

INTERACTIVE MARKETING PLAN



# THERAPY DOGS INTERNATIONAL

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**PREPARED BY**

Malleneo Communications

**INTERACTIVE MARKETING AND ADVERTISING**

Johns Hopkins University, spring 2020

## History:

Founded in New Jersey in 1976, Therapy Dogs International (TDI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the regulating, testing and registration of volunteer handlers and their therapy dogs. Handlers and their canine partners provide comfort and support to residents of nursing homes, hospitals, schools, cancer centers, mental health facilities, and other institutions where therapy dogs are needed. TDI is funded through annual dues collected from its registered volunteers and associate members. Donations and bequests are also welcome.

TDI is the oldest registry for therapy dogs in the United States, with dogs working in the U.S., Canada, and multiple other countries. The organization registers dogs of any breed. Some dogs have pedigrees, while others have been adopted from local shelters or are rescue dogs. As of 2017, approximately 25,000 dog/handler teams were registered with TDI.

TDI remains committed to bringing joy and comfort to those in need, and to making more registered dogs available by improving and expanding the relationship between TDI, institutions, and individuals in need of emotional service dogs.

## Areas of Work:

TDI registers and certifies therapy dogs and their volunteer handlers. Efforts primarily focus on the ongoing evaluation and improvement of certification standards.

In conjunction with these efforts, TDI has a range of programs that bring therapy dogs to facilities, including:

- Assisted Living Facilities
- Disaster
- Stress Relief
- Home Visits (helping to maintain independent living)
- Hospice, Library, Nursing Home, and School Visits
- Hospital Visits (both general and children's)
- Shelter Visits (abuse survivors)
- Tail Waggin' Tutors Program (where children read to dogs)
- The Final Visit (in funeral homes to aid the grieving process)

Additionally, TDI works to inform and educate officials, medical and other professionals, hospitals, and similar institutions about the many health and wellness benefits of utilizing therapy dogs in treatment regimens, crisis management, and emergency scenarios.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the vast majority of these services are suspended, due to limits on gatherings of any size and the closure of nursing homes and hospitals to the public. Despite these challenges, TDI provides comfort and support to those most in need.



## Campaign Need

As one of the oldest and largest registries for therapy dogs, TDI is an invaluable resource to many. However, their current website is outdated and disorganized, with too much text, too few photos, confusing site mapping, and unclear CTAs.

The site's information architecture is cumbersome and its data flow has the existing capability to easily and quickly overwhelm visitors. Despite the website being awash with information about TDI and therapy dogs, there is little **directing the readership to take action**. For example, as a nonprofit, TDI should have an easy-to-locate Donate button on their site, and clear information for both prospective therapy dog handlers and those seeking credible information on handlers and dogs.

Overall, the interface needs to be **streamlined and simplified**, where appropriate, and enhanced to improve the total user experience resulting in more frequent traffic. The UX portion of the site is also lacking **engaging story-telling and interactive features**, leaving visitors feeling unconnected with the charity's mission, decreasing the likelihood of further engagement or website sharing. For these reasons, TDI would greatly benefit from a complete website redesign, resulting in a relaunch across social media and the web.



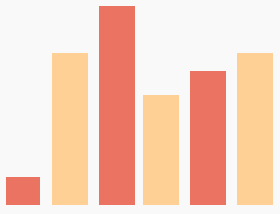
## Target Market Profile

This marketing campaign will focus on three segments of the TDI audience. First, this campaign will target those who are **interested in acquiring the services of a therapy dog** and handler and want to explore the medical and mental health benefits of doing so. Next, the campaign will target **volunteer handlers and their dogs** who are interested in learning more about TDI's certification process and available testing to become registered therapy service providers. Finally, this campaign will target a more board audience of **potential donors and supporters** of TDI's work.

While these target groups are always part of TDI's larger audience, their relationship with and need for therapy dog services has been altered in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This campaign will focus on this additional need and target these groups with respect to their newfound reality of living their lives while sheltering-in-place in their home.

# Brand Positioning

TDI is currently recognized as a credible source for individuals seeking information on how to secure a therapy dog or who are interested in applying for therapy dog registration. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, service dogs and their handlers are facing an inability to perform their work, as large gatherings are not permitted, and many nursing homes and group meetings have closed to the public. Due to this reality, there is a much greater need for therapy dog services. Therefore, TDI's new website will cater to this demand by providing a relaxed, informative, and useful public resource during the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with this corresponding marketing campaign, this effort will **reposition TDI as the go-to source**—not only for registering therapy dogs, but also as a credible resource for those seeking the services that therapy dogs provide.



