

Marketing Strategy

The SUS Executive Officer has been working over the past few months to produce a marketing strategy for SUS.

Following a successful workshop at the SUS conference where members were asked how they thought SUS should market for the future, what plans needed to be put in place to deliver on the objectives, and what action should be taken, the SUS Executive Officer has digested all feedback from the session in order to help with compiling the strategy.

The strategy document is attached below for Exec's comment. Each target area contains an action plan with specific deliverables and timescales for implementation.

SUS Executive is asked to:

Item
➤ Offer comment on the SUS Marketing Strategy



SUS Marketing Strategy

2008-09

1. Executive Summary

Scottish Universities Sport (SUS) is a dynamic network of elected students, University staff and volunteers who work in partnership to provide high quality sport and physical activity opportunities within Scotland's Higher Education sector. SUS aims to deliver first-rate events in over 35 sports, to champion and encourage physical activity, to develop skills of volunteers and staff, to promote professional excellence and to advocate the role of the sector within Scottish Sport.

Sixteen higher education institutions are in membership of SUS and staff and students at these Universities are part of the target market of the organisation. Externally SUS works in partnership with a number of other organisations including BUCS and Sportscotland as key funding partners.

SUS faces a threat from increasing competition for resources and the constant fight against the trend of an unfit nation. However it is in an ideal position with a good reputation and well motivated staff (paid and voluntary). There are also potential sponsorship and development opportunities through enhanced links with external organisations.

Although there has been no direct marketing strategy up until now SUS has still been actively marketing over the last three years in the following areas: branding; website; communication; and events.

A marketing strategy has been produced in order to focus on four objectives: maintain and enhance position as organisation responsible for Scottish HE Sport and Physical Activity; strengthen external relationships and develop new ones; improve communication; and improve members' sense of involvement with and commitment to SUS.

In order to deliver on the objectives the following sub-sections have been expanded: Brand Development and Visual Identity; External & Internal Publications; Web Development; Media Liaison; Stakeholder Liaison; Events & Merchandise; and Market Research.

Each section finishes with an implementation plan incorporating a timeline for achievement of each element and details of the system for control and review.

Business Overview

Background

Scottish Universities Sport (SUS) was set up in June 2005 with the aim of fostering and promoting Sport and Physical Activity in the HE Sector in Scotland. Much progress has already been made by the organisation during its short life.

As SUS was the coming together of two organisations that existed previously the vision for SUS was shaped from what had gone before.

However in forming this new organisation the remit expanded to incorporate more than had been on offer before.

Aims

SUS is committed to being a partnership between Scottish Universities, relevant staff, students and volunteers across the HE sector, with the aims of assuring quality in the sporting / physical activity programme in Higher Education in Scotland and continually developing and improving that programme.

Accordingly 4 goals have been established to meet our aim:

- to be active and pro-active in promoting sport and physical activity and its benefits,
- to provide competitive sports on a range of levels for Scotland's young people in our Universities and Colleges,
- to be innovative, flexible and dynamic in our working arrangements within the sector
- to embrace partnership working with national / local and statutory / voluntary organisations UK wide.

Market

SUS works with and for a number of groups:

- Students (both generally and those working as Presidents)
- Staff in Universities (from several backgrounds)
- Sports Departments
- Sports Unions
- Academics
- Volunteers - SDCs / Event People etc
- FE Colleges (one we are only starting out with - DMcD)
- External Groups - important to push the Uni agenda forward at a national level
- Sportscotland
- BUSA / UCS
- Scottish Sports Association - SGBs
- Physical Activity and Health agencies
- Scottish Executive / Parliament
- Media - not a group we have successfully managed to target yet but one for the future.

These groups currently learn about SUS through emails, Website, word of mouth and through promotion at events and through Institutions.

Competitors

Although SUS has no direct business competitor there are a number of ways that we find ourselves in competition for provision and services.

- Compete with other pastimes to get people active - e.g. non-sporting, alcohol
- Compete with other clubs to have people participate at University level - local sports clubs attracting students to compete for them
- Competition for funding from other agencies
- Competition from BUCS at UK level - professional development of staff

So how is SUS making a difference?

