

# Marketing Plan



## Marketing Services for Web “Navigational Icon” for BRAC

Presented by **designsource**

March 22, 2010



## Executive Overview:

This project will focus on identifying specific websites utilized by our target demographic (relocated BRAC personnel and Howard County residents) with the result of inclusion of the BRAC icon. An identifiable icon will be created in assistance with BRAC Marketing as well as an informational flyer that will be used to communicate the purpose and value of a partnership to potential websites. All materials will be made readily available to the County; training will be provided for all designated personnel to learn the CRM tool; and a step-by-step guide will be created and distributed to key personnel outlining best practices for identifying, approaching, and securing approval for placement of the BRAC icon on a designated company/organizations website.

The first phase initiated was research and was undertaken jointly with The Caplan Group, Inc. as part of "Marketing Services for BRAC" (PA-21-2010). Those results are included as Addendum A of this plan. The end users who were interviewed identified several websites that they frequented to obtain information about a possible move to the area. These included websites for:

- Howard County's Public Schools ([www.hcpss.org/](http://www.hcpss.org/))
- Howard County Government ([www.co.ho.md.us/](http://www.co.ho.md.us/))
- Army Community Services (<http://www.ftmeade.army.mil/pages/acs/ACS.html>)
- DISA's BRAC website ([www.DISA.mil/BRAC](http://www.DISA.mil/BRAC))

In addition, the research indicated that end users readily identified with the BRAC acronym and if presented that option online they would likely "click it" to obtain pertinent information relevant to them in regards to relocation. 100% of the users indicated that they would be attracted to a simple, well designed, icon that spoke directly to the service provided and that did not include any sort of flash feature. 80% of those surveyed preferred the term Family Support over *Human Services, Citizen Services and Resident Support*. As a result, the URL [www.HowardCountyFamilySupport.org](http://www.HowardCountyFamilySupport.org) was purchased and will be the web address that the BRAC Web Navigational icon will be linked to when placed on a partner's website.

The master list of websites identified for icon placement will be broken down into several different categories (Howard County Government, Federal Government, Non-Profit, For Profit Businesses & Organizations, and Miscellaneous). Each of these categories will include a list of preferred websites identified as being of significant value to our end user based on their needs as they relate to services provided [www.HowardCountyFamilySupport.org](http://www.HowardCountyFamilySupport.org).

Every attempt will be made to complete placement of the icon on these websites, but due to the significant time constraint imposed by the March 31, 2010 deadline and the time necessary for The Caplan Group, Inc. to create the micro-site, 100%

inclusion may not be possible. In anticipation of this occurring, Design Source will provide an easy to follow Step-by-Step Guide that will enable any personnel to continue the project after March 31, 2010. A Client Relationship Management (CRM) tool has been engaged on behalf of the “Marketing Services for Web ‘Navigational Icon’ for BRAC” project (<http://highrisehq.com/>) and training on its use will be provided. The use of Highrise will enable multiple personnel to track, review, and organize information as it relates to any web partners that may be engaged regarding placement of the BRAC icon on their website.

The use of Highrise will enable all feedback to be documented and reviewed at any time for evaluation (ex. General comments, willingness to partner, etc.). In addition, web analytics from [www.HowardCountyFamilySupport.org](http://www.HowardCountyFamilySupport.org) will provide statistical information on the overall performance of the website, the number of visitors, pages of interest, and most importantly the referring domains to evaluate which partners provide the most leads.

#### I. Market Overview: (Research Phase)

##### A. Target Audience – Three Groups

- Active Duty Military & civilians relocating to Ft. Meade
- Department of Defense- Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), Defense Media Activity, The Co-Location of Defense/Military Adjudication Activities
- Recently Relocated Residents to Howard County, Maryland

##### B. Size of Market

- 5400 Military, Department of Defense Civilians and contractor employees will work on the Ft Meade base.
- 3 to 7 thousand employees for contract support for the DOD activities excluding family members that will be located in and around the Ft. Meade area.
- Number of newly relocated residents to Howard County varies but Howard County Public Schools has averages listed at about 10% new students annually (see Maryland State Department of Education website under Mobility rates).

##### C. Market Segmentation

Department of Defense (94.5%DISA/5.5% JTF-GNO)

- 56% are between the ages of 41-60
- 35% have a Bachelors degree & 35% have obtained a Masters degree
- Majority are highly skilled IT professionals “tech savvy”
- 65% -Senior GS 13/15 24% Intermediate GS 9/12

##### D. Psychographics

- Majority have an awareness of what “citizen services” include

- Utilize the services when “the need arises”
- They get the vast majority of their information online
- Factors that influence a decision to utilize services varies:
  - Military - Base support programs (Army Community Services)
  - Defense Contractors - Companies tend to have Employee Assistance Programs
  - Recently relocated citizens: Internet, family doctor, church, schools

