

**HELDERBERG COLLEGE  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Open Day**

**Public Relations Campaign  
Plan**

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## **Introduction**

Helderberg College of Higher Education is part of the second-largest education system in the world and is operated by the Seventh-day-Adventist Church. The college provides top-notch education in South Africa and the SADC area. It is situated in the lovely town of Somerset West, Cape Town, on the foothills of Helderberg mountain. Their goal is to generate competent graduates by providing value-based higher education in a variety of subjects, grounded in the educational philosophy of Seventh -day-Adventists.

## **PHASE 1: FORMATIVE RESEARCH**

### **Step 1: The Situation**

Being a Seventh Day Adventist institution, Helderberg College also accepts students from different denominations. Recently, the college has found itself accepting more non-Adventist students and few Theology students. This year's student population consists of mostly students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, as opposed to the earlier years when the Theology students made up half of the student population. The school is planning an Open Day, whereby they would use this opportunity to reach more Seventh-day-Adventist students.

Even though the location is one of the college's strengths, it is also a weakness. Since the college is located forty minutes from the Cape Town city centre, it becomes costly for students to commute from Cape Town to Somerset West and since the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Business do not offer online classes, prospective student would rather opt to study at the universities nearby. This is why the Faculty of Social Science is dominating because it offers both online and in person classes.

### **Step 2: The organisation**

For the past 130 years, Helderberg College has changed a substantial number of students, having more than 10,000 graduates since the college was founded and past alumni whose families became part of the Helderberg family. One of the college's greatest strengths is the Christian values they uphold. Located in Somerset West, and away from the distractions of the city centre, Helderberg College offers a sense of refuge, protecting its students within its four walls.

The Faculty of Business, Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education are faculties available at the college. While the college offers the necessary knowledge for each faculty, it also offers modules that reflect on the Christ's love and values from the Bible.

Helderberg College has had past events such as open day, market day and education day. Last year, the college celebrated its 130<sup>th</sup> year anniversary on education day where we had people from all over Cape Town attending for the Sabbath special. For last year's market day, we had students from Stellenbosch University and other universities attending and taking part in face painting, food stalls, the mini-hike and scavenger hunt.

It is events like these that help boost up the name of the school. Helderberg College still offer great and fun activities all while adhering to the Christian values.

The college's target audience are prospective Theology and Seventh-day-Adventist students as well as their parents. While the college is hoping to reel in students, it is their parents who pitch in on the financial side for the students.

### **Step 3: The public**

Current students, alumni, faculty, staff, local businesses, and the media, are the stakeholders of the college. They have the knowledge of the college, its value and what it stands for.

The students are aware of the values that are adhered in the college and are supportive, but they have expressed their concerns about the food served at the cafeteria. A vast number of the student population prefer to eat meat and would prefer some chicken and beef options in the menu, but the college does not offer that. One of college's value is to offer fresh authentic and vegetarian food that will help in the betterment of their students.

Even though the students had been made aware of this when they joined the college, it still does not stop them from asking or raising their concerns every now and then.

Helderberg will not sway from serving vegetarian meals, and it is because of this, students, faculty members, and people outside the college are still buying meals at the cafeteria.

## **PHASE 2: STRATEGY**

### **Step 4: The goals and objectives**

The purpose or the aim of the Open Day is to recruit more Seventh day-Adventist students as well as Theology students. To show the community and potential students everything that Helderberg College has to offer.

With the open day event the college is hoping to reach and increase the number of Seventh-day-Adventist students by thirty-five percent by next year and another five percent every year after that. The aim should not be a one-time thing but should be long-term. There would be no point in trying to increase the numbers only for them to decrease a few years later.

For this to be successful, the college will need to know exactly the area they lack in terms of attracting prospective students. This could be in term of social media influence or interschool events. After working out the logistics, the goals could be broken down into tactics.

### **Step 5: The strategies**

Developing strategies such as using social media to pull and engage with prospective students, partnering with local high schools during college day to promote upcoming college events and the institution itself, or offering scholarships for the attendees are some of the ways that could guarantee a great outcome in the rise in numbers.

However, these strategies must be planned accordingly and should be time-based. How, where, and when these plans will take place it crucial.

### **Step 6: The message**

Instead of advertising the college and asking Seventh-day-Adventist students to apply, the college could use the pull marketing approach. Promote the college in way that shows its mission statement and the values it upholds. Taking pictures of the beautiful campus and its surrounding nature, would portray to the prospective students how refreshing a walk around campus would be.

- **Content:** What information do we need to convey? Helderberg College could convey a simple message such as: “Living a Christ-centred life by loving and being of service to others”.
- **Tone:** The language used can affect how the information is received by the public and prospective student. To sound genuine, the college will have to choose their words carefully to ensure that there is no double meaning. It should be friendly and conversational.
- **Register:** The words used are the casual or formal. As a Seventh-day-Adventist, it is expected of college to use words that fit the vision, hence the use of slang cannot be used in the formal message.
- **Voice:** Who is the voice of the college? Is it college as a whole or a representative like as the College President?

Helderberg College’s message strategy could be highlighting all the events that have happened over the years to draw in prospective students and their families. For a promotional TikTok video, the college could you a catchphrase such as: “Will this be you?” This all depends on the approach the marketing team will take.

