Widening Participation Service Design

innovation | participation | experience

Social Marketing Strategy for Widening Participation in Tertiary Education   in Low SES Communities: Integrated Marketing Communication Plan

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The project

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The Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC Plan)
- Professor Gayle Kerr, Queensland University of Technology

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Glossary

Cohorts: Groups that are under-represented in higher education are the focus of widening participation in this project, including those from low socio-economic (low SES) status backgrounds, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.

Indigenous: Please be aware that in this publication the terms 'Indigenous', 'Indigenous Australians' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and its abbreviation ATSI are used interchangeably. No disrespect is intended.

Personas: A persona is a research-based profile which represents variations within a target group with distinct motivations and behaviours.

Service design: Service design is an interdisciplinary process to solve a problem, a new way of thinking and a set of evolving tools and techniques that can be applied to industries such as retail, banking, transportation, healthcare and education. Service design is user-centred, co-creative, sequenced, evidenced and holistic with an ability to provide solutions and experiences. Importantly, service design can be harnessed for social impact.

Social marketing: "*A behaviour change approach that seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviours that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. Social Marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, target markets and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition-sensitive and segmented social change programmes that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable.*" (Consensus definition by the International Social Marketing Association, the European Social Marketing Association and the Australian Association of Social Marketers.)

Stakeholders: In the context of this strategy, the term 'stakeholders' refers to the two key groups who will be needed to provide content, tertiary institutions and employers.

Target markets: A sub-group of the market who have similar needs and wants for the product/service but can be differentiated from other target markets. The marketing mix strategy is different for each target market to reflect their different needs. For this project the market segmentation is done across cohorts and consists of four target markets:

1. High school students (Years 7 to 12).
2. Recent school leavers (who left school in the last five years with or without completing Senior studies and have not yet enrolled in tertiary education).
3. School staff (those who advise students and their parents about post-school options).
4. Parents and community members (who support young people in their post-school options).

Tertiary education: Where tertiary education is mentioned in this report it is referring to high-level VET (AQF 6 and above; Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas) and undergraduate (Bachelor degree) programs.

Widening Participation: Widening participation in higher education is an Australian Government strategic priority aimed at increasing the proportion of people from traditionally underrepresented groups (particularly low SES and Indigenous) who undertake higher education. Funding is provided through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) for programs which raise the awareness, aspirations and educational attainment of prospective students; assist with access to higher education; and support retention and success.

Acronyms

AQF: Australian Qualifications Framework

ATSI: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

CALD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

HEPPP   Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program

JCU: James Cook University

LSES: Low socio-economic status

NCSEHE: The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (Curtin University)

NPP: National Priorities Pool

QUT: Queensland University of Technology

SEO: Search Engine Optimisation

TAC: Tertiary Admission Centre

TAFE: Technical and Further Education

USC: University of the Sunshine Coast

VET: Vocational Education and Training

WP: Widening Participation

Executive Summary

Although a lot of effective WP resources have been developed, not all target markets are equally well-served, not all resources have been effectively evaluated and not all target markets are aware of where to go to find these resources.

This IMC Plan seeks to address this problem by formalising four objectives:

1. To empower many different target markets and stakeholders to find relevant and useful information and support on the transition to tertiary education

2. To establish guidelines of best practice for the creation of content and events on the transition to tertiary education

3. To grow and manage an online community and outreach events to support target markets and stakeholders and grow advocates

4. To track target market and stakeholders behaviour and optimise content and events to ensure strong return on investment

To deliver these objectives, the proposed IMC strategy is "same but different". The idea would be to bring together the different stakeholders and resources with one common, memorable portal, yet to personalise the information and experience for each of the users. Same online portal, yet different information and experience for each user. The strength of this plan is its focus on personalisation and targeting in order to direct stakeholders to the portal and to deliver rich and relevant, personalised content to the very different target markets. This would be supported by strong, face-to-face, people-rich interaction through outreach programs and events, announced and amplified through the portal.

Rather than delivering a one-size-fits-all program, the intent of this plan is to purpose-build a common and easy-to-find portal tailored to very different needs. Based on the interviews and service design workshops, it aligns key messages and preferred digital platforms to each of the four high school personas, four recent leaver personas, four parent personas and three high school teaching staff personas.

