



Washington Redtails Marketing Plan

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I. Introduction & Overview of Plan

Organizational History

The Washington Redskins, which shall be called “**The Washington Redtails**” for the duration of this plan, is a professional football of the National Football League (NFL). The team was **founded in Boston**, Massachusetts, in 1933 as the Boston Braves, and owner George Preston Marshall [changed its name](#) to the Redskins in 1936 just prior to its move to the Washington, DC, area. Unofficially, the name “Redskins” was chosen in honor of its then coach, William Dietz, who himself claimed Native American ancestry. Dietz had also recruited a number of Native American players to the team when it was still based in Boston as the Braves, so it was thought a fitting name and one that would differentiate the team from the Boston Braves baseball team. The organization was founded as a **professional athletic organization** to provide entertainment for the public. Today, it has two nonprofits under its umbrella that address various social issues in the region and nationally. This plan will primarily focus on the rebranding of the organization as it would impact its **football team**.

Main Goals

1. Improve Organizational Image

The organization's image is increasingly negative to those who are not fans because its current name is considered by many to be a racial slur. This is a deterrent to attracting potential fans. Changing the name to the **Washington Redtails** would accomplish several indirect objectives. It would **show respect** to those whom the current name offends; it would **honor the Tuskegee Airmen** who fought in World War II who were nicknamed the Redtails; it would refocus the name from one of a racial slur to that of **honoring military veterans** and reinforce the team's existing connection with veterans; and it would **inspire patriotic sentiments** that fit well with the team's association with the nation's capital.

2. Retain the Team's Core Fan Base

Rebranding the team as the Washington Redtails runs a great **risk** of alienating the current fan base. Surveys have shown the majority of fans do not want the team name changed, even though the number of those who do not want it to change has decreased. There is no doubt there will be **resistance** from the fans which could lead to them no longer supporting the team. However, using the strategies outlined below will help mitigate revenue loss and **retain fan loyalty**.

3. Expand the Fan Base to Include a Younger Demographic

The team's current name is considered by many to be culturally insensitive and has become the subject of much litigation and bad publicity. This in addition to a losing team has not encouraged **new fans** from the younger more educated demographic spanning those in their early 20s to mid 30s in particular to become apart of the organization's community. This demographic would be a primary target of the plan because the current fan base is older and does not ensure a **sustainable source of revenue** as it ages out.

Proposed Marketing Strategies

Three primary strategies have been chosen as part of the rebranding campaign. They are:

- 1. Integrating Vine into Redtails Twitter posts**
- 2. Cause-related marketing partnering with the National Veterans Foundation**
- 3. Direct marketing to current season ticket holders**

These strategies will be used so that **each is integrated** with the other to accomplish three main objectives of recreating the team's identity, **maintaining** fan loyalty, and **expanding** its fan base into the younger generations that will **minimize** loss of profits.

II. Situational Analysis

The NFL is an organization that practices what has become known as "[sports socialism](#)" because profits from each season are divided equally between its the 32 teams. These evenly split profits are revenue generated from multi-year network deals, merchandise and sponsorship deals signed by the league as a whole. **Profits** that are not split evenly are stadium box seats, of which the local team retains 100% of earnings, gate revenue, or ticket sales, 60% of which are kept by the local team and 40% taken by the visiting team, local television and radio contracts and sponsorship deals signed by the local team.

The NFL does not disclose its earnings as all but one of its teams, the Green Bay Packers of Wisconsin, are privately held. Because the Green Bay Packers is a publically held team, it must disclose all of its earnings each

year, and based upon their earnings the rest of the league's profits can be estimated. The Packers's revenue for 2013 was \$312,500,000. Based upon this figure, the [projected revenue](#) of the NFL for 2014 is \$10 billion. As of 2014, Washington's NFL Team is the third most valuable team in the league, valued at \$1.5 billion.

Due to the support of the NFL's shared earnings policy, the location of Washington's NFL Team in one of the **wealthiest regions** of the country, and its **loyal fans**, the team has largely gone untouched by the economic downturn. Its fan base is undeterred by the team's losing history and the team seems to be financially resilient with sound financial stewardship. Were the team to change its name to something not offensive and begin to win, it could **increase its fan base** and revenue even more.

The **culture** of the board and organization is unknown. However, some deductions may be made based upon the makeup of the organization's administration. The owner of the Washington NFL Team is a white male, 49 years of age. The ownership group is comprised of three men, all white and all multi-millionaires. The group of Executive Directors consists of seven white males, two black males, and one white woman who is the Executive Director of the organization's nonprofit Foundation.

