

Running head: FROM RUNNING BASES TO TRAILBLAZING

From Running Bases to Trailblazing: A Strategic Communication Plan for Marketing the
Organizational Leadership Communication Aspects of America's Pastime

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Executive Summary:

As in many communities across the United States, the American Legion Post #51 in Concord, North Carolina operates a baseball program. The Post #51 program began the undertaking of rebuilding the organization after a period of declining support and participation. The 2015 season was successful, but the organization would like to increase community support for its program. With limited funding available, the organization relies on grass-roots efforts. This strategic communication plan is designed to help the organization plan and prepare its marketing, communication, and community engagement tasks for the 2016 season.

The first portion of the plan includes the purpose, rationale, and challenges and opportunities sections (pages 3 – 5). These sections describe the American Legion Post #51 baseball organization, its mission, current challenges, and how this plan can help the organization meet its goals. Among the key challenges facing the organization are building and maintaining a successful program on a limited budget, and generating excitement and support among members of the community without dedicated operations, administrative, or communications staff.

The analysis section of the plan (pages 5 – 14) examines the resources available to the Post #51 baseball program through the theoretical lens of capital theory. Pierre Bourdieu proposed that organizations have various resources, or capital, available to them, and understanding capital can help organizations grow their pool of resources. The analysis discusses the financial responsibilities of operating this organization, and provides an assessment of factors like existing relationships with the local media, social media use, reputation, and tools available. The market segmentation portion of the plan (pages 14 – 19) provides a demographic overview of the communities Post #51 serves. It also provides a broad assessment of the various audiences with whom the organization communicates. This section also examines two other American Legion Baseball organizations and two showcase organizations in North Carolina.

The next section of the plan offers eight strategies and multiple recommendations for developing each of the different forms of capital and utilizing institutionalization (pages 20 – 33). The list of recommended strategies is comprehensive, and includes ramping up efforts to build a social media presence, providing opportunities for players to interact with members of Post #51, and offering club pricing to sponsors and those who frequently attend games. The plan ends with a brief conclusion, a list of references, and an appendix with supporting documentation.

Purpose:

The purpose of this plan is to help the American Legion Post #51 in Concord, North Carolina increase community support for its baseball program for the 2016 season. Although the American Legion's national baseball program partners with major league baseball (MLB), Diamond Sports, The Baseball Factory, and others, individual leagues like the one Post #51 sponsors rely on local, league-level efforts for fundraising and marketing. This plan will analyze the resources, or capital, present in the Post #51 baseball organization, and recommend strategies to use these resources along with the inherent organizational leadership skills players and fans acquire through playing and watching baseball to market the program.

Rationale:

American Legion Baseball (ALB) is an amateur athletic league which promotes values such as sportsmanship, good health, active citizenship, leadership, and equality (American Legion, 2015). The junior and senior leagues serve boys ages 13 through 19, and approximately 60 percent of current college baseball players are former members of an ALB team. Well-known celebrity players like Chipper Jones, Johnny Bench, Madison Bumgarner, Don Mattingly, and numerous others are among ALB alumni. In fact, 60 program graduates are in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Notable figures not associated with professional baseball who participated in American Legion baseball during their youth include former Vice President Dick Cheney and esteemed television journalist Tom Brokaw.

The stated purpose of the national ALB program reads, in part, as follows: "To instill in the nation's youth a sincere desire to develop within themselves feelings of citizenship, sportsmanship, loyalty, and team spirit... To build the nation's future through our youth" (American Legion Baseball Promotional Booklet, 2015, p.1). The ALB organization is committed to promoting teamwork, regardless of income levels or social standing, and preparing young men to serve their communities, thrive in the workforce, raise families, or continue playing baseball at the highest level. In fact, the History of American Legion Baseball web page boasts, "Legion Baseball graduates are proud contributors throughout our society and often are the most successful people in their respective career fields" (American Legion, 2015, para. 27).

In other words, the teenage boys running the bases in an ALB game on a summer evening will grow into pillars of their communities, leaders, and trailblazers. This is the value ALB offers teens, their families, and communities.

Although ALB receives donations from corporate sponsors like MLB, Rawlings, Diamond Sports, Baseball Factory, and others, the funds are allocated primarily to support the national scholarship programs and the American Legion World Series. This leaves the responsibility of fundraising for team expenses such as uniforms, umpire fees, travel, fees for using baseball fields, and equipment on the American Legion posts for their respective baseball leagues. Marketing and fundraising for ALB teams relies on grass-roots efforts within the community.

American Legion Post #51 in Concord, North Carolina, like other leagues across the United States, must rely on league-level marketing and fundraising efforts to maintain its baseball program. The once-thriving league experienced a decline in community support for several years after its longtime director passed away. Post #51 appointed Brian Sweet as the new director of its baseball program in 2015, and charged him with rebuilding the program. The 2015 season ended in early July, and work will begin in September to prepare for a successful baseball season in the spring and summer of 2016.

Post #51 faces several challenges to developing a thriving baseball program, which will be discussed later in this document, and must find ways to distinguish itself from other, competing, baseball programs in the area. To distinguish itself from other programs in the same geographic region, Post #51 must identify those characteristics which make ALB unique, and then ensure the message reaches the target audience(s), or public, in ways that engage them. One way to do this is by implementing a strategic communication plan to help utilize existing resources effectively, and market the attributes that make ALB more attractive than other baseball organizations. This plan will propose ways to use the ALB mission of developing young men into leaders in their communities as a way to market the Post #51 baseball program for the 2016 season.

Challenges & Opportunities:

This section of the plan provides a summary of the main challenges facing the American Legion Post #51 baseball organization as it tries to boost support for the program. This section also lists several key opportunities for the organization.

Challenges

- Building and maintaining a successful program on a limited budget
- Promoting the program without dedicated marketing and communication staff
- Gaining community support for the program to increase the size of its network and the pool of potential resources
- Sharing the pool of player talent and potential resources with showcase baseball programs in the same geographic region

Opportunities

- Promote the rich history, patriotism, and symbolism associated with the American Legion's baseball program to set the Post #51 ALB program apart from showcase or metro teams
- Market the leadership skills players and spectators learn from the game of baseball through playing, watching, or participating in game day activities
- Improve communication between all stakeholders – Post #51 members, administrators, coaches, players, parents, and sponsors – to increase potential capital for the program
- Leverage social and symbolic capital to offset limited economic capital
- Generate 'buzz' about the program through use of social media engagement and word-of-mouth marketing

Analysis Using Capital Theory:

This strategic communication plan uses Pierre Bourdieu's reworked typology of capital as a foundation for the analysis (Ihlen, 2009). Bourdieu's capital theory serves as a useful guide for understanding the various types of resources, or capital, available to Post #51 for its ALB program. The main components of the reworked typology of capital include an analysis of:

- Institutionalization
- Economic capital
- Knowledge capital
- Social capital
- Symbolic capital

The following sections will pose the foundational questions for the analysis, and briefly explain each component of Bourdieu's reworked typology of capital. For a detailed description of how capital theory informed the analysis for this plan, refer to the literature review section of the project proposal in *Appendix A*.

Institutionalization: To what extent is the organization institutionalized?

According to Ihlen, (2009) determining the degree to which an organization is institutionalized involves examining its human resources and the number of people engaged in administration of the organization. This type of exploration also includes the number of members and how many people engage in public relations for the organization. It is important to distinguish between the national ALB program, which is significantly institutionalized, and the Post #51 program.

Although this plan will occasionally reference the national program, the focus is on the degree of institutionalization specific to the program Post #51 operates.

The Post #51 baseball program consists two teams: a senior team for 18 and 19 year-old players and a junior team for players aged 13 to 17. Refer to *Appendix B* for player age eligibility information. The baseball program is a non-profit organization, and its "staff" includes one director, five coaches, and several volunteers. Staff members volunteer their time and talents to the program without pay. The director oversees all administrative and operational tasks including game-day operations, marketing and fundraising, managing concessions, communicating to players and parents, and advising coaches. American Legion members assist with game-day duties such as announcing during the games, operating the concession stand, and collecting money for in-game promotions. All assistance from members of Post #51 is on a volunteer basis, and the majority of the tasks for operating the league fall to the baseball director.

Like most organizations, ALB has chain of command ranging from the team or league-level up to the national level. The ALB program in North Carolina consists of four regions, or *areas*,

based on geography. Post #51 is part of area three, which encompasses several counties in the middle of the state. Area three has a chairman who oversees the junior and senior teams within the region, and reports up to the state leadership. A chairman serves at the state-level for each of the 50 United States. The state chairman reports to the executive committee at the national headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to the ALB chain of command, the director of the Post #51 baseball program also has accountability to the Post #51 baseball committee. The committee empowers the director to act on their behalf to administer the baseball program but provides input regarding financial oversight. The director provides a financial report to the committee annually, in September.

By comparison, several baseball organizations in the same geographic region operate as profitable businesses, and are heavily institutionalized. These organizations offer instructional camps and operate showcase baseball teams, boasting they provide high school players with exposure to college and professional scouts. For example, the Carolina Baseball Center, (CBC) located in Charlotte, North Carolina, employs seven full-time coaches and instructors, a baseball operations manager, and an office assistant. On Deck Academy in Pineville, North Carolina employs a baseball chairman, an office manager, and 19 instructional coaches. Showcase Baseball Academy (SBA) has a larger operations staff than the other organizations listed in this plan. Located in Matthews, North Carolina, the organization includes a chief executive officer (CEO), a president, a director of baseball operations, and a director of communications in addition to a coaching and instruction staff of six people. Dirtbags Baseball, known as one of the most successful showcase organizations in North Carolina, recruits players from all over the state, and employs a staff of 31 people. Each of these showcase teams have secured sponsorships from multiple corporate partners, and each maintains a website.

Economic Capital: What types of economic capital does the organization have?

Economic capital refers to the organization's budget (Ihlen, 2009). In the context of this type of strategic plan it is important to note the amount of budget allocated toward marketing, communication, and public relations. In organizations that rely heavily on grass-roots efforts like the Post #51 ALB organization, other forms of capital may ultimately offset the lack of economic capital allocated to marketing and related tasks.

Members of Post #51 provide a significant portion of the financial support necessary for operating the baseball program. The post has several sub-groups, or committees, each with its own budget and financial oversight, that contribute to the Post #51 baseball program. The Sons of the Legion, the Legion Women's Auxiliary, and the Legion Riders each provide monetary support to the baseball program. Each group provides different amounts depending on their individual expenses, the size of the committee, and fundraising efforts. Post #51 also provides financial support at the post level. The amount of financial support the post provides varies from one season to the next, and helps offset the difference between the funds raised from other sources and the expenses for running the program.