- We are a relatively new organisation that has brought competition, physical activity and professional development under one umbrella
- Shaping stronger organisations - building smaller institutions
- Providing a rich network - sharing best practice etc
- Speaking with a united voice - SUS can speak on behalf of all Scottish HE at high level
- Working to long term goals & strategies - now preparing a 4 year development plan for Scottish HE
- Providing more (and better) opportunities - for students, clubs, NGB liaison
- Making a telling contribution to national effort - How to feed into national picture of Scottish Sport Development

✚ PEST Analysis

<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Administration • Focus on sporting legacy (London 2012/Glasgow 2014) • Initiatives concerning health and fitness • Training and support for key workers 	<p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenced by government priorities on resource allocation to sport • Growing Economy – increased consumer spending especially on leisure • Steady Interest Rates
<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased numbers attending universities • Growing Health Consciousness • Increase in sports participation – especially among women • Critical attitude to quality of leisure provision – high expectations 	<p>Technological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancement of Internet Technology • Technological Development of equipment for health and fitness • Cutting edge technology in the provision of applied sports science and sports medicine support

✚ SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good reputation and links with all Scottish HE institutions • Well motivated staff • Wide range of activities • Strong Brand 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited recognition at National Level • Small staffing team – high dependence on volunteers • Lack of media promotion for University sport • Reliance on Membership Income/ Sponsorship
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding market through health agenda • Sponsorship and grants available • Develop through enhanced links with external organisations • Widen membership through FE links 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes at UK level may affect SUS' operation • Increasing competition for resources • Trend towards unhealthy nation • Limitations on paid staff support will constrain growth

Previous Marketing Methods

Branding

- When SUS started as a new organisation it was important to quickly establish a logo that would be recognised. The requirement was for the identity to be clean, modern and easily identifiable and our strapline was incorporated in order to further enhance our vision
- We have different versions of the logo for all different sports (35 in total) and guidelines for how our logo should be used.
- The logo is carried through all that we produce: we have a range of banners etc that can be used at events as well as a merchandise range that anybody can buy.

Website

- Once we had an established logo and strapline the next step was to produce a website. It was important that the website would operate as a promotional tool for SUS and also as an information hub for the sector.
- The site has background information about SUS and all our activities as well as regularly updated news and events sections. There is also a resources section where policies, minutes and other information is held. The site also incorporates a full database of contact information for people within the Universities and clubs.
- The future of the site is to be able to complete all event entry online which will lead to easier administration.

Communication

- As with any organisation communication is integral to the working of SUS. As we now live in an electronic age most of our internal communication is completed through email and using our website. On a daily basis news items are added to the site and information added to the events list. At present important news has been emailed round to the SUS membership. However now we are in the process of adding an E newsletter to the website which will allow members to sign up to receive a fortnightly email containing news headlines.
- Our physical activity committee prepare quarterly newsletters and flyers which are placed on the website to download. Links are then emailed round to interested parties.
- Word of mouth is important for spreading the SUS message as new members of staff hear about SUS activity from existing members. SUS hosts several networking events throughout the

year where members can share best practice and interact with colleagues from other institutions.

- Where a good relationship exists with SGBs e.g. Rugby, Volleyball etc University activity is promoted through the governing body websites through news stories and features.
- SUS is often consulted at high level policy matters which necessitates the production of papers and written responses, e.g. active students

Conference

- Annual network event where around 150 delegates from around Scotland come together to share knowledge over two-days. We organise the content: speakers etc which allows the opportunity to showcase the best of what is going on in Scottish HE sport and investigate developments.
- Delegates come from a wide variety of backgrounds from students to staff and key personnel from external partners. The whole conference is branded up from start to finish.
- An important part of the conference is the branding of delegate packs and giveaways. Last year saw SUS flip flops and sweatbands in the branded bags as well as conference gifts of mugs, MP3 players and data sticks. We have also expanded into pens and stickers which can be given away at this and similar events.

Other Events

- SUS covers over 90 events per year and most of these are sporting events - cups, leagues, championships. However the SUS Physical Activity Committee also runs some of their own events including an annual active age festival. Also throughout the year smaller training events are held for specific groups of the SUS membership. SUS have banners that can be used inside or outside at these events in order to further promote the SUS brand.
- SUS has a full merchandise range of leisurewear which complements a whole host of playing kit for almost all SUS sports. This means that when our teams or players compete against other teams we are presenting a united front. All kit carries the same branding of the SUS logo on the breast and the SUS Swoosh on the back.

2. Goals

Why a marketing strategy?

- To help SUS maintain and enhance its position locally, regionally and nationally as the organisation responsible for HE Sport and Physical Activity
- Strengthen SUS' external relationships and develop new ones
- Improve Communication
- Improve members sense of involvement with and commitment to SUS
- Objectives:
 - Strengthen SUS' distinctive identity
 - Raise SUS profile
 - Improve image and reputation
 - Improve links between SUS and stakeholders
 - Make links with groups/individuals not currently engaged with SUS
 - Underpin work that is underway to increase participation, improve competition and enhance innovation throughout the sector

3. Marketing Strategies

Next Steps?

