heavy focus on protection of branding, which fits the above definition. However, she gave the example of responding to external environments when a rumor circulates about a wish kid. Although she could not give me the specifics for privacy reasons, she explained how sometimes rumors circulate in a nearby community with accusations about a wish kid unfairly receiving a wish. Individuals may believe a certain child is receiving special treatment. In this case, if the rumor is not severe, Dyana explained that her job, as a PR practitioner, is to reach out to these people on social media, and to in essence kill them with kindness. Since the topic of wish kids is such a sensitive matter, the PR team at Make-A-Wish has to be careful not to involve the children in any unnecessary drama, or to exploit their stories. Instead, they merely have to explain to their publics that there is a process in determining wish kids, and that the decision is not subjective. In the case of a more serious situation, the CNY chapter will contact the National chapter and work out a plan to stop any rumors. However, in her time at Make-A-Wish, Dyana has never encountered such a circumstance.

Make-A-Wish is also an open system because it actively seeks feedback and quantitatively measures its progress. New hires must meet with consultants within their first week of starting the job, and after this first week they must meet monthly to review their progress and determine if they are meeting goals and objectives. Even Dyana, being head of the department, must frequently be reviewed by the board. Dyana explained that, as a whole, the PR department of Make-A-Wish is constantly seeking new ways to measure their progress, and the first step in doing so is making sure that each and every employee is doing his/her job adequately. One example that Dyana gave was when she

learned that Northern New York, the Southern Tier and Mohawk valley needed an increase in awareness. This was determined by information based on the number of referrals Make-A-Wish had received from these areas in the past year, in comparison to the other counties. This shows just one strategic approach that MAW CNY PR department measures its effectiveness. However, the way in which the department dealt with this lack of involvement from these regions also shows their work as an open system. Make-A-Wish realized that there was a deficit, and worked to challenge its established practices by understanding why they did not work in these areas. In order to try to solve this problem, Make-A-Wish began to track the media clips that it ran, as well as ads and airtime on both TV and the local radio. If Dyana felt that there was not enough PR presence in a certain area (in the Binghamton area, for example), she increased the amount of time that she ran a certain release. The PR department immediately saw a surge in the number of referrals from these previously struggling counties, as well as many of the others. However, they found that a new difficulty lay in determining where these referrals came from. Dyana's PR team began asking those who phoned in about where they heard about Make-A-Wish, but they are currently working on a more efficient way to monitor and record this information. This just goes to show that MAW CNY is constantly changing its tactics in order to be more efficient, to reach out to more people, and to save time and money while doing so.

Lastly, Make-A-Wish can be classified as an open system based on their willingness to exchange information both in and out of its organization with its environment. MAW CNY recognizes that it relies on the support of its volunteers, and that without accepting and valuing their feedback, the organization would cease to exist.

Dyana recalled the first time that she and her team had a local rotary organization reach out to Make-A-Wish to volunteer, since many of its members required service hours. This kind of interest coming from an outside environment can be classified as input. Dyana realized the worth that these young volunteers could bring to the table for her fundraising events and brought them in as part of the organization. Dyana was also outputting information through the press release that sparked these kids, and many others, interest in the first place. In fact, they later admitted that they had contacted her after they had read a press release in the news about an event that Make-A-Wish had previously put on, and its need for more volunteers. This shows a healthy organization and its relationship with its environment through the flow of information. Learning from this experience, the PR department took this new information and began to target service organizations in the area to serve as volunteers. Make-A-Wish recognized the mutual benefit and symbiotic relationship that could occur by working with such organizations, and used this to further its business goals. MAW still today tailors its stories to attract these people, serving as an innovative solution to serve its mission.

Question 2

Part One: Using systems theory, describe in as much detail as possible the public relations function at this organization. Describe the role of the public relations practitioner. Would you describe them as falling within the role of “technician” or “manager?” Justify your response.

Systems theory is the belief that one part of the organization impacts all other parts. In other words, management subsystems impact PR subsystems, which impact production, maintenance, adaptive, and distribution subsystems. In return, each of these subsystems communicates and exchanges information with the outside environment. The role of the PR department at Make-A-Wish CNY is to “effectively promote the organization, events, program services, and national and local fundraising initiative to increase awareness, donations, volunteerism, and wish kid referrals.” The PR department also works to develop Make-A-Wish into a household name with immediate brand recognition. From a plan set in February 2015, MAW CNY has made it its goal to “expand its reach through community engagement, media, and social media efforts.” Ultimately, PR serves as the voice for Make-A-Wish. Without Public Relations, Make-A-Wish would not have the visibility needed to not only bring in wish kids, but to raise enough money to serve these kids and give them the opportunity of a lifetime. In order to fulfill these objectives, Dyana and her team face a variety of responsibilities each day.