For example, the baseball program must pay a fee prior to the start of each season for registration and player insurance. The cost is approximately \$530 per player for the senior legion team and \$360 per player for the junior legion team. In addition, the league must purchase a bulk order of baseball caps for the players and coaches to wear throughout the season, and these cost around \$1000. The league must also buy food and beverage items in advance to sell in the concession stand during home games. The Post #51 baseball program has a volunteer with concessions experience, and buys items in bulk from a local Sam's Warehouse Club. The initial cost for concessions is approximately \$500, and the league may need to replenish items a second time before the end of the baseball season. Because the league needs the items listed here at the beginning of the season before generating revenue from games, Post #51 and its various sub-groups provide the money to cover these costs. The baseball program also collected \$200 from each player on the junior legion team, but maintains a goal of operating the program in future seasons without collecting this fee from players and their families.

Game proceeds provide another source of money for the program. Between ticket sales for entrance to each home game, the sale of concessions, and money collected for a 50/50 raffle during each home game, the program makes approximately \$400-\$450 per game on average. Post #51 creates a season program featuring a schedule for the senior and junior teams, player rosters for each team, and a biography for each of the coaches. Local businesses can buy advertisements in the program for \$100 for a full-page, \$50 for a half-page, and \$25 for a quarter-page advertisement. Funds Post #51 raises from games and program advertisement sales help pay for other league costs like a fee of \$125 per game to Cabarrus County for the use of the

Central Cabarrus High School baseball field. The league also uses the money to pay umpires, which costs \$90 per game, per official for senior legion games and \$70 per game, per official for junior legion games. Refer to *Appendix C* for a detailed summary of expenses and revenue.

The Post #51 baseball director has a five-year goal of generating enough revenue from sources such as corporate sponsors, game proceeds, and fundraising events to minimize the amount of money the post and its committees contribute. As the program raises money and cultivates new sources of economic capital, it will need to maximize other types of capital, such as social and symbolic capital, available to the organization.

Knowledge Capital: What types of knowledge capital does the organization have?

An organization's knowledge capital consists of both formal and informal education, training, and experience (Ihlen, 2009). The Post #51 baseball program relies on the collective wisdom of local American Legion members, coaches, parents, and community members.

The ALB chain of command from the local director to the executive committee with the national headquarters also functions as a form of knowledge capital. The Post #51 director contacts the regional chairman who oversees area three with questions about complex issues about rules, policies, and procedures. Examples include assistance with expediting the registration process or determining how to handle a dual roster when a junior player moved to the senior team. If needed, the area three chairman contacts the state chairman for guidance. The state chairman escalates any unresolved issues and questions to the national executive committee on behalf of the area chairman and local baseball director.

The ALB national headquarters also provides knowledge capital to individual leagues. The organization's website, legion.org, houses documentation and several publications to provide guidance on policies, procedures, and baseball rules. The website also contains guidelines for operating a large ALB tournament, including obtaining sponsors and marketing tips.

The coaches for the Post #51 teams provide knowledge capital in the form of player skills development, interpreting baseball rules, recruiting players, and working with the baseball director to improve the program. The coaches' collective résumé includes playing at the college and professional level, and coaching several high school, middle school, and showcase teams.

They lend their knowledge, experience, and expertise to the program. The baseball director communicates regularly with the coaches, and conducts an evaluation during the off-season to identify any necessary changes to improve the experience for the next season.

With regard to promoting the baseball program and communicating about it within the community the documentation and literature from the ALB national headquarters serves as a significant source of knowledge capital, particularly in the absence of dedicated staff to carry out tasks associated with marketing. The grass-roots nature of operating the league necessitates rich sources of both social and symbolic capital to offset the limited economic and knowledge capital.

Social Capital: What types of social capital does the organization have?

An organization's social capital is its network, resources, and the degree of shared values within the community (Ihlen, 2009). This form of capital is critical to an organization like the Post #51 baseball program because the organization's relationships are what sustain its success. Social capital is the aggregate of actual or *potential* resources available to an organization (Bourdieu, 1986). Although social capital does not directly contribute to an organization's bottom line, it is critical because it facilitates the process of encouraging people and organizations to donate their time, money, and other resources. Analyzing the organization's social capital entails understanding its connections, and potential connections, as well as its reputation. An examination of social capital often includes understanding any connections to civic groups, journalists, politicians, or public figures, and examining the time and effort the organization devotes to cultivating those relationships (Ihlen, 2009).

Post #51 has several sources of social capital available to its organization. The most obvious is the network of post members, players, coaches, and parents. During the season they come together to interact at games and practices. The Post #51 junior and senior home games, held at Central Cabarrus High School in Concord, North Carolina, serve as social gatherings. More importantly, the games function as a way to connect with others. The games serve as a place for these stakeholders, in various forms, to engage in public discourse. Public discourse refers to conversations in a civic or community context involving diverse insights and perspectives that shape public engagement (Arnett, Harden-Fritz, & Bell, 2009). This suggests that games and

other ALB activities provide an opportunity for the Post #51 baseball ‘community’ to collaborate, exchange ideas, and identify ways to use the skills and talents within.

A key source of social capital for the Post #51 baseball program is the relationship between the organization and local media. Three journalists regularly cover American Legion baseball games in the area, and support the Post #51 program by reporting on games and generating buzz around league activities. Jamal Horton is the head sports writer for the Concord, North Carolina local newspaper, the Independent Tribune. David Exum also writes for the Independent Tribune, and specializes in writing Internet content. Mark Plemmons, another Independent Tribune journalist, is a news reporter who also operates a local Internet radio station, Radio Free Cabarrus. Plemmons is an avid supporter of ALB, and assists Post #51 and other ALB posts in the area by broadcasting games. He is also active on social media, and sometimes helps disseminate information about the Post #51 baseball program via Twitter. Together, these three media partners aid the program’s efforts to generate buzz in the local community.

Perhaps the most overlooked, yet most important source of social capital available to the Post #51 ALB program is the players. The players for the senior and junior teams attend several different area high schools: (a) Mount Pleasant High School in Mount Pleasant, North Carolina, (b) Central Cabarrus High School in Concord, North Carolina, (c) Concord High School in Concord, North Carolina, and (d) Hickory Ridge High School in Harrisburg, North Carolina. Several home schooled students who live within the established zone for Post #51 also play on the teams. Most of the players play on opposing teams for their respective schools during the Cabarrus County Schools baseball season. A baseball program is only successful if its players enjoy playing. Part of the enjoyment comes from the opportunity to play alongside young men who are competitors during the school year, and form a sense of camaraderie and friendship. Players for Post #51 report their experience playing for their team is positive, despite a losing record in the 2015 season. The young men will likely tell their peers who do not play ALB about their positive experience, and encourage others to attend games or perhaps try out for the team next season. One of the goals for the Post #51 program is to create excitement, or “buzz” around playing ALB in Concord. This is particularly important with regard to the junior team who serve as a developing pool of talent in the program’s pipeline. Teen-to -teen word of mouth is a valuable form of social capital that can help boost the program’s success.

Symbolic Capital: What types of symbolic capital does the organization have?

Symbolic capital is subjective. Pierre Bourdieu, the scholar who developed the theoretical framework, defines symbolic capital as “a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honorability” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 291). Symbolic capital is the thread that weaves together the inherent leadership skills that accompany the game of baseball, the prestige of an organization like the American Legion, and winning over community support. It is important to examine the symbolic capital present in the ALB program Post #51 operates because these resources represent the subtle, yet powerful, factors that set the program apart from competing baseball programs like showcase teams.

Many scholars and sports writers have documented the connection between athletic sports and leadership, and the game of baseball serves as a rich source for developing leadership skills. Refer to the literature review section of the proposal in *Appendix A* for a complete account of academic works that informed this plan with regard to leadership and baseball.

Each ALB game begins with symbolic capital. The public address announcer greets the crowd by welcoming them to the game, and introduces each player and coach on the home and opposing teams. Once on the field, the players and coaches turn toward the umpires standing at home plate, and recite the ALB Code of Sportsmanship as follows:

I will: Keep the rules. Keep faith with my teammates. Keep my temper. Keep myself fit. Keep a stout heart in defeat. Keep my pride under in victory. Keep a sound soul, a clean mind, and a healthy body (American Legion, 2015, p. 2).

David Exum, a journalist for the local newspaper, *The Independent Tribune*, describes the pre-game ritual and reciting the code as refreshing, especially in an era when society often glorifies celebrity athletes for poor sportsmanship (Exum, 2015). He continues by applauding the ALB organization for reminding players to play America’s pastime with honor and dignity.

After reciting the Code of Sportsmanship, players and coaches remove their caps for the National Anthem. Young players and the fans get to experience the type of ceremonial start to each ALB game that players and fans attending a professional baseball game might experience. In fact, the senior and junior ALB games mimic professional major (MLB) and minor (MiLB) games.

Players experience fierce competition from other teams, and endure a rigorous schedule by playing four or five times each week. The intensity of the program helps prepare young players for playing at the college or professional level. More importantly, it helps them develop skills like perseverance, diplomacy, determination, teamwork, and strategic thinking. Leadership skills encompass all of these characteristics.

Another example of symbolic capital available to Post #51 is the reputation and notoriety of ALB. “American Legion Baseball enjoys a reputation as one of the most successful and tradition-rich amateur athletic leagues” (American Legion, 2015, para. 16).

Many current and former notable MLB players were once part of their local post’s ALB team just like the teen players who represent Post #51. For instance, well known players like Mark Texiera of the New York Yankees, Justin Verlander of the Detroit Tigers, Cliff Lee of the Philadelphia Phillies, Albert Pujols of the Los Angeles Angels, and Craig Kimbrel of the San Diego Padres, formerly of the Atlanta Braves. Other former Atlanta Braves also played ALB including Greg Maddux, Chipper Jones, Fred McGriff, and Sid Bream. A few well known players even played for ALB teams in North Carolina. Josh Hamilton of the Texas Rangers played for the South Rowan team, one of Post #51’s area three competitors. Standout pitcher for the World Series champions, the San Francisco Giants played for Post #29 in Caldwell County. Young men often dream of making it to the major leagues. Being part of a program with a reputation for producing talented professional players gives them a sense of excitement, and helps them feel like they share a common bond with the famous ALB alumni.

