

Title: A briefing paper on multi-channel marketing at the XXXXXX.

Author and date: Marketing Officer, November 30th 2018.

Subject matter: This paper has been prepared for the Senior Management Team at the XXXXXX and will discuss the benefits, to the School and to its customers, of multi-channel marketing.

1 (a) Background Information

Organisation Name

The XXXXXX at XXXXXX.

Type of Organisation

The XXXXXX is one of eight schools that make up XXXXXX and benefits from the University's registered charity status. The School is an international body, with students from various nations across the world, and is run as a for-profit business, providing higher education in the form of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

Size of Organisation

The School employs 110 staff, comprising of professional services staff and academics with teaching responsibilities, and earns its income from higher education provision. The School currently has 1400 students, with 1100 undergraduates and 300 postgraduates. Working from the University's current fee structure, this gives the school an annual turnover of £15 million.

Products and Services

The School's products and services centre around the provision of higher education. It has two main teaching areas, XXXXXX, and offers teaching at the level of undergraduate and postgraduate. Currently, it offers 16 undergraduate degrees and 16 postgraduate degrees.

Customer Base

The customer base at the XXXXXX is of a business to customer (B2C) nature, with education being provided to students in return for set tuition fees. The School's customer base is mostly made up of an 18-25 age range, with an equal mix of male and female students. As the undergraduate law degrees on offer are 'qualifying' in the sense that they provide the recognised qualifications for students to enter in to legal practice in the UK, these are not widely recognised outside of the UK, meaning the School doesn't have a large proportion of international undergraduate students. Although, the postgraduate options provide areas of study, which are popular across Europe, meaning that the School's postgraduate student base has a large number of EU students. Part of the School's provision involves professional courses, which provide further training for those already in legal practice. The School educates a large number of police officers, as having a master's degree has now become a requirement for progression within local police forces.

Main Competitors

Due to their close proximity and similar teaching provision, Cardiff, Aberystwyth and Bangor are considered to be the School's main competitors. Due to its ability to provide distance learning nationwide, the XXXXXX is also a unique and strong competitor. The School is also placing itself against members of the Russell Group of Universities, to position itself as a high-quality education provider. Due to their prestige and teaching similarity, this would place Bristol, Nottingham, Cambridge and Oxford as key competitors. This situation differs slightly when looking at the School's postgraduate provision, as they are specialised degrees and largely centre around Shipping and Trade Law. As this is a niche area, there is only one main competitor, which would be Southampton University.

1 (b) Multi-channel marketing benefits that benefit the School

Multi-channel marketing can be defined as a process which “enables organisations to reach new markets and different segments, using more than a single marketing channel” (Fill, 2013, p633). The goal is to manage each channel well to provide “increased convenience and an improved experience” (Stone et al, 2002, p41) for each type of customer.

From consulting the following sources, it is clear the School must adopt a multi-channel approach to marketing; 71% of customers state that they “see repeated adverts” (Econsultancy, 2018) across multiple channels, and 71% also say that “advertisers are better at communicating with them” (Kantar Media, 2018). This shows customers are remaining receptive to receiving multiple messages on multiple channels and a multi-channel approach will help the School to meet its customers’ expectations.

For the purpose of this briefing paper, analysis of the School’s social media reach was undertaken. Typically, the School’s organic Twitter posts receive 1,000 impressions, with some paid-for Facebook posts reaching up to 500,000 people (see appendix item 1). It is clear from this insight that reach is a major benefit of adopting a multi-channel approach. As there are now over 3 billion social media users (Smart Insights, 2018), the potential reach of the School’s online marketing is huge. When combined with offline channels to enforce messaging, this can result in integrated multi-channel activities that have a reach that would not be possible using just one method of communication, for example, if the School relied solely on direct mail as it would have historically.

