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Marketing Strategy: Hanson Howard Gallery

I. Introduction and Overview of Plan

The Hanson Howard Gallery was established in 1979 by Judy Howard, and is the longest existing contemporary art gallery in Ashland, OR. The Gallery was created to serve as an artistic space to showcase local artists, as well as serving as a cultural center for the Southern Oregon region.

The goal of this marketing strategy is to increase its social media following to gain further exposure for the Gallery and its artists, to create a more personable and approachable atmosphere for locals and tourists, and to increase individual sales annually.

To accomplish these goals, I propose that the Hanson Howard Gallery implement the following marketing strategies: increase their presence on social media with the use of a consistent posting schedule that offers an interactive element, a direct mail/email plan, and a guerrilla marketing plan to be used in conjunction with city events such as the Festival of Lights, and the Fourth of July Festival. If implemented properly, these marketing strategies could lead to creating a more approachable and personal atmosphere for the Gallery, which could then in turn lead to higher levels of exposure, as well as future sales.

II. Situational Analysis

Economic Scan

The City of Ashland, and its local business economic health relies heavily on the annual tourist population. This tourist population is one of the main targeted audiences for the Hanson Howard Gallery. The health of the annual tourist population directly impacts the number of potential visitors to the gallery, and thus, also directly impacts the number of potential art sales. That is not to say that all art purchase are made by tourists, however they do make up the vast majority of them.

Local, State and National Support

The gallery is a member of the local Chamber of Commerce, and the Ashland Galleries Association, which provides local exposure, especially to visiting tourist populations. However, the gallery does not receive additional state or national financial support as it is a self-sustaining, individually owned, for-profit business.

Organizational Economic Past and Present

Are there other economic factors that influence the organization's situation (touring trends, competition and other outside variables) The overall health of the organization has been tested, tried, and proven true. As aforementioned, the Hanson Howard Gallery was first established in 1979, and is Ashland's oldest locally owned and operated art gallery. In 2011, the gallery was forced to relocate from their original location. Prior to the move, the gallery was located at 82 N. Main Street, which was a highly visible location also situated right next to the popular,

local-favorite restaurant called Thai Pepper. Thai Pepper expanded their business, and had purchased the building, including the space that the Hanson Howard Gallery was renting. At first, this move posed a threat for the gallery's overall financial health. The cost of relocating, the duration of closure while the new gallery was set-up, as well as overall visibility and exposure concerns had the potential to be detrimental to the gallery. However, this move has proved to be a successful one. Now located at 89 Oak Street in downtown Ashland, the new location offers more exhibition space, as well as being located next door to another successful and local-favorite restaurant, the Standing Stone Restaurant & Brewery. The gallery is now also located closer to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, which draws most of their targeted audience and demographic population.

Demographic Scan

As of 2013, Ashland's population is 20,713 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). According to the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, "Southern Oregon University is located in Ashland with over 6,500 students with faculty and administration numbering over 750. This sets the stage for a highly educated workforce and population, an engaged citizenry and a knowledgeable public" (Ashland Chamber; The Economic Base, 2014). As a result of being a University town, 56.5% of citizens over the age of 25 have Bachelors Degrees. When compared to the state average of 29.2%, and national average of 28.5%, it is undeniable that Ashland is a highly educated community with high levels of arts engagement opportunities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). For the Hanson Howard Gallery, this generates a demographic base of local well-educated individuals. As previously noted, Ashland is home to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, which is

a major source of tourism to Southern Oregon year round. According to the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, the city of Ashland receives on average 350,000 tourists each year (Ashland: Doing Business Guide, p. 56). For the gallery, this means that not only is the local population highly educated, but also depends on the tourist population. Generally speaking, the audience that attends OSF are also highly educated and have a vested interest in the arts.

Cultural Scan

The general culture of the organization can be described as aesthetically driven, and artistically based. Owner Judy Howard is a reputable artist herself, and seeks out artists who produce artwork that she believes in. She has a keen eye for design, but can also be somewhat discretionary when it comes to the artists that she will accept to promote within her gallery (Telephone conversation with Judy Howard, October 16th, 2014).

