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Communication Audit: CUBE

Overview

CUBE, located in the Campus Y, is the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's social innovation incubator. It is designed to help entrepreneurs help enact social change in the community. Students and faculty who wish to take on a social issue can apply to CUBE through a competitive process. If selected to participate in the program, participants take a yearlong class during which they are offered resources, working space, seed funding, and mentorship and coaching from other entrepreneurs. In the class, entrepreneurs work to build their business plans and build clientele bases in order to launch a final product at the end of the year. CUBE has launched around 45 ventures since it was established in 2012. CUBE currently has 12 new ventures for the 2019-2020 year. Business leaders can create for-profit or non-profit companies, however, their main goal is to help solve a social problem in the community. Companies range from providing sustainability consulting to Orange County school systems to giving music lessons to under-served communities. Green Gears is a sustainability consulting company that aims to implement environmental literacy programs into school systems. Green Gears goal is to educate students and get them to understand the energy it takes to grow food and the energy it wastes when food goes into landfills. Musical Empowerment is another venture that was developed in the CUBE program. It offers free one-on-one music lessons between college aged students and children. Its aim is to help children who may not have the funding or material means develop long-lasting relationships with music.

Review of current efforts and media coverage

CUBE's main targets are students and faculty. The success of the program is reliant on students and faculty applying to take part in CUBE. The way most people find out about CUBE is through the application posted on the website each year and through the partnership work CUBE does with other professional schools throughout campus. For example, the School of Education, the School of Social Work, and the Kenan Flagler Business School promote CUBE to students and aspiring entrepreneurs. CUBE receives around 30 to 50 applications a year due to these efforts. CUBE also has to reach funders to support the program. All funding comes from private donations and are mainly contributions from Campus Y alumni. Previous successful ventures are willing to donate their time to mentor the current entrepreneurs in the class.

While the companies that are born out of CUBE's program are often covered in the media, CUBE itself has very little media coverage. CUBE has been mentioned in outlets outside of campus related publications very few times. The program has been in local newspaper articles such as The News&Observer and Duke FUQUA Case. The nature of these stories have been spotlights on the venture that were created in CUBE. CUBE was mentioned in just a sentence or two explaining where the idea for the venture was created.

CUBE mainly targets on campus sources to send stories. These sources include, The Daily Tarheel, UNC-CH's Campaign for Carolina, and Innovate Carolina. In these stories, CUBE is still only briefly mentioned and the main focus is the venture that was built. However, CUBE is in the process of creating a more expansive media list that includes local outlets outside UNC-CH's campus in hopes of widening the reach of the program and its efforts. Most of CUBE's news is shared through the Campus Y's newsroom. There is a tab about CUBE that keeps readers updated on the program's news and has feature stories on some of the ventures.

CUBE has a Facebook page that is not kept up to date. It does not have any other form of social media. Communications Director, Erin Reitz, is in the process of setting up an Instagram page for CUBE in which a venture will be spotlighted each week.

The spokespeople for CUBE are, Communications Director Erin Reitz and program director, Jakelin Bonilla. Erin works to create content to promote CUBE and its ventures. Jaki oversees the program and the entrepreneurs social initiatives in CUBE. The Campus Y at UNC-CH has more than 2,000 student volunteers who help with the 30 social justice and innovation organizations, including CUBE.

SWOT analysis

Strengths:

- CUBE is a unique organization that has provided enriching opportunities for students and the community. The program works to bring the UNC-CH community and the larger community together. Through this class, students and faculty are able to get involved in communities outside of UNC-CH.
- The organization addresses a wide array of social issues from food insecurity, to environmental issues, to inequality in healthcare and education.

Weaknesses:

- There is a lack of awareness of the organization. Not many people know about CUBE, and not many are given the chance to know about CUBE.
- CUBE's website isn't clear. When on the website, "CUBE" is not displayed in a visible and up-front place. There is a blur between what is "Campus Y" and what is "CUBE". The distinction is not made clear, and even within their websites, it is not made clear through headers and styling choices.

- CUBE has very little social media presence. It has a Facebook page but it is very rarely updated. If someone went to the page, they could very likely end up confused and just click out without exploring the content and program more. CUBE is not active on any other social media platforms.

Opportunities:

- There are many unique and successful ventures that have come out of CUBE. Using past venture success stories would be an effective way of promoting and telling CUBE's story.
- Successful ventures do offer mentorship to current ventures. However, reaching out to those ventures that are successful and thriving and offering them the opportunity to fund current and upcoming ventures is something CUBE should think about as they are fundraising.

Threats:

- One significant threat to CUBE is their funding, or lack of. CUBE has to hold fundraising each year, and it is always inconsistent. They do not have donors that pledge to support them over multiple years, so each year is different. CUBE receives their largest amount of funding through Innovate Carolina and of course, the Campus Y.
- CUBE's success is based off the interest and ideas of students and faculty. Though this hasn't been a problem in the past, it is definitely something to be aware of. CUBE's livelihood is dependent on their "customers" just like any other business is.

Recommendations:

- CUBE needs to increase their social media presence, specifically on Instagram, because that is where their largest demographic is. Students gather a lot of information through

social media, so this is something CUBE needs to take advantage of. On their instagram, they should make weekly posts that highlight specific ventures. This will give more awareness to innovation at Carolina but also give a better idea of what CUBE is.

- The organization needs to update their website and make it clear that it is their website. Where “CUBE” should be written, it instead says “The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Also on the website there is “SI@UNC” which stands for Social Innovation at UNC, but this is not clear, and it makes it confusing whether it is CUBE’s website or not. Additionally, they should make clear pathways with coding to make the website more user friendly.
- Another interesting part of CUBE is the people who have been personally impacted by a specific CUBE venture. CUBE should highlight these people to bring awareness to the social impact these ventures are making through CUBE.
- As a way to fundraise, CUBE should start a “give back program” where past, successful ventures can support the organization as a way to thank CUBE for helping kick-start their business.
- In order to gain more awareness for their organization and increase their media presence, CUBE should create an extensive media list.
- Another easy way to increase awareness is to pass out flyers that offer information about CUBE. A flyer won’t cause a majority of students to participate in CUBE, however it will create name recognition which will increase CUBE’s presence on campus.