



**Brand Strategy Plan and
Marketing Communications Program**

March 2018

**Illinois Association of Court Appointed Special Advocates
207 West Jefferson Suite 303
Bloomington, Illinois 61701**

Situation

The Illinois Association of Court Appointed Special Advocates Brand Strategy Plan and Marketing Communications Program is being initiated to encourage and establish a consistent CASA brand for the thirty-one (31) local CASA programs throughout the State of Illinois. The project requires a comprehensive evaluation of current branding and marketing practices throughout the state along with strategic planning involving the four regional representatives of local CASA programs. Once completed, programs will be able to easily implement and access all forms of marketing materials and approaches.

Background

In November of 2017, newly appointed Executive Director Mari Christopherson evaluated the current branding and marketing program of Illinois CASA and determined that no solid plan or strategy was in place that established a consistent messaging point for the local programs to utilize. To bring Illinois into compliance with the National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association Marketing & Communications Policies, Executive Director Christopherson directed the Director of Program Development to begin the process of establishing and implementing a Brand Strategy Plan and Marketing Communications Plan.

Approach

The Brand Strategy Plan for Illinois CASA requires a full and detailed assessment of the current state of the Illinois CASA programs and the goals for the future state. The process begins by answering 15 mission-critical, brand-defining questions. It continues with talking to each of the 31 local CASA programs and finding out what the CASA brand means to them. The answers and feedback will form Illinois CASA's value proposition and brand identity.

A holistic brand strategy – one that relates to both our local programs and the children we serve – is more than just a new website and updated marketing communications materials. A successful Brand Strategy Plan develops a brand identity and positions the brand in the marketplace with the goal of building a positive perception in the minds of the Illinois public.

The answers to these all-important questions require your undivided attention and a dedicated period of time to dig deep and do some program soul searching. The end result will deliver the information and the emotion that will drive the development of an effective brand messaging platform.

The brand positioning statement will set Illinois CASA apart from its category competitors. From there, the brand identity will emerge to form the brand image, communicate the brand promise, increase brand awareness and build brand loyalty.

Answer 15 Mission-Critical Questions to Define Your Brand

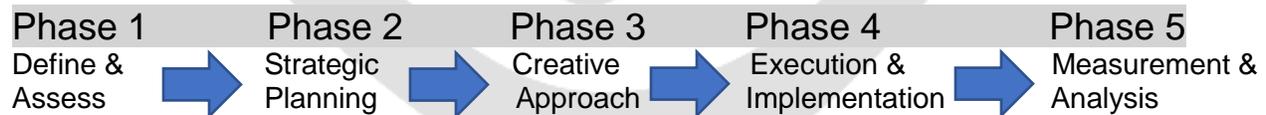
1. What is your programs Mission Statement?
2. Explain your brand in a short phrase you can deliver in 60 seconds.
3. What is your programs tagline?
4. What are your website keywords?
5. Do you want to stick with your present logo and program identity?
6. What type of brand program have you had in place to date?
7. What emerging and/or popular trend(s) does your program address?
8. Describe your target volunteer(s).
9. How do your current volunteers and employees view your brand?
10. What do your customers value most about what your program offers?
11. Identify three to five unique differentiators/strengths of your program.
12. If your program were a person, how would you describe it?
13. Describe your marketing communications/content marketing program.
14. Do you feel you have any competitors?
15. What do you want your program to be known for in the industry?

Strategy

Branding influences virtually every activity in the enterprise with each point of customer, or volunteer contact. Branding goes beyond the selection of a program name and logo design. A well-defined, well-positioned, strong brand influences employees and volunteers to think of a program in terms of positive brand attributes: quality, dependability, trust, reliability. Brand building is a process that establishes and solidifies a relationship between a program, its employees, and its volunteers.

When done right, branding drives recruitment, lowers the cost of acquiring new volunteers, increases volunteer retention and loyalty, and attracts talented employees who remain with the program over the long term. The core strategy of a branding plan is to clearly identify the brand message and communicate it consistently through persuasive copywriting. To reach this point, a brand assessment is required.

Branding Methodology



To position Illinois CASA as a leader in advocacy, both employees and volunteers must be part of the **Define & Assess** phase. Collecting this research is a basic step in the development of a successful brand. Like any sound business plan, the objective in building a sound brand strategy is to determine where the program is today and identify growth objectives.



