Report of Professional Development

Background

Y Tŷ Poeth is an initiative intended to bring the work experience element of the Professional Development Module (HPMF5009) under internal control. In addition to offering work related roles that can be fitted around other coursework instead of having to take place within an inflexible timeframe such as Reading Week, it will also provide an illustrative business model for the Entrepreneurship Module that the same students undertake at Level 6.

About Y Tŷ Poeth

Y Tŷ Poeth is a ‘virtual’ digital agency and film production company in which UWTSD Filmmaking students will create high quality promotional content. It offers students the opportunity to develop their professional practice, to apply their experiences and existing skills to live briefs and to learn new skills by collaborative making in a professional environment. A successful execution of the brief will fulfil the coursework requirements of the Professional Development Module and add professional experience and achievement to the CVs they have produced in coursework.

Students were unanimous in accepting the Welsh identity proposed for the film. Y Tŷ Poeth is Welsh for ‘the hot house’, a term that in itself has multiple meanings. A hot house (or hothouse) can be a heated greenhouse in layman’s terms, a method of accelerated education above the expected level or a business method to increase the workflow of ideas at a starting point of a process. All three of these meanings were relevant to the students, as discussed in the initial meetings:

- the greenhouse meaning as Yr Egin is primarily a glass-structure building, and also to relay the idea of transparent and clear production
- the educational meaning as the students are internalising the work experience element of the module and providing not only what is expected of them on the module but also to provide a much more productive piece of work for themselves and the university in a short period of time
- the business meaning as Y Tŷ Poeth serves as a new initiative that is being accelerated with plenty of ideas from the students in hope that it can continue operating in years to come

The Welsh identity was decided upon to proudly brand itself from a Welsh community from Carmarthen as well as promote the bilingual identity the university has built for itself.

If the initial experiment proves successful, Y Tŷ Poeth could be incorporated as a legal entity. In the longer term, it might offer its services to external business clients on commercial terms and become based at Yr Egin.

Initial Brief

The Filmmaking and Adventure Filmmaking courses at Carmarthen are undersubscribed. Based upon their own experiences, students have reflected on why this is the case and why a group of their cohort chose to leave the course. They have considered the positive developments that have been implemented this year and the advantages and disadvantages of studying at Carmarthen to define a unique selling proposition (USP).

They considered the primary advantages to be small class sizes, tuition from enthusiastic academics and inspiring industry professionals and opportunities for one-to-one tuition. Adventure Filmmaking students also mentioned the location, with its host of story opportunities in the vicinity.

Those that attended open days felt that the enthusiasm and technical proficiency of the current course director was a key factor in their decision to study at Carmarthen. They felt that existing promotional material was corporate and uninspiring. They wanted to see more emphasis on the processes of filmmaking and less emphasis on buildings.

Working collaboratively, students will conceive, develop and execute an undergraduate recruitment campaign aimed at creating interest in finding out more about courses at Carmarthen amongst a tightly defined target market (in essence, people like them two years ago). The campaign will include a call to action, initially intended to generate applications for the Open Day on 29th February. The number of applications generated by the campaign will be a measure of its effectiveness. An objective is to develop and extend the campaign through to clearing in order to achieve a full, gender balanced and more diverse student intake in 2020.

Students have analysed social media campaigns from institutions offering film and media courses such as USW and Cardiff University, the film and television schools at Aberystwyth, Bournemouth and Bristol University, The London Film School, The London Film Academy, Central Film School, MetFilm School and NFTS (The National Film and Television School) in Beaconsfield and Leeds. They are also following the standout campaign from RADA (The Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts).

They are planning to produce a series of short films of 30 seconds to 1 minute duration with the straightforward call to action: STUDY FILMMAKING AT CARMARTHEN.

Their solutions, based on their research, are organised into four strands:

- interviews with tutors discussing the modules they teach
- behind the scenes films of students making films
- films about life Carmarthen and living on campus
- virals showing mastery of the medium, such as explaining aspect ratio to help people understand how to film events with a smartphone

The first batch of films will be completed before the end of this semester.

Media

The plan is for these short films to be placed as paid for advertisements on social media using the official UWTSD Filmmaking accounts.

Given that a Google search for “filmmaking courses in Wales” lists UWTSD third below a paid result from Bangor University and a result from USW, it would probably be unproductive to advertise with Google unless we wanted to compete with the London film schools in recruiting from England.

Students feel that Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are the channels most likely to reach people who share their interests. All three channels allow us to test different approaches with tight targeting: for example, people aged 17-20 with an interest in filmmaking or photography, in Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Powys. Given that the total universe in these areas is relatively small, we may wish to test extending targeting to include interests in related pastimes such as film, documentaries, storytelling, extreme sports etc, and extend our reach to the counties along the Welsh border and the South-West area of England.

To further the concept of Creative Carmarthen, it seems sensible to begin testing the campaign with impacts concentrated in Welsh speaking areas.

Given that the focus of our campaign is a call to action rather than simply raising awareness, bids per play or per action are likely to be the most cost effective media buying strategy.

Reflection

The students discussions of the Filmmaking and Adventure Filmmaking courses raised points that led to their decisions to study here. They brought up many good points about what the courses offer as well as the university and its location that could be promoted as USPs. The comparisons with similar courses at competing universities gave insight to a unique structure offered by this university that the students wanted to promote.

The sessions the students held in Yr Egin were very casual and allowed for easy distraction. Despite this the students managed to discuss and devise a strong production plan and organise suitable times to shoot interviews and B-roll footage to use in the advertising media. Whilst attendance to these sessions was lower than ideal, the students relayed information effectively between those who attended and those who did not and were able to involve those absent through online communication.

It could have been more productive by planning a structure to the pre-production meetings and choosing a less casual environment than Yr Egin's Y Gegin to gather to avoid distraction and encourage higher attendance. By having a plan and delegating research could have sped up the process and allowed a larger period to produce footage.

The questions the students had first considered in the interviews that were compiled and written up by Dean were decided less to the point than ideal and focused as initially planned on the tutors' story whereas it was now decided that the course modules were more relevant to be the feature of the interview. The students came up with new questions that were more direct and about the module content instead.

Following the plan devised in previous meetings the students met with and interviewed various tutors on the film and media courses, including Brett Aggersberg, the course coordinator, Helen Minghella and Geraint Radford, each to describe their background in the industry and their industry backgrounds and respective modules on the course. This gave the students a wide range of profiles and differing module content to create individual promotional videos for each module.