With the number of online channels always increasing, a wealth of customer information is now readily accessible. Marketers now have the ability to target customers effectively, which is the second benefit of adopting a multi-channel approach. The School advertises across a range of channels, from Facebook to Google, which collect data on their users. Data is also collected by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the School’s CRM system, which when combined, lead to a massive database of prospective customers, who can be marketed to based on their personal preferences and interests. By combining several channels, the School can tailor communications to each customer, and re-market using different channels. This links in with the earlier mention of customers responding to the repeating of messages across several channels.

Targeting tools also give the School other capabilities, which include the ability to analyse data, to provide useful insights into the target market, which is the third major benefit of multi-channel marketing. By collating data, a range of insights can be defined to influence future marketing. Tools such as Google Analytics can be used to study customers’ behaviours and by using tracking links to see if customers respond to calls to action, even printed materials can be assessed for their effectiveness. This can help to inform the School’s strategy, by giving detailed insights, so activities can be as informed and targeted as possible.

To give an example, students were recently encouraged to sign up to the School’s Open Day. Those who registered their interest online were sent a postcard, with a tracked registration link, and a printed voucher for a free coffee on campus, should they attend. As a result, the attendance rate of the Open Day rose by 10%, showing how effective even a simple multi-channel campaign can be.

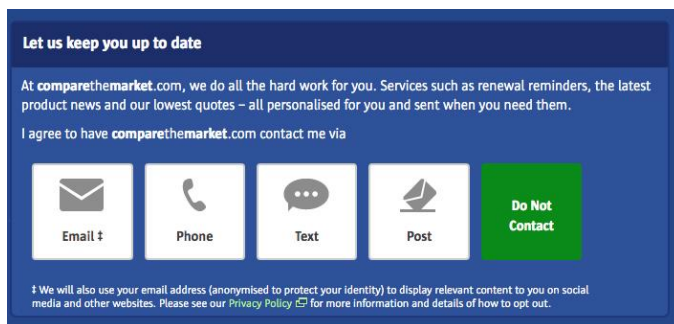
1 (c) Multi-channel marketing benefits that benefit the School’s customers

With the previous benefits to the organisation in mind, there are benefits to the School’s customers that can also be identified.

The rise of digital marketing is a direct response to the massive increase in internet users, with 4.1 billion people now using the internet (Statista, 2018). With a huge number of people viewing digital content, it became inevitable that the related legislation would be reformed. With recent changes such as GDPR being enforced, marketers are now more responsible than ever when it comes to managing customer data.

Each of the School's channels are now governed by GDPR and as such its customers can be sure that their data is handled lawfully. They are also able to manage their preferences, putting them in control of the communications they receive, which is the first customer benefit of multi-channel marketing.

An example of this would be the inclusion of 'opt-in' questions being posed, which allow customers to choose what communications they wish to receive, instead of being bombarded with information that may not be useful. One example would be the below question now posed by Compare the Market, when obtaining an insurance quote.



The image shows a blue-themed opt-in form titled "Let us keep you up to date". The text explains that the user will receive services like renewal reminders and product news. Below this, it asks for agreement to be contacted via various channels. There are four white buttons with icons: "Email" (envelope), "Phone" (phone handset), "Text" (speech bubble), and "Post" (envelope with paper). To the right of these is a green button labeled "Do Not Contact". At the bottom, a small disclaimer states that the email address will also be used for social media content, with a link to the Privacy Policy.

Compare the Market opt-in questions, satisfying GDPR regulations.

As mentioned earlier, customers are now accustomed to receiving multiple messages on topics which interest them. This includes the School's customers, who now have useful messages channelled towards them, which are tailored to their needs. These messages supply them with a great deal of information, empowering them to make an informed choice and saving them time in having to conduct research, which is the second benefit of multi-channel marketing.

