

Indiana CPA Society
Branding Case Study
Fall 2001

The Indiana CPA Society (the Society) is a 501(c)6 professional society of CPAs, accounting students, and business affiliates in Indiana. Its fiscal year ends March 31 and has an annual budget of about \$3.8 million. The Society has more than 7,600 members statewide whose occupations range from strategic business advisors to financial consultants to professors to members of corporate management.

The Society provides many valuable benefits to its members. It keeps its members informed of current and anticipated changes in legislative and environmental issues affecting CPAs. It promotes sharing of information through educational and networking opportunities. In addition, the Society serves as a united voice of Indiana CPAs by introducing and sponsoring legislation that affects the CPA profession and by enhancing the positive image of CPAs to the public and other target groups. That branding effort has coincided with participation in the American Institute of CPAs Image Enhancement Campaign since 1996.

Background Information

In 1998 the AICPA developed the “CPA Vision Project 2011 and Beyond.” CPAVision.org articulates the vision as,

Helping the CPA profession stay on top of the change curve is what the CPA Vision Process is all about. With direct grassroots input from CPAs across the nation and support from the professional organizations that act on their behalf, the CPA Vision Process has created a comprehensive and integrated vision of the profession’s future that will—

- *Build awareness of future opportunities and challenges for all segments of the profession.*
- *Lead the profession as it navigates the changing demands of the marketplace.*
- *Draw together the profession to create a vibrant and viable future.*
- *Leverage the CPA’s core competencies and values.*
- *Guide current and future initiatives in support of the profession and the protection of the public interest.*

By focusing on the future, CPAs will be better able to plan for their own needs, as well as those of clients and employers in the next century. Our goal is as simple as it is ambitious: to enable the profession to create its future.

Keeping in line with this vision, the Indiana CPA Society’s Board of Directors in 1999 directed the Society to increase its public relations expenses for branding efforts yearly until reaching \$300,000 by the year 2003. The Society has complied with this directive and budgeted \$200,000 for the current fiscal year ending March 2002. In 2000 the AICPA started the State Society Image Enhancement Partnership Program. This program

encourages state societies to increase spending on branding through advertisements using the profession's logo. This program matches dollars spent using the following two-tier reimbursement formula:

Tier 1 = 25% of Actual Ad Budget

Tier 2 = the lesser of

- A. Planned budget increase over last year or
- B. 15% of last years actual ad budget

The Indiana CPA Society participated in this pilot program's first year and received just over \$46,000 in matching dollars. There is no assurance that this program will be ongoing in years to come, however the Society has been informed that the program will be in place for 2001.

Required Documentation & Analysis

With the growing dollars allocated to branding efforts, it is imperative that the Society maximize the effectiveness of the campaign. Ad placements must reflect the criteria set forth in the advertising strategy while generating the most desirable return on investment.

1. Keeping the above information in mind, develop a strategy that would maximize the Indiana CPA Society's return on its branding investment as well as the AICPA's Image Enhancement dollars. The strategy should identify (at least) the following:
 - Criteria
 - Timing
 - Media outlets
 - Geographic distribution
 - Cooperative efforts; grass roots support and/or involvement
 - Success measurement
 - Target audience
 - Competing efforts (market analysis)
2. Prepare a Branding Budget for the fiscal year 2003 (April 2002 – March 2003)
3. Consider any market saturation issues (i.e. at what point do returns begin to diminish? Is there a maximum that should be invested in this program?).