Although also noted as a form of social capital, the player experience and popularity of the program is also worth mentioning as a form of symbolic capital. Players view participating in ALB as a rite of passage and a crowning achievement. The competitive level of play and the opportunity to play on the same team with people they usually play against makes many players, and potential players, desire a coveted spot on the local ALB team. It is the “in” or “cool” team.

The American Legion is a veterans’ organization dedicated to patriotism, community service, leadership, and helping others. Exposure to these values through playing baseball helps ALB players connect to something larger than the mere mechanics of the game or the final score. It instills values and a sense of community. The Post #51 ALB games are family-friendly and

community-focused. The baseball program embodies the symbolism and values from its parent organization, the American Legion. These values serve as an immeasurable source of symbolic capital for the Post #51 baseball program.

Market Segmentation:

This section will describe the target market, current communication methods, and competing communications. It will provide an overview of the communities American Legion Post #51 serves. It will also discuss how the organization communicates with its various audiences, or *publics*, and assess its social media presence. This section will also include a brief overview of competing communications by surveying communication efforts of two other ALB organizations in North Carolina and two showcase baseball organizations in North Carolina.

Overview of Post #51 Community

Post #51 is one of two American Legion posts that serve Cabarrus County, which borders the Charlotte, North Carolina metropolitan area to the northeast. Post #115 in Kannapolis serves the western portion of the county. The towns of Concord, Mount Pleasant, Harrisburg, and Midland lie within the established boundaries for Post #51. The total estimated population for these communities is 102,248 (City Data, 2015). The table below provides a breakdown of the population, by town.

Community	Population
Mount Pleasant	1,740
Midland	3,214
Concord	83,506
Harrisburg	13,788
Total	102,248

Refer to *Appendix D* for additional data about these communities.

Several high schools serve this area: (a) Concord High School in Concord, (b) Hickory Ridge High School in Harrisburg, (c) Mount Pleasant High School in Mount Pleasant, and (d) Central

Cabarrus High School in Concord. The average household income for this predominantly rural region is \$61,762 annually (City Data, 2015).

Post #51 Baseball Communication & Audiences

- **Community**

In this context, *community* refers to the public of baseball fans in close proximity to the Post #51 area. The community includes people who do not have a direct connection with ALB such as relationship with a player or coach. This group of people is the potential ALB fans who will attend games and generate economic capital by spending money on game tickets, concession items, and other fundraising activities. They are individuals or families in the Concord, Mount Pleasant, Harrisburg, or Midland areas who desire an inexpensive source of local entertainment, who enjoy sporting events, and who might not otherwise know about the ALB program. This audience may vary in their preferred communication channel, and can learn about the Post #51 teams through word-of-mouth, local newspaper or radio, or through social media. This group represents an opportunity because it is largely un-tapped currently. However, reaching the general community will be challenging without including additional communication channels as part of the messaging strategy.

- **Players**

The players are male teens between the ages of 13 and 19. Although most attend one of the Cabarrus County schools listed above, some are home schooled. They belong to the millennial generation, and communicate primarily through mobile devices, and use social media (Instagram or Twitter) and text messaging. Players are the focus of the program, and often serve as unofficial ambassadors. If engaged and invested, these young men will tell their peers, family members, and neighbors about the program, and serve as a form of free, word-of-mouth advertising. The players need timely information during the season to ensure they keep abreast of schedules, game times, last minute changes, and logistical details for away games. During the off-season these players appreciate updates regarding upcoming events like tryouts and fundraisers. Reaching this audience is relatively easy if the program can communicate with them through their preferred methods and channels.

- Parents

The family members of players are a distinct audience. Because some of the younger players on the junior team do not have a driver's license yet, parents are the primary source of transportation to and from games. Most regularly attend games, and are a resource for the program. Like players, parents who are happy with the program will happily share positive information about it with their friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Parents communicate through a variety of channels including face-to-face, Internet, and social platforms; predominantly Facebook and Twitter. Parents need to know about game details, fundraising opportunities, and may want general updates during the off-season.

- Sponsors and stakeholders

Like the general public, this audience represents a significant area of opportunity but may be tricky to reach. Potential sponsors will want to know specific details about the program in concise, easy-to-digest messages. Emphasizing the value ALB adds to the community is critical to help sponsors understand the answer to their main question, "*what's in it for me?*" By emphasizing the patriotic symbolism associated with the American Legion and the leadership skills that young players gain from playing baseball, Post #51 can set itself apart from other baseball leagues that vie for a share of the sponsorship dollars in the community. Post #51 currently communicates with sponsors via telephone and in person.

Post #51 Social Presence

Individuals and businesses view social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google +, as primary communication channels. Therefore, it is important to separately conduct a broad survey of the extent to which Post #51 uses social platforms to engage with its various audiences. This section derives data from user-friendly, free analytics tools available on the Internet. This analysis draws on Twitonomy, Likealyzer, and Quintly, and explores the organization's social presence on Facebook and Twitter.

It is important to note that the social analytics tools vary in the level of detail they provide at no cost. The amount and the type of data available also varies from one social platform to another.

- Twitter

Post #51 ALB uses its Twitter account, *@51LegionBsbll*, as the primary method of communication for players, parents, and members of the community. The account has 182 followers, and currently follows 102 others. According to a Twitonomy (2015) report ranging from May 1, 2015 to August 13, 2015 – the approximate duration of the 2015 baseball season, including ALB state and regional playoffs and the ALB World Series – the organization had 238 tweets and retweeted others 42 times. The organization’s Twitter presence significantly outpaces its Facebook presence, but opportunity exists to further leverage Twitter as a social tool to increase capital. For instance, *@51LegionBsbll* used a hashtag only three times during the review period, and tweeted only three links to articles or other information. The 2015 season was the first under new management, so the organization will likely increase its Twitter presence significantly in the next couple of seasons.

Refer to *Appendix E* for a detailed summary of Twitter data for *@51LegionBsbll*

- Facebook

The Post #51 ALB organization maintains a Facebook page. The page, titled *51 Legion Bsbll*, has 63 total “likes”. The organization posts on its Facebook page infrequently, with the last post occurring on June 23, 2015. The posts on the page are utilitarian in nature, most providing announcements about games. The posts drew very little engagement in the form of “likes” and comments. Increasing Facebook engagement is an opportunity for the Post #51 baseball program.

Competing Communications

This section addresses competing communication in the field of teen baseball organizations by discussing the messaging similar organizations use. The assessment will discuss four specific organizations in North Carolina within 100 miles of the communities Post #51 serves. Two ALB organizations and two showcase baseball organizations will serve as the focus of this discussion based on their proximity to the Post #51 communities and their success during the 2015 season.

- American Legion Baseball: Rowan County Post #342

The Rowan County Post #342 organization, located in Salisbury, North Carolina, is part of area three. The successful team, which competes against Post #51 in the same ALB area of North Carolina, proceeded to the playoffs for the 2015 season. The organization has a social media presence on both Facebook and Twitter. Although the organization does not maintain its own website, it actively communicates on social media. Between May 1, 2015 and August 13, 2015, the @RowanLegionBall account shows 1,851 tweets (Twitonomy, 2015). The Facebook page has 1,201 “likes”, and features posts about a variety of topics. The majority of the posts have engagement in the form of “likes” and comments, and the organization creates status updates, posts pictures, and shares links to articles.

- American Legion Baseball: Caldwell County Post #29

Unlike Post #51 and Post #342, ALB Caldwell County Post #29 in Granite Falls, North Carolina, does not have a Twitter presence. The organization has a Facebook page with 554 “likes”, and creates a variety of content for its page including pictures, videos, links to articles, and status updates. Fans of the team, which proceeded to the 2015 playoffs to play against Post #342, frequently engage through comments and “likes” on Facebook posts. The ALB Post #29 team maintains its own website, which serves as a focal point for both communication and fundraising. The site features schedules, rosters, and standings. It also features team photographs and history along with banners from various sponsors. The website likely serves as an alternative for its lack of Twitter engagement. It features a tagline at the top of the page asserting, “Your home for all the Caldwell Co. Post 29 news and information” (Post29Baseball, 2015).

Refer to *Appendix F* for a link and an image of the website’s homepage

- Showcase: Dirtbags Baseball

Dirtbags Baseball is one of the leading showcase baseball organizations in North Carolina. Appian™ maintains a website on behalf of the organization, and a copyright statement appears at the bottom of the home page. The website features ads as well as special links for sponsors and merchandise purchases. Users can link directly to the organization’s Facebook and Twitter pages from the website’s home page. The Facebook page has 1.959 “likes”, and

features pictures and information about Dirtbags alumni who are committing to play baseball for various colleges across the country. Like the Facebook page, the organization's Twitter feed also reads like an advertisement by featuring tweets about successful program alumni. The account, *@dirtbag_swag*, has 2,721 followers. It is apparent this organization has invested in its social presence, but because it is a business rather than a non-profit, grass-roots organization like ALB, it has financial resources to pay for professional support in boosting its social engagement.

- **Showcase: Showcase Baseball Academy**

Showcase Baseball Academy (SBA), like Dirtbags Baseball, is a business. The organization has a dedicated employee who serves as the Director of Communications for the program. SBA has a website that prominently features pictures and articles about its successful alumni who have committed to college baseball programs around the country. The website also features information about upcoming tryouts and other events as well as banner ads from sponsors. Links to the organization's Facebook and Twitter accounts appear on the website's home page. The Facebook page has 1,104 "likes" and includes posts about activities and tournaments involving the organization's many teams. It includes information about sponsors, and links to various articles and websites. The tweets in the *@SBATheShow* Twitter feed mirror the Facebook posts, almost identically. The account has 1,627 followers, and retweets messages from other baseball organizations in the area, including the Charlotte Knights. Because many of the messages on the organization's Facebook and Twitter accounts are similar, it appears it might utilize an automated messaging platform to help curate a portion of its content.

Recommended Strategies:

The following recommendations, like the analysis, are informed by a reworked typology of capital based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu. This typology as presented in Ihlen, (2009) and McArthur, (2014) proposes go-forward strategies designed to (a) utilize institutionalization, (b) develop economic capital, (c) develop knowledge capital, (d) develop social capital, and (e)

develop symbolic capital. Because the forms of capital present in the ALB Post #51 program have an interdependent relationship, most recommended strategies connect with more than one form of capital. Therefore, rather than list each form of capital and one or two strategies for each, this plan will (a) list each recommended strategy, (b) identify the applicable form(s) of capital, (c) list and describe any corresponding recommendations, and (d) discuss the steps or considerations for implementing each recommendation.