At MAW CNY, Dyana Smolen serves as the only PR/Communications manager, and therefore fulfills the majority of the managerial roles. Because the organization is so small and money is tight as it is for most not-for-profits, Dyana’s interns primarily handle

the roles of the PR “technician.” However, because of the small nature of the organization, Dyana finds herself working some of these technical jobs as well.

Each day, the PR team updates its social media, blog and website, as well as traditional communications outlets, such as newsletters, brochures and fact sheets. Most of this work is delegated to interns, especially in the summer when there is more student help. These interns also work to write and distribute eligible wish stories, develop spreadsheets, and provide miscellaneous support to whatever communications programs are currently going on. Dyana, on the other hand, is responsible for delegating tasks for event promotion. Each year, MAW CNY holds six internal events, and more than 100 external events. Whereas Dyana oversees the work going into making each of these events possible, it is her interns who actually design the flyers and brochures, tweet out reminders, and answer any questions that may come in via phone or social media.

Typical event promotion for Dyana includes asking for media sponsorships and sponsorships from organizations in the community. Since the budget is tight, she usually looks for free media sponsorships, which is why the radio is a great outlet. Dyana is responsible for knowing her volunteer and participant base, and picking a primary media outlet based on whom she believes the main public is for MAW. For example, the “Walk on the Wild Side” event, a children’s event held at Rosamond Gifford Zoo, targets moms and mom groups, since they are usually the ones spending the most time with their kids. Dyana uses a combination of grassroots efforts to reach out to this specific public, including posting on popular mom blogs, for example. For this event last year, Dyana also chose Wild104.7, a radio station specifically targeted to women, to implement her media sponsorship. Whereas Dyana is responsible for developing the ideas behind and

managing the implementation of initiatives, her interns act as the technicians, and she must communicate to them the specific tasks that she wishes to get done to achieve her overall goal. Dyana says that she loves writing, but does not generally get the opportunity to do this much in her current position since MAW is such a small organization and there is always so much to get done. Instead, she must leave this work to her interns.

As head of the PR department, Dyana also manages national corporate partnerships, such as Macy's Believe and Subaru Share the Love, initiatives that take place year round. To manage these campaigns, Dyana must communicate with the external companies to ensure that they are on the same page, and then delegate tasks to her internal employees. She therefore serves as the primary contact for these partnerships and manages the volunteer website to make sure that she touches base with both sides. Overall, she undertakes much of the same responsibilities as her interns, but also does much more work in making strategic decisions to reach organizational goals, as opposed to the technician's responsibility to only carry out assigned tasks. Dyana puts the larger picture together through all of her different campaigns, events, and communications outlets, and then takes the feedback she receives to report back to senior management.

Part Two: Get to know your interviewee a bit: Educational background; how he/she got into public relations; previous positions; involvement in professional societies and/or community organizations. Then: review the definition of, and criteria for, "dominant coalition." Is the top practitioner a member of the dominant coalition? What specific evidence can you give to support your answer?

Dyana always knew she wanted to work in writing and/or communications, because writing is one of her biggest passions. Other than writing, Dyana enjoys reading and spending time with her animals, and is an advocate for spirituality and holistic health.

Dyana grew up in Rome, attending Utica College and earning a degree in PR/Journalism at the time when the school was still affiliated with Syracuse University. After graduating, she lived in Missouri for a year, but returned and began working for news radio, where she later moved on to state politics. Two years later, she had her first child, and took the opportunity to freelance for a year, an advantage of Public Relations that we have discussed in class at great length. From here, still wanting a flexible schedule, Dyana went into nonprofit communications and has been in the field ever since, although not starting her career with Make-A-Wish. For eleven years, Dyana worked for the YWCA of Oneida, but struggled as the organization went through a bit of an identity crisis. She then moved into her current position as PR/Communications Manager at MAW CNY in June of 2014. She currently lives in Oneida with her husband and two children and commutes to Syracuse each day. Dyana chose to work for Make-A-Wish because of the mission. She greatly enjoys getting to go to work every day knowing that she has a hand in making a positive difference for a child and his/her family. It is a gratifying experience that she is not sure she would get in any other setting. She genuinely feels that Make-A-Wish has strong national support, with daily communication coming from the national office, and the work environment is always inviting.

