Study in
Europe

This Communication tool-kit has been developed within the European Commission's Global Promotion Project (GPP) to assist European higher education institutions in promoting the opportunities they offer to students outside Europe to come and study in Europe. The tool-kit is designed as a resource from which users can select what they need, when they need it. It contains tools for hands-on use as well as advice on communications and marketing best practice.

COMMUNICATION TOOL-KIT

June 2008

Study in Europe

CONTENTS

This tool-kit has been developed within the framework of the European Commission's Global Promotion Project (GPP). The GPP has been devised to build on the success of the Erasmus Mundus programme by assisting higher education institutions in Europe to generate an effective flow of information and publicity about the opportunities they offer to students from outside the EU. It is designed to give both guidance and instruction on how to communicate. It includes tools for hands-on use and advice on communications and marketing best practice.

*Please note that the tool-kit is intended as a source of information on technique and **not** on policy. The European Commission is aware that protocols for communications and marketing vary from country to country and from institution to institution. Whether you wish to promote your institution to overseas students is up to you. If you are looking for guidance on how to do it, this is the place.*

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

EFFECTIVE MARKETING

A robust **marketing strategy** translates the promotional aims and objectives of your institution into a framework that summarises, as a minimum:

- Your target markets
- The objectives for each market (share, growth, improved margins, better quality students or staff, increased donation value, etc.)
- The basis upon which you will compete (positioning) in each market (fees, convenience, reputation, relevance, innovation, etc.)
- The range of core and support services to be offered
- How growth (in terms of volume or financial margins, for example) is to be achieved – penetrating core markets or developing new ones
- Critical success factors or potential barriers

Such a strategy will have implications across your organisation, typically well beyond the marketing or communications department but also into finance (costing and pricing), premises (to support service delivery), HR (do you have the right people), IT (to support communications and e-delivery) and service delivery units – the parts that are central to the user experience.

Your marketing strategy should be built on:

- Your mission, vision and values – what is the purpose of the organisation and where does it want to be in X years time?
- Financial analysis – what services and markets make money and which consume it ?
- Portfolio analysis
- Reputation and image assessment
- A relative SWOT analysis
- Competitor evaluation
- An appreciation of the regulatory and policy framework
- Market needs/demand analysis and forecasting
- Understanding "consumer behaviour" – how choices are made
- Marketing evaluation (resources, competencies, integration, etc.)
- Feedback from current and recent users, members, students, clients, parents

MARKETING PLANS AND CAMPAIGNS

Once the strategy is in place the next level is a **marketing plan,** which typically focuses on a market or a cluster of products (China or a business school, for example). They take their steer from the marketing strategy, which ensures all plans are broadly compatible.

Marketing can also be a planned activity as expressed through marketing operational plans or campaign planning. Operational plans are typically functionally based – the plan for the marketing or communications department is a classic example. They tend to be annual or linked to the budget period.

Campaigns are typically planned to be executed within a short or defined timeframe and with a very specific purpose in mind – fund-raising for a new building, advertising to recruit students for a new course or a PR campaign to win support for a new initiative or support a major funding bid, for example. It should be possible to relate even tactical plans back through the marketing strategy to show how it supports a priority objective for the organisation as a whole.

Like all other plans, a marketing plan establishes what you want to do, who will do it, how it will be done, when it will be done and how its impact will be measured. Make enough time to plan. Writing an institutional marketing plan can be a long process, complicated by the competing factors within an institution. A plan without research is useless; each element of your plan has to be based on some element of firm background work. In many ways, writing the plan is easy – the work it is based on is not. Research is equally important for knowing your internal situation, as it is to be familiar with the external environment.

Structuring your plan is very important. Setting your objectives, methods, research and analysis, implementation and review processes in as clear a fashion as possible will make the marketing plan more useful to your institution. Define your target markets as specifically as possible and relate these to your communications tools and methods.

Be familiar with the seven Ps (see below) and know how they relate to your institution and your marketing plan's aims and objectives. Integrate other activities into your marketing plan: working together with other parts of your institution makes a far greater impact. Be clear on budget and timing. A marketing plan will never succeed if it is under-funded and set over an unrealistic time period. Manage the implementation of your marketing plan very carefully, for it is this area that will make or break the plan. Tie it in as closely as possible with your aims and objectives.

Once you've developed your marketing plan, there is a "Seven P Formula" you can use to evaluate and re-evaluate your activities. These seven are: product, price, promotion, place, presentation, positioning and people. As markets, customers and needs change rapidly, you must continually revisit these seven Ps to make sure you're on track and achieving the maximum results possible.

PRODUCT

Of course, education is not a manufactured product, like soap-powder. But it is a service chosen in a market-place by consumers (= students) who are making informed choices. So, develop the habit of looking at what you are offering as though you were an outside marketing consultant brought in to help your company decide whether or not it's in the right business at this time. Ask critical questions such as, "Is our current service, or mix of services, appropriate and suitable for the market and the customers of today?"

Whenever you're having difficulty, you need to develop the habit of assessing your business honestly and asking, "Are these the right services for our potential students today?"

PRICE

The second P in the formula is price. If you charge fees to overseas students, develop the habit of continually examining and re-examining your prices to make sure they're still appropriate to the realities of the current market.

In business, as in nature, whenever you experience resistance or frustration in any part of your sales or marketing activities, be open to revisiting that area. Be open to the possibility that your current pricing structure is not ideal for the current market. Be open to the need to revise your prices, if necessary, to remain competitive, to survive and thrive in a fast-changing marketplace.

PROMOTION

The third habit in marketing and sales is to think in terms of promotion all the time. Promotion includes all the ways you tell your audiences about your services and how you then market and sell to them.

Small changes in the way you promote and sell can lead to dramatic changes in your results. Even small changes in your advertising can lead immediately to better results.

Large and small companies in every industry continually experiment with different ways of advertising, promoting, and selling their products and services. And here is the rule: whatever method of marketing and sales you're using today will, sooner or later, stop working. Sometimes it will stop working for reasons you know, and sometimes it will be for reasons you don't know. In either case, your methods of marketing and sales will eventually stop working, and you'll have to develop new sales, marketing and advertising approaches, offerings, and strategies.

PLACE

The fourth P in the marketing mix is the place where your service is actually sold. Develop the habit of reviewing and reflecting upon the exact location where the potential student customer first encounters your institution.

PRESENTATION

The fifth element in the marketing mix is the presentation. Develop the habit of standing back and looking at every visual element in the packaging of your service through the eyes of a critical prospect. Remember, people form their first impression about you within the first 30 seconds of seeing you or some element of your institution. Small improvements in the presentation or external appearance of your service can often lead to completely different reactions from your potential students.

Presentation refers to the way your service appears from the outside. It also refers to your staff and how they dress and behave. It refers to your offices, your waiting rooms, your brochures, your correspondence and every single visual element about you. Everything counts.

POSITIONING

The next P is positioning. How do people think and talk about your institution? What positioning do you have in your market, in terms of the specific words people use when they describe you and your offerings to others? Do you have a specialist geographical or disciplinary "niche" of which you can take advantage?

Develop the habit of thinking about how you could improve your positioning. Begin by determining the position you'd like to have. If you could create the ideal impression in the minds of your potential students, what would it be? What changes do you need to make in the way you interact with students today in order to be seen as the very best choice for your students of tomorrow?

PEOPLE

The final P of the marketing mix is people. Develop the habit of thinking in terms of the people inside and outside of your institution who are responsible for every element of your marketing strategy and activities.

It's amazing how many organisations will work extremely hard to think through every element of the marketing strategy and the marketing mix, and then pay little attention to the fact that every single decision and policy has to be carried out by a specific person, in a specific way. Your ability to select, recruit, hire and retain the proper people, with the skills and abilities to do the job you need to have done, is more important than everything else put together.

KEY MESSAGES

INTRODUCTION

In any information and communications campaign, it is vital to prepare key messages in advance and to ensure that they are delivered in the most effective way possible to their intended audiences. In developing the Key Messages for the GPP, we have followed the guidelines below:

Straightforward and to-the-point

There is no point in using phrases such as "interoperability of platforms" when addressing the general public. Language should be simple and direct. This does not mean dumbing-down, but it does mean avoiding jargon and acronyms.

Outcomes not processes

In our experience, what matters to most audiences is the outcome rather than the process. In the case of the GPP, this means talking about the benefits of European Higher Education for students and other stakeholders, and not just the detail of the GPP programme itself.

Supporting arguments

A key message is not a policy or an argument; it is a brief and accessible summary of a policy or argument. Speakers who use them should therefore also be supplied with appropriate back-up material, with examples, to support their points in question and answer sessions.

Not too many

There is a balance to strike here. Individual speakers or interviewees should not attempt to make too many points at once: it only serves to confuse the audience. But the key messages need to cover a wide range of issues and audiences. The answer is careful categorisation, so that speakers can easily select the appropriate messages for a particular occasion.

Consistent across audiences

The increasing use of electronic media means that messages cross borders and time-zones very quickly. There is no point saying one thing in (for example) Singapore and something completely different in Brazil. Some messages may be the same for all others, but the tone or emphasis of others may need to vary from audience to audience. However, the underlying themes must be consistent.

Delivered directly

As much as possible, key messages should be delivered directly to their intended audiences. Other organisations will have their own agendas and may modify the messages for their own ends.

MESSAGE CONTENT – THE STRENGTHS OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

On 18th and 25th April 2007, two GPP Introductory Workshops were held at the European Commission's offices in Brussels. Participants were senior marketers, rectors, policy advisors, deans of academic departments, from around 20 different European universities.

In these discussions, three strong values of EHE were identified: **Diversity**, **Quality** and **Creativity**. The value of the Bologna Process was also stressed. We feel that these four themes can together Provide an effective framework within which to group our Key Messages. However, we do suggest some minor modifications: while Quality is an essential element and Diversity is a unique selling point for Europe, we also need to convey the message that students will have the chance to develop themselves personally and professionally in Europe. We therefore propose to replace the word "Creativity" with "**Opportunity**"; it is broader and it does not preclude the inclusion of Creativity as a sub-set.

As for Bologna, we readily accept the importance of the process, but it was felt at the workshops that the word itself would have little or no resonance with audiences outside Europe. It was suggested that there is a need for a significant substitute for the term, such as "convergence", "comparing" or "sharing". We therefore suggest the phrase "easy to compare".

As a starting point, we have taken the strengths identified at the workshops and grouped them under these three headings.

Quality

- Europe offers excellent universities - many of them in world top 100.
- The Erasmus Mundus programme has already started producing high quality students. It is a strong brand upon which to build.
- Europe is developing a scheme of quality assurance. By 2010 there should be a quality controlled process.
- Europe will be emblematic of a guarantee of quality in higher education.

Diversity

- There are over 4000 higher education institutions in Europe, so everyone can find what they are looking for – from top research universities to small friendly teaching-led colleges.
- A wide range of cultural experience is available among countries which are in close proximity to one another.