Appendix G illustrates the interrelated nature of the capital this organization possesses

Strategy #1 – Get social: Build a prominent social media presence

This strategy supports developing *social capital*. By actively cultivating its social media presence, the Post #51 baseball program can strengthen its existing network and expand its relational connections within the community. Increased social capital can ultimately lead to increased economic capital for the program.

Recommendations for strategy #1:

1. Use Twitter strategically

Assessment: Post #51 already maintains a Twitter account for its baseball program using the @51LegionBsbll handle. Although the organization is fairly active on Twitter, it could be doing more to use the platform to engage existing followers and reach new followers. Below are some ways to accomplish this:

- Create two or three hashtags, and use at least one of them on every tweet and retweet. Hashtags are like keywords, and help make content easier to find (Currey, 2015). Some suggestions include: #ConcordALB2015, #LegionBall51, #LOVE51Baseball, or see *strategy #7, recommendation #2* in this document to enlist help creating a great hashtag.
- Ask for follows and retweets. Create tweets periodically that specifically ask followers to retweet. This can be as simple as a tweet that says: “Retweet if you love baseball”. Also address tweets directly to influential or interesting users asking them to follow @51LegionBsbll. Taking both of these actions will help increase the organization’s network.

2. Embrace Facebook

Assessment: Although ALB Post #51 has a Facebook page, the organization is less active on Facebook than on Twitter. Post #51 can create engagement in the community by stepping up its efforts on its Facebook page. Some individuals and businesses prefer Facebook over Twitter, or vice versa, so it is important to actively create content on both platforms. Below are some ways to increase engagement on Facebook:

- Ask people to like the Concord Post 51 Baseball page on Facebook. Use the “invite” feature on Facebook to invite other Facebook users to like the page. Create a status update asking people who already like the page to invite others. Connect with local businesses on Facebook, particularly those who supported Post #51 baseball the prior year, and ask them to like the Concord Post 51 Baseball page.
- Create status updates frequently during the baseball season. Share game information, player statistics, pictures, or cheer on the senior and junior teams. Facebook updates should occur at least once daily during the ALB season. Create less frequent status updates during the off-season, but post at least once monthly to maintain engagement.
- Tag people or businesses in posts. This works especially well with pictures, but also with status updates because it connects people in the community with Post #51 baseball.

3. Create an Instagram account

Assessment: ALB serves young men between the ages of 13 and 19. Many in this age group use Instagram as their social platform of choice. Building a pipeline of talent, and future talent, is one of the organization’s goals. Engaging with existing players and potential players using the method they are most comfortable with is essential. Below are some suggestions:

- Create an Instagram account for Post #51 Baseball
- Ask each player to follow the account on Instagram and invite their friends to follow the account as well.

- Ask players to share pictures or “selfies” of their off-season activities, school sports, and after practices or games during baseball season.

4. Share pictures and articles that show the value of American Legion Baseball

Assessment: Pictures and articles attract attention on social media, and baseball provides numerous photo opportunities. Below are a few ways Post #51 can engage the public by sharing pictures and articles:

- Create opportunities for players and American Legion members to interact, and take pictures. Most young players will appreciate the opportunity to interact with men and women who have served their country. This is a shareable, feel-good moment that is perfect for sharing on social media.
- Continue to share news articles about Post #51 baseball on Twitter and Facebook. Also share relevant articles about baseball in the community, school activities, ALB articles, and even articles about college or MLB teams and players.
- Use games as photo opportunities. Have the public address announcer ask the crowd to share their pictures from the game on Facebook and Twitter. Ask everyone to tag the Concord Post #51 Baseball page on Facebook, or include the @51LegionBsbll and specified hashtag on Twitter or Instagram. Most parents, friends, and girlfriends take pictures to share on social media anyway. Asking them to tag or mention Post #51 will ensure everyone in an individual’s network who views a photo will learn about the teams.

5. Use the available resources to help with maintaining a social presence

Assessment: The ALB Post #51 director, Brian Sweet, is responsible for operating a successful program. This includes a multitude of duties, which might leave little time for him to handle the recommendations in this plan with regard to maintaining multiple social media accounts. The following are ways to balance and streamline the workload while still investing in boosting the program’s social media presence:

- Leverage parents as “ALB ambassadors”. Ask for one or two parents from each team – junior and senior – to live tweet during games, update the Facebook page, post pictures to both platforms, and create a buzz on social media.
- Use a social media management tool like Hootsuite™. Hootsuite and similar tools provide analytics to determine the success of tweets and hashtags as well as the extent of a user’s reach. It can also help identify relevant content through a keyword search, and allow the account owner to schedule and send tweets. Although Hootsuite offers a pro subscription for \$9.99 per month, its free version provides a single dashboard for managing several accounts at once and basic analytics to measure effectiveness.

Strategy #2 – What’s in a name? Create a team name and mascot

This strategy helps develop *symbolic capital* as well as *institutionalization*. Cultivating symbolic capital has to do, in part, with creating a reputation or making an organization recognizable. Although institutionalization generally refers to processes, policies, and governance in an organization, it also involves signs, symbols, and the ways people identify an organization.

Recommendations for strategy #2:

1. Develop a team name

Assessment: Post #51 does not currently have a team name or mascot to identify the team. Fans cheering for the senior and junior teams at games shout “Go Concord!” or cheer for individual players. The absence of a team name makes it difficult to recognize and identify with the team.

- Create a memorable, easy-to-pronounce name to identify the teams. The senior and junior teams can have the same name such as wildcats, 49’ers, etc. The teams could also use variation of the same name. For example, the senior team might be called the bears, and the junior team might be the cubs.
- Use the team name when communicating with the community about the Post #51 teams.

Strategy #3 – Create a virtual home for ALB Post #51 communication

This strategy will develop both *knowledge capital* and *social capital*. It can also help utilize institutionalization. By having a blog or website serving as the single source of information about the baseball organization, Post #51 can share knowledge about the program, and connect with the public.

Recommendations for strategy #3:

1. Start a website or blog to connect people with Post #51 baseball

Assessment: A website or a blog that functions as a team site will help connect Post #51 with the community, and tie together the various communication activities.

- Establish the website. Many blogging sites, like Wordpress.com, offer free templates, and are relatively easy to use for people who might not have web design skills. The organization may wish to pay a small fee for a custom domain name, but this is an optional step.
- Create a basic “home” page with “widgets” or sections. For example, one section of the page could include the senior and junior teams’ schedules, another section could include icons linking to the social media accounts, and another section could include a brief blog article with pictures about games and various organizational activities.
- Enlist several volunteers to maintain a Post #51 blog. The blog would function as the primary source of information for players, coaches, and parents, but would also be a “place” to inform the community about the local program. Having volunteers assist with the duties of updating the site will minimize the amount of time and effort the baseball director spends on various communication tasks.

Strategy #4 – Connect the past with the present and future: Provide opportunities for players and American Legion members to work together

This is a strategy for developing *social*, *knowledge*, and *symbolic capital* by providing opportunities for future leaders and community members (players) to learn from those who

served their country and community (American Legion members). This strategy will help develop social capital by encouraging community involvement and increasing the size of the Post #51 baseball organization's network. It develops knowledge capital by facilitating personal development among the young players. This strategy also develops symbolic capital by promoting the American Legion values of Americanism and community service.

Recommendations for strategy #4:

1. Organize a volunteer event in the community in which American Legion members and players for the Post #51 baseball teams work together.

Assessment: The American Legion promotes service to communities, and Post #51 has several committees dedicated to serving Concord, North Carolina and surrounding communities. In fact, as mentioned earlier in this plan in the assessment of economic capital, these committees provide funding to the baseball program. Players can bond as a team by participating in activities away from the baseball field. Participating alongside those who support their teams to help others in the community is a win-win proposition.

- Arrange one or two volunteer events each year during which Post #51 members work alongside baseball players. The events can be arranged specifically for the purpose of providing the collaborative opportunity, or the legion members might invite the players to participate in one of their pre-existing volunteer events.
- Leverage the existing relationship with local media, and ask one of the Independent Tribune reporters, David Exum, Jamal Horton, or Mark Plemmons, to write and publish a story about the event. The article might include quotes from young players and veterans about how the activity made them feel or what they learned from it. The story should also include photographs of American Legion members and players working together.
- Use the event as a talking point to help persuade local businesses to sponsor the Post #51 ALB program. Discussing the leadership skills players develop through this type of event will help them on and off the field, and is a distinguishing factor of ALB compared to showcase teams.

2. Invite American Legion members to participate in the playing of the National Anthem before home games.

Assessment: The pre-game ceremony is one of the most special and enjoyable parts of the ALB experience. This recommendation will involve Post #51 members in a portion of the ceremony, and make the games more meaningful for players, spectators, and volunteers.

- Enlist the public address announcer to ask American Legion members, or perhaps *any* veteran present in the audience, to join the team on the first base line for the playing of the National Anthem. Immediately upon the conclusion of the song, these VIP guests will return to their seats.
- As an alternative to the recommendation above, have the public address announcer ask any former or current service members attending the game to stand so that the crowd and players can show appreciation for their service.

Strategy #5 – Share the love of baseball with youngsters in the community to raise funds

This strategy will involve using two forms of capital to develop other forms of capital. The Post #51 baseball organization can use the collective wisdom of its coaches and players, or *knowledge capital*, and a common love and esteem people share for the game of baseball, or *symbolic capital*, to host a fundraising event. The event will help develop *economic capital* by raising funds for the baseball program. It will also develop *social capital* by expanding the organization's potential network.

1. Host a Post #51 ALB pre-season youth baseball camp

Assessment: Cabarrus County is home to several recreational youth athletic leagues, including those for Harrisburg, Bethel, and Concord, which are part of the area Post #51 serves. Many young players play recreation league baseball with the hopes of someday developing into a player who can participate in a program like ALB. These youngsters and their parents are eager to learn from local coaches and observe older players. The Post #51

program is in a prime position to encourage these young players, and possibly develop a pipeline of future talent, while raising funds for the baseball program.

