



# SeaWorld®

## Reputation Management Plan

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Problem and Purpose**

SeaWorld's reputation and profitability have been damaged following the release of the documentary, *Blackfish*. Since the documentary's release in 2013, revenue and attendance at SeaWorld parks have declined dramatically. At the same time, animal rights activists have been aggressive in denouncing SeaWorld's "animal rights abuses"; specifically, the use of captive of killer whales at SeaWorld parks. The purpose of this report is to analyze the problem at hand, and to provide constructive recommendations that can be used to restore SeaWorld's reputation and profitability over the next six months

### **Conclusions**

Analysis of SeaWorld's publics has led us to the following conclusions:

- 1) Animal Rights Activists believe that SeaWorld's animal rights abuses outweigh the contributions that the company has made to wildlife conservation efforts.
- 2) Major media outlets believe that SeaWorld values corporate growth (money) over its principles (animal conservation). This is in part due to SeaWorld's slow (and often insufficient) response to questions posed by the media, as well as the accusations posed by *Blackfish*.
- 3) Negative perceptions of SeaWorld portrayed by the media (and spread by word of mouth) have influenced theme park attendance; particularly among families.

### **Recommendations**

After a careful evaluation of the major problems facing SeaWorld, three specific recommendations are given to help restore the reputation and profitability of SeaWorld.

- 1) Utilize SeaWorld's partnerships with wildlife conservation organizations to increase key publics' perception of SeaWorld's commitment to animal rights.
- 2) Increase key publics' perception of the impact that SeaWorld has in educating the public and raising awareness of wildlife conservation issues.
- 3) Increase key publics' perception of changes being made at SeaWorld, in response to concerns raised by *Blackfish*; including, but not limited to, new policies and incoming attractions (animal shows, thrill rides, events, etc.).

## **Background Research**

### **External Environment**

#### **Social Environmental Challenges**

The animal rights activist group, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have been extremely vocal in attacking SeaWorld. In October 2011, the group filed a lawsuit against SeaWorld for “violating the constitutional rights” of killer whales (PETA, 2011). The lawsuit cited the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, arguing that the whales were being held as SeaWorld’s “slaves” The lawsuit was promptly dismissed by a District judge in February 2012 (Zelman, 2012). However, the issue (and PETA’s vocal opposition) would eventually resurface to the attention of the general public.

In July 2013, *Blackfish*, a documentary about SeaWorld’s killer whales was released to the general public. The documentary “followed the controversial captivity of killer whales, and its dangers for both humans and whales” (NA, 2013, imdb.com). The documentary focused on multiple accidents that occurred at SeaWorld, particularly the tragic death of SeaWorld trainer Dawn Brancheau in 2010 (Cowperthwaite, 2013). The documentary accused SeaWorld of neglecting the safety and well-being of both the killer whales and the trainers. In the Fall of 2013, *Blackfish* was broadcast on CNN, carrying it to an even wider audience (Duhon, S., et al 2016). By December 2013, the documentary was made available on Netflix (Mattera, 2013). As of April 2017, *Blackfish* was still accessible for Netflix’s 89 million subscribers (Snider, 2017).

#### **Economic Environmental Challenges**

The release of *Blackfish* led to widespread protests and negative media/social media attention surrounding SeaWorld. Immense pressure was placed on SeaWorld, as well as corporate partners and music artists that partner with SeaWorld. As a result, many music artists and SeaWorld corporate sponsors (Heart, Barenaked Ladies, Southwest Airlines, Taco Bell, etc.) quickly terminated their relationships with SeaWorld (Ulloa, 2013)(Duhon, S., et al 2016).

These factors helped contribute to a massive decline in attendance during 2014. As a result, revenue and share prices suffered. Of the three financial indicators (attendance, revenue, and share prices), none of them have been able to return to pre-*Blackfish* levels. In 2016, SeaWorld eliminated 320 jobs and reported a net loss of \$12.5 million (SeaWorld 10-K, 2017).

