ISMP: Research, Part 1

By: Alexa Cash, Nianru Chen, Rongzhen Lyu, Beth Shirk and Michael Spencer

Organizational Background

Defy Ventures was founded in 2010 by Catherine Rohr. Following accusations of sexual harassment and other misconduct, which surfaced in March 2018, Rohr stepped down from her position as CEO and President of the organization. In 2004, prior to founding Defy Ventures, Rohr admitted to having relationships with program graduates during her time at the Prison Entrepreneurship Program for Texas and was subsequently banned from all Texas prisons. Following the incident in 2018 and an investigation, the Board of Directors released a statement saying it had "strengthened sexual harassment training, adopted a whistleblower policy, clarified procedures regarding complaints to and about senior staff, and strengthened Defy's financial controls and recordkeeping practices." After Rohr's departure, Andrew Glazier took over as President and CEO.

The organization is headquartered in New York City and has several regional offices throughout the United States. These regions include Tri-State (which works within two state prisons, one in New York and one in Connecticut), Wisconsin, Illinois, Southern California, Northern California, and Washington. Defy has a national leadership team and each region also has its own leadership. The national leadership includes Glazier, CFO John Garofolo, Program Operations Manager Gilian Villatoro, VP of Learning Julie Jackson-Forsberg, Senior Director of National Programs Christine Castillo, Director of Development Stephanie Struck, Graphic Design Manager Kalena Schoen, and Director of Marketing and Communications Mariah Dickinson.

Defy's mission is to change mindsets about formerly incarcerated people and help give those individuals their best shot at a second chance. Their vision — to cut recidivism in half — is based on evidence, which suggests that unemployment and poverty are major factors in a person's risk of recidivism. Defy works with currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, providing resources and training to help them integrate into the workforce or become entrepreneurs. Graduates of Defy's program had an 80% employment rate post-program in 2020 and a recidivism rate of 10% (the overall U.S. rate was 30%). One of the organization's objectives is to increase its post-program employment rate to 85% or higher. More abstractly, the organization also aims to expose business leaders to fair-chance employment and reduce stigma about formerly incarcerated people.

Defy Ventures has partnered with various companies dedicated to giving people with criminal histories their best shot at a second chance. It has funding partners such as the AARP Foundation and TOMS, who provide financial sponsorship for Defy. It also has program partners such as Linkedin and the Oglivy, who offer workshops for EITs, help Defy develop programs and courses, or provide event space or other non-monetary resources to run Defy programs. In addition, Defy also has a number of employment partners like Checkr and A Place to Go; they hired and employed Defy's EITs to provide them with employment opportunities. And now, It is currently partnering with Legal Zoom to provide second chances to aspiring, justice-minded entrepreneurs. This collaboration follows LegalZoom's recently-announced partnership with Accion Opportunity Fund and the University of Southern California (USC) Marshall School of Business, furthering the firm's mission to democratize the law so everyone, regardless of wealth or background, can maximize the protection of themselves, their families, their businesses and their ideas.

Brand, Industry, Competitor Performance/Trends Over Time

Defy Ventures falls into the non-profit industry with a brand of hope, hard-work and redemption through giving previously and formerly incarcerated people a second chance at life. Defy does this by preparing its students for future employment opportunities through entrepreneurial programs like Entrepreneur Bootcamp, CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL) and Business Incubator. Defy is able to provide these programs with the support of generous donors and passionate volunteers. Volunteers have the opportunity to attend events in prison as well as post-release events. Donors have the option to make a one-time or monthly contribution, while also directing their contribution to a specific chapter or affiliate of Defy. As mentioned above, Defy helps incarcerated people in Washington, Northern California, Southern California, Wisconsin, Illinois, Louisiana, and the New York Tri-State area. According to 2021 reports from World Population Review, Texas, California and Florida are the top three states with the highest prison populations in the United States, while Louisiana, Mississippi and Oklahoma have the highest prison rates per 100,000 people. It is important to understand the states where incarceration is experienced the most because these are the areas where impact is needed the most.

