



Rewarding Responsible Choice: A 12-month Project Encouraging the Use of Long-Acting Reversible Contraception within the Female 18-29 population through a Web-based, New Media, Social Networking Delivery

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Summary

Introduction

The idea began as nothing more than a kernel of thought in 2002 and grew into a 501 (C)(3) organization in 2009. Since I began using the tools acquired in the Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) program the development of the organization has been tremendous. In spring 2008 the idea became a possibility, and then it became feasible, and now it has been redefined and polished into something presentable to the public. Throughout the process I have used the skill sets I learned in the CCT program to both guide and shape the direction of my organization. Letting the process unfold wasn't easy because the concept is controversial and as the developer it was my instinct to defend it; but as I learned, protection isn't what it needed. The concept needed to be explored in a public forum, reshaped by the opinions of others, and reassembled into something capable of igniting social change. Throughout this semester, research, policy changes, trends and personal decisions have forced me to reanalyze my direction. It is because of this process I can now say I am developing a much more efficient and innovative organization.

Abstract

In order to address unplanned pregnancy we must begin a contraceptive revolution. The proposed project *Rewarding Responsible Choice* will do this by working to make long-acting reversible contraception both an appealing and affordable option for women. Pennies for Pause (PfP) is a new 501 (C)(3) and is based on the research of MIT's economics professor Esther Duflo (*International Bright Young Things*), who discovered that women in India, who would not previously vaccinate their children, could be incentivized by a small bag of beans. The conclusion, the pennies invested were well worth the enormous cost in human suffering and the high financial cost of more serious disease.

Gina Dillon Podolsky, founder of the Pennies for Pause organization, understands the hardships unplanned pregnancy presents. In order to create the program, a lifetime of experiences have been combined to create a unique approach that addresses the issue in an interdisciplinary delivery. As a teen welfare mother, and a 10-year IUD enthusiast who later completed a B.A. in Community Studies with a focus in Economic Inequality, and a M.A. (fall 2010) in Critical and Creative Thinking with a focus on Social Innovation, Dillon Podolsky combines these life lessons and education with over twenty years experience in professional marketing, promotions, and technology to create the proposed project *Rewarding Responsible Choice (RRC)*.

Development Process

In the summer of 2009, I had made a few contacts that originally impacted the direction of this project but due to creative differences I opted to blaze the trail alone so when I began the *Processes of Research & Engagement* (CCT692) course the concept for the organization was relatively undeveloped. When I reflect upon what drives me to create this organization/project I believe the answer is waste. The waste of lives, tax dollars, resources etc. So when I began the research for this project I began with a series of questions addressing irresponsibility: 1. "How can we encourage young women not to be irresponsible with their lives, our tax dollars, resources etc?" 2. "Why are young women irresponsible and what do they think about the consequences of irresponsible behavior?" 4. "What components are necessary for a program to hold the attention of young women on a regular basis?" These questions are what helped formulate my governing question, or the general thesis statement.

CCT692 encouraged me to use convergent and divergent thinking as a way to inspire possibility and direction. Through the use of free-writing, brainstorming, mind mapping and questioning exercises I was able to work toward a more refined and polished governing question "How might I develop a 12-month Project Encouraging the Use of Long-Acting

Reversible Contraception within the Female 18-29 population through a Web-based, New Media, Social Networking Delivery?” While in research, these exercises continued to open doors for further exploration while leading me to ask questions that otherwise might not be asked. By contacting informants (Raines 2009) and conducting interviews (Kinnan 2010) I was able to obtain a personal perspectives to add to my research. Through reflection and peer advise I was able to ascertain that the word “incentive” might not be well received by the public (session 5. presentation of work-in progress 2010), but through research I determined that the implementation of incentives would be well received by participants.

Since there was very little research found on the role incentives play in encouraging the use of contraception, I was forced to look at comparable situations where incentives have been used in social settings. The initial study which my project is based upon studied the impact a small bag of beans made on the decision of mothers in India to vaccinate their children (Duflo 2008). Incentives have also been routinely been used in encouraging patients to take their tuberculosis medicine. The *British Medical Journal* cites a study where food was used as an incentive to encourage cooperation in tuberculosis patients and the findings reveal that the incentives made an impact but only if the incentives were something the patient deemed “worthwhile” (Dermot 2009). While another study confirmed the

same positive results when patients who took their TB medication were supplied with free cellular minutes (*New Scientist* 2008).