Southern Oregon offers numerous arts participation opportunities, including Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Peter Britt Festivals, the Southern Oregon University's Schneider Museum of Art, the Ashland Independent Film Festival, the Oregon Cabaret Theater, along with roughly 16 other art galleries in Ashland alone, and nearly 50 local wineries. This wealth of cultural opportunities draws a specific demographic to the region of the well-educated, well-established, arts appreciative individual.

Ashland is also home to Mt. Ashland, which is open seasonally to skiers and snowboarders. Although Mt. Ashland is about a 45 minute drive from the city center, it attracts its own tourist population. Mt. Ashland is the only skiable mountains on the I-5 corridor in Oregon, as all other skiable mountains lie farther inland. Aside from skiing, Southern Oregon is also home to a

wealth of outdoor recreational activities including hiking, camping, fishing, boating, white water rafting, and rock climbing. Along with recreational activities, Ashland is home to over 80 fine dining establishments, varying from French cuisine to Asian Fusion. The downtown area of Ashland also has its own thriving retail community. Shops are unique, with no two being the same. There is a individualistic quality when it comes to the shopping in Ashland as “stores carefully select their merchandise to offer their customers something different than can be found in chain store shopping” (Ashland Chamber; Shopping, 2014).

Influential Cultural Elements

Engagement and participation in the arts is a contagious affair, especially in Ashland. After a day of shopping, wine tasting, fine dining, and a play at OSF, it is nearly impossible to not visit at least one of the many art galleries downtown. Ashland offers an all-inclusive opportunity to participate in several various art forms. Live theater performances, film, culinary, fine wine, as well as visual arts encapsulate the arts participation experiences in Ashland. Being located two blocks from arguably the biggest artistic and cultural center in Ashland (the Oregon Shakespeare Festival), the Hanson Howard Gallery is privy to the hundreds of tourists that flood the area on any given day.

Technology and Hanson Howard

The Hanson Howard Gallery has very little engagement in the technology culture. They do have their own website and a Facebook Fan Page, but that covers the extent of their technological coverage. The gallery’s website is very rudimentary and offers very little promotional

information. The main page of the site is a chronological list of exhibitions, starting with the current show and then on to previous shows. There is no promotional information on upcoming shows at this time. The site does not offer any navigational information, or for that matter, very much information about the gallery itself except for a small overview on the about/contact page. As of March 12, 2015, Hanson Howard Gallery's Facebook page has not been updated since July 25, 2014.

Other Environmental Elements

There doesn't appear to be too many governing political factors that affect the Hanson Howard Gallery, other than city ordinances that have been previously established. The City of Ashland does have a law where all murals (both on public and private property) must have prior approval by the Public Art Commission (City of Ashland, Public Art Mural Packet, 2014). This can affect the types of artwork shown in the public eye within the City of Ashland. For example, if an artist wants to paint a mural on the side of the gallery, the design must first be approved by PAC before the mural can be created. This can lead to limits in artistic freedom for artists represented at the gallery.

SWOC Analysis

Cultural Product

Strengths

- Art sold is mostly regional to the Pacific Northwest which supports local artists
- There is an allure to the purchaser to buy art while on vacation, not just for aesthetic value but for also a souvenir/sentimental value.

Weaknesses

- Not all art is easily transported. This can cause concern for tourist who are unable to return home with the art, or are unable to afford the shipping and packaging of the work as well.

Opportunities

- There is the opportunity to seek out other artists from other areas, nationally and internationally.
- There is an untapped opportunity at the local University. SOU has an incredibly talented pool of students that are creating all forms of artwork (drawing, painting, sculpture, jewelry and metalwork)
- The Hanson Howard Gallery leans more towards exhibiting artists that have a longstanding reputation as already successful artists. This could be expanded to include artists new to the art scene.