- Identify a date with minimal conflicts during the spring, and schedule an event at one of the local baseball fields. The event could be between 9:00am and 12:00pm on a Saturday.
- Enlist the help of the Post #51 ALB coaches to provide instruction during the baseball camp. Some of the older players on the senior team may also provide instruction, while some of the junior players participate by shagging balls, helping with equipment, etc.
- Contact local recreation departments and elementary schools to tell them about the baseball camp, and ask for their help with inviting players to attend.
- Create promotional flyers, and ask for volunteers to distribute these at recreation league baseball games one or two weeks prior to the camp. The flyers will contain all relevant information about the camp.
- Establish a reasonable price for the camp. The goal will be making parents feel like they are getting a bargain by allowing their young player participate in the camp while generating enough revenue from the event to help the program for the upcoming season. For example, a price point of \$30 per camper with 20 campers would generate \$600 in revenue.
- Ask a few local businesses to consider sponsoring the camp in exchange for using their name and logo on promotional materials. One business could even donate to be named the “exclusive sponsor of the American Legion Baseball Post #51 youth baseball skills camp”.

Strategy #6 – Create opportunities for face time: Strengthen bonds and increase transparency within the organization

This strategy involves developing relationships and strengthening social capital. Although the primary goal of the ALB Post #51 organization is to raise economic capital and inform the public about its baseball program, these efforts must begin with strong bonds internally.

1. Conduct at least one meeting with parents, players, coaches, and leadership at the beginning of the baseball season.

Assessment: Most people feel more connected to an organization when they know what to expect. The players, their families, the coaches, and the whole Post #51 organization will benefit from a meeting, no more than 30 minutes to one hour in duration, to let them know what to expect for the upcoming season. This will provide an opportunity to set expectations, establish communication channels, and answer any questions.

- Schedule a meeting one or two weeks prior to the beginning of the first scheduled game for the season. Encourage all players, coaches, and parents to attend.
- Ask the coaches to address players and parents during a portion of the meeting. This will help establish rules and expectations for behavior during practices, games, and travel. It will also give the coaches more visibility, and in turn, help the players feel more connected to them.
- Use the remainder of the meeting to inform people of the ways they can connect with the teams through social media or the blog. Ask for support in making the season a success.

2. Arrange at least one non-baseball activity in which players and coaches interact with each other socially.

Assessment: The ALB season occurs just as most players are finishing their seasons for school baseball and other programs. Sometimes it is difficult making the transition from playing for one group of coaches to another within a short timeframe. Players also feel more connected as a team if they get to know their coaches as people.

- Schedule a fun and informal gathering such as a cookout, enjoying a meal out together at a local restaurant, (everyone pays their own way) or even a volunteer event. The gathering will provide an opportunity for coaches and players to relax and get to know each other better.

Strategy #7 – Do more with less: Draw on existing resources to generate buzz and excitement about the baseball program

This strategy demonstrates the interrelated and often interdependent nature of capital. Collectively, this set of recommendations uses existing forms of capital to develop other forms of capital in a variety of ways. The ultimate goal of the program is to generate funds for the program while creating excitement among potential players and the community. These recommendations are designed with those goals in mind.

1. Use the existing ALB promotional booklet to solicit sponsors in the community.

Assessment: ALB publishes a promotional booklet that provides information about the national organization, scholarship programs, and the value of participating in ALB as a sponsor. The booklet does a great job of telling the ALB “story” and how the organization builds not only excellent baseball players, but also future community leaders. As the foundation of this plan suggests, marketing the leadership skills players develop through playing baseball can become a valuable marketing tool for the Post #51 organization.

Visit the American Legion Baseball website for a copy of the promotional booklet, or follow this link:

<http://www.legion.org/publications/227176/american-legion-baseball-promotional-booklet>

- Download the booklet from the ALB website, and print several color copies. Ask a local business for a discount on the price of the color copies, or ask someone involved with the program that has access to a color printer to donate several copies.
- Provide a copy of the booklet to local businesses interested in sponsoring the Post #51 baseball program.
- Use the booklet as a guide if it is more appropriate to develop a shorter booklet that specifically targets the Concord, North Carolina community.

2. Make a contest out of naming the team and creating social media hashtags

Assessment: Previous recommendations in this plan mention the need for a team name and a few memorable hashtags for the league's social media accounts. This recommendation proposes making a fun contest out of both tasks, and boosting engagement with the teams.

- Conduct a contest at the first senior and junior home games of the 2016 season, and ask fans to pay “name the team for one dollar”. Participants will donate \$1 to the organization, and in turn, will receive a piece of paper to write their suggestion for a new team name or mascot along with their name. The best name wins, and the person who suggested the name will be recognized at the next home game.
- Alternatively, ask players and coaches to make suggestions for a new team name, and narrow the list down to three possibilities. Ask the public address announcer to read the suggested team names during the first home game of 2016, and instruct the crowd to cheer for their favorite. The name with the loudest cheers wins.
- Provide a piece of paper during a home game, and ask fans to write a suggested hashtag and their name on the slip of paper. During the game, the public address announcer will draw a name, and the winner will win a free drink from the concession stand. The organization can review the suggested hashtags to see if there are any with several votes or that stand out.

3. Promote ALB games like MLB games

Assessment: Most MLB organizations offer special promotions, clubs, and sponsorships for their games. Post #51 already offers a season ticket option for home games, and this recommendation expands on that concept.

- Offer gold, silver, and bronze club pricing for home games. For example, a gold club membership might include a season pass to all home games, a t-shirt, a program, and a \$20 concession stand voucher for \$125. A silver membership might include a season pass, hat, and \$15 concession stand voucher for \$75. A bronze membership might include a season pass and a \$10 voucher for the concession stand for \$50.

- Expand on the club pricing options to include corporate sponsor privileges. For example, a platinum sponsor will receive two gold passes, a full page ad in the program, a sign, and an end-of-season name announcement for \$500.
- Offer fans the opportunity to deliver a public “Happy Birthday” message during a home game. Fans will pay a small fee, like \$10, and the public address announcer will wish the designated person a happy birthday between innings.
- Ask sponsors to become the “official” sponsor of Post #51 American Legion Baseball. This would require a significant donation to the program, and would be featured in promotional items and game announcements. For example: “Brooklyn’s Pizza, the official restaurant of Post #51 legion baseball” or “Harrisburg Hardware, the official hardware store of Post #51 legion baseball”. This type of sponsor could also sponsor the seventh inning stretch during senior legion games.

4. Benefit from the value of social media

Assessment: This recommendation will work best after Post #51 has established a robust social media presence, and might be best suited for the 2017 season. Many organizations feature sponsor information on their websites, and sometimes mention or thank them on their social media feeds. This recommendation introduces that concept as a way for Post #51 to raise funds through sponsorships.

- Add website ads and social media mentions to the list of promotional offerings Post #51 provides. This concept could function in the same way as program advertisements and signs in terms of pricing.

Strategy #8 – Miscellaneous recommendations to develop economic capital

These recommendations primarily help raise money for the baseball program, and develop the organization’s economic capital. They also indirectly build social capital by helping Post #51 build relationships with businesses and members of the community.

1. Go golfing for baseball

Assessment: Brian Sweet, the Post #51 baseball director was already planning this event prior to the initiation of this plan. However, it is worth mentioning at a high level with a few additional recommendations. The golf course that hosts the event does most of the planning and preparation for the tournament, so Post #51 is only responsible for handling promotions and securing sponsors.

- Promote the tournament on social media.
- Ask local businesses to sponsor a particular hole.
- Invite sponsors and tournament participants to come to a baseball game

2. Play softball for baseball

Assessment: Softball is closely related to baseball, and a very popular sport in the community. This recommendation uses the popularity of softball to raise funds.

- Host a one day, co-ed, adult softball tournament during the fall or early spring.
- Publicize the tournament through social media and word-of-mouth, and invite teams to enter the tournament. Teams would pay a fee to enter the tournament.
- Contact local businesses to sponsor the tournament by purchasing a sign, sponsoring one of the bases, or having their name and logo printed on game tickets.

Conclusion

This plan analyzes the various forms of capital at play in the ALB organization that Post #51 in Concord, North Carolina operates. The plan offers eight strategies with multiple supporting recommendations and action steps. The recommended strategies are a result of the analysis, and are specific to the Post #51 baseball organization based on its current needs and goals.

The organization should review this strategic communication plan, and determine which strategies it would like to implement. Upon deciding on the strategic direction, the organization should move quickly with developing project plans or task lists, enlisting help, and assigning roles and responsibilities. It is also recommended that Post #51 identify which of the strategies best align to its mission and goals, and prioritize the proposed solutions accordingly. Once the organization establishes priorities, it can then develop a timeline for implementation.

By understanding and appropriately leveraging its resources, or capital, the Post #51 ALB organization can re-build and re-brand itself to become the most sought-after and admired baseball organization in the region.

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Appendix A – Project Proposal

Abstract

This proposal discusses the connection between the game of baseball and developing organizational leadership skills. This often-overlooked aspect of the game is important to teen players who will become the next generation of workers in and leaders of organizations. One organization with a rich history of cultivating baseball players as athletes and as leaders is American Legion Baseball. The national program boasts several current and retired Major League Baseball (MLB) players and notable leaders from outside of professional baseball among its alumni. Despite a few corporate sponsorships, the American Legion's baseball programs rely on grass-roots efforts. One such league is the Post #51 junior and senior teams in Concord, North Carolina. The league is in a rebuilding phase after a period of decline, and relies on the support of the community for success. This project will present a strategic communication plan based on the reworked typology of capital based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu to help the American Legion Post #51 baseball organization understand the forms of capital, or symbolic resources, it has available. The analysis will explore the extent to which the baseball program is institutionalized, and will examine the economic, knowledge, social, and symbolic capital present. The finished plan will provide recommendations for how the organization can better utilize its available capital. It will also provide recommendations for using Twitter and other forms of social media to market the organizational leadership communication teens learn through playing baseball through the American Legion.

Keywords: baseball, strategic communication plan, American Legion baseball, leadership

A group of parents, friends, and members of the community sit on bleachers or in folding chairs on a Saturday afternoon. The smell of fresh cut grass and popcorn fills the air as grounds workers, often coaches, sweep the dust from home plate, rake the dirt infield, and check the painted white boundaries of the field. The crowd watches with excitement as the announcer introduces each player by name, and the adolescent boys take the field. The boys stand proudly with their caps off, facing the American flag flying just beyond the scoreboard in the outfield, and place their hands over their hearts for the National Anthem. At the end of the song, the crowd cheers while one team retreats to the dugout and the other team takes its place on the field. This describes the beginning of almost any American Legion youth baseball game in any given community in the United States.

