

Marketing the Information Services Division  
at Ceredigion University

Section	Page no.
1. Introduction	3
2. Marketing Approaches	4
2.1 External Marketing	4
2.2 Internal Marketing	7
3. Summary and conclusion	8
4. Recommendations	9
4.1 External	9
4.1.1 Survey customers	10
4.1.2 Focus Groups	10
4.1.3 Social Networking	10
4.2 Internal	11
4.2.1 Mission Statement	11
4.2.2 Staff Meetings	12
4.2.3 Social Networking	12
Appendices	13-14
References	15
Bibliography	17

## **1. Introduction**

Ceredigion University comprises 26,000 students, 5,000 members of staff and 29 academic schools. Within the Information Services Division (ISD), there has been a steady decline in usage, particularly the library service. There has been a concurrent growth in remote access by users, with search engines (such as Google) becoming particularly popular. As a result of this decline, the Director of the Division requested proposals for the Senior Management Team of both the ISD and Ceredigion University to consider, in order to develop a unified strategy for the Division.

The aim of this report is to examine how ISD as a whole can better market itself both to academics and students. Currently, ISD is responsible for:

- Library and information services
- ICT infrastructure (including e-learning platforms)
- Records management (including compliance with Freedom of Information legislation)

This report intends to use experience of recent marketing workshops to develop a marketing strategy that is appropriate for all elements of ISD. These workshops particularly focused on a number of techniques, particularly relationship marketing and services marketing strategies. The techniques that were viewed as most relevant to the Department were internal marketing, customer satisfaction and brand development strategies.

In order to prepare this report, a number of resources were consulted that were identified as being particularly relevant for the development of the Division's marketing strategy. Relevant literature on relationship marketing and marketing of services in general was consulted and resources were not restricted to those specifically on the library service as all marketing guidance was considered relevant to the demands of the report. However, primacy was given to resources that focused on the areas referred to above.

## **2. Marketing Approaches**

### **2.1 External marketing**

There are three main issues facing the IDS:

- decline in library use
- rise in remote access
- increased usage of search engines.

In terms of the library service, the decrease in usage and rise in remote access suggests that the Department should rethink its marketing approach towards the academic community at the university and beyond. Clearly the decline in library usage is a serious issue, especially as students are turning to alternative forms of information retrieval to support their studies. How ISD markets itself to the academic community can play an important role in addressing this decline. Relationship marketing, in particular, is a valuable tool that can be employed to develop an overall strategy for the Division.

In business terms, relationship marketing is based on main two economic arguments:

1. it is more expensive to win a new customer than to retain an existing one
2. the longer the association, the more profitable the relationship (Buttle, 1996, p.5).

It is argued that, instead of expending vast resources to attract users who have already decided not to utilise the service, resources should be focused on trying to retain users. In the commercial sector, it has been argued that it is between five and ten times as expensive to win a new customer than it is to retain an existing one (Buttle, 1996, p.5). In short, application of relationship marketing techniques encourages retention marketing first and acquisition marketing second (Egan, 2008, p.73). Although some aspects of the commercial sector do not apply to the Department, there are valuable lessons to be learnt. Substantial effort on retaining existing service users would be more beneficial in the long-term than it would be to invest resources in attracting non-users.

Furthermore, the reduction of user defection rates is crucial for retention rates to rise. As one credit company discovered when reducing its defection rate, the average lifespan of its relationship with a customer doubled from five years to ten, and the value of the customer also doubled from \$134 to \$300 (Buttle, 1996, p.6). Clearly, there is a distinct link between the retention of service users and the value that the organisation accrues from the stronger relationship. Focusing resources on existing users (whilst also not neglecting non-users) and ensuring that the service meets their needs can have a major role in ensuring they do not seek out other service providers to meet their needs.

