

# **VITA**

**(Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)**

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**December 16, 2015**

## **Executive Summary:**

### ***Purpose***

The purpose of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is to perform a FREE IRS authorized tax service for those with annual incomes below \$54,000 per year.

### ***Marketing Problem/Objective***

Concordia College has an IRS certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site for several years. Last year, the number of customers coming to us was only 43 people in the tax season of 2014. VITA seeks to develop a marketing plan & model targeted to Moorhead area college students with incomes less than \$53,000 that will generate a 30% increase in customers vs. 2014, or minimum of 50 customers served between February 1 thru March 18, 2016. If this objective is not met, VITA at Concordia College will be forced to shut down, which would be a shame to the low-income community, as well as the tax accounting students at Concordia who are receiving valuable real-life experience.

### ***Value Proposition***

In order to successfully meet this goal we need to have a reasons that will entice our target market to use our service, which is put into a value proposition statement.

We offer a FREE tax service which is at a convenient location to students in Moorhead at the Concordia College Grant Center with many BENEFITS to the customer including:

- FREE parking
- Food and Coffee Available
- No appointment necessary
- FREE E-filing- About 90% of our customers will receive a refund within 2-3 weeks of filing- Don't Wait on Parents!

### ***Recommendations***

There are several key recommendations we have for VITA so that we can meet and our objective and continue to serve the community. Our most important recommendation is to start a Social Media Campaign. This will be key for VITA since right now, there is no online presence for our VITA site, and we are targeting the largest users of social media- STUDENTS! We recommend both a Facebook and Google ad to be directed to our target market and leading them to our landing page, which will display more information,

including our value proposition. We need to make ourselves and our benefits known to the colleges of Moorhead. Another recommendation we have involves partner marketing. Globe University, M-State and Cardinal IG are both also interested in our service and we have the opportunity to have them market us to students and employees. Finally, we want VITA to work on further developing loyalty. We want to give customers a great experience using our service so that they tell their friends and family.

### ***Company Description***

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) performs a FREE IRS authorized tax service for those with annual incomes below \$53,000 per year.

Location: 1310 8th St., Moorhead MN at the Concordia College Offutt School of Business.

Hours: 6PM-9PM, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays

Dates: February 1st to March 18th.

Certification: We have IRS certified tax volunteers in addition to site coordinator with 20+ years of tax accounting experience in both the private and academic sectors.

### ***Competitive Analysis***

| <b>Site Location:</b>                                            | <b><u>VITA Sites</u></b>          |                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                  | <b>Dates Open:</b>                | <b>Hours:</b>                                               |
| 1. NDSU: 1201 Albrech Blvd.,<br>Fargo, NDSU Campus Library       | 2/2/16 to 3/29/16                 | Tues. 6PM to 9PM                                            |
| 2. S.E. ND Community Action Agency:<br>3233 S. University, Fargo | 2/1/16 to 4/13/16<br>(appt. only) | Monday thru Thursday:<br>8:30AM to 4PM                      |
| 3. Concordia: 1310 8th St. S.<br>Offutt School of Business       | 2/1/16 to 3/18/16                 | Monday, Tuesday, Thursday:<br>6PM to 9PM                    |
| 4. Lakes and Praires Comm. Action:<br>705 11th St. N, Moorhead   | 1/26/16 to 4/12/16                | Tuesday thru Thursday:<br>5PM to 8PM<br>(Wed. only in Feb.) |

Based upon this competitive analysis, we have decided that we do not want to target the Fargo area because NDSU is already targeting students and the Community Action Agency

has the competitive advantage of more hours and more days. Thus, we are focus on the target market of Moorhead college students. Lakes and Prairies Community Action Center, even though in our area, is a retirement home and target retirees and older low income people, therefore we feel we have the clear advantage in targeting students.

### ***SMART Objective***

VITA seeks to develop a marketing plan & model targeted to Moorhead area college students with incomes less than \$53,000 that will generate a 30% increase in customers vs. 2014, or minimum of 50 customers served between February 1 thru March 18, 2016.

