

SBA The Solicitors' Charity

Communications Strategy: 2019-2020



1. Introduction

This strategy will cover an 18 month period, ending on 31st December 2020.

Although SBA The Solicitors' Charity has been in existence for over 150 years, knowledge of the organisation is comparatively low and needs to be improved. This is especially true within the critical audience of solicitors and law firms (see below). In recent years, marketing and communications activity has been effective but not focussed on audience growth.

This strategy will seek to improve recognition of the charity, consistency of messaging and calibre of marketing and communications activities. By doing this, our aim is to build positive brand associations, improve awareness, and create better relationships with internal and external stakeholders. This will hopefully provide foundations necessary to ensure that SBA The Solicitors' Charity is (and continues to be) a loyally supported brand, focussing on its vision that:

No solicitor is unsupported in times of need or crisis

Activities within the document will be targeted towards primary, secondary and tertiary audiences.

2. Audience

Our audience is defined as follows:

1. Primary audience:

Current and future beneficiaries. This includes solicitors and former solicitors, and their dependants. To achieve our vision, we need to reach out to those who we support now and may do so in the future.

2. Secondary audience:

Current and potential donors. Although we have substantial reserves, in order to meet the needs of our beneficiaries we will require ongoing income streams. This audience comprises mainly solicitors and law firms in England and Wales.

3. Tertiary audience:

People and organisations who support, or who are broadly supportive of the charity and its aims now and in the future. This audience includes:-

- a. Internal stakeholders such as Trustees, volunteers and staff
- b. Our partners, e.g. LawCare, Renovo, Citizens Advice
- c. Professional bodies and other organisations connected with the legal profession (e.g. the Law Society, Local Law Societies, Association of Women Solicitors, Junior Lawyers Division etc)
- d. Press

- e. Charity commission
- f. The general public

Each audience category will be further segmented for each campaign. The segments will then be targeted using the most appropriate communication channel. Messages will aim to be personal and relevant to the audience. This will assist in ensuring effectiveness of campaigns.

Annexed to this strategy is a stakeholder map which seeks to recognise the relative influence and interest of our stakeholders. As a general rule, those stakeholders with substantial influence and substantial interest require close management; those with substantial influence but little interest need to be kept satisfied; those with substantial interest but little influence need to be kept informed; and those with little influence and little interest simply require monitoring.

3. Strategic aims

3.1 Improve positive awareness/perception of the charity

A positive image is crucial both to encourage those in need to approach the charity, and to persuade others to help the charity - whether by donation or by volunteering or in any other way. Ideally the charity will be seen as the “go-to” organisation for those in need within the legal profession.

This will be helped by the public seeing us as experts in all aspects relating to especially financial hardship. For example, how financial hardship can affect lives, the best methods of help, and the fact that we seek to take a long term view and address causes as much as symptoms.

Exposing the myths of solicitors being rich will also help to improve credibility. Also, we should not be afraid to give the charity’s take on certain topics that are related to our cause (mental health, men’s health etc) where we have knowledge and expertise.

By being viewed as a credible source, potential beneficiaries will be more inclined to approach the charity, and public trust within the brand will solidify. The credibility will be linked to internal stakeholders (staff and volunteers), but more importantly, what we do and what we deliver.

3.2 Audience growth

Audience growth, particularly amongst our pool of potential donors, is vital to the long-term sustainability of the charity and the achievement of our vision. The message is that giving to the charity enables donors to make a difference. We will use a variety of tactics via different channels to achieve this aim. Ideally, we will utilise online channels due to consumer habits. However, offline media should not be neglected. The digital space allows for accurate and targeted messaging, thus enabling communications towards cause specific supporters.

The charity will look to increase GDPR compliant contacts and boost audience across all platforms to heighten awareness. We will also proactively gain permissions to communicate with existing supporters. Content will seek to reward our audience for their support and engagement.

3.3 Strengthen relationship with volunteers

Our volunteers provide invaluable support to the charity, and act as a vital link between the governing body and the constituency we seek to serve. Currently our relationship with volunteers needs to be improved. There has been a lack of communication with them in recent years and numbers are dwindling.

It is important that volunteers feel thanked for their kindness and investment into the cause. Likewise it is vital that they feel as part of a wider family. This will help to avoid any feelings of cognitive dissonance.

To achieve this, pull marketing tactics will be applied to various internal communications campaigns. Messaging will be personable, compelling and where possible, about the readers themselves. This will be applied via online and offline tactics, the former taking the form of email marketing.

3.4 Consistency of messaging

Consistency of messaging is a key element of a compelling narrative. We will look to promote the brand through consistent campaigns. This will involve a structured treadmill/routine of messaging to strengthen continued brand recognition. The consistency will also reward consumers for their interest, depend on us for regular content and encourage new and repeated visits to our online channels.

News pages will be published on a monthly basis on the charity's website and will be promoted via social media and email marketing.

After campaigns in previous years, the charity had often failed to capitalise on traction gathered with audiences. By applying the practice of consistency on a drip feed basis, these issues will be resolved. An emphasis to regularly target volunteers will be applied to potentially heal possible feelings of neglect and help to strengthen our relationship with them.