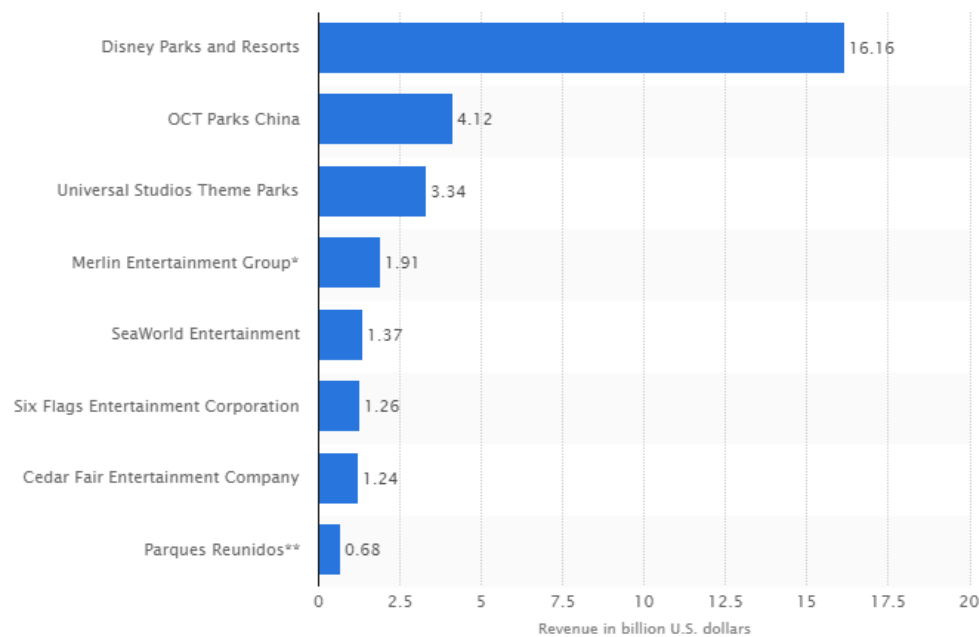
#### **Political Environmental Challenges**

Media attention surrounding *Blackfish* and other accidents at SeaWorld, has led to government interventions with SeaWorld’s business operations. Ever since the death of Dawn Brancheau, SeaWorld has received multiple safety citations from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) (Garcia, 2012). In 2016, the State of California passed legislation outlawing orca breeding programs. Set to take effect in June 2017, the law also stipulates that orcas can be used for “educational presentations” only (Bollag, 2016). Similar legislation was recently proposed at the national level (Schiff, 2017).

## Industry

The amusement and theme park industry is a \$30 Billion global industry (N/A, 2016). Across the industry, theme parks host close to 400 million domestic and international visitors each year (N/A, 2016). Theme parks are most popular during the summer months (from May to late September), when most kids are out of school. For this reason, theme parks that have adjacent or incorporated water parks/rides, tend to draw bigger crowds (N/A, 2016). The most popular theme park destinations are located in Florida (Orlando) and California (Anaheim/Los Angeles and San Diego).

### Amusement Park Chains Worldwide by Total Revenue in 2015 (in billions)



Leading amusement and theme park companies worldwide in 2015, by revenue (in billion U.S. dollars), [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)

The theme park industry has benefited from an improving global economy, in recent years. On a global scale, the industry grew two percent in 2014 alone (TEA, 2014). Most of that growth came from the top nine parks in the industry (mainly Disney and Universal-owned parks). Much of this growth can be attributed to the incorporation of pop culture into theme parks.

## Client

### Brief History and Reputation

SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc is comprised of twelve US-based theme parks including SeaWorld, Busch Gardens, and Sea Rescue (SeaWorld 10-K, 2017). The first SeaWorld opened in San Diego, California in 1964. The “marine park’s” sea lion and dolphin exhibits drew more than 400,000 visitors during that first year (Duhon, S., et al 2016). In 1965, SeaWorld acquired its first orca, which attracted large crowds. The killer whale quickly became the face of the young company.

SeaWorld has since expanded, building parks in Orlando, Florida, and San Antonio, Texas (Niles, 2013). In December 2016, SeaWorld announced the construction of a fourth park in Abu Dhabi, UAE; the first SeaWorld park outside of the US. The new park will also be the first SeaWorld park without orcas (SeaWorld 10-K, 2017).

SeaWorld boasts one of the largest collections of animals on the North American continent. In addition to caring for 60,000 fish, the park also cares for 7,000 marine and terrestrial animals (N/A, Seaworld Parks). SeaWorld is a member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (N/A, Seaworld Parks).