### PHASE 3: TACTICS

#### Step 7: The Communication tactics

MONTHS	APRIL				MAY				JUNE				JULY				AUGUST			
WEEKS	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
POSTERS			■	■	■	■									■	■	■	■	■	
TIKTOK			■	■	■				■	■	■				■	■	■	■		
INSTAGRAM			■	■	■	■	■	■							■	■	■	■	■	■
FACEBOOK						■	■	■	■	■					■	■	■	■	■	■
WEBSITE									■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

After sorting out the content, tone, register and voice of the message that they want to use with the Open Day, the college will make use of various forms of media as soon as possible to boost awareness of the event. This will be over span of five months, whereby each form of media will operate under a specific time limit as the day of the event draws closer.

### 1. **Posters**

These are the posters that the PR team would have to print and distribute all over campus and on the notice boards about the Open Day, relaying any valuable information on it. The first round of posters would be distributed for the third week of April to second week of May. This would serve as an introduction for the public about the day.

The second round of posters would then be distributed from the third week of July up until the day of the event. The posters could also be distributed at Helderberg High School or any other high schools nearby.

### 2. **TikTok**

TikTok has become a popular social media platform since 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. By utilising its popularity, the PR team could create three videos and upload them to the college's official TikTok account. The first video could highlight the past events that college had last year; from the Peninsula Tour, Market Day, Education Day, and the Seventh-day-Adventist Student Movement (SDASM). The video could be posted from the third week of April to the first week of May with the catchphrase "Are you ready?" and the date of the Open Day. The video could be between ten to fifteen seconds long. A teaser if you will.

The second video could be posted from the second to the fourth week of July. In this video the PR team can give more details about that will happen on Open Day. The location and activities that will take place, as well as the contact details for the college. Finally, the third video will have all the details about the event, that were not mentioned in the earlier videos. This would then be the official trailer of the day.

### 3. **Instagram**

This is when the PR team posts the digital posters on the college's official Instagram page with the proper captions that give a little insight on the upcoming event as well as using the proper hashtags ensuring it reaches the targeted audience.

#### 4. Facebook

Most of the new generation do not use Facebook, but their parents and families do. By sharing the Open Day posters on Facebook, the parents of prospective students are sure to interact with them and share them with their friends and other family members.

#### 5. Website

On the college's official website, the marketing team could set up a tab specifically for the Open Day, detailing everything that will take place. From the whole college tour, to meeting the faculty members, to watching a friendly soccer match of Helderberg College versus University of Western Cape, these are the few things that could be on the website.

By doing so, this gives prospective students and families from various parts of South Africa (and even the world) to make travel arrangements for the day. This also give the college an opportunity to tease the public and increase the eagerness for the day.

The PR team will need to consider the following when selecting the communication tactics:

- **Mode:** This is the forms of media that will be used by the college to spread the word about the Open Day. These includes Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.
- **Timing:** The exact time and date are crucial for the message that the college wants to send out. In this case, the college would use the pull marketing approach when it comes to TikTok videos, and this could happen over different period.
- **Frequency:** For TikTok videos, a total of three to four TikTok videos from now until the day of the event.

Each video will highlight different areas of the message that the college is trying to send, but still relates to the main message. The same goes for the Facebook and Instagram posters. The more times the college publishes the posters, the more awareness is raised to the students and their families.

- **Engagement:** With either physical printed posters or digital posters shared on the school's official social media pages, the college will include contact information such as an email address, phone number and the college's website. This provides more engagement from the people which could also be encouraged by inviting people to share and like videos, and subscribe to our Facebook or Instagram pages, or perhaps create a competition.

### **Step 8: The implementation**

Setting goals and making strategies can only go so far, but putting the plan into motion is a critical point in PR planning. This means all the material needs to be published to their respective social media platforms and for the college to respond to any engagement they receive from prospective students and families.

The PR teams should consider the following when implementing their plan:

- **Accurate Timing:** The PR teams needs to properly time their message. They cannot post TikTok videos and posters during times of disasters such as storms etc.
- **Availability for team response:** How quick is the team when it comes to responding to comments, or questions from the website?
- **Coincidence of other new events:** When posting on social media platforms, positive news that are circulating at the time with have a great positive impact, but it is the same for negative news. This is linked to correct timing.

In theory, this step seems simple but is complicated. The college should be ready to release all the material to the media and be ready to handle all interactions and the positive and negative feedback.

## **PHASE 4: EVALUATION RESEARCH**

### **Step 9: The evaluation**

During this step, the college measures the effectiveness of the public relations efforts against the responses on social media platforms, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to decide the success of the programme. The strategy will be reviewed to decide where improvements could be made in both the planning and execution.

- **Qualitative methods:** This determines the quality of the responses and interactions with the media from the public, in terms of reactions and engagement. In the case of the TikTok videos and the Instagram posts, this could be the nature of the comments.
- **Quantitative methods:** These methods determine the quantity(number) of the responses from the public. This could be the number of views from the TikTok videos and Instagram reels, or the number of questions from the college's official website about the event or the college in general.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

- How many views did the Instagram reel reach?
- Did the TikTok videos exceed 500 views?
- What was the average number of comments under each Instagram and Facebook post?
- How many interactions did the college receive from their official website in relation to the Open Day event?
- Did the college receive any enquires that did not relate to the Open Day event?
- Which post received the highest number of likes and shares?

Depending on rate of succession from the social media platforms will determine the areas of improvement the PR team will need to work on and revise the plan. Based on the evaluation, they can adjust the plan for future Open Day events.

It is important to note that how the public perceives the message is unpredictable and nothing is for certain. The PR team should continuously update the PR plan to adapt to changing circumstances and audience needs. Just because it worked for this period does not mean it will work in the next five years.