- Achieving the objectives above will require action in the following areas:
 - Brand Development and Visual Identity
 - External & Internal Publications
 - Web Development
 - Media Liaison
 - Stakeholder Liaison
 - Events & Merchandise
 - Market Research

4. Implementation Tactics

Brand Development and Visual Identity

Overview

The notion of 'branding' may be more familiar in the commercial world than in higher education, but it is a significant element of this strategy. It means being clear about SUS' essential qualities - the characteristics, values and aspirations that set us apart and constitute our central 'offer'. It is important to be able to call upon a simple distillation of what the organisation stands for - a concept that can be communicated easily and regularly by a variety of means, and which almost everyone in the organisation recognises as true.

SUS' visual identity should be part of the brand, and a reinforcement of it. Thus the 'look and feel' of SUS' publications, website, signs and merchandise should be consistent with the brand and with each other.

Current Position

SUS is beginning to present itself internally and externally in a way that more consistently reflects and reinforces its essential qualities and ambitions.

SUS has an aim and goals which are an accessible summary of the organisation's values and aspirations. The SUS business plan will flesh these out and describe how they will be delivered. This will then form the basis on which brand development and associated communications and marketing activity can be progressed.

In terms of visual identity SUS has a logo and corporate style that reflects the brand. It can be reproduced easily and economically in many contexts, from headed notepaper and website to banners and merchandise. The logo also includes the SUS strapline 'active, competitive, innovative' which functions as a contemporary motto for the organisation.

Making Further Improvements

It is recommended that a set of straightforward statements be adopted as an expression of the brand identity. The statements would help to distinguish SUS from its competitors. These statements can also be used to convey something of SUS' distinctiveness when promoting itself to potential sources of funding and to opinion-formers in Scotland and further a field.

For appropriate exhibitions, publications and the web, the SUS strapline or key statements should be accompanied by high-quality photographs. Together, the pictures would constitute a portfolio of powerful images that would bear repetition and reinforce the brand. They would also be important in reflecting SUS' values, including equality of opportunity. SUS should establish a strong link with SUSPhoto for the delivery of this service.

The intention is that over time, the essential characteristics of the organisation will be communicated to a variety of audiences in an accurate, unforced way. The motto, the core idea, the set of key statements and the images would reinforce one another and build a strong group of impressions reflecting an important reality about the organisation.

The key elements of the identity should continue to be communicated internally and employed in publications, on stationary, on signage, on merchandise and on the web etc. The presumption should be that no alternatives are used without appropriate authority.

Individual institutions should be encouraged to embrace SUS branding and where practicable incorporate SUS signage at appropriate venues (e.g. Sports Union offices, gym receptions, playing fields etc.). Where possible it may be useful to have SUS staff visit institutions to spread the SUS message (e.g. at Freshers' Fairs or other events).

Broad Targets	Specific Deliverables	Prime Responsibility	Complete by / When	Dependencies / Risks
Define SUS's brand values more closely	Production of key statements about SUS	JS/FA/SF	31 st Dec 2008	
Develop portfolio of powerful images to reinforce brand	Define partnership agreement with SUSPhoto.com	JS/FA/SF	Sept 2008	
Apply the visual identity consistently	Guidelines and templates for publications, signs, etc.	JS	Ongoing	
Extend reach of the SUS brand	Encourage institutions to embrace SUS branding/signage	JS/FA/SF/Admin	July 2009	Notoriously difficult to achieve in a large, diverse organisation

Web Development

Overview

Every organisation's communications are being revolutionised by email and the web, but for most - including SUS - there is a gap between what the technology can do and the use to which it is actually put. This is partly to do with the speed at which the technology is moving and partly to do with levels of investment and staff training.

There is no realistic alternative to trying to keep up with web developments. For most 17-24 year-olds the ability to find out about things and communicate electronically is fundamental. So failure on behalf of SUS to create an attractive web environment giving ready access to key information and processes via logical routes will be progressively more damaging to SUS' interests.

Current Position

SUS' website is probably as good (or bad) as those of many other sporting organisations. The website offers an information hub for resources, news, events and contact information.

A difficulty with the SUS website is that it is reliant on members of the core SUS staff to keep material up-to-date. This is a hugely time-consuming task and does require a degree of specialist knowledge. Until this can be resolved there is a danger that the website will become a static rather than a dynamic resource.