To give an example of this, the School currently uses the Google Display Network (GDN), which understands the preferences of users and advertises to them on appropriate websites. This gives customers an integrated and seamless experience, as they will receive information on products which could interest them, while viewing associated content, all in one place. This will then be reinforced on other channels, such as social media, to provide the customers with as much information as possible, ensuring they make informed choices.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, it is recommended that the School continues to implement a multi-channel approach, to meet customer expectations, increase its reach and targeting of customers and improve its future activities by analysing its data effectively. Customers would benefit from the School using a multi-channel approach as they will be put in control of how their data is managed, and will receive a wealth of personalised and useful information saving them time in having to conduct research themselves.

Understanding the behaviours of the School's customers

November 30th 2018

This report has been prepared by the Marketing Officer for the Senior Management Team.

Terms of reference

This report will:

- Assess the School's online and offline marketing communications
- Analyse changes in customer behaviour brought about by the digital environment
- Determine how buyer personas could be of value

Procedure

The School's communications were assessed on their strengths and weaknesses. Research was undertaken into the behaviour of customers in relation to the changing digital environment. Finally, the concept of buyer personas was investigated.

Executive Summary

- The School currently implements online and offline communications, with varying degrees of success
- The rise of GDPR, multi-screening and customer trends will need to be monitored
- Implementing buyer personas will be key going forward

Findings

2 (a) The effectiveness of the integration of online and offline communications

The School's online channels include: social media, the website and direct mail (email). Its offline channels include: direct mail (postal) and print advertising.

Social Media – The School has a reasonable following, with higher engagement levels than its competitors (see appendix item 2). The School follows a structured calendar, ensuring regular and interesting content, explaining its high engagement levels.

However, content is repeated across several channels, meaning each channel's strengths aren't fully utilised. This would have a negative effect on those following multiple channels. As mentioned earlier, customers can now easily change their preferences, which the School needs to monitor.

"If you're short-changing your followers on one platform by sharing content that was optimized for another, they're going to notice. Seeing a post with a cut-off caption or a weirdly cropped image looks lazy at best, and spammy at worst." (Hootsuite, 2018).

The Website – This is a potential sticking point, as the content management system hasn't been updated recently, meaning the website is behind its competitors in usability and aesthetics.

Although, the School utilises its social media channels well, including links in its posts to drive website traffic.

Direct Mail (email) – The School regularly emails students with relevant information. Open rates are high, showing the content is useful and engaging. These emails channel traffic to the website, enabling re-marketing using social media, ensuring an integrated approach.

Although, central teams also email potential students, and if a student shows interest in multiple subjects, other schools will also contact them, meaning they will be bombarded. This could prove challenging due to the new GDPR and the ability customers have to change their preferences.

Direct Mail (postal) – Postal mail campaigns have been well executed previously. Post cards have been used to encourage Open Day attendance, and congratulatory letters have been sent to offer holders, with invites to visit days.

With our online culture, students receive far less postal mail, so there is great nostalgia to be gained from using this channel. Although, these activities have not previously been well integrated with other communications.

Print Advertising – The School's print advertising includes local newspapers and trade magazines. These can be useful for accessing customers who are less inclined to use online channels, and offer a sense of legitimacy, as trusted sources.

However, print advertising is also often seen as a stand-alone channel of communication, which is not well integrated.

2 (b) Three key changes in online customer behaviour brought about by the digital environment

The rise of a digital culture has instigated several key changes in online customer behaviour, which have had a profound effect on the School.

By 2018, information-related crime had become such an issue that the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) instigated the implementation of The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The magnitude of the issue is made clear by this statistic: "In 2015, identity theft accounted for more than 50% of all global data breaches, and about 40% of all compromised records...The services sector had the highest number of identities exposed that year – nearly 260 million." (Statista, 2018).