Opportunity

- Many countries want to encourage the best and brightest students to remain after their studies.
- With cheap flights, it's easy to move around. Some countries are very inexpensive and Europe offers many bursaries.
- European is tolerant, and generally peace-loving. It is an easy place to come and study, with cultural assets and a rich history. It's sophisticated, and fun.

We also need to take into account that the slogan for the GPP, to be used alongside the logo, is "Study in Europe". This was another key outcome from the Introductory Workshops and it will be important to utilise the exact phrase as prominently as possible in our messages.

POTENTIAL AUDIENCES

Having defined our themes, we now need to give attention to our audiences. The classic manner in which a programme of key messages is considered usually consists in asking two questions: "What do we want to say?" and "Who do we want to say it to?" But there is a third, equally important, question to be addressed at the outset, namely: "What are the opinions, concerns, expectations and prejudices of the audience(s)?" If we fail to pay attention to the key issues and concerns of our audience, we will not develop effective messages for them.

The GPP has to address audiences around the world. But despite the geographical variations, we may still identify four broad groups. Each of these target audiences will need its own key messages. We need to bear in mind that these various counterparties are disparate; they are each concerned with their own agendas and not always one another's.

Potential students

The key audience. Those who are actually going to benefit from particular programmes need to know what to do and how to apply. Key Messages for them must be purposeful and not bureaucratic.

Academic institutions and their staff

Students will still seek advice and information from their tutors and their teachers. Teaching staff will need to know what the opportunities are, what European universities have to offer, and how the application process works.

There will need to be a distinction between messages for European academic institutions (who attract students) and non-European academic institutions (who send students or who advise them to complete their studies in Europe).

Parents

Students value the opinions of their parents. In some countries it is parents who decide the choice of university. Students will discuss their options with their parents and those parents need to be informed in their own right rather than just hearing at second-hand from the students or their teachers.

General Public

People outside academia, both in Europe and in the rest of the world, need to know that the GPP is a Europe-wide initiative. These messages should focus on the wider benefits for the countries concerned, and not just the direct advantages to participating students.

Employers

As well as benefits to the students themselves, a top-class European education has value for their future employers. These messages are aimed at businesses, and need to be very practical: they should focus on what specific advantages graduates who have studied in Europe will bring to the workplace.

KEY MESSAGES

We set out here the Key Messages for each audience by thematic heading:

Students

Quality

Europe offers you a choice of excellent universities – many of them in the world top 100.

Only Europe provides state-of-the-art facilities and cutting-edge research opportunities together with the chance to "walk in the footsteps" of many of the world's most influential thinkers.

You may know a student who has benefited from the highly successful Erasmus Mundus programme. They'll be able to tell you all about studying in Europe.

Europe is developing a scheme of quality assurance. By 2010, a full quality control process is planned. Europe will be emblematic of a guarantee of quality in higher education.

Diversity

Come and study in Europe! There are more than 4000 higher education institutions in Europe, representing nearly 1000 years of academic excellence. From top research universities to small friendly teaching-led colleges, you're sure to be able to find what you're looking for.

Europe is easy to move around, and offers a unique cultural experience. In addition to a world-class qualification, you will have the chance to acquire linguistic and intercultural skills that are of great value to future employers.

Opportunity

Studying in Europe gives you a world-class education – and more. You will learn how to operate in a dynamic multicultural environment. You will have the opportunity to acquire intercultural skills and an additional language or two, assets that are key to employment in today's globalised economy.

Europe is a destination which welcomes diversity of opinion and which offers you the freedom to create, experiment and innovate.

Many countries encourage the best and brightest students to remain after their studies, or you can take your newly acquired skills back home to use there.

Some countries are very inexpensive and European universities offer many bursaries.

Europe is modern, tolerant, sophisticated and fun. It's an easy place to come and study.

European academic institutions

Quality

Europe offers excellent universities – many of them in the world top 100.

Europe is developing a scheme of quality assurance. By 2010 there should be a quality controlled process.

Europe will be emblematic of a guarantee of quality in higher education.

Diversity

With over 4000 higher education institutions – from top research universities to small friendly teaching-led colleges – study in Europe can offer a much wider range of academic experience than its competitors. Europe can also offer a wide range of cultural experience.

Opportunity

The business case is compelling. Countries such as Germany, the UK and France have already benefited considerably in financial terms from encouraging overseas students to come and study.

There is an opportunity to encourage bright students with a fresh perspective to remain after their initial studies and follow research.

Non-European academic institutions

Quality

Europe offers excellent universities – many of them in the world top 100.

Europe is developing a scheme of quality assurance. By 2010 there should be a quality controlled process.

Europe will be emblematic of a guarantee of quality in higher education.

Diversity

There are over 4000 higher education institutions in Europe, so everyone can find what they are looking for – from top research universities to small friendly teaching-led colleges.

A wide range of cultural experience is available among countries which are in close proximity to one another.

Opportunity

Europe offers numerous scholarship opportunities for talented overseas students.

Experience shows that many students return to their home countries after their education, repatriating their new skills.

Parents

Quality

Europe offers excellent universities – many of them in the world top 100.

Europe has been delivering excellence in higher education for nearly ten centuries. Only Europe offers students state-of-the-art facilities and cutting-edge research opportunities together with the chance to "walk in the footsteps" of many of the world's most influential thinkers.

Europe is developing a scheme of quality assurance. By 2010 there should be a quality controlled process.

Europe will be emblematic of a guarantee of quality in higher education.

Diversity

There are over 4000 higher education institutions in Europe, so everyone can find what they are looking for – from top research universities to small friendly teaching-led colleges.

Europe offers a unique cultural experience, combining world-class qualifications with the chance to acquire linguistic and intercultural skills that are of great value to future employers.

Opportunity

Studying in Europe provides students with a world-class education – and more. They will learn how to operate in a dynamic multicultural environment. They will have the opportunity to acquire intercultural skills and an additional language or two, assets that are key to employment in today's globalised economy.

Europe is tolerant, safe and welcoming. It is an easy place to come and study, with a strong commitment to academic freedom, innovation and creativity.

With cheap flights and one of the world's most modern and efficient transport networks, it's easy to move around. Some countries are very inexpensive and Europe offers many bursaries.

Experience shows that many students return to their home countries after their education, repatriating their new skills.

General Public

Quality

Europe offers excellent universities – many of them in the world top 100.

Europe is developing a scheme of quality assurance. By 2010 there should be a quality controlled process.

Europe will be emblematic of a guarantee of quality in higher education.

Diversity

There are over 4000 higher education institutions in Europe – from top research universities to small friendly teaching-led colleges. Between them, they can offer an unparalleled range of experience and cultural diversity to students from overseas.

Opportunity

This is an opportunity for all of Europe to benefit from exporting its skills in degree-level teaching. Countries such as Germany, the UK and France have already benefited considerably in financial terms from encouraging overseas students to come and study.

Employers

Quality

As an employer looking to recruit graduate students, you need staff with a recognised qualification from a top-level academic institution. Europe offers a wide range of excellent universities - many of them in the world top 100.

Europe is developing a new scheme of quality assurance. By 2010 there should be a quality-controlled process and Europe will be emblematic of a guarantee of quality in higher education.

Diversity

As well as world-class qualifications, graduates from European universities have had the opportunity to acquire valuable linguistic and intercultural skills, which will add value to your organisation.

Opportunity

Graduates who have studied in Europe know how to operate in a dynamic, multicultural environment.

They have studied in a culture which is committed to academic freedom, innovation and creativity. Many of them are now keen to return to their home countries and repatriate their new skills.

EFFECTIVE PLANNING FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity is not new. Chinese silks were all the fashion in Rome centuries ago, and Alexandria in Egypt was the ideal of the modern universal city. Many a small European town has long had Asian restaurants, or North African grocers – but now these cultures are crossing at the speed of light through the use of technology. The blending of many cultures is something more than being cosmopolitan; it is changing the complexion of society. Cities like Paris or London have always had an international air, and have served as magnets for exiles, but now many much smaller places are multinational, too.

Being aware of cultural diversity requires a tailored form of marketing, where the three Ps of a marketing scheme – people, place, and product – are gathered and analysed, and a concerted plan of action is developed and carried out.

People
Knowledge of the norms, values, attitudes, and practices of the people who are the target of any culturally-diverse marketing programme is crucial.

Place
Be aware of where students live, work, and play. Being aware of the places that people enter and use on a daily basis is very important to the effective distribution of information.

Product
Further education is a service. HE professionals need to help people from various backgrounds see how a European higher education can help their family members to participate more fully in the unique cultural/social life of Europe.

MARKET RESEARCH

A little market research can go a long way. By understanding potential overseas students' preferences just as you would all students, you are better able to anticipate their needs. When you provide little touches such as bilingual signage and help in finding speciality products for cultural celebrations, you illustrate to students that they matter.

Now you are ready to build your action plan. The following may provide a useful checklist:

- Develop a university-wide philosophy that encourages cultural diversity.
- Analyse the cultural diversity of your existing staff and student composition and set goals for enhancing diversity.
- Research practices/programmes/activities that promote recruitment and retention of culturally diverse students.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive plan for recruitment/retention activities that focus on enhancing cultural diversity.

DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

A good beginning is for the institution to adopt a mission statement overtly embracing cultural diversity. Potential examples of such statements follow:

- The mission of the University is to provide a culturally diverse learning environment that promotes personal, intellectual, ethical and spiritual excellence through sensitivity, sound judgement, tolerance and respect for all persons, cultures and ideas.
- The mission of the University is to prepare a diverse community of learners to live in a society that supports equity and diversity.
- The mission of the University is to promote equity for all students from admission to graduation.
- The purpose of the University is to develop an environment where all individuals can maintain their identity, learn from other cultures, and participate equally in the larger community.

It is not enough just to develop mission statements that support diversity. If your mission statement is buried away in governance charters or on file for accreditation reports, it will tend to be historical and rhetorical in nature rather than a proactive, living part of campus life.

The mission statement should be publicly displayed, and openly discussed among student groups and staff groups on campus if the diversity mission/philosophy is to permeate day-to-day activities.

ANALYSING DIVERSITY

If academic institutions truly desire to embrace diverse cultures, they must begin to collect and analyse data regarding their own cultural diversity. Basic student data to be collected should include the number and percentage of existing groups from different geographical backgrounds (South-East Asia, India, China, North Africa, Central Africa…).

Additional enrolment data might include gender information, socioeconomic status information, age range, undergraduate/graduate enrolments, major area, college enrolled in, first-generation students, etc. This data could be collected by the Admissions Office, the Registrar's Office, the Institutional Data Office, or whatever university office might be responsible for this type of data collection.