The 'same but different' portal should be implemented in a seven-phase process across a two-year period. The plan should begin by establishing guidelines of best practice (phase 1), then use these guidelines to facilitate the development of rich and relevant resources and programs to the different target markets (phase 2). It should then build and manage an online community portal (phase 3). The content and experience delivered on this portal would then be personalised for each of the personas described above (phase 4). Once built, users could be directed to the portal using strong search strategy, combining both paid and organic search (phase 5). Users would also be encouraged to access the portal through the recommendation of advocates and influencers they trust. Loyal portal users would in turn advocate for the portal, growing its membership (phase 6). Finally, user behaviour should be tracked using the individual identifiers to see how different stakeholders and their different personas use the portal across time (phase 7). Basic metrics would provide information by personas, across time and different decision phases and devices in order to optimise the content and use of the portal.

Supporting this implementation, four tactics should be will be to acquire, engage, retain/convert and advocate. Portal members should be acquired through search, influencers and events and engaged with relevant content, timely responses to user-generated content and announcements of relevant events. Portal users should be

rewarded with information and advice and seeing the value of this, become loyal members. This, in turn, should encourage them to share the site and the information with their peers, creating advocates for the portal.

The aim of this IMC plan is not just to propose how to deliver the resources the different stakeholders need, but to recommend continual optimisation of the portal to improve those resources, grow use and amplify advocacy. Therefore, it is recommended that monitoring is on-going and instant, including usability reports which track use, including time spent on site and the sites users came from and migrated to. This should then inform retargeting strategy, content development for the portal and provide real value to users encouraging them to return again and again. Same URL, same relevancy, same easy-to-find information managed and optimised for each of the very different target markets.

Background and Purpose
Integrated Marketing Communication Plan

The social marketing strategy should be activated and optimised through the implementation of an IMC Plan. The purpose of this IMC Plan would be to provide the strategic direction for the communication, based on research and consumer insight. This should begin with the definition of the IMC problem, the development of objectives to solve the problem, the 'big idea', the development of key messages and how the plan will be implemented, optimised and measured. Notably, this IMC Plan does not include the creative ideas or the media strategy as these are developed by an advertising agency and are not typically part of a strategic IMC plan. Consistent with the principles outlined in the social marketing strategy and based on the interviews and service design workshops, digital should be the key platform for delivering a consistent experience across time and place, nationally within the budget.

IMC Plan objectives

This IMC plan should be founded on four objectives (See Figure 1):

1. To empower many different target markets and stakeholders to find relevant and useful information and support on the transition to tertiary education.
2. To establish guidelines of best practice guidelines for the creation of content and events.
3. To grow and manage an online community and outreach events to support target markets and stakeholders and grow advocacy.
4. To track target market and stakeholder behaviour online and optimise content and events for strong ROI.

Figure 1 - IMC Plan Objectives
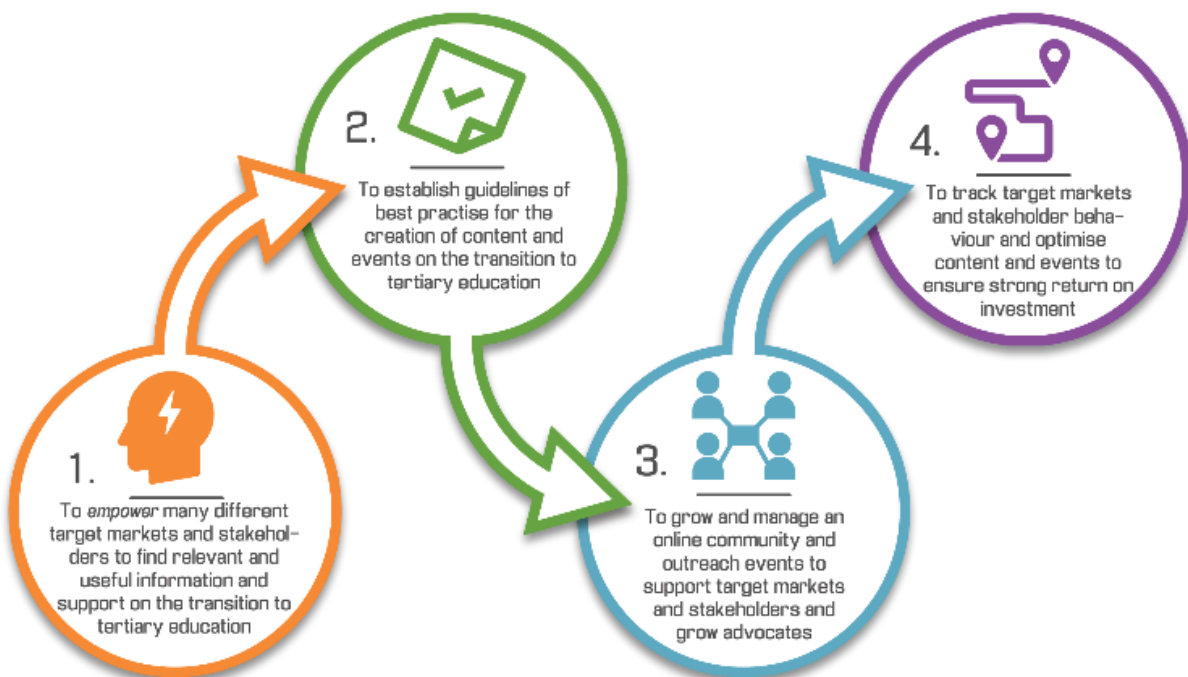
IMC Strategy