Although Dyana does not currently belong to any professional PR societies, she is connected to other Make-A-Wish PR professionals across the country via ongoing communications and outreach through a specially designed Facebook page. This communication with others in the same position has helped to be a collaborative measure for networking and outreach. In her spare time she also occasionally engages in freelance grant writing for other nonprofits.

Definition of Dominant Coalition: A group of people with the power to set the direction for an organization. These are the people in an organization who hold the most power; for example, a Board of Directors or Board of Trustees. If PR is included within the dominant coalition, theory explains that PR will play a prominent role in the organization. However, if not, the work of Public Relations in such an organization is limited to technical activities and is left out of important decision making.

In Dyana's position, she works closely in line with management. Although not a member of the dominant coalition herself, she strongly feels that the role of her work in the PR department is greatly valued within the organization. Broadly stated, "not-for-profit PR impacts the entire organization." The success of a not-for-profit organization such as Make-A-Wish, including awareness and powerful, positive branding, occurs with increased donations, increased volunteer interest and increased child referrals; all of these things are strongly influenced by strong Public Relations. The PR department at MAW CNY serves as the chief method of raising awareness about the organization and its happenings, and although Dyana herself is not a member of the Board of Directors, she is certain that there is a definite PR consideration to all board decisions. The executive director, Diane Kupperman, has a keen Public Relations mind, and is the primary board contact for the CNY chapter, attending every meeting. Although the board serves as the governing body of the organization, nothing goes by without Diane's approval, and discussions are frequently held the impact and PR influence with new campaigns. Diane's responsibility is to pull together materials from all subcommittees of MAW CNY (for example, finance, HR, PR, etc.), and present these to the board at their meeting every

two months. There is also a national conference each year that all employees are encouraged to attend to make their voice heard. Therefore, while my interviewee is not specifically a member of the dominant coalition, the CNY chapter of Make-A-Wish greatly values the importance of PR in the successful company that it has become.

Question 3

Using Harlow's FULL definition of public relations, create a checklist of each of the elements of that definition found in your organization. Give a concrete example of each element found. If your organization does not match the Harlow definition, then how does it define "public relations?" Comment on that definition in comparison to the Harlow definition.

Public Relations is:

- The distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics.
 - As a small not-for-profit organization, consisting of a mere nine staff people, each employee collectively manages the organization. Dyana holds a seat at the table and must communicate with other employees on a daily basis in order to be effective. Between weekly team meetings, weekly one-on-one meetings with the executive director, monthly strategic planning sessions and bi-monthly board meetings, each employee at Make-A-Wish is in constant communication with each other.
 - MAW CNY also realizes how crucial the public is to its organization. Without the public, there would be no volunteers to grant wishes, no donors to give donations, no participants in fundraising events, and effectively, no wish-granting organization. There is a very mutual understanding between Make-A-Wish and its publics, as both are set out with the same goal to improve the life of a child.
- Involves the management of problems or issues

- As far as problems or issues are concerned, Dyana could not think of any that she had encountered with Make-A-Wish during our interview. Having only worked for the organization for a little over two years, she noted that she had fortunately not encountered any serious problems, unlike some of her previous jobs. Overall, people and communities as a whole want to help out in any way that they can, and there are generally no issues that arise.
- Helps management keep informed on and responsive to public opinion and emphasizes the responsibility of PR to serve the public interest
 - MAW CNY sends out surveys after each event it holds, asking volunteers what they enjoyed best, and whether they have any suggestions to better the experience next time. These surveys are done to monitor ways in which to effectively improve the wish-granting and fundraising experience.
 - The entire mission of Make-A-Wish is in the public's interest.
- Helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change
 - Traditional media has changed today to approaching its stories from a multimedia perspective. The Make-A-Wish PR team has come to an understanding that reporters are now interested in obtaining information for stories that can be used on all platforms. Therefore, every story that is now pitched by MAW CNY has all angles considered, including interview subjects, and potential audio and visual benefits.
- Serves as an early warning system to anticipate trends

- Dyana constantly monitors both traditional and social media, as well as reads trade publications to anticipate new trends. She also pays close attention to peer experiences and her PR interns, as they often bring much information to the table about what is currently a “hot topic” in society.
- The Make-A-Wish organization must stay up to date on the trend of social media, and more importantly a new trend of social media in real time. Knowing that this is an entity that the public has shown interest in, Dyana employed one of her interns to stage a Twitter “lunch and learn” for staff and volunteers.
- Uses research and sound ethics as its principle tools
 - In conducting the 30th Anniversary event, Dyana and her PR team had to use sound research in order to find the best advertising strategy. MAW CNY is given a small advertising budget, comprised of a mere \$12,000 for 15 different counties, and finding a way to implement an advertising campaign effectively was a challenge. The team researched the option of public radio and found that it clearly fit the demographic that they were hoping to reach for the type of volunteers and donors they want (educated families with an overall income of greater than \$70,000). Public radio also fit the budget, with reasonable pricing over the course of the year compared to other platforms like television. This would allow the ads to be consistent and play throughout the year. Dyana also researched different locations in CNY to find where the majority of public radio

listeners came from, and determined that the southern region of CNY was the place to start, opening an advertising campaign with WAER.