## Current Social Media Standing

Social media presence and strategy should be developed with knowledge of and respect for industry standards and norms of similar organizations.



### Therapy Dogs International Page Followers

Facebook: 152,380

YouTube: 259

Instagram: 4,220

### Alliance of Therapy Dogs Page Followers

[www.therapydogs.com](http://www.therapydogs.com)

Facebook: 27,571

YouTube: 53

Instagram: 1,427

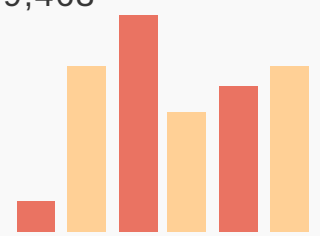
### Pet Partners Page Followers

[www.petpartners.org](http://www.petpartners.org)

Facebook: 33,236

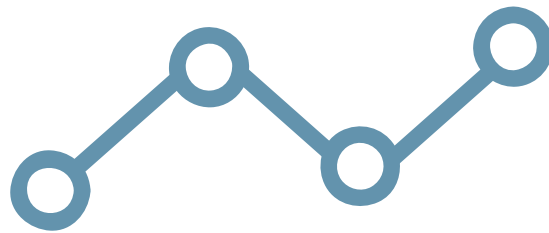
YouTube: 596

Instagram: 9,463



## Current Market Trends

It is important to understand the context within which TDI presents itself on social media. As demonstrated on the previous page, TDI holds the majority audience interest on Facebook compared to similar nonprofits. While maintaining a competitive number of followers on both Instagram and YouTube, TDI's website design is more outdated and disorganized than the websites of competing organizations. The following is a compilation of social media benchmarks for nonprofit organizations:



## Relevant Social Media Statistics

### Key Findings

- For every 1,000 email addresses, nonprofits had an average of 806 Facebook fans, 286 Twitter followers, and 101 Instagram followers.
- Over 50% of consumers wish that brands would tell them what type of content to create and share. When consumers create and share content about the brand, the posts receive 28% higher engagement compared to standard company posts.
- Each Facebook post reaches an average of 4% of a nonprofit page's fans. Meanwhile, 29% of the audience reached by a given post were not previous followers.



## Takeaway

The size of TDI's email list can help determine where TDI's social media presence stacks up compared to other nonprofits. Recent research has shown that user-generated content is not only more engaging, but also what consumers want brands to be seeking. Lastly, Facebook—where TDI has the strongest audience—is an excellent platform to utilize to attract new followers.



## The Big Idea: Therapy At Home

The use of dogs to aid humankind through difficult times is recognized throughout the world. Dogs have been used to guard flocks, track, hunt, participate in search and rescue efforts, lead the blind, and assist the deaf and physically challenged. The bond between dog and human dates back to early history, but it wasn't until recently that the **relationship between canine companionship and the emotional health of humans** was recognized. Studies have shown that interacting with a dog can lower blood pressure, help reduce stress, and lessen the effects of loneliness and depression.

In today's growing uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for comfort and support cannot be overstated. And physical, mental, social, and financial issues will always be part of daily life. The soothing encouragement offered by therapy dogs can often keep minor issues from becoming major problems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced individuals out of work, displaced them from their homes, alienated them from their support systems of friends and family, and fostered feelings of uncertainty, stress, and even panic. **Now, more than ever, the public needs the support of therapy dogs.** TDI remains committed to bringing joy and comfort to those in need—only this time, instead of traveling to patients, TDI will provide this much-needed therapy to individuals and families from the comfort of their homes.

Imagine individuals or families sitting at home, frustrated because they can't socialize, or go out to see a movie. With Therapy at Home, TDI will provide instant stress relief. Viewers can sit down with their families, log on to [tdi-dog.org](http://tdi-dog.org), and together, partake in a virtual therapy dog session.

Mental health professionals, searching for alternative ways to help treat patients virtually, search the web and come across TDI. After reading the valuable information on the TDI website, they recommend the Therapy at Home program to their clients.

Facebook users, seeking a means to engage with people while isolated at home, come across the #TDITrick campaign and submit their own user-generated content. Their friends and family join in, creating a greater sense of connection and community.

