

Marketing Student Activities

“Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer demands profitably”

(Chartered Institute of Marketing)

Marketing means:

1. Putting yourself in the customer’s (internal or external) shoes.
2. Understanding your market.
3. Being market driven.
4. Looking at what makes your excellent areas and transferring them to other areas as best practice.

Marketing is everything we do to make our activities as focused and successful as possible.

Very few people will actively go out of their way to find out what activities are offered by their Student Union, Association or Guild. For your activities to be successful and involve more people, you will need to market them carefully.

Marketing is about more than dreaming up some clever gimmicks or advertising. It acknowledges that your “customers” (i.e. students) are the focus for any organisation and the product that it delivers. It is, therefore vital that one considers a range of factors around the student body, the activities on offer and the SU itself.

McCarthy (1960) and Booms and Bitner (1981) proposed the following model for successful marketing. They are:

- Product
- Place
- Price
- Promotion
- Process
- People

Product

Think about the “product” you are trying to “sell”. In this case you are selling the particular student activity. This means thinking about what will happen to the student if they get involved in that activity. Consider what they will get out of it, the tasks they will engage in, how much time they will have to commit and also how their peers might perceive them if they became involved. This point is as much about the SU as it is about the activity.

Think clearly about the needs of your students and ensure that the “product” that you deliver is one that is suitable to those needs. This may require research in to what those needs are.

Place

Where do people need to go to find out about the activity? If the students don't come to you, take your message to them. Where will they be based when they are engaged in the activity? Consider students with mobility issues and those studying at other sites. Don't forget that some may attend your institution at times when the union office is traditionally closed. How will these people get involved?

Process

This covers:

- Systems: what does the student have to do to get involved in the activity (phone calls/ filling in forms etc)
- Are these helpful/ easy to understand?
- What do they say about you and/ or the union – complex and inefficient or straightforward and professional?
- Consider: Office space and position in building
 - Noticeboards and notices
 - Administrative forms
 - Bookings
 - Your IT reliability

Price

What is your price – Money? Time? Effort?

Think about the financial cost to the student. Ideally the activity will be free for the student to take part in. However think about indirect costs to students for example travel costs or extra childcare cover.

Many students carry out paid work alongside their studies. Another indirect cost may be that the student involved in the activity will be unable to work at the time that the activity is taking place. This will reduce the money they have for living and may in the long-term force them to give up on the activity. It's important to work around the student's priorities to get the best from them.

Promotion

Different "types" of volunteers will be attracted by different messages – there are many ways of putting your message across.

Try and write opportunity profiles to provide students with more information about student activities.

Remember that communication is a two way process. How will students get their message back to you? Here are a few ideas:

- ✓ People

- Word of mouth
 - Ask course reps to promote your activities
 - College or University staff are well placed to encourage students to get involved. Build up relationships with key institutional staff. Send information to departments.
- ✓ Posters
 - ✓ Stalls
 - ✓ Leaflets/ flyers
 - ✓ Newsletters
 - ✓ Prospectus
 - ✓ Departmental leaflets
 - ✓ Handbook
 - ✓ Mailshot
 - ✓ Email
 - ✓ Website
 - ✓ Notice boards
 - ✓ Campus transport (ever sat and read an advert on a bus? Do you have a college or university shuttle bus?)
 - ✓ Special events (A "student activity night"?)
 - ✓ Induction process (e.g. welcome speeches to freshers)
 - ✓ Videos/ CD Roms
 - ✓ OHP slides (put these up before big classes or lectures – ask the lecturer to make an announcement)
 - ✓ Freebies
 - ✓ Student media
 - ✓ Cards (think about putting your website address on your SU cards, library or ID cards)
 - ✓ Joint promotion (will the college or university or a sponsor add their name to the event?)
 - ✓ Balloons

People

These are the people who will get involved. What qualities will they exhibit? Do they need to have specific experience? Or will the training be provided? How much time will they need to devote to the activity? Do you wish to target any specific groups (e.g. those that are not currently involved). How will you reach these people?

With thanks to NUS Scotland and University of Staffordshire SU