- As far as ethics are concerned, Dyana often has to draw a fine line between allowing volunteers to contribute to wish children and allowing it to become a “dog and pony show”. The wish children are often fragile and in a difficult medical state, so Make-A-Wish must work to never exploit the children it serves. A lot of people want to help, and as a result, they want access to the kids. However, what they fail to remember is what exactly these children are going through. When communicating with donors and sponsors, it must be made clear that any donations they generously give do not buy them access to a child; rather, they support the general mission of granting all wishes to multiple children.

Question 6

Read a variety of sources about the topic of “corporate social responsibility.” Based on your readings and personal opinion, explain why it is important for organizations to be responsive to their publics. Give at least one detailed example of how your chosen organization performs its social responsibility function, and describe the role of the public relations person or department in helping that organization be socially responsible.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a fairly new management concept used to manage relationships both in the nearby community and globally. This concept emphasizes the idea that companies have a responsibility for the overall social well being of their publics. It defines an organization’s responsibilities for the impacts of its decisions on society, the environment, and its own prosperity. Since organizations hold much of the vital power in the country and its actions touch everyday citizens, they owe it to their publics to be responsible for its actions.

It is important for companies to be responsive to their publics because having a positive relationship with them can foster better sales and a better reputation. CSR gives the public the sense that their opinions and interests are valued, and therefore increases customer loyalty. CSR initiatives often target topics such as community health, education, environment and human rights, which are all areas in which the public has shown great interest. Therefore, if a company receives credit for being environmentally concerned, a beneficial relationship is built between it and its publics, making it more trustworthy. Increased transparency about the actions of an organization also allows the public to be less skeptical and more willing to interact with a particular organization, especially since large corporations in general today have a bad reputation. CSR can help an organization regain credibility. In fact, “79% of Americans claim to take corporate

citizenship into consideration when purchasing products” (Wilcox, 2015). In today’s world, it is almost a necessity for an organization to have a successful CSR program, as it is something that individuals look for when they choose the brands they work with.

As a not-for-profit organization that gives back to children in need, every action of Make-A-Wish can be seen as looking out for the well being of its publics. However, one specific CSR initiative that Make-A-Wish CNY implements is its “stop, drop and party” policy. Wish kids often stop into the office to visit when they are in the Syracuse area. Some travel to Syracuse for treatment and they stop by on their way home for a pick-me-up. During their visit, they are given the opportunity to scavenge the “wish closet,” a closet in the back of the office filled with toys, games, movies, etc. They are also encouraged to share a drink or a snack with the staff, and their parents are given a chance to sit down and talk about how the child is doing. This initiative gives the family a sense of truly connecting to the Make-A-Wish organization, even after a wish has been granted. The love and support of the Make-A-Wish family does not disappear after a wish, and MAW CNY actively seeks to ensure that their wish children always feel welcome through this policy. Children are also encouraged to find their star up on the star wall during their visits, which serves as a constant reminder that they are forever a part of the Make-A-Wish family.