**Despite these trying times, wherever people are in the world, TDI is proud to provide relief with virtual therapy dog services—Therapy at Home.**

## Strategy

This marketing plan follows a two-segment strategy: short-term tactics and long-term tactics. With the overall concept being to make therapy available to people at home at a time when people need it most, the plan will incorporate four main tactics: the TDI website relaunch, a user-generated content contest, the Therapy at Home VR Experiential Marketing Campaign, and a Google Ads campaign.

In the short term, the focus will remain on **generating buzz** about the TDI website redesign, **boosting the amount of traffic** to the TDI website, and—most importantly—in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, **providing a beneficial resource** for individuals at a time when it is most needed. The website redesign will provide a cohesive user experience for the target market, and the Therapy at Home VR campaign will provide individuals the opportunity to utilize the services of a therapy dog while adhering to shelter-in-place guidelines. The user-generated content contest will also contribute to the short-term strategy of generating interest by encouraging users to interact with the brand on social media in a meaningful, relevant way.

Long term, we recommend permanently extending the Therapy at Home campaign on the TDI website. While no one is sure how long shelter-in-place orders will last, society will not return to "normal" for a significant period of time. Therapy at Home will continue to be available for those who wish to use it—**providing a safe space for people who cannot or do not wish to attend a therapy dog session in person**. Concurrently, the Google Ads campaign will direct two different audience segments to the TDI website: **handlers and their dogs** interested in registering as a therapy dog/handler pair, and **potential donors and supporters**. With several competing organizations such as *Alliance of Therapy Dogs* and *Pet Partners*, the Google Ads campaign will promote TDI's website at the top of search results, increasing the chances of users navigating to the website.

In the face of COVID-19, TDI is able to provide a much-needed solution in a difficult time with Therapy at Home. **Through meaningful experiences, comprehensive information, and sharing the joy that is service dog therapy with new and existing audience members, TDI will become the preeminent therapy dog service.**



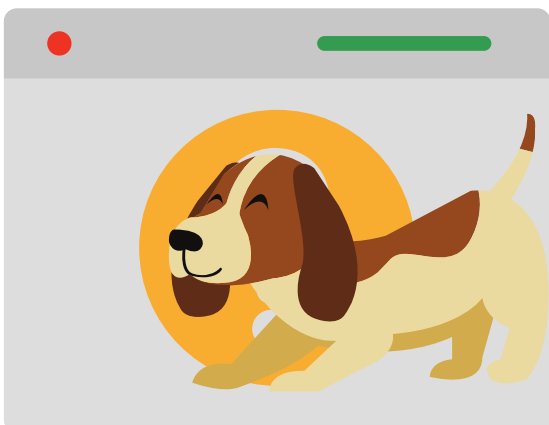
# Tactics

## Tactic 1: Website Redesign

**To retain existing audiences and attract new visitors, TDI must improve the user interface and user experience of its website, promoting expansion of the organization's overall brand presence.**

TDI's existing website suffers from an overabundance of text and an outdated infrastructure. Ample information about the organization is provided, but efforts directing visitors to take action are minimal. TDI's website should feature Learn More and Donate buttons prominently, and will benefit from clearly identified information for both prospective therapy dog handlers and those seeking credible information on handlers and dogs. Streamlining the navigation and improving the overall aesthetic appeal will increase site traffic and aid in providing effective therapy services to users while at home or wherever they may be.

In addition to deficiencies in TDI's site interface, the user experience also suffers from a lack of engaging story-telling and experiential opportunities, leaving visitors feeling disconnected with the organization's mission. This absent connection decreases the likelihood of further engagement or website sharing. Adding more interactive features, including the Therapy at Home VR experience to resonate with target audiences, and regularly updating web content will promote stronger user connection and encourage sharing. Website redesign will also improve SEO, ensure the layout is optimized to be mobile-responsive, and increase overall site speed and performance.