Under the umbrella of the non-profit industry, Defy focuses specifically on second chance programs. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, around 650,000 Americans are released from incarceration annually and 75% of those released will be reincarcerated before 2025. The recidivism rate only increases the longer a previously incarcerated person has been released. The recidivism rate is alarming and Defy is in the business of lowering this statistic. The current recidivism rate for Defy graduates is less than 10% with an 80% employment rate for Defy post-release programs in 2020. Defy is not the only organization offering this service, but this is a new service nonetheless with programs like this not existing on a wide scale until after 2015. The other non-profit organizations that seek to help incarcerated people like Defy are 2nd Call, Refoundry, Truth Be Told, The Dannon Project, All of Us or None and Prisoner ReEntry Network.

2nd Call is based in Los Angeles, California and works to help formerly incarcerated people gain a trade skill and then a job. 2nd Call partnered with the Los Angeles Rams and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) in 2019 to help more than 100 union workers find jobs building the SoFi Stadium. This non-profit organization does not seem as big as Defy, but has had some impressive partnerships. Refoundry has two primary locations in South Los Angeles and Brooklyn, New York. Refoundry's mission is to help formerly incarcerated people gain financial independence and become leaders in their communities. As of now, Refoundry entrepreneurs have employed over 125 people from their communities. In August, actor and activist Gbenga Akinnagbe was named president of the Refoundry Board. Refoundry also has some impressive partnerships with Shake Shack, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, and Cisco Brothers. While also having notable current and past funders like The Starbucks Foundation, Wells Fargo, and Robin Hood. Based on the information provided, 2nd Call and Refoundry seem to be Defy's two main competitors. Defy has the largest social media following when compared to 2nd Call and Refoundry, but is falling behind in relationships with business partners and donors. It is also important to note that these two non-profit organizations are located in states where Defy has organization chapters.

Current Marketing Tagline, Design and Voice for Brand

Defy's current marketing tagline is "The best shot at a second chance." It succinctly states the organization's main direction: to provide formerly incarcerated people with the basic career skills to improve their chances of securing a second chance at a job and to repaint their lives. Defy's marketing tagline fits perfectly with its mission of changing mindsets in order to give people with criminal histories their best shot at a second chance.

When it comes to Defy's style guide, brand voice, and tone, its website displays a consistency in all three but there is variability in its social media channels. On Defy's website the four colors used are orange, black, gray, and white with the typography being a bold sans serif. Its logo is in all caps with the "D" serving as a door that is opening to a second chance, while each subheading is in bubble-like letters. Additionally, almost every photo on the website is in black and white and this gives off a serious, nostalgic and cinematic feel and tone. Its website features descriptive creative writing, while its social media channels display a much more impersonal voice. Defy's brand is lacking consistency throughout all platforms but it has built a strong look and feel on its website. Its brand is centered on the idea of helping incarcerated people get their second chance through humanizing incarceration and the unforeseen consequences that follow. It is important that Defy's "why" is seen throughout all its avenues of communication – this consistency will further its brand and impact.

Defy's voice is sincerely and authentically human. On its website are many stories of formerly incarcerated people who have been given a second chance after participating in Defy's programs. The way these EITs and entrepreneurs themselves tell the story of their time at Defy and how their lives are today vividly illustrates what Defy has done, how each program worked, and how the participants felt. Defy also takes each meaningful holiday and several national observances very seriously. It regularly commemorates special and memorable days on social media platforms. On special days like Black History Month and Asian American and Pacific

Islander Heritage Month in February, Defy's posts on social media aim to reach out to audiences who observe these occasions.

Target Market and Key Target Audience(s)

Target Market

According to the Defy Ventures Annual Report, Defy's work is supported by more than 40 organizations and companies who provide funds, program cooperation and employment resources. Some notable organizations are very representative. Of Defy's funding partners, some focus on humanitarian issues — AARP, ATS, The Emergent Fund. John E. & Jeanne T. Hughes Charitable Foundation — and their primary areas of interest include self-employment education and training, entrepreneurship and educational research. These companies focus on improving public well-being. There are also many partners who focus on prison, like the Bob Barker Company and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, who support Defy with funds and program resources. Give a Beat, also one of Defy's partners, is a California-based organization that serves as a catalyst for social change by bridging global electronic dance music culture with youth and families impacted by incarceration.