SUS is dependent on news and events items being sent through from Sport Development Coordinators and from universities for posting on the site. This proves a challenge for SUS staff to pursue relevant and interesting content.

Reciprocal links with the SUS website are not utilised to full potential. Although SUS has links to all Universities department and unions and National Governing Bodies the majority of these are not reciprocated.

Making Further Improvements

A priority is to make practical improvements to those parts of the website that are most important to the majority of users and on which SUS's reputation depends most heavily. This will include making sure the news; contacts and events sections are kept fresh and up-to-date. Also the development of an e-newsletter must be finalised in order to be able to reach a wider audience on a more regular basis. This could also include advertising spaces for potential sponsors and partners.

Efforts must be directed to enhance links between the SUS website and others. A survey of missing links should be carried out and then addressed to encourage all University departments/ unions; National Governing Bodies and other relevant organisations to include the SUS logo and link to the SUS site.

The use of social networking sites as a means of promoting the organisation to its target markets should be investigated. Sites such as Facebook and Bebo are readily used by students and this may be a means for SUS to reach a wider audience and distribute its message.

Further refinement of the website should be constantly reviewed and when funds allow additional elements can be incorporated into the site such as a fixtures/results service or a forum.

Broad Targets	Specific Deliverables	Prime Responsibility	Complete by / When	Dependencies / Risks
Create one of the best corporate web domains in Scottish Sport	Ensure website is kept fresh with stories and events	Admin	Ongoing	Requires substantial input from Unis and SDCs
	Finalise development of SUS e-newsletter	JS	Sept 2008	
	Encourage links to SUS site with Universities; NGBs and other relevant organisations	Admin	31 st Dec 2008	Notoriously difficult to achieve with lots of parties involved
	Investigate use of social networking sites to further promote SUS	JS/PDC	31 st July 2009	
	Constant review of site to identify areas for future development	PDC/JS	ongoing	

External & Internal Publications

Overview

Despite the increasing dominance of the web, CDs and DVDs, printed material will continue to be an essential communications tool. The issue for the future is the integration of printed materials and electronic formats. 'Seamless' publishing in a variety of media will be the order of the day.

SUS' documents are largely corporate in nature such as policies, business plans and annual reports. However other documents are also produced to support particular programmes or initiatives. Publications are not only an initial source of hard information but also a way of gaining an impression of SUS' character and values.

Such publications present an opportunity to promote and strengthen SUS' brand and for everyone to benefit through association with that brand. But as well as reinforcing key messages and displaying a strong visual identity, documents need to be clear, concise, sensitively written and (unless they are purely 'duty' or reference documents) interesting if they are to make a positive impact.

Current Position

Many of SUS' existing corporate publications are of a high standard. However there are opportunities to make adjustments that would result in a greater range of material reflecting different styles.

There are still some 'missing' publications in the corporate repertoire. There has not previously been a readily digestible version of the SUS Strategic Plan to help internal and external audiences discern easily the path that SUS is following.

The distribution of some SUS documents - the Annual Report and Audit data, for example - needs consideration. At present, these publications have limited external distribution. Potentially they could serve as a flagship for SUS among opinion-formers at local and national levels. There is little likelihood that they would be read thoroughly by all the recipients, but it could nevertheless create a positive impression and demonstrate that SUS is proud of its achievements, outward looking and keen to communicate.

Making Further Improvements

In order to secure further improvements to publications, there needs to be a proper evaluation of content and appearance each time they come up for renewal. This exercise needs to include an analysis of the publications' functions and target audiences.

As part of an on-going reassessment of SUS' key messages and audiences, it is necessary to identify those gaps which would best be filled by publications. For example, all SUS members should be issued with a summary of the SUS key statements which could be in the form of a one-page strategic plan. For a wide range of general uses (e.g. for distribution at Freshers' Fairs and to school leavers/colleges) there is a place for an introductory leaflet about SUS and the current flyer may need to be refined.

SUS should also investigate whether it is possible for the SUS logo and information to be placed in University prospectuses in order to attract students and inform them about SUS before they even arrive in Scotland.

The quality and range of photographs available to illustrate SUS publications needs to be sustained. This includes images that would help convey SUS' commitment to equality of opportunity.

The database of key stakeholders and opinion-formers needs to be refined so that appropriate publications can be targeted more carefully and distributed more widely and so work harder for SUS' reputation.

In the case of internal and external publications, some straightforward opinion research should be carried out to help assess the impact of the revamped documents and point the way to further improvements. This has proved useful in the past and should be undertaken regularly to measure progress over time.

