Unit 3: Developing a Communications Plan

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

Customer communications is a key component in the overall marketing strategy of an organisation. Different types of organisations use different forms of communication to reach their customers. Increasingly, they are implementing a range of communication techniques to achieve their end goal of boosting awareness or revenue. In this unit, you will look at the processes involved in creating a successful communications plan. Learners will explore the purpose of marketing communications and the range of tools available. Learners will prepare a customer communications plan and measure the plan's effectiveness.

You should employ a wide variety of teaching and learning techniques in order to encourage the exploration of all aspects of customer communications. Learners will have opportunities to work independently and collaboratively, and will develop their skills of research, analysis, evaluative techniques and written and verbal communication. You can involve employers in the delivery of this unit if there are local opportunities to do so. Visits from guest speakers from different marketing roles, where learners can ask questions, will add interest as well as consolidate their learning.

Delivering the content areas

To support your learners' success in this unit your delivery must cover all content areas. You should develop your learners' ability to demonstrate their understanding of the content terms and language, applying their knowledge to a range of different businesses.

Content area A introduces learners to the customer communications process. It explores factors involved in developing communications and examines the advantages and disadvantages of different communication tools.

Content area B requires learners to plan and create customer communications for a specific product or service. Learners will develop a communications plan as well as communication materials that meet set objectives.

Content area C involves presenting customer communications for a specific product or service. Learners will present the plan, including the materials created, using appropriate technical language and formatting. Learners will respond to an audience and reflect on the effectiveness of the plan for improvements.

Learners will use research skills extensively, supported by tutor input, to source relevant information on customer communications. There are numerous websites that give practical information into planning and creating communications. You should direct learners towards reliable information sources and suitable organisations and discourage them from using Wikipedia as a source of information. Your learners could use websites from a range of organisations within the public, private, voluntary and not-for-profit sectors, in order to establish the characteristics of different types of customer communications and the effects on the buying decision making process.

You may find that your learners have 'first-hand' experience of different decision-making processes as customers, as well as being recipients of business communications, and these can

be drawn on for learning activities. There are many useful videoclips available on YouTube to provide a visual insight into the communications of many different types of organisations, and used selectively they can support and enhance delivery.

Educational visits and guest speakers can be a highly beneficial way of building a foundation for learners when conducting classroom-based research. It is possible to organise visits that do not incur too many costs, for example guest speakers from marketing and communications agencies or in-house. Other employer involvement for Unit 3 can involve audience members in the form of marketing professionals.

Many marketing organisations have employees who are willing to provide talks tailored to the needs of educational groups. A vast number of organisations also have a section of their website dedicated to educational resources, which can be accessed free of charge, and which can greatly enhance the learning experience.

Learners should be introduced to the wide range of technology used in the marketing industry. It would be beneficial for learners to develop an understanding of the rapid technological developments within the industry over recent years as these impact on marketing communication opportunities.

Some content areas in this unit overlap with other units in the qualification, for example Unit 2: Customer Communications and Unit 7: Generating Customer Loyalty. You could coordinate delivery to ensure the content of overlapping units are addressed in a complementary way, fully meeting the delivery requirements of the respective units, without undue repetition.

Assessment guidance

Unit 3 is assessed using a set assignment, an assessment set by Pearson. The Pearson Set Assignment will be assessed internally by the centre using the unit Assessment Criteria detailed in the qualification specification. The assignment will be sampled by the Standards Verifier as part of the standards verification annual centre visit.

Conditions of supervision The Pearson Set Assignment should be undertaken in conditions that assure the authenticity of outcome. This may require supervision. We advise that the Pearson Set Assignment be completed in sessions that come to a total of 10 hours. The Pearson Set Assignment should not be shared with learners prior to the start of the assessment period. Teachers/tutors are responsible for security of the Pearson Set Assignment and materials.

Outcomes for Submission Learners must complete this set assignment on a computer using word processing software. Learners must save their work regularly and ensure that all materials can be identified as their work. Learners must submit their own, independent work as detailed in the set assignment, together with notes prepared. Each learner must complete an authentication sheet.

Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit.
Activities are provided in preparation for the internal assessment.

Unit 3: Customer Communications

Introduction

The delivery of this unit provides an opportunity for learners to be involved in the creative world of customer communications. It provides the tools, knowledge and skills to plan communications, develop creative materials and present communications plans to an audience.

You could approach this unit in a number of ways. However, the unit has been structured to develop and build on underpinning knowledge. It is likely that once the underpinning knowledge and understanding have been addressed for each content area, learners are able to prepare for the completion and presentation of the communications plan.

While it is appreciated that much of the delivery of this unit will take place within the centre, there are numerous opportunities for employer engagement, e.g. through educational visits, the use of guest speakers, and the use of employees for example as a presentation audience, asking questions or giving feedback.

Learners will require the use of IT facilities, including internet access for carrying out essential research and to cover all content areas independently, including the customer communication presentation.

Content area A: Investigate the customer communications process for a specific product or service

- Content area A1 introduces the customer communications process. Visual learners will be supported by the use of diagrams and flowcharts that explain communication models, including AIDA and DAGMAR. Learners have the opportunity to explore how businesses use these models in understanding and influencing customers as they enter the buying process, from generating brand awareness with advertising, to convincing customers using product preferences. Both internal and external types of communication will be included.

- Content area A2 deals with factors that are involved in developing customer communications. A teacher-led discussion could include business case studies for introducing internal and external influences on developing communications. For example, levels of finance and a trained workforce for internal influences and competitor action and technological change for external influences. Learners could work in groups to explore the impact of these. Leaners will also consider marketing budgets, resources and time factors and could be given

- Content area A3 introduces learners to the customer communication mix. There are plenty of examples online of each element for learners to research. Consider giving small groups a business case study for applying the communication mix, for example details from their public relations and sales promotions. These can be discussed and compared in a feedback session.
  A3 also covers communication mix tools. The invitation of a guest speaker to discuss the different types of communication tools is an interesting way to bring real examples and experience into the classroom. Most businesses use all three tools: mass communication (e.g. web, apps or TV); online communication (eg. email, online forums or live chat) and offline communication (e.g. networking, print advertising or direct mail). This could be a good opportunity for learners to not only gain a detailed knowledge of tools, but to discuss their similarities and differences. Learners will be expected to apply communication tools, as well as the customer communication mix, to a specific product or service in their coursework.

- Content area A4 covers advantages and disadvantages of different customer communications tools. Firstly, above-the-line and blow-the-line approaches are considered. Learners could be given a case study and work in pairs to investigate the use of different tools. For example, advertising on TV is an above-the-line tool. It clearly reaches a wide target audience but at a great cost. Alternatively, direct emailing is a below-the-line tool and can be a welcome direct point of contact on a personal level, however this advantage may be limited to small businesses.

- This content needs to include both online and offline tools. Learners could use examples from A3 and, with additional research, set out the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Content area B: Plan and create customer communications for a specific product or service

- Content area B1 provides a comprehensive list of content to be included in the communications plan. Learners could spend some time in small groups or pairs discussing and finalising their individual choices for a specific product or service. Learners need to be clear about the objectives of the plan as they will be expected to make connections between objectives and other areas of content, such as the message and the communications mix.
- Present learners a range of objectives and remind them that not only should objectives steer the plan but will be used to measure and evaluate its effectiveness in Content area C3.
- There are some good video clips for teaching the importance of a strong marketing messages and rationale and if segmentation and targeting has been taught in previous units this can be drawn on here. For constraints, risks and contingency planning, groups could be given a case study for exploring their importance. For example, using figures for a limited budget or plotting marketing activities on a time scale. Learners should have the opportunity to carry out their own research into the importance of using measuring and evaluating criteria and this could feed into a whole class discussion.
- Content area B3 introduces the creation of communications materials in line with communication plans. For developing ideas, learners could work in pairs using diagrams to enable visualisation and refining. Tools for creating communications are also covered here and learners could continue to work together investigating different possibilities for using software, hardware and traditional tools, discussing the advantages and disadvantages for each. For creating communication materials, learners would benefit from being presented with a wide range of different option using organisation case studies. Learners need to keep in mind the need to ensure that all materials created meet set communication plan objectives.