Challenges

- Regardless of the types of artwork exhibited at the gallery, there will be a large audience that will not come to the gallery, based on their preconceived notion that they do not “belong” in a gallery space, or that they do not know, understand, or appreciate art.

Pricing

Strengths

- Entrance to the gallery is free for the general public. Even those who are unable, or uninteresting in purchasing art at that time, can still go into the gallery and enjoy the current exhibition.

Weaknesses

- Price per artwork varies, and is subject to the pricing of the artist and the commissions that the gallery will acquire upon purchase.

Opportunities

- The gallery could invest in their own poster prints for purchase at a competitive price. Posters could be specific to the gallery, or to any particular arts. This could increase revenue sales, as well as the number of sales on any given day. Posters would also be easily transportable by traveling tourists. Instead of a delicate sculpture to carry home, or the added cost of shipping, posters could easily fit into a suitcase.

Challenges

- Pricing for art is always subject for individual speculation. Determining the value of the art is not always an easily accomplished feat. There are some artists who price their work on the high end of the spectrum, and therefore, limit its sale potential.

Place (Access)

Strengths

- Hanson Howard Gallery is located in the highly visible and accessible location in downtown Ashland. It neighbors a successful and popular restaurant, which naturally draws people to its general location.

Weaknesses

- The gallery only has one site.
- One must physically be in Ashland to visit the gallery.
- Parking in Ashland can be difficult.

Opportunities

- The gallery could take a more active role with their website, featuring virtual and video tours.
- The gallery could invest in eCommerce Sales, extending their art sales opportunities worldwide.

Challenges

- Hanson Howard Gallery is one of 17 art galleries in Ashland. There is a high level of competition, where all galleries target the OSF tourist population.

Promotional Efforts

Strengths

- Hanson Howard Gallery participates in the City of Ashland: First Friday Art Walk.
- The gallery does use their own webpage and Facebook Fan Page for promotional efforts.

Weaknesses

- The webpage does not offer an extended amount of information.
- The Facebook Fan Page hasn't been updated since July 25th, 2014.
- The gallery relies on other second party affiliates for exposure (Ashland Gallery Association and the Ashland Chamber of Commerce).

Opportunities

- The gallery could feature themselves on tourist webpages such as TripAdvisor.
- The gallery could partner with restaurants around town, exhibiting art for public display (previously, this had been an arrangement that the Hanson Howard Gallery and Thai Pepper had made before the gallery was forced to relocate).
- The gallery could take a more active and vested interest in social media.
- The gallery could create a free pamphlet that would be available at the Tourist Information Center, local hotels, any are where else tourist information is made available to the public, highlighting current shows, artists, and the gallery itself.

Challenges

- Additional collateral does take time to produce, as well as money.
- Additional collateral might require additional staff to be able to complete.

III. Scheme

Social Media Plan:

Hanson Howard Gallery is currently lacking a strong presence on any sort of social media platform. They do have a Facebook fan page, but as of March 12, 2015, they only have 150

followers. They have no known presence on Instagram or Twitter. I propose that the Hanson Howard Gallery create both a Twitter account, and an Instagram account to increase visibility and to reach a more diverse audience. On their Facebook account, the last post that was made was on July 25, 2014. The Gallery has not used social media as a promotional tool to be able to promote their current and upcoming exhibits, thus resulting in a lost opportunity.

I propose that the Hanson Howard Gallery implement a social media strategy to promote their exhibit openings to gain more exposure, and to increase their social media following. Strategies and schedules could be implemented as follows:

Three Weeks Prior to Opening Show:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Facebook	Intro to Show				Opening Recept.		
Twitter		Intro to Show		Opening Recept.			
Instagram			Sneak Peek Photo			Sneak Peek Video	

Two Weeks Prior to Opening Show:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Facebook	Artist Promo				Opening Recept.		
Twitter		Artist Promo		Opening Recept.			
Instagram			Sneak Peek Video			Sneak Peek Photo	