Broad Targets	Specific Deliverables	Prime Responsibility	Complete by / When	Dependencies / Risks
Continue the improvement in the quality, range and distribution of the main corporate external and internal publications	Fortnightly issues of SUS E-News	Admin	ongoing	Reliant on collaboration with universities
	Quarterly issues of SUSPAC Newsletter & Flyers	SUSPAC	ongoing	
	Annual Report	FA/JS/SF	Oct 2008	
	Strategic Plan	JS/FA/SF	Sept 2008	
	Introductory leaflet about SUS	PDC	31 st July 2009	
	Investigate possibility of SUS logo in University Prospectuses	Admin / JS	31 st July 2009	
Improve distribution of key publications to stakeholders and opinion-formers	Refine database of key stakeholders / opinion-formers	Admin / JS	31 st Dec 2008	
Develop portfolio of powerful images	More extensive, accessible and manageable image library	SUSPhoto	ongoing	Requires substantial input from SUSPhoto

Media Liaison

Overview

A constructive relationship with the mainstream media at local and national levels is vital for a number of reasons:

1. a positive media profile is important in building SUS' image and reputation as a leading body for university sport and physical activity in Scotland and in so creating a climate favourable to many of SUS' aspirations - including raising income;
2. constructive media coverage at the local level helps to sustain close relationships with host cities and other key partners;
3. positive media publicity is an important form of recognition for distinguished and interesting work, and can boost the morale of those directly responsible and the whole SUS community.

By the same token, a failure to engage positively with the media can lead to missed opportunities, invite suspicion and encourage the view that SUS is remote and unaccountable.

The management of relationships with the media is a skilled business and the needs, *modus operandi* and impact of the media have to be understood if opportunities are to be grasped and pitfalls avoided.

Current Position

The current levels of media liaison remain reactive rather than proactive, and the level of resources specifically allocated to this function is low. Some individual sports, recognising the value of positive relations with the media, have actively cultivated their own, direct links with the media or simply allowed them to evolve (e.g. cross country / rugby). However on the whole links between SUS and the media have been poor.

The output of positive stories and feature ideas and the profile of the SUS is becoming higher, especially locally. However progress of this kind needs to continue and accelerate if SUS is to be seen as open and dynamic and to get as much credit as possible for its achievements. At present, there is no doubt that positive news and feature opportunities are still being missed due to the resource shortage. In particular, there is insufficient targeting of key journalists, especially at the national levels.

Making Further Improvements

The first step to advance a link between SUS and the media is the need to identify a database of contacts for journalists, press agencies and other relevant parties. Once this has been completed relationships need to be built with these key people (already started with In the Winning Zone).

A basic improvement would be to introduce brief but regular press releases being sent out to the database of media contacts on a proactive basis. These could include results, event notifications and other items of news. Thought needs to be given to appropriate media (type and level) to be targeted aligned to specific target markets that are prioritised.

As well as more proactive day-to-day media liaison, there is scope to introduce a stronger element of strategic planning. This would help to ensure that limited resources were used to best effect and avoid an over-

concentration on stories which are peripheral to SUS' interests and unlikely to have more than a marginal impact on its reputation. It would also mean that key, up-to-date messages about SUS were readily available to its spokespeople and could thus be incorporated into its dialogue with the media at any time.

The process of identifying more stories and of planning strategically could take a step forward with the appointment of a Press Officer for SUS. This could be in the form of a student internship or if funds were available a paid position. Until this is a possibility this area of work will be included in the remit of the Administrative Assistant.

This approach could be underpinned by stronger communication between SUS and institutions. Each University could have a link person who would feed story and feature ideas to the SUS Office (for internal as well as external use), and to whom the latter could turn for help (for example, in formulating a rapid response within a tight media deadline). These arrangements would be in addition to on-going, day-to-day contact between particular volunteers (SDCs) and the SUS Office whenever stories emerged or responses were required.

A 'directory of experts' who are willing to make authoritative comments and to give interviews on key topics regarding SUS activity would help raise SUS' profile and ensure that it is seen as engaged with the issues of the day. The Executive Council should revisit the possibility of having a SUS Champion/Ambassador to promote the message as well as a hall of fame of past graduates who have been successful in sport.