Not only is it important to collect and analyse enrolment data on students, it is equally important to collect retention/persistence information on students. This could include data on drop-out rates, reasons for drop-out/non-completion, years to complete programmes/degrees, and follow-up data such as employment rates, etc.

Because the visibility of staff from other cultures may act as a catalyst in enticing students from those cultures, you should collect data on the number of teaching staff as well as on the number of students. The types of information on staff should be comparable to the basic student data collected. In addition, the following information could prove useful:

- Discipline or Field of Study
- Years in rank at Assistant, Associate, Full Professor Levels
- Number of Assistant, Associate and Full Professors
- Number who leave – Why?

Once data have been collected on students and staff, you need to address the following questions:

- Do the data complement our mission statement on cultural diversity?
- Is our institution reflective of diversity?
- Is there a need to target recruitment/retention efforts to increase staff diversity?
- Is there a need to target recruitment/retention efforts to increase student diversity?

Collection and analysis of these data should provide a framework for developing a comprehensive plan to diversify the population on campus.

RESEARCH BEST PRACTICES/PROGRAMMES/ACTIVITIES

In promoting activities and programmes to increase cultural diversity, you want to try to avoid "reinventing the wheel". It is important to recognise that there are programmes and activities already taking place within institutions of higher education. The question is not "Where do we start?" but "What do we have that is already working?" Thus, it is imperative to assess cultural diversity efforts that exemplify best practices. Talk to other institutions, or national organisers. Talk to alumni. Talk to fair organisers. They have all been down the same path that you are considering. Benefit from their experience.

DEVELOPING, IMPLEMENTING, AND EVALUATING A PLAN FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Once the earlier recommendations have been implemented (i.e. mission statement, analysis of current/existing cultural diversity status and research on best practices), you then need to look towards consolidating all this information into a cohesive and comprehensive plan to promote greater cultural diversity.

Each sub-unit, such as the individual college, school, and department, should develop mission statements that reflect/emphasise a cultural focus. Existing staff and student groups should have opportunities to discuss how the mission of the sub-units can influence and increase recruitment and retention efforts. Having knowledge of the current number of culturally diverse staff and students on campus compared to the numbers within the individual sub-units may lead to improved practices that could alter the population data through more recruitment and retention programmes and activities.

After outlining what needs to be accomplished, the institution and its sub-units must determine who will be assigned the responsibility of organising these efforts and how they will be done. These entities must develop the working plan with the previously designed mission statement in mind and use the list of potential practices, programmes, and activities as a basis for delegating duties to other parties. It is important that whoever leads/directs this plan is given the power to accomplish those steps identified within it in order to promote a campus climate that reflects cultural diversity.

The process for carrying out this plan should be thorough and continuous. The plan should be endorsed and supported by everyone it includes at all levels of the institution. Activity in administering this plan should be ongoing. There should be periodic meetings to communicate assignments, delegate responsibilities and discuss anticipated costs and materials. These meetings should also address issues and concerns that may arise and the progress of the plan. Attempts should be made to develop

collaborative relationships between units and programmes, especially when similar plans can be combined. An appointed co-ordinator of events is a necessity as this person facilitates collaboration between and scheduling of different projects.

Ultimately, the plan should be evaluated to assess if progress is leading to anticipated goals. This would include methods of ongoing evaluation related to responsibilities, timeline, and other aspects of the process of carrying out the plan, as well as final evaluation of projects as a whole. It is worth emphasising that in order to ensure the success of a comprehensive plan, there must be a constant cycle of developing, implementing and evaluating.

WORKING WITH EDUCATION AGENTS

An education agent is an individual, company or organisation who provides educational advice, support and placement to students who are interested in studying abroad. The agent usually represents a selected number of educational institutions, often specialising in particular courses and destinations. A formal agreement usually has to be in place before an agent will start representing an institution.

The ICEF, a leader in the agency field (www.icefonline.com), calculates that in some countries, 60 to 80% of international students are assisted by education agencies and advisors. There is no doubt that family and friends are important influences as well, and more and more students are finding out about potential courses via the Internet, but an educational agent has the advantage of putting the recruitment relationship on a professional basis.

An education agent should be able to represent your institution to potential students on a year-round basis, provide you with up-to-date and reliable market information and tell you which courses students are currently seeking. They can also distribute your promotional materials, advertise in targeted student media on your behalf and represent you at HE fairs and exhibitions.

When you are travelling, the agent should be able to arrange appointments and speaking opportunities for you, as well as providing you with a local office infrastructure. Agents can also provide value-added to students. They can help with student application forms, visa and travel arrangements, insurance, accommodation and exam preparation.

If you decide to work with an agent, the following hints may be useful:

- Ensure that the use of the agent will integrate and complement your wider marketing and student recruitment strategy.
- Brief all those members of staff whose work will be affected by the actions of the agent: admissions staff, international office staff and other support staff.
- Do your due diligence: ensure that any agent you contract is reliable, reputable and responsive. Gather references and peer reviews for each agent you may wish to sign on.

- Sign a contract with your agent, specifying the rights and obligations of both parties, ensuring that you eventually are in control, i.e. able to terminate the contract if necessary.
- Build a lasting relationship with your agent by investing time and money in the agent. Visit them, invite them to your campus for familiarisation and training.
- Ensure that you are able to spend more than just the commission payments to the agent, i.e. set aside some marketing budget for specific marketing activities.
- Provide your agent with detailed information about your institution, the admissions process, student accommodation, etc.
- Be willing to (re)direct enquirers to your agent, since they are much better at following-up than you.
- Follow-up accurately and as quickly as possible on any applications that your agent provides to you.

SUPPORTING ALUMNI RELATIONS

SUPPORTING YOUR BIGGEST FANS

The Americans have long been the leaders of alumni relations, reaping the benefits of staying in contact with their annual graduate cohorts. The hope that they will give back generously to the university when they make their mark on society has yielded impressive income streams. Moreover "on tap" alumni support for course development, campus expansion, or political lobbying is fully used to advance the institution. Alumni relations is a key part of the US corporate higher education strategy.

An alumnus of Princeton once described how each year he would return to his institution to enjoy the company of his old student friends over a long meal, and then challenge the year group above him in an auction of giving over coffee and liqueurs. This was friendly rivalry, peer networking, conviviality and, most importantly for Princeton, a wonderful way of raising funds and friends to create new buildings, resources and bursaries. This alumnus was not simply an open wallet – he was also immensely proud of his role as a volunteer and mentor for the college, showing applicants around, supporting fund raising telethons, and putting all his skill as a communicator and established businessman into making his alma mater even greater for the next generation.

For universities that have international ambitions, alumni are also your friends overseas. They are the most likely people to persuade your next students to apply to you. (Of course, they are your best ambassadors, provided their student years were as good and beneficial as you told them they would be!) International students turn into international business people, lawyers and academics, who may be returning to you as staff and the next cohort of professors in 20 years from leaving. Your alumni count, and any major university with ambitions cannot afford to ignore them.

STRATEGIC INTENT

As with most endeavours, you need to decide why you want to do alumni relations. Is it for fundraising? Are you trying to create friends around the world? Are you hoping to identify the Great and the Good, who could open the doors to you to advance your cause? Many alumni of course will be politicians, in the media, significant business leaders – all of whom can raise your reputation, or help you with a problem, if they are proud to be your alumni. You may have also realised that one of the main markets for

your new distance learning courses, or your newly launched MBA, will be your own recent alumni. You may want to expand your adult education, and consider that the alumni who are living in your immediate region will again be likely to be warm to courses in archaeology, bioethics, or Spanish literature. The answers may be "yes" to all of these. But it helps to set out a strategy. Alumni relations is a short and long-term investment in your university, and if return on investment is measured by alumni giving, it may take a very long time to know whether your efforts are being rewarded. Some of the rewards are also far less tangible than donations to a fund – an increase in reputation, alumni helping with marketing, alumni returning to you as staff, etc. An alumni strategy helps you think through the costs, the objectives and the possible measures of success. You might consider the following headings:

- Objectives for alumni relations overall, nationally, internationally, regionally.
- Objectives for alumni relations in the next five years (e.g. a target for fundraising, the support for a campus building, etc).
- Targets for contact (in the next x years, we will be in active contact with 10,000 alumni).
- Framework and responsibility (will you do this at central level, or devolve responsibilities to departments, schools, or colleges?).
- Conduits (e.g. a new annual alumni magazine, alumni group to be established in e.g. Malaysia).
- Budget and staffing to achieve all the above.
- Measures of success (e.g. hard ones such as fundraising targets, students returning for reunions, alumni survey returns, and soft ones such as alumni being more positive towards you) .

START WITH THE STUDENTS

An engaged alumnus can only come from an engaged student. Alumni relations has therefore to start with your current students and indeed even your prospective students. If they don't enjoy their courses, feel let down by student support, or simply have insufficient teacher contact hours, they are not going to rush to be an active alumnus.

These are some of the processes you might want to put in place from the beginning of their student life:

- Have an alumni presence at all key student rites of passage – recruitment, orientation, admissions, matriculation, annual summer events, graduation.

- Give students an e-mail for life. This is a good way to stay in touch with them after they have gone.
- Create a parents' association, and bond and network with the parents whilst the student is still being supported by them. American universities focus heavily on parent fundraising and ensure the parents are part of the community from day one.
- Invite students to at least one free annual dinner to bond and create a sense of belonging with their college or institution before they leave.
- Give students an insight into how the college or university works, what its ambitions are, where it is going. Make them aware of your ambitions from an early age. Introduce them regularly to the leader of the university. If they only hear from the rector or Vice Chancellor once they have gone, they are likely to view any alumni approach as merely cynical fundraising.
- Tell them about alumni giving and how it has created a new sports hall, library, or bursary. Make the link between the alumni who have gone before them, and their present student experience. Establish the importance of philanthropy and demonstrate how they have benefitted from other alumni.
- Establish the link between alumni relations and their career development. Peer to peer networking is more compelling for a 20 year-old than class reunions.

HOW TO REACH ALUMNI

A good starting point is to work with the people who have already stepped forward to connect with you. These are your most dedicated alumni. Begin by creating a database with all their key contact details. Invite them to respond to a survey so that you can create a baseline of performance and work out your current strengths and weaknesses. Expand this circle gradually by tracking down those who have slipped below the radar, yet are still warm towards you. Only a small percentage of your students are likely to not want to engage at all.

Most alumni will at some point in their lives dip into your website. If they do that, have you got news and content for them? Have you got a section of the site which allows them to find other alumni friends, and to give you their address? Also consider some of the tactics that will allow them to do some of the work for you:

- Create an area of the website which provides interactive space for alumni to communicate with one another, and with professional peer groups.
- Include alumni profiles to show what your alumni have achieved since graduating (a great marketing tool).

- Allow alumni to update their own profiles and include pictures (think of the techniques of Facebook and other social networks).
- Provide a searchable jobs database so that alumni return to the site to advance their own careers.
- Put news and films on social networks to showcase the university for the YouTube generation.