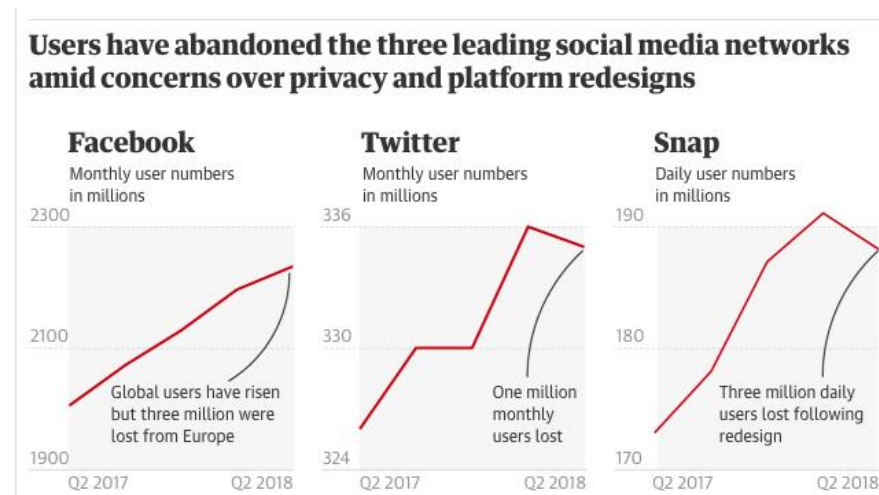
These regulations have made it simple for customers to control the use of their data: "Telling people they have the right to withdraw their consent at any time, and how to do this. It must be as easy to withdraw as it was to give consent." (ICO, 2017, p.8).

GDPR being enforced resulted in a massive change in customer behaviour. Customers are now fully aware of their powers in relation to their data and the School needs to adapt to this. The School must give its customers the ability to regulate the use of their data and must implement engaging marketing activities to ensure they remain engaged. It also needs to horizon-scan for new channels, to ensure it remains at the cutting-edge of its sector.

Another major behavioural change has been the rise in multi-screening. "52% report that it's somewhat or very likely that they're using another device while watching television. With each screen added to the mix, that percentage rises, with 60% of smartphone users (three screens) and 65% of tablet owners (four screens) saying that multi-device use is the norm while watching TV." (Econsultancy, 2012).

This offers a new range of challenges. If customers are consistently multi-screening then the School must remain relevant by producing visually-orientated content. Customers will expect to receive information in a screen-friendly format, through images, video and visually appealing content. As such, the School must give resource to producing such content, reinforcing its messaging across multiple channels and screens.

The digital world that we now live in develops on a daily basis. With the emergence of new channels comes the emergence of new trends. This year, unbelievably, for the first time, Facebook has seen a decline in its monthly users:



Changing social media trends (The Guardian, 2018).

These trends are another key change in customer behaviour within the HEI sector and mean the School must remain proactive, horizon-scanning to ensuring it remains knowledgeable on its target market. Market research must become a regular activity and engaging directly with the target market will be key in reviewing trends and ensuring the School uses relevant channels.

2 (c) How the development of buyer personas for key customer segments could be of value

Buyer personas allow organisations to conduct research to identify the norms and trends associated with their target customer, including their age, interests, frustrations and influences. Using personas would allow the School to intelligently define and segment its target customers, using these visualisations to inform its activities: “A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer based on market research and real data about your existing customers.” (Kusnitz, 2018).

Buyer personas also “guide marketers, enabling them to gain in decision-making confidence in nearly every aspect of marketing, from content to product design, lead generation to business strategy and sales enablement to segmentation.” (Chaffey, 2018).

By identifying personas, the School can tailor its marketing activities to best suit its key segments and can satisfy each stage of the buying cycle (Kingsnorth, 2016).

If the School fully understands its customer segments, it can market to them on relevant channels, creating **awareness** of its product offering. By utilising channels, which are identified by the personas, it can reinforce its messaging and aid customers in **researching the product**. Customers will receive information, in the form of suitable videos, imagery or case studies from like-minded individuals, satisfying the **peer review** element of the buying cycle. When each of these elements are combined into an integrated multi-channel campaign, directed at a persona or segment, they should positively influence sales, resulting in a successful **final decision**.