## Tactic 2: Google Ads Campaign

**A Google Ads campaign ensures TDI's mission is only a click away, effectively driving more traffic to the organization's website, increasing donations, and better promoting TDI's overall mission.**

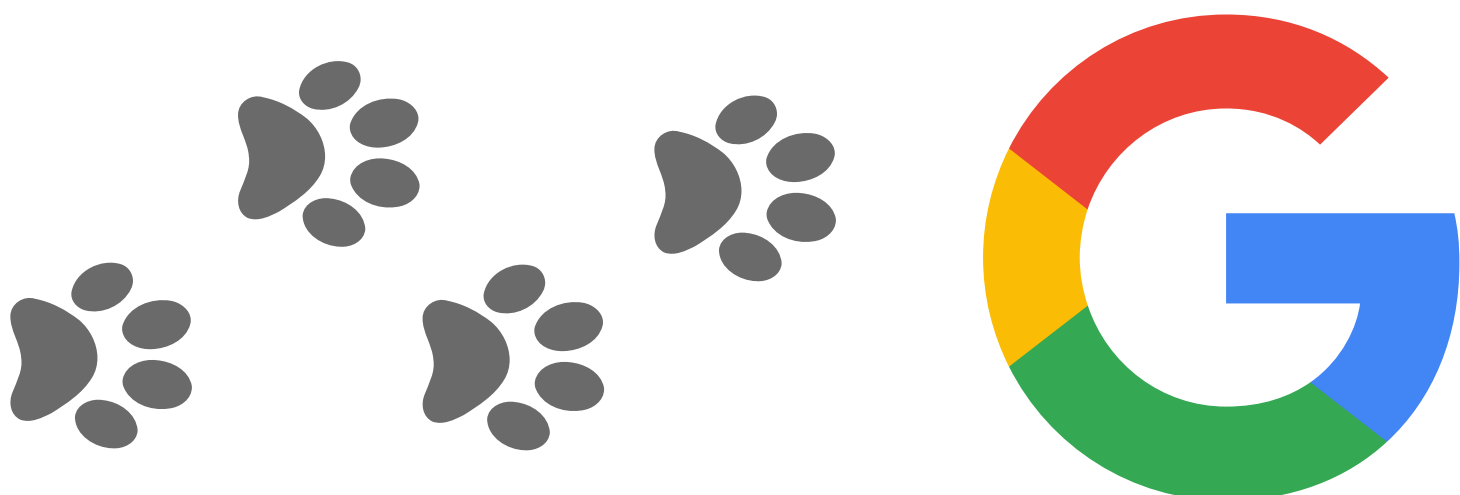
It is estimated that Google has a 37.2% share in the U.S. digital ad market. The company supports both display advertisements, through its two million display network partner sites, and text advertisements on its search engine results page. Google Ads assists organizations in increasing leads generating increased website traffic, bypassing the organic search results algorithm. Additionally, as a nonprofit organization, TDI may be eligible for \$10,000 of in-kind Google advertising each month.

Available campaigns within the platform can encourage site visitors to:

- Make a donation
- Sign up for a mailing list
- Register to volunteer
- Join an advocacy initiative
- Download an educational resource
- Register to attend an event

A Google Ads campaign will increase the reach of TDI's overall marketing strategy when combined with SEO and other digital marketing technologies. Search advertising will also help bridge the gap between organic SEO and its social media campaigns, helping TDI better reach its target markets. Additionally, Google Ads campaigns are fully measurable and integrate with Google Analytics.

When an individual searches the Internet for therapy dog services, the TDI website will appear at the forefront of the Google search results. Upon clicking on the organization's ad, the user will be directed to the redesigned TDI website, where they will find a delightful user experience and an informative, easy to navigate site architecture, making therapy dog services and relevant information easily accessible.



## Tactic 3: User-Generated Content Campaign

**A user-generated content campaign will increase traffic to the TDI Facebook page, the TDI website, and raise general awareness of organization's mission.**

Contests and sweepstakes have been around for many years. But with the growth of social media, they have taken on a new life. Contests offer an immediate way for organizations to increase their fan base, as well as deepen their connection with audiences. A photo or video contest taps into the human drive to compete and campaigns featuring a voting component encourage participants to share through their social network, asking that friends and family support their entry. Contests can drive significant traffic to TDI's website or Facebook page as a result of **target audiences marketing to other consumers**.

TDI will engage social media users in a month-long, user-generated content Facebook campaign called "Best Trick Challenge." To **generate excitement** around the redesigned website and branding, and to align with current social-distancing best practices while people are at home with their pets, users will be served the following:

*At home with your pet because of COVID-19? Therapy Dogs International challenges you to our Best Trick Challenge! Take a video of you and your pet doing the coolest trick you both know and post it on Facebook with the hashtag #TDITrick.*

The first-place winner will be determined based on the number of shares their video receives, encouraging networking, which increases awareness and generates more interest and content in the campaign. Submission of video content will generate traffic to both TDI's Facebook page and website. This video can then be reposted to TDI's Facebook page as continuous, **repurposed content**.