WHAT CAN YOU OFFER THEM?

Alumni are after a combination of things – firstly communication from you, telling them what the institution has done, research breakthroughs, new buildings, new ambitions, etc. Alumni want to be able to talk up the institution because it matters to their career that you are doing well. The most likely conduits for this are going to be the web, downloadable or paper newsletters, and personalised letters or e-mails.

Once good communication has been created, you can then consider activities and events for your alumni that will further bond them to you. You have to consider what is appropriate for their age. Those in their 20s and 30s will probably be interested in visiting alumni groups in their place of work. Those who have started families may be quite keen to visit their old haunt with their family, and be keen to come back for an alumni weekend.

The older and more mature alumni will have more time on their hands. These graduates are often lively partakers of alumni cruises and study tours, and can be the most active consumers of your adult education. Here are some other suggestions:

- Lifelong learning seminars.
- Networking events, class dinners, family events.
- Classical music concerts, invitations to major sporting fixtures, invitations to honorary degree ceremonies.
- Reduced price courses.
- Access to universities' libraries or sports facilities.
- Ability to book a room in the university for a meeting, or an overnight stay.

WHAT CAN THEY OFFER YOU?

Alumni are principally your ambassadors around the region, country and world. To what extent they want to give you something back will depend on their student experience, their own time and wealth, and their feeling that you as a university need

their help. If they are warm and favourable towards you, alumni are one important source of giving to a university. If your ambitions are towards fundraising, you need to work carefully with alumni to be clear about what their money might achieve, and work out which alumni are more likely to be in sympathy with your new catalytic converter for Chemistry, and which are more likely to want to create a new student bursary scheme. Each will have their own preferences for giving. However, you have to make clear your goals, and what extra money could achieve to realise those goals. But beyond money, here are other ways they could support you:

- Volunteering to mentor new graduates.
- Serving on alumni committees.
- Participating in campaigns to ask businesses for money.
- Providing political and business intelligence.
- Providing feedback on new course content – is it appropriate for the market in which your senior alumni operate?
- Volunteering to attend recruitment conferences in their home country.
- Use alumni journalists as an editorial board for your alumni magazine to professionalise content.

THANKING ALUMNI, INVOLVING THEM STRATEGICALLY

If alumni give of their time or money, you need to remember to thank them. Sometimes the thanks might be a personal note from the president, sometimes alumni are looking to be involved in something bigger or more lasting. Here are some suggestions:

- Create an alumni committee, with some of your most influential alumni represented to plan activities and reach new alumni.
- Naming a building or bursary after a major alumni donor.
- Create a ceremony for alumni who give large donations.
- Display alumni giving prominently – e.g. in the annual college newsletter.
- Employ your current students to phone existing alumni, to update them on college news and explain how their donations have been used.
- Invite alumni who give generously of their time or money to an annual college dinner or special event. The event itself may prompt others to want to engage.

SUPPORTING ALUMNI RELATIONS

PROCESS AND PERSUASION

Alumni relations is three parts process, and one part creative communication. The initial work comes down to systems and hard graft – have you got the e-mails for all your new graduates, when they move house do you have a system which makes it easy for them to alert you to their new address, do you have the manpower to communicate with them and alert them to what you as an institution are doing? Have you got systems and finances in place to stay in touch with them? Have you got a good database with CRM (customer relationship management) systems in place, so that you record when you last spoke to them, and what was said? Have you got a button on your home page that is for alumni, and is there content on the site for them to read, engage with, and enjoy? If someone wants to donate, have you made it simple? Do they know how and where to send the money?

But creative communication is the yeast that allows your alumni relations to rise. Your website, your staff on alumni teams, your face to face communications must be convincing, articulate, warm but not overly effusive. You need to convince your alumni that you are a serious institution making a very real contribution to society. That your research and teaching make a difference. You need to be unstuffy, modern and thought provoking. You need to remind people of the good times they had as alumni, but point to the plans for the future. Without that creative connection, what you say and how you say it, your alumni relations will be hard work, expensive, and yield little in return. But if you get the balance right, your alumni are likely to want to rejoin the community that started their adult lives.

GENERAL PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

MEDIA RELATIONS

The modern media is faster, more immediate, more integrated and more widespread than ever before. Academic institutions have to respond quickly, and need to have a robust, flexible and responsive media strategy.

THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA

Over the last two decades, there has been a massive deregulation of broadcasting. This has led to a great proliferation of private TV stations at a local, regional and national level, to compete with the state-owned channels. In general terms, state operated stations still retain a greater degree of factual and information programming, while the private stations, dependent on advertising revenue for their commercial survival, concentrate more on entertainment.

The arrival of private TV and radio has brought from North America the practice of "formatting" stations, whereby each is targeted at a niche audience. Traditionally, the national public broadcasting stations operated more general, full-service formats which included a mix of news, documentary, drama and music, but some of these are being modified in the face of competition from more narrowly-formatted private stations.

You will usually find it advisable to target a number of different strands of media: general news programmes; regional news programmes; economic and business programmes; social issues programmes. All these strands should be considered in providing coverage. At the outset, it will be important to determine not merely whether particular stations are amenable in theory to the idea of carrying the relevant information, but actually to establish the sort of information they would be prepared to broadcast. It is too easy for stations to say "Yes, in principle" to a vague proposal, and then decline when confronted with the actual offer.

SPECIFIC RELEASES FOR EACH MEDIA GROUP

Specific press releases should be produced for each media group. For releases aimed at new or infrequent media targets, a background/general briefing document should also be prepared and issued giving the overall story.

Releases should be issued to selected lists of journalists, together with supporting material, such as product literature, and/or photography/graphics. Top quality photography is essential. The releases should be posted (and/or distributed electronically) to agreed lists of national and regional publications.

Many of the relevant media are monthly; the programming of each release must take this cycle into account and will broadly conform to a four-weekly rolling schedule. Releases should be followed up by offers of feature material and editorial meetings.

LONG-TERM PLANNING

While the major newspapers and television news programmes are naturally concerned with the issues of the moment, many magazines and feature programmes take a longer perspective, planning three or even six months in advance. Therefore you need to know:

- What are the longer term trends, stories and issues?
- What can be done to anticipate and prepare for them?
- Which are the areas where selected press can be taken into our confidence briefed in advance?

Draw up a report, prior to the media campaign, on upcoming issues and opportunities with recommendations for action in the media, to anticipate the negative coverage and promote the positive.

MEDIA LIAISON

You cannot build up a close working relationship with every higher education journalist in the world! But you can develop a core of well-informed and broadly sympathetic press. There is no "quick fix" in PR, and face-to-face meetings will need to be arranged to build up effective media contacts. In many ways, it is easier to establish initial contact when there is not a specific story to sell, but rather when there is an interesting or relevant point of view to communicate. In such circumstances, the journalist will not be quite so much on guard against the idea of being force-fed a story. In the same way, once a journalist has been contacted and sent information, follow-up is vital. Documents are too easily lost or forgotten.

Identify case studies which will allow you to illustrate the benefits of studying in Europe in a relevant and strongly visual manner. Journalism is about real stories and real people. Journalists are always on the lookout for something to interest their

audience – this needs a background of facts, but also a story to tell. Identify the subjects and angles which will be of most interest to the media and which therefore have the greatest chance of attracting coverage.

Identify the widest possible constituency of journalists and editors – in national, regional and local press as well as on radio and TV stations (news bulletins and specialist programmes).

Develop and maintain contacts with the journalists and editors regarded as priority targets for stories concerning the various aspects of higher education. Make a regular assessment of the level of interest among the journalists and editors in the subject areas which you intend to communicate to them.

Produce fact sheets tailored to specific target audiences. Subjects should be carefully chosen to be of interest to the target media (and therefore through them, to as wide an audience as possible).

Invite target journalists and editors to meetings or events (like HE fairs) where the background issues can be discussed and longer term plans made for interviews or other coverage. The development and deployment of success stories or case studies should be an integral part of your approach. Journalists should be offered a choice from a mixture of written information, programme ideas and prepared programmes (VNRs = Video News Releases) from which they can develop their own output.

Content should include clear and concise briefing materials, interview opportunities, where appropriate pre-recorded video material and/or a video news release with footage of visually interesting activity. The material should examine the implications at a local, regional or national level.

The press prefer specific examples to generalisations. In order to communicate a positive message a number of case studies of suitable concrete examples should be identified, not just one, and suitable footage identified for the broadcasters. At the same time, and if policy permits, articulate interviewees should be designated among senior staff and given media training.

PRESS RELEASES

A press release can be one of the most effective techniques for publicising an event or calling attention to an issue. But a press release is only effective if it is read and if the information is actually published. So a press release must contain a clear and engaging text, it must be sent to a careful selection of recipients, and its timing needs to be right. If you follow the guidelines below, your release should have a good chance of success.

WHAT'S MY STORY?

Define the subject of your story. If you can't be clear on the story, don't write the release.

IS IT REALLY NEWS?

A journalist is not seeking to join your project or programme. A journalist is looking to fill a news need. Rather than answering the question, "What's in it for the University of X", answer the question, "Why would ABC magazine's readers care"?

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Read the target publication.
Visit the web and look at the stories their site offers.
Work out the issues of common interest to their readers.

WHAT AM I TRYING TO WRITE?

A persuasive communication within the framework of a news story.
Think like a reporter. Follow journalistic style.

STYLE

KISS – Keep it simple stupid!
400-500 words maximum.
Active tense, not passive.
Main points first – in sentences, paragraphs and the whole document.
"If in doubt, cut it out."

STRUCTURE

The Headline: In about ten words – or less – grab the attention of the editor.
The headline should summarise the information in a way that is exciting and dynamic.
Opening Paragraph: Always start with the principal point. Explain who, what, when, where, why, and how.
The Hook: A hook is not a hard sell – it's an interesting and newsworthy factual statement.
The Body: The inverted pyramid – most important information and quotes first, lesser detail and background later. If editors need to cut, they can cut from the end.
The Close: Critical contact information.

CONTENT

Stick to the facts.
Illustrate the story with quotes, real life examples and case-studies.
Make it relevant. Keep in mind what's going on with relevant social issues and current events.

SEND IT TO THE RIGHT MEDIA

Target publications read by your customers.

E-MAIL THE APPROPRIATE PERSON

Releases sent to incorrect contacts are thrown away.

GET YOUR TIMING RIGHT

Send it out during the morning rather than the afternoon, giving time for it to be read before deadlines approach. Avoid Fridays and days immediately before Public Holidays.

DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU

Reporters hate calls asking if a press release was received, or worse yet, read. Journalists are busy. They throw away the releases of people who persist in calling.

HERE IS A SELECTION OF PRESS RELEASES TO ILLUSTRATE EFFECTIVE EDUCATION PRESS RELEASE WRITING

A good example of how to get publicity for your University or College. It includes both celebrity (The Queen), which is always a good selling point to the media, and a high-profile medical condition – cancer.