There are several cultural elements that **encourage participation**. There is significant local and regional pride in the team and it provides a prevalent sense of identity for many people. There are numerous opportunities for **social engagement** amongst fans such as at watch parties held in bars and tailgating on game days, where fans go so far as to wear costumes such as Native American headdresses. There also seems to be some **reconnection** with youth in these actions.

The **leisure trend** that most influences the organization is that of football season and there do not seem to be any popular culture elements that influence its offerings. In regards to technology, the organization has fully

embraced it and connects with the public on every major social media platform. Its website is dynamic and almost overly full of information regarding the team, sponsorship advertisements, and promotions.

The organization's leadership is **politically well connected**, yet seems to be socially and politically tone deaf, given their resistance to changing the team's name as public support for keeping it continues to erode. Remaining the Redskins has not been a significant **political liability** for them thus far in that it has not affected tickets sales or hurt them in their political relationships. However, Congressional letter taking the position that they should change their name and the newly elected Mayor of the District of Columbia, Muriel Bowser will not allow the team back into the District unless they change their name.

SWOC Analysis

The **strengths** the Washington NFL Team has lies in its dedicated fan base, long standing traditions among its fans, and lucrative business. Its **weaknesses** are that, traditionally, it is a losing team, it has an offensive and alienating name, and its owner is in denial about the offensive of the team's current name. **Opportunities** for the team lie in changing the name to appeal to a younger, more liberal and wealthy demographic, also improving its image as a socially conscious organization. **Two challenges** would be that while momentum is building for the team to change its name, the [majority of fans](#) do not want it changed.

There are several **strengths in the pricing** strategy currently employed by the organization for their tickets. Special deals are offered for the military, season or single game tickets may be purchased, and package deals are available. A **weakness** would be the price of parking, which for standard vehicles is \$46.00 or \$57.50 per vehicle. Seasonal tickets are expensive as well, ranging from \$690-\$1390, which may be a deterrent for those earning \$35,000 to \$75,000 a year. **Opportunities** for pricing would be in regards to information for individual ticket prices that could be listed on the website but

are currently not shown. A challenge would be competition from other websites that offer individual game tickets starting at \$7.00 each.

The organization has many strengths in regards to **place and access**. All home games are played at FedEx Field which seats 79,000 fans and has 241 private suits available to be leased by corporations. HD video screens are placed throughout the stadium's walkways so people can see the game at all times and the venue provides parking for buses and RVs. There is also **access** for those with disabilities and the field is metro-accessible in addition to being located near a major highway. A final strength is that parking can be paid for ahead of time online. A **weakness** lies outside of the control of the organization in that it can be difficult for people to drive to FedEx Field because of high volumes of traffic that infrastructure cannot accommodate, road construction, or getting lost because of the complexity of the roadway system. I am not sure of opportunities as the stadium is accessible by mass transit, public transportation, and private transportation. A **challenge** would be that other professional teams are easier to reach via public transportation because they are more centrally located in the District of Columbia.

The organization does well in having a very strong **presence** on the radio, television, internet, and social media. It has multiple deals with other businesses such as restaurants and hotels, tries to appeal to women through social issues, and has a strong focus on supporting and accommodating the military. Weaknesses would be that the fans are not always welcoming, the **team name** is not welcoming, and ownership seems to be insensitive to these issues. Not all efforts made by the ownership to address the insensitiveness of the name seem sincere. There is not much effort on behalf of the organization to **appeal** to the younger demographic in the region and the team does not win much. Some opportunities for the organization are to be more inclusive of other demographics and offer family plans and kids' discounts. There are challenges in the environment, being that the organization cannot alienate current fans, the NFL culture itself deters younger and liberal fans from wanting to participate, recent

issues of violence involving NFL players from other teams, and the need for this team to win.

The **targeted audience** for the athletic side of the enterprise is any and everyone. Of all DC's sports teams, they have one of the predominantly [older demographics](#) according to a survey conducted in 2009. The same survey also showed their fan base to be 56% male. This parallels closely to another [set of demographics](#) for the National Football League (NFL) from 2013 in which 60% of fans were male, 76% white, 39% over the age of 59, with incomes between \$35,000 and \$75,000. It is [commonly known](#) that the team is not attracting the **younger demographic** in the region. As for the foundations, each have a very specific targeted demographic, but no detailed statistics to demonstrate which demographics are actually benefitting from their work.