### **Client Profitability**

In 2016, SeaWorld hosted 22 million visitors, including 2.9 million international visitors. Families accounted for 52 percent of SeaWorld's guests (SeaWorld 10-K, 2017).

SeaWorld's total revenue for 2016 was \$1.34 billion; 61 percent of which came from theme park admissions, alone. The remaining 39 percent came from other revenue forms such as food and merchandising (SeaWorld 10-K, 2017). Additionally, just 44 percent of admission revenue came online purchases.

### **Growth Patterns**

The release of *Blackfish* came just three months after SeaWorld's Initial Public Offering (IPO) (Fry, 2016). Prior to the documentary, SeaWorld stock was a hot commodity at the New York Stock Exchange. However, ever since *Blackfish*'s release, SeaWorld has been in a financial nosedive. In 2013 alone, SeaWorld suffered a seven percent drop in revenue (Solomon 2014). Attendance at SeaWorld parks for 2014 fell by 1 million visitors, compared to the year before (McVicker, 2015). It's unclear whether the decline in revenue/attendance was directly related to *Blackfish* or other factors (ex. Harry Potter World opening at Universal Studios CA). Regardless of the factors involved, SeaWorld's investors were unsettled, and consequently, SeaWorld's stock price suffered. As of April 2017, SeaWorld stock was valued at \$18.27; 33 percent lower than the share price offered at SeaWorld's IPO (Alden, 2013)(Nasdaq).

### **New Development/Investments**

To counteract the fallout from *Blackfish*, SeaWorld began to invest in new rides and attractions to draw visitors to the parks. In 2016, the park unveiled two new attractions, including a new shark-themed roller coaster at SeaWorld Orlando. Four additional SeaWorld attractions (including a new "Virtual Reality" (VR) coaster) are planned to be unveiled during 2017 (SeaWorld 10-K, 2017).

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

SeaWorld is perhaps the only theme park that has made significant investments in wildlife conservation efforts. For more than 50 years, SeaWorld's Rescue team has focused on rescuing and rehabilitating injured otters, manatees, dolphins, whales, and other forms of wildlife. SeaWorld's Rescue team is made up of more than 1,500 employees (SeaWorld 10K, 2017). As of May 2016, the organization had performed more than 28,000 successful rescues (N/A, SeaWorld Cares, 2016).

SeaWorld has also partnered with multiple leading wildlife conservation organizations to promote research and rescue efforts. Among its more notable partnerships are the Humane Society of the United States, Guy Harvey, and a \$1.5 million partnership with The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The NFWF partnership is part of a \$10 million SeaWorld pledge to fund research and conservation for killer whales in the wild (N/A, SeaWorld Cares, 2016). SeaWorld has also worked with researchers at UCLA and the San Diego Zoo to gather research related to the animals in SeaWorld parks (N/A, SeaWorld Cares, 2016).

### **Social Media Following**

As of April 2017, SeaWorld had 1.6 million followers on Facebook, 128,000 followers on Twitter, just over 6,000 followers on Pinterest, and 20,490 YouTube subscribers (Official SeaWorld Social Media Platforms, 2017). SeaWorld also has a blog/website that highlights their CSR/animal rescue efforts, [www.seaworldcares.com](http://www.seaworldcares.com).

## **Issue: Reputational Challenges from *Blackfish***

### **Safety Violations**

One of the biggest threats the *Blackfish* posed to SeaWorld was its portrayal of SeaWorld's safety violations. The documentary cited 70 human injuries from incidents involving killer whales that supposedly occurred at SeaWorld; most of which didn't make it into the media (*Blackfish*, 2013). It also included the testimony of former SeaWorld trainers; many of whom condemned SeaWorld for covering up or making light of killer whale-related accidents. *Blackfish* also detailed the traumatic death of Dawn Brancheau; an incident that had gotten comparatively little media attention. Finally, *Blackfish* documented the safety violations that were filed by OSHA against SeaWorld; with specific emphasis on SeaWorld's attempts to avoid responsibility for the accidents. Viewers were left with an impression of a SeaWorld that was irresponsible and solely profit-driven.