Successful implementation of personas can also help the School to satisfy the 5 Ss of internet marketing (Chaffey and Smith, 2002). The implementation of personas will allow the School to create tailored content, which will reach an engaged audience, allowing it to efficiently **sell** its products. If the School fully understands its customers, it can tailor its activities to their needs,

achieving a higher level of engagement, and **serving** its customers with useful information. When these connections are made, the School can target its audience, based on its personas, **speaking** to them directly and creating personalised and tailored communications. This, in turn, ensures the School's activities are far more efficient and marketers use their time to better effect, **saving** on costs. Finally, by understanding the needs of its target market, the School can add **sizzle** to its offering, communicating on new channels, defined by the preferences of the buyer personas.

Conclusion and recommendations

The School currently employs online and offline communications successfully. Although, to maximise the impact and reinforce its messages, it needs to work harder on its strategy and planning, to ensure its communications are fully integrated and as effective as possible.

It is crucial that the School looks at defining buyer personas, as they will focus its marketing activities. Personas offer a visualisation of the target customer at each touch point, which helps to maintain a level of accuracy, as colleagues will be completely aware of who they are targeting, how they are targeting them, and what channels are most efficient, ensuring the maximum return on investment.

3 (a)

The School will need to set SMART objectives to continually improve its activities. As mentioned in the briefing paper, if the School was to implement an integrated multi-channel approach, it would help it to improve the reach of its marketing and target customers more efficiently. These objectives will be targeted at the School's largest segment of customers, which are in the 18-25 age range.

With these being key areas for improvement, the School needs to achieve the following aims:

- To increase its social media followers on all its currently used channels by 25% in the next year
- To increase the number of website users from the School's target segment by 10% in the next 6 months

For the School to increase its social media following it will need to plan its activities, implementing a thorough content calendar of engaging content. With multi-screening increasing so rapidly, as mentioned earlier in the report, it will be essential that the School produces content for a range of devices.

To increase its followers, it is essential that the School implements the RACE model (Smart Insights, 2017). This model is perfect for social media, as increasing the quality and regularity of content will increase the **reach**, which will encourage a larger number of people to respond to calls to action and **act**. If the content is high quality, they will **convert** to followers on social media, who can then **engage** with future posts or create user generated content.

The School has historically repeated the same content across multiple platforms, which needs to change as customers are consuming content at an ever-increasing rate. It must identify which channels are best for which content, using the analytics and insights available.

Regular, visually appealing messaging must be maintained across the channels that support such content, which would be Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat. These channels will be supported by offline channels, with links to social media accounts being printed on all materials, guiding even offline customers to follow the School online.

As part of increasing its efforts made on social media, the School can also create posts, which target certain users, defined by a range of buyer personas. The customers who match these personas will receive personalised and useful information across both online and offline channels, satisfying the customer benefits outlined earlier in the report, and ensuring they are driven towards following the School's social media.

If the School manages to increase its following on social media, this will also enable it to increase the number of its target market using its website.

The School can use its social media accounts to drive traffic to the website by including links in its posts, encouraging the audience to gain more information from its website, ensuring its activities feed into both objectives. The website will need to undergo a major overhaul, to ensure it is far more user friendly, which should also boost its traffic.

The School can utilise its sources of information, including CRM systems, to target customers in offline direct mail campaigns. These can range in use, from inviting customers to visit Open Days, to

sending congratulatory letters to offer holders. All printed materials will contain links directing users to the website to book a place or accept their offer online.

As soon as they have done this, they can be tracked and re-marketed to, ensuring they continue to use the website, keeping the numbers of the School's target market at an all-time high, meeting both of its objectives.

3 (b)

For the School to achieve its two objectives, it is recommended that the School implement an integrated multi-channel digital communications mix, supported by offline communications. The digital mix will include: social media, the website and digital direct mail, which will be complimented by offline direct mail and print advertising.

Social media – The School's social media activity will be essential in achieving its objectives. It will need to drastically change the way it looks at content, producing unique content for each channel, to ensure viewership levels constantly increase. By incorporating links into its campaigns, the School can also drive traffic to its website, helping to achieve both of its objectives.

Social media is also a massive opportunity for the School to be innovative, using new technologies to remain relevant to its audience, combining both online and offline elements. The School could use Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality, which walk the line between online and offline communications. By using examples such as virtual Open Days, the School can reach a whole new audience of people who may not be able to visit its campus and can encourage users to share this content on social media and view more information on the website.

The School could also implement new platforms, such as Zapper, which would encourage the use of multi-screening – using one device to scan another, revealing new interactive content on the second device, which would not be possible with one screen. This new technology also has a great share factor and would encourage online conversation.

The website – If the School is going to increase the number of users on its website, it will need to undergo a radical overhaul, which will include looking at the Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) (Standberry, 2017). This will be the easiest way to increase users, as there are quick amendments, which have an almost instant effect on its ranking, such as looking at key word density.

The School can also look at implementing goals, to monitor its Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO) (Ratcliff, 2014). One such example would be including prominent calls to action, directing users of the website to follow the School on social media, helping to achieve both goals in synergy.

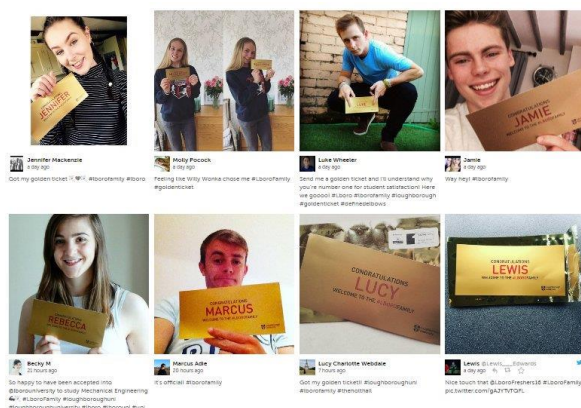
By implementing both the social media and website improvements effectively, the School will also be achieving the customer benefits outlined in the earlier briefing paper, as the School will be providing users with regular, varying and useful information, in a way which respects their online data choices and preferences.

Digital Direct Mail – In order to achieve its communications objectives, the School will also need to implement regular digital direct mail, through email campaigns. These can be used to provide useful snippets to prospective customers, which could potentially be viewed on multiple screens and can direct to both the School's social media and website to gain more information. It will be key that these communications are well thought out, in line with the needs of the customer, so they are not

bombarded with information. They will also need to visually fit with the School's other communications, extending its integrated multichannel approach to an omnichannel level.

Print Direct Mail – If the School is to fulfil its objectives, it will also need to implement offline activities, to complement its online channels. The use of printed direct mail can offer a real sense of nostalgia and speciality if used correctly. By implementing light-hearted and novel communications, the School can mail out merchandise to its customer base, with instructions on how to share photos of the gifts online, using a hashtag and tagging the School's accounts. Elements of sales promotion will also be introduced, by running competitions, with the winner being selected from a pool of people who have followed the School, helping it to boost its social media followers.

A particularly effective campaign was Loughborough University's 'golden tickets', which encouraged students to share photos of their golden ticket to university, creating nostalgia in relation to their childhood, resulting in numerous shares online.



Loughborough University's golden ticket campaign.

This can then be followed up with a web presence for the competition, with winners being announced in a press release, driving target users to the website, helping the School to achieve both objectives.

Print Advertising – Many of the School's target market are influenced by their parents. If the School was to carry out relevant research into which publications would be most appropriate, it can place advertising in such publications, which would in turn convince the parents of potential students to encourage their children to visit the School's website and social media channels. Marketing activities are not always black and white, so it will be key to think outside the box and influence the influencers of the School's target market.

In conclusion, if these online and offline channels are used to incorporate an integrated and synergised multichannel and omnichannel campaign, with clear actions and clear objectives, the School can drive traffic to its website and encourage a mass of new followers on its social media, achieving both of its targets in a timely manner.