Royal opening for new £50m Cancer Research UK Cambridge Research Centre
2 February 2007

Her Majesty The Queen will today (Friday) officially open the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Research Institute. The Institute is a unique partnership between the University of Cambridge and Cancer Research UK. It will be dedicated to state-of-the-art research into the causes of cancer, and developing new treatments and bringing them to the clinic to benefit cancer patients.

The Cancer Research UK Cambridge Research Institute is housed in the recently completed Li Ka Shing Centre on the Addenbrooke's Hospital site in Cambridge. Her Majesty The Queen, who is Patron of the Charity, will be accompanied by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and Sir Ka-shing Li, Chairman of Hutchison Whampoa Ltd.

More than 300 scientists in up to thirty research groups will be based at the Institute. They will be led by Professor Bruce Ponder, Director and Li Ka Shing Professor of Oncology, whose research covers the genetics of breast cancer, and Professor Fiona Watt, Deputy Director and holder of the Herschel Smith Professorship of Molecular Genetics, who studies the link between stem cells and cancer. Other research at the Institute will range from cell biology to imaging and experimental medicine.

Construction by the University of the £50 million Li Ka Shing Centre on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus was funded jointly by Cambridge University, Hutchison Whampoa Ltd., Cancer Research UK and The Atlantic Philanthropies, plus a range of other donors. Cancer Research UK has purchased approximately £15 million of state-of-the-art equipment for the Institute, funded through generous donations and an appeal spearheaded by Cyril Dennis MBE. Cancer Research UK will further provide around £20 million per year to core-fund research at the Institute.

Events which take place at your University or College are a good way of promoting yourself as being in the forefront of opinion. The story may be read by potential students in your target group.

Higher education 2.0: the new generation university

3 July 2007

Mobile phones are changing the way news is reported, online wikis are competing with traditional encyclopedias, and blogs are moving in on mainstream publishers.
Now mobile technology could reshape higher education, according to one of the papers presented this week at the University of Sydney's *Mobile Media 2007* Conference.

"As ivory towers crumble, traditional content-based, narrative-based, or apprenticeship-style education is becoming increasingly irrelevant," according to Axel Bruns and his co-authors from Queensland University of Technology.

Just as traditional media is being challenged by citizen journalism, they say higher education systems are "under threat" from what they call a "Generation C" that is hungry for interactive experiences.

Generation C "is able to access scholarly sources and debate at the touch of a button, from outside the system." Members of Generation C are part of an information-rich culture and they already "produce academic grade information and knowledge resources of its own."

"Higher education's competitive advantages now lie squarely in its ability to provide a strong combination of systematic overviews and deep engagement with specific fields of knowledge."
Bruns and his co-authors urge universities to make greater use of mobile and wireless technologies – including blogs, wikis and sms – in order to allow students to be active co-creators of course content. These technologies also make it easier for students to leave campus and study real world problems relating to students' current and future work lives; this leads to more "authentic learning" experiences, they write.

It is essential to promote HE Fairs in advance. This example from New Zealand does a good job of setting out what the country has to offer as well as the Fair itself.

New Zealand Education Fair in Mumbai

8 September 2007

World-class New Zealand education is about offering people the skills to make the world of difference to industry, environment and progressive thinking. The programmes offered are practical and connects high-potential sectors with the best talent in the world. To share more on the opportunities, the New Zealand Education Fair 2007 is being held on 08 September at the Hilton Towers, Mumbai from 11.00am to 5.00pm, where representatives from over 20 educational institutions from across New Zealand will be present to counsel parents and students aspiring to make a difference.

Speaking on the occasion, Paul Vaughan, Trade Commissioner, said, "Today, New Zealand Universities are driving the innovation in the education arena. It is helping students meet the needs of the globalized marketplace through an education that endows, harnesses and polishes skills, teaches how to innovate in thinking and helps build international networks."

New Zealand is fast becoming the first choice for an increasing number of international students seeking quality education. New Zealand universities, colleges and other New Zealand education institutions offer students a unique learning environment. Its approach to education is to nurture individuality and fresh thinking. Whether one studies in New Zealand or at one of the international campuses, one will find a holistic approach to education.

New Zealand bases its education programmes and degrees on the world's most recognized and accredited education system – the British system. One is taught in an English speaking environment and qualifies with a quality, internationally recognized degree. New Zealand offers students the most prestigious education system in the world without the expense of living in the Northern hemisphere.

This is further enhanced by the New Zealand Government administered Code of Practice for the pastoral care of international students. Over 1200 institutions are signatories to the code, which is designed to ensure that a consistent, high standard of pastoral care is provided to all international students studying at New Zealand institutions.

Opinion surveys are always of interest to the media. This release from the British Council has a very good first paragraph, short and straight to the point.

UK School Children Come Bottom Of The Class In New Research Measuring International Awareness

12 November 2007

New research has found that UK school children score lower than their counterparts in nine other countries in an index measuring the international outlook of young people around the world. The UK index scores are slightly lower than those of the USA and significantly lower than those of other European countries.

The research was carried out on behalf of the British Council by Ipsos MORI who asked 11-16 years olds in ten countries, with internet access in the household, a range of questions to ascertain their international outlook. The questions covered attitudes towards language learning and international affairs. Results were scored on an index with 7 being the highest score and 0 the lowest. Nigeria came top of the table, followed by India and Brazil. The final results are as follows:

1. Nigeria 5.15
2. India 4.86
3. Brazil 4.53
4. Saudi Arabia 3.74
5. Spain 3.29
6. Germany 3.24
7. China 2.97
8. Czech Republic 2.51
9. USA 2.22
10. UK 2.19

Within the UK, English school children (2.17) scored slightly lower than their counterparts in Scotland (2.35), Wales (2.43) and Northern Ireland (2.26).

The publication of the research coincides with the start of the British Council's annual conference for schools and local authorities which focuses on encouraging internationalism in the school curriculum and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) International Education Week, which aims to encourage an international outlook in schools in England.

HIGHER EDUCATION FAIRS

Higher Education fairs provide an excellent opportunity for prospective students to meet university representatives, to discuss issues about degree programmes and university life in general and to pick up prospectuses and other information about HE institutions.

BEFORE THE FAIR

Set clear goals

What do you want to get out of it? You can have more than one goal, of course, but the point is that you need to be clear about what your participation in the fair is going to achieve.

Do your research

Ensure that the fairs you attend will integrate and complement your wider marketing and recruitment strategy.

Gather references and peer reviews for every fair you are considering to attend

You want to choose a fair that best targets the audience that you want to reach, and best suits your participation goals. Find out what the fair's objectives are, and investigate and evaluate the audience.

Plan your budget and book your space

Find out everything you can about your space, including where it is on the floor, what kind of other exhibits will be around it, whether it's a high traffic or low traffic area, and the physical conditions of the space, such as lighting.

Plan your exhibit

Who is it that you're targeting? Ensure that you are familiar with the local market, its qualifications and institutions. Make sure you take the right material with you.

Brief all those members of staff whose work will be affected by your fair attendance: admissions staff, international office staff and other support staff. Ensure that they are prepared to support your fair follow-up.

Advertise in advance

Put the word out that you are participating in a particular fair. Be sure to advertise your coming attendance on your website.

DURING THE FAIR

Just being there isn't enough to make attending an HE fair worthwhile. You need to have a display that will draw and engage potential contacts.

Think neatness and visibility when putting your display together

Make sure your display is organised and tidy. Visitors will be turned off by messiness or by having to do too much searching to find what they want.

Have promotional items that you can use as giveaways

Small items that people can take away and use (while being reminded about you) are best. Be sure you place these items in a location where people will have to walk into or through your display to get them.

Make the most of your attendance

Work with your agent to plan visits to local schools, universities and existing partners to coincide with your trip. Ensure that your current applicants/enquirers are invited to meet you at the fair.

Make it easy for visitors

Use signs to give information about all basic information they might need to know, to save them the trouble of having to wait to ask when you're busy with another visitor.

If the fair is slow, use the time to accurately assess each student that you talk to. If it's busy, work efficiently and talk to small groups at the same time.

Invite an alumnus or your agent to help you on the stand.

Ensure you have plenty of promotional literature

Have a good supply of fliers and brochures as well as business cards that you can hand out to visitors so it will be easy for them to find all the information they need about you later. You should also have a press kit prepared for the trade media.

Be ready to do business

Plan to capture student information as quickly and as accurately as possible. Devise a method that will record all the vital information you need when you return to your institution

Have your exhibit manned at all times

Someone has to be there to greet visitors, engage them in conversation, and take their questions. If you cannot be there personally every minute the fair is open, you will need to have at least one other person to help man your exhibit.

Actively engage visitors

Give people who approach your display a friendly welcome, and welcome their questions. Be sure your body language is friendly; don't stand there with your arms crossed over your chest, for instance. Talk to your visitors, and find out what aspect they are most interested in. Be prepared to offer specific solutions to their questions. Draw them in without intimidating or overwhelming them.

AFTER THE FAIR

Follow-up accurately and as quickly as possible. Ensure that you have planned your follow-up campaign before you leave and stick to it.

Send out e-mail, post, or make the phone calls to follow up on the contacts and leads you made as soon as possible. The faster you send them out, the more you will stand out from the rest.

Manage expectations. Communicate clearly to all students when they can expect to hear from you again.

USING GIVEAWAYS

Giveaways are one of the most ubiquitous items at any HE fair. Virtually everyone has these so-called "freebies", ranging from pencils to expensive CDs. Other examples include pens, mouse mats, T-shirts, Post-it blocks, paperwieghts, key rings: the list goes on. Yet, if you ask many regular exhibitors, they'll be hard pressed to tell you if most of it works. So, from a psychological marketing viewpoint, what are the best types of giveaways? There is no simple rule such as "pens are always better than pencils". To answer the question, you as the exhibitor need to determine what you want your giveaway to do.

The Purpose Of Giveaways

There are several overlapping reasons to give something to a visitor:

Branding – the giveaway reinforces the institution's name and core benefit, such as a pencil with the phrase "X – the perfect place to Study."

Image-building – the giveaway helps to reinforce the institution's image and niche.

Create a positive feeling – in most situations, it is human nature to think well of someone who gives you a gift.

Reminder – a traditional and useful reason for giveaways is to help people remember the institution's name and benefit after the fair is over.

Build a List – giveaways that are exchanged for names and e-mail addresses of prospective students offer one of the best values for money. It gives you a low-cost way to contact potential students over again.

Selecting The Best Giveaways

Based on an analysis of desirable fair visitors and the potential benefits of giveaways, we can draw some general conclusions about the most and least valuable types of giveaways.

- Giveaways which are consumed (such as food) will generally have little marketing value.

- Giveaways which do not have your name on them are useless.