### **Animal Abuse**

Perhaps the damaging impact that *Blackfish* had on SeaWorld's reputation were the accusations about animal abuse. *Blackfish* detailed the life of the killer whale that was involved in the death of Dawn Brancheau. The testimony of former SeaWorld trainers was again incorporated; this time to point out acts of abuse or neglect that the killer whales suffered. The result effectively changed how the general public viewed killer whales. Before the media (and SeaWorld, to a certain extent), viewed killer whales as dangerous animals that needed additional safety precautions. However, *Blackfish* presented the killer whales as victims that were lashing out because of SeaWorld's abuses.

### **SeaWorld's Response**

Initially, SeaWorld tried to discredit the documentary and its impact on the company. Just before *Blackfish* debuted in July, SeaWorld published "69 Reasons Why You Shouldn't Believe *Blackfish*". This detailed 32-page critique provided evidence that supposedly discredited much of the documentary (N/A, SeaWorld Cares). In December 2013, SeaWorld published a letter in major newspapers that explained its use of killer whales. This letter was

also published on the SeaWorld Cares website, under the title “The Truth about *Blackfish*” (Duhon, S., et al 2016).

Soon after that, SeaWorld attendance began to drop. However, SeaWorld still refused to acknowledge that *Blackfish* was the cause of the problem. Executives blamed a late summer vacation and the success of rival Universal Studios for low attendance rates in the parks. It wasn’t until August 2014, when SeaWorld reported a six percent drop in revenue, that executives acknowledged that *Blackfish* was the cause of the issue (Solomon, 2014). However, the acknowledgement came too late for SeaWorld’s share holdings, as SeaWorld stock prices dropped well below IPO share price. In December of 2014, SeaWorld CEO Jim Atchison resigned.

### **SeaWorld’s Recovery Efforts**

In April 2015, Joel Manby became the new CEO of SeaWorld. Under Manby’s leadership, SeaWorld began to address some of the concerns voiced by animal activists. In March 2016, SeaWorld announced it would end its orca-breeding program and would begin phasing out killer whale theatrical shows (N/A, CBS, 2017). Many of SeaWorld’s notable wildlife conservation partnerships (NFWF, Guy Harvey, etc.) were established under Manby’s leadership; a further effort to demonstrate SeaWorld’s commitment to wildlife.

However, many wildlife activists such as PETA are still not satisfied. Many are calling for SeaWorld to relocate their killer whales to “seaside sanctuaries”; enclosures in the open ocean that allow killer whales more space. The movement gained traction after the National Aquarium in Baltimore announced that it would move all its dolphins to seaside sanctuaries by 2020 (Mirabella, 2016). SeaWorld has argued against the movement; opting instead to remodel dolphins and killer whale tanks with special technology that simulates their natural habitat (Fry, 2016). The park also plans to debut a new educational killer whale show that will teach visitors about the natural behaviors of killer whales in the wild (Galindo, 2017).

## **Competition**

### **Walt Disney Co.**

Disney is the king of the amusement/theme park industry. Their portfolio includes ten theme parks in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Paris, Orlando, and Los Angeles (Disney 10-K, 2017). The parks that directly compete with SeaWorld are based in Orlando (Magic Kingdom/Disney World) and Anaheim (Disney Land). In 2016, Disney earned \$55.6 billion in total revenue; \$17 billion coming from its theme parks (Disney 10-K, 2017).

### **Universal Studios**

Universal Studios has been one of the fastest growing theme park chains over the past decade. Universal owns five parks in Singapore, Hollywood, California, and Orlando. In 2016, Universal’s Conglomerate, Comcast reported a total revenue of \$80.4 billion; \$4.8 billion coming from Universal theme parks (Comcast 10-K, 2017).

## Resources

### The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is one of the world’s largest conservation grant-makers (N/A, About the NFWF, 2017). Since its founding, the NFWF has helped organize and fund more than 16,000 conservation projects across the country (N/A, About NFWF, 2017).

### The Humane Society of the United States

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is the nation’s largest animal protection program (N/A, About Us (Humane Society), 2017). The organization provides and sponsors care for more than 100,000 animals each year and is the leading animal advocacy organization in the United States (N/A, About Us (Humane Society), 2017).