Brand Strategy Phase 1 – Define & Assess

- Research / Audit
 - Conduct data gathering (interviews, emails, webinars)
 - Distribute questionnaires
 - Define target audience
 - Identify market goals
 - Obtain competitive intelligence
 - Review existing materials
 - Explore industry and associations
 - Identify program touch points

After the data gathering is completed, the **Strategic Planning** phase begins. The information collected will serve as a roadmap for building the brand and positioning it successfully in the local regions. In this phase, the facts and vision are creatively merged to establish the foundation of the brand messaging platform.



Brand Strategy Phase 2 – Strategic Planning

- Holistic Branding Strategy
 - Internal (build pride and involvement for employees)
 - External (build buss and credibility for volunteers and prospects)
- Messaging Development
 - Vision / Mission / Values
 - Value Proposition
 - Go-To-Market Strategy
 - Brand Personality / Positioning / Identity / Architecture
 - Tagline
 - Deliver Brand Messaging Platform
- Creative Direction
 - Graphic Design and Image Look-and-Feel
 - Color Palette
 - Layout
 - Establish Program Voice, Tone
 - Review Websites (design, functionality, strategy, consistency)
 - Review Logo Design
 - Liaise with Graphics, Website, Product, and Print Vendors
- Deliver Brand Brief

The **Creative Approach** phase translates the strategy into tactical communications tools. The marketing items listed in Phase 3 comprise a comprehensive Marketing Communications Program. A concurrent, integrated Marketing Communications Program channeled across all media drives the delivery of an effective brand message that reaches the targeting volunteer base and employees. The defined brand identity and program goals will dictate which of these items to use in the go-to-market strategy.



Brand Strategy Phase 3 – Creative Approach

- Corporate Identity System (e.g., logo design, signage, stationary, business cards, proposal template, email auto signature, screen saver, etc.)
 - Brand and Style Guidelines for all media
- Website with optimized SEO
 - Content Development and Management
 - Copywriting
 - Videos
 - Webinars
 - Volunteer Lead Generation

- Content Marketing
 - State Brochure
 - Program Fact Sheets
 - Thought Leadership (Case Studies, White Papers, Perspectives)
 - Timeline / Program History Fact Sheet
 - Volunteer Newsletter (Digital and/or print)
 - Social Media
 - Blog
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
 - Pinterest
- Advertising (online and offline)
- Branded Promotional Products
- Recruitment Toolkit
 - Proposal Language
 - Elevator Pitch
- Mobile Marketing
- Direct Mail and Email Campaigns
- Public Relations
 - Press Kit Elements (digital and print)
 - Brand Announcement Card
 - Boilerplate Program Statement
 - Press Release(s)
 - FAQs
 - Media Contacts
 - Telling the Brand Story
 - Social Media
 - Volunteer Voice, Dialogue and Experience
 - Bylined Articles
- Internal Communications
 - Brand Email Announcements
 - Brand Book (tool that explains the Brand)
- Event Marketing
 - Exhibit Booth Graphics, Brand Messaging

The **Execution & Implementation** phase will launch the brand internally and externally. One of the key performance indicators of a successful branding is gaining consensus with employees and building the brand involvement and an emotional attachment. The external side of the campaign will include a concurrent, integrated campaign including marketing communications, advertising, content marketing, email marketing, direct marketing, internal communications and social media.



Brand Strategy Phase 4 – Execution & Implementation

- Content Development and Copywriting
- Production (digital, print, product)
- Media Plan
 - Press Conference Brand Launch (urban areas)
 - Newspaper / Magazine Placements
 - Radio / TV Media
 - Speaking Engagements
- Direct Marketing
 - Conferences

The **Measurement & Analysis** of ROBI (return on brand investment) will begin at the launch of the new brand initiative. The data collected will be measured against previous year's data, such as volunteer leads generated, actual recruitment numbers, actual numbers trained, etc. The first metrics report will be delivered three months into the branding campaign and every three months following with an annual report delivered at the end of the project year.



Brand Strategy Phase 5 – Measurement & Analysis

- Brand Asset Management
 - Develop measurement tool / dashboard to assess awareness and ROBI from current state to rebranded state

Project Schedule

It is not possible to estimate a timeframe for the Illinois CASA branding project until the elements to be included in the Brand Strategy Plan and Marketing Communications Program have been decided upon. Once the project begins, a detailed project plan with due dates and milestones will be delivered.

Project Employee Time Investment

At this time, the Director of Program Development, along with two (2) Illinois State University Marketing Interns will be the only Illinois CASA employees with time commitments for this project. An estimation of five (5) weekly hours is allotted for the Director of Program Development. A requirement of 180 hours/per Intern/per semester has been agreed upon in the Intern/Illinois CASA agreement to dedicate to the Brand Strategy Plan and Marketing Communications Program.