STRONGER ROOTS

ORGANISATION: KONNEKT ASSOCIATION

How did Konnekt Association identify and effectively reach its target group?

Case study of a Hungarian organization supported under the Stronger Roots 2023-2025 Program.

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Organisation description:

Founded in 2015, the main goal of the **Konnekt** (*'Connect'*) **Association** is to support career choice. Initially, it helped secondary school students with self-awareness, skills and career goals, then opened up to adults (mainly 30-40 year olds planning a career change), parents, teachers and employers. Its activities include a mentoring programme, the Konnekt Live event, school workshops, sessions for parents and company projects. It operates primarily in Budapest, with six employees and 62 volunteers.

Case study introduction

The case study presents how the Konnekt Association revamped its communication aimed at reaching students and alumni. The organisation mapped the needs, communication habits and donation motivations of its target group through research, including interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. Based on the results, they developed a more personalised strategy, launched new programmes and improved their operations to engage young people more effectively and ensure financial stability.

The initial situation and the problems to be solved

One of the biggest challenges for the Konnekt Association was to reach and engage its primary target group, namely secondary school students. Although many young people had previously participated in the organisation's programmes and their feedback had been positive, after a while the number of applicants began to decline. The Konnekt team felt it was important not to simply continue with tried and tested methods, but to consciously understand what might be behind the change.

The organisation set two main goals: on the one hand, it wanted to revamp its recruitment and communication practices aimed at students, and on the other hand, it wanted to ensure its long-term financial stability. The latter was particularly important, as Konnekt wanted to increasingly rely on individual donations, which was a completely new task.

The realisation: data instead of assumptions

The Konnekt Association had already used participatory methods in the past: during planning days, known as ReDesign events, they worked with volunteers to develop programmes. However, these processes were primarily based on the insights of the internal community and did not necessarily reflect the current needs of students or potential donors.

The team recognised that communication preferences and target group expectations can change significantly even within a few years. As one representative of the organisation put it:

„Something that was perfectly functional five years ago may no longer be so today. Communication habits have changed so

much that we need to get to know our target audience all over again.“

This mindset led the organisation to move away from assumptions and instead collect data using research methods, which it then used to develop new approaches.

The management and staff of the Konnekt Association agreed that a thorough understanding of the target group is only possible if data collection is consciously planned and well organised. To this end, an internal project team was set up to coordinate the research and ensure the professional quality of the process.

The team included both employees and volunteers. The employees ensured the continuity of the process, while the volunteers participated in tasks such as conducting interviews, data processing and organisational tasks.

Konnekt also involved a sociologist who assisted with the work from the compilation of the questionnaire to the evaluation. Interestingly, he had previously worked as a volunteer for the organisation, so he understood both the professional aspects and Konnekt‘s objectives.

Steps in the research process

Reaching out to students
As a first step, Konnekt conducted interviews with students to find out what factors and expectations influenced their decision to participate. Based on the interviews, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to a wider range of secondary school students. This helped the organisation gain a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of its communication channels and messages, as well as the types of programmes that most appeal to young people.

Alumni group study
Another focus area was the alumni community: former volunteers and programme participants who could potentially support the organisation. Two focus group discussions were organised with them to map their motivations for participation, opportunities for engagement, and expectations regarding the topics of alumni events.

Mapping donation potential
In addition, Konnekt conducted market research to understand the chances of success of individual fundraising campaigns and the strategies that work for other organisations with similar goals. The research showed that although the inner circle of the Konnekt Association is likely to be committed, it is more difficult to reach a wider target audience. This is partly because the issue the organisation represents, although useful, is not one of the most emotionally charged causes. It is therefore much more difficult to reach „strangers“ for donation purposes, unlike organisations that work with more disadvantaged groups (e.g. the needy or the sick). This realisation led the Konnekt Association to focus its 1% tax donation efforts on those who are familiar with and appreciate the organisation‘s work. Based on experience, this is a more realistic strategy than launching a broader donation campaign.

Results

In the case of the questionnaire survey among students, it was difficult to achieve the planned number of responses. Nevertheless, the responses received confirmed previous assumptions and helped to understand more precisely, for example, that podcasts are not a very attractive format, while the use of TikTok may be justified.

The results of the research had a significant impact on the content the organisation should use to address young people. It was revealing to see what words they search for on Google when it comes to career guidance, why this period is frustrating for them, what they expect from a career guidance session, and in what areas they would like to develop. In the latter case, for example, 84% of respondents said they would like to spend more time developing areas such as self-awareness, self-confidence, decision-making and communication. All of these areas are covered by Konnekt‘s programmes, but they are easily overlooked in our communications. Based on this and similar input, the website and various advertising texts were rewritten.

The alumni focus groups revealed that former participants are primarily interested in professional content rather than informal meetings. The discussions also highlighted that the term „alumni“ is too broad: participants have very different connections to the organisation, so communication needs to be segmented.

Part of the renewed strategy is to plan professional events based on prior needs assessment and to make them relevant to different age groups. An alumni event was organised, inviting former participants and mentors, with a focus on job search tips and mental well-being. The related professional materials were also shared in the newsletter. In addition, business breakfasts are regularly organised for corporate contacts, where different topics related to employer challenges and Generation Z are discussed in an interactive format. The related communication materials, such as newsletters, not only contain invitations but also offer additional professional content, thereby increasing the chances of engagement.

Konnekt Association did not leave the results of the research in a drawer. Social media and newsletter content, platform selection and targeting were redesigned based on the latest data. The donor strategy has also evolved as a result: instead of a broad public campaign, the more realistic goal of reaching out to the existing network of contacts has been set. Experience has also made it clear that improving communication and developing new donor channels requires a structured process supported by those responsible.

LESSONS LEARNED AND USEFUL ADVICE

1. **Don‘t rely on assumptions** – it is worth developing programmes and communication strategies after assessing and getting to know your target audience.
2. **To plan your research**
   - Divide responsibilities – without a stable project team, research will fall apart.
   - Assess capacities – well-organised research requires time and energy.
   - Combine methods – interviews, questionnaires and focus groups together provide a complete picture.
   - Evaluate the data – It is essential that an organisation not only collects data, but also evaluates it.
   - Plan the next steps – based on the evaluated data, clearly define the next steps and assign responsibilities for their completion.
   - In this way, research can become not just a means of gathering information, but a planned process that promotes the development of the organisation.
3. **Use the results of the research; these have worked for us**
   - Build on existing relationships – this can be much more effective in fundraising.
   - Link professional content to your communications – this will motivate your target group more strongly
   - Be flexible – if one channel (e.g. podcast) doesn‘t work, don‘t stick with it.
   - Segment boldly – don‘t treat your community of supporters as a homogeneous group.

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This case study was prepared within the framework of the Stronger Roots Program. The Stronger Roots Program aims to increase the resilience of civil society organizations and their networks, strengthen their social capital, and embed them in the communities and societies in which they operate.

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