



CASE STUDY: CANADIAN FEED THE CHILDREN 2011-2018

From Charity to Change

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Taking Canadian Feed The Children from Charity to Change

Canadian Feed The Children, an international development agency that had operated in Canada since 1986, was a small fish in an ocean of very big fish. Functioning more as a charity than as a change agent, it needed refreshing in every area of its operation.

With an ambitious strategic plan to increase its impact, diversify its revenues and update its reputation, CFTC's new CEO enlisted Context Communications to implement best practice communications to support CFTC's strategy and growth.

Conte✱t Analysis

Jennifer identified CFTC's core strengths, opportunities and two urgent priorities:

- * **STRENGTHS:** Strong and untapped content assets that could be leveraged to build connection among a large base of existing private donors. Supportive senior leadership team and board of directors with a willingness to invest in change and an understanding of communications as a strategic partner.
- * **OPPORTUNITIES:** Targeted, segmented communications to reinforce CFTC's credibility and build its reputation among new major and institutional donor audiences. Focus on emotive and impact story-telling for acquisition, retention and growth.
- * **PRIORITIES**

Reputation management: Build stronger connections with donors during period of declining revenues/shifting ratios to stem donor attrition and protect reputation. Ensure a coordinated response founded on key messages of new leadership, financial strength and good governance.

Get online FAST and WELL: Overhaul website and implement best practices to raise brand profile and increase fundraising effectiveness through website, social media and search.

GOAL 1:

Strengthen the organization's reputation for good governance, strong financial management and transparency

CFTC was facing a major shift in its revenues and ratios, which had the potential to cause reputational risk to the organization and loss of confidence among donors. At the same time, under its new leadership, CFTC was engaged in exciting and transformative work to redefine its value to its various publics, enhance its management and governance practices, and refine its programming focus.

As one of her first priorities, Context Communications' founder, Jennifer Watson, created a communications strategy for CFTC that hinged on reassuring donors, stemming donor attrition, and protecting CFTC's reputation during this period of significant organizational transition. Communications reflected key messages about new leadership, good governance, strong financial management, and transparency.

The Activities

Context Communications redesigned CFTC's annual report to better communicate impact and repositioned it to target major donors and institutional funders. A secondary objective was to engage long-time and loyal donors as partners on CFTC's "Journey to Change" – a theme that reflected CFTC's internal transition as well as its mission.

Along with CFTC's concurrent work to achieve Imagine Canada Standards accreditation, Jennifer recommended applying for and profiling other awards and accreditations including the Voluntary Sector Reporting Award, the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, and Charity Intelligence.

The Results

- * FIVE-TIME FINALIST and THREE CONSECUTIVE WINS of **VOLUNTARY SECTOR REPORTING AWARD**, EARNING EXEMPLAR STATUS 2015-2017
- * **'A' RATING** on CHARITY INTELLIGENCE, MONEYSENSE and **TWO-TIME AWARD WINNER** of FINANCIAL POST's *TOP CHARITIES OF THE YEAR*

GOAL 2:

Update & differentiate CFTC's brand in a crowded, confusing sector

CFTC had a “little fish in a big pond” problem. And that pond was crowded with big fish that had bigger teams and bigger budgets.

Not only was CFTC confused with other similarly-named INGOs, but it was also confused with its long-ago parent organization based out of the U.S. with which CFTC was no longer affiliated. A name change might seem like a slam dunk recommendation, however CFTC was also facing some intense financial and reputational pressures. It simply didn't have the funds or the capacity to engage in a full rebrand – nor was it wise to do so.

Context Communications recommended a visual identity and key message upgrade as Phase I. We knew there was tremendous room for growth not by swimming into deeper waters to compete but by finding our own lagoon and being the very best medium-sized fish we could be. Our focus was on updating the brand story and look to reflect the evolution of CFTC's programs focus and to more clearly articulate CFTC's difference to key audiences.

The Activities

- * Created new visual identity and mission
- * Created a strong brand story and key messages, which were socialized across the organization and in all communications
- * Laid the groundwork for future renaming with a solid brand platform

The Results

Created a refreshed visual identity (new logo and brand story, key message matrix) and launched in an extremely short (six months) and extremely cost-effective fashion. New mission followed in 2016.



GOAL 3:

Increase touchpoints to donors with relevant, targeted content

CFTC had a wealth of untapped content: photos, stories, reports and plans from the field, from staff, from partners. What it lacked was a clear plan to use that content strategically, turning that content 'gold' into relevant, compelling, targeted story-telling.

Like many organizations early in their strategic communications journey, CFTC was centering *itself* in its stories rather than its donors and the impact they were having. And, it was blasting content to a generic public instead of customizing it for specific audiences to achieve specific organizational or fundraising objectives, e.g., engagement, conversion, retention and revenue growth.

The path to communications segmentation is technology, data and resource-dependent so we began with small but critical steps. Context Communications introduced some core tools and practices and built upon them each year.

The Activities

- * We created an editorial calendar to deliver targeted, relevant and compelling content to specific audiences, at specific times, with specific goals
- * We used content to build emotional connections between donors and the real people, places and projects they were funding
- * We developed clear processes and trained people on data gathering and story-telling
- * We re-oriented fundraising materials to use donor-centric, results-focused language
- * We created discipline around communications strategy and decision-making, helping staff and leaders ask (and answer) key questions: Who's the audience? What do you want them to do and feel? How does this support strategy? How will you measure success?
- * We introduced new print and email communications targeted to key donor segments to achieve stewardship and retention objectives

The Results

- * STEADY STREAM OF CONTENT RELEASED & REPURPOSED PER **ANNUAL EDITORIAL CALENDAR**
- * STRONGER INTERNAL CAPACITY FOR **RESOURCE COLLECTION AND STORY-TELLING**
- * DONOR-CENTRIC STORYTELLING AND FOCUS ON **ENGAGEMENT, RETENTION, CONVERSION**
- * CONTRIBUTED TO **98% DONOR RETENTION**

GOAL 4:

Take CFTC online fast and well

As one of our first tasks in 2011, Context Communications initiated an online overhaul to bring CFTC up-to-speed on what were then early but important website and social media best practices for non-profits.

Like remodeling a house, the foundation, plumbing and electrical needed to be in top shape before we could build the snazzier content and design elements that would be leveraged to drive engagement and fundraising.

The Activities

- * Rebuilt canadianfeedthechildren.ca and bestgiftever.ca websites
- * Installed an in-house content management system
- * Introduced best practice online giving strategies including Google grant for non-profits, SEO and online advertising, landing pages, integrated marketing
- * Re-launched blog and new social media platforms with accompanying content and promotional strategies
- * Introduced clear metrics to measure success: traffic, bounce rate, conversion rate, cost-per-acquisition, open rates, click-thru rates

The Results

- * INCREASED ONLINE GIVING **FROM 21% TO 76%** OF TOTAL REVENUE OF GIFT CATALOG
- * INCREASED SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE **FROM 0 TO 4** PLATFORMS WITH CORRELATING INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENT AND FOLLOWERS
- * BUILT FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS **FROM 300 to 13,000** IN TWO YEARS