3 (c)

The School will need to implement the above communications mix and monitor its activities, to ensure the campaigns are on track to meet their objectives. This will allow the School to either maintain its momentum, or make changes, if things aren't going to plan.

There are numerous tools, services and metrics which can be monitored, so it is essential that the School pays attention to the most relevant and useful: “the volume of data available today should make it possible to find metrics and analytic opportunities that take advantage of your unique insights...provide proof of progress, and lay a foundation for more sophisticated approaches to tracking marketing ROI in the future.” (Court et al, 2012).

One of the first objectives must be to improve the look and usability of the website. As part of this, the written content needs to be assessed. The School currently uses a Content Management System called T4. T4 has SEO scoring metrics, which can be reviewed to ensure the School’s pages are able to rank as highly as possible and gain organic traffic. Metrics such as readability, key word density and trust score are measured. These refer to the standard of the English used, the number of key words used, and how well trusted the website is. Implementing ‘backlinks’, which are links from external sources, will help improve the trust score, as this shows that the content can be trusted, and Google will rank it more highly.

The School currently uses software called SiteImprove, which can be used to run reports and measure the number of spelling mistakes, broken links and 404 errors on the site. By correcting these, and running monthly reports, the usability of the site will be increased, improving the overall customer experience.

When the site is improved, the School can run regular reports on its performance, to ensure the usability remains high. At this point, the School can start to analyse customers’ use of the site, to understand the demographic of its users and how they use the content. Google Analytics will be invaluable at this point, as it provides information on the level of traffic and its sources.

Google Analytics also contains more in-depth tools, which can be adopted over time. The School can look at customer journeys, understanding the routes users are taking to navigate through the website and can implement Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO). If the School aims to drive traffic from its social media channels to the website, and vice versa, it can put calls to action in place on the website and use CRO monitoring tools to see how many users click on the links. It can also use split testing to put bespoke customer landing pages in place and find out which designs are most effective. Not only does this give valuable insight into the changing behaviour of customers, as identified in the earlier report, it also improves usability, ensuring customers are using their preferred pages.

Relating to the communications mix, the School plans to use direct mail as a source of traffic. By using systems such as DotMailer or MailChimp, these communications can be analysed. Heat maps can be produced, to see which links are working best, and by using the Google and Facebook Pixel data, users can be tracked to understand their journey. Programmes such as DotMailer give a wealth of information, from open rates to click through rates. This will be very useful as it will help the School to see which direct mail campaigns have been the most effective, allowing it to tailor its future communications to its customers’ preferences.

The School’s social media accounts give it access to a mass of information. Each post can be assessed on its impressions, views and percentage of engagement. Channels, such as Facebook and Twitter show where in the world the School’s followers are, and what demographics have engaged with their posts most, to see what content works best for different audiences.

Facebook sends out regular communications to account holders to keep them updated on the number of followers their page has. It will be key to review these communications, to assess

whether the School's activities are having the desired effect when it comes to increasing the number of followers.

When each of these tools and metrics are used in synergy, the School will have access to a mass of information on its website and social media users. It will be able to easily and effectively monitor the reactions and behaviours of its users, building a detailed picture of what content works best. By monitoring these metrics regularly, the School can inform its activities and tailor its communications to increase the numbers of desired users using its website and following it on social media. When this is achieved, the School can build on these growing numbers by continuing to implement multi-channel campaigns with consistent messaging and approaches across all channels, to continue its success.

Appendix

1.

Impressions	Engagements	Engagement rate
2,440	23	0.9%

Statistics for a typical organic Twitter post, from the School.

Reach	Impressions
539,960	1,424,659

Statistics for a paid-for Facebook post, from the School.

2.

 1,074 people reached

Boost Post

 Jack Chen, Sarfaraz Hussain and 29 others

2 shares

Typical engagement with a XXXXXX post: 1074 people reached, 31 likes and 2 shares.

 7

1 share

 Like

 Comment

 Share



Typical engagement with a Cardiff University Law School post: 7 likes and 1 share.

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