



# **STRATEGIC MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS**

## **2018 Request for Proposal (RFP)**

### **Summary**

The Fortune Society (Fortune) is seeking a **Strategic Marketing and Public Relations consultant or firm** specializing in non-profit, advocacy, social justice, and civil rights issues to create and execute a strategic communications plan that increases the media presence of Fortune within a crowded environment, broadens and deepens target audiences, increases fundraising, positions key people within the organization as subject experts, and strengthens Fortune’s brand as a key leader highly relevant to the expanding dialogue and conversations around criminal justice reform, reentry, and the crisis of mass incarceration.

### **History/Mission/Services**

In 1967, David Rothenberg produced the off-Broadway play “Fortune and Men's Eyes.” Written by John Herbert, a formerly incarcerated playwright, the play captured the experience of living in prison in a way that mesmerized audiences and generated public discourse. As a result, several audience members, who themselves were formerly incarcerated, reached out to Mr. Rothenberg and collectively they founded Fortune. Over the succeeding 50 years, Fortune has evolved into one of the nation’s preeminent reentry service organizations, providing formerly-incarcerated people with the skills and wrap-around services needed to break the cycle of crime and incarceration and to build productive lives in their communities.

The overriding mission of Fortune is to support successful reentry from incarceration and promote alternatives to incarceration, thus strengthening the fabric of our communities. We do this by believing in the power of individuals to change; building lives through service programs shaped by the needs and experience of our participants; and changing minds through education and advocacy to promote the creation of a fair, humane, and truly rehabilitative correctional system.

In the most recent year, we served over 7,000 individuals through one or more of our holistic array of programs that include housing, education, employment services, outpatient substance use and mental health treatment, family services, HIV/AIDS services, food and nutrition, benefits screening and enrollment assistance, discharge planning, and alternatives to incarceration. Through the David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy (DRCPP), we also advocate for an equitable and conscionable justice system, promote effective program models for people with criminal justice histories, and work to change counterproductive laws and policies that prevent this population from successfully reentering the community.

## **Background/Context**

While Fortune has a long history of providing services and conducting advocacy on behalf of currently and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, the current media and political landscape around criminal justice issues has changed dramatically in recent years as the general public has woken up to the reality of mass incarceration in America. This has happened as a result of the publication of several highly acclaimed and popularized books, such as Michelle Alexander's The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness and Bryan Stevenson's Just Mercy, along with films, such as Ava DuVernay's *13<sup>TH</sup>* and Bill Moyers' *RIKERS*, and intensifying local and national advocacy efforts supported by major new funders investing in criminal justice reform and ending mass incarceration, such as Google, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Open Philanthropy Project, and others.

In this context, Fortune has a reputation as a strong reentry services provider with expertise on criminal justice issues that reflects the real life experiences of those who have been incarcerated. Over 50% of our staff have been directly impacted by the criminal justice system – and many serve as thought leaders in speaking publicly about their experiences and in being interviewed by the media to share their perspectives. In fact, two Fortune staff were featured in the Bill Moyers' documentary, *RIKERS*; and our Executive Vice President, Stanley Richards, serves on the Justice Implementation Task Force to close Rikers Island and also served on the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice chaired by former New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman.

Furthermore, our founder, David Rothenberg, a former Broadway publicist, has a huge following from his work in theater, arts, politics, criminal justice reform, and his radio show *Any Saturday* on WBAI. Our President and CEO, JoAnne Page, who has been at the helm for nearly 30 years, spearheading the expansion of Fortune from a small grassroots organization into a \$35 million reentry services agency, sits on numerous reentry and related task forces and is frequently invited to speak publicly and to conduct media interviews.

Although we have these many strengths, Fortune is perceived within the criminal justice space as a more traditional non-profit organization and is not as well-known for our advocacy work around criminal justice reform and ending mass incarceration. In addition, we have low name recognition with the general public, which inhibits our ability to reach new individual, institutional, and corporate supporters. With the current in public opinion moving toward the need for criminal justice reform, there is a potential for Fortune to play a leading role in this conversation and accept the credibility that we have from working on this issue for over 50 years. We need to establish Fortune as a leader in both provision of services and advocacy, owing to the unique experience, expertise, and character of our organization. There is an urgency to capture this moment in time to drive the conversation.

## **Goals/Scope of Work**

The Strategic Marketing and Public Relations consultant or firm will:

1. Create a strategic communications plan and branding strategy to increase Fortune's media presence. The plan should clearly identify and define our target audiences and set forth a clear

strategy for broadening and deepening our reach to these audiences, including potential new donors and younger audiences.

2. Pro-actively pitch stories to raise Fortune's profile, enhance our reputation, and increase our base of financial supporters. Tell Fortune's story through feature pitches, profiles of staff, clients, events and its wide variety of programs and services.
3. Promote Fortune's leaders and our large number of formerly incarcerated staff and clients as experts on criminal justice and reentry issues to shape the narrative locally and nationally.
4. Focus attention on Fortune's policy and legislative agenda.
5. Increase Fortune's name recognition and brand awareness on a national level and throughout New York State and New York City, and particularly for key influencers in media, politics, and philanthropy.
6. Create and cultivate relationships with national, state, and local media representatives so that we are frequently one of the *first* organizations that reporters call for a quote or comment on current events happening around criminal justice and reentry issues, as well as to generate more interest in covering stories about Fortune's work.
7. Oversee Fortune's role in press events or other events where media is present to maximize the opportunity for our voice and core message to be heard.
8. Advise staff and brand ambassadors in identifying newsworthy stories within Fortune.

### **Qualifications**

Fortune seeks a partner with a proven track record of creative excellence in strategic communications planning and media placements in New York City, New York State and nationally. The consultant or firm must have strong relationships with media contacts in a wide variety of media outlets, including print, TV, radio, and digital media, including blogs, podcasts, and social media. Ideally, we would like a partner with some strong knowledge and experience around non-profits, social justice, civil rights, criminal justice, mass incarceration, and reentry issues – especially within the New York City media environment. The ideal consultant or firm will have a strong track record of driving media coverage for similar organizations and strong on the record experience with reporters.

### **Proposal Requirements**

- Initial ideas for positional and media strategy
- Past experience & qualifications
- Examples of success in driving media coverage for other non-profit organizations
- Proposed Scope of Work & Timeline (for 1 year)
- Cost/Fees (monthly or annually)
- Team members and roles

Please submit your proposal to this RFP to Jill Poklemba at [jpoklemba@fortunesociety.org](mailto:jpoklemba@fortunesociety.org)

Submission Deadline: June 22, 2018