- Giveaways which do not have a branding message are of less value than those which do. That means a postcard with an institution's name is of less value than one with the name and a slogan which enhances its position.

- Giveaways which involve the visitor are superior to those which do not. For example, a cable TV company offered a virtual reality experience – two fascinating minutes in a virtual reality world of dinosaurs. It was exciting, new and memorable.

- Giveaways which offer an immediate benefit are useful. It's important to also give something which will remind visitors of your organisation, such as a notepad. It is always a mistake to impress your visitor, then not provide a way to let them contact you.

- Giveaways which create involvement are better than those which allow the visitor to remain passive. Involvement can be created by many means. Involvement creates a personal relationship between the visitor and the stand personnel and may help reinforce the message.

- Giveaways can be an effective way to enhance a positive image, gather prospective leads, and generate repeated reminders of your institution long after the fair is over. Or they can be a waste of money, and even create a negative impression. All giveaways are not created equal. For the best results, try to see them through the eyes of your targeted visitors.

USE OF THE INTERNET

THE INTERNET – GROWTH AND CHANGE

The dramatic growth in Internet usage has transformed what was once a "geek's" gimmick into a major global communications tool. What was only of interest to a minority has now become a major source of information, entertainment and communication.

Essentially there have been three phases – all overlapping – in the development of the Internet. In its first phase it was used by experts – especially the global academic and scientific community – to communicate information to each other. In its second phase, it was used by organisations, businesses and governments to communicate more effectively with their customers and with users of public services. This remains one of the largest segments of Internet use and many Europeans are now accustomed to handling their relationships with government and buying goods and services over the Internet.

The third, and now the fastest growing, use of the Internet has been networking sites, what could be called "horizontal communication" – that is to say, between self-creating groups and individuals with shared interests. Networking sites, such as Facebook, are seeing very fast growth. Facebook, started in 2004 by a group of graduates at Harvard, now has 59 million active users worldwide. MySpace has 110 million users worldwide. YouTube, started in February 2005, has seen huge growth in its networking of video material of all different types and descriptions and, as at February 2008, had 70 million videos available on the site.

As a result of these phases, the three largest uses of the Internet, according to a recent survey, are for personal/business communication (e-mail), finding out information about goods and services, and for general intergroup communication (networking sites). 56% of Europeans used social networking sites in August 2007. One major publicly-quoted European company estimates that approximately 30% of its Internet traffic is related to employees using social networking sites.

The Internet is overtaking other more conventional media as a source of information. In December 2007 all media users were asked to rate which media they used most: TV came top (36%), radio next (26%), closely followed by the Internet (24%). Newspapers and magazines each scored only 7%.

The fast growth of the Internet and the swift way in which it changes its nature means two things: first, that it is a crucial medium to be considered in creating any communications plan; and second, that there are few hard and fast rules. The development of the Internet is moving faster than the ability of anyone to create rules for its use. Many Internet experts believe that sites like Facebook will soon lose their novelty value as another new idea takes over – "users are one click away from going somewhere else", says Google.

The purpose of this guide is to offer some basic suggestions as to how to use the Internet to promote European Higher Education in general, and your institution in particular. Given that young people are among the most active users of the Internet, and in some cases at the forefront of development of new services, effective use of the Internet is something which should be in any HE institution's communications armoury.

THE INTERNET AUDIENCE

The Internet audience is not only growing, it is getting decidedly mainstream. Once confined to specialists or the technically capable, the Internet now embraces almost everyone. Moreover, newcomers to the Internet go online much more often for personal reasons than do more experienced online users.

E-mail continues to be the top Internet draw and shows the same broadening trend. Approximately 200 billion e-mail messages are sent everyday worldwide. Many e-mail users say they communicate more often with friends and family now that this technology is available. E-mail is also making available the possibility of communicating with groups – e.g. fellow students at a university – at no cost and very little effort. While spam (unwanted e-mails or "junk" mail) remains a problem, most Internet users take that as a risk in return for a benefit that is seen to be of great value.

Very often, Internet searchers find it difficult to track down what they are looking for. Internet search technology is simple and quite fast, but does not match the complexity of queries entered into it. Trying to find something on the Internet is the top source of frustration for users, followed by the speed of Internet connections and the speed of searches. And these complaints aren't limited to beginners – experienced users express more frustration than new users in each of these areas.

HOW TO DEVELOP AN INTERNET AUDIENCE

Search Engine Optimisation – The majority of Internet users rely on search engines and directories to find the information they need. Therefore, ranking highly in search engines and directories should be critical to your Internet marketing strategy. Because users generally only explore the first 10 or 20 sites in the search results, an understanding of how search engine ranking works and how to get your site in the top 20 results can make an enormous difference in the amount of visitor traffic your site receives.

Effective optimisation requires a combination of carefully designed META tags using logical search terms, an understanding of the various search engines and their ranking algorithms, as well as a pro-active approach to search engine submission and ranking monitoring. If your web developer claims to have already optimised your site, ask to see the key search terms used and for proof of your search engine ranking. If you do not already work with a firm that specialises in optimisation, consider it a critical aspect of your audience development strategy.

Banner Advertising – Some websites attract audiences of millions every day. You can purchase banner advertising space on these popular sites to draw visitors into your own. Banner advertising technology can even target visitors based on demographic data and behaviour. Such capability can attract highly qualified visitors to your own site. Your web developer should be able to tell you which type of viewers are regularly found on which sites. Typical costs for a banner can be €10 for 1,000 CPM (Cost Per IMpression = clicks through to your website). Industry experience suggests that only .39% of "click throughs" lead to a positive outcome. But if you target your source sites correctly, using banners effectively can be a relatively cheap form of advertising on the Internet.

Loyalty Programmes – Unlike their offline versions, online loyalty programmes can be relatively inexpensive to integrate. It is possible to create a protected sub-site, accessible only by password. Such a "virtual community" for visitors – providing chat rooms, personal web pages and e-mail addresses – can be a very valuable way of building up loyalty with the audience you are trying to reach. These are people with whom you will probably want to build up a long term relationship – alumni, for example. Making it easy for them to contact you will be a valuable short cut to your site.

Strategic Linking – The web as a medium is unusual and strengthened by the use of hyperlinks, active links which enable users to be redirected to the right site very quickly. Sites that have a lot of other sites linking to them will naturally receive more traffic. More links = more traffic = more business. Links with related sites can stay in place for long periods, ensure targeted traffic and can often be arranged free of charge or by reciprocal link agreement. Webmasters of affinity sites should be approached for this service.

Sponsorships and Partnering – Sponsoring strategic content on popular web sites is another way to secure a site audience. If users see your brand associated with information they find useful, they will naturally develop a good association with your products and services. Exclusivity is the key here – if you provide a unique service or information on a major portal, it lends credibility to your brand and increases customer interest in your own site. Placing articles can be very cheap, given that most websites are desperate for new editorial copy.

WRITING FOR THE WEB

Web readers have very short attention spans. You are trying to attract the attention of a mobile audience who, if they are not interested in your story in the first 50 words, won't bother to read the rest of it. Reading on-screen uses a different set of eye and mind responses than reading on paper. This all has a bearing on the way you structure your information and on the language you use.

HEADLINES

On average, headlines are read five times more than body text. A web page should have a headline. This headline will be:

Short

Between four and ten words. Ideally, it should be short enough to stand on one line. Leave out adjectives, prepositions, adverbs and any unnecessary paraphrasing.

Eye-catching

The headline should be central, immediately above the body text.
Use a higher font size than that of the body text.
Do not use italics, underline or uppercase.

Straightforward and explicit

Use plain language that can be understood by your target audience.

Your headline should give the reader a good idea about the text content. In other words, the reader should be able to anticipate what is on the page and whether it is of interest to him/her. Avoid acronyms, abbreviations and idiomatic expressions.

Catchy

The headline should be worded in such a way that an interested reader will want to go a step further and read the text. Caution: this should not override straightforwardness.
- Avoid stylistic fudge: puns, exclamation marks, statements lacking substance.
- Wherever possible, use a verb to add more dynamism to your headline.

With keywords

Headlines are one of the items that search engines take into account for indexing web pages. For consistency's sake, repeat these keywords in the body text.

Self-explanatory and self-contained

A headline may be part of an interactive summary. Internet users may land on a page from a search with a search engine. Readers have to grasp immediately what is at stake in one glance, without any need to read further. Which first words have the most importance? If a date has to be mentioned, put it after the headline.

THE MAIN INTRODUCTION = CHAPEAU

The "chapeau" or main introduction is used by journalists as a way to sum up the content of a feature in an introductory paragraph. Web writing can use the same technique. Limit the chapeau to one short paragraph. To highlight the chapeau, use bold or a different background colour. Never use underlining or italics.

Sum up the gist of the information. The chapeau should be read as a single brief paragraph. It should contain the main thrust of your material while the body text adds deeper detail. To best explain the information, apply the **5W** standard. This means providing in the introduction the answers to the 5 basic questions readers ask themselves: **W**ho? **W**hat? **W**hen? **W**here? **W**hy?

Write it to the point: avoid any introduction which is not directly linked to the information such as verbose welcome statements, greetings, warnings, etc. Apply the inverted pyramid principle, i.e. that the most important information should appear first, followed by an explanation in greater detail. At all costs keep it simple and clear.

BODY TEXT

In writing for the web, keep it short and simple.

- Write in short sentences.
- Split up information into paragraphs. Limit each paragraph to just one idea, which should appear in the first sentence of the paragraph. Where needed, distribute information in several logical blocks or boxes. Use sub-headings in longer texts.
- Limit the volume of information per page: between 500 and 4,000 characters or four screens at a maximum.
- Feature additional information "outside" the text. Information sources, statistics and items recurring on several pages should appear in separate boxes. Alternatively, use hypertext links to original documents. Illustrate content by using visuals, where they convey informational value.
- Write in the present tense, and in the active voice ("We recommend" instead of "It has been recommended").
- Use effective and clear quotes, which are clearly attributed.
- Avoid jargon and abbreviations.
- Express time references in absolute terms (e.g. write "in December 2004" rather than "next month"), as it ensures a longer life to your content.
- Avoid paper-based spatial references, either textual ones (like: see below, above-mentioned, as follows, go to the next section, etc.) or hierarchical ones (numbering chapters, sections, etc. in a format like 1.a, II.a or a), b), c)…).
- Avoid footnotes for the same reason.

When writing, never assume that:

- The audience has the time to read it all.
- Your boss is the audience.
- Only specialists are in the audience.

Before starting your draft, take some distance from the subject. Think about the concrete message that you want to convey.

- Which audiences are we addressing?
- What are their concerns/interests?
- What, concretely, are we doing to address those concerns and interests?
- What do we want to achieve?
- What is the specific added value of what we are saying?

- Are we offering something that justifies our audience taking an interest in us?
- Which critical or even cynical questions could an observer feel inclined to ask on the subject? What is our answer?
- Quotes should be one or maximum two sentences, illustrating the main policy message the text wants to communicate.