Opening Week:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Facebook		Opening Recept.		Opening Recept.	Opening Recept.	Recept. Reflect	
Twitter	Opening Recept.			Opening Recept.	Opening Recept.	Recept. Reflect	
Instagram			Sneak Peek Video	Sneak Peek Photo	Sneak Peek Photo	Recept. Photo	

Week 1 of Show:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Facebook	Artist Promo				Show Promo		
Twitter		Artist Promo		Show Promo			
Instagram			Gallery Video			Gallery Photo	

Along with implementing this social media strategy, I would recommend that the Hanson Howard Gallery promote their exhibits through the use of Like/Share incentives. Hanson Howard Gallery is currently located next door to a popular brewery. If the Gallery does not do so already, I would recommend that they establish a partnership between the two locations. The brewery could receive art on loan for display purposes, and the Gallery could receive incentives to share promotional events with the brewery. Perhaps, the Gallery could also do cross

promotional events with Standing Stone, offering a chance to win a free *Beer Flight* or *Dinner for Two* if followers Like/Share their post.

Email/Direct Mail:

According to the information available on their website, the Gallery does not have any kind of monthly news letter, or any other kind of direct mail for their clients or community members who are interested in the upcoming and current events of the Gallery. Although direct mail can present an additional expense to the organization, there are times when direct mail is more effective for the consumer than another email in their inbox. I recommend that the Gallery utilize direct mail to their new and existing clients to promote their new exhibits, and to offer a current glimpse on what activities are going on in the Gallery. This would in turn create a more personable image for the Gallery, and to offer a level of emotional connectivity, approachability, and transparency to their clients.

If the direct mailing option proves to be too expensive of an investment to the Gallery, email could be used in place of a direct mailer. However, it would be wise to note that with the ease of email, and its cost effectiveness, it is easy to overlook when email is used too often for promotional efforts. I recommend that the Gallery use email only once per week during promotional periods for exhibit openings (depending on the duration of the show), and perhaps once more as a mid-exhibition reminder, and one last email towards the end of the show. Since email does not cost the Gallery any additional funds, it can be easy to overuse this strategy, and overwhelm their mailing list with too many updates.

Ideally, a combination of both direct mail and email would be used.

Guerrilla Marketing:

In addition to the social media schedule, and the use of email and direct mail, I recommend that the Gallery implement a guerrilla marketing strategy to be used in conjunction with large scale city events, such as the Festival of Lights in November, and the Fourth of July Festival. During these events, the entirety of downtown Ashland is shut down to vehicle traffic, and pedestrian traffic is at its highest levels. I recommend that the Gallery draw upon this opportunity to strategically place unobtrusive displays throughout downtown to gain more exposure for the Gallery. For example, the Gallery may choose to use an ornate frame that is attached to a stand of some sort. With the picturesque nature of Ashland, these frames could be positioned around town that when looked through from a specific viewpoint, the frame would capture and highlight a view of one of the sights of Ashland. A *Stand Here* notation of some kind would have to be placed in front of the frame so that viewers could find the optimal viewpoint. This would create a sense of a physical, real-life work of art. Participants may also be invited to stand behind the frame for a photo opportunity, to pose in front of these selected views of Ashland. Participants could also be encouraged to post their photos on social media, using a variety of preselected hashtags. On the frame itself, information about the Gallery (address, contact information, etc.) would be noted. Locations for these frames could include sites downtown, around the Shakespeare Theater, or also Lithia Park.

Art galleries are often seen as static and non-participatory. However, with this initiative, the Gallery would create an element of participation for the viewer, allowing them to interact with the real-life artwork, and view the Gallery as being inviting and personable.

IV. Implementation

The Social Media plan and schedule could be used for any of the upcoming shows and exhibits.