This campaign's primary objective is to **increase awareness during this time of crisis**, rather than promote a specific product or service. This content will increase traffic to TDI's Facebook page and encourage individuals to seek out the organization's website as a credible source of information—and a source of interest—while sheltering-in-place. Participating in the contest with a pet provides a **sense of purpose and therapeutic relief** during this uncertain time, supplying therapy for the user and engaging them in TDI's mission from the comfort of their own home.



## Tactic 4: "Therapy at Home" Virtual Reality Experiential Marketing Campaign

The virtual reality *Therapy at Home* campaign forms the cornerstone of this marketing plan, tying together the three previous tactics by providing a valuable, enthralling, educational experience that is the first of its kind.

The *Therapy at Home* virtual reality campaign provides much-needed therapy dog services, at a time when they are largely inaccessible, 100% remotely. As most individuals are not able to leave their home due to the pandemic, *Therapy at Home* brings the benefits of therapy to them.

Using **360-degree video technology**, TDI will create 30-minute videos of select therapy dogs registered with the organization. Recorded sessions will mimic the interaction a dog would have with a patient during an in-person therapy visit. Videos will then be uploaded to the TDI website on the *Therapy at Home* page, along with a short bio and headshot of the dog. Users will then be able to log on to the TDI website and choose a dog with which they would like to have a therapy session. This service will be **provided without cost and will be accessible to anyone** with internet services.

At the conclusion of each therapy session, users will be asked to make a small donation to TDI to fund this service, providing the opportunity for users to further engage with the organization's work.

The 360-degree video will provide users with a **hyper-realistic experience** compared to traditional video capabilities. Users will be able to look up, down, and behind them with a click of the mouse, permitting them to 'interact' with the therapy dog and its movements. TDI will be the **first and only therapy dog organization to provide such services**, occupying 100% of the market share.

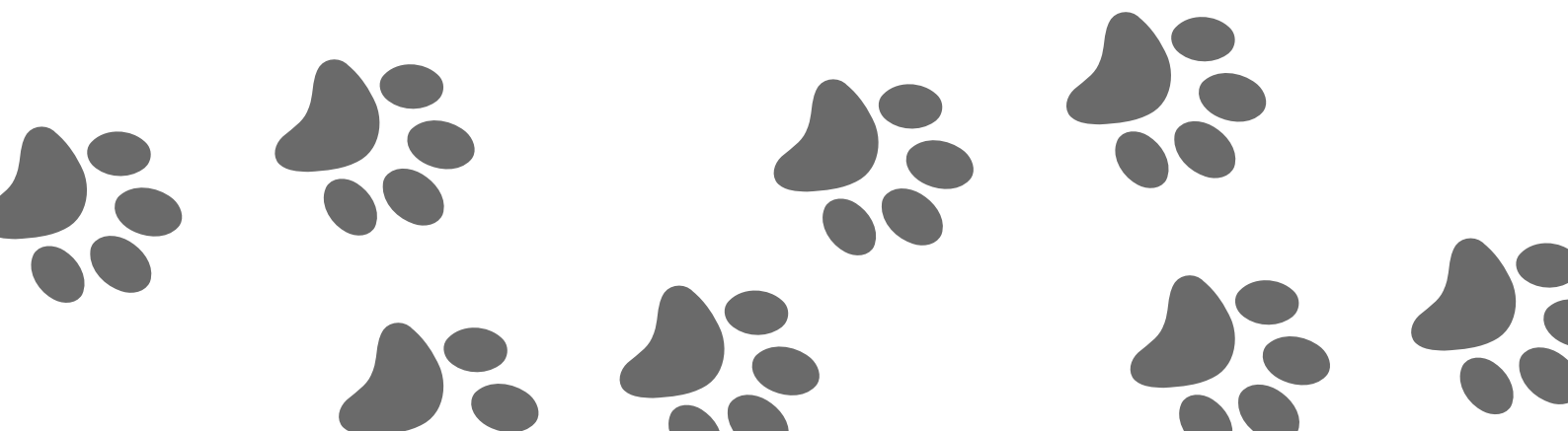
In conjunction with the user-generated content campaign and the website redesign, this experiential marketing campaign will work to drive new and pre-existing clientele to the website, encouraging them to **engage with TDI's mission in a new and exciting way**. Individuals who have not heard about or experienced a therapy dog session now have the ability to do so without leaving home. For existing clients, the *Therapy at Home* service will fill an important void caused by social distancing, a result of COVID-19.





