

MEJO 332 Public Relations Writing

APPLES Client Portfolio

GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh

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Communication Audit

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Introduction

GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Down syndrome achievement center located in Cary, North Carolina. It is dedicated to changing the way the world views Down syndrome through free, research-based educational, therapeutic, and career-building programs for individuals of all ages. Founded in 2016 by individuals personally connected to Down syndrome, the Playhouse began in its original Raleigh location as a welcoming space for growth, learning, and community connection. In 2023, it expanded into its permanent Cary location, allowing the organization to serve the growing Triangle community with greater capacity and accessibility. Today, GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh offers a wide range of purposeful programs for all ages, from prenatal and early childhood to teens and adults, including literacy and math tutoring, speech and language support, fitness programs, social and life skills development, career training, and volunteer-led therapeutic activities designed to build confidence, motor skills, communication, and independence. All programs are free as it aims to ensure cost is never a barrier to achievement for any and all families. As part of a national network of more than 60 Playhouses, the Raleigh location helps advance GiGi's global mission of acceptance for all while delivering locally tailored support to individuals with Down syndrome and their families.

This communication audit evaluates GiGi's current communication channels and materials to assess their effectiveness, including a SWOT analysis and recommendations for strengthening the organization's social media presence and overall communication strategy.

Methodology

This communication audit consists of our team's evaluation of GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh's current communication tools, including its website, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, X and Youtube. Our analysis was informed by client conversations, team discussions, and instructor feedback. Each communication tool was assessed using a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

SWOT Analysis

Analysis for GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh [Website](#):

Strengths:

- Features an "As Seen On" section highlighting major media coverage (CNN, NBC, FOX). This gives GiGi's a strong reputation with their target audiences.
- Footer includes clear contact information, Playhouse hours, and ways to get involved.
- Fast loading speeds across pages and tabs.
- Straightforward navigation with clearly labeled main tabs.

- The donation tab uses a distinct color, making it easy to find. The page is clean and user-friendly.

Weaknesses:

- Significant information overload under many tabs, making content overwhelming.
- No consistent color scheme aligned with the brand or logo.
- News and stories are all from the national organization, with no Raleigh-specific content except for the blog.
- The About page is too dense, despite being one of the most important sections on the website.
- Website may not fully follow digital accessibility standards ([UNC Digital Accessibility Office](#) could strengthen this).

Opportunities:

- Adding Raleigh-specific news updates, press releases, and photos to personalize the chapter's identity.
- Updating the volunteer page and moving the link higher on the homepage to boost engagement.
- Incorporating testimonials from long-time participants, parents, and volunteers to highlight impact.
- Potential addition: a virtual tour of GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh to provide a welcoming preview for new families and volunteers.

Threats:

- The site's density and layout may be confusing or overwhelming, especially for individuals with Down syndrome trying to navigate independently.
- Branding confusion: labeled as the Raleigh chapter despite no program offerings physically in Raleigh since the new headquarters.
- Lack of clarity on the meaning of the \$21 monthly donation request, which could lead to misunderstandings or donor hesitation.

Analysis for GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh [Instagram](#):

Strengths

- The handle, profile name and bio clearly identify the account as GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh, a Down syndrome achievement center that offers free therapeutic and educational programs for all ages. The full street address helps users confirm they have found the correct local Playhouse.

- The page posts often and stays current with key events and programs, signaling an active and engaged organization.
- Many posts feature local participants, families, volunteers and community partners, which reinforces authenticity and the Raleigh Playhouse's local presence.
- Caption tone is warm and encouraging, which fits a family-focused nonprofit and supports GiGi's inclusive brand.
- The account uses a mix of photos, graphics and video, including some collaborative posts, which keeps the feed from feeling static and offers multiple ways to share information.
- The profile links directly to the Raleigh website, making it easy for users to find details about programs, registration, donations and volunteering.

Weaknesses

- The visual style is inconsistent, with many different fonts, colors and layouts, so the grid can appear cluttered and less polished than larger nonprofit accounts.
- A high percentage of posts are announcements such as flyers, closure notices, recruitment posts and fundraising graphics, which can cause important updates to blend together and be overlooked.
- Captions are often long and repeat text already included in the graphic, which makes posts harder to skim on mobile and can feel generic.
- Posts rarely include clear engagement prompts, and Instagram tools such as polls, quizzes and question stickers are not used often, limiting two-way interaction.
- Story highlights feel crowded and loosely organized, making it harder for new visitors to quickly find essential information on programs, volunteering and donations.
- The profile is not fully optimized for search. The name field and bio do not use all available keywords, so national and other location accounts often appear first when users search for GiGi's Playhouse.

Opportunities

- Develop a simple visual guide using a small, consistent set of brand colors, fonts and templates to make the feed look more cohesive and professional while staying friendly and approachable.
- Balance announcement posts with more story-based content that highlights participant milestones, volunteer experiences and family quotes to add emotional impact and keep the feed from feeling like only a bulletin board.
- Tighten captions by starting with a brief hook, sharing key details and ending with one clear call to action, then moving extra context to the website and linking it through the bio.