Broad Targets	Specific Deliverables	Prime Responsibility	Complete by / When	Dependencies / Risks
Strengthen relationships with and service to journalists	a) Develop database of key contacts b) Start building relationships with these individuals	Admin JS	Sept 2008 July 2009	Requires co-operation from press agencies and journalists
Continue the improvement in the output and targeting of positive news and feature stories	a) More positive coverage, including locally and nationally b) Develop media strategic plan	SUS Office JS/PDC	ongoing July 2009	Dependent on buy in from press
Identify individuals to carry out work on SUS' behalf	a) Option of press officer b) Directory of experts c) Ambassador/ Champion	Exec Exec Exec	July 2009 Dec 2008 July 2009	
Encourage and support students who are willing to work with the media on SUS' behalf	a) Identify key individuals b) 'Media clinics/training' at Unis	Admin JS	Dec 2008 July 2009	Reliant on collaboration with universities

✚ Stakeholder Liaison

Overview

One way of viewing SUS is as a set of internal relationships at the hub of a network of external ones. The quality of the relationships with and between the key stakeholders is one determinant of individual and collective success. Those relationships are built largely on effective communication.

It is useful to identify SUS' key 'stakeholders':

Internal	External
SUS Staff University Staff (Dept / Union) Students SUS Volunteers	<i>Funding bodies, and sponsors</i> <i>Public sector</i> - central & local government - Sportscotland - SSA & NGBs <i>Specialist professional bodies</i> <i>Education sector</i> - schools and FE colleges - other universities - BUCS <i>Health sector</i> <i>Business sector</i> - industrial and commercial partners <i>Local and regional partnerships</i> <i>International organisations</i>

Current Position

Many of SUS' stakeholder relationships are already being actively nurtured. Links with university staff, Sportscotland, and BUCS are obvious examples - SUS has well-established mechanisms for co-ordinating these connections. Liaison with Government and other professional organisations is already seen as fundamentally important. Other relationships are governed to a greater or lesser extent (e.g. some of the links with governing bodies and further education).

However, there is a case for greater consistency of branding and message and for fresh attempts at strengthening communication with the following groups of stakeholders:

- internal stakeholders: students in particular;
- national governing bodies;
- business sector including potential sponsors;
- further education;
- health-based organisations and enterprises.

The outcomes could be more unity of purpose across the organisation, improved funding potential, a greater sense of engagement with NGBs, sponsors, FE and the health sector, and an enhanced reputation.

Making Further Improvements

Communication is necessary to enhance Scottish Universities Sport's reputation. Effective communication will help to establish and maintain

mutually beneficial dialogue and understanding between SUS and its key stakeholders both internally and externally.

DRIP

The key purpose of communication to all stakeholders can be summarised with the acronym DRIP (Differentiate, Remind, Inform, Persuade).

SUS needs to:

- **Differentiate** its services from other possible providers and this can be achieved by continuing to enhance its reputation in the key areas which affect its reputation. SUS needs to develop consistent, strong and memorable branding which clearly identifies SUS and its values and aspirations.
- **Remind** stakeholders of many relevant factors - SUS' key messages, key issues and new priorities. Also to remind them of the benefits of dealing with SUS and using its services.
- **Inform** stakeholders of key developments and issues by providing effective, timely, easy to understand, relevant, accessible information through a range of suitable channels.
- **Persuade** stakeholders of the desirability of entering into a mutually beneficial relationship, by establishing two-way communication, encouraging consultation and feedback and changing behaviour and attitudes where relevant. Stakeholders must know what SUS believes in and its strategic intent.

As far as internal stakeholders are concerned there may be the requirement for further training of volunteers such as those serving as Sports Development Coordinators or those working within the SUS committees. Students in particular need to be made aware and appreciate the work that SUS is completing on a day-to-day basis so thought should be given to particular ways to engage the student population.

E-news, electronic discussion boards and web-based question-and-answer sessions could all be used to give members an opportunity to contribute to SUS policy- and decision-making instead of merely hearing about them. Together with a well-embedded system of team meetings and events to consider issues these initiatives should help to establish a 'virtuous circle' of communication. Stakeholders must also be encouraged to share the SUS message widely (e.g. directors and presidents to promote at their own institution; SDCs with sports clubs and NGBS).

The following might be useful ways of developing and maintaining constructive liaison on a wider basis with NGBs:

- ensuring that the key figures receive relevant corporate publications (e.g. the Annual Report);
- providing them with more specific bulletins and updates as opportunities arise;
- holding regular (at least annual) working meetings with them to exchange information and ideas, seek their views and explore areas of common concern;

- involving them in the life of SUS by inviting them to appropriate events (as already happens, for example, the SUS Conference).

SUS must promote the high quality sport and activity that is taking place to stimulate the interest of influential people and external stakeholders should be made aware of opportunities for partnership working. Further utilisation of the SUS Audit statistics would prove useful in this area. Also highlighting recognition for representative teams' achievements can be attractive to potential sponsors. Additional work in this area is needed to develop potential sponsorship packages.