After establishing the effectiveness of incentives, the next question was to determine what audience should I target. Most of the focus and funding is directed toward addressing teen pregnancy. Although this group is the age that suffers the most from unplanned pregnancy; it is not the target group with the highest rates. Statistics show young women 18-29 have the highest rates of first and second unplanned pregnancies (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy 2010). A brief investigation determined that this audience is usually allocated the least amount of funding dollars. I found this odd and somewhat backward considering that the “big sister” relationship older women have with younger women should imply that the 18-29 group could be used to set an example for responsible contraceptive use. My belief that the approach is wrong was even more solidified after speaking with a healthcare provider at a local Family Planning clinic who detailed the enormous obstacles the state of Texas has imposed for clinics dealing with the -18 patient base (Cofelt 2009). Together these details helped shape my decision to address the 18-29 target audience.

Delivery was the next area of study. As we segue into a new media world, we are finding that organizations who target younger adults are falling short in delivery due to their inabil-

ity to navigate the cyber world of social networking. The next question then became “What means will we use to attract and energize this audience?” I had to determine what methods are currently not being used that would best reach young adults? I remembered an earlier conversation with Claudia Stravato, who at the time was the president of The Texas Panhandle Family Planning and Health Centers, who said the problem with addressing unplanned pregnancy is convincing the girls to come to the clinic before they become pregnant (Stravato 2009). Reflecting upon these two issues: delivery and motivation, I realized that the majority of programs currently in use rely upon education as the sole motivator for participation and the traditional public service announcement style advertising as the delivery. According to the Duflo study, the research in India was broken down into two trials; one intervention provided education without incentives, and the second intervention provided education along with incentives. The results showed a considerable difference: not only did the incentives encourage more mothers to vaccinate their children but mothers came from a further distance to receive the vaccination and the incentives (Duflo 2008). By taking a closer look at both the incentives and delivery; I have determined that by incentivizing young women to commit to long-acting reversible contraception and delivering the message in a new media format, we can reach the levels of repetition necessary to make an impact on the target audience in a style that is typically not held to the same professional restrictions as a health care clinic.

Details

Rewarding Responsible Choice is a national web-based/community program that will use social media and electronic technology to promote the use of thinking skills, life planning and the use of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). Presented in a positive and enthusiastic, change-agent campaign *Rewarding Responsible Choice* will encourage young women to stop, think, and plan.

The goal of the project is to:

1. Reward responsible choice by providing a gift bag of donated items from supporting sponsors to women who agree to a LARC as their method of contraception. Women will print an application from the Pennies for Pause website, watch a STD video and test for STDs at their local clinic, receive a contraception consultation, and then return the application with clinic confirmation to us. Upon receipt, we ship a gift bag to the address provided. The participants have two options for gift bags: pamper me (fun products) or help me (necessities).

2. The cost of an IUD makes them unobtainable for many young women. In order to encourage the affordable use of these devices Pennies for Pause will work to establish a micro-credit system of financing/leasing to make these devices affordable for all women. For those women who are ineligible due to credit restrictions, we will work to develop a fund to help those in need.

3. The above goals will be implemented through a campaign delivered via a series of new/social media technologies. You Tube will be used to create a collection of testimonials from older IUD enthusiast to assure younger woman of their positive experience such as a contest recreating the Dire Straits video *Money For Nothing* from “I Want My MTV” to “I Want My IUD” and a weekly stand-up comedy post from an amateur female comedian with a contraception, dating, sex theme will be posted on the PfP website and Facebook page. Creating a national network of supporters will be vital to the success of the project. Facebook and Twitter will be used to create strong cyber communities, with a constant eye on emerging technology that could also be used to further the message. *Foursquare* can be used to show women where they can find clinics that offer services and the popularity of these providers. Financing options can be outlined on Facebook and the PfP website.

Rewarding Responsible Choice provides the following: 1. an educational and entertaining message encouraging young woman to take their choices seriously 2. a plan to address the upfront costs of using IUDs. 3. the experience to create a full social media campaign to promote the acceptance, buzz and excitement of a contraception revolution.