Over the next seven innings, or approximately two hours, the players will overtly demonstrate observable athletic and mechanical skills. These young players will also demonstrate another set of important skills that most of the game's onlookers will not notice: organizational leadership communication skills. Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, and Pease (2008) argue that eight motives for consuming organized sports like baseball exist, and these typologies include: (a) escape, (b) economic, (c) eustress, or emotional stimulation, (d) self-esteem, (e) group affiliation, (f) entertainment, (g) family, and (h) aesthetics. This analysis will propose that observing and developing organizational leadership communication skills serves as an additional motivation for consuming baseball by watching it as a fan or by participating as a player. Moreover, youth baseball organizations can, and should, use the inherent leadership skills present in the sport to enhance their marketing efforts.

Both leaders and followers in groups function collaboratively in pursuit of a common goal (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Moreover, group members "can learn to lead by following

and learn to follow by leading” (p. 21). Baseball teams and organized sports in general employ group leadership and followership skills on the field to win games. Cranmer and Myers (2015) argue that sport teams consist of multiple layers of both formal and informal leadership. The organizational leadership communication practices present in baseball provide useful information one can apply in a business setting.

One organization rich with history is the American Legion’s youth baseball program. Founded in 1925, American Legion baseball is an amateur athletic league which promotes values such as sportsmanship, good health, active citizenship, leadership, and equality (American Legion, 2015). The junior and senior leagues serve boys ages 13 through 19, and approximately 60 percent of current college baseball players are former members of an American Legion baseball team. Moreover, well-known celebrity players like Chipper Jones, Johnny Bench, Madison Bumgarner, Don Mattingly, and numerous other professional players are among legion baseball’s alumni. In fact, 60 program graduates are in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Notable figures not associated with professional baseball who participated in American Legion baseball during their youth include former Vice President Dick Cheney and esteemed television journalist Tom Brokaw.

Although the American Legion has a partnership with Major League Baseball, (MLB) its marketing and fund raising efforts rely primarily on local, league-level efforts. This analysis will attempt to show the mutually beneficial relationship between baseball and the business sector by using the junior and senior teams of a specific American Legion post as the focal point. The organizational leadership communication skills youth acquire from playing baseball in this league helps them develop into active, engaged community members, and eventually employees. Therefore, this study will propose that marketing the leadership aspects of baseball is a valuable

approach. Organizations can benefit from the leadership and organizational communication skills boys learn on the baseball field. Haskins (2013) discusses business wisdom derived from youth soccer games. In a similar vein, this research will discuss organizational leadership practices in youth baseball, and apply it to analogous communication skills in business situations. Moreover, it will propose a specific application of the organizational leadership skills in youth baseball to the American Legion's efforts to market its baseball program for teens.

Using the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a guide, this work will offer a capital analysis in the form of a strategic communication plan to help the American Legion Post #51 in Concord, North Carolina effectively use the leadership aspects of baseball to communicate with and market to key stakeholders. According to McArthur, (2014) a capital analysis offers "a broad survey of the symbolic and material resources available to an organization in a particular scenario" (p. 21). As in the game of baseball, Bourdieu's theory of capital involves players, or actors, positioning themselves in fields by using different forms of symbolic and material resources he calls capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this context, a field is a social space which individuals occupy (Ihlen, 2009). One can find several parallels between a baseball field and the field Bourdieu addresses in his works. The primary concept for the analysis is the notion of capital. Bourdieu discusses many forms of capital, but the most practical and applicable for this research are economic, cultural, knowledge, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The manner and extent of institutionalization in American Legion baseball is also relevant.

This study is important for several reasons. First, youth baseball organizations like American Legion baseball can use the capital analysis to better understand the resources available to them and how best to leverage the valuable organizational leadership skills from baseball in their marketing and other communication endeavors. Second, business organizations

can benefit from research into organizational leadership communication as it relates to the game of baseball because of the game's popularity and the applicability of the skills. Finally, organizations will have a better understanding of the return on their investment when they decide to support the American Legion baseball program by having a clearer picture of the types of future leaders that will enter the workforce. In other words, helping businesses to see the value of investing in their future workforce by helping them acquire organizational leadership skills now will help to answer the question, "what's in it for me?"

This project will study organizational leadership communication practices present in the game of baseball to better understand how organizations can benefit from cultivating young leaders, and how a youth baseball organization like the American Legion Post #51's league might develop strategic communications linking marketing efforts to leadership values.

Literature Review

A review of both academic and popular literature can inform one's understanding of the connections between youth baseball, organizational communication, and leadership communication. Reviewing existing literature also helps illuminate other aspects of this project. This literature review will begin with an overview of literature focusing on the notion of sports teams as organizations including literature linking baseball to organizational leadership communication skills. The next portion of the literature review will discuss youth organizations and the value of youth baseball programs. The theoretical framework will include an in-depth discussion of Bourdieu's concept of capital analysis so a broad survey of academic literature using Bourdieu's work as a framework is necessary. Of particular importance is literature connecting sports to the concepts Bourdieu proposes. Because one must understand current marketing practices in the sports industry, baseball, and specifically in youth baseball, the

literature review will continue with an examination of scholarly sports marketing literature. Finally, I will tie the literature together, and describe how this project provides a unique perspective to advance understanding of how youth sports organizations can use the organizational leadership skills adolescent boys learn through the game of baseball as a strategic marketing tool.

Baseball Teams as Organizations

Several scholars discuss sports teams as organizations, and link sports with communication behaviors. Sullivan and Gee (2007) use social exchange theory to link athlete satisfaction with the extent to which effective communication occurs among members of a team. This work examines communication as intra-team resources across a broad array of sports, and the authors extend the list of outcomes from social interaction in sports to include not only cohesion and performance but also athlete satisfaction.

Like Sullivan and Gee, (2007) Cranmer and Myers (2015) also discuss cohesion and satisfaction as outcomes associated with effective communication among members of a sports team. Cranmer and Myers explore communication between the athlete-coach dyad through the theoretical lens of leader-member exchange theory. This research is particularly helpful to a project examining leadership communication practices present in youth baseball for several reasons. First, the authors propose coaches must adapt their communication to the needs of each individual player. They agree with Hackman and Johnson (2013) that leader and follower communication style influences the quality of a relationship. The study also discusses various sources of and approaches to leadership in organized sports. "Sports teams are comprised of several complex layers of informal and formal leadership" (Cranmer & Myers, 2015, p. 102).

This discussion of leadership layers present with an organization like a sports team holds relevance for this project with regard to the discussion of baseball in an organizational communication context and an exploration of capital present in a specific American Legion baseball league. In essence, this project will undertake a deeper examination of the various resources and leadership layers present within the American Legion Post #51 baseball league.

Another crucial aspect of organizational leadership communication one can learn through organized athletic programs such as a baseball league is an appreciation for diversity. Ressler (2013) uses a concept he calls organizational citizenship behavior and self-perception theory as the framework for an analysis of in-depth interviews with a diverse group of minor league baseball players. In this study, players report that collaboration across cultural boundaries is rewarding, and more often the result of voluntary self-leadership than a top-down mandate. The notion of collaboration and self-leadership give way to an exploration of other scholar's works with direct application to organizational communication and an indirect application to baseball. One such area is the work of management theorist, Peter Senge and his concept of learning organizations, which provides a more holistic and participative approach to organizing (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2010). According to Senge, (1990) learning organizations exhibit five characteristics: (a) systems thinking, or interdependence, (b) personal mastery, or commitment to learning, (c) flexible mental models, (d) a shared vision, and (e) team learning with an emphasis on dialogue. Although not the intent of the original work, baseball fans can apply the concepts of Senge's learning organization to the study of baseball from an organizational perspective.

Like other scholars, Hawkins and Tolzin (2002) also view baseball teams as organizations. Their work, however, views baseball teams as examples of postmodern

organizations, and examines the relationship between teams and leaders. In their view, leaders in both baseball and postmodern organizations exhibit the behaviors of: (a) leadership through ritualized behavior, (b) transformational leadership, and (c) balancing the relationship between autonomy and interdependence. Burr-Miller (2011) also views baseball as a postmodern organization type, but extends the view to use the “equipment for living” idea proposed by Burke (1967) and later expanded by Brummett (1985). The notion of equipment for living stems from Burke (1967) and his proposal that literature functions as a symbolic means through which individuals can make sense of and adapt to their social world. Burr-Miller (2011) explains, “using Burke’s conceptualization, it becomes possible to recognize that individuals use a multitude of texts, in a variety of ways, to make their way in the world” (p.446). She argues baseball is one of many texts, and proposes the concept of using fantasy baseball games to make sense of and relate to one’s social world.

Hawkins and Tolzin (2002) argue that baseball is worthy of scholarly research in the context of understanding organizations because “baseball, in sharp contrast to most formal organizations, operates in the public realm in which much of its operation is directly observable” (p. 98). This statement provides a foundational argument to justify a capital analysis of a specific baseball organization culminating in a strategic communication plan.

Because a key aspect of this project takes root in organizational leadership within a baseball organization, an understanding of power is essential. Warneke and Ogden (2012) broadly assess the various forms of power such as (a) coercive power, (b) referent power, (c) reward power, (d) social power, (e) legitimate power, and (f) expert power to determine the influence on collegiate baseball players and their organizational commitment. They focus on bases of power using an organizational commitment questionnaire. This study concludes that

collegiate players' perceptions of the power their coaches wield correlates to organizational commitment. Moreover, the authors conclude, "the more they perceived their coaches to have reward, expert, referent, and legitimate power, the more the players reported being committed to the team" (p. 76). Although this project will not focus explicitly on the concept of power, an understanding of the different types of power and their application to collegiate baseball is important for several reasons. First, the age group served by American Legion baseball ranges from 13-19 years of age, which is the next youngest age group by comparison. Also, various forms of power can affect the forms of capital present in an organization. This project will re-focus the analysis of power bases in collegiate baseball to expressly examine the capital in a youth baseball organization for teen players.

Youth Baseball

After surveying the relevant literature exploring the concept of sports teams as organizations, and narrowing the focus to baseball teams as organizations, one must next understand the literature pertaining to youth sports in the context of organizational leadership. One author uses the perspective of soccer parent and business consultant to explore this concept. Haskins (2013) analyzes personal observations from youth soccer games to develop a list of business lessons one can learn from watching youth soccer games. Among these lessons are the importance of patience, flexibility, and critical thinking. Baseball provides another opportunity for young people and adults alike to glean business wisdom and organizational savvy through an organized athletic team.