Time needed to implement this strategy would be rather minimal, however, it would be necessary to have the personnel resources to be able to stick with this schedule. When researching the Hanson Howard Gallery's existing social media presence, I was able to come across Judy Howard's personal Facebook page. As previously noted, the Gallery's business page has not been updated since July 24, 2014. However, Judy Howard updates her personal Facebook page with the same elements that I am suggesting be implemented on the business page. I do not believe that there would be a huge increase in the personnel time devoted to social media, but it does have the potential to be easily overlooked and forgotten about. The technology needed to implement this strategy is already utilized by the Gallery, and therefore would not have an additional cost for materials and supplies (with the exception of opening the additional free social media sites).

Direct Mail and email does have the potential to be more time consuming than the social media strategy. There would be a higher cost and personnel time devoted to creating a physical newsletter and postage costs. However, if the Gallery were to use an outside printing company, the cost of postage and time spent envelope stuffing would be greatly decreased. The personnel time used to stuff and address envelopes would then be freed, allowing that personnel time to be used towards other things. Email would be a far more cost efficient strategy, but as previously noted, the effectiveness of email can be compromised if this strategy is used too often. If the Gallery floods the inboxes of their clients on a daily basis, emails will begin to go unopened, or worse, allocated to the junk mail folders.

The guerrilla marketing strategy would have a very little cost associated with its implementation, however, careful consideration must be made to ensure that the Gallery does not come into controversy with the City of Ashland. Ashland is a town notorious for its lack of advertising. Businesses are under strict guidelines as to how large their storefront signs can be, and even large chain stores (notably fast food restaurants) must scale down their signs to smaller sizes. According to the City of Ashland, Municipal Code 6.04.160 Evidence of Doing Business, the ordinance states:

In the trial or hearing on any alleged violation of this Chapter, evidence of advertisements by newspapers, radio, television, internet or other medium or by signs displayed for public view, that a business activity was being conducted within the City, including expressly or impliedly offering to sell goods, services or lodging to the public or any segment thereof, shall constitute prima facie evidence that the defendant was conducting a business activity within the City on the day or date during which such representations were made (Ord 3087, 2013).

The Gallery would have to make sure that this guerrilla marketing plan would not interfere with this ordinance by presenting the Gallery as an open art show, without representing the intent to sell. Sales may be a trickle down effect of this strategy, but that would not be the main focus of the frame display. This strategy could also be represented as a sponsorship, rather than an advertisement. The frames could denote a slogan of “*Picture Perfect Ashland: Sponsored by Hanson Howard Gallery*” instead of the direct business promotion. Costs for this strategy could be variable, including the cost of the frame, stand, and additional signage and collateral. However, this could be a one time purchase that would have the ability to be used countless times for a variety of occasions.

V. Evaluation Plan

With the implementation of these aforementioned strategies, there is the potential to track the results through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. If the amount of social media followers increases, then that increase can be charted and evaluated. If the gallery sets strategic goals such as “we would like to increase our social media following by 25 followers in six weeks,” the progress made towards that goal could be evaluated. Qualitatively, followers would be encouraged to write reviews on their experience on their Facebook page, Like/Share photos, or comment on posts. If the number of followers continues to rise after the implementation of this strategy, the success of the schedule would then be labeled as successful. If the number of followers stays the same or declines, other marketing strategies should be looked at to increase visibility and exposure.

Direct Mail/Email could also have a quantitative evaluation, noting how many returning purchasing clients they have to the Gallery. Clients may be asked at the time of purchase what brings them into the Gallery that day. If they say “I received an email about the new show,” or “I received the newsletter and wanted to see what was new,” a collection of these answers could then be compiled to see how effective the email and direct mail has been.

The guerrilla marketing strategy effectiveness could also be analyzed as both qualitative and quantitative. Data could be collected on visitors during the times that the standing frames were up in the public, by asking visitor what brought them in. If new visitors referenced seeing the frames, then a tally could be conducted, seeing how many new visitors came into the gallery from this strategy alone. Qualitatively, if new visitors come in talking about the frame project,

then by conducting short interviews by asking how their experience was with the frames could be compiled as a qualitative approach. This strategy would hopefully generate word-of-mouth promotion, however, it is difficult to directly gauge its effectiveness unless the participants visit the Gallery.

Resources

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