Adapt your editorial style to your target audience and check that it is consistent throughout your content.

HYPERLINKS

Hypertext is the most prominent web writing feature. It is a powerful weapon in enabling readers to go quickly to another source, or reference, but can be damaging if it encourages readers to leave before they have finished reading your message. Use sparingly.

- Limit the number of links on the web pages.
- Seven links is the maximum advisable number of links that should be grouped within every zone which is not part of the main content.
- A home page may host a total of twenty links at a maximum, except for portals.
- No more than five links maximum in the body text.

As a rule, you should group hyperlinks outside of the body text, in the margin or below the text (hyperlinks are an incentive to go astray). The wording of the hyperlinks should be explicit enough for the reader to know exactly which hyperlink targets which content. Avoid hyperlinks like "click here", "next" or the full web address of the target site.

Hyperlinks should not be too short (this may contribute to making a link unnoticed or non-explicit) or too long (this goes against "scanability"). Thus, do not hesitate to use several words as a link: a link spanning 3 to 5 words is perfectly acceptable; a link spanning a whole paragraph is heresy!

Avoid redundant links that lead to the same target content. Carefully check that the link's wording is consistent and closely related with the target page headline. Feel free to pair the link with a short descriptive text giving a more accurate understanding of the link's rationale. Note that, in HTML, you may also use the TITLE attribute of the hyperlink (an additional description which is displayed when the mouse rolls over the hyperlink).

Check that the link's meaning is clear to the reader. The difference between links, in particular contiguous ones, must be clearly and immediately understandable: e.g. on a site where a "News" link would be next to a link labelled "What's new?", you might avoid the reader being confused by rewriting them as "Press releases" and "What's new on this site?".

Use standard colours for links (blue for links and red/purple for visited links). The virtue of following familiar and commonly used rules is that most readers will be familiar with them.

Underline your links. The only exception is links that belong to the navigation interface, as long as the interface graphical design makes their interactivity obvious. Conversely, do not underline non-interactive text.

Except for some cases (large PDF files, programmes, etc.), the target window of a link should not be a new window, at least for any content belonging to the same site. Always warn an Internet user when the target content is not a web page (PDF, Word document, etc.). Where images are used as hyperlinks, always provide an alternative hypertext.

MICRO-CONTENT

A web page's content is more than just the main content with its headline and introduction (chapeau). A myriad of micro-contents may be included here and there: section descriptions, webmaster comments, alert messages, web form labels, etc.

The whole body of rules used for highlighting contents, headlines and introductions and making them concise must also be followed for micro-contents.

VISUALS

Write an alternative text for your visuals. This short descriptive piece of text may be used in HTML so that it will be displayed when the mouse rolls over the visual. Use visuals that add informational value to your textual content. Whenever possible, use a short caption that makes a link between the visual and the content focus.

BLOGGING AND PR ON THE INTERNET

Blogs (short for "web logs") are online journals, published on the Web by either an individual or by the blogging host or affiliate of an entity that shares a common interest. They are a product of the growing interactivity of the Internet in recent years. Reliable estimates of the number of bloggers are hard to find: no one really knows how many there are out there. One recent estimate (February 2008) by Technorati reckoned there were 112.8 million blogs on the Internet, but admitted that many of the 73 million written in Chinese characters may be extra to this number.

Most blogs are written by a single individual called a blogger. The majority of these self-made Internet pundits are simply Web fans who wanted to bring their own views to the online table. Others are journalists or industry insiders who wanted to create forums for expressing their opinions without editorial constraint. There is an enormous variety in the standard, knowledge and value of blogs, but in the "democracy" of the Web all can be seen as having equal validity.

There are a few blogs, however, that are collective endeavours, where a community of vocal individuals participates in providing opinion, commentary and links. In many cases these are trying to achieve a specific campaigning objective – e.g. to prevent the expansion of an airport. Some of these sites have an editor filtering through submissions. A handful also allow members to grade contributions, enabling the community to vote on whether or not a suggestion gets prominent placement or makes it on to the site at all. One of the most well-known in this category is perhaps the news site Slashdot.

Weblogs are different from traditional media. Bloggers tend to be more opinionated, niche-focused, and partisan than journalists, who (usually!) strive for editorial objectivity. Blogs encourage dialogue with readers, which is why many traditional journalists now also have blogs.

BLOGGING AS A PROMOTIONAL TOOL

The concept of "viral marketing" is now at the heart of the Internet. Just as a cold virus may quickly spread as people in a crowded train pass it on to each other, so messages can be quickly passed via the Internet on to other members of your group, fellow employees, people with similar interests, etc. Viral marketing is one of the Holy Grails of Internet marketing, though there are few hard and fast rules as to how to do it.

These days marketing campaigns target blogs because there's no question that blogs are the perfect viral marketing medium and an excellent way to promote a product or message. PR professionals can develop several blogging strategies. To do so, they can either pitch blogs directly or set up a corporate blog (internally or externally).

Marketers directly target the most influential bloggers and blog posting sites with an interest in their area and integrate their message into those venues. In many cases this will mean making direct contact by e-mail with the blog author.

For more general access to blogs, make sure your messages are getting into the news outlets that blogs tend to link to by using blogdex.com and daypop.com to find this information. You'll also want to use MediaMap, which recently announced that it will include blogs in its communications database. There you'll be able to find contact information and pitching procedure guidelines for major bloggers.

It is important to remember that while the Internet itself is constantly changing and developing, blogging is even more fast-moving, even to the point of being ephemeral. It is worth checking that the blogs you wish to connect to are still "live" – many bloggers start off with enthusiasm but give up after a few weeks.

Pitching a Blog

The most important thing a publicist can do before pitching to a blogger is to read his or her blog. It is crucial not to spam bloggers and to be aware of their likes and dislikes before you drop them a line. In general, when communicating with blogs, make sure to be open and honest about why you are contacting them by disclosing your organisational affiliation. Keep it to the point and always make sure to include a URL link to published information or an item that they might consider featuring. Do not ask bloggers to link to your client's site or latest press release. Bloggers are sensitive about becoming marketing tools for other organisations and companies, which is often the reason they began blogging in the first place. The emphasis must be on supplying useful information that can help a blogger make more of his or her blog, and attract more attention to it. Remember all bloggers dream of seeing their name in lights – somewhere!

Developing a Corporate Blog (Wiki)

Because corporate blogs can be effective marketing tools, especially in niche industries where little news is published in the mainstream press, corporate blogs

(called "Wikis") are the next big step in corporate communications. Wikis can be used in a number of ways to strengthen relationships, share knowledge, increase collaboration and improve company branding. Foremost, a Wiki can be used to strategically position the authors as industry experts and opinion leaders.

Corporate Blogs, and the numbers of people who manage and write them, are growing at a phenomenal rate. According to EuroBlog 2007, a recently published survey among 409 PR professionals from 24 European countries, the number of professionals that read and run blogs has roughly doubled in one year and commenting has increased five-fold:

- 79% read blogs (up from 37% in 2006).
- 38% run blogs (up from 21%).
- 51% comment on blogs (up from 10%).

A shortage of good professionals is seen as the biggest limiting factor (by 69% of respondents) to the further growth of corporate blogging. Concerns about return on investment are another issue.

The survey also named the biggest challenges to using blogs:

- Integrating blogs into communications strategy (88%).
- Having time to blog regularly (83%).
- Reacting to comments (83%).
- Creating content and ideas for posts (80%).

Overall the balance was highly positive, despite these problems. Blogs offer a good means of providing authentic two-way communication with customers or the public and give you an ear to the ground, enabling you to react swiftly to events.

As a general principle, a corporate blog positions you as open and friendly (rather than just leaving users of your service to interact with you via the formal website).

Corporate Blogs and Their Content

There are some quite simple rules about content. Marketing experts talk of the 5 Rs:

Read: first of all you need to create subject matter which will encourage people to visit your blog and then read what you're writing about.

Return: once they have visited for the first time, you have the opportunity to give your readers something they'll wish to read more of, hence encouraging them to return to your blog.

Reply: you are looking to encourage dialogue and communication, so you must find subjects and a style which encourages them to express an opinion about it and reply to the post.

Refer: provide your readers with enough compelling, relevant and interesting content and they'll want to recommend it to everyone.

RSS: encourage them to sign up and receive what you are writing as and when it appears, using RSS either directly or via e-mail.

Depending on your view, RSS stands either for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary. Each reflects a key use of RSS. It provides the publisher with a way for other sites to use and hence "syndicate" news and content that has been created and, for the reader, it gives a regular summary of the updated contents of a favourite site.

If you want to subscribe to and read an RSS feed, then you will need to have an RSS reader (also known as an RSS aggregator) which will either be one that you have installed on your PC or one which you access online. When you wish to subscribe to an RSS feed, you simply copy the relevant URL of the feed into the reader and everything else is done for you.

A very good way of seeing what is out there in the market is to search for blogs in your area of interest. The most popular search engine is Technorati which doubles as a Blog Search Engine and a Blog Directory. Being able to see who is linking to whom allows you to easily trace a route through to find the blogs that you are looking for. Other search engines include Google's own Blog Search Engine and Icerocket.

From close scrutiny of other blogs, you will be able to see what works and what doesn't in terms of content, design and site architecture. From Technorati you will be able to see which sites are the best linked and best visited.

Beyond that, make sure to check out PR Leap, a new company which offers search engine optimisation for press releases, now called press release optimisation (PRO). There is also an e-mail marketing potential for corporate blog content. Articles written by corporate communications professionals for the corporate blog and placed within

e-mailed newsletters can be linked to blogs, extending story life and creating a massive conversation with customers.

ADVERTISING ON THE INTERNET

As with all communications, a good understanding of your key target markets and their concerns and interests is crucial. It takes research to get solid knowledge of your target customer, but that is an essential starting point.

Following that, you can plan and implement a simple marketing campaign in the space of a single, dedicated day. A planned and well organised Internet marketing campaign with rotation through a variety of targeted sites, directories and venues is not hard to co-ordinate, does not need to cost a great deal of money and can generate traffic and sales faster than search engine submissions alone.

A five-step plan follows. By doing each of the actions, you'll end up with an effective communications campaign, creating a marketing plan that can be implemented immediately and begin delivering effective communications results.

1 - Defining Your Target Audience & Key Messages

Defining your target audience is the most important step of all. If you address the wrong audience, it does not matter how good your messages and services are. We take as an example below the process you could go through.

Action

Answer these questions as honestly as you can. In other words, don't project your expectations or hopes on them.

- Which nationalities am I targeting?
- What age bracket should my target market be? Potential undergraduate students? Graduate students? Parents? All of these?
- What level of education do they have?
- What will be making them consider HE abroad?
- How mobile are they?
- What are their hopes in terms of conditions?
- What are their fears/concerns about moving to another country?
- What sort of things will you need to address in providing them with information about the host country they will be moving to?