## SWOT Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) One of the Only “Wildlife-Themed” Theme Parks</li> <li>2) History of Wildlife Rescue Efforts</li> <li>3) Partnerships with well-known Animal and Wildlife Advocacy Groups</li> <li>4) New/Young, Vision-Driven CEO (Joel Manby), who is dedicated to change.</li> <li>5) Family Friendly Atmosphere</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Accusations of Animal Abuse; Damaged Reputation (<i>Blackfish</i>)</li> <li>2) Limited Attractions outside of Animal Shows (Roller Coasters, etc)</li> <li>3) Limited Capital; Low Attendance and Fewer Investors than Competitors (Disney, Universal)</li> <li>4) Small Social Media Following</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase Attendance and Profitability at SeaWorld Parks</li> <li>2) Establish SeaWorld as more than just a theme park; but an organization with a mission.</li> <li>3) Raise awareness of Wildlife Conservation issues</li> <li>4) Promote scientific animal research initiatives to learn more about killer whales, dolphins, etc.</li> <li>5) Increase public appreciation/education regarding animals like dolphins, killer whales, etc.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Boycotts against SeaWorld</li> <li>2) Government Regulation (especially anti-orca regulation)</li> <li>3) Pressure from Wildlife Community/Animal Activists to Relocate Whales/Dolphins</li> <li>4) Financial Debt/Problems (Need to Re-model but Lack of Investment/\$\$\$)</li> </ol>



## **Market Research**

### **Animal Rights Activists**

Animal Rights Activists encompass a very broad range of topics, issues and organizations. Most of them (77 percent, according to one study) tend to be middle-aged or younger (Jerolmack, 2003). Eighty-three percent of animal rights activists are white (Jerolmack, 2003). Females are slightly more likely to be involved in animal rights activism than males (57 percent to 43 percent) (Jerolmack, 2003). Finally, most animal rights activists (83 percent) have a high school degree or higher.

Because most animal rights activists come from stable educational and financial backgrounds, they take a special interest in the well-being of others—mainly of animals. Animal Rights activism can take many different forms; from volunteering at animal shelters to protesting or boycotting organizations, like SeaWorld, that allegedly engage in animal abuse. PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) is one of the largest (and more extreme) opinion leaders for animal rights activists. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are also well-known animal rights groups.

### **Media Outlets**

The media (specifically CNN) is perhaps one of the biggest publics that SeaWorld needs to target. Not only did CNN broadcast *Blackfish* (twice), but it also heavily promoted the documentary on its social media channels (Duhon, S., et al 2016). This promotion is one of the main reasons why *Blackfish* received so much attention, in the first place. CNN is one of largest online news accounts in the world, with more than 47.4 million twitter followers (CNN Breaking News Twitter Page). It's also one of the more progressive/left-leaning networks; covering a wide-range of activist-related issues, including wildlife conservation. The media's self-interest is to cover a good story that their listeners are interested in listening to.

### **Families**

Fifty-two percent of SeaWorld's visitors last year were families (Seaworld 10-K, 2017). Most families value participating in fun activities that they can do together. Most parents welcome activities with educational benefits, because they want their kids to have fun while learning. Traditionally, the ideal "SeaWorld" family has kids in middle school or lower (ages 4-14). Also, with the new roller coasters coming in, SeaWorld has an opportunity to reach families with older kids/teenagers, that may be looking for more "thrill rides". While parents of these older families/teenagers within these families may not be as inclined towards "educational" activities, they are more likely to have strong feelings about animal activism and other environmental issues (see age statistics for animal activists).

### **SeaWorld Investors**

SeaWorld Investors want to get the highest Return on Investment (ROI) possible. They are a global audience. Most of them likely have stock in other companies as well. SeaWorld Investors value stability. They are uncomfortable with fluctuating attendance, policy changes, and especially negative press. On the other hand, positive press and economic indicators, may bolster their confidence; convincing them to invest more in SeaWorld.

## **Elementary Schools/School Districts**

Elementary Schools are looking for fun, educational field trips that will allow students to learn outside of the classroom. Field trips that teach students science, math or technology (STEM) principles are extremely valued, as they are skills students need to excel in the workplace. Most school systems also try to teach their students the need to be responsible citizens in their communities. This includes learning more about their environment and surrounding ecosystem. Depending on the school (and its budget), schools may also look for a field trip that is cost affordable.