III. Marketing Scheme

There are five phases of this marketing plan that incorporate all three strategies so they work together. Details of each strategy are given followed by the roll out of each phase.

1. Integration of Vine into Redtails Twitter posts

Integrating Vine into Redtails tweets will create a more dynamic, interactive, and participatory social media presence. It will connect with the younger demographic that uses this social media platform and can be used as a way to promote the other two marketing strategies. Current fans will be encouraged to use Vine as a way to participate in the direct mail sweepstakes to be discussed. It will also be used for the cause-related campaign, giving team players, owners and cheerleader; enlisted military; and veterans an opportunity to make personal connections with fans and engage them in the campaign. The social media manager will tweet followers individually to engage them in the campaign.

Actions, Messages, and Methods needed for implementation

- Creation of hashtags #RedVine, #RedRealEstate, #RedSpring, and #RedCares, #RedGear that will be used for each separate campaign. #RedVine is the general hashtag that can be paired with the other two or used for other Vine Tweets. (The full name Redtails will not be used because this will be implemented before the brand change is announced.)
- The message is succinct as each hashtag is easily identified with its corresponding promotion.
- Each hashtag will be included on the appropriate mailer in the direct mail campaign.
- Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest posts will all use the appropriate hashtags. They will also be displayed prominently on google+ and the team's Internet homepage.
- #Redtails will be used the day of the announcement with the launch of the team's new Twitter account.
- Media manager tweets individual followers to engage them.

2. Cause-Related Marketing with National Veterans Foundation

The choice to run a cause-related campaign with the National Veterans Foundation is logical for several reasons. The Washington Redtails are named in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen who fought in World War II, it inspires patriotism as the team is associated with the nation's capital of Washington, DC, the military is a central part of American identity at home and abroad, and it creates an emotional reason for people to remain loyal to the team because they will also be supporting an organization dedicated to improving the lives of military veterans. There will be many fans whose immediate reaction to rebranding is to no longer support the team. This campaign would give many of them a significant reason to remain loyal because they would feel as if they could not turn their backs on the people who served their country. Additionally, the football team already offers promotions to military personnel so this would be a natural extension of their present work. This cause-related campaign would then seem legitimate and

sincere. The goal will be to raise \$4.5 million dollars for NVF, requiring at least 45,000 subscribers for the season.

Actions, Messages, and Methods needed for implementation

- Phases 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 of the campaign will have 10% of all season ticket sales for the following season would be donated to the NVF. Phase 5 will have 15% of all ticket sales donated to the NVF.
- Partnership with the National Veterans Foundation (NVF) needs to be finalized
- Coordination with NVF on using #RedVine and #RedCares on its own Twitter account to promote the partnership
- Have veterans who have received NVF support create Vines and tweet them on their own accounts using the designated hashtags. Vines will be testimonials or short clips of how NVF has helped them.
- Team owners, players, and cheerleaders will also create testimonial Vines about why they support NVF on their personal or team Twitter accounts and use the designated hashtags.

3. Direct Marketing to Current Season Ticket Holders

Direct marketing will be used to engage current season ticket holders and maintain their loyalty. Mailers in the earlier phases of the marketing plan will be designed so they include exclusive offers to subscribers, encouraging them to purchase non-refundable season passes months before the rebranding announcement is made. This will help negate loss of revenue. Subscribers who purchase season tickets will receive different mailers encouraging them to buy merchandise in Phase 3, and inform them of free entry into Spring Training and the half-time show of the Season Opener announced in Phase 5.

Actions, Messages, and Methods needed for implementation

- Direct mailers will need to be created for each of the five phases with their respective promotions. Mailers sent before the rebranding

announcement will maintain the current logo, fonts, and color schemes.

- Mailers should be 8.5”x11” tri-fold, full color, double sided, and printed on a thicker weight paper, with glossy finish.
- Each mailer will incorporate the respective hashtags to encourage participation through Twitter.
- Each mailer will refer subscribers to the website for purchasing and enrollment in special offers.
- The look of all mailers should be dynamic and eye catching. They should communicate excitement in each promotion and feature people directly involved in the cause-related campaign so there is a human element.
- The first cause-related mailer should feature a team player and a veteran photographed together. It should contain a special personalized message signed by both.

