



**#NationalEntrepreneurshipMonth
Hispanic Unity of Florida (HUF)**

Lucia Rodriguez, Chair of the Board

What was the organization's mission at the outset?

At HUF, we believe everyone is empowered to live their American dream. From the beginning, the mission of the organization has focused on "empowering immigrants and others to become self-sufficient, productive and civically engaged." Founded in 1982 as a haven for immigrants and refugees, HUF has grown to serve diverse and multi-cultural working families from the United States, as well as more than 25 other countries.

The organization provides a range of wrap-around services to help more than 15,000 clients of all ages, from preschoolers to adults, successfully transition to a productive new life. HUF offers 12 programs and 30 services in several languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole and Sign Language.

Where do clients and supporters find HUF? How do you market the organization?

HUF is a well-known organization in South Florida with a very strong brand equity and excellent reputation that have been built over the years through the efforts of its leaders, employees, and the positive impact it has had on the community via its programs and services.

HUF also supports its branding on its consistent communications efforts, strong digital marketing and social media presence. Public Relations is also an important arm of the marketing strategies

at HUF that allows the organization to stay top of mind and ensure that its programs and impact are disseminated via PSAs, media interviews, and more.

In addition, I can say that the power of word-of-mouth is effectively activated via its clients, donors/funders and employees, who are powerful brand ambassadors for the organization.

As a marketing executive, to what do you attribute your professional success 'till today?

I attribute my professional success to my drive and determination to achieve my dreams/goals. I try to "follow my bliss" (see one my favorite quotes from Joseph Campbell) and I do it with passion, which allows me to enjoy what I do, because I do what I love!

"Follow your bliss. If you do follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while waiting for you." Joseph Campbell

As a professional in any field, you need to pay attention to self-branding, and ensure that your brand encompasses and supports your vision for your life, and positions you to achieve your professional and growth goals. Luckily, social media has opened many outlets that we can utilize for building our self-brand. We have to tap into it and ensure that we have a presence, so we don't remain a hidden secret.

These days when we live in a global village, self-branding is important and something that every professional needs to nurture.

What has been your biggest challenge during COVID, and how have you dealt with it or overcome it.

Some of the biggest challenges have been to accelerate the digitalization of the organization so employees could be effective working from home, and reinvent the programs so clients could be served virtually.

One example of this is the great work done by HUF this year with the Entrepreneur Summit. Like many business owners, HUF had to pivot and, rather than host a one-day in-person event, a month-long virtual event was organized under the theme of how to survive - and even thrive - through the pandemic, making it possible for South Florida's entrepreneurs to connect and learn during these difficult times.

Another example, due to COVID-19, HUF reformulated its popular Broward Tax Pro/VITA program to make it virtual thanks to a partnership with Code for America. Through the digital platform Get Your Refund, it offered the expertise of skilled, certified tax professionals to qualified Broward residents, online.

Based on your experience, what is your best advice on branding for causes?

As in for-profit, non-profit organizations must try to cultivate their brands, because the image and awareness that people have about the organization can impact the fundraising results, as well as the level of engagement and credibility.

One key approach is to tap into the emotions that drive the supporters of the organization and show how they relate with those served by the organization. Sympathy and highlighting the positive emotions are key to put the brand into action to support the goals of the organization.

Based on your experience, what is your best advice on sales and marketing causes?

Nowadays, social media users have grown by more than 10% globally. That means that, for the first time, more than half of the world's population now uses social media*, and what it tells us is that the utilization of digital tactics and social media has to be a core strategy for any branding effort in any organization.

Using a website, a blog, and social media to highlight the client's experiences or those that are supporting the cause, is fundamental.

*Digital July 2020 Global Statshot report.

What would you like to share with other founders and aspiring nonprofit leaders?

I believe so strongly in HUF's mission that I was eager to contribute to the organization right away. We need to take the time to learn, specially to understand key areas of the organization like governance, operations as well and the finances, which are the pillars. Program immersion is also key, a sure way to accelerate the learning process and see and feel first-hand the impact that the mission is having on the community. With this knowledge, you can identify areas of focus and be more effective prioritizing resources and focusing the communication and marketing efforts on the right areas.

Anything else you'd like to share in regards to marketing?

The organization is going to evolve, and your brand must evolve with it. However, one word of caution, we need to be careful and not to be tempted to modify the brand in a way that brand equity is lost in the process, because it takes years and a ton of marketing focus to build brand equity. Carefully evaluating how to revitalize your brand and its attributes, ensuring that it is supporting the organization, will allow you to evolve your current brand in tandem with your organization.

More: [Hispanic Unity of Florida \(HUF\)](#)



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