***TaxAide***

***CLIENT MARKETING/COMMUNICATION***

Suggestions on how to get the word out to potential clients about our free income tax preparation assistance program.

* Clients - Target Audience: Low-to-middle Income Families, Individuals, Seniors
* Suggested Timing for Communication:
  + Communication Planning: December
  + Communication Plan Execution: January/February
    - If your approach is to have appointment-driven sites, then communication flow to clients generally begins at the time you are ready to take appointments
    - Doing a lot of communicating/advertising in December usually gets lost in the Holiday rush; it’s generally better to wait until after Jan 1st
* Communications Vehicles/Approaches
  + Email blast to past clients
    - If you don’t collect email addresses, you might want to start (optional for the client)
    - In the email blast you can suggest that client tell their friend who might qualify for the service
* Media
  + Press Release – you might be able to team up with United Way, Community Action Partnership, or some other not-for-profit organizations that often do press releases; they might be able to assist with the wording of your press release and they might have a list of media outlets in your area
  + PSA Radio spots – Lots of areas offer free air time; also, some local radio talk hosts love to have new topics to discuss, or have guests on to talk about local initiatives
  + Kick-off Press Conference – This can be a bit of work, but it is a way to attract a good deal of attention
    - Consider holding this at one of your tax sites so that the press can also interview clients & volunteers; or take some pictures (of course you’ll need to get permission from the site people and from anyone who is interviewed or photographed)
    - If you can get one or two local politicians to speak, that is a real drawing card
    - Tie this in with your press release, or do a re-release at the same time as the press conference with quotes from the politicians
* Posters/pamphlets/signs
  + Get some from TaxAide or make up your own
  + If you have your own, seek out local not-for-profit organizations or banks or other businesses that might do the printing up of posters or flyers; offering, if necessary, to let them put their logo on is an incentive for them to print these for free (“Poster provided by …”)
    - Where to put posters: Supermarkets, libraries, senior and lower income housing developments, senior centers, town halls, DSS, and many other places
    - Where to use small flyers/inserts: school systems (particularly inner-city schools; part of what kids take home to parents; some school systems allow this), local businesses/manufacturing sites (some employers allow inserts with paychecks), leave some in laundromats, etc.
  + How to distribute:
    - Attach a copy of the poster/flyer to an email to all local not-for-profit organizations (your local United Way should be able to help with this distribution); these NFP organizations have both clients and employees who can benefit from the service
    - Get posters and flyers to your volunteers for them to get out in your communities
    - Enlist the support of groups to help take flyers around to various businesses and housing areas (Examples: local scouts looking to earn “community service” credit; volunteers you recruit who don’t want to do taxes but would like to help out in other ways – a “Feet on the Street” team; local colleges; etc.)
    - See if your local United Way would also email a copy of your poster to companies who run a United Way campaign
* Senior Newsletters - build a list of these over time
* Church Bulletins – a local Catholic Charities and/or interfaith organization may be able to help here
* Other types of newsletters – Hispanic organizations; advertising newsletters that provide space for volunteer organizations like ours
* A short blurb in the Pennysaver
* Social Media/Websites – can you get on the Facebook pages or websites of local not-for-profit groups?
* Letter to all local politicians asking them to include a message about this service in their communication to their constituents; they often put out newsletters or updates

HOW CAN I FIND TIME TO DO ALL OF THIS?

*Between coordinating new and returning volunteers, getting training set up, worrying about sites, keeping up with TaxAide emails streaming in – how can you find time to focus on communicating to potential new clients?*

If you don’t already have one, you might consider appointing a Communication Specialist. Do you have a volunteer who is very busy during tax season, but has some time on her/his hands in December and January? Someone who is energetic and has good communication skills? Having someone focus on this aspect of your program might be very helpful to you.