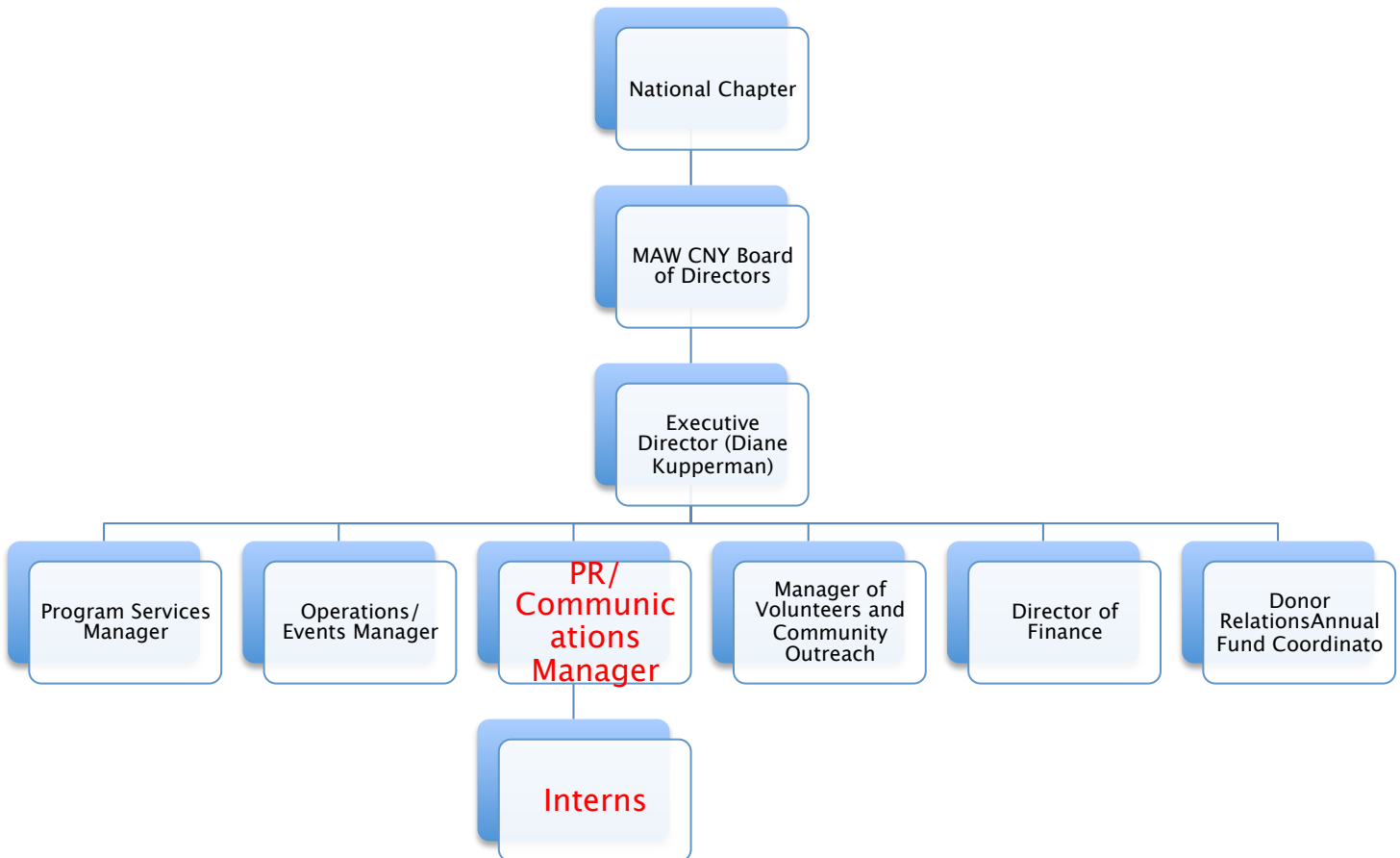
This policy fits the definition of Corporate Social Responsibility because it effectively gives back to its public through the delivery of a toy, allows the family to check up on the organization and see how it is doing, as well as allows the parents and opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Dyana and her team have the sole responsibility as the PR department to communicate to the wish kids and their families

that they are welcome at any time in the office. This is done through the addition of memos in newsletters and through letters sent home individually to the families. On top of this, the PR team make a point to submit brief writing clips and pictures to their social media sites like Twitter and Instagram after a wish child has visited and taken part in the “stop, drop and party” initiative. By seeing these posts, it is Dyana’s hope that other wish kids will be encouraged to drop by.

By interviewing Dyana, I found that she personally understood the importance of organizations to use CSR and to be responsive to their publics. She noted that a successful CSR program gives an organization a general idea of how it is doing. She believes that feedback from the public can show whether the organization is working to its maximum potential, and whether the public views it as successful or not. Because of this, Dyana takes a very active role in making sure that Make-A-Wish CNY has a strong Corporate Social Responsibility presence. When wish kids stop by the office for “stop, drop, and party,” Dyana is around to introduce herself and offer any assistance that she can. If a parent/ potential wish kid reaches out on social media with a question, if Dyana does not answer it herself, one of her interns will by at least the end of the day. Being a not-for-profit, Make-A-Wish’s primary goal is to give back to its publics, and as if its mission statement wasn’t enough, its CSR initiative helps to reach this goal.

Question 10

Describe the organizational structure (hierarchy) of the public relations department. Be sure to indicate to whom the top public relations person reports.