Organization

Pennies for Pause (PfP) is a new 501 (C)(3) organization founded in May 2009. It was created as an innovative approach to the issue of unplanned pregnancy and developed as a project in social innovation while working on a M.A. in Critical and Creative Thinking at UMASS Boston. It was originally scheduled for research through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Health Leader Award. Initially inspired through the PBS series *The New Heroes*, PfP is based upon the research of MIT's economics professor Esther Duflo (*International Bright Young Things*), who discovered that women in India, who would not previously vaccinate their children, could be incentivized by a small bag of beans. Using behavioral modification research as a guide and observing the popularity of giveaways in the United States (Oprah's Big giveaway, Clinique Bonus Week etc.), the overall concept of the organization was designed to modify contraceptive behavior by providing rewards for responsible choice.

PfP will debut addressing the issue of unplanned pregnancy by:

- Encouraging the use of LARCs through a reward system for participation
- As the organization grows, developing problem solving and life planning skills for women in a workshop series

PfP intends to use a business framework similar to The Komen Foundation by:

- Developing nation-wide affiliates
- Corporate donors and sponsors
- College Clubs
- Creating a large volunteer organization of middle age adults who were teen moms/dads who will serve as our version of “survivors”
- Utilizing college interns as frequently as possible to serve as organizers and professionals as project mentors

PfP will be innovative by:

- Using a variety of new/social media methods to create a community of women committed to self-sufficiency, goal setting and the achievement of dreams
- Designing a web/community based hybrid program allows PfP to operate as a national organization with cooperation from local clinics with the hopes of adding community based workshops later in development process
- Use an edutainment approach that will stay in sync with today’s culture and social/media advancements. Conceptually, the organization will develop as a combination

of The Komen Foundation and The Door. And be delivered in a fun, edgy, youthful approach using humor, satire and pop culture for entertainment.

Experience

PfP is a new nonprofit, therefore, relevant organizational experience is limited, but collective life experience is unmeasurable. The relevant life experience of the president/founder is as follows: (formal education is below)

- Single teen mom at the age of 16 (1983)
- Lived on the streets in California with a baby and picked apricots
- Sales/marketing/programming Radio Shack *Tandy 1000* computers at 17
- Enrolled in college. Dropped out in junior year due to hardships of raising a child
- Radio advertising, copy writing, marketing, classic rock promotions
- Sales/promotions, introduced the cellular industry of 1G analog service to the public (1987).
- Real estate sales with two niche markets in medical relocations and first-time, single mother homebuyers. Hosted TV real estate show, radio promotions, and offered commission free services to low income buyers, early user of the internet as a business tool
- Court Appointed Special Advocate for children, inner city of St. Louis, MO

- Mentor St. Louis
- Enrolled in online adult completion program at UMASS Boston
- BA Community Studies: Comparative communities with a focus in economic inequality
- Studied the creation of cyber communities and the impact of global communities
- Proficient in online delivery of educational materials
- Graduate school focus: innovative methods of social change with the use of emerging technology

Staff

The business model for PfP was created to be low cost, and therefore, we intend to keep our staff as small as possible by utilizing college interns, volunteers and professional mentors. Current staff/consultants are as follows with one position to be added when funding is available:

Gina Dillon Podolsky, President/Founder;

B.A. Community Studies, studies primarily focused on income inequality and cyber communities, University of Massachusetts Boston; M.A. Critical and Creative Thinking University of Massachusetts Boston (2010) studies focused primarily on social innovation.

- Texas Panhandle Family Planning and Health Centers; board member 2009-current
- Texas Pregnancy Prevention Coalition; steering committee 2008-current
- Political Fundraising/Candidate Events; Texas Democratic Party; 2008-current
- Gina Dillon Podolsky will serve as the director of the project.

Howard Scott Podolsky (husband) MD, JD, FCLM, Chairman of the Board, consultant;
MBA, Olin School of Business, Washington University, St. Louis; J.D./Health Law, Saint Louis University School of Law; Internal Medicine Internship and Residency, The Christ Hospital/University of Cincinnati; Externship-Gastroenterology and Hepatology, University of Chicago; M.D., S.U.N.Y. at Buffalo, New York; B.Sc., Union College, Schenectady, New York

- Dr. Podolsky is Senior Vice-President/Medical Director, Structured Settlements Division, AIG/American General Insurance Houston, TX.
- Dr. Podolsky will serve as medical, legal and business consultant. Before joining American General, Dr. Podolsky was Chief Medical Officer/Vice President of Medical Affairs for large hospital systems in Missouri, Virginia, and Washington.