#### E. Methodology

- In depth telephone interview surveys with key personnel from the three targeted audience groups with a set defined list of specific questions.
- DISA/JTF-GNO BRAC Awareness Study conducted July 2009
- Military Family Support (survey, issue & findings)
- Howard County BRAC Task Force (survey of Department of Defense families)
- Key findings from BRAC Human Services Capacity Study (9/09)

## II. Product Overview

- A. Assist in the development of an identifiable, web-friendly Brand Icon that serves as an identity for all human services offered in Howard County, Maryland
  - Main identifier will be referred to as **Family Support**. Overwhelming majority interviewed was in favor of using this terminology (80%).
  - Tagline, “Howard County, A Community of Services”. Research in favor of specific language that speaks directly to the audience.
- B. Creation of a creative informational flyer to promote placement of the icon. This piece will be used to communicate the purpose and value of the project and will be created with the intent to be used after the contract period expires.
- C. Creation of a step-by-step guide that will allow DCS staff to continue the icon placement campaign after the contract period.

- D. Development of CRM (Client Relationship Management) database that can be used to enhance future communication with participating organizations and leverage current efforts to ensure long-term results.

### III. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

#### A. Strengths

1. Numerous existing BRAC relocation assistance websites (government).
2. BRAC personnel “trained” to recognize BRAC acronym and recognize that is geared toward them.
3. Howard County’s educated and affluent residents easily adapt to working and gathering information online.

#### B. Weaknesses

1. Limited access to government agencies to develop partnership
2. No budget for icon placement on websites: must seek partnerships with altruistic companies and organizations only.

#### C. Opportunities

1. Howard County is an educated, affluent community – more companies, agencies, and organizations are online = more potential
2. Link to government supported program beneficial to other agencies, businesses, non-profits (potential new customers, community strengthening, link building)

#### D. Threats

1. Target markets limited awareness of Howard County’s extensive “human services” – don’t know about it until they need to know about it.
2. Willingness of government, non-profits and for profit businesses to cooperate (without financial compensation)
3. Deadline of March 31.

### IV. Objectives

- A. To have the icon included on as many different websites as possible where BRAC employees who are relocating and residents of Howard County will see it. Category of sites identified include: Howard County Government, Federal Government, Non-Profit, For Profit Businesses & Organizations, and Miscellaneous
- B. Broad placement that represents multiple layers of where potential users of the services may be searching.

- C. Placement and utilization should appear seamless to the public, well coordinated.

## V. Strategies

### A. Positioning

1. Our research revealed that of the three targeted audiences, the first area of interest is children services (child care, before/after school care); older adult services (this is something several individuals we interviewed are now realizing they will need, if not now in the very near future, for a family member; knowledge of the variety of housing opportunities available; English as a second language for a spouse was mention especially by military families.
2. Given the results of our research we have determined that an overwhelming majority of those relocating are accessing their information online (this is supported strongly by the military, government offices, and government contractors).
3. Positioning the BRAC icon placement on partnership sites as a service to the community, a show of support for BRAC families & Howard County families will allow these “partners” to stand out from other service providers and/or competitors.

### B. Marketing Mix Strategy

1. The research conducted clearly indicated what the end users preference in regards to gathering information is: clear, concise, attractive, no flash
  - Research reinforced categories identified to ensure broad placement of logo where end user searches.
  - Material produced will follow all guidelines requested by end user: clear, concise, attractive, key phone numbers, correct web links.

### C. Promotion Strategy

1. Including web icon on websites that best meet the needs of the end user (categories previously identified)
2. Marketing and Public Relations
  - Press Releases articulating what has been developed
  - Including Icon on applicable government and agency newsletters and email campaigns
3. Product Marketing Literature (Quantity 500)
  - Dynamic, informational flyer that clearly articulates what the project is and the “benefits” of including Icon on government, business, non profit organization website. Final product can be printed or emailed to prospective partners.

### 4. Digital

- Benefits obtained from social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, blog) strategy utilized by overall BRAC Marketing
5. Promotional Materials
- Benefits obtained from promotional materials distributed by overall BRAC Marketing.

## VI. Action Plan/Deliverables and Implementation Schedule

- A. Research: Included questions in research undertaken by The Caplan Group, Inc. on behalf of “Marketing Services for BRAC Families”. Timeline-completed mid-February.
1. Findings were documented and provided to the County in writing.
- B. Website Identification: Compiled a comprehensive list of preferred websites within identified categories that fulfill stated objectives based on findings of research.
1. Target websites within all categories (Howard County Government, Federal Government, Non-Profit Organizations, For Profit Businesses & Organizations, and Miscellaneous),
  2. List will be documented and presented to County for approval and changes or recommendations.
- C. Plan Development: once website list is approved, develop a written plan to promote and facilitate placement of the icon on select websites.
1. Training on CRM database to track contact information, chain of personnel, response and evaluation.
  2. Production of dynamic informational flyer that clearly articulates the project and the benefits of partnership.
  3. Production of a step-by-step guide that enables DCS staff to continue the icon placement campaign after March 31, 2010.
- D. Training
1. Provide training for key DCS staff in the process of ensuring proper placement and functionality of the icon to continue effort after project is completed.
    - Training to include all necessary tools to ensure success: plan, step-by-step guide, CRM database
    - Will also include on and off site (ongoing support) training.

