Tangram Life Coaching: A Comprehensive Communications Plan

Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

Shelby Scott

Advisor: Deborah Davis

Ball State University
Muncie, IN

July 2013

Expected Graduation Date
July 20, 2013
Abstract

Any public relations professional can create a press kit, but it takes insight, passion and strategy to solve problems through public relations. This thesis aims to move beyond the rudimentary skill of creating a simple press kit to creating a comprehensive communications plan that can solve problems for and further the interests of Tangram Life Coaching.

Tangram Life Coaching is an organization that aims to help young adults with varying degrees of social or educational disabilities to make a smooth transition into higher education or independent living. The problem presented by Tangram was simple, their target audience was not being reached and they needed to redirect their focus to reach young adults. Through an analysis of the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats a new strategy and tactics were created to reach high school seniors and their families. The product of this strategy and its subsequent tactics is a complete communications plan.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Debbie Davis for advising me through this project. Not only did she agree to assist me on top of her overwhelming schedule, but she led me from a fledgling and meaningless idea to a complete thesis that made a substantial contribution to my portfolio with an organization that I was proud to assist and represent. In the two years that I have had the pleasure of knowing Professor Davis I have learned so much more than PR best practices. She has taught me what it really means to be a strong and driven professional woman, how imperative it is to pursue what you want and better yourself in the process, and the extreme importance of keeping a detailed calendar. Thank you Professor Davis, my education would not have been the same without you.

Outside of my advisor, I would like to thank Professor Richard Shoemaker, I couldn’t have done it without you. All of the employees within Tangram were amazing, Steve, Kathy, Lindsey, and Connie thank you for letting me inside your organization and for welcoming my suggestions with an open mind and great constructive feedback, I am a better professional for it.
Author's Statement

Upon beginning my honors thesis I had two goals I hoped to accomplish. First, I wanted to test my public relations education. I wanted to know that I could create and complete a project individually and to a caliber that I could be proud of with the knowledge I had already gained through classes and internships. Second, I wanted what I created to become a focal point in my portfolio that could attract future employers and showcase my skills. These simple and albeit vague goals grew and transformed throughout my thesis to a finished project that accomplished all I could have hoped for and a tangible product that I could be proud of. This process evolved from creating a press kit for a made up charitable organization (building off of a project from a previous class) to creating a media plan for a real life coaching organization.

I began not knowing what I wanted the focus of my plan to be, and through a meeting with my advisor had determined it needed to be something I could be passionate about. We settled upon building on a project I had completed in my PR Publications class about a fictional charity I had created in honor of my grandfather who died of prostate cancer. Much of the media plan was already created and I could add to it and adapt it with the skills I had learned since the first time I had created the project. However, the more I contemplated creating this project the more I realized I didn’t want the project to be fictional. In order to create a truly viable portfolio worthy media plan, it needed to be for a real world organization and aim to solve a problem.

Thankfully my thesis advisor Debbie Davis had the perfect organization in mind. She had just recently spoken with the CEO of Tangram (the parent organization of Tangram Life Coaching) who wanted to work on redirecting their life coaching program and reach
out to a different demographic than they had previously been pursuing. Now this was a project I could commit myself to. Although Tangram Life Coaching is a for-profit program that charges for its life coaching services, the program is built upon great intentions and creating the best possible lives for its clients. After meeting with the Tangram Life Coaching team and learning more about the program I knew this was an organization that I could be proud to work with and be passionate about in creating strategies and materials to further their goals.

The first step of the process was to gain an understanding of what Tangram was doing well and what they needed to improve upon. It was important to look at the organization as a whole and then apply it to their communication strategy specifically. To accomplish this I chose to utilize a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. The completed SWOT analysis can be seen below. I first asked the Tangram Life Coaching team to fill out the analysis without my assistance; I wanted to see what they perceived about their organization. I then added to and edited their analysis as an outsider looking in and shared the results with them. With this newfound awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization I began to move forward with creating the strategy.

The strategy was fairly simple. Create collateral that appealed to students, not just their parents. It should be inviting and engaging in a form that they are likely to access. To break down the reasoning behind this strategy we have to consider what collateral Tangram already had in place and who they were trying to reach. Much of Tangram’s existing collateral consisted of text heavy brochures, and folders filled with stacks of highly informative papers related to payment plans and the process by which they run their program. While this is exactly the information a parent would demand of an organization
involved in the wellbeing of their child, it might not necessarily interest the child, it may overwhelm them or cause them to want to disengage with the program because it looks like a lot of work. The majority of teenagers are highly likely to engage online, no matter their learning or social abilities. They want their information to be available quickly, easily, and with details as they pertain to them specifically. With this in mind I created documents that were simple, visually stimulating and digital friendly that explained how Tangram could help students in their everyday life.

The first piece I tackled was the brochure. I used the original parent brochure as a guide but shortened it up and changed the visuals. Because Tangram had already created a brand around their life coaching program, I chose to stick with the brand image that existed and worked to tailor it to students specifically. Utilizing the stock photos they had already purchased I created a visually stimulating brochure that showed ‘students’ in action. I kept the information short and used bulleted lists to convey the message. The way that this brochure would most relate with students occurs in the “Why Would Tangram Life Coaching Be Right For Me?” section, where I utilized “you” statements to project commonly felt and relatable issues to the reader.

The last page of the brochure consists of a parent testimonial, however in my final comments to Tangram I suggested that they try to find a student who has finished the program to write the back page testimonial because it would resonate better with potential students. Next to the contact information I also included a QR code, which if scanned by a smart phone would lead the student to the Tangram Life Coaching home page. I hoped that this would help encourage students to find out more and give them the resources to do so in the digital form that they prefer.
Building off of the brochure, I created two post card mailers, one targeted at parents and one at students. These mailers could easily be sent through the mail, placed on tables at college fairs and conferences or stuffed in new student orientation bags. These versatile and relatively inexpensive direct mail pieces lend themselves to generating interest in the program and directing interested families to where they can receive more information. Again I utilized projective “you” statements and QR code integration to generate interest and help students relate to the material while giving them the ability to learn more. The parent post card mailer was very similar but asked a question that many parents have asked themselves, “How will your child make the transition?” By posing a common question and drawing parents in Tangram has a better chance of engaging with parents of potential clients because they are able to relate to them.

Another piece that I created was an example of a newspaper or other print advertisement that would work well if Tangram could forge a partnership with a university. I used Ball State as an example. The purpose of this advertisement is to help direct students that may be struggling to the resources available to them. In an ideal partnership with the university the counseling center would view Tangram Life Coaching as an extension of the services that they offer students regularly and would be able to direct students who could benefit from the program to resources about Tangram Life Coaching.

Following the visual print materials are two press releases. I was excited to create these releases because it gave me an opportunity to showcase my writing ability while also helping me to continue to build my skills. The first release aims to announce the new target market of Tangram Life Coaching and includes a created quote for Steve O'dore the Director of Tangram Life Coaching. The most important message of this release that parents and students could take away would be the importance of gaining independence
earlier in life. This was an issue that Steve had addressed in our strategy meeting. Many people see life coaching as a last resort after all other programs have failed, as opposed to seeing it as a way to reach financial, social or educational independence earlier in life.

The second release is announcing a fictional partnership with Ball State University. I utilized Ball State as the example again but made this as a general template for a press release that Tangram could utilize after developing a partnership with universities, which is something they are currently pursuing. This release also addresses another concern mentioned by Tangram, that schools can see them as an outside threat as opposed to a program that helps supplement the services offered by universities and gives students the greater one-on-one attention that they may need.

The next piece I created was honestly more for my portfolio than anything else. I had yet to be able to ghostwrite or create a feature piece for a magazine or other publication. To prove to myself that I could do it I chose to write a feature article from the point of view of a mother of a Tangram client. Although this piece itself would not be usable for Tangram because it is purely fictional, I was proud of the end product and proving to myself that I'm not a one trick pony when it comes to writing so I decided to include it in my thesis project.

The final piece that I included was a document that I felt Tangram desperately needed but didn’t seem to have, a Frequently Asked Questions page. While all of this information can be found in their brochures and on their website you have to dig for it and it’s not necessarily something you can find right away. When people are researching an organization they may do business with, they want to be able to learn about them quickly and preferably find the information all in one place. I felt that having a Frequently Asked Question document would lend itself to greater credibility and accessibility for Tangram.
After creating these pieces I met with Tangram Life Coaching for a final time to discuss suggestions and thank them for giving me the opportunity to work with their organization. At that point in time they were planning on utilizing the parent and student mailers and considering creating the student brochure or making it digitally available on their website. It was rewarding for me to hear that they wanted to utilize the strategy and collateral pieces I had created. I greatly appreciated their part in my thesis experience as well and felt very proud of the final product we had created together.
### SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Not office-based</td>
<td>• Unaffordable for some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Face-to-face</td>
<td>• No full time staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Customization</td>
<td>• No sales person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different from traditional approaches that clients are used to accessibility to the life coach</td>
<td>• Find the business -not being able to tap into our market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ease of communication</td>
<td>• Finding the market that can afford the price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strike a balance between professionalism and intimacy</td>
<td>• Risk averse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clients trust life coaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expertise in our field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Years of experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not restrained by government funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commitment to target population that no one else has</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Values of the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Client/coach matching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• People with discretionary income</td>
<td>• Large Franchises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Legislature affecting post-secondary pressure for success</td>
<td>• Not a trademark is susceptible to copycats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Importance of a college degree increases every day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Growing appreciation for the vastness of the issue (time is right for tapping into the media)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foundations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tangram Life Coaching is a program directed at young adults with disabilities to help make the transition from high school and constant family support to post secondary education/employment and independence. The materials that Tangram currently uses are directed mainly at parents and may not appeal to students who may want or need the assistance offered by Tangram. Currently Tangram Life Coaching reaches adults at an average age of 27, but leadership at Tangram have found that reaching clients at a younger age would be more beneficial to the client. Tangram would now like to target students graduating from high school/entering college for their program.

The purpose of this media kit will be to announce Tangram’s expansion to include high school and college students and to improve the overall appeal to a younger age group. This media kit should appeal to high school and college counseling centers as an addition to their services and not competition to what they offer. A goal of this kit is to overcome the stigma of life coaching being exclusively for people with serious mental and physical disabilities. Instead it should be viewed more as a tool for people who just need a little extra push to reach their educational, social and employment goals and are struggling to do so independently.
General Information Media Kit

Prepared by Shelby Scott
tangram
LIFE COACHING
Life. Make it happen.
What is Tangram Life Coaching?

The Tangram Life Coaching program provides professional guidance, consultation, and real action-oriented strategies for students struggling with the transition from high school to college to help them gain independence.

Who can benefit from Tangram Life Coaching?

Individuals working with Tangram may live with varying degrees of social or learning disorders such as
- ADHD/ADD
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Dyslexia
- Bipolar Disorder

Why would Tangram Life Coaching be right for me?

Tangram Life Coaching might be right for you if
- You feel that other programs have not worked for you in the past
- You're struggling with classes, social situations, and feel like you just can't stay on track
- You're finding it difficult to manage all the new expectations and situations that are part of college life
- You want to succeed but don't know how to get there on your own
How does Tangram Life Coaching Work?

Part 1: A consultation with a clinician who
- helps you assess your needs
- develops a customized quality of life plan to fit your needs
- pairs you with your personal life coach.

Part 2: Meet with your life coach where you will
- develop action strategies
- begin implementing strategies
- evaluate successes and setbacks
- adjust quality of life plan accordingly

The quality of life plan assesses
- Financial awareness and stability
- Personal health and wellness
- Spirituality
- Education
- Employment
- Relationships

What does Tangram Life Coaching cost?

Because every person is unique, Tangram Life Coaching offers 3 tiers of support to best fit your needs and financial position. Generally, there is an initial consulting fee for the Tangram Life Coaching program as well as a monthly retainer fee.
Testimonial

My son Winston was diagnosed early in life with an Autism Spectrum Disorder among other learning disabilities. He struggled with living independently after graduating from high school because he no longer had the daily support he needed. My husband and I tried to fill that void but it was difficult. We started looking for other options to support him and found Tangram Life Coaching.

From the beginning the Tangram staff took the weight off our shoulders and gave Winston his confidence and independence back. My only regret is that we didn’t find Tangram sooner.

This program changed Winston’s life. He is living independently, truly independently, for the first time in his life. He has friends and volunteer projects and although he is still looking for a job, I’m not worried because I know that my new stronger Winston can handle it.

Ann Marie Daniels, Mother of Winston Daniels

Tangram got its name from the ancient Chinese puzzle made of geometric pieces that can be combined and arranged to make an endless variety of shapes. Tangram life coaching helps people arrange all the pieces to create a complete and fulfilling picture of their life.

Tangram Life Coaching
Phone: 317-968-9035
Toll Free: 877-861-0032
Email: coaches@tangramlifecoaching.org
www.tangramlifecoaching.org
Are you struggling with the transition from home to college? Do you have a learning difference keeping you from feeling comfortable in class or social situations? **Tangram** Life Coaching can supplement the campus resources available to you to make the most of your independence and this exciting time in your life. This one-on-one customized program will give you the tools you need to gain confidence in your studies, your ability to be self-reliant, and your social life. Scan the QR code or use the contact information below to learn more.

**Tangram Life Coaching**
Phone: 317-968-9035
Toll Free: 877-861-0032
Email: coaches@tangramlifecoaching.org
www.tangramlifecoaching.org
Will your child be able to take the transition from high school to college in stride? Does your child have a learning difference that may make their new independence overwhelming? Tangram Life Coaching can supplement the campus resources available to your child to make the most of their independence and this exciting time in their life. This one-on-one customized program will give them the tools they need to gain confidence in their studies, their ability to be self reliant, and their social life. Scan the QR code or use the contact information below to learn more.

Tangram Life Coaching
Phone: 317-968-9035
Toll Free: 877-861-0032
Email: coaches@tangramlifecoaching.org
www.tangramlifecoaching.org
Are you struggling with the transition to college from home? Do you have a learning difference keeping you from feeling comfortable in class or social situations? **Tangram Life Coaching** can supplement the campus resources available to you to make the most of your independence and this exciting time in your life. This one-on-one customized program will give you the tools you need to gain confidence in your studies, your ability to be self reliant, and your social life. Visit the Ball State Counseling Center or use the contact information below to learn more.

**Tangram Life Coaching**  
Phone: 317-968-9035  
Toll Free: 877-861-0032  
Email: coaches@tangramlifecoaching.org  
www.tangramlifecoaching.org
Tangram Life Coaching Expands Focus to Include Younger Clients
*Life coaching services targeted at new age group of special needs individuals*

*Indianapolis, Ind., Feb. 12, 2013* – Local students with disabilities have a new program to utilize in the Indianapolis area called Tangram Life Coaching. The company has previously offered life coaching services to special need adults but now looks to work with high school age students to help them gain independence at an earlier age.

"In the past we had focused our program to adults, who may not have the services available to them that high school and college age students do. However, in the process of helping our adult clients we realized there was a greater need of life skills training and support during the transitional phase from high school for students," said Steve O'dore, Director of Tangram Life Coaching. "Our hope is that we can help students now, so that they would not need our services later in life. We want students with learning and social disorders to be able to feel independent from age 18 on, not wait until age 30."

The program works with individuals that may have a varying degree of disabilities like Asperger's, Tourette's, Dyslexia, ADD, ADHD or Bipolar Disorder. The goal of the customized one-on-one coaching program is to give clients the basic life skills and tools they need socially, academically and personally to succeed and gain a sense of independence in the future. For high school age students this would also include helping smooth the transition to the new social and educational environment in college.

*Tangram Life Coaching* provides professional guidance, consultation, and real action-oriented strategies for individuals with disabilities to help them take control of their lives. Coaches help develop skills in the areas of relationships, employment, personal health and wellness, financial awareness and stability, spirituality, and education. To learn more visit www.tangramlifecoaching.org.

-END-
Indianapolis, Ind., Feb. 12, 2013 – Tangram Life Coaching has partnered with Ball State University to offer life coaching to students with various disorders that make independence and the transition to college difficult. The services offered by Tangram will not replace resources already available to students, but instead supplement them for students that need some extra guidance.

"While the services offered to students by Ball State are exceptional, there are students who need more one-on-one support to be successful in the college environment. That’s where we come in," said Steve O'Dore, Director for Tangram Life Coaching. "By partnering with Ball State our services can be made available to the students who need them most. We can help keep them focused and raise the graduation rate for students with special needs."

Students eligible for this service may have previously been unsuccessful with other programs offered, may be struggling in classes or social interactions on campus, or may find it difficult to live independently for the first time due to a social or learning difference. Some of these differences may include ADHD, ADD, Asperger Syndrome, Tourette’s Syndrome, Dyslexia or Bipolar Disorder.

The services offered by Tangram Life Coaching will be offered at a reduced rates through the partnership with Ball State University.

Students can find out more about Tangram Life Coaching at the Ball State University Counseling Center or by visiting www.tangramlifecoaching.org.

Tangram Life Coaching provides professional guidance, consultation and real action-oriented strategies for individuals with disabilities to help them take control of their lives. Tangram Life Coaching helps these individuals develop skills in the areas of relationships, employment, personal health and wellness, financial awareness and stability, spirituality and education.

-END-
Every mother dreams of the future for her child, she prays for their health, that they’ll make good friends in school, make the right choices in tough situations, and someday be independent enough to leave the nest. Those wishes don’t change when your son is diagnosed with ADHD, then bipolar disorder, and then an autism spectrum disorder like our son Winston was.

When Winston was only 4 we realized he was struggling to socialize appropriately with his classmates in pre-school, that he wasn’t developing as quickly as the other students. We took him to a specialist where he was diagnosed with not 1 but 3 disorders that might hinder his progress in school. Thankfully, Winston was in a school district with a strong special education focus and all his needs were met so that he was able to graduate high school like any other student.

But after Winston graduated high school it became more difficult. Without the support of his teachers during the day he lacked the interaction and guidance he had in the past and clung to his father and me. He had the ability to live alone, so we rented him a small apartment near our house and set out to find him a job. His disorders were not so extreme he could not function, they were simply a hindrance, but he struggled being alone and he had a lot of questions about problems that you and I would consider basic daily obstacles in life. I love my son with every fiber of my being, but it was a struggle to keep up with his needs.

My husband and I were grasping at straws looking for solutions to help Winston be self-sufficient. That’s when we heard about Tangram Life Coaching from one of Winston’s old counselors. We didn’t know what to expect, but my husband and I decided that if it could give Winston, and us, our independence again it was worth a try.

We were able to meet as a family with a psychologist, the director of the life coaching program and Winston’s personal life coach. My husband still swears Megan, Winston’s life coach, is a saint. She would answer his questions and help teach him how to run his household. She helped him maintain appropriate
relationships with his friends, and find volunteer opportunities and exercise classes to keep him focused.

When something wasn’t working for Winston his team would meet with him to help find new solutions that he could realistically accomplish on his own.

My only regret about Tangram Life Coaching is that we didn’t find it sooner. This program changed Winston’s life; he is now doing everything I ever dreamed he would be able to when I was a young mother. He is living independently, truly independently, for the first time in his life. He has friends and volunteer projects and although he is still looking for a job, I’m not worried because I know that my new stronger Winston can handle it. This is now Winston’s life to live and world to conquer and I couldn’t be happier.
Frequently Asked Questions

What is Tangram Life Coaching?
The Tangram Life Coaching program provides professional guidance, consultation, and real action-oriented strategies for individuals with disabilities to help them take control of their lives and gain independence. Tangram Life Coaching helps these individuals develop skills in the areas of relationships, employment, personal health and wellness, financial awareness and stability, spirituality, and education.

How can I contact Tangram Life Coaching?
Tangram Life Coaching
Phone: 317-968-9035
Toll Free: 877-861-0032
Email: coaches@tangramlifecoaching.org
www.tangramlifecoaching.org

Who is eligible for Tangram Life Coaching?
Individuals working with Tangram may live with varying degrees of social or learning disorders such as ADHD, ADD, Asperger Syndrome, Tourette’s Syndrome, Dyslexia or Bipolar Disorder.

Why would I use Tangram Life Coaching?
Tangram might be right for you if you feel that other programs have not worked for you in the past, if you’re struggling in employment, education, or social situations, or if you’re finding it difficult to live and function independently.

How does Tangram Life Coaching Work?
The Tangram Life Coaching program begins with consultation with a clinician, who will help you assess your needs, develop a customized quality of life plan to fit your needs, and pair you with your personal life coach. With your coach you will develop action strategies and begin implementing the plan. Throughout the program you will discover what works and does not work for you and your Tangram team will help you solve problems and revise your plan as necessary.

What does Tangram Life Coaching cost?
Because every Tangram plan is unique, every payment process is also unique. There is an initial consulting fee for the Tangram Life Coaching program as well as a monthly retainer fee. The amount required for the consultation and monthly retainer fee is dependent upon the needs of your individual plan.

Why is it called Tangram?
Tangram got its name from the ancient Chinese puzzle made of geometric pieces that can be combined and arranged to make an endless variety of shapes. Tangram life coaching helps people arrange all the pieces of their life to create a complete and fulfilling picture of their life.