Although a lot of effective WP resources have been developed, not all target markets are equally well-served, not all resources have been effectively evaluated and not all target markets are aware of where to go to find these resources.

To bring together the low SES cohorts into target markets of students, young adults, parents and teachers and provide them with relevant resources to foster wider participation in tertiary education, there is a need to unite efforts and resources. This means building and maintaining an online sharing community, which could be personalised to provide the information or inspiration these cohorts desire. This should be supported by strong face-to-face, people-rich interaction through outreach programs to key stakeholders of tertiary institutions and industry practitioners.

This is not just a matter of building an online portal and creating links to existing information as that would be problematic from three perspectives. Firstly, the existing online resources (more than 80 by our count) are largely untested in terms of effectiveness in resonating with the cohorts, so they may not be helpful or may perhaps even be detrimental to the project objectives. Secondly, each of the stakeholder groups, and each of the personas within them, require personalised resources. Give the target markets access to 80 programs and they will look at none; but personalise the content delivered to them, based on their role and their persona, and users are likely to engage with the content and be converted to become long-term 'members' and perhaps even 'advocates'.

Thirdly, the needs of users change over time, so the kind of information provided must change too. It is not enough to get people to an online portal, their online behaviour needs to be tracked, the content personalised and they need to be persuaded to become advocates to the next generation of portal users.

Therefore, the proposed IMC strategy is the 'same but different'. The idea would be to bring together the different stakeholders and resources with one common, memorable portal, yet personalise the information and experience for each of the users. Same online portal, yet different information and experience for each of the target markets and their personas.

The strength of this IMC Plan would be its personalisation and targeting. Therefore, it would not require a large television advertising campaign to promote a website, but rather the activation of key influencers and strong search strategies would direct the target market to the portal. This would be achieved in three ways:

1. The use of search strategies. The strong search component would direct those searching for possible courses or career information to the portal.
2. The activation of influencers (school staff and WP outreach staff) to direct people to the portal.
3. The use of events to direct people to the portal. When people attend events, they would be informed about the portal and encouraged to sign in.

Digital and people-rich tools per persona

As a digital and people-rich IMC plan, the intent is not to deliver a one-size-fits-all program, but rather one common and easy-to-find portal tailored to very different needs. This is illustrated in Table 1 and Table 2, which identify the different personas, their different needs and desires, and suggest platforms and ideas to connect with them.

For each persona, the key message is outlined along with the key content on the digital portal, an app version of the digital portal and people-rich activities. The information for this section was informed by the Position Paper and the primary data collected in this project via interviews and workshops.

Table 1 - Key Messages, Tools, Mode and Activities for School Student and School Leaver Personas

School Personas	Key Message	Mode	Example Features/Activities
	Fast track your dream job	Portal	Pathways to a dream job: An entertaining, engaging information portal that provides pathways, options, showcases career, has quizzes and provides a fast-track.
		App	Career Quiz: A career quiz to confirm career choices.
		People	Career Excursions: See careers in action and ask questions.
	Find a pathway to success	Portal	Pathways to Success: An entertaining, engaging information portal that provides pathways options and showcases careers.
		App	Career Extension: Careers that make money.
		People	Success Stories: Connect with successful professionals.
	Explore career avenues	Portal	Pathways to an Expert: An entertaining, engaging information portal that provides pathways options, showcases careers, has quizzes and provides a career plan
		App	JobTinder (Jinder): Job and applicant matching app.
		People	My Point of View: Direct contact with mentors and experts.
	Explore stepping stones to your future	Portal	Pathways to a Pathway: An entertaining, engaging information portal that provides options, and showcases careers
		App	Future Finder: Help me find a career, and share with friends.
		People	Career Brainstorming: One-on-one career counselling.

Recent Leaver Personas	Key Message	Mode	Example Features/Activities
	Getting back on track for your dream job	Portal	Uni/TAFE portal: Information about Uni/TAFE, options and stepping stones for people who take the long way around.
		App	Chat with a buddy: so I am not doing this alone.
		People	Expo Invasion: Bring experts to me on my turf in a random way.
	Find a pathway to success now	Portal	Uni/TAFE portal: Information about Uni/TAFE, options and stepping stones for people who take the long way around.
		App	SimCareer: Game to learn and simulate careers, and earn money.
		People	Half-way There: Info on jobs and money, not career focused.
	Explore career options now	Portal	Uni/TAFE portal: Information about Uni/TAFE options and pathways.
		App	Career Connect Profile: Build profile, connect with industry.
		People	New Chances: An interactive, engaging careers pros/cons.
	Getting started on your first step	Portal	Uni/TAFE portal: Information about Uni/TAFE, options and stepping stones for people who take the long way around.
		App	Run a Business: Grow confidence and give me control.
		People	Give it Go: Try different jobs and careers.

Table 2 - Key Messages, Tools, Mode and Activities for Parent and School Staff Personas

Parent Persona	Key Message	Mode	Example Features/Activities
	Help me support my child's choice	Portal	Understanding Uni: All encompassing, social media oriented, information-rich website that can be used by all.
		App	Practical Career Blog: In-depth entertaining social information.
		People	Festival Vibe: Socially engaging festival style info sessions.
	Help me feel confident	Portal	Uni Unmasked: Simple information about uni, job options with alerts/reminders. Advice/counselling for whole family.
		App	Organise me: Book appointments, remind me of events.
		People	Manage the Anxiety: Family nights with careers advisers
	Help me develop my child as a person	Portal	Virtual University / TAFE: Engaging, entertaining interactive experience providing information, pathways, connections with other parents and children.
		App	Goal Setting: Structured goal setting, action plan, reminders.
		People	Immerse us: Short intensive workshop parent/child/industry.
	Help me direct my child	Portal	Parent link: Career options, pathways, they want them and their child to be properly informed.
		App	Career Calculator: ATAR, Career choice, affordability, location.
		People	Connect parents with teachers/schools: Open Day for Early years school students.
Staff Persona	**Key Message**	**Mode**	**Example Features/Activities**
	Help me be the connector	Portal	One-Stop-Shop: Instant expert with all information on their phone for quick access. Know the student and culture best.
		App	Key Features: a more portable version of the website.
		People	Connector Fun Day: Connect me so I can connect students.
	Help me connect with experts	Portal	One-Stop-Shop: Instant expert with all information on their phone for quick access. Know the student and culture best.
		App	The Mentor's Mentor: Connects with local experts, mentors.
		People	Mentor Expo: Engaging with industry mentors, local experts.
	Help me connect with resources	Portal	One-Stop-Shop: Instant expert with all information on their phone for quick access. Know the student and culture best.
		App	Online catalogue of tools and programs.
		People	Specialist workshop: update on latest programs, tools, tech.

Participant ideas for communication mix

In the interviews and service design workshops, there was diversity in the level of use of communication platforms preferred by participants. For instance, some students, parents and teachers were keen digital users and regularly checked social media pages, while others rarely used them. Table 3 indicates the communication media preferences of the four target markets, their preferred influencers and message source.

Table 3 - Communication Mix

Target Audiences	Communication Mix	Source of the Message
High School Students	• Social media: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter • Face-to-face • Radio • Television • Pop-up ads • Blogs	• High school students • University/TAFE students • Teachers • Industry Practitioners/professionals • Sports stars and celebrities
Recent School Leavers	• Social media: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter • Blogs • Television • Radio • Newspaper	• University/TAFE students • Past teachers • Industry Practitioners/professionals • Sports stars and celebrities
Parents/Carers/Community	• Schools apps • SMS • School newsletter • Email • Social media: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter • Blogs	• School/teachers • Parents and carers • Community leaders • Tertiary education institutions
School Staff	• Staff newsletter • Email • Social media: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter • Workshops	• School Principals • Departments of Education and Training
Industry Practitioners	• Articles and advertising in industry newsletters • Industry Association events • Employers in local communities • Appeals to Service Clubs: Lions, Rotary	• Government • Tertiary education institutions
Tertiary Institutions	• Conferences • Academic journals • Email • Industry newsletters	• Government • Departments of Education and Training