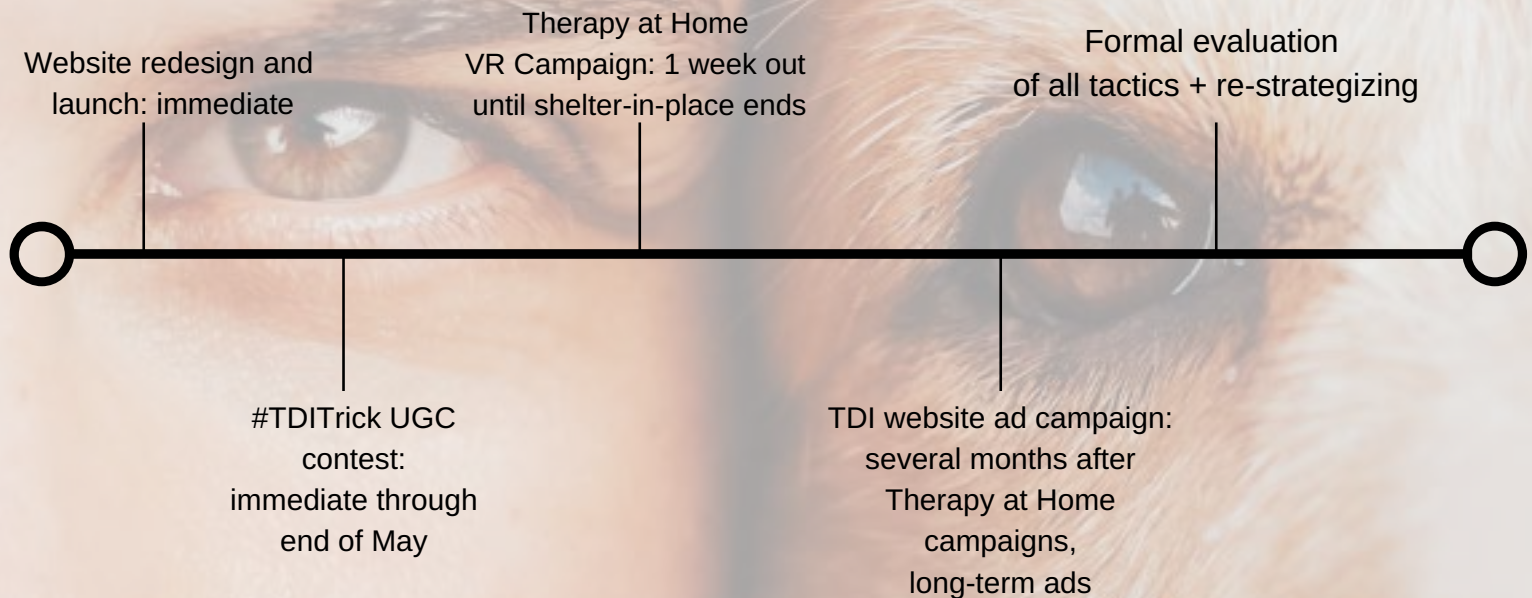
## Tactic 4: "Therapy at Home" Virtual Reality Experiential Marketing Campaign

Sample 360-degree videos:



## Timeframe:

Sequence of tactics and campaign evolution



## Measurement Plan + KPIs

Effectiveness of the online UGC campaign on Facebook will be tracked using the total number of page followers as well as total engagement and post reach. An increase in these three metrics will demonstrate an increase in the **number of engaged users** interacting with and recognizing the TDI brand. Use of the hashtag #TDITrick will also be monitored to determine the **number of users contributing content** to the competition and responding to TDI's content. The key to building brand recognition through the Internet is ensuring viewers engage with the brand in meaningful and memorable ways.

To monitor the effectiveness of the website relaunch, Google Ads campaign, and the Therapy at Home VR campaign, **Google Insights** monitoring will be utilized to track the number of **ad clicks, web users (including repeat vs. first-time users), and website conversions** from outside sources, ultimately determining whether or not each campaign successfully resulted in conversions and drove traffic to the TDI website.

After being compiled, the data will be analyzed and summarized to determine the effectiveness of tactics. This summary will then be used to **reevaluate and inform** marketing strategy going forward.



# Thank you!

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this proposal. We hope to have the opportunity to earn your business.



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