



The Student Speed Networking Event.

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Executive Summary

This report introduces a new idea for an event with a specific concept that could be held at the Creative Bubble in Swansea. The report provides an analysis on the feasibility of the event named The Student Speed Networking Event. In the main body section of the report there is a brief explanation of what an event is and how to prepare and plan one, this is backed by research and references to multiple sources. This is followed by the rational section. This is where the event idea is described in more detail. TSSNE would be an event fit for any student who wishes to share their experience and knowledge of their course to other students with the intentions to create new useful contacts for future projects. It explains how it can be brought to life from the first stages of imagination through to the planning procedures, research that should be done, the all-important requirements ranging from physical to material and finally the ideal end result along with the appropriate tools that support the proposition and creation of the event. Following this there is a thorough explanation on market research and more specifically on the demographic research that is necessary for this type of event. In order to further understand the analysis, images, figures and brief bullet points are provided before the conclusion.

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1.0 – Introduction

According to Getz (2007, p.18), an event is a unique happening that is planned with a specific purpose and for a set amount of time. Events are held for people to celebrate special occasions or to come together through a common interest. They are also described as being “central to our culture as perhaps never before” (Bowdin, 2011, p.3). This report will introduce a proposition for a new event called “The Student Speed Networking Event” (TSSNE) The event will be held at the venue called ‘Creative Bubble’ in Swansea and will have a set budget. Creative Bubble (CB) is an ongoing project that started in 2013 and is funded by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). As described on the University’s site it is a ‘joint initiative between Swansea BID and UWTSD’ that brings two organisations together in order to provide a positive social and cultural impact in the city of Swansea. First, the main focus of this report will be about the main findings on what would be necessary to bring this event to life reasonably. Then there will be an insight into who the target market is. Following that, the requirements needed to interest and satisfy that audience. Finally, there will be a conclusion that will assess the realistic aspect of the event.

2.0 – Main Findings

Firstly, for there to be an event there must be an understanding of the realistic aspect of it. When approaching the topic of planning an event, O’Toole (2011, p.21-24), explains how preparing a strategy is a major tool when it comes to feasibility. He states that decision making, and situation analysis are primordial when planning an event. According to White et al, (2010, p.402-403) a S.W.O.T analysis is important when creating an event as it helps to analyse the feasibility of it and consider for contingency plans. It ensures that research for and around the event is undertaken and in doing so highlights the possible strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as can be seen within appendix 1. According to Shone and Parry (2013, p.98-99), it is said that planning is key. However, leaving space for contingency plans and unexpected obstacles is also important to keep in mind. To plan an event, the objectives must be clear. This will allow for a clear vision from the beginning and throughout the process of the event.

2.1 – Rational

The entire concept of TSSNE is to provide a private event enabling students from the Swansea area from different courses to meet and greet other students from courses not necessarily related or connected to their own. It would be set up as a networking event with a speed dating concept. The date and time would be chosen strategically. It would take place on the 10th of October 2020, the beginning of the new academic year. It would start at around 6.30pm and close at around 8.30pm. There will be a certain number of tables and chairs placed around the room and a timer set up for each pair to talk to each other before changing seats. TSSNE stands out from the usual network type event as it will have the original set up of timed sessions throughout which the participants will sit, present and explain what they do on their University courses before their time is expired and they switch tables. The networking itself could last around 45 minutes before opening the room up in a more sociable, laidback vibe with light food and beverages provided on the side. In terms of the aesthetic look of the event, details such as the ceiling being covered with vines, hanging decorations and particular choices of lighting including fairy lights, lamps and patterns will provide more of a warm ambiance for the event. Transforming the space into a more inviting environment with a specific mood. Finally, as this event involves students from the local area, TSSNE will be classed as a local, community event and as part of the public sector. The main purpose will be to create a structured, safe and intellectual opportunity for students to socialise with new people and create new contacts for academic purposes in the future. “A skilled manager strives to make events meaningful, magical and memorable” (Bowdin et al. 2011, p.240). There are advantages and disadvantages to this type of event:

Advantages:

- Allows for new connections/contacts – further promotion of university courses – bringing people together

Disadvantages:

- It may have been done before – not enough students may want to get involved – too complicated to bring to life

The aim wouldn't be to gain any financial profit as the main mission would be to prioritise the experience and the outcome of new connections made throughout the event. In order to provide this experience in the best way possible, understanding the target market is essential.

2.2 – Market research

Accordingly, to Bowdin et al, (2011p.187) conceptualising the event is a major determinant of its success. The environment must be taken into consideration. Research can be done to allow for a better idea into who the event will have an impact on and who could get involved with the process. These range from the participants themselves to the host community and possible media and sponsors from the surrounding area. There is a need to understand what works and what doesn't in order for it to have a positive impact. For example, a short list of specific questions we're asked to the client Lucy Bedall from the Creative Bubble: What are some of the purposes the CB has had in the past? How was the space used in a smart and creative way? What advice would you give for what to and what not to do to host a successful event there? And type of budget previous users may have had. In response to these questions, according to Lucy, CB has seen many different uses throughout the years. Fellow students have used the white, empty space as a blank canvas, not only creating and adapting their vision around it but also giving it a new surge of life by constantly promoting the space in the most purposeful ways possible. Lucy quotes "Students who have really thought through their visitor experience do really well. How they look after a visitor from the moment they walk through the door – and thinking about how the room is presented and how professional it looks." Bowdin (2011) describes marketing as a challenge that the event host can take on to give advanced clues and an insight into the nature of the event itself to its future participants.

2.2.1 – Specific research

Indeed, questions regarding any financial implication are also a major factor to consider. As shown previously above in section 2.1, in order to show that each and every resource has been accounted for, creating a fixed budget and expenditure sheet is a priority. This is explained in simple, straight to the point terms by Bladen et

al (2008, p,39-40), cost management and monitoring is to be used to ensure that each department of the event is budgeted for and is allocated the right amount. For instance, the required amount should be set aside for any food and beverages, electrical hire or special guests whose attendance needs to be funded. For TSSNE, research has shown that the chosen location Creative Bubble is already funded for by UWTSD and the company Swansea BID, a business led and funded partnership company that works on improving the city centre of Swansea by adding value to its different sectors whether it be for professional or entertainment purposes (Swansea Bid, 2017). With the location already accounted for a precise amount must be provided to these two organisations to obtain the other necessities. In addition to any expenditures, income is also something to envisage in advance. Is the event going to make for any profit? Is it free, if not how much does each participant contribute and why? These are all relevant questions to be thought about carefully.

2.2.2 – Market segmentation and research

To provide the right type of experience for the chosen target market, research about that specific area and its habitants should be completed prior to the event. Kotler and Armstrong (2010) provide a brief diagram as illustrated in diagram 1, on how to select a customer to serve.

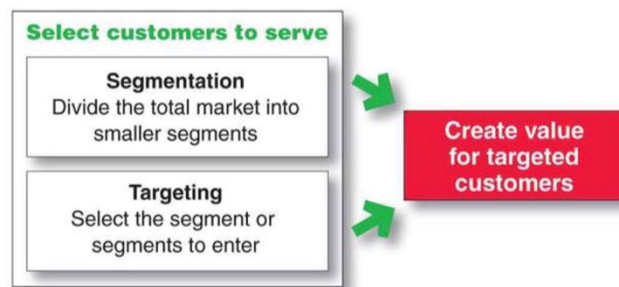


Diagram 1 of marketing and segmentation and targeting

This involves segmentation and targeting. By completing demographic research and dividing the market into smaller segments of buyers the target audience is being identified thus enabling a service that is more attractive to that category of people. In the case of TSSNE, by allowing the students themselves to have an input in expressing what they would like to experience at an event of this type and listening to any negative past experiences that may have occurred. TSSNE could shape itself around the age range, backgrounds and current interests of Swansea's students. As

shown in the table 1, there is a strong market for people considered to be in the average student category. In this case, the 16-24 age range.

Table 1: Composition of Swansea's population by sex and age, mid-2018 (rounded)

Age:	Swansea				Wales %	UK %
	Males	Females	Total	%		
0-4 years	6,500	6,100	12,600	5.1	5.4	5.9
5-15	15,300	14,100	29,400	11.9	12.6	13.1
16-24	19,000	15,600	34,700	14.1	11.0	10.7
25-44	31,500	29,700	61,200	24.8	23.8	26.1
45-64	29,400	31,200	60,500	24.6	26.4	25.8
65-74	12,100	13,600	25,700	10.4	11.5	10.0
75+ years	9,200	13,100	22,300	9.0	9.3	8.3
Total	123,100	123,400	246,500	100	100	100

Source: Mid-Year Population Estimates 2018, ONS.

Table 1 : Swansea's Population by sex and age (2018)

2.3– Operational Requirements

Nevertheless, there can be no event without its fundamental requirements. Whilst bearing in mind the financial implications previously budgeted, these requirements will be the backbone for bringing the event to life. The first point to be considered is the event design and theme. This is what makes it stand out. In the book called Events Management by Bowdin, there's a reference to Berridge (2007) who claims that many people think of an event design as only being about the theme when it should actually incorporate all elements of the experience. TSSNE has been shaped around the type of venue chosen and its size. The CB provides simple facilities for guests such as toilets, wheelchair access to the main room and parking spaces in the surrounding streets. The stage, in this case the main room, can host up to 35 people at a time. In terms of lighting and sound there would be a warm, smooth light coming from the ceiling and the tables around the room. As seen on the image below.