## VII . Evaluation Method

### A. Website Identification

- Feedback obtained and documented (in CRM database) from companies and organizations: willingness to partner

### B. Benchmarks

- Web analytics from the BRAC Marketing micro-site will be utilized to determine traffic coming into the site and from where.
- Data will be analyzed and compared to amount of overall traffic to partner's site and number of relocated families/individuals moving to Howard County.

## ADDENDUM A

The following research is the result of surveys conducted by Design Source and The Caplan Group, Inc.

The target audience consists of three major groups identified as: 1) active duty military & civilians relocating to the Ft. Meade base; 2) Department of Defense employees including Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) and Defense Media Activity; the co-relocation of Defense/Military Adjudication Activities; and 3) recently relocated/current residents of Howard County, Maryland. The Caplan Group Inc., a full service advertising, marketing and public relations firm located in Howard County, Maryland for 23 years, was awarded the contract in December 2009 to develop the marketing materials.

The first phase of the project was to conduct research in order to develop a comprehensive marketing plan. The research was undertaken by Roger Caplan, principal at The Caplan Group, during the first two weeks of February, 2010. The interviews were conducted via extensive telephone interviews using questions that were crafted in conjunction with a team from the Howard County Office of Citizen Services. The interviews were performed with key stakeholders from the target audience as defined above. The interviews lasted from twenty minutes to just under one hour. The cooperation was excellent and every participant was very excited about the description of the project.

The research was illuminating. First and foremost we clearly established a preferred name for the services offered. Our research showed that over **80%** of those surveyed preferred the term ***Family Support*** over *Human Services, Citizen Services* and *Resident Support* to help them identify assistance for the services we are marketing. A tagline of "Howard County, A Community of Services" will be utilized to enhance identification.

Our research showed that the issues that have received the majority of attention to date for the influx of BRAC related personnel have concentrated on the basic needs for those involved in the relocation process. Transportation (DISA is currently located in Arlington, VA and many employees plan to commute); housing for the large number of relocated newcomers to the Ft. Meade area; the quality of public school systems in the region and public safety concerns were of interest to a number of families.

Our research also stated clearly that for all three groups their primary means of acquiring information for their relocation to the Ft. Meade area is online. As a result, we are developing a comprehensive micro website with an easily identifiable URL [www.howardcountyfamilysupport.org](http://www.howardcountyfamilysupport.org) that will serve as a quick reference for Family Support services (primarily related to Children Services, Older Adults, People with Disabilities and English for Speakers of Other Languages).

The results to our questions indicated that users are interested in clear, concise information that leads them to the answers they seek. All materials will be designed and created to allow an individual to quickly identify their need and obtain a contact for assistance. These products will allow us to aggressively brand the campaign for the URL which is imperative to the project's overall success.

## **ADDENDUM B**

### **Rationale of Website Selection**

The main objective of this project was to include the BRAC icon on as many websites as possible that our end users would likely be frequenting. Our research, combined with our extensive knowledge of the community and its residents, along with certain provisions such as budget, enabled us to narrow our focus to a manageable selection.

Our research showed that our end user was extremely knowledgeable when it came to the Internet and used it as a primary source of information when it came to researching an area they would likely be moving. The end users interviewed clearly (and overwhelmingly) identified several main websites that they used to research their impending move (ie. Howard County Public School System, County government, Army Community Services, BRAC relocation sites, etc.). These sites were immediately placed on our list and classified as high priority.

Among those identified as high priority were several sites that provide a critical service to the community and receive a great deal of visitors. These included [www.hcpss.org](http://www.hcpss.org) (Howard County Public School System) which receives over 2.3 million visitors per year; [www.HCGH.org](http://www.HCGH.org) (Howard County General Hospital) which receives over 500,000 visitors per year; and [www.howardcc.edu](http://www.howardcc.edu) (Howard Community College) which receives over 1.2 million visits per year.

Once the top tier of websites was identified we expanded our list to include broader possibilities for secondary and tertiary categories. These included websites such as non-traditional health related, family and lifestyle, real estate agencies, and even entertainment sites. Due to the extensive number of businesses within these categories it was determined that in most cases we needed to identify umbrella organizations rather than individual establishments. Identifying the most recognized business and developing a relationship with them for icon placement lends credibility and acts as an “endorsement” of the project. An example of this would be Howard County Association of Realtors and the two primary Chambers of Commerce in the County that represents over 1000 members, many of which are independent businesses.

Ultimately, successful placement of the icon on any website will come down to relationships. With this in mind, Design Source will assist in extending our contacts and associations whenever possible to facilitate placement on an identified website. The initial list is expected and intended to grow as we continue to expand our knowledge base and as placement of the icon becomes successful. The more success we have placing the icon on various sites, the more we fully expect to increase awareness and a desire to support the project.