The Project

Rewarding Responsible Choice

The goal for Rewarding Responsible Choice (RRC) is to reduce unplanned pregnancy in young women 18-29 through the increased use of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) while encouraging the use of thinking and life planning skills. We will do this by developing A) Interactive website and community clinic participation B) Corporate Sponsorships Rewarding Responsible Choice is a national web-based/community program that will use social media and electronic technology to promote the use of thinking skills, life planning and the use of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). Presented in a positive and enthusiastic, change-agent campaign *Rewarding Responsible Choice* will encourage young women to stop, think, and plan.

Outline of Rewarding Responsible Choice:

I. Developing interactive web site with new media/social networking components

Development of an interactive website as an anchor for the workshop is essential to the success of the program. A community based program will also be available for young

women without online access. The website program will detail the following:

a. Effective contraception methods. What they are, how to get them, and how to receive a gift bag give-away.

b. Online alternative reality games. How life choices effect me. CCT games etc.

c. Social Media connections to Pennies for Pause

d. Online version of 12-month workshop program for those unable to attend

II. Developing monthly community based life planning workshops

a. Development of a 12-month workshop series that teaches young women the key elements of life planning for a happy and healthy life. Workshop delivery is in an integrated collaborative environment with a focus on interdisciplinary learning that can be applied in teaching problem-solving in real life applications. Also provides take home projects, encourages community building and online activities for continued personal development skills.

Objectives

1. Increase awareness of LARC through new/social media campaigns:

a. RRC will use text messaging, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, a blog and the Pennies for Pause (PfP) website to promote the positive messaging of, and develop the education about, LARC as an effective method of contraception. By recruiting older

women who have positive memories of their IUDs and younger women who have positive experiences with Implanon, Depo Provera the newer generation of LARC. By posting video testimonials on the Pennies for Pause website we can answer questions and combat the fears of pain etc. associated with LARCs.

b. RRC can promote a video contest through social media encouraging young women to submit videos encouraging the use of an LARC. The winner receives a prize donated by a sponsor. For example, we can ask the public to recreate the lyrics/performance to the 1985 classic by Dire Straits “Money For Nothing” from “I want my MTV” to “I want my LARC” and create an online contest for viewers to vote.

c. Create a casting call for female comedians to audition and create weekly comedy clip with the themes of contraception, sex, dating, etc. that can be posted on YouTube, Facebook, website and text messaged in hopes of creating a buzz and encourage frequent visits to the PfP media sites.

2. Increase the use of LARCs by:

a. Making LARCs, especially IUDs, affordable by working to provide financing to women unable to afford the devices. Dentist and plastic surgeons use finance companies for their services, why not women’s health centers? By providing a micro-financing/lease program, IUDs will become affordable for many women who were otherwise unable to afford the device. Establishing a fund for women unable to obtain financing will make the choice of more effective contraception possible. These financing options and applications can be posted on the Pennies for Pause website and other online advertising opportunities.

b. Providing a gift bag full of donated items to women who agree to commit to an LARC. Online registration forms will be available for women to take to their local clinic and upon confirmation of commitment, Pennies for Pause will ship the women's gifts to the address they provide. In order to include women who do not have online access, health clinics can print forms from the Pennies for Pause site. The only requirement for the gift bag is for the participants to receive contraceptive counseling from a clinic, watch an STD video, be tested for an IUD, and return a completed and confirmed application to Pennies for Pause.

c. Use *Foursquare* to create a community of supporters who can pinpoint location of clinics who provide LARC services, provide feedback on their quality of care, and highlight other services and supporters of our mission to increase visibility of our program.

Workshop Components

1. Oh, the places we go! The things we could do!

1) Teaches the concepts of critical and creative thinking skills to open the mind to possibility

- uses frames of reference, convergent and divergent thinking and mind mapping to teach how we are limited by our own thinking processes.
- Teaches the importance of reflection, how to explore options, and how to use problem solving in real life problem solving

2. Health

1) Education on contraception, STDs, and mental health

- the history of the IUD and other LARC methods
- STDs: what you don't know can hurt you

- how our mental well-being influences are decision making

3. Beauty

1) Make-overs, dress for success, how to put together a wardrobe etc.

- how to dress like a million dollars for pennies
- professional dress vs. evening clothes

4. Finances

1) How much does it cost to....?

- presenting the cost of life
- how much do I need to make to....?