The third category of partners are those based in California, like Dermalogica, Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, eBay Inc, Joseph Drown Foundation, Toms, Pure Beauty. Some foundations support Defy because the similar mission, like Stand Together Foundation aims to break the cycle of poverty. Defy also has additional program partners like BetterUp, Grow with Google, and Linkedin. Linkedin is a platform primarily used for professional networking and career development, and allows job seekers to post their CVs/resumes and employers to post job openings. Defy aims to help formerly incarcerated adults find jobs, a mission which coordinates well with Linkedin. For their employment partner, Checkr is focused on employee background checks for companies and cooperates with Defy with monetary, program and employment resources.

When it comes to a target market, Defy Ventures has yet to partner with corporations belonging in the sports arena such as the NFL, MBA and MLB. That being said, Defy is located in states with robust sports teams, which leaves opportunities for potential partnerships. The NFL is a sports organization that features a large number of athletes, fans and is of great interest to Defy. The West Coast has the largest number of NFL teams when compared to the other regions Defy is located in. Additionally, Washington, Northern California and Southern California have the longest history with Defy – the founding years are as follows 2018, 2017 and 2016. The NFL teams located in Washington and California are the Los Angeles Rams, Los Angeles Chargers, San Francisco 49ers and Seattle Seahawks. Each of these professional sports teams has its own unique relationship with social justice and civic initiatives. The death of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 prompted many NFL teams to reevaluate their own missions and visions. Also, many began looking for local non-profit organizations to help them with work towards new initiatives.

The Los Angeles Rams are one of the teams that began their commitment to social justice before 2020, with their mission statement: "Social justice is at the heart of the Los Angeles Rams community outreach efforts. To us, it's about fighting for equality, driving equity and providing access." In their June 2019 initiative to address local recidivism, the Rams partnered with the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) and 2nd Call to provide jobs through the construction of SoFi Stadiums. The Rams rookies at the time were invited to visit the stadium and meet the previously incarcerated workers. Defy has an opportunity to partner with the Rams to help them further their mission into 2021. While the Seattle Seahawks do not have an initiative as clearly laid out as the

Rams, they too have sought to give resources and donations to deserving non-profit organizations. The 2020 Seattle Seahawks NFL Social Justice Grant Recipients were Robert Chinn Foundation, Youth Care, Kingmakers of Oakland, Latino Community Fund and Opportunities Industrialization Center. The Seahawks have also launched the Seahawks Players Equality & Justice for All Action Fund. Defy has a great opportunity to appeal to their call for equality and justice through the fair treatment of previously incarcerated people.

The Los Angeles Chargers have their own community efforts with a mission statement: "We *Bolt Up* by partnering with and supporting nonprofit organizations providing direct services which build healthy, empowered communities for our region's youth, families, pets and so much more." The Chargers have two different sectors of work, their Bolt Community Team programs and the Charger's Impact Fund. They do not currently seem to have an initiative for social justice, but the desire to support local nonprofits like Defy Ventures. Finally, the San Francisco 49ers have the 49ers Foundation which has been around since 1991. This foundation has invested "$50 million into historically underserved communities" and is celebrating 30 years of change this year. The 49ers have also allowed players to highlight causes near to their hearts through designs on their cleats, My Cause My Cleats in Action. The 49ers are empowering and giving their players the platform to have their voices heard. Defy has the opportunity to be a part of the conversation with these players and have their efforts echoed nationwide.

Target Audience

The organizations mentioned above are Defy's current target market for funding and partnerships. Their target audience should be the official and unofficial accounts of these organizations on the major social media platforms where Defy is active. For example, AARP not only has its official account on Twitter, it also has an account specifically for advocates on Social

Security, Medicare and more. This account manager might have more interest in discussing teamwork with Defy. That being said, Defy’s target audience must include the official social media account, CEO’s personal account and accounts about other functions which align with Defy’s work.

