Sing for Hope: a strategic communications case study





NYC-based arts nonprofit Sing For Hope is probably best known for the colorful pianos it brings to the city's parks and plazas each summer.



Yet a bigger part of what they offer is live music programs for sick kids, the elderly, and increasingly, military veterans.





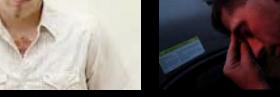


We set out to answer:

How can Sing For Hope better communicate about their veteran programs in order to get more funding?

No matter what era they served in, our military veterans are struggling.









Robert, Iraq

Nathan, Afghanistan

Marc, Vietnam

Peter, WWII

PTSD symptoms: hyperarousal, flashbacks, nightmares, paranoia



"feelings of helplessness, Isolation, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation,

loss of hope."



They face significant barriers to healing.



Fortunately, MANY groups are trying to help.

But how can Sing for Hope stand out from the competition?



























































































































































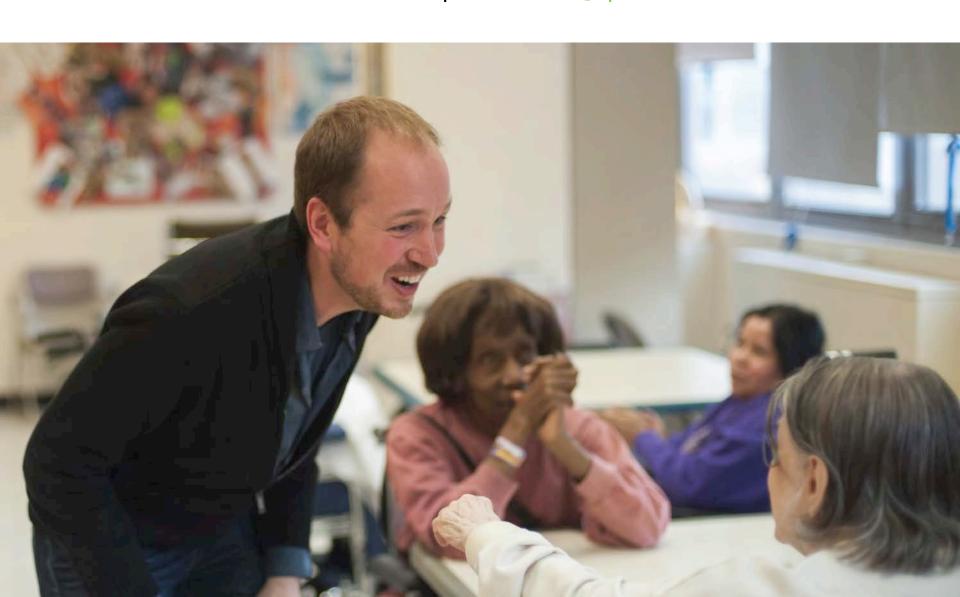








The answer lies in the unique healing power of live music.









The pitch: "healing readiness"

Sing for Hope programs help veterans be "ready" to pursue their healing journey.

- more physically relaxed
- feel "safe" and connected to others
- positive attitude
- more open to talk therapy

Therefore increasing the effectiveness of other therapeutic interventions available to them.

The target: corporations and corporate foundations

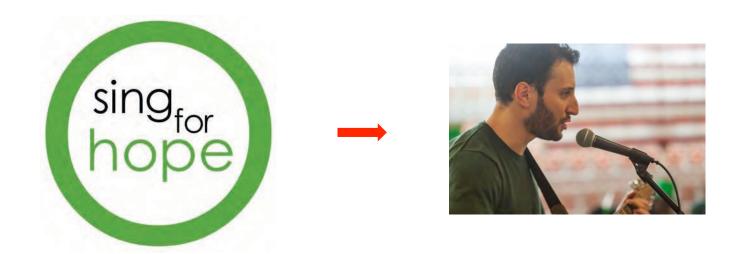
Instead of sprinkling support across a wide variety of program areas, there is a current trend in corporate philanthropy to support programs and organizations that align with a limited number of strategic priorities.

We have identified a number of corporate funders that have identified military veterans as a strategic priority. See appendix 2.

Specific language to use in the pitch

- 1. "[The Walmart Foundation] has demonstrated a major commitment to veterans."
- 2. What we do at Sing for Hope helps veterans by magnifying the effect of services already available to them.
 - live music is proven to improve mood (75% agree)
 - increases commitment to recovery
 "Their therapists say they open up more in sessions."
 - gives veterans the hope they need to begin and continue healing.
- 3. Can we show you more?

Recommended strategic shift



"arts for all"

"live music to give veterans hope"

Strategic action plan

- 1. Cultivate and pitch for corporate grants
 - · Develop pitch materials using "healing readiness" positioning
 - Enlist board and staff to make pitches
- 2. Distinctly brand veterans programming with unique name and logo
- Boost military credibility
 - Recruit military veteran(s) for board of directors and future leadership roles
 - Forge connections within military circles (one per quarter)
- 4. Improve financial transparency
 - create low-cost annual report and post on website
 - post financial statements & 990s
 - apply for Better Business Bureau, Guidestar, and Charity Navigator ratings

Appendix 1: The power of music

Scientists are more certain than ever about the incredible transformative power of music.

- Music has been scientifically proven to reduce blood pressure in surgical intensive-care patients (Updike, 1990)
 (cited in Mitchell 2002), decrease nausea and vomiting in chemotherapy patients (Frank, 1985) (cited in Mitchell 2002), lower both anxiety and pain levels in hysterectomy patients (Mullooly et al., 1988) (cited in Mitchell 2002).
- Intimate live music performances are an inexpensive, non-invasive, feasible way to improve a deteriorating quality of life for persons suffering from dementia. Can be considered a "form of supplementary care may also alleviate the task of caregivers." (Der Vleuten et al.)
 - SFH program coordinator Rachel told me that staff often comment tell her that they are more relaxed and happier after a SFH visit (interview with SFH staff).
- Music even makes students less unhappy about waiting around in university health clinic waiting room (Silverman et al.)
 - This is relevant because a portion of SFH performances take place in waiting rooms.
- The fact that it's live music makes it all the more powerful than pre-recorded.

And the benefits are more relevant than ever.

- In white papers released in 2012 and 2013, arising out of a recently annual event called "Arts & Health in the Military National Roundtable", the creative arts (including live music performance) are recognized as a valid, effective, and cost-effective way to treat military veterans, as part of comprehensive treatment programs.
- The field of Music Therapy has been established as an accredited professional certification and the ranks of certified music therapists are growing.

Appendix 2: funder targets

Corporations and corporate foundations that support veterans' wellbeing

Advil

Ahold / Stop & Shop

Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc. APF Properties

At a Glance

AT&T Corporate Giving Program

Bank of America

Barclay

Beef'O'Brady's

BIC

Booz Allen Hamilton Brawny (Georgia Pacific)

Brightstar

Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.

Camelbak

Campbell Soup Company

Cardinal Health

Chase Cintas Cisco Citigroup CME Group

Comcast NBC Universal

Country Crock Cracker Barrel

CSX

CVS Caremark
Del Monte

Ebay

Ernst & Young Flag Outpost

Flir Systems Food Lion

Freddie Mac Foundation

Geico Philanthropic Foundation

Giant Goodwill Google Harris Teeter

Hartz HBO Heinz Hershey HP IGA

ITT Exelis

Johnson & Johnson Lockheed Martin

LPGA Macy's

Merchants Distributors, Inc

Merck

Miller High Life

Mission NFL Oberto Oral B

OtterBox / Otter Cares Foundation

Overstock.com PGA Tour

Pilot Pen Corp of America Principal Financial Group

Pringles
Promo Depot
Prudential
PSEG
Raytheon

Regal Entertainment Group

Revlon

Safeway Foundation Schwab Charitable Fund Stanley Black&Decker

Subway

Sun Products Corp Survival Straps

The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation

Tough Mudder

TPC (The Players Club)

Trader Joe's Uhaul Union Bank

USAA (insurance for military)

Verizon Viacom

Walmart Foundation

Wells Fargo

Worksman Cycles

Appendix 3: Free resources

For learning about corporate giving:

- http://www.grantspace.org/classroom/ training-courses/grantseeking-basics
- http://grantspace.org/Classroom/Training-Courses/Introduction-to-Corporate-Giving
- http://www.grantspace.org/Tools/ Knowledge-Base/Funding-Resources/ Corporations/corporate-giving

For researching potential targets:

