

Marketing WISE Newfoundland and Labrador

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ABSTRACT

A Marketing Plan has been developed for WISE Newfoundland and Labrador following a traditional business marketing model.

Developing the strategy involved assessing the environment in which the organization operates, assessing the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the organization, and examining the components of marketing: product, price, promotion and distribution.

WISE implemented most aspects of the Marketing Plan in early 2000 and has, to date, exceeded the objective of doubling the current membership.

The paper describes the process used to derive the Marketing Plan, describes its key aspects, and discusses the implementation and its success in reaching WISE's objectives.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2000, the authors, two Directors of Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Newfoundland and Labrador prepared a marketing plan for the organization as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate level Business class in Marketing. It was particularly relevant for WISE to examine its marketing strategy at that time, as the group had just co-hosted the successful *New Frontiers, New Traditions National Conference for the Advancement of Women in Engineering, Science, and Technology*, the Canadian national conference preceding ICWES 12. The conference achieved significant recognition among women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the wider community. WISE wanted to capitalize on that recognition to increase membership and further the goals of the organization.

BUSINESS MODEL

Pride et al (1) define a marketing plan as "a written document that specifies an organization's resources, objective, marketing strategy, and implementation and control efforts planned for use in marketing a specific product or product group. The marketing plan describes the firm's current position or situation, establishes the marketing goals or objectives for the product or product group, and specifies how the organization will attempt to achieve these objectives." Clearly the definition is intended primarily for companies marketing a tangible

product, but with some consideration, the business model is equally useful for considering the marketing of a service or non-profit group.

The first step in preparation of a marketing plan is to perform an analysis of the environment in which the organization operates, including the competitive, economic and political climates. The target market and the historic marketing objectives and performance are also assessed.

The second step is a SWOT analysis, an assessment of the organizations strengths and weaknesses, and of the opportunities and threats surrounding it. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses focuses primarily on the internal factors that affect how the organization meets the needs of its target market. The assessment of the opportunities and threats focuses more on the external environment and how that can affect the goals of the organization. The remainder of the marketing plan aims at matching strengths to opportunities and minimizing the potential negative impacts of the weaknesses and threats.

A fundamental element of developing the marketing objectives of the organization is to prepare a mission statement that summarizes the long-term vision of what the organization wants to become. Having a clear mission statement provides a clear purpose and direction for the organization; a measure against which alternative courses of action can be compared. Marketing goals are then developed which are consistent with the vision, but must also be specific

and measurable, and must specify a time frame for accomplishment.

The next planning step is to consider the marketing mix required to satisfy the organization's objectives. The marketing mix refers to decisions related to product, price, distribution and promotion. The remaining sections of the plan describe implementation and methods for evaluation of its effectiveness.

The rest of this paper describes the marketing plan presented to WISE in January 2000.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

WISE exists in a competitive economic and political climate. WISE *competes* for both core funding and project funding with other special interest and minority groups and to some extent competes for membership with other professional organizations, such as the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland, and Women in Communications. A *political agenda* exists to recognize women in non-traditional roles which has enabled WISE to form strong relationships with government agencies.

WISE's target market is any individual or group that supports the mission and the goals of the organization. Currently, the average age of WISE members is between 30 and 35.

Historically, new WISE members learn of the organization through word of mouth or attendance at events, which received promotion strictly through email distribution list and postings at the university. In the past, membership has been treated very casually, and there are few benefits of membership. Promotional activities related to the *New Frontiers, New Traditions National Conference for the Advancement of Women in Engineering, Science, and Technology*, co-hosted by WISE in July 2000, were extremely successful in generating attendance at the conference, raising corporate support and increasing awareness of WISE which provided an opportunity to capitalize on this positive exposure.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths: WISE is the only women in science and engineering group in the province. In 1994, WISE received the Michael Smith Award for Science Promotion, which has given it strong credentials for writing proposals or seeking sponsors. WISE has successfully run an employment program for high-

school students for 12 consecutive summers which receives annual media attention and is consistently applauded by participants and external bodies. WISE has an extensive network of partners and affiliates. This includes: a solid relationship with the Atlantic Region, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)/Petro-Canada Chair (the Chair) at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN); and extensive support from the Deans of Science, Engineering and Medicine.

Weaknesses: WISE shares the stigma of all minority interest groups as it is sometimes viewed as being exclusive and showing favouritism. Although it is the only women in science and engineering organization in the province, WISE is still not well known and suffers from the perception that it is a government or university body.

Opportunities: In the current economic climate, promotion of STEM careers is seen as a positive contribution to society that can lead to successful funding opportunities for WISE. Positive relationships with government agencies also assist in fundraising efforts.

Threats: Backlash against women's groups could pose a threat to WISE. As a non-profit organization, insufficient funding is a constant threat, and volunteer time is always limited. WISE possesses the same acronym as another organization, Women Interested in Successful Employment, which creates confusion.

MISSION STATEMENT

WISE's original mission statement was: "*To encourage women to enter courses and careers in science, engineering, mathematics, computer science and related technological fields.*" This statement did not fully reflect WISE's objectives or activities and the following was implemented: "*Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) is a non-profit, volunteer organization which aims to increase the participation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics careers by increasing awareness that these professions are rewarding and exciting options for women. WISE also provides mentoring, professional development and networking opportunities to facilitate the success of women in these fields, and advocates for equitable workplaces.*"

MARKETING GOALS

WISE provides services to its own membership while influencing the ideas of society with respect to women working in STEM careers. Among WISE's

goals are:

- To double the individual membership of WISE (from 34 to 60 members) by December 31, 2001 and to continue to grow at a rate of ten percent per year afterwards.
- To encourage new members to get actively involved in WISE events and programs.
- To increase the number of corporate members to ten (from two) by December 31, 2001 and by five to ten percent annually after that.
- To bring new members onto the Committee by electing at least 20 percent new members each year, in the long term.
- To increase the awareness of society to the opportunities for women in STEM careers.

MARKETING MIX

Product: WISE's product is its membership and member benefits. Member benefits include access to WISE's personal and professional development events; email communication regarding job opportunities and news of events of interest; volunteer opportunities for STEM promotion; and mentoring from senior STEM professionals. The benefits of corporate membership should be enhanced by creating new opportunities for corporate members to be profiled and acknowledged in WISE materials. Corporate members should be able to nominate three individuals within their organization to receive individual memberships. WISE events include personal and professional development seminars and workshops, and informal social networking events.

Price: Current annual membership rates are set at \$25 for regular members, \$10 for student and unwaged members, and \$250 for corporate members. The corporate membership rate should be reviewed annually and increased as additional benefits are implemented. WISE events do not generally have an entrance fee.

WISE should move toward a pricing structure that would allow it to be self-sustaining as it currently exists through assistance from the Chair and funding on a project-to-project basis. Events should be priced such that at least 50 percent of the costs, including promotion, room rental, and speaker honoraria, are covered. Members should receive entrance at a reduced cost.

Distribution: WISE is primarily a St. John's-based organization, concentrating its channel of distribution in this area. WISE's distribution requirements are limited to the circulation of materials and information regarding events. Print materials are posted on

campus bulletin boards, and should also be submitted to campus newspapers. Members and non-members are notified of events through email and limited use of the media. A new distribution channel could be developed through government agencies that support WISE and corporate members to distribute materials about WISE. As part of its communications activities, WISE should cultivate positive relationships with members of the media and use them as a distribution channel for the organization and its events. WISE should publicize its more significant events in newsletters or magazines of groups with overlapping interests and objectives. Public service announcements on the cable network and in print media would also be effective.

Promotion: WISE should enhance its promotional activities to increase awareness of the organization, stimulate an increased demand for its activities, events, and membership, and retain current members. WISE's current general promotional activities include distributing WISE posters and displaying the WISE booth applicable events. WISE events are promoted through event posters, email messages, and word of mouth.

WISE's promotional strategy should incorporate advertising through the development of professional print advertisements. An advertising campaign highlighting, and potentially paid for by, WISE sponsors could be developed from the sponsor's perspective to reflect the reasons that they support WISE. Co-operative advertising with like-minded organizations is also a viable option to promote WISE.

WISE should expand its promotion using public relations tools. The WISE newsletter should be revived and a series of information sheets providing advice and practical tips for women in STEM careers should be implemented. WISE should develop merchandise items, which could be used in the workplace while promoting the organization. A communications team should be developed to address and interact with the media to convey a consistent and strong message about WISE through media interviews, press releases, and feature articles.

IMPLEMENTATION

WISE should establish a marketing subcommittee to be responsible for implementing its marketing strategy. Because the organization is volunteer-run, strict timelines are inappropriate. The following is suggested as a guideline:

- Open all meetings to all members.

- Inform email distribution list that only members will receive notices.
- Enlist the assistance of current corporate members to design a strategy for soliciting additional corporate members.

Each year, the marketing subcommittee should undertake the following activities:

- Enlist media exposure of the Summer Program.
- Coinciding with membership renewal, run advertisements profiling individual/ corporate members.
- Target newsletter with membership renewal.
- In early September, hold a student-focused event.
- Hold a major event in early fall with a pricing structure that includes an annual membership.

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