Content area C: Present customer communications for a specific product or service
- Content area C1 introduces learners to presenting of their plans. Learners need to consider the audience, and a teacher led discussion of the types of questions an audience might ask, along with possible responses, would be recommended. Learners could also extend audience engagement with handouts. The presentation itself needs to be well-structured with marketing language, correct formatting and timings. Learners should have the opportunity to practice their presentations with suitable software and support materials, such as a script. This should help to ensure all key information is included and skills are practised before final presentations take place. In addition, learners need to consider contingencies, for example creating back-up copies of materials.   - Content area C2 covers measuring and evaluating the customer communications plan. Small groups could carry out research into the types of data that can be used to determine if objectives have been met. For example an objective of increased demand could involve sales data. C2 considers costs and learners could be presented with typical investment costs for media and resources etc. along with expected income, and be asked to calculate the key performance indicator ROI.   - Content area C3 introduces learners to the tools for measuring the effectiveness of the plan. This is an opportunity for learners to thoroughly research online, offline, financial and non-financial measurements and select the most appropriate metrics for their plan. This could generate a discussion on what exactly these metrics reveal, for example the online and non-financial metric of website traffic can give length of visiting time and repeat visitors, which could link for example to an objective relating to digital engagement.   - C3 also covers the evaluation of the plan. Small groups could focus on two factors each, discussing and agreeing on the opportunities for evaluation. For example, 'customer focus and understanding' as an evaluating factor will involve weighing up the extent to which the plan has targeted the correct audience. The responses could open up a whole class discussion. For the concluding activities, learners could work individually to assess the strengths of their plans as well as the areas for development using specific examples. This will include an evaluation of the plan, materials and presentation as well as evaluating objectives. Suggestions for improvements will then be put forward.

Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit gives the foundation for learners to study all other units in marketing, including:

- Unit 1: Marketing Principles
- Unit 6: Branding Products and Services
- Unit 5: Branding Products and Services
- Unit 7: Generating Customer Loyalty

Textbooks

Bevan J, Coupland-Smith H, Dransfield R, Goymer J, Richards C (2010), *Business Level 3 Book 1*, Pearson (ISBN 9788120350588) – gives a useful introduction to communication terminology

Bovee C, Thill J *Business Communication Today* (2017) Pearson (ISBN-13 9780273761463) – gives useful chapters on planning and digital media

Egan, John (2019), *Marketing Communications* Sage Third Edition (ISBN 9781526446893)

Blogs

www.freshdesk.com - customer communication and engagement
www.hostpapa.co.uk - effective communication online
www.scripturaengage - why communication is crucial

Websites

www.smartinsights.com - segmentation targeting and positioning
www.yieldify.com - segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP)
www.yotpo.com - decision making process
www.springfair.com - influencing factors on decision making
www.searchenginewatch.com - the influence of social media
www.tutor2U - internal and external influences on marketing
www.marketingdonut.com - sponsorship is good for business
www.business2community.com - offline marketing
www.yokellocal.com - 5 ways digital marketing helps business to grow
www.rightsourcemarketing.com - core messaging
www.hullabaloo.co.uk - marketing communication top tips
www.create.piktochart.com - creating materials
www.trendhumter.com - 30 audio marketing campaigns
www.themarketiingcentre.com - how to measure brand awareness
www.hootsuite.com - measure social media engagement

Other resources

Plickers (https://get.plickers.com) is a SMART device app that promotes an imaginative way for tutors to complete formative assessments

Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for tutors to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that tutor's bookmark useful websites and consider enabling learners to access them through the school/college intranet.