Phase 1: Cause-Related Campaign Launch & Holiday Promotion

November 1 – December 20

- Each subscriber will be automatically entered for a chance to win the Prime Real Estate Season Tailgate Package, including prime parking on the tailgating field for one season, one season’s supply of barbecue and fixin’s from Rockland’s BBQ, football field turf rug, two team lawn chairs, one tent, one table, one grill & grill supplies, team apron, and outdoor heater for all homegames.
- Each subscriber is encouraged to say who they will invite to their Prime Real Estate Tailgate through Vine, using #RedRealEstate and #RedCares
- Winner will be notified December 21st
- All buyers will receive a commemorative holiday ornament thanking them for their support of the NVF with each season ticket purchase.

Phase 2: Spring Training Promotion

March 1 – March 21

- In addition to supporting NVF, subscribers who purchase groups of two or more tickets are automatically entered for the Spring Training Party Bus and Passes. The bus will transport them to and from opening day of Spring Training and they will have free entry into Spring Training for that day.
- Subscribers are encouraged to use Vine to say who they would bring with them on the Party Bus, complete with food and beverages, to Spring Training with #RedCares, #RedVine, and #RedSpring
- 10% of ticket sales are still donated to NVF.

Phase 3: Discounted Merchandise

April 15 – May 15

- In addition to 10% of season ticket sales donated to NVF, 30% of all team merchandise bought during this time will be contributed as well. This will help move merchandise with the old brand.
- Direct mail will be sent and a #RedGear hashtag inviting fans to share vines of themselves sporting their favorite team gear. The message will be “Show us how you rock your gear!”

Phase 4: Teaser Campaign

June 7 – June 21

- #RedCares and #RedVine posts will increase in number as veterans give personal stories about how the campaign has already helped them.
- Campaign moves into the Teaser phase, preparing for rebranding announcement with veterans, players, and cheerleaders saying to stay tuned for important team news
- No direct mail needs to be sent during this phase.

Phase 5: Rebranding Announcement

June 25

- There will be a press conference in which Dan Snyder, the team's owner, will make the announcement and unveil the new logo.
- Team players and cheerleaders will be on hand, some wearing the new uniforms and others new Redtails merchandise, as well as the celebrities who will perform in the Season Opener Half Time Show at FedEx Field.
- Also present will be the Tuskegee Airmen, who are still living, and other military veterans
- Floyd "Shad" Meshad, founder of the National Veterans Foundation, who will announce the next big promotion of the cause-related campaign.
- Meshad will talk about the opportunity for fans to get 20% off all season and individual ticket purchases if they are bought in the next two weeks, with 20% of the pre-discounted price going to the National Veterans Foundation.
- Each purchase will include a gift package including a free limited edition Redtails t-shirt and visor, personal thank you note from Floyd Mashed and Dan Snyder, and autographed picture of a Redtails player.
- First-time purchasers will be entered for a drawing to win a home entertainment system with one year's subscription to Comcast Cable services.
- Returning subscribers will be entered for a chance to win season passes to their own private skybox at FedEx Field, complete with catering from Papa John's and Budweiser for every homegame.
- Another promotion will be a drawing for one fan and ten of his or her friends to ride the new Redtails Party Bus, complete with food and beverages, to and from all home games.
- Also, at the time of the press conference, the Washington Redtails website and social media channels will go live, officially replacing the Redskins.

- #RedTails will go live with continued stories from veterans, players, and cheerleaders about their excitement in honoring the Tuskegee Airmen
- #RedTails will be associated with Vines featuring surviving Tuskegee Airmen themselves telling how honored they are for being recognized by the team

Phase 6: Maintenance

June 25 – end of season

- Continued partnership with NVF through the duration of the season
- Redtails Party Bus drawings will happen for every home game for every regular and season ticket purchased.
- The Redtails will also host a veteran associated with NVF for each home game and have his or her story broadcast on the big screen as part of each halftime show.

Phase 7: Home Opener

TBD

- Stages will be set up around the tailgating field for live musical performances until kickoff
- An airplane replicating the ones flown by the Tuskegee Airmen will be on display outside the main gate of FedEx Field.
- Budweiser beers will be sold for \$2 each
- Papa John's pizza will be sold for \$2 a slice
- Kids will receive free Redtails t-shirts at the gate
- All fans will receive free Redtails towels at the gate
- The pre-game show will be performed by a headlining singer/musician who will also sing the National Anthem.
- A Super Bowl style half time show will be performed featuring popular singers and or rappers, with time given to honor the Tuskegee Airmen who will be in attendance.
- #RedtailsGameDay will be used to promote via social media