- Use Instagram Stories more intentionally for interaction, adding polls, quizzes, countdowns and Q&A boxes about programs and volunteering to encourage participation and improve visibility in followers' feeds.
- Clean up and rename highlights under clear labels such as Programs, Volunteer, Events, Donate, Partners and New Families, and archive older or redundant folders so visitors can quickly find what they need.
- Update the name field and bio to include phrases such as "GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh" and "Down syndrome achievement center," and promote the handle more prominently on the website, in email and through partner accounts to improve search and follower growth.

Threats

- Instagram continues to prioritize short-form video and interactive content, so a heavy reliance on static, text-heavy flyers may lead to declining reach over time.
- Multiple GiGi's Playhouse accounts and other disability-focused nonprofits compete for similar audiences, and users may follow larger or more polished accounts if the Raleigh feed does not present a clear, consistent look.
- If followers see too many similar announcement-style posts without enough variety in stories and visuals, they may stop engaging, making it harder to recruit volunteers, fill programs and promote fundraising events through Instagram.

Analysis for GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh [LinkedIn](#):

Strengths:

- The 'Home' page includes a clear headline, recognizable logo, and concise overview, making the organization's identity and purpose immediately understandable for all audiences.
- The 'About' section effectively summarizes GiGi's goals, free program offerings, and core values, appropriate for a LinkedIn audience.
- The page also includes a map and full address with hyperlinked directions, making the Playhouse's location easily accessible.
- Posts regularly (generally weekly, if not a few times a month), sharing timely announcements such as program updates and application links. For instance, its recent literacy and math tutoring post includes direct links for potential volunteers.
- The page also highlights major events, such as its annual Gala, by sharing recap posts that showcase its success and community involvement.
- Posts include strong visuals that help build emotional connection and encourage their calls to action.
- Although the colors and themes vary across posts, the feed maintains a lively and approachable tone that aligns with the Playhouse's energetic, family-centered image.

- The tone is consistent, using emojis and friendly punctuation to create a positive and welcoming presence.

Weaknesses:

- The ‘People’ section includes generalized statistics about associated members’ locations and education, but does not list names or staff members, resulting in no clear point of contact or identifiable leadership.
- The Playhouse previously shared monthly infographic calendars of events but stopped abruptly in May, creating inconsistency in communication patterns.
- Many recent posts repeat the same call for literacy or math tutors, which, while important, may appear overly repetitive and suggest difficulty in filling these roles.
- Despite having around 340 followers, posts typically receive only 1-3 likes, indicating very low engagement and suggesting that LinkedIn may not be a primary communication platform for GiGi’s current audience.

Opportunities:

- Add a dedicated “People” or “Team” section with staff or board contacts to provide clear points of connection for partners, volunteers, and potential donors.
- Include a prominently featured donation link or call-to-action on the LinkedIn page, similar to the website, to make supporting the Playhouse more accessible across all platforms
- Use LinkedIn analytics to identify the most engaged segments and tailor content accordingly to that audience (e.g., corporate offices in the Triangle region, universities, hospitals or therapy practices).
- Highlight program outcomes and specific data (e.g., families served, program hours delivered, participant achievement) to strengthen credibility for corporate partners, major donors, and institutional supporters.
- Use LinkedIn’s professional network for corporate partnerships, sponsorship announcements, volunteer-recruitment (especially skilled corporate volunteers), and potential board recruitment.
- Create LinkedIn specific posts/campaigns (employee/volunteer spotlights, board member profiles, corporate partner features, etc.) to generate engagement and increase reach.

Threats:

- Repetitive content may reduce follower interest and discourage regular viewing.
- Inconsistent posting could lead to LinkedIn favoring other posts that have higher engagement, resulting in reduced visibility.
- Other nonprofit organizations (local and national) are also competing for professional attention and interest on LinkedIn, potentially diluting reach.

Analysis for GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh [Facebook](#)

Strengths

- The Facebook page is the most active platform, with around 4.5K followers and consistent daily posts that keep the audience engaged.
- Posts receive steady likes and comments, showing reliable interaction from the community.
- The content is interactive and uses emojis, clear calls to action, and links to collaborators to make posts more engaging.
- There are a wide variety of posts, including congratulations to program graduates, reminders about upcoming events, giving information, and photo memories from galas, holiday parties, and other activities.
- Frequent photos and community-centered updates help maintain a strong sense of connection with followers.

Weaknesses

- Engagement doesn't always match the large follower count, and many posts receive only a few comments or shares, which limits reach.
- The content often follows the same structure of a photo and a short caption, which can make posts feel repetitive.
- There are very few videos or Reels, even though Facebook prioritizes video content and would likely boost those posts more.
- Posts highlight events but don't always include deeper storytelling, like quotes or personal details that could strengthen emotional connection.
- The audience skews older (as shown by the few comments), which limits reach to younger volunteers and supporters.