## **Situational Analysis**

SeaWorld's reputation has been damaged following the release of the documentary *Blackfish*. The documentary portrayed SeaWorld as a "profit-driven" company that irresponsibly placed the lives of its employees in danger. *Blackfish* also argues that SeaWorld's practice of keeping killer whales in captivity is dangerous and unethical. SeaWorld has continued to face hard opposition from animal rights activist groups because of *Blackfish*; despite SeaWorld's long history of advocating for and contributing to wildlife conservation efforts. The negative media attention has also caused financial problems for SeaWorld, as park attendance and SeaWorld stock values have decreased. SeaWorld's new CEO, Joel Manby is attempting to restore SeaWorld's reputation through a series of new partnerships, attractions, and theme park policies.

SeaWorld executives are concerned that if SeaWorld is unable to overshadow the negative impressions generated by *Blackfish*, the company's reputation could be permanently damaged. Consequently, park attendance and SeaWorld stock prices would continue to decrease, causing further financial difficulty for the company.

## **Core Problem/Opportunity**

If SeaWorld is unable to restore its reputation, park attendance and SeaWorld profitability will continue to decrease.

## **Goal**

Restore SeaWorld's reputation in order to improve park attendance and SeaWorld profitability.

## **Objectives**

- 1) Increase SeaWorld Park Attendance by 5% (1.1 million visitors) by October 2017.
- 2) Generate 5,000 positive media mentions in traditional and social media outlets regarding SeaWorld Cares and SeaWorld Rescue programs by October 2017.
- 3) Generate 2,500 positive media mentions in traditional and social media outlets regarding new SeaWorld theme park attractions and animal exhibits by October 2017

## **Key Publics**

### **Key Public #1: Families**

**Primary Message:** SeaWorld is the Park that your whole family can enjoy!

#### **Secondary Messages:**

- 1) From penguins to dolphins and from killer whales to otters, SeaWorld gives you a close encounter with exotic animals from all over the world.
- 2) Our animal exhibits have no age or height requirement! Fun for the whole family!
- 3) New Roller Coaster and VR Coaster rides are coming soon!
- 4) Mako, SeaWorld Orlando's newest shark themed coaster is the fastest ride in Orlando
- 5) Besides providing fun and thrills, SeaWorld also teaches our visitors how to be more responsible citizens and respect wildlife.

#### **Strategy One:**

Convince families through traditional and social media that going to SeaWorld will be a fun and uplifting experience that the whole family can enjoy.

#### **Tactics:**

- 1) Partner with Discovery Channel to host live Shark Week broadcasts at SeaWorld Parks (June 26<sup>th</sup> – July 3<sup>rd</sup>). Film special episodes with Shark Week Hosts Featuring Mako Roller Coaster; SeaWorld shark/killer whale exhibits
- 2) Create a hashtag #SeaWorldFamily Host competition inviting guests to make a post about their family's SeaWorld experience on social media. The family whose experience is shared/liked the most wins free season passes.
- 3) "My SeaWorld Vacation" YouTube series – videos that highlight the best aspects of SeaWorld from the perspective of teens, parents, and younger kids.
- 4) Animal Highlight YouTube Videos—videos that highlight the different types of animals at SeaWorld and the experiences that kids have while learning about them
- 5) World Oceans Day Marine Life Conservation Event – SeaWorld will partner with NFWF to organize Habitat Conservation and Animal Rescue Activities at local beaches for the General Public on June 8<sup>th</sup>.
- 6) Celebration to commemorate the 30,000<sup>th</sup> animal rescued by SeaWorld.
- 7) Family Discount Days – First Saturday of Every Month, Families (groups of 4 or more) will receive 15 percent discount on admission price.
- 8) SeaWorld Augmented Reality—SeaWorld will develop an app (similar to Pokemon Go) that adds a virtual layer to the park. App users will be able to explore the park virtually, as well as in real life. Visitors can collect tokens in the game by visiting different portions of the park. These "virtual tokens" can then be redeemed for prizes/special discounts.