A crucial factor in the delivery of ISD is the quality of the service. Retention in competitive markets is generally believed to be a product of customer satisfaction (Egan, 2008, p.127). A crucial component in this is the link between what customers expect from the service and what the service actually delivers. If the provider does not continue to offer the services that end users expect, then they are sure to look elsewhere to meet their needs. The greater the negative gap between the level of expectation and the matching of these expectations, the greater the level of dissatisfaction that is experienced by the customer (Egan, 2008, p.127). It is essential, therefore, to be aware of how the customer views the service and, where necessary and possible, re-align the service to meet the expectations that are held by them. However, matching the user's expectations does not necessarily mean that they will be loyal (Egan, 2008, p.132). Assumptions about what they want should be avoided as it is potentially damaging to the service if those assumptions are used to formulate service delivery instead of finding out what users actually want. Failure to consult with users on what they expect from the service and making such presumptions, leads to organisations failing to meet their expectations, which in turn can lead to an increased defection rate (Wilson, Zeithaml, and Bitner, 2008, p.123).

The meeting of customer expectations can also have positive side-effects. Good customer experiences can lead to word-of-mouth referrals to non-users of the service. This is a powerful tool as customers are more likely to take a message from one of their peers more seriously than if it came from a formulated marketing message sent out by the department (Godson, 2009, p.77). With the growth of the internet and social networking, peer-to-peer

messages have become increasingly important in forming people's views about a service. Customers use a wide range of networks to share their experiences, including:

- email
- social networks (including blogs, Facebook, Twitter etc)
- web discussion groups

Using such tools, customers are able to spread their views quickly and effectively (Parsons & Maclaran, 2009, p.82). By establishing a presence in such forums, ISD would be able to:

- engage with customers
- promote services
- identify issues
- proactively meet the needs of customers

Furthermore, it would also enable ISD to deal with any negative issues before the escalate. Dealing with such issues proactively can minimise any damage to the Division and potentially turn the situation into a positive as it demonstrates a willingness to develop a relationship with users and to understand their expectations.

The development of a positive brand is an important way of connecting with customers. In developing the brand it is essential that the passions of the organisation are shared with that of the user. If this is not shared the brand will be doomed to failure (Parsons & Maclaran, 2009, p.77). Furthermore, it is crucial that the organisation shares, rather than manipulates, consumer passions and emotions (Parsons & Maclaran, 2009, p.79). Applying a brand image and then expecting users to align themselves to it is not a successful way of developing a brand strategy. It is beneficial to work closely with customers to ensure that the brand and image of the Division are in line with what they identify as important about the service. Increased communication with a range of customer groups can help to enhance service delivery (Woodruffe, 1995, p.101). Any attempt to foster an image onto users, or fail to align it with the views of the users will most likely lead to alienation and, again, an increase in defections to alternative providers.

## **2.2 Internal Marketing**

As well as marketing to external customers, it is also important to consider marketing internally. Marketing to employees is a vital factor in delivering an effective and relevant service. Without meeting the expectations of the employees, the success of the organisation's operations on its external markets will be jeopardised (Gummesson, 2000, p.188).

Employees should be central to any marketing strategy developed for a number of reasons:

- employees link management and service users
- they perceive and evaluate services (Grönroos, 2007, p.384)
- it encourages employee creativity and input in brand development (de Chernatony, 2010, p.96).

If the employees do not understand or believe in the brand, then it is unlikely that the customer will which will consequently undermine any agreed marketing strategy. To ensure that employees are onboard with the marketing strategy, they need to be treated in the same way as external customers (Grönroos, 2007, p.384).

In order for IDS to develop a positive brand and image, employees and management must have a shared vision of the organisation. If they are not in alignment it will be more difficult to develop a consistent image with the organisation's stakeholders. (Parsons & Maclaran, 2009, p.76). There needs to be consistency throughout the management team down to the employees dealing face-to-face with service users. If there is not a clear strategy, it will be reflected in the quality of service received by stakeholders. To ensure that the appropriate brand and image is promoted by the Department there must be a clear strategic vision that can be built into the culture of the organisation and that employees can interpret and comprehend (Parsons & Maclaran, 2009, p.75). Once a clear vision is established it is easier to ensure that it is shared by employees and management.

The importance of ensuring that there is a shared vision between employees and management was demonstrated with the turnaround of Scandinavian Airlines by Jan Carlzon. Although his efforts were in a completely different industry, the lessons from his strategy are

certainly instructive. Faced with losses of almost \$20 million, Carlzon embarked on a number of changes to the organisation to ensure that the decline was reversed. One of these initiatives was the distribution of a little red book to every member of staff entitled 'Let's Get In There and Fight' (Godson, p31). The distribution of this text helped to improve internal communication, encouraged staff to take more responsibility and helped to ensure that staff felt involved and valued. By doing so, it engendered an increase in energy levels amongst the 20,000 employees and played a big role in Carlzon's successful attempt to turn around the business. Although this measure was only one amongst many other initiatives, it was crucial to enable the other changes that had taken place to be successful. The improved communication ensured that all staff members understood where the business was going and why. The value of ensuring that staff understand their role within the organisation cannot be underestimated and the impact that this has on customers is also not to be overlooked.

There are very clear benefits to ensuring employees understand and feel part of the overall branding of the department. When employee, management and customer meanings of the brand coalesce, it increases the generation of loyalty amongst the communities involved in the brand. It is extremely likely, this loyalty can be "quasi-religious in its intensity" (Parsons & Maclaran, 2009, p.76). By building up such a strong loyalty in all aspects of the organisation, defection rates can be minimised and retention increased, ensuring a long and productive relationship with stakeholders. By working in partnership with employees and encouraging them to believe they are an important part of the brand and the overall strategy, they can play a vital role in retaining customers. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that strong internal customer service within an organisation leads to greater levels of employee satisfaction and greater levels of customer retention (Godson, 2009, p.94).

### **3. Summary and Conclusions**

In terms of the future strategy, a combination of internal and external marketing techniques would be desirable. An integrated strategy encompassing both techniques would be the most advantageous course of action. Clearly the future strategy will involve a number of changes to the way the department currently operates. Consequently, it will be necessary to ensure

effective communication with both employees and customers. It is essential for employees to understand the changes and the reasons behind them in order for them to support the agenda. By ensuring that both employees and management are united behind the strategy, it is more likely that it will succeed. Furthermore, if employees are enthused and feel like they have a vital role to play in the overall strategy, their enthusiasm and advocacy can be transmitted to service users which can help to ensure retention and subsequently acquisition of users through word of mouth recommendations.

It is also important, when considering future strategy, to consider the needs of our customers. Although it is important to draw in new users wherever possible, it is also extremely valuable to ensure that our existing users continue to develop a strong relationship with the department that ensure that they keep coming back to make use of the services provided. Evidence shows that retaining users can be very beneficial to the service and has the potential to drive up the number of users. Consequently, it is important to ensure that the Department is meeting the needs of current users and if not, look at ways to ensure that their needs will be met in the future. If the expectations of the customer are not met, there will be a continual decline in the use of the service.

## **4. Recommendations**

### **4.1 External**

This report makes a number of recommendations regarding the Division's external marketing strategy:

- survey customers
- establish focus groups
- engage in social networks

### **4.1.1 Survey Customers**

As established above, an important factor in the retention of customers (and indeed the addition of new customers) is ensuring that the service meets the needs of all users. If the service does not meet the expectations of the users, they will continue to seek out other means of collating information. One way of measuring customer satisfaction is by conducting a SERVQUAL survey. However, this type of survey is not without its limitations and it may be costly to reach non-users of the service.

An alternative would be the distribution of an online survey, perhaps via SurveyMonkey (see Appendix). Although there are costs attached to using such a survey, it would reach users who are already turning to the internet for information provision rather than utilising ISD, so it would be a more effective forum in which to reach them. Furthermore, distributing via email would save on the cost of postage for such a survey (both for sending out and for the SAE). The survey could be administered by the current secretary to the department.

### **4.1.2 Focus Groups**

As well as embarking on a wide-scale survey, it is also essential to ensure that this should not be the sole effort in connecting with users and understanding their needs and expectations. Focus groups should be established within all aspects of ISD, including stakeholders in library services, ICT and Records Management. The establishment of focus groups would help to ensure that the Department keeps track of the expectations of the users and how this evolves. Creating and distributing a survey can lead to complacency about the service delivery. However, needs change and it is important for the Department to be aware of any shifts in expectations and changes behaviour. The focus group would be lead by a responsible member of the Department within each team, preferably management at first but a responsible member of staff could also lead discussions at a later date.

### **4.1.3 Social Networking**

The development of a presence on social networks would be particularly valuable for the library service within the Division and would not be considered appropriate for Records Management or Freedom of Information departments.

As indicated above, users are finding new ways of communicating with each other about service delivery. As well as the traditional, formal methods of communicating dissatisfaction with the service, users are also using social networking tools such as Twitter and blogs to communicate with one another about their experiences with organisations. This is an area in which the library does not currently have a presence and this would enable the Division to proactively deal with service issues.

It is recommended that responsible members of staff are chosen to establish and manage both a Twitter account and a Facebook page. By establishing accounts in both forums, the Department will be able to connect with users and establish a greater relationship with them, allowing them to interact and express their expectations of the service itself, as well as enabling the service to be more proactive rather than reactive.

Costs for utilising social networks would only involve training staff and staff time to maintain the accounts as no payment is required to sign-up on the most popular social networks (see Appendix).

## **4.2 Internal**

### **4.2.1 Mission Statement**

To help the development of the staff and encourage them to take more ownership of the service, discussions with staff should be established to plan and develop a three year strategy plan for the Department. The discussions should be led by senior management, but should encourage staff to help identify a strategy that encourages students to use the service. As they deal with customers on a regular basis, they are well placed to share user behaviours and needs. By ensuring that they contribute to the strategy, they will take ownership of it and have a responsibility in ensuring that the strategy is successful.

Furthermore, if the staff are involved in the process of delivering the marketing strategy, they will subsequently understand and believe in the brand that the Department is attempting to

develop which will help to ensure that the customers receive a positive message about the brand and the organisation as a whole.

#### **4.2.2 Staff meetings**

Further to the development of a marketing strategy with staff, regular meetings should be held with the staff to ensure that feedback can be given on how the service is performing in relation to the targets set out in the agreed strategy plan. This should be an opportunity to discuss performance as well as an opportunity for employees to express their views about the delivery of the strategy and the views of the users about the service. By ensuring that the employees are empowered to give feedback on the service, it will enable them to share the experiences of users and help them to share ideas for developing the delivery of the service.

#### **4.2.3 Social Networking**

Responsible members of staff should be encouraged to keep blogs and engage in social media to connect with users and share their enthusiasm of the library service. This should be done in a managed way but staff should be encouraged to share what they do within the service and to promote the brand. A library blog would be established that would enable all staff to contribute and share their passion for the service. To start with, it would be sensible to moderate blog posts before publishing to ensure that they are not likely to damage the development of ISD's brand. Again, costs would be restricted to training staff on web 2.0 technologies.

## **Appendix 1**

Survey Monkey pricing

Basic account (restricted to 100 responses) – Free

Pro (up to 1,000 responses a month) - £19.95 per month

Unlimited (unlimited responses) - £200 per annum

To ensure that all responses can be considered, and to allow follow-up surveys, the ‘unlimited’ option is recommended.

(Survey Monkey, 2010)

## Appendix 2

Social networking training

CILIP offer a training course. Fees are as follows:

CILIP personal member: £305 + VAT

CILIP organisation member: £370 + VAT

Non members: £430 + VAT

Approximate minimum cost for 10 members of staff across departments: £3,050 + travel expenses (dependent on location).

Approximate maximum cost for 10 members of staff across departments: £4,300 + travel expenses (dependent on location).

Additional costs: staff to cover for those attending training session: approximately £100 per member of staff.

Potential for session to be held on site, reducing the need to pay travel expenses.