4. Consistent Messages - Themes

As well as being consistent, messaging must be relevant to the target audience and chosen accordingly. The following 'Central Themes' are designed to provide a common foundation for more targeted communications – and to provide a degree of 'relate-ability'.

4.1 Theme 1 – The objects and vision of the charity.

The objects of the charity are to provide relief and assistance for solicitors and former solicitors, and their dependants. Our vision is that 'no solicitor is unsupported in times of need or crisis'.

4.2 Theme 2 – The scope and range of the support we provide.

We seek to support any potential beneficiary who needs assistance. The vast majority (86%) of our beneficiaries are solicitors – a small minority (14%) are dependants. Two-thirds have health issues, including mental health problems. They come from all sizes of firm and across all practice areas. We provide substantial financial assistance (over £1m a year), as well as facilitating practical advice and support such as debt management, career guidance, and emotional support.

4.3 Theme 3 – Being seen to serve the profession

The charity has supported the profession for over 150 years, helping practicing and former solicitors, and their families, in times of need. With a trustee body comprised entirely of volunteers, mainly solicitors, we understand the pressures of professional life. A substantial part of our income comes from solicitors and law firms who value our contribution to the health of the profession – ‘solicitors helping others in times of need’.

4.4 Theme 4 – Adapting to changing needs

We constantly evaluate needs to ensure our resources are properly applied. In the modern world, solicitors, like all professionals, are increasingly susceptible to many different pressures, including mental health issues. We aim to address causes as much as symptoms. We place considerable emphasis on ensuring we provide appropriate support to achievable positive outcomes for our beneficiaries.

4.5 Theme 5 – Working in partnership

Sometimes the assistance we can provide serves to meet all the needs of the particular beneficiary. But often the situation is more complex, and we work with trusted partners to ensure that the support provided is both comprehensive and the best available. We think this approach will become increasingly more the norm.

5. Elements of the strategy

What we will do more of	What we will do less of	What we will stop
Increased consistency of messaging	Repeating the same messages/graphics on social media	Stopping consistency after each campaign. This will result in loss of momentum and traction with our audience
Content published monthly on the website to drive traffic to via other channels	Targeting only existing supporters (in external campaigns)	Bulletins tailored only for one segmentation of the audience
Internal communications published monthly with personalised and relevant messaging	Focusing communications via just one channel	A formal tone for all messaging. This will help content to be compelling and engaging (thus encourage repeated visits)
Publish a weekly ‘SOFT Report’ for trustees to		

highlight Successes, Failures, Opportunities and Threats		
Instigate a monthly dial-in with Trustees and Staff participating.		
Best practice in terms of copywriting, copyediting and SEO	Use of the acronym 'SBA' to refer to the charity	Publish news pages without images
Building of external relationships and guest blogs	Unambitious approach to all communications	
Publications of case studies	Use of images reflecting only one demographic of our audience	
Tactics to strengthen our audience's commitment to our cause and communicate the difference they make	Use of the words "Area Representatives" to describe volunteers	
Audience segmentation, notably for internal bulletins		
Online articles to gain the perception that we are experts in our field and give our take on issues directly and indirectly related to our cause. Example topics include aspects that affect our beneficiaries, affects of financial support and issues within the profession.		
Creation of graphics to reflect the content (rather than the author)		
Innovative tactics and methods to raise awareness of our cause		
Fresh designs of social media graphics for each month		
Capturing contact details and GDPR preferences for supporters		
Pro-active engagement via twitter (retweets, likes and replies) rather than only waiting for audience to engage with us		

Active presence at events, whether hosted by the charity or another organisation		
Interactivity with the legal press		
Cross channel messaging Communication internally with colleagues		

5. What will success look like?

- Consistent, streamlined messages delivered via a variety of channels
Content will be easily digested by both internal and external stakeholders
- Content designs that are refreshed each month (notably for social media)
Designs will be attractive and engaging
- Audience growth
Measured through web, social media and eNewsletter analytics. Plus increase of social media followers
- Presence within the legal media
- Presence at events
Hosted by SBA The Solicitors' Charity and external organisations
- Refreshment of how the charity appears and is perceived
E.g. modern, forward thinking and experts in our field
- Stronger relationships with volunteers
Measured through engagement of internal campaigns and feedback from colleagues

6. Costs and resources

The majority of activity will be delivered via digital platforms (which involved less overhead). Costs will be managed by the post holder for communications in accordance to the annual marketing budget. This will be administrated in collaboration with the Finance Director.

An external PR agency (Carswell Gould) has been hired to assist with all marketing activities and implement certain campaigns. The effectiveness of this resource will be reviewed accordingly.

Communications stakeholder map



High



Influence



Low

Keep satisfied

- Patron
- Press (general)
- Representative groups
- HMRC
- Company House
- Charity Commission
- SRA
- Access to Justice
- JLD

Manage closely

- Press (legal)
- President
- Existing donors (firms)
- Potential donors (firms & ind)
- Potential beneficiaries
- Trustees
- Volunteers
- LawCare
- Local law societies
- London Legal Support Trust
- SAS
- Existing donors (ind)
- Staff
- Beneficiaries

Monitor

- LSO
- Bank
- Auditors
- Suppliers

Keep informed

- Retired Trustees
- Vice President
- Citizens Advice Manchester
- Renovo
- Retired Trustees

Interest

High