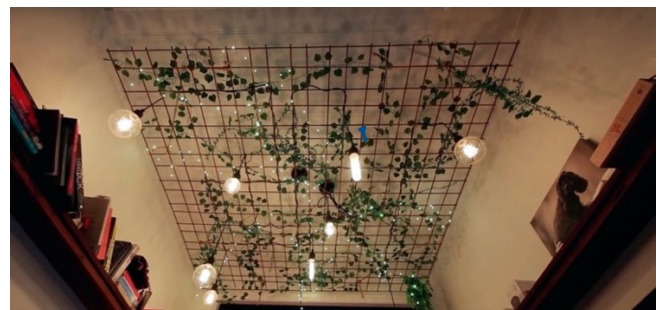


Image 1 : Ceiling decorations for interior design

Power is provided with CB and the costs are covered by UWTSD. The supplier for the catering will be the University's food service as this will avoid having to scout for

outside sponsors. In terms of logistics, no hired transport should be necessary as the location is accessible on foot. Contingency plans will be made and to make the entire process easier and as free of any possible legal issues no alcohol will be sold at the event itself.

2.4 Resource requirements

As described by Newbold et al (2019, p.92), planning involves the creation of a specific design, vision and list of all of the necessities that help to bring that said event to life. These resources can be categorised into physical, technical, financial and human. For TSSNE, there will be no paid staff as the budget is limited. It would seem that one of the essential tools to have is a Resource List, this can be done as a spreadsheet. Figure 2, as seen below, shows an example provided by O'toole (2011).

EXHIBIT 8.6 RESOURCE LIST

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Resources								
1	WBS	Resources	Inhouse	Make	Hire	Buy	Quote	Quote	Contacts
2									Contract status
4	Admin	IT equip				Yes - laptops, PDAs			
5	Admin	Office space	yes						
6	Marketing	Office stationery	yes						
7	Marketing	Creative Agency						Office space	
8	Marketing	Ad Agency	yes					Office stationery	
9	Marketing	Printing	yes						
10	Marketing	Brochures and collateral		yes					
11	Marketing	Vouchers		yes					
12	Marketing	Designer	yes						
13	Marketing	Web design				yes			
14	Marketing	Graphics	yes						
15	Logistics	Valet			yes				
16	Logistics	Couriers			yes				
17	Logistics	Transport			yes				
18	Logistics	Shuttle bus	yes						
19	Logistics	Travel agents	yes						
20	Logistics	Limo							
21	Logistics	Taxis			yes				

Figure 2 : Resource list example by O'toole

To demonstrate here are some of the resources required for TSSNE:

- Technical : Electricity, lighting, projectors
- Furniture : Tables, chairs (already on site)
- Decoration : Table covers, fairy lights, fake plants, plates, plastic glasses
- Physical : Around three people (each with a checklist for schedule)
- Financial : Budget for food, marketing, cleaning products, decorations

A provisional expenditure sheet gives a reasonable idea of total costs that can be expected.

<u>RESSOURCES</u>	<u>POSSIBLE OUTCOME</u>	<u>POSSIBLE SPONSORS</u>
Creative Bubble venue hire	FREE	None
Students	FREE	Universities
Furniture	FREE	None
Food/Drink	RESEARCH	Traders/Cafes/Shops
Decoration	RESEARCH	Shops
Social Media	FREE	TBC
Utility sources	PAID BY UWTSD	None
Marketing; flyers/posters	RESEARCH	TBC

Table 2 : Expenditure sheet

“Don’t find customers for your products, find products for your customers.” Seth Godin (2018)

Conclusion

Finally, after analysing the feasibility of this event idea. It would be an interesting challenge to attempt. The priority would have to be on capturing the attention of the target market. In this case, the local students from multiple universities in and around Swansea. In order for the event to be a success, it would have to be extremely well promoted and communicated. The venue’s layout & design would have to be captivating in order to help make the experience worthwhile. TSSNE would rely on the overall outcome of people as it will be upto those attending to get involved. The aim would be that after the event itself word of mouth and customer experience will allow for further opportunities to network with an even wider range of people in the future.

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Appendice 1 :

S.W.O.T Analysis

STRENGTHS	Free venue – local amenities – community involvement – motivation
WEAKNESSES	Budget – lack of skills/knowledge in certain departments – time to plan ?
OPPORTUNITIES	New contacts/communications – feedback for future events – experience
THREATS	Poor publicity - lack of communication / interest – academic dates (right time to host it?)