#### **Specific:**

Our specific goal is to provide a tax service to a minimum of 50 customers in addition to creating a marketing model that can be utilized by VITA service locations nationwide.

#### **Measurable:**

Our objective is measurable by the amount of customers that we gain. With a minimal goal of 50 clients served.

#### **Attainable:**

| Location          | # Students    | % Working | Total Possible Clients |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Concordia college | 2,214         | 50%       | 1075                   |
| M-State           | 2,700         | 50%       | 1350                   |
| MSUM              | 5,800         | 70%       | 3920                   |
| Globe University  | 75            | 100%      | 75                     |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>10,789</b> |           | <b>6420</b>            |

We believe our 50 customers are attainable given that the majority of our 43 customers last year were retirees and there was very little marketing to students aside from posters and announcements in some Concordia classes. To reach our goal of 50 customers, we need to attract 7 additional customers to obtain 50 customers. By actively recruiting to surrounding schools and with aggressive low cost recruiting to Concordia's 1075 student workers, we will be able to make and hopefully exceed our goal.

#### **Relevant:**

The Number of 50 is relevant as a minimum of 50 clients are required to stay in business with our VITA location.

#### **Time-Based:**

We will need to serve these 50 customers at VITA between the months February 18 through March 18, 2016 (tax season).

### ***Target Market***

College students in the Moorhead area.

- Age: 18-30
- Income: Making under \$53,000 a year.
- Location: Concordia College, MSUM, M-State, Globe University
- Profession: Students with on-campus jobs and off-campus jobs

Demographics:

- Aged 18-30
- A student currently enrolled in college
- Either married or single
- Attends college in Moorhead

Psychographics:

- Roughly 70%-80% of students work part time in all universities in Moorhead.
- People don't want to do their taxes nor do they have the expertise
- Students don't understand how to do their taxes therefore they look for an outside source to get the task completed.
- Students spend their money on going out with friends (I.E bars, movies, concerts, restaurants), they also spend money on groceries, and fast food.

### ***Market Demand***

As the above chart demonstrates, from our research, there are 6420 working college students in Moorhead that we can potentially serve. Last year, the Moorhead/Fargo sites served a combined 1150 customers with our site serving a mere 43 customers. This shows that there will be great potential to grow with existing customers and Moorhead college students, who we are targeting.

### ***Buying Process/Touchpoints***

- **Problem Recognition:** People who work are required to have their taxes filed each year by April 15.

- **Past Information Search:** External search: People can search for VITA locations on the IRS website within their zip code. Fliers posted in Moorhead Public Library, Concordia campus bulletin boards, and other VITA sites.
- **Recommended Information Search:** We want people to be able to find us easier because right now, according to our sample survey results, only 45% of students are even aware that our service is available. These students will be able to find out about us through our Facebook and Google ads campaign and fliers in more prominent locations.
- **Alternative Evaluation:** When students are looking to do their taxes they have three options. The first is to file the taxes themselves. The second is to pay a professional service to file their taxes. The third is to hand their taxes to parents. We want them to choose VITA because we offer a free e-filing in which they will receive their refund within 2-3 weeks of our service and will not have to wait for their parents to file their taxes to spend their hard earned money.
- **Purchase Decision:** People will choose the alternative in which it is the easiest and most convenient for them. We think they will choose us because we are free and will get students their money back faster than their parents would get a refund for them.
- **Purchase Experience:** Only 1 mistake in 43 customers last year, which was corrected. Concordia College Grant Center has many benefits to the customer including free guest parking, food and coffee available at the brew, no appointment necessary, free e-filing- 90% of our past customers have received a refund within 2-3 weeks of filing.
- **Post Purchase:** Have never had a complaint from a customer. Last tax season, about half (20) were repeat customers. The majority of repeat customers are retirees because students are in and out from 2-4 years depending on which school they go to. This year we plan on having a short survey for our customers rating our services and the likelihood that they would recommend us to friends or family along with a big thank you for your business.

