



British Columbia  
Gift of Communications

# Salvation Army Harbour Light Addictions Treatment Centre

---

## The challenge

The Salvation Army Vancouver Harbour Light addictions treatment centre operates a 50-bed alcohol and drug treatment facility for adult men. The program focuses on a holistic approach to addictions recovery and removing barriers to long-term sobriety. In preparing for a capital campaign, the program wanted to strategically position the organization in order to achieve the best results in public awareness and financial support.

One of the largest hurdles was the lack of public awareness on the addictions treatment program, however media coverage during the annual community dinners at Christmas and previous series *Faces of Downtown Eastside* on Vancity Buzz proves that the organization has frontline access to stories that can inspire donors to contribute.

The program receives the majority of their clients through referrals from partnering agencies such as correctional facilities, the court system and other Salvation Army programs around the province.

## The solution

The strategic communications plan presented by the Gift of Communications team of Kate Hunter and Lindsay Kwan focused on three themes: education and awareness, collaboration and partnerships and donor outreach. Key audiences included internal staff and volunteers, professionals working with at-risk clients, potential donors, the media as well as potential clients and their families.

One of the largest hurdles was the lack of public awareness on the addictions treatment program, however media coverage during the annual community dinners at Christmas and previous series *Faces of Downtown Eastside* on Vancity Buzz proves that the organization has frontline access to stories that can inspire donors to contribute.

## **Proposed solutions in education and awareness for internal & external audiences included:**

### ***New website***

During Year 1 after the internal survey, the new website will be built as all communication initiatives will lead back to it as the central hub. Each webpage will feature an active call-to-action to donate. Content will be added and updated in accordance to the lead up for the capital campaign.

### ***Internal conversation kit***

To be created in Year 2 after the internal online survey, the kit is designed to be a tool to help crowdsource ideas from internal audiences. The kit will contain how-tos on providing information to raise awareness on social media, what stories to share in the quarterly newsletter, sample social media posts etc.

## **Proposed solutions in collaboration & partnerships to drive client referrals included:**

### ***Professional Organizations & Conference Speaking Engagements***

Proposed for Year 3, sharing the emotional impact of the program with health, judicial associations etc. lets them know how they make a difference in the life of an addict.

## **Proposed solutions in donor outreach to raise public awareness included:**

### ***Media relations***

Recommendation to pitch 2-3 human interest stories to the media/year following the launch of the capital campaign to encourage donations. For Year 1, it's recommended that it be done as the opportunity arises and for Years 2-3, as a key component of strategy to boost awareness.

### ***Facebook Advertising***

Promote key posts with calls-to-action to donate or volunteer for geographically & interest based targeted segments during Years 2-3.

## **The results**

The Salvation Army took the robust communications plan created by the Gift of Communications team and has already implemented recommendations based on their available resources.

### **New website**

The organization took advantage of an offer through its provincial office to have the website redeveloped at a higher quality, lower cost and with more brand alignment. While the website is in beta testing currently, the Gift of Communications strategy was helpful in developing content. One-on-one conversations with the addiction treatment program staff led to more detailed, practical and accessible content for that portion of the website.

### **Conversation kit**

A smaller version of the kit is governing their social media effort with a more complete version on the way once the internal communications survey is done.

### **Public speaking/media coverage**

A successful media opportunity came with the idea recommendation to offer to take excess Halloween candy from people/businesses, for use in the Salvation Army's care packages and holiday goodie bags. Using a graphic made in Canva, the post was shared on Facebook and Twitter, and to a handful of corporate supporters. The post was picked up by various popular outlets including Vancouver is Awesome (web article) and the CBC (radio and web article) – which resulted in organic media coverage. Through this social campaign, the Salvation Army collected enough candy to donate for 1,500 Christmas goodie bags, treats for the client Christmas party, 600 Easter meal guests, and many other treats.

### **Online advertising strategy**

Due to the recommendations in the Gift of Communications strategy, changes were made to the Salvation Army communications department budget, allowing for online advertising. Plans are in the works for Facebook advertising when the new website launches.

### **Social media metrics**

As a result of implementing the social media recommendations from the Gift of Communications strategy, Salvation Army received an overall increase in engagement on Facebook with likes up 10% and total number of engaged users on their page up by over 85%.

Twitter has seen momentum rise as well with clicks on the Salvation Army's links rising 95% and both likes and retweets of their tweets seeing a more than 100% increase.

### **Lessons learned**

The strategic plan created by the Gift of Communications team has informed the goals & priorities for donor communications as well as aided in the onboarding of Salvation Army's new Fundraising Coordinator.