

Project MopSquad – Summary Report

Project Goal: To establish a strategic marketing plan that helps *marcfirst* grow its cleaning services client base and generate a profit within a year.

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About *marcfirst*

marcfirst's mission is to guarantee the personal dignity of people with developmental disabilities and to promote their personal achievements based on their dreams, desires and abilities. The vision of *marcfirst* is to be a bridge to the community allowing people to pursue and achieve their dreams throughout their lives.



The roots of *marcfirst* date back to 1955 when the McLean County Association for Mentally Retarded Children was established by families who had children with development disabilities. At the time, the organization's purpose was to provide support for families and their children during a period when children with cognitive disabilities were often excluded from the public school system. The agency started serving the community with only five students. By 1972, the program had increased to 36 students, five classrooms, and five teachers with aides. In the fall of 1979, a federal law was passed stating school districts would be required to provide appropriate programs for children with developmental disabilities between ages 3 and 21.

In 1980, the organization changed its name to Marc Center and then to *marcfirst* in 2007. Today, *marcfirst* provides a continuum of services and support for families, children and adults throughout their lifetime including residential, vocational development, employment, and therapeutic support.

Project Description

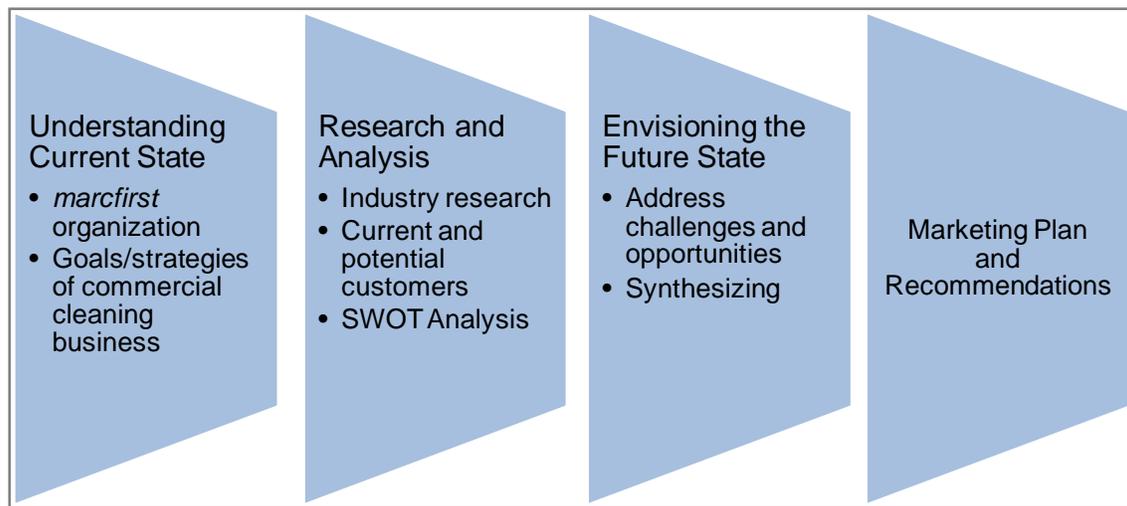
Following the closure of the Occupational Development Center (ODC) in 2008, *marcfirst* took over several of the commercial cleaning contracts the ODC had with local businesses. During the past year, *marcfirst* has steadily increased the number of cleaning contracts and hired additional employees along with an experienced manager to oversee the operations. Despite the growth in clientele, the cleaning services business is currently not profitable.

Many of the services provided by *marcfirst* rely on reimbursement from the state of Illinois. Due to the ongoing state budget crisis, *marcfirst* has seen its operating revenues fall substantially, wherein the state of Illinois owes more than \$1.0 million to *marcfirst* for services and support provided. To help offset some of this lost revenue, *marcfirst* would like to expand

its cleaning services business and become profitable. The overall goal of the project was to establish a strategic marketing plan for *marcfirst's* commercial cleaning services in order to help grow its client base and establish a profit within the next year.

Project Approach

In September 2010, a project team of seven individuals from the McLean County Multicultural Program was formed and charged with developing a marketing plan for *marcfirst* Janitorial Services. Over a six month period, the project team evaluated the current commercial cleaning operations, conducted industry and customer research, and developed a marketing plan with recommendations as highlighted in the diagram below.



Research Findings

- After experiencing a slump in 2008 and 2009, janitorial services industry revenues in the U.S. (currently at \$42 billion) are expected to grow 3.2% annually through 2015.
- The janitorial services industry is fragmented with a number of small and medium-sized businesses competing for clients. Seven of the ten fastest growing franchises in the U.S. are commercial cleaning businesses.
- Profit margins for the janitorial industry tend to be fairly low (5.0%- 7.0% of revenues).
- Feedback received from existing janitorial clients was overwhelmingly positive with customers happy with the quality, expertise and price *marcfirst* brings to each cleaning job.
- *marcfirst's* Janitorial Services growth challenges come from limited brand recognition, perceived lack of experience, and an inconsistent sales process.

To support the organization's growth and profit goals the project team recommends the following five areas of focus:

1. **Define a Target Market** – Identify and focus on a key segment of businesses and/or job sizes.
2. **Improve Marketing Activities** – Build strategies to leverage the *marcfirst* brand, make enhancements to the website, feature testimonials and encourage word of mouth marketing.
3. **Enhance the Sales Process** – Establish a consistent sales process with dedicated and/or highly trained sales representatives.
4. **Provide Exceptional Customer Service** – Continue providing exceptional customer service to clients. Look for ways to gather and respond to ongoing customer feedback.
5. **Leverage Industry Best Practices** – Consider joining an industry trade group and leverage the research and information available.