Paid, Owned and Earned Media

The IMC Plan will bring together a mix of paid, owned and earned media (see Table 4) to connect with the target markets and optimise the message and return on investment. Paid media is where the company pays to use the platform, such as advertising or paid search. Owned media is where the company owns or controls the channel, such as the proposed online portal and app. Earned media is what might traditionally be called public relations or, in social media, refers to the messages and endorsements earned by the company from consumers, influencers or the media.

Translated into this plan, the key channel would be owned media, especially the development of the portal and its resources such as the app, videos and blogs. This should be the main investment and the catalyst for change. The use of paid media, such as key events, would also launch and build awareness of the portal amongst the target market. In tandem with this, search and content creation should be leveraged to increase awareness of the portal and drive users to the URL.

Once the target market are users of the site, the strategy seeks to retain and convert them into advocates, through good community management and the promotion of user-generated content through competitions. The activity around the portal should be amplified through social media posts by influencers, industry associations, industry professionals, schools and universities. In addition, the launch event would generate media publicity and ongoing events and competitions, and launch tools such as apps, sustaining the media interest and keeping the portal in the public eye.

Table 4 - Paid Owned and Earned Media Table

PAID	OWNED	EARNED
Search engine optimisation and paid search	Development and optimisation of portal	User-generated content from target markets
Content creation	Apps such as career quiz, job tinder, career calculator	School newsletters and posts
People-rich activities such as events, excursions, activities, workshops	Videos such as success stories and specialist workshops	Influencer blogs and social media posts
Facebook advertising	Blogs to showcase careers, profile mentors, parent support, practical career blog	Industry association posts

Implementation plan

The 'same but different' portal should be implemented using the following seven-phase process across a two-year period. The plan begins in Year 1 by establishing best practice for resource development, before building the portal and personalising it to the needs of the different target markets. Users should be acquired using a search strategy and leveraging the power of influencers. Throughout this process, and ongoing throughout the life of the portal, the community requires empathetic and strategic management to accommodate and anticipate the needs of its users and to respond by tracking visitation and optimising resources, in accordance with user behaviour.

Phase 1: Establish guidelines of best practice

Phase 1 provides a proposal to test some of the major existing WP resources to determine their relevance to the different stakeholders and different personas. This testing should result in chronicling best practice, therefore setting guidelines that can be adopted in the development of new material, and also shared to ensure future outreach programs meet best practice. The testing would also select programs for inclusion in the new portal.

Phase 2: Use best practice guidelines to develop additional resources and programs

By identifying what works best with each of the personas within the stakeholder groups, new content can be created and curated more effectively. The audit of existing resources and programs would also identify the need for content, highlighting which personas are devoid of relevant information and helping to prioritise new content creation.

Phase 3: Build and manage an online community

In order for the portal to become an online community where members share information, encouragement and grow membership, an acquisition and retention strategy is required. An online community is a highly useful way to connect with personas that are disengaged from education and may not be highly motivated. An example of how an online community motivated low SES communities to engage with a topic they were not particularly interested in is the 'Reduce Your Juice' digital social marketing program (www.citysmart.reduceyourjuice.com.au).

Using existing resources that were shown to be useful via testing and developing new resources that meet best practice guidelines, an online community should be developed and promoted, using one URL for all target markets, personas and key stakeholders. The creation of an online community would bring together all stakeholders in the WP process to form an online community – not just a website. Therefore, building the portal is just the start, and not the outcome.

To manage the portal requires the appointment of a full-time community manager. The role of the community manager would be to:

1. **Listen** – by tracking target market and stakeholder behaviour across all platforms to create a single integrated view.
2. **Learn** – by processing all of your target markets' and stakeholders' digital signals for a better understanding of their needs.
3. **Speak** – by managing, personalising and acting on conversations.

To do this, the community manager would identify influencers, seed content of new initiatives or resources, encourage and monitor user-generated content (which people consider

to be more believable than marketing material), and to grow advocacy so that the students or the parents who first came to the portal for help are now helping other students or parents to support their transition into tertiary education. Similarly, through the use of a unique identifier, the community manager can track the transition from high school student to university graduate, encouraging those who received help from the program to mentor new users some years later.