Further education is the fourth group of stakeholders with whom links could profitably be closer. A helpful start has been made with this group through the representative on the Executive Council however in order to progress as an organisation this is an area that SUS needs to tap into further. A package of associate membership for the organisation should be developed to fit the needs of this group and further encouragement for integration into SUS activities is essential.

The final stakeholder group identified above was health-based organisations and enterprises. Most of the proposals regarding NGBs above apply to this group as well. Thus, for example, SUS events such as SUSPAC workshops are an opportunity to engage with these organisations on issues of common concern, including equal opportunities. SUS should try to ensure that there is a SUS rep on all relevant groups and committees where possible.

Broad Targets	Specific Deliverables	Prime Responsibility	Complete by / When	Dependencies / Risks
Strengthen internal communications	a) Improved liaison with staff and students	JS	Ongoing	
	b) Improved liaison with Sports development coordinators	SF	Ongoing	
	c) Practical support /training for key volunteers	JS/SF/PDC	July 2009	
Promote positive relationship with national governing bodies	a) Providing info about SUS / news	SF/Admin	Ongoing	Reliant on collaboration with national governing bodies
	b) Holding regular meetings	SF/Comps	Annual	
	c) Inviting to relevant events	JS/Admin	Ongoing	
Promote positive relationship with the business sector as well as potential sponsors	a) Providing info about SUS / news	JS	Ongoing	
	b) Further work needed to develop sponsorship packages	JS/Exec	July 2009	
Promote positive relationship with the further education sector	a) Further integration with this group into SUS operations	JS/SF/FA	July 2009	Notoriously difficult to achieve with lots of parties involved
	b) Development of a associate member package	SF/JS	Dec 2008	
Promote positive relationship with the health-based organisations and enterprises	a) Providing info about SUS / news	JS/SUSPAC	Ongoing	Reliant on collaboration with these organisations
	b) Aim for SUS rep on all relevant committees	SUSPAC	Dec 2008	
	c) Inviting to relevant events	JS	Ongoing	

Events & Merchandising

Overview

The business of SUS, through its programme of activities and events for people in and around Scottish Universities are opportunities to engage with a number of stakeholder groups (see previous chapter), to encourage their involvement and to enhance SUS' reputation. Special one-off events on a local, national or international scale can be effective in positioning SUS and establishing a reputation for innovation and vitality.

The merchandising section of the business was introduced to help further promote the brand and to generate small amounts of income to help offset the costs of providing the SUS programme. It was hoped to provide a quality range of merchandise which compliments the nature of the SUS business.

Current Position

With regard to the Conference and other events, there is a consensus that SUS conducts such occasions with dignity and style and succeeds in making them valuable and memorable. The events are listed in SUS publications such as the SUSPAC News and are published on the website. However, there is scope to consider other approaches to raising the profile of SUS activities and events - not just in order to boost attendances but also to signal that the SUS sees itself as part of University life and welcomes its members.

The SUS logo has formed the strong impression on a range of signage and banners that can be used for events. SUS has a now extensive merchandise range working in partnership with Kukri for all clothing items. The brand design of playing kit is echoed in a broad range of leisurewear that anyone can buy and is promoted through the website. SUS has further utilised its logo through a variety of branded items that are used for promotional purposes.

Making Further Improvements

SUS increases its event programme year on year and the events that are being held are growing in popularity. Thought must now be given to whether there are any opportunities that SUS can take on to develop the offer yet further. One other type of event that should be mentioned here is the special, one-off initiative that creates a significant impact at a local, national or even international level (such as SUS being involved in the delivery of BUGS). These types of event can help raise the profile of the organisation and thus improve its image and reputation.

It should be considered whether SUS activities and events would benefit from the production of 'shell' posters, with strong branding, on which details could be overprinted for distribution to institutions. However, useful though posters and listings in event guides may be, they tend to have a limited impact. It may be effective to complement them by:

- taking paid advertising in local news when the event or activity is likely to have wide appeal;
- seeking free media coverage if the content of the event is newsworthy in some respect;
- targeting particular groups with a known interest in the topic concerned by sending them posters and letters;
- inviting particular individuals who have a link with the subject matter.

Of course, the extent to which such measures could be taken would depend on the resources available. It would also be important to conduct audience research from time to time to ascertain which publicity techniques were working and which were not.