Estimated minimum cost (excluding travel expenses) - £4,050

Estimated maximum cost (including travel expenses) - £6,000

(CILIP, 2010)

## References

- Buttle, F. (1996). *Relationship Marketing: Theory and practice*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- CILIP (n.d.). CILIP: Using social networking and UGC websites. Retrieved August 22, 2010, from <http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/training/pages/using-social-networking-ugc-websites.aspx>.
- de Chernatony, L. (2010). *From brand vision to brand evaluation: The strategic process of growing and strengthening brands (3rd ed.)*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Egan, J. (2008). *Relationship marketing: Exploring relational strategies in marketing*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Godson, M. (2009). *Relationship marketing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grönroos, C. (2007). *Service management and marketing: Customer management in service competition (3rd ed.)*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Gummesson, E. (2000). *Total relationship marketing*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Parsons, E. & Maclaran, P. (2009). *Contemporary issues in marketing and consumer behaviour*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Survey Monkey Home Pricing Page. (2010). Retrieved August 22, 2010 from [http://www.surveymonkey.net/Home\\_Pricing2.aspx](http://www.surveymonkey.net/Home_Pricing2.aspx)

Wilson, A., Zeithaml, V., Bitner, M., & Gremler, D. (2008). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm (1st European ed.)*. Maidenhead: Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education.

Woodruffe, H. (1995). *Services marketing*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

## **Bibliography**

Ahmed, P.K. & Rafiq, M. (2003). Internal marketing issues and challenges.

*European Journal of Marketing*, 37, 9, 1177-1186. Retrieved August 10, 2010, from Emerald.

Ahmed, P.K. & Rafiq, M. (2003). Advances in the internal marketing concept:

definition, synthesis and extension. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14, 6, 449-462. Retrieved June 14, 2010, from Emerald.

Ballantyne, D. (2003). A relationship-mediated theory of internal marketing.

*European Journal of Marketing*, 37, 9, 1242-1260. Retrieved August 10, 2010, from Emerald.

Broady-Preston, J., Felice, J. & Marshall, S. (2006). Building better customer

relationships: case studies from Malta and the UK. *Library Management*, 27, 6/7, 430-445. Retrieved June 14, 2010, from Emerald.

CILIP (n.d.). *CILIP: Using social networking and UGC websites*. Retrieved August

22, 2010, from <http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/training/pages/using-social-networking-ugc-websites.aspx>.

- de Chernatony, L. (2010). *From brand vision to brand evaluation: The strategic process of growing and strengthening brands (3rd ed.)*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Doyle, P. (1995). Marketing in the new millennium. *European Journal of Marketing*, 29, 13, 23-41. Retrieved August 10, 2010, from Emerald.
- Egan, J. (2008). *Relationship marketing: Exploring relational strategies in marketing*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Godson, M. (2009). *Relationship marketing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grönroos, C. (2007). *Service management and marketing: Customer management in service competition (3rd ed.)*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Gummesson, E. (2000). *Total relationship marketing*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Jones, T., Fox, G.L., Taylor, S.F. & Fabrigar, L.R. (2010). Service customer commitment and response. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 24, 1, 16-28. Retrieved June 14, 2010, from Emerald.

- Morgan, R.E. (2004). Business agility and internal marketing. *European Business Review*, 16, 5, 464-472. Retrieved August 10, 2010, from Emerald.
- Nicholls, R. (2010). New directions for customer-to-customer interaction research. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 24, 1, 87-97. Retrieved June 14, 2010, from Emerald.
- Palmer, A. (2008). *Principles of services marketing (5th ed.)*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Papasolomou-Doukakis, I. & Kitchen, P.J. (2004). Internal marketing in UK banks: conceptual legitimacy or window dressing? *The International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 22, 6, 421-452. Retrieved August 10, 2010, from Emerald.
- Parsons, E. & Maclaran, P. (2009). *Contemporary issues in marketing and consumer behaviour*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Rose, S. (2009). *Student views on library services: key lessons for developing libraries of the future*. Retrieved July 9, 2010 from <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/47/2.pdf>.
- Survey Monkey Home Pricing Page*. (2010). Retrieved August 22, 2010 from [http://www.surveymonkey.net/Home\\_Pricing2.aspx](http://www.surveymonkey.net/Home_Pricing2.aspx)

West, D., Ford, J., & Ibrahim, E. (2010). *Strategic marketing: Creating competitive Advantage (2nd ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, A., Zeithaml, V., Bitner, M., & Gremler, D. (2008). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm (1st European ed.)*. Maidenhead: Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education.

Woodruffe, H. (1995). *Services marketing*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.