Opportunities

- Adding more videos or Reels from events, participant stories, or behind-the-scenes moments could expand reach because Facebook's algorithm favors video.
- Creating weekly series, such as volunteer spotlights or participant highlights, could give followers something to look forward to and build routine engagement.
- Using Stories for reminders, countdowns, or quick updates could increase day-to-day visibility.
- Tagging partners, local schools, organizations, and sponsors more often can expand the page's reach and introduce new audiences to GiGi's.
- Encouraging volunteers and families to share their own photos or experiences can bring more authenticity and help broaden awareness.
- Using Facebook Event tools and reminder features could help increase attendance at upcoming activities.

Threats

- Facebook's feed is crowded, so GiGi's posts can get pushed down quickly and fewer people may see them.
- Facebook shows posts to more people only when they get quick likes or comments, so posts that don't get early engagement may not reach much of the audience.
- Other local nonprofits with stronger video content may grab more attention and compete for the same supporters.
- Facebook's audience is getting older, which could make it harder to connect with younger volunteers and donors, especially since GiGi's Raleigh doesn't consistently post on other platforms.
- If posts start to look too similar, followers might scroll past them, which could lower engagement over time.

Analysis for GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh [YouTube/X](#)

Strengths

- YouTube has 39 subscribers and around 60 videos, which gives GiGi's an existing foundation to grow instead of starting from scratch.
- The channel uses the official GiGi's profile picture, keeping the branding consistent across platforms.
- Videos cover a wide range of topics, including Down syndrome awareness, exercise routines, informational content, and volunteer testimonials.
- Video quality is strong, with clear audio, focused speakers, blurred backgrounds, and good lighting.
- X has a complete bio that explains GiGi's mission, lists the Raleigh email, and includes the correct website link.
- The X account already has around 475 followers and follows other GiGi's locations and local partners, giving it a built-in network even with zero posts.

Weaknesses

- YouTube posting is extremely inconsistent, with the first video posted eight years ago and the most recent video posted a year ago.
- Many YouTube videos have low view counts, which makes the channel feel inactive.
- The YouTube channel has no About section, so new visitors don't immediately understand what the organization does.
- Thumbnails are plain and could be more engaging and recognizable with GiGi's branding.
- Video titles could be clearer and more attention-grabbing to improve search visibility.

- There are no YouTube Shorts, even though Shorts are one of the easiest ways to increase reach.
- The X account has no posts, making the page appear inactive even though it has followers.
- The X location is incorrect because it lists Raleigh even though the actual location is in Cary, which may confuse users.

Opportunities

- GiGi's can easily drive views to YouTube by promoting videos on Facebook, where they post daily.
- Older videos can be repurposed into YouTube Shorts, which the algorithm pushes more than long videos.
- Adding a clear About section to YouTube would make the channel look more professional and informative.
- Updating thumbnails and titles would help increase visibility in YouTube search and recommended videos.
- Posting simple, consistent content, like event recaps, participant achievements, or short volunteer clips, can slowly rebuild the channel.
- On X, they could begin posting by repurposing Facebook content to keep the account active without extra work.
- Tagging partners, local businesses, and other GiGi's locations on X could help grow visibility through community engagement.
- Updating the X location to Cary would make the account more accurate and trustworthy.

Threats

- Long gaps between YouTube uploads can make the channel look inactive, which may discourage viewers or donors.
- Competing nonprofits with active, modern video content may appear more appealing to younger audiences and potential supporters.
- Older YouTube videos with low views may get buried by the algorithm, making it harder for new content to gain traction.
- If the X account stays inactive, followers may lose interest or unfollow over time.
- The incorrect location on X may confuse users or create a mismatch between online information and real-life operations.

Conclusions & Recommendations

GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh has a strong foundation of mission-driven programming, a committed and welcoming community, and an active presence across multiple communication platforms. Its expansion into the Cary location and its continued growth in programs show a

clear commitment to serving individuals with Down syndrome and their families. However, the audit we conducted shows that GiGi's communication strategy is not yet fully optimized to strengthen its brand identity and maximize engagement across its channels. While the organization excels in authenticity and community connection there are significant opportunities to create greater clarity and strategic consistency to support long-term growth, volunteer recruitment, and donor engagement.

Based on our findings, we recommend that GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh prioritize strengthening brand consistency across all platforms by adopting a unified style, simplifying dense website content, and optimizing profiles for search and accessibility. The website should include Raleigh-specific updates and clearer explanations of key initiatives to help visitors understand the Playhouse's local impact and mission. Across social media, balancing announcements with more story-driven content, such as participant milestones, volunteer spotlights, or behind-the-scenes footage, could help increase engagements and further convey the human-centered nature of the organization's work. We also recommend more intentional use of engagement tools on Instagram and Facebook, improved organization of highlights and stories, and a more strategic approach to LinkedIn that focuses on partnerships, professional storytelling, and showcasing program outcomes.

Additionally, GiGi's should invest in strengthening underutilized platforms such as YouTube and X, beginning with smaller steps like repurposing existing videos into Shorts and cross-posting content from Facebook. Updating platform information, particularly on X, will help build credibility and reduce confusion. Strengthening all communication platforms, through improved formatting and consistent posting rhythms, will increase engagement across audiences.

Overall, GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh has a positive public standing and a strong mission statement. By implementing these recommendations, the organization can create a more cohesive communication presence that better reflects the strength and impact of its programs and continues to spread its mission of acceptance for everyone.