2) The importance of a credit score

- how a credit score can ruin your life
- how to maintain a good credit score

3) How to live on a budget

- what is a necessity and what is not
- what is the actual cost of.....?

5. Culture

1) Geography, famous people and places

- where are they from and where is it?

2) Expanding our world

- global communities; learning how things come together

6. Who Am I?

1) Self discovery: What do I like? What are my natural talents?

- what can I do with these talents?
- where do I begin?

7. Etiquette

1) Social and professional

- the importance of manners
- business etiquette
- social etiquette

8. Relationships, violence and bullying

1) How to recognize a good guy

- traits of a good guy

2) Violence

- statistics on abuse and date rape
- how to recognize the warning signs
- how to protect yourself.

3) Love and sex

- healthy relationships
- 9. Art Night
 - 1) talent night
 - 2) mind map exhibits
- 10. Problems?
 - 1) How to handle conflict, challenges and obstacles
- 11. Putting in all together
 - 1) Final presentation preparation
- 12. Graduation/Presentations

Target Population

The target population for the project is young women 18-29. The strategy for choosing this target population is multi-factorial:

1. Research shows this population has the highest rate of unplanned pregnancy
2. Some clinic policies restrict the use of LARCs for women under the age of 18
3. 18-29 is one the most coveted marketing demographic. Therefore, soliciting corporate gift bag donations will be easier. Similar to The Komen Foundation, companies view their contributions as marketing to potential customers vs. charitable contributions.
4. Working with legal adults will allow more creative freedom, and in doing so, will offer the opportunity to design a project that will also influence the behavior of teens and older women who are not specifically targeted. For example, David Letterman, Saturday Night Live and The Daily Show all cast a wide audience net, but were originally intended for the college crowd.

Innovation

A successful project in 2010 should bring together a variety of interdisciplinary components. It is difficult to maintain the attention of younger adults through programs designed in research labs because they fail to the mysterious component of human behavior that science fails to reach. Although the effectiveness of a program is at the core of its existence, the delivery of the method must be in a style and language that is interesting to a generation captivated by pop culture, fashion and technology. In order for the project to resonate it must find a way to grab the attention of the audience by using a message that motivates the target population and correlates with the underlying values of their generation. For example, Mac successfully creates a synergy that captivates people and creates a desire to participate. What makes Pennies for Pause innovative is we understand the following:

1. We have to do something new and different.
2. There is an intrinsic relationship between marketing, pop culture, and corporate sponsorship. Understanding this relationship is imperative to the success of non-profit organizations that deal with a younger population who are fixated on image and life style.
3. An effective program is tied directly with the ability to be relevant in the eyes of the target population. The ability to use current and emerging technology as a tool for message delivery is fundamental for success. It is absolutely imperative to understand the importance of social/new media to a 2010 project.

4. Staying edgy and hip to a younger crowd takes constant oversight. There must be an acceptable level of controversy, drama, and entertainment for an organization to stay current and interesting. For example, 16 and Pregnant creates an acceptable level of edutainment and Lady Gaga maintains an interesting persona. For a program to be interesting to a younger crowd we have to learn to captivate their attention and be able to do it again and again as culture and dynamics frequently change.

Conclusion

Looking forward, there is much work to do. To date, my media development efforts have primarily focused on building a fan base on Facebook. I recently discovered the many features of Ning, the web program established for group interaction. I have spent the last month developing the site and I am currently in the process of taking it live. I recently attracted my first product donor *Seventh Generation* who has provided 100 boxes of feminine products. I plan to use them in a David Letterman canned ham way, by virtually tossing them to the audience in an effort to create some enthusiasm and build the fan base.

The steps of my development this summer are as follows:

1. Finish Ning and take it live within the next week
2. Contact the pharmaceutical companies that manufacture the LARCs for funding
3. Work on product donations this summer. Think creatively on how to obtain gifts
4. Talk to clinics, college campuses, and political representatives about the program
5. Build a virtual intern program, establish retired mentors, build networking relationships

On a personal level:

1. Work through the relocation issue which will determine what direction I take the organization
2. Try to alleviate stress by taking better care of myself
3. Begin to think of myself as a professional again instead of a student/mother

Polishing CCT skills:

1. Develop a mind exercise course for senior citizens and volunteer at the local senior center
2. Begin designing mini-courses to post on the Pennies for Pause website.
3. Volunteer to speak to groups to further develop my presentation skills

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