Other scholars focus on the developmental value of baseball on youth. Thomsen (2004) discusses the positive aspects of development possible when young people participate in

baseball, and how these might apply in an academic setting. She offers, “think of how much more effective school and classroom environments would be if schools worked like baseball teams, which bring highly skilled people together under the leadership of a person who has a vision for winning” (p. 80). She points out that, like players and coaches, both students and educators must work hard, collaborate, and practice to achieve success. Another study examines the responses from a group of 11 year-old baseball players who report fun and personal development are the primary motivating factors for participating in an elite youth baseball program (Pugh, Wolff, DeFrancesco, Gilley, & Heitman, 2000). Likewise, Ogden and Warneke (2010) explore the developmental benefits of baseball. Their work explores the notion that select, travel baseball serves as a necessary foundation to a player’s high school and college baseball career. The authors conducted a survey with college baseball players to determine the percentage of players that participated in travel baseball when they were younger and the extent to which they reported the experience prepared them for their college baseball career. Exploring the literature related to developmental and foundational support baseball provides is necessary to understanding some of the motivations for parents and teen boys for playing American Legion baseball or participating in other leagues.

Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin (2003) explore a broad array of youth activities, including participation in sports, to determine the developmental experiences present in organized activities. They conclude from their analysis that youth who participate in sports and other organized activities report higher instances of personal development in the areas of goal-setting, time management, problem solving, and effort. Moreover, they report higher rates of instances of interpersonal development and relationship satisfaction. This study enhances an understanding of how knowledge capital and social capital function in a youth baseball organization.

Bourdieu and Capital

This project will draw on a reworked typology of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital as the theoretical framework. Although this project will focus primarily on the notions of institutionalization and capital, one must also understand Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field in the context of a capital analysis. According to Ihlen, (2009) "a habitus is a structuring mechanism that generates strategies for actors in the social world" (p. 78). In essence, habitus functions as the explicit and implicit rules or guiding principles. Habitus relates to the concept of field. A field is the social network of relationships between individuals, or actors.

Individuals attempt to position themselves on a field by exchanging various forms of capital (Ihlen, 2009). Capital refers to the resources available to an organization or individual, and organizations may value some forms of capital more than others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This project will focus on the extent to which the organization is institutionalized as well as the economic, knowledge, social, and symbolic capital. Institutionalization examines factors like organizational membership and stability (Ihlen, 2009). A significant portion of this project will focus on analyzing economic capital, or the financial resources available to the organization. This project will examine knowledge capital, or the information, skills, or education within an organization. Knowledge capital also encompasses lobbying efforts and the political processes within an organization. This project will explore the symbolic and social capital within the American Legion Post #51 baseball organization. According to Bourdieu, (1984) symbolic capital is an organization's reputation or images of respectability. Social capital is the aggregate of potential resources within a network (Bourdieu, 1986). Moreover, social capital involves "a conscious or unconscious investment strategy" of exchanges of services, words, time, concern,

gifts, or attention (Ihlen, 2009, p. 87). This project will explore each form of capital and how it functions in the American Legion Post #51 baseball organization.

Because this project will culminate in a strategic communication plan based on a capital analysis rooted in Bourdieu, a brief survey of Bourdieu and how other scholars apply his ideas is necessary. Essential to understanding the basis of this project is a foundational understanding of the concept of capital. Bourdieu (1986) narrows down the list of potential forms of capital to (a) economic capital, or money, (b) cultural capital, or knowledge capital, which includes knowledge, skills, education, and training, (c) social capital, or group memberships and connections, and (d) symbolic capital, or prestige. Ihlen (2009) proposes a reworked typology of capital like the one this project will use. This typology explores the degree to which an organization is institutionalized and the types of economic, knowledge, social, and symbolic capital exist. McArthur (2014) expands on this notion of a reworked typology of capital, and provides a planning guide for developing a capital analysis for strategic communication.

Many scholars use Bourdieu's theory of capital as the framework for their research. Couldry (2003) discusses the relevance of Bourdieu's field theory to media research. They posit that field is essential to media research, and media function as a form of meta-capital that trump other forms of capital. Nevertheless, Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) argue that too few scholars focus on Bourdieu's notion of habitus as a critical component of understanding how organizations function. Greenspan (2013) discusses how an understanding of capital can advance one's understanding of advocacy nongovernmental organizations. Although the exploration of capital is in the form of an academic paper rather than a strategic communication plan, this project can draw upon the similarities in how an organization uses the various resources, or capital, available.

Other scholars use the work of Pierre Bourdieu as a theoretical framework for understanding athletic sports. Kitchin and Howe (2013) explore the relational aspects of Bourdieu's concepts with application to sports management. They argue, "a relational approach drawing on field, capital, and habitus can provide a multi-layered analysis that positions sport management within its wider social and institutional context" (p. 130). Scholars like Warde (2006) narrow the focus to a single form of capital as it applies to sports. His work focuses on exercise and body image practices in sports through the theoretical lens of applying cultural capital in its three forms: institutionalized, objectified and embodied. According to Stempel, (2005) sport is a form of cultural capital rather than a factor present in organized sports. He analyzed adult sport participation data, and determined social class drives sport participation. Therefore, he argues sport is a form of cultural capital. Understanding how other scholars apply Bourdieu's theories explicitly to sports can inform an understanding of this project, which seeks to examine capital theory and its use in a baseball organization.

Marketing in Sports

This research will culminate in a strategic communication plan which will include recommendations for how American Legion Post #51 can use the organizational leadership communication aspects of the game of baseball as a marketing tool. Therefore, it is important to review literature that advances an understanding of marketing practices, particularly social marketing, present in baseball. The first article that helps set context for examining marketing in sports provides a chronological overview of the evolution of sports marketing, and examines how the emergence of equipment and technology changed the sports marketing methods (Hardy, Norman, & Sceery, 2012). These authors also discuss how some sports, like golf and tennis,

represent higher socio-economic status through their marketing efforts. This article sets the stage for understanding marketing in sports at a more nuanced level for this project.

Other scholars focus on the different types of marketing and the relevance to sports. For example, Farrelly, Quester, and Mavondo, (2003) explore how thriving business-to-business relationships between sponsors and sports organizations serve as forms of relationship marketing. They argue that commitment between members of the sponsorship dyad leads to sponsorship effectiveness. Some authors discuss sponsorship in different terms. For example, one study examines the extent to which fan values influence sponsorship effectiveness (Aiken, Sukhdial, Kahle, & Downing, 2015). These authors discuss the importance of “old school values” (p. 57). They characterize old school values as follows: (a) athletes and fans place little emphasis on material gain, (b) athletes and fans place value on sportsmanship rather than on winning, and (c) athletes and fans are concerned with social responsibility. Reviewing previous works pertaining to sponsorships will inform the examination of knowledge capital for the strategic communication plan this project will yield.

Another group within the academic literature that informs this project is scholarly articles on the topic of social media marketing. One example is an article which seeks to “determine if there were differences in the brand personality items of a major sporting event” between social media users and non-users (Walsh, Clavio, Lovell, & Blaszka, 2013, p. 218). They conclude that fans who follow a team’s Facebook page have more opportunities to encounter a team’s brand, and therefore, social media is a contributing factor to influencing a brand’s personality. Moyer, Pokrywczynski, and Griffin (2015) also study Facebook and its influence on sports fans, specifically, baseball fans. They analyze fans of a minor league baseball team and their use of the team’s Facebook page to predict the likelihood of those fans purchasing team merchandise.

Moreover, they conclude that “the amount of active involvement one has with the professional baseball team Facebook page might be associated with team identification” (p. 41). Williams, Heiser, and Chinn (2011) also examine how fans engage with a minor league team through social media. Their research uses social identity theory as the framework to predict the likelihood of fans attending a game when they interact with the team through social media. They focus on posters, or those who frequently post on social media, and lurkers, or those who view social media sites but rarely contribute. The authors conclude that frequent interaction on the team’s social media page correlates with the likelihood of purchasing products and attending games.

Understanding social media use in sports marketing and in baseball marketing in particular is helpful in the context of this project. The literature discussed to this point focuses on Facebook or on broad social media use. Nevertheless, the American Legion Post #51 baseball league uses Twitter as a mode of communication. Therefore, an article exploring the use of Twitter in sports marketing will be helpful as it will inform the recommendations portion of the capital analysis. Witkemper, Lim, and Waldburger (2012) attempt to ascertain why some people adopt Twitter as the medium through which they follow athletes and sports teams. Among the top motivators are information and entertainment. This research has important practical implications for sports teams who wish to engage fans through Twitter.

Based on existing literature, evidence of players acquiring organizational leadership skills through an organized sport such as baseball exists. Understanding the power of using the organizational leadership skills teens obtain through their participation in a baseball league can function as a marketing tool for a grass-roots organization. Conducting a capital analysis based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu provides a useful theoretical framework through which one can attempt to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do youth baseball leagues such as the American Legion baseball use the inherent organizational leadership skills players develop as a tool in their marketing efforts?

RQ2: How can American Legion Post #51 use the organizational leadership skills players develop by playing in their leagues as one of many forms of capital to improve the marketing and strategic communication efforts in the Concord, North Carolina community?

RQ3: How can American Legion Post #51 better utilize social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to market their baseball program?

Methodology

This project will culminate in a strategic communication plan for the American Legion Post #51 baseball league in Concord, North Carolina. The plan will provide a capital analysis using Pierre Bourdieu's reworked typology of capital as the theoretical framework. The analysis will examine the five main themes or categories as outlined by McArthur (2014). This will include a market segmentation of the communities American Legion Post #51 serves as well as an examination of (a) institutionalization, (b) economic capital, (c) knowledge capital, (d) social capital, and (e) symbolic capital. The capital analysis will consist of applied research methods.

The market segmentation will draw on data collected from the City Data website. Specifically, the market segmentation will use population, financial, and demographic data at the state, county, and city level to provide a description of the Concord, Harrisburg, Mount Pleasant, and Midland communities which American Legion Post #51 serves.

The capital analysis will draw from a combination of applied research methods including in-depth interviews, content analysis of websites and Twitter feeds, and observations.

Specifically, in-depth interviews will occur with the director of the American Legion Post #51 baseball program, Brian Sweet. These interviews will include questions to ascertain the extent to which the baseball program is institutionalized as well as questions about the economic and knowledge capital present within the organization. A review of website content from the America Legion baseball national program will provide data regarding the organization's rules, regulations, policies, and procedures, which also serve as forms of knowledge capital.