Additionally, through these companies Defy can find more target audiences to grow its scope and reach. Defy’s scope can be expanded according to the followers of these organizations and those organizations’ current partners. Defy needs to engage in and interact with more publics who have an interest in its non-profit work of preventing recidivism and enabling second chances for formerly incarcerated people. Defy has the opportunity to be active alongside the companies and organizations mentioned above, and its efforts will not be in vain as this exposure will mean its mission will be heard by many more.

Defy should focus efforts on engaging its current social media followers and potential followers. For example, Defy could cooperate with Unincarcerated Production, which is a podcast social media account that aims to shift the collective consciousness from intolerance to redemption by humanizing the unincarcerated. They need a story to tell and Defy needs a platform to share its story. Defy has an amazing mission and through cooperation with specific markets and audiences its message will continue to influence and encourage those that hear it and resonate with it.

Audience Persona

Overview

Demographics

Name: Alec Sullivan
Age: 38
Gender: Male
Race: White
Occupation: VP, Marketing
Education: Bachelor's Degree, Business Administration
Annual Income: $190,000
Location: Los Angeles
Family: Wife, 1 Child

Media/Distribution

Media Types: Twitter, Linkedin, Facebook
Resonating words/phrases: Community, Family, Legacy, LA, Rams, Active, Leader
Resonating Images: city landscape, children, football, laughing people
Writing Style: short, informal, conversational

Psychographic

- Interested in elevating the public face of the brand.
- Concerned about the impact of his work on the Los Angeles community.
- Values the health and wellbeing of the players and their families.
- Goals
  - Remain humble and focused on bettering his city.
  - Become a highly respected marketing professional in the sports industry.
  - Maintain a stable income to live in L.A with a family
- Challenges
  - Finding community initiatives that align with his personal beliefs.
  - Balancing work hours, family life, and daily commute times.
  - The rising cost of living in California.

In-Depth

Bio

Alec Sullivan is a 36-year-old L.A. native who specializes in community outreach and marketing communications. He has worked in the sports communications industry for the past 10 years and he's interested in finding new ways to support the local community that impacts people's lives. Alec is an ambitious worker who's always on the lookout for community programs that reach different audiences. Outside of work, Alec is a family man who spends most of his time at home and on the field with his wife and son.

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Age: 38

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Education: Bachelor's Degree in Marketing from University of California-- Berkeley

Average Income: $190,000

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Writing Style: short, informal, conversational

Geographic

- Our Primary audience is Marketing Directors or VP's of major sports teams in urban areas throughout Southern California.

Location: Los Angeles

Teams: LA Rams or LA Chargers

Psychographic

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    - Remain humble and focused on bettering his city.
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Influencers

- Jerry Jones Jr. is the Vice President and Chief Sales and Marketing Officer for the Dallas Cowboys, one of the most popular teams in the league. He has helped cultivate and maintain the Cowboys' audience, so Alec looks at him as a prime example for the industry standard.

Age

The intended audience for Defy Ventures corporate communication is a 34 to 38-year-old marketing specialist. According to Data USA, the average age of an employed marketing professional is 37.5. The 34-38 age range captures professionals who have had time to gain experience and land Vice President or Director level positions at profitable companies.

Gender

On average, a marketing specialist is a woman with 60.8% of employed marketing research analysts and specialists being women and 34.3% being men. Considering we're looking at partnerships in the sports industry, it's much more likely, however, that we'll be working with a man. It's estimated that 135k marketing practitioners are male and 210k are female.

Salary

Assuming that our intended audience is a property owner who has been employed for several years, we estimated that they would have a higher income for their profession. The average salary of a marketing specialist is $79,915 and the average salary of a male marketing specialist is $95,424. According to Bulletin, if they hold a Director or Vice President title, their income is estimated to be $190,252.