- Do my targets spend a lot, some or minimal time on the Internet?
- Where do my targets look for information? Both online and in physical locations – if so, which ones?
- What will be the concerns of the friends and family they will be leaving behind at home (which could influence their decision)?

Once you have this written down, it should give you a guide to what your messages should be, and give you some good ideas for the means to contact your target market.

You should now be in a position to create some core messages which address the interests and concerns of your audience (in terms of the questions posed above). Draw these up in a clear and simple form which can be used across a number of sites. Clarity and repetition of messages is important with the Internet. You cannot afford to contradict a message on one site with a different message on another.

2 - Choosing Your Target Sites For Advertisements

The next question is where you are going to post your advertisements. A co-ordinated effort across several sites and venues commonly frequented by your audience is the most effective marketing campaign. If you are seen in several places your visibility and retained message is much stronger. Complementary sites – to which you are linked – will help cross-promote your services to your visitors, by providing reinforcement of your message.

When considering a site or newsletter, look at factors such as traffic, search engine placement, external linking (how many places link to it), quality of current advertisements and types of messages being presented. The owner of the site should be able to provide you with useful numbers, including demographics, on the traffic visiting the site. Two issues are crucial for you – are visitors to the site the right ones in terms of your target audiences? And how many of them are there? Is it enough to justify the budget you will spend? You can take comfort from the fact that most Internet advertising is relatively cheap compared to other sources. Against this is the uncomfortable truth that take-up is low – one recent survey suggested that only 1 in 200 visitors clicked on advertising banners. These are all clues by which you can measure a best fit of your message to the traffic of the site.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising – where you pay the site owner for every person that clicks on your advertisement – is another possibility for your Internet marketing campaign but can be daunting for someone new to this form. If you are new to PPC,

stick to places that allow you to set limits on daily expenditure. Google is a good example. This will also help you to experiment and determine the most effective keywords by paying close attention to the statistics of the PPC campaign.

Conversion rates are an important measuring tool. There is no benefit for people clicking through to your site if they go no further.

Even more than most communications exercises in conventional media, Internet marketing needs close monitoring to tell you what is working and what is not. Fortunately, unlike TV or press advertising, changing your message or style of getting it across is cheap and simple on the Internet. Don't hesitate to change or modify your advertisements if needed. This is a process in constant motion until you find the best fit. Remember too, an advertisement may work superbly in one place but not in another.

Action

Create a spreadsheet or document in which you enter all the sites and venues that are a consideration in your Internet marketing campaign. Add to the layout all the information you can get about the demographics, visitor traffic, etc. of the various sites and the proposed cost. This should enable you to make a decision on which sites offer value for money.

3 – Budget

While some think this should be the first step, realistically it is much easier to create the budget for your marketing plan when you have a good idea of the costs and possibilities involved. That can only be done once you've worked out your targets, and looked at potential ways of reaching them. A warning – although Internet advertising is still relatively cheap, it can be quite random in the targets it hits (not very useful to you) and can take up a lot of management time and effort.

You probably already have a figure in mind of how much you can spend, so go back to your information budget and total up the costs of all the advertisements you'd like to do. The chances are that total will exceed your overall spending limit.

Action

Then go through that list and prioritise the advertisements in terms of where you think you'll get the most exposure – in terms of reaching your target audience – and

results that fit within your budget. Move the others onto a holding list. As the advertisements start to yield results you can always go back and expand your marketing campaign from the holding list.

If you are engaged in pay-per-click advertising, check in daily for the first week or so and monitor your results to ensure you are paying for useful results.

Don't forget to consider advertisement swaps and bartering as part of your payment and marketing budget. Many sites will swap newsletter or banner advertisements for similar placement on your site. It never hurts to ask, and can reduce costs.

4 – Creating Your Content

Internet marketing works best when you focus only on one or two clear messages. You should by now have a clear and simple set of messages to be directed at your target audience.

Always ask yourself, "What am I offering?" Remember the old marketing saying that you should always sell "benefits not features". You are selling something – education – that registers at the emotional as well as the practical level.

Action

Create a text advertisement for each item in your Internet marketing campaign, making sure to hit at least one to three key emotional words in the text. Text advertisements are typically 60 characters wide by 3, 5, 7 or 10 lines long.

Once you have your text advertisements, go through your banner inventory. Do you need to update them with a specific message directed at the particular audience that will use the site? Does every image have an appropriate ALT tag? Is the graphic properly optimised for size (under 20-50kb) and resolution (72dpi)?

5 – Tracking & Monitoring

Tracking and reacting to your campaign's successes are critical in maintaining an effective marketing campaign. From your website statistics to PPC numbers, there are many ways to determine what is working and what isn't. By paying attention you'll learn a great deal about your advertisements and how to hone them for best results in the future.

Study in Europe

Action

On a daily basis for the first two weeks, review the results of your various advertisements. Write them up and look for any trends or patterns. Which ones are performing, where and why? If some aren't working, replace them with others that are or try another from your holding list. Once you settle into a pattern of review and management you'll know better how often you need to monitor your marketing campaign.

Be prepared to change and innovate on the basis of what you can see happening. Remember, the Internet is a fast changing world – what works one week may not work the next, and success goes to those who spot innovation and respond to it quickly.

OTHER FORMS OF INTERNET MARKETING

Social Networking Sites

Social networking websites focus on the building and verifying of online social networks for communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others, and which necessitates the use of software.

Most services are primarily web based and provide a collection of various ways for users to interact, such as chat, messaging, e-mail, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging, discussion groups, and so on.

Chat Rooms

A chat room is a term used primarily by mass media to describe any technology ranging from real-time online chat to instant messaging and online forums to fully immersive graphical social environments. Online chat is a way of communicating by sending text messages to people in the same chat room in real-time. The oldest form of true chat rooms is the text-based variety. The popularity of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) chat rooms has waned over the years, and IRC's popularity has rapidly given way to instant messaging. There are also graphical user interface (GUI) text-based chat rooms which allow users to select an identifying icon and modify the look of their chat environment.

Visual chat rooms (Active Worlds, Habbo Hotel, Chatablanca, There, etc.) add graphics to the chat experience, in either 2D or 3D (employing virtual reality technology).

Some visual chat rooms also incorporate audio and video communications, so that users may actually see and hear each other. However, some find these types of environments cumbersome to use and actually an impediment to chatting.

YouTube

YouTube was created in 2005 as a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. The service uses Adobe Flash technology to display a wide variety of video content, including movie clips, TV clips and music videos, as well as amateur content such as videoblogging and short original videos.

Unregistered users can watch most videos on the site, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos. Related videos, determined by title and tags, appear onscreen to the right of a given video. In YouTube's second year, functions were added to enhance user ability to post video "responses" and subscribe to content feeds.

STUDY IN EUROPE
PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

USE OF THE LOGO

The logo is designed to give a common identity to any communication about Study in Europe. It is designed for use on posters, brochures, leaflets, flyers, letterheads and all other printed material. Using the logo in a consistent manner on any communications material is important, both in creating a clear design message and in conveying the values of European HE.

The logo should not be used on the Study in Europe website or on any materials produced under the GPP unless the European Commission has given its explicit agreement. It should be treated as a complete element and resized proportionally.

Word Mark

Picture Mark

EXCLUSION ZONE

X/6 – height

X – space

X/6 – width

To enhance the logo design, an exclusion zone has been created which must always be respected. The zone consists of the areas surrounding the picture mark and the word mark. This area must be kept free of all other graphical elements.

COLOURS

EU – blue	c100 m80 y0 k0	r0 g51 b153	PAT Reflex Blue
EU – yellow	c0 m0 y100 k0	r255 g204 b0	Yellow 012

INCORRECT USE OF LOGO

Picture mark without wording.
This is not allowed.

Logo on the diagonal (in any direction).
This is not allowed.

Wording without picture mark.
This is not allowed.

Logo on images.
This is not allowed.

PIXEL VERSION

Largest logo size
210x210mm

210 mm

Smallest logo size
40x23mm

40 mm

To make sure that the logo character (especially the gradient in the picture mark itself and the fabric in the gradient) stays sufficient in terms of resolution the pixel logo should only be used up to a size of 210 mm. If it is nessesary to place a bigger logo in layouts, the vectorised version has to be put in (please see next page).
To make sure that all logo elements can be seen/read properly the logo should have a width of at least 40 mm.

Study in Europe

VECTORISED VERSION

In case of large print formats (such as city light posters or bill boards) the vectorised logo version should be used if the logo has to be shown larger than 210 mm (width). Furthermore the vectorised logo can be used for different methods of production such as plot-stickers or engravings.

Study in Europe

GREYSCALE

This version of the logo should be used in greyscale production.

Auditorium
Black

Star
40% black

Word Mark
Black

THE STUDY IN EUROPE WEBSITE

Among the questions most asked by potential students when they visit HE fairs is "Where can I find out more?" With more than four thousand higher education institutions in Europe to choose from, they face a sometimes bewildering selection. Which country should they go to? Which university should they choose? What do they need before they leave? What will happen when they arrive?

The Study in Europe website at **http://www.study-in-europe.org** has been developed to answer just these sorts of enquires. It provides up-to-date information on more than thirty European countries, their universities and what it takes to live and study in them.

The site is easy to navigate and is organised under five main headings:

- Why study in Europe?
- Courses and Programmes
- European Higher Education
- Application Guide
- Living in Europe

WHY STUDY IN EUROPE?

For students who are making the decision of whether to come to Europe or look elsewhere, this section provides three compelling sets of reasons to choose a European higher education: Quality, Diversity and Opportunity.

"Quality" means excellence of teaching with value for money, and a lasting legacy that they can take with them into the workplace.

"Diversity" because Europe offers unparalleled choice: tradition and innovation go hand-in-hand in a multicultural environment.

"Opportunity" because European HE is recognised around the world. It offers a springboard for travel during the programme of study itself and highly portable skills for the years to follow.

Study in Europe

COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

In practical terms, this section sets out the three stages to go through in choosing a course

- Prioritise your requirements
- Gather information
- Search and find

For those who want to find a specific course, there is a link to the Ploteus search engine – the Portal on Learning Opportunities Throughout the European Space.

EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

A set of country guides accessed by a drop-down menu with details of the various types of higher education institutions and curriculum structures on offer.

There is also a section explaining the Bologna Process, plus useful links to Europe-wide HE sites and international organisations which offer bursaries.

APPLICATION GUIDE

This section contains practical details on the process of applying to study in Europe. Potential students can find out about the application, visa and residency requirements and the funding possibilities that exist. Once again, there is an overview and a set of country-by-country guides accessed via a drop-down menu.

LIVING IN EUROPE

The basics on where students will be living: details of accommodation on and off campus along with useful links, all organised on a country-by-country basis.