### ***Value Proposition***

Students making less than \$54,000 per year can utilize a FREE, professional, IRS-authorized tax service at Concordia College from Feb 1st to March 18th. We specialize in FREE student

e-filed tax returns with 90% of our customers receiving refunds within two to three weeks.

Other benefits include:

- Free Parking
- Food and Coffee Available
- No appointment need

### ***Integrated Marketing Campaign***

#### **Public Relations**

- How customers evaluate our service and what they say to others
- Being that VITA, Concordia College, has never received a complaint, it is good
- Plan to offer a short evaluation to customers of our performance asking, Rate your reply on a scale of 1-10. 1. How likely are you to use this service again? 2. How likely are you to recommend VITA service to friends and family?

#### **Promotion**

- Social Media- Facebook Ad
- Google Ad
- Access to Concordia students e-mail
- Use these outlets to promote why customers should use us: FREE, 90% of customers receive refund within 2-3 weeks, convenient location

#### **Partner Marketing**

- Opportunity for Globe University and M-State to market to their students
- Partner with Mike to service Cardinal IG employees

#### **Direct Marketing**

- Fliers at low income apartment complexes (Laundry rooms, lobby area on bulletin board)
- Fliers at places low income might work- local fast food restaurants
- Fliers at local nursing homes for the elderly
- Fliers at the restaurants and stores that our survey results say that students frequently go to- Hornbachers, Walmart, Buffalo Wild Wings, Olive Garden
- Local Churches

#### **Process**

- Customers have free parking right next to Grant Center
- With BREW open, customers can purchase coffee, which appeals to college students
- No appointment needed, we are available at customers convenience
- FREE WIFI, computer access
- FREE E-filing

### Online Customer Journey/Social Media

When tax season arrives, customers will do a google search of resembling “tax services Moorhead/Fargo” and when they search this on google our ad will appear:

**Ads**

**VITA: FREE IRS TAX PREP**  
[www.IRS.gov/VITA](http://www.IRS.gov/VITA)  
4.4 ★★★★★ advertiser rating  
No Apptmt Necessary, Evening Hrs  
Annual Incomes <\$53K Only

Another online tactic for VITA is our Facebook ad in which the demographics of our target market can be set so that this ad is only shown to our target market and will look like this:

Niveen Hassan, Courtney Weispfennig and 2 others like Discover.

**VITA**  
Sponsored · 🌐

Like Page

No appointment necessary, evening hours. Annual income less than \$53,000 only.



**VITA: Free IRS Tax Prep**  
Available at Concordia College Grant Center  
[WWW.IRS.gov/VITA](http://WWW.IRS.gov/VITA)

Learn More

Upon the customer clicking either one of these two ads, they will be directed to our landing page which will portray the benefits of our VITA site and ask for the customer's email address so that we will be able to be in contact with the customer so that we will be able to remind them of the upcoming tax season. The landing page will look like this:



Submit your information here to inquire and learn more:

\*Name:

\*Email:

\*Phone #:

Income:

\*Required

Contact us:

VITA CENTER MOORHEAD, MN Ron Twedt. E-mail: [twedt@cord.edu](mailto:twedt@cord.edu) Number: 218.299.3484

### Strategy

- Social Media: We want to implement our google and facebook ads, and our landing page since this has never existed for VITA. We believe that this is going to be key for interacting with our target market of students who are reliant on.
- Partner Marketing: We want to have connections into each of the colleges in Moorhead. We have contacts who will be able to get us into these colleges. We also

have a contact at Cardinal IG. All of these sites are interested in marketing our service.

- Developing Loyalty: We want to create a great process for the customer so that they are willing to use us again and even recommend our service to friends or family. We will be able to have an idea of this based upon our short survey that we would like the customer to have following the use of our service.

### *Closing Statement*

We strongly believe that this marketing strategy will obtain our goal of getting 50 customers because we are attacking a very large and untapped target market, college students, and have created a way to reach out to these students and show our many benefits as VITA, Concordia College.