## **Key Public #2: Major Media Outlets**

**Primary Message:** The Public Asked; SeaWorld Answered. Change is Coming!

### **Secondary Messages:**

- 1) SeaWorld is introducing new exciting rides/attractions at their theme parks
- 2) SeaWorld has a new, young CEO with a fresh vision for the company.
- 3) SeaWorld listened to public outcry and changed its animal show policies
- 4) SeaWorld has started several partnerships with wildlife conservation groups to help raise awareness about conservation efforts
- 5) SeaWorld continues to be a leader in wildlife rescue efforts.
- 6) SeaWorld is planning exciting events that will bring the community together to celebrate wildlife

**Strategy One:** Convince major media outlets through events and news placements that giving positive media coverage to SeaWorld's reputational re-branding efforts will attract viewers.

### **Tactics:**

- 1) Press Conference with CEO Joel Manby about new "Orca Encounter" killer whale exhibit; changes to killer whale show. Include exclusive showing/demonstration for the media. Provide VNR/Press Release for media outlets.
- 2) Provide VNR detailing the impact that SeaWorld's programming has on educating the community about wildlife conservation.
- 3) Obtain extensive press coverage for World Oceans Day Marine Life Conservation Event. Provide exclusive interview for CNN
- 4) Send Press Releases through NFWF and HSUS to the media that detail the impact of their partnership with SeaWorld
- 5) Celebration to commemorate the 30,000<sup>th</sup> animal rescued by SeaWorld. Obtain press coverage and provide VNR/Press Release for media outlets.
- 6) Send VNR to media outlets that details the positive experiences that families are having at SeaWorld
- 7) News Release to media outlets from UCLA and San Diego Zoo about research discoveries resulting from the study of SeaWorld animals.

## **Key Public #3: Animal Rights Activists**

**Primary Message:** SeaWorld is the leading animal rights advocate in the theme park industry

### **Secondary Messages:**

- 1) SeaWorld has performed more than 28,000 successful animal rescues over the past four decades.
- 2) SeaWorld is one of the lead responders to wildlife disasters, such as oil spills.
- 3) SeaWorld employs more than 1,500 employees to help rescue and care for wild animals.
- 4) SeaWorld has pledged \$10 million to fund research and conservation for killer whales in the wild.

- 5) SeaWorld maintains partnerships with more than 60 national and local wildlife conservation organizations including The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Guy Harvey, and the Humane Society of the United States.
- 6) SeaWorld's parks educate the general public about animal wildlife. They also raise awareness about conservation efforts.
- 7) SeaWorld's parks provide valuable research opportunities for scientists to learn more about animals. Numerous "SeaWorld animal" studies have already been published in conjunction with UCLA and the San Diego Zoo.

### **Strategy One:**

Convince animal rights activists of SeaWorld's commitment to wildlife conservation through SeaWorld's conservation partnerships and traditional and social media channels.

### **Tactics**

- 1) Create a VNR detailing SeaWorld's new killer whale program and the impact that SeaWorld's programming has on educating the community about animals. VNR will be sent to major news networks
- 2) Animal Rescue Video Series on HSUS YouTube Channel. Videos will highlight the story/progress of marine animals rescued and rehabilitated by SeaWorld and the relationship/bond that caregivers form with these animals
- 3) News Release to traditional media about SeaWorld's Animal Rescue efforts
- 4) World Oceans Day Marine Life Conservation Event – SeaWorld will partner with NFWF to organize Habitat Conservation and Animal Rescue Activities at local beaches for the General Public on June 8<sup>th</sup>.
- 5) Celebration to commemorate the 30,000<sup>th</sup> animal rescued by SeaWorld.
- 6) 30,000 Animal Charity Donation—SeaWorld will donate \$30,000 (to commemorate the 30,000 animals rescued by SeaWorld) to one wildlife conservation organization. The winning organization will be decided by a social media poll that will be promoted by the participating conservation organizations. PETA will be invited to participate. Participants tweet the name of their organization with the hashtag #OneAnimalOneLife The organization with the most tweets will receive the prize.
- 7) News Release to media outlets from UCLA and San Diego Zoo about research discoveries resulting from the study of SeaWorld animals.
- 8) "Adopt-an-Animal"--Merchandise sold at SeaWorld will include a profile about a certain animal cared for by SeaWorld Rescue. A QR Code will also be attached, which visitors can scan for updates about their "adopted animal". A portion of each sale will also go directly to help animal rescue efforts.

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