IV. Implementation

Calendar of dates for Phases

| | Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 | Phase 4 | Phase 5 | Phase 6 | Phase 7 |
|------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Date | Nov 1-Dec 20 | Mar 1-Mar 21 | Apr 15-May 15 | Jun 7-Jun 24 | Jun 25 | Jun 25-Dec 1 | TBD |
| Promotion | Holiday/Tailgate | Spring Training | Merchandise | Teaser | Rebranding Announcement | Maintenance | Home Opener |
| Hashtags | #RedRealEstate #RedCares #RedVine | #RedSpring #RedCares #RedVine | #RedGear #RedCares #RedVine | #RedCares #RedVine | #Redtails #RedCares #RedVine | #Redtails #RedCares #RedVine | #Redtails #RedtailsGameDay #RedCares #RedVine |

Example Calendar of Social Media Rollout Phase

| Oct 30 | Oct 31 | Nov 1 | Nov 2 | Nov 3 | Nov 4 | Nov 5 | Nov 6 |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|--|-------|
| Film Vine of 3 Players | Write tweets for each Vine | Tweet launch Vine of team owner | Tweet Vine of NVF Founder | Tweet Player Vine | Tweet Player Vine | Tweet Player Vine | Etc. |
| Film Vine of 1 Team Owner | Plan date & time each Vine will be tweeted | Media Manager tweets asking subscribers to share who they will tailgate w/ | Owner replies to tweets. Media manager individually tweets followers. | NVF replies to tweets. Media manager individually tweets followers. | Nov 3 Player replies to tweets. Media manager individually tweets followers. | Nov 4 Player replies to tweets. Media manager individually tweets followers. | Etc. |
| Coordinate Vine of NVF Founder | Write tweets advertising campaign | #RedRealEstate #RedCares #RedVine | #RedRealEstate #RedCares #RedVine | #RedRealEstate #RedCares #RedVine | Repeat #s | Repeat #s | Etc. |

This calendar can be modified and applied to other phases as well.

Resources

- Cost:

It has been estimated by marketing professionals that the rebranding effort would cost between \$10 and \$15 million dollars for design and implementation of the new brand at FedEx Field and the Ashburn, Virginia, office and practice complex.

- Personnel:

Direct Mail Campaign: The design and marketing team currently employed would manage the direct mail campaign.

Vine: The current social media manager would integrate Vine into Twitter. An additional responsibility would be coordinating veterans, players, and cheerleaders to use Vine and making sure the correct hashtags are used for the appropriate phases. As Vines are short, it is estimated 15 minutes would be needed on behalf of those making them. It is estimated replying to tweets would require about two hours per day. The social media manager's tweeting followers individually would require about 1 hour per day.

Cause-Related Campaign: Coordination of the cause-related campaign will require multiple talents. Legal contracts will be handled by the organization's attorney and promotions will be handled by marketing and public relations. The initial ask on behalf of the Redtails will need to be done by team ownership.

V. Evaluation Plan

Each phase will be quantitatively evaluated based upon revenue earned and fan participation via Vine. The targeted number of renewed subscriptions prior to the rebranding announcement is 95%. We want to increase new subscriptions by 30%. It is important that at least 90% of the \$4,500,000 be raised before the rebranding announcement. We want fan participation through Vine to be at 100 per day by the end of the third day of each phase.

Special codes used at the time of purchase will be included in the direct mailers to track how many subscribers respond to this strategy.

Qualitative evaluation will be based upon fan reactions in their Vines and how they portray themselves in them. Qualitative evaluation post-rebranding announcement will be done by gauging media and fan reactions. Surveys can be sent via email to subscribers and posted on the team's website asking for fan feedback as each phase progresses and fans are able to take advantage of the promotions.

VI. Recommendations

It is recommended another cause-related campaign be run the season following rebranding to help maintain good will with fans. Discounted merchandise with the new brand and give-aways should also continue to help fans build their wardrobe. Promotions such as "Wear your Redtails gear to the game and automatically win a family pizza party" should also be run the following season. Providing incentives such as these will entice people to attend games and give them reasons to wear the new brand.

It is also recommended the organization create a Controversy Plan. Talking points would be:

- The organization should communicate that it decided to change the name to honor the military veterans and identify itself more closely with the Nation's Capital.
- Season tickets are nonrefundable, however there will probably be fans who want their money back after the rebranding announcement. The organization should set up a website for these fans to sell their season passes directly to other patrons. That way, people can sell their tickets directly to other people and the organization will not lose money.
- The organization should communicate it had not officially decided to rebrand itself until a few months before the announcement.