A review of the American Legion baseball website, the Post #51 baseball website, and the Post #51 Twitter feed will provide data for the assessment of social and symbolic capital. The analysis will also include a review of the websites and Twitter feeds of two other American Legion baseball leagues in North Carolina. One team is in region three, the same region as Post #51, and the other team is from region four in North Carolina. The analysis will also include a review of the website for On Deck Baseball Academy, a showcase baseball organization serving the same geographic region. Analyzing the messaging of a showcase baseball organization is important because these leagues compete against the American Legion baseball leagues for recruiting players and attracting resources. In-game observations and detailed notes on these observations will also provide data for the social and symbolic capital analysis.

Challenges and Limitations

This project presents two distinct challenges. The first challenge is finding mutually agreeable times to conduct in-depth interviews during the busy playoff game schedule and other end-of-season activities for the league. Another challenge is assessing the forms of capital accurately and without bias within the specified timeframe. Capital is a complex concept, and varies from one organization to another. Bourdieu (1994) suggests researchers should focus on

competing interests and the organization's interactions, or field, as a whole by examining historical conflicts. The league is under new management, so the availability of historical information may be limited. The research for this strategic communication plan will focus primarily on the capital as it exists in the current season and among current league and community members rather than delving into a robust historical analysis.

The time constraint serves as both a challenge and a limitation. Although implementation of the strategic communication plan is timely because of the marketing and communication efforts scheduled during the off-season, the ability to conduct in-game observations will be abbreviated. Another limitation of this project is the scope. The website and Twitter analysis is limited to similar and competing leagues within the same geographic region as American Legion Post #51. Finally, economic capital will likely limit some of the recommendations in the plan. American Legion baseball leagues operate through the support of volunteers and sponsors, and funds are limited. The plan will need to present recommendations that yield benefits with little or no financial cost to the league. This underscores the importance of assessing other forms of capital American Legion Post #51 has at its disposal.

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Outline of Strategic Communication Plan

- I. Executive Summary: Overview of the strategic communication plan
- II. Purpose : To study organizational leadership communication practices present in the game of baseball to better understand how organizations can benefit from cultivating young leaders, and how a youth baseball organization like the American Legion Post #51's league might develop strategic communications linking marketing efforts to leadership values.
- III. Challenges & Opportunities: A summary of the major challenges and opportunities for the American Legion Post #51 baseball organization (to be determined through ongoing research and discussions with the organization)
 - A. Challenges
 - 1.Challenge 1
 - 2.Challenge 2
 - 3.Challenge 3
 - B. Opportunities
 - 1.Opportunity 1
 - 2.Opportunity 2
 - 3.Opportunity 3
- IV. Analysis
 - A. Overview statement to preview analysis
 - B. Institutionalization
 - C. Economic capital
 - D. Knowledge capital
 - E. Social capital
 - F. Symbolic capital
- V. Market Segmentation: An overview of the American Legion baseball organization, Post #51, and the community it serves including how the organization communicates with its various "publics"
 - A. Community and game attendees
 - B. Players
 - C. Parents
 - D. Coaches
 - E. Sponsors and stakeholders
- VI. Recommended Strategies

- A. Strategies for utilizing institutionalization
 - 1.Recommendation 1
 - a. Strategy for implementing
 - b. Resources needed
 - c. Proposed plan and timeframe
 - d. Goals and measurements
 - 2.Recommendation 2
 - a. Strategy for implementing
 - b. Resources needed
 - c. Proposed plan and timeframe
 - d. Goals and measurements

- B. Strategies for developing economic capital
 - 1.Recommendation 1
 - a. Strategy for implementing
 - b. Resources needed
 - c. Proposed plan and timeframe
 - d. Goals and measurements
 - 2.Recommendation 2
 - a. Strategy for implementing
 - b. Resources needed
 - c. Proposed plan and timeframe
 - d. Goals and measurements

- C. Strategies for developing knowledge capital
 - 1.Recommendation 1
 - a. Strategy for implementing
 - b. Resources needed
 - c. Proposed plan and timeframe
 - d. Goals and measurements
 - 2.Recommendation 2
 - a. Strategy for implementing
 - b. Resources needed
 - c. Proposed plan and timeframe
 - d. Goals and measurements

- D. Strategies for developing social capital
 - 1.Recommendation 1
 - a. Strategy for implementing
 - b. Resources needed

- c. Proposed plan and timeframe
- d. Goals and measurements

2.Recommendation 2

- a. Strategy for implementing
- b. Resources needed
- c. Proposed plan and timeframe
- d. Goals and measurements

E. Strategies for developing symbolic capital

1.Recommendation 1

- a. Strategy for implementing
- b. Resources needed
- c. Proposed plan and timeframe
- d. Goals and measurements

2.Recommendation 2

- a. Strategy for implementing
- b. Resources needed
- c. Proposed plan and timeframe
- d. Goals and measurements

VII. Conclusion

VIII. Appendix

- A. Appendix A
- B. Appendix B
- C. Inquiry Project Proposal

Appendix B – Player Age Eligibility



**Senior & Junior American Legion Baseball
2015 Age Eligibility Chart**

Jan.	Feb	Mar.	Apr	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Traditional grade in school	Birth Year
Age - 12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	Not Eligible	2003
Age - 13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	7 th Grade	2002
Age - 14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	8 th Grade	2001
Age - 15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	Freshman	2000
Age - 16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	Sophomore	1999
Age - 17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	Junior	1998
Age - 18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	Senior	1997
Age - 19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	College/HS	1996
Age - 20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	Not eligible	1995

2014 High School graduates may only play for the Legion team they last played for. Players shall not be eligible for transfer and their name must have appeared on an approved senior Legion team roster.

Players born in 1996 or 1997, must play in the Senior Legion Baseball program.

Players (age 12 and under) born in 2003 and after are not eligible to play American Legion Baseball.

Players born in 1995 or before are no longer eligible to play American Legion Baseball.

Get connected with American Legion Baseball – “like”, “tweet”, or “view”   

Appendix C

Expense Type	Approximate Cost	Quantity or Unit
Stock concession stand	\$500	1-2 times per season
Registration and insurance – senior team	\$530	One-time expense
Registration and insurance – junior team	\$360	One-time expense
Fee to use field (Cabarrus County)	\$125	Per game (appx. 22 home games)
Baseballs	\$55	Per dozen (assume 2 dozen per team)
Hats	\$1000	Per order for league
Paint for fields	\$40	Per case
Umpire – senior team	\$90	Per game (appx. 11 home games)
Umpire – junior team	\$70	Per game (appx. 11 home games)
TOTAL	\$7660.00	

Above list does *not* include:

- Cost of uniforms for senior and junior teams (re-use uniforms from year to year)
- Cost of gas (diesel) and meals for senior legion away games

Appendix D – Cabarrus County City Data

Town	Population	Average Household Income	Rural	Urban
Midland	3,214	\$54,307	100.00%	0.00%
Mount Pleasant	1,740	\$54,227	100.00%	0.00%
Harrisburg	13,788	\$82,963	0.00%	100.00%
Concord	83,506	\$55,551	99.00%	1.00%
Total	102,248	\$61,762	74.75%	25.25%

Appendix E – Post #51 Baseball Twitter Data



@51LegionBsbll's tweets analytics



@51LegionBsbll 51 Legion Baseball

363 tweets 102 following 182 followers 3 listed
 Joined Twitter on February 22, 2014 as user #2358885052
 Updates on Post 51 Legion Baseball.
 Concord, NC 1.78 followers/following 16 listed/1,000 followers

238 tweets from May 01, 2015 to August 13, 2015

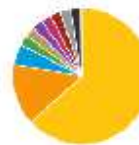
- 2.27** tweets per day
- 42** retweets 18% of tweets
- 0** user mentions 0.00 per tweet
- 0** replies 0% of tweets
- 3** links 0.01 per tweet
- 3** hashtags 0.01 per tweet
- 42** tweets retweeted 17.6% of tweets a total of **106** times 2.52 per retweeted tweet
- 71** tweets favorited 29.8% of tweets a total of **111** times 1.56 per favorited tweet

Tweet history



Users most retweeted

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| @dexum66 26 | @AL_WorldSeries 6 |
| @MPTigerPride 2 | @wjboger 1 |
| @NCArea3Baseball 1 | @bsweet77 1 |
| @CoachLisle 1 | @AmericanLegion 1 |
| @JRWalk22 1 | @JayBakerFD 1 |



Users most replied to

@51LegionBsbll has not replied to anyone

Users most mentioned

@51LegionBsbll has not mentioned anyone

Hashtags most used

- #cube **3**



Tweets most retweeted

Appendix F – Post #29 Website Image

GC **POST 29 BASEBALL ONLINE**
 Your Home for all the Caldwell Co. Post 29 News and Information

Home Schedule/Results ▾ Roster ▾ Stats ▾ Former Players Staff MS Deal Stadium American Legion Baseball

MS Deal Stadium - Granite Falls, NC (Granite Falls Middle School)

Picturesque MS Deal in the heart of Granite Falls is the home of the Post 29 baseball team. Since Post 29 moved to MS Deal that stadium has seen many baseball wars.

The high point for that stadium was in 2000 when the inaugural double elimination NC State Legion tournament was held. In front of 3000 strong, Caldwell County defeated Cherryville in another heated chapter of their classic rivalry in the winner's bracket final and then defeated Rowan County in the tournament finals to win yet another championship for the storied baseball program.

The stadium itself has been awarded the Best Playing Field Nationally by Turf Magazine. Credit for that award is due to GC Trivett and his team including Bill Davis.

In 2005, the care taking reigns of MS Deal have been handed to new blood Kevin Prince and Chad Raby. Both men are fixtures in the area. Prince athletic director at Granite Falls Middle School and Raby is Programs Supervisor at Granite Falls Recreation Center.

In 2006, another huge news making event occurred when the Hickory Crawdads, the Single-A affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates played host to the Single A affiliate of the Chicago White Sox, the Kannapolis Intimidators. 1200 tickets were sold through season tickets and at the gate. The only drawback to the day of baseball was the Crawdads fell 12-4.

In 2012, MS Deal once again played host the Area IV American Legion State Tournament. The tournament was won by Wilmington Post 10 defeating Cherryville Post 100 in the finals.

In 2015, MS Deal will play host to the NC American Legion Junior Tournament. As seven teams from across NC along with the Tournament Hosts and defending State Champs, South Caldwell Junior Legion will do battle for the state title.

Appendix G – Interrelated Nature of Capital