Because of the small nature of Make-A-Wish CNY, the PR department is primarily made up of Dyana, the PR/Communications Manager, and her interns, who range in number dependent on the time of year. These interns perform most of the technical tasks, while Dyana oversees their work and develops the overall strategic communications plan, working to develop campaigns and following trends through research. Dyana then reports her findings and work to the CNY Executive Director, Diana Kupperman. Diane is responsible for providing support and guidance to each

subsection of MAW CNY and working as a liaison between the chapter and the Board of Directors.

Part One: What positions are there within the department? What specific duties fall within each position? (If job descriptions are available, include them in the appendix.)

Dyana Smolen, my interviewee, is the head of the PR department at MAW CNY. Dyana is “responsible for all press coverage, marketing and public relations for the chapter in order to ensure mutually beneficial relationships with media outlets.” Part of Dyana’s job description is to manage the volunteer web site, as well as the volunteer social media, and up to three to four interns at any given time. Her primary mission is to manage exposure for the organization through the creation of various informational materials. Such materials may cover wish stories, timelines for external and internal events, and fundraising programs. On top of this, Dyana serves as the primary contact for several campaigns, including Kids for Wish Kids and Wishmakers on Campus, the student organization that runs on college campuses across New York State.

Besides these duties, which are specifically laid out in Dyana’s job description, she also works to provide support for other staff members in her chapter. Staff will often count on Dyana to proof some of their communications vehicles, such as brochures, appeal letters, etc. before they are sent out, as this is her area of specialization. Dyana must also scan the news and professional journals on a regular basis to keep up to date, as must any other PR professional.

Aside from Dyana, the only other positions that fall within the PR department at Make-A-Wish CNY are delegated to interns. Because the chapter is so small and works to primarily serve the public with very small personal profit, the room for paid employees

is minimal; therefore, the work of unpaid interns is an integral part of the success of the organization. Because of this, an intern at MAW CNY is treated as part of the staff and expected to take on a full workload. The PR intern at MAW CNY is responsible for assisting Dyana in generating awareness about Make-A-Wish throughout each of the fifteen counties the CNY chapter services. Interns are expected to update media lists, work with Dyana to create social media campaigns and then implement them, and write press releases and features. Usually one intern is assigned per semester to stay on top of social media planning, updating and tracking, but other interns must contribute and post on a more unplanned basis as well. Interns “may also be asked to create content for quarterly newsletters” and to “create collateral for internal and external events.” Wish announcements are the sole responsibility of the intern, as well as promotion; this allows interns to get a genuine feel of what the organization is all about and gives them some of the joy in helping to change a child’s life. Currently, in the office, MAW CNY has a volunteer who does a lot of work with developing social media content, so interns work closely with him to upload this content and make sure that it fits the Make-A-Wish brand. Interns may use technology such as Word, Excel, Photoshop and InDesign to create brochures, pamphlets and calendars, and report directly back to Dyana with all tasks. Interns also work to fulfill many office setting jobs, such as sending out faxes, opening and reading mail, making copies, putting together gift bags and mailing brochures. Whatever must be done to implement a particular campaign/ objective is given to the intern to carry out.

Part Two: How are goals and objectives set within the department?

At the beginning of each fiscal year, Dyana develops a list of responsibilities and objectives that she wishes to accomplish within the next 365 days. She then sits down with the other team members of Make-A-Wish CNY, from the head of fiscal services to the head of volunteers, and works to make sure that her goals align with theirs. Usually, the team as a whole will sit down with the results from campaigns from the previous year, such as Kids for Wish Kids and Wish Ball, to determine in what areas exactly they excelled and what areas are areas of improvement. The primary goal each year is to increase volunteers and funds from fundraising events, goals that Dyana strives to meet through the work of her department. After meeting together as a team, each head of each department meets one-on-one with Diane Kupperman. As the Executive Director, she reviews Dyana's communications plan and approves it (see appendix). The overall plan is then broken down into sections including vision, mission, objectives, strategies, and action plans, all outlined on a one-page plan. This is the typical strategy for MAW CNY to set goals and objectives within each department, including the PR/Communications department.

Part Three: How is the overall public relations program evaluated? How are individuals within the department evaluated on their performance?

The overall PR department at MAW CNY is evaluated on its success each year based on collected statistics. These statistics show expenses for the year, amount of money raised, total revenue, total number of wishes granted, etc. (see appendix). This quantitative statistical analysis is the most effective method that Make-A-Wish uses to show its progress. While these numbers are collected throughout the year, the PR department meets monthly with the Executive Director to review progress on its goals

and objectives and to make sure that it is headed in the right direction. Make-A-Wish has found that since collecting this statistical data, it has been much closer to measuring the exact impact it has in comparison to the use of solely anecdotal information in previous years. However, anecdotal information is still taken into consideration. Public satisfaction is tracked, primarily through social media, and accounted for by interns. The feedback that MAW CNY receives through social media is used as a good indicator of whether it is adequately meeting the public's needs. Phone calls and letters that are sent in are also a key indicator of success or failure. More often than not, most letters that MAW CNY receives are thank you notes from wish families, but complaints are sent in this way as well and are recorded.

The overall Public Relations department is also evaluated through the use of surveys. While Dyana admits that this is a work in progress at the CNY chapter, she noted that the department is beginning to implement these much more. Especially after events, the PR department has been making a concerted effort to distribute surveys at the event site to encourage feedback on how they are doing. These surveys are implemented to encourage input on staff performance, events, presentations, etc. If, based on the nature of the event, it is difficult for a survey to be completed on site, the MAW PR department ensures that a follow-up notice is sent out with information on how to complete an online anonymous survey, usually through a third-party platform such as SurveyMonkey.

Lastly, the overall program is evaluated through frequent meetings within and between members of the organization. Weekly team meetings, weekly one-on-one meetings, monthly strategic planning sessions and bi-monthly board meetings all ensure that no job falls through the cracks and that goals are being met at a timely manner.

Individuals within the department are also evaluated separately based on their performance. Weekly one-on-one meetings occur between each department member and their higher-up. For Dyana, this means that she meets with the Diane, the Executive Director, on a weekly basis to evaluate her performance and find areas of improvement. Interns, likewise, meet with Dyana once a week to lay out the work that they have accomplished and develop a plan for next week's goals. For example, if an intern was working on developing a newsletter for the organization, Dyana might meet with him/her to assess the progress that he/she has made in the given time frame. If a cover page and two feature stories were to have been written and the deadline was not met, Dyana will sit down with this intern to determine why full completion did not occur and whether the reasoning was justified. Based on what the two discuss, a new plan will be implemented for the next week based on the skill set of the intern and the other duties he/she is given. The same sort of process is used between Dyana and Diane.

Question 12

After reviewing the pre-readings and class lecture on the topic of “public relations and social media,” and/or outside sources on the topic, discuss how your organization’s public relations department is using social media to engage its publics and to build relationships. Give specific examples, and if appropriate, suggest ways that the organization could better utilize social media applications.

Social media is an extremely important tool for the Public Relations departments of organizations today. It is used to not only engage its publics, but to serve as a two-way symmetrical communication tool to build relationships. Listening to feedback from publics through social media can be used in part for research to build the organization, as well as to know what the publics want if a crisis were to occur. However, increased transparency, which is another positive of the use of social media, makes it less likely that a crisis will occur since an organization will be perceived as more trustworthy. Social media outlets also assist in brand identity in a much cheaper way than traditional communication vehicles, but an organization must be careful not to clutter the already crowded media world. Quantity does not compensate for quality, and a PR department must make sure that they are still distributing quality work. All social media platforms are not the same, as well, so it is important to realize that what can be posted on a Facebook page, for example, can not be posted word for word on Instagram. Above all, knowing the audience of the organization is the most important thing.

At the CNY chapter of Make-A-Wish, social media is frequently used. As previously mentioned, one intern is assigned specifically each semester to manage and track each social media account. MAW CNY implements its online image through its Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube accounts.

As a more visual platform, Instagram is used by Make-A-Wish primarily to feature pictures of wish kids enjoying their wish, pictures of donors and photos of

fundraising events. The Instagram account is the perfect way for MAW CNY to truly illustrate to its publics what the wish granting process looks like and the hard work that is behind it. The use of this page builds relationships with its publics by putting a face to a name and painting a profile of the children who are receiving wishes. As is often the case, being able to see the individual whose life you are impacting makes it mean that much more. The Instagram account is also used to inform the public about any upcoming events; a flyer/ campaign poster can be directly uploaded to the page without any added text and still be just as efficient. I find that in today's world, visual representations are much more powerful than information distributed by text, and I always look for an organization's Instagram account first before searching for any other platform. Therefore, I find it important that Make-A-Wish operates on Instagram in order to reach out to its younger audience in a way that it does not usually target. Although Make-A-Wish usually targets older, affluent adults who are willing to make a contribution, I feel like the MAW mission is one that can be backed and supported by all age groups.

The Twitter handle for MAW CNY operates in a similar way. Since text posts are limited to 140 characters, they must be concise and most link to an outside source or photo. However, this platform is used in a more newsworthy fashion. For example, Make-A-Wish often retweets articles posted in the local newspaper or links to appearances made on local television shows. Whereas the Instagram account gives a more casual, "behind the scenes," type of feel, the Twitter account operates in a more business manner. The overall purpose of the Twitter account is to raise awareness, and this goal is apparent on the CNY chapter's page. Twitter gives Make-A-Wish the added ability to engage with its publics individually through the reply burron. Supporters who

want to voice their thanks or showcase their involvement in a recent event may be retweeted or responded to by Make-A-Wish, which once again builds the relationship between an organization and its public. When an organization takes the time to speak one on one with individuals in the external environment, they are seen as less of an operation and more of a human entity that people can connect with.

The Facebook page for Make-A-Wish serves as a basis for its other social media. Today, a company without a Facebook page is almost unheard of. Having a Facebook allows Make-A-Wish to consolidate all of its information into one central area for people to turn to. For example, in the “about” section, Make-A-Wish lists its mission statement, a brief company overview, links to its other social media accounts, and contact information. This effectively serves as a type of “second website” for the organization in which they can post everything and anything having to do with their wish-granting and mission. Another major benefit of Facebook is its ability to create online events that represent the ones occurring in real life. This is beneficial for an organization such as MAW that holds close to one hundred events each year. The event option allows the organization to receive a general idea of how many people are expected to attend an event, as well as gives the ability to send out reminders as the date draws closer. Of course, there is also the general ability to post photos and comments on a Facebook page, and for the public to post directly to the organization’s page as well. Having one large conglomerate page of posts creates a sense of community for Make-A-Wish and its supporters since anyone can comment on any post that they would like.

The Pinterest account of MAW CNY is perhaps my favorite social media outlet. Having a creative mind myself, I love to discover new ideas, which is the idea behind

Pinterest itself. The Pinterest boards that Make-A-Wish has created allow a way to organize ideas for different aspects of the wish process. There is a board specifically created to collect wish stories, a board dedicated to volunteers and supporters, a board solely filled with ideas for wish announcement events, and many others dedicated to ideas for the various wishes that kids request. For example, in the “Wish Announcements” board, MAW has collected a wide variety of cupcake recipes that could be used for almost any occasion. Included are cupcake designs decorated to look like a baseball for the sport enthusiast, pink sparkle cupcakes for the Disney princess, turtle cupcakes for the animal lover, and the list goes on and on. Often when wish announcements are made, the MAW team puts together a small party with sweets and goodies such as these based off of the overall theme of the designated wish; therefore, a Pinterest board is the perfect way to keep these ideas together until they are used. A Pinterest page is a perfect example of interacting with publics because that is the essence of the sit. Pins are meant to be shared from one page to another, with ideas swapped between individuals who share the same interests.

Lastly, Make-A-Wish CNY uses a YouTube channel to complete the realm of its social media. This channel is a more in-depth version of its Instagram account, offering videos instead of photos. The YouTube channel is a new addition to the multitude of social media platforms that the organization uses, but so far its three videos center around specific wish children and follow their journey from announcement to wish granting. The videos specifically illustrate the day that each wish announcement was made and the child’s reaction to having a themed party thrown in his/her honor. Having a place where individuals can watch a wish come to life really works to engage the Make-A-Wish

community and attract continuous support. Seeing the joy on a child's face when they find out that he/she are a wish recipient is the best way to encourage further donations in order to keep this happy tradition alive, which is essentially the goal of the PR department.

The CNY chapter of Make-A-Wish seems to be effectively using their various social media platforms. After speaking with Dyana, I know that there is a movement to add Snapchat to the growing list to provide live coverage of the event, but I do not believe that this is necessary just yet. Although events are beginning to become more popular with the creation of the Snapchat Story, and certain organizations are beginning to use the app as well, Snapchat is still in mainly the individual stage. Especially since Dyana noted that her interns feel overwhelmed with the volume of social media posts as it is, I think adding another platform to manage right now would not be a smart decision.

The addition of a Flickr page might, however, be beneficial for Make-A-Wish. During my research, I found that many other chapters across the country use Flickr to manage their photos, and this would not require much excess work since photos are already taken at every event. By having a Flickr account, MAW CNY could upload all of its pictures from events onto social media, instead some like Instagram currently allows. This would also allow the organization to categorize photos into albums and refer back to them quickly if ever needed.

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Appendix