The SUS kit should be promoted more widely and emphasised that it is for everyone and not just elite sportspeople. Promotion of leisurewear and even potential sales through individual institutions should be investigated where this would not conflict with their own deals. SUS members should be encouraged to buy SUS merchandise to use as prizes and gifts within their own institutions to progress the SUS message further.

Innovative thinking should continue to be applied when considering new promotional products so that items are fresh at each event to captivate the audience and target markets should be borne in mind when developing new ideas.

Broad Targets	Specific Deliverables	Prime Responsibility	Complete by / When	Dependencies / Risks
Continue strong event programme	a) evaluate current events to help shape new ones	JS	2008-09	
	b) consider different ways to promote current events	JS	July 2009	
	c) attract new people to existing events	JS	2008-09	
Contribute to major one-off events	a) plan for involvement with major games	Exec	Ongoing	
	b) seek involvement in special events (e.g. BUGS)	Exec	Ongoing	
Enhance SUS Merchandise range	a) further promotion of SUS kit and merchandise	JS	2008-09	
	b) investigate getting kit into institutions	Admin	July 2009	Reliant on collaboration with Unis
	c) add new products to range especially for promotional purposes	JS	Ongoing	Risk of exhausting ideas

Market Research

Overview

Formal market research is a way of introducing some rigour and structure into the on-going, multi-layered process of listening, analysing perceptions and adjusting products, policies and practices. A lack of such research makes decision-making more difficult and constitutes a risk to SUS' interests.

Current Position

SUS already conducts or uses a number of items of market research, the results of which help to guide decisions. For example:

- the annual SUS audit of activity allows for benchmarking and monitoring growth within the sector;
- placement students complete research while working for SUS (e.g. research into coaching in 2007);
- other students have consulted with SUS when completing dissertations as part of their degrees (e.g. volunteering research in 2008);
- students' satisfaction has been assessed through formal and informal methods, including questionnaires, staff-student committees and forums.

However, there is further scope for strategically planned, 'corporate' market research to help SUS track perceptions more systematically, to enable it to tailor and present its offer appropriately.

Making further improvements

A better-structured approach to market research should prove to be more cost effective and yield richer data. Some key policies and decisions should become easier to make or review given the availability of stronger evidence on which to draw. Indeed, future versions of this communications and marketing strategy should be more closely informed by market research outcomes, and the targeting of effort in this field should become more precise and sophisticated.

Analysis, such as the Audit, should continue to be undertaken on an annual or biennial basis through a mix of quantitative and qualitative research and used to inform SUS' operational plans. Further utilisation of students to carry out research projects on SUS' behalf should also be pursued. Other topics where accurate data would prove useful should be identified and study in this area completed.

Periodically - perhaps annually - market research outcomes should be considered alongside assessments of progress with the implementation of the SUS Business Plan. The revision of the plan should be informed by such outcomes, and the links between market research and any shifts in SUS' direction should be widely communicated internally and to appropriate external stakeholders. The fact that SUS is genuinely listening and responding accordingly is itself a positive message that can contribute to the process of enhancing its reputation.

Broad Targets	Specific Deliverables	Prime Responsibility	Complete by / When	Dependencies / Risks
Acquire additional corporate market research information	a) identify topics for further research b) identify students or other means to carry out research c) maintain Audit analysis on an annual basis	JS/PDC	2008-09	The speed with which these actions can be implemented will depend on the availability of staff time to do the ground work and in some cases money to pay for new research
Collate recent market research information	Review of information acquired and analysis of common themes	JS	2008-09	
Establish a closer relationship between strategic decision-making and market research outcomes	Annual summary of market research outcomes to support SUS Business Plan monitoring and review	JS/PDC	Ongoing	
		JS	July 2009	

5. Budget

For the 2008/09 financial year SUS has allocated £4000 from the annual budget towards marketing and promotion which will include spending on website development, branding and photography. In addition another £4000 has been set aside to support SUS network events such as the annual conference and seminar (£2000 of this comes from BUNAC as sponsorship).

This funding will be supplemented by SUS actively seeking commercial sponsorship. This may be in the form of sponsorship for specific events or programmes such as the SUS annual conference (e.g. Precor as a previous headline sponsor and other companies paying to exhibit). Alternatively it is hoped that SUS will be able to secure sponsorship which would be aligned to some or all of SUS' business objectives.

By considering realistically what resources SUS has at its disposal there may need to be systematic prioritisation of what the organisation will try to achieve and how it is going to do it.

6. Evaluation of Results

The implementation of this marketing strategy will be monitored and the Professional Development Committee will have a key role in this regard.

Scottish Universities Sport is committed to keeping this strategy under review, and will formally review it again in August 2009.