



Kidzu Communication Audit

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Executive Summary:

The process of performing a communication audit on Kidzu Children's Museum was limited by the amount of information available. However, the audit was a success as the PR student research team was able to gain great insight into Kidzu's current communications efforts and what can be improved upon. Kidzu has a large, immersive space for children to play and learn; however, their membership and visitorship are not where they could be. In addition, Kidzu is looking to relocate to a much larger space with more amenities within the next 5 years. This provides additional obstacles in terms of spreading the word about the new space and soliciting donations for funding purposes. This relocation is not only an obstacle but also an opportunity for massive growth. In order to grow as productively as they can, Kidzu must communicate with their members and guests in order to know what is most needed. This communication audit looks deeply into ways Kidzu currently communicates with the public, and ways to improve communication.

This audit consisted of a tour of the facilities, review and analysis of data on the upcoming project, an interview with the communications manager and review of their social media platforms and website. The initial tour was to familiarize the PR student research team with the museum and understand what they had to offer. By understanding the facilities the team then had more of an opportunity to see what parts of Kidzu were advertised and communicated to the public effectively and what needed more exposure.

After touring Kidzu, the PR student research team sat down with Candace King, the communications manager at Kidzu, for insight into her role at Kidzu and where she wanted

to improve. She shared that her role is limited due to her small budget given that Kidzu is a nonprofit. Additionally, she doesn't work full time which further limits her capabilities.

After the initial visit to Kidzu, the PR student research team went to work auditing with the resources they were given access to. The team did a thorough review of Kidzu's social media accounts on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest. The team was able to address Kidzu's strengths and weaknesses online and where they should focus more time and energy for growth. Kidzu maintaining their emphasis on Facebook is important but it would also be extremely beneficial to spend more time developing their Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube accounts. These have potential to be extremely effective means to reach families and grow their membership. Staying relevant online and in the minds of kids and parents can go a long way in growing Kidzu.

The next part of the audit consisted of a review of Kidzu's website to see how well it is maintained and how navigable it is. The website has room for improvement. The main page could improve in its storytelling capabilities. Just from the website it is hard to get an idea of what Kidzu is specifically and what it has to offer. If the website was better suited to show off all that Kidzu has to offer they would be able to attract more first time visitors and potentially grow their membership. Another aspect of the website that could use improvement is their logo. They have changed it in recent years to include textures to show the different elements used at Kidzu; however, it does not demonstrate what Kidzu is. Their logo must be improved to show that it is kid-friendly and fun. By improving their communication to the public through online channels, they will be able to reach many more people at a relatively low cost thus helping Kidzu to stay within their means.

After speaking with King and reviewing Kidzu's communication methods, the PR student research team was able to determine Kidzu's main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Kidzu is strong in diverse programs and a wide audience of children up to 10-years-old. Additionally Kidzu is committed to gathering customer response in terms of their potential new construction. They communicate well with their members by newsletters as well, a practice King mentioned was very popular.

Apart from weaknesses in social media presence, Kidzu also struggles with the limitations of their space. Their location is difficult to find within the mall, their space is small and they have minimal outside areas. They aim to solve these problems with the hopes of building an entirely new Kidzu location. Unfortunately, they are also limited by their funding as a nonprofit and securing the funds for the new space is not guaranteed.

A key opportunity for Kidzu is growing membership among the Chinese community within Chapel Hill. The population of Mandarin-speaking families is growing and by integrating more Mandarin into their signage Kidzu would be accessible to more families across Chapel Hill. Another opportunity for Kidzu is to tap into video advertising. This would be a much better way to showcase all that they have to offer and would provide a much better feel for the space than just photos.

Kidzu does not have many direct threats in the Chapel Hill area when it comes to other children's museums. However, Kidzu is threatened by the outdoors in the Spring and Fall when the weather is nice and families are more inclined to stay home than play inside. The threat of families avoiding Kidzu for lack of outside space can be resolved if Kidzu is able to expand to a new structure.

In conclusion, Kidzu has a wonderful model that provides places to play and learn for children and their families. Kidzu is committed to providing improved facilities based on what is best for their customers. This has been proven due to the extensive research they have completed to learn what their members and guests want. They have room to grow in their social media channels and their online presence. They could greatly benefit from increasing their attention on these platforms. The one catch stopping Kidzu from reaching their potential in communications is their budget as a nonprofit. They allocate most of their funds to improving programs and maintaining their facilities which leaves the communications department sparse and without sufficient funds to improve at the rate they would like. In total, Kidzu makes the most of the time and budget they have and keeps their membership strong.

Introduction:

At Kidzu, children have the opportunity to make, build, explore and learn while doing their favorite thing, having fun! Offering experiences for children of all ages, infant to tween, Kidzu offers a diverse array of multi-sensory, play-centered educational programs for children and their families, teachers, and caregivers. As a truly hands-on museum, Kidzu's mission, as stated on their website, is to inspire children and the adults in their lives to learn through creative, purposeful play. With a focus on STEM education, the arts, child health and emerging literacy, Kidzu has something to appeal to every family. Currently located at University Place mall in Chapel Hill, NC, their vision is to become a national model of excellence as a community-centered children's museum. Kidzu's mission and vision is made possible by 71 museum volunteers, 37 permanent staff members, and over 100 community partners.

Methodology:

Considering that Kidzu's clientele consists of families and small children the student PR research team realized that surveying them and getting observations would be a rather difficult challenge, but luckily Kidzu had performed some questionnaires and surveys that the team was able to utilize to use as research resources. These surveys were posted signs throughout Kidzu that served as a visual aid to determine what Kidzu could improve on and gave the team an idea of the demographic breakdown of their clientele.

The surveys, which can be found later in the appendix starting on page 18, were conducted using a poster board and a sticker, although this seems rather simple it serves as an efficient way to gauge the Kidzu clientele. There were surveys that asked what aged children parents and guardians come to Kidzu with as well as whether they were a Kidzu member, community member visiting Kidzu, or an out of town visitor. Those surveys were performed simply by the participant placing a sticker in a box that listed their choice, so the answers were one of 4 or 3 options. The other type of survey that they conducted was not based on individual choices, but rather a range where the participant could place their sticker on the poster determined by where they felt their choice landed. The surveys that included a ranged and not a fixed answer consisted of the question of what people wished Kidzu would extend. Some of the ranges were age range, hours, exhibit offerings, outdoor space, programs and event rental spaces. There was also a range survey where participants could vote on how they value proximity. The proximity survey consisted of ranges based on

public transportation, parking, shops & amenities, schools, UNC-CH, and rural areas. There was also a board where participants could write whatever suggestion they had for Kidzu.

Since the people at Kidzu had done most of the work by posting these simple yet informative surveys all the team had to do was analyze the results and come up with recommendations.

Audit Diary:

The audit performed on Kidzu Children's Museum consisted of an interview of Candace King, the communications manager at Kidzu, a thorough review of their website and social media platforms, and a thorough review and analysis of survey results conducted by King. King explained that Kidzu does not have the funds to perform the communications efforts they would be able to conduct if they weren't constrained by their nonprofit funding. They are limited to owned and earned media for the majority of their communication efforts. Despite their limited budget, they still are able to perform well and have a strong member base of 1,100 families.

The audit began with a tour of the entire Kidzu facilities. First, the front desk which clearly lists the prices of daily visits for mall shoppers who may be first time visitors. Then, the back office to take a look at the desk spaces occupied by Kidzu employees and interns. Their office space is limited thus leaving as much room as possible for the play places for children.

Next the PR student research team toured the children's facilities. They saw places for parents to park strollers which makes the space accessible to young families. The team moved throughout the facilities and saw that there was a gated and padded area for toddlers who might not be able to walk yet. This made the space even more accessible to families with young kids who might not have access to play places. The team then moved towards the play kitchen and garden areas which are meant to teach children ways to play well with each other and learn about gardening techniques. In the middle of the space they

have a climbing structure for children who are older and more mobile. After moving through the rest of the play areas, the PR student research team went to the back of the space that is meant for arts and crafts. The space is outfitted with supplies and provides a space for the children to get messy. The entire area is well outfitted to serving children and their families.

After touring the space, the PR student research team was able to sit down with King to learn more about her responsibilities and efforts as the Kidzu communications manager. She shared her role and limitations mostly due to time and budget. She also introduced her communications intern she works closely with. They each discussed what they wish to improve on.

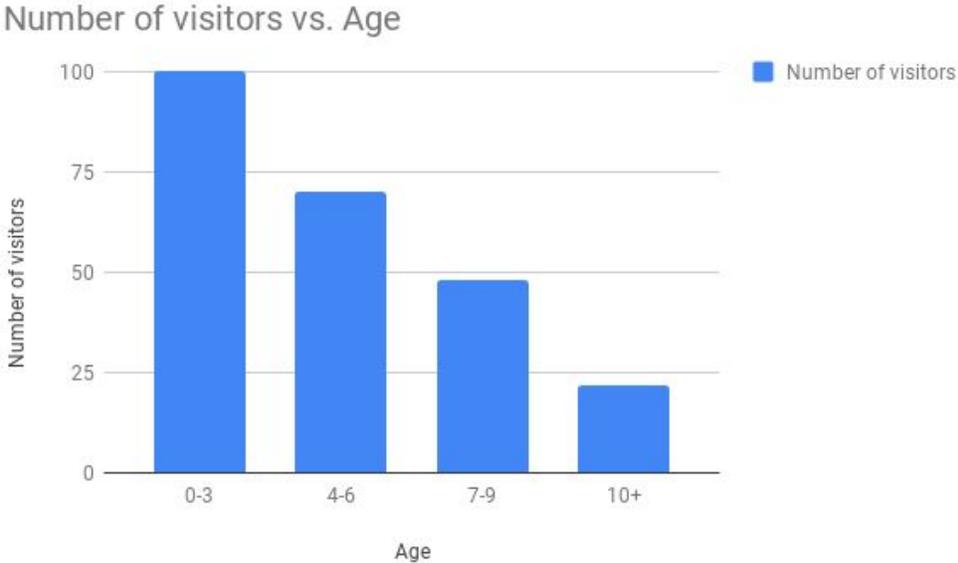
King provided the PR student research team with data collected on the possibility of constructing a new Kidzu facility with much more space and updated facilities. They solicited Kidzu parents and kids for input on what they want in a new Kidzu space and the PR student research team was able to access that data in order to gain a better understanding of what Kidzu's clientele wants.

Lastly, the PR student research team reviewed Kidzu's website and social media pages in order to get a better understanding of the communication efforts that King and her intern are able to perform. The team looked extensively at their website and Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages. In addition, they looked into social media channels that they do not yet use however might benefit from.

Results of Audit Process:

The audit process was limited due to client confidentiality and information King and her intern were able to provide. However, the PR student research team was still able to learn valuable information on the communication efforts made by Kidzu and ways that the team will be able to add value.

The space at Kidzu is limited however, they utilize it well by having small offices and check in space so that the majority is for the children. The needs of the children are supplied by the data that Kidzu collected from their clients on what they want to see more of. The chart below is data the PR student research team was given on the most popular ages of Kidzu visitors. This provides much needed information on the best ways to serve the Kidzu population as well as activities and structures that might be in high demand for the new facility.



Aside from the information gathered on Kidzu's demographics, the PR student research team compiled data on improvements and facilities that are most important for Kidzu's clientele. Of the subjects asked about, the most important were an extension of the age range at Kidzu, longer hours at Kidzu, increased exhibit offerings, increased outdoor space, and increased programs. On the other hand, more event rental opportunities were not as valued by Kidzu patrons. Kidzu is in the process of planning a new facility that would provide much more space for the kids. This information gathered from families and kids is vital in communicating with each other in what they want.

After reviewing the Kidzu website, which can be found at www.kidzuchildrensmuseum.org, the PR student research team was able to identify certain needs that they can suggest to Kidzu to fix. Their website is easily navigable; however, their logo in the top left corner is missing the letters thus leaving it incomplete. Additionally, their blog posts are infrequent. They have not written a new post since May. Their website does include photos and videos but they need to add much more to showcase such a visual museum. In order to increase attendance and membership, the website should be more interactive and informative on the best parts of the museum, which are the play places for kids. These are not shown nearly enough on the website and could improve attendance and members.

Kidzu's social media accounts could benefit from more attention as well. Their Instagram posts, found on @kidzucm, are good quality however, they do not post nearly as frequently as they should for a nonprofit. In their feed there are gaps between posts of over a month. This should never happen for a nonprofit that wants to increase membership and

continue to grow. Their Twitter account, @kidzucm, is updated much more frequently than Instagram. However, much of their content is retweets and not enough is content from the actual museum, the type of photos that would attract families to Kidzu. Their Facebook page, which can be found at www.Facebook.com/kidzu, contains the most updated and relevant content out of all of the social media platforms. They post updates and quality photos to show users what is going on at Kidzu. With 3,500 likes on their Facebook page, this appears to be their primary communication tool to the general public. Due to the fact that Facebook is most likely the most popular site for their target demographic, which is parents of young children, it is great that is where their largest audience is. However, with the growing popularity of Instagram, Kidzu needs to find a way to grow their followers on that social media channel.

Kidzu also has a Pinterest account which can be found at www.pinterest.com/kidzucm. The existence of a Pinterest account is great for the moms who are looking for at-home inspiration for children's activities. However, this account has not been updated in years. The account is still using the Kidzu logo from years ago before they updated it away from primary colors. Increased attention on their Pinterest page could allow for families to learn more about Kidzu and the activities that children are able to learn there.

Kidzu also has a YouTube page which is not updated frequently. Their page has 8 videos and no subscribers. Increasing the number of videos on their YouTube channel would be very beneficial to the organization to showcase all that they offer. As their communication efforts stand, it is hard to get a good sense of what Kidzu looks and feels

like unless you visit the physical museum. With improved YouTube presence, families could see what is so great about Kidzu to draw them in. This would improve online presence as well as members and donors.

As stated earlier, Kidzu has struggled with communicating as much as they would like due to budget restrictions. Although it would take time, if Kidzu improved their communications efforts to get the word out about what they offer, they would be able to increase membership and donations thus providing more money to the communications team to fulfill their goals.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

In March of 2006, Kidzu Children's Museum opened at 105 East Franklin Street, serving 150,000 visitors in its first five years of operation. As they kickstarted their mission of encouraging learning through creative, purposeful play, they found themselves in need of a larger space to meet the demands that came with hosting various educational and outreach programs, as well as the ever-changing exhibits coming through the space. In 2011, the town of Chapel Hill offered the museum an interim residence in the downtown area, Kidzu2, as it was called, continued to work towards becoming a strong, community-centered children's museum for two years while awaiting a more permanent home. In February to July 2014, Kidzu took up residence in two different locations at University Place mall, first in a 10,000 sq. ft location formerly used as the Chapel Hill Public Library, and then to a smaller, more temporary location focused solely on the Makery and other specified programming.

Their most recent move in the mall, occurring in April of 2015, to an 8,500 sq. ft. space, acts as their official Launch Pad location. This location has provided Kidzu with the opportunity to continually develop more program offerings, from partnerships with other educational initiatives to the size of the space allowing for sectioned areas of the museum to serve specific exhibits. These include: "The Front Yard", a small outdoor learning garden, "Farm to Fork", a play area celebrating local food and farming initiatives, the "Forest Theater", a miniature performance space for theatrical expression, the "Flexible Forest", a jungle-gym like area with a climbing wall, tree house, and other nature inspired elements, the "Build Guild", a construction themed area that helps children learn fine and

gross motor skills, the “Book Nook”, a quiet reading area geared towards children with various sensory needs as well as nursing mothers, “The Makery”, a STEAM focused crafting area dedicated to maker education and promoting creativity through science, technology, engineering, arts and math. Several other smaller exhibits are also available in the space.

While Kidzu has been able to evolve in their current home, the staff has felt suppressed by their location in a shopping mall. University Place will not allow Kidzu to post any signage on the exterior of the mall, making finding the museum difficult for visitors. Additionally, the lack of available outdoor space has limited Kidzu’s programming capabilities, and has therefore made attracting visitors in times of good weather more difficult. The staff also shared that the main complaint they receive from visitors is that there isn’t enough space to comfortably hold all of the exhibits and visitors that come through the museum each day. From the staff directly, their biggest complaint is the lack of stability that has come from the museum’s lack of a lasting home.

Issues such as these are the basis for Kidzu’s ultimate goal of developing a truly permanent, stand alone museum, with an easy to find location, even more square footage, and more outdoor space, to hopefully grow and serve more children and families in the Chapel Hill community. Since early 2015, Kidzu has been making plans for their future home, exploring affordable site and partnership options to make Kidzu’s educational vision a reality. The current plan is to build the permanent museum on a 3-acre piece of land in Southern Community Park. However, the logistics of the new museum are very much still in development according to staff, and opening is still years away. Therefore, the

goal Kidzu staff is to continue to develop their brand as an educational resource for parents as well as place of fun stimulation and growth for children.

Upon visiting Kidzu for the first time, the PR student research team got the opportunity to receive a full tour of the facility as well as discuss the current state of the museum with communications manager, Candace King. In this discussion, she shared with the team the staff's specific wishes for developing Kidzu's public relations efforts. Based on the expressed desires as well as research within this audit, the PR student research team recommends the following for Kidzu's communications program:

To Be Done Immediately:

- Develop a proactive social media plan that emphasizes consistent updates and relevant, high quality content
- Begin posting more often on the Kidzu Blog to keep members and potential visitors updated on the goings on of the museum as well as provide content that acts as a helpful resource to parents.

To Be Done Soon:

- Create more content for platforms like Pinterest that act as a go-to idea machine for families
- A redesign of the museum's logo and visual branding
- Partially redesigning the website to be more visually appealing as well as more user-friendly

To Be Done When Time/Money Allows:

- Create at least one marketing video that can be used to easily express what makes Kidzu unique

SWOT Analysis for: Kidzu Children’s Museum

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent growth of website, stronger SEO - Continuously growing social media presence - Diverse program offerings (appeals to kids 6 mo - 10 yrs) - Dedication to gathering customer feedback/expansion plans - Regularly ends out a digital newsletter to members 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location (hard to find inside the mall, no signage outside) - Budget restrictions - Minimal staff is stretched thin - Internal conflicts amongst staff, not letting programs run long enough to determine effectiveness - Not enough space (main complaint from parents) - No current outdoor space - Blog desperately needs more attention
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To become a reliable resource for parents (growing Pinterest page, sharing fun ideas for families to do at home) - Continue to grow social media (ideally one person managing one platform each) - Effectively communication/building relationships with the large Chinese community in the area - Explore video advertising 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weather (fall/spring are slowest times as families are spending time outside; sunny day = lower attendance) - Other children’s learning facilities (Museum of Life and Science & Notasium both in Durham, Marbles Kids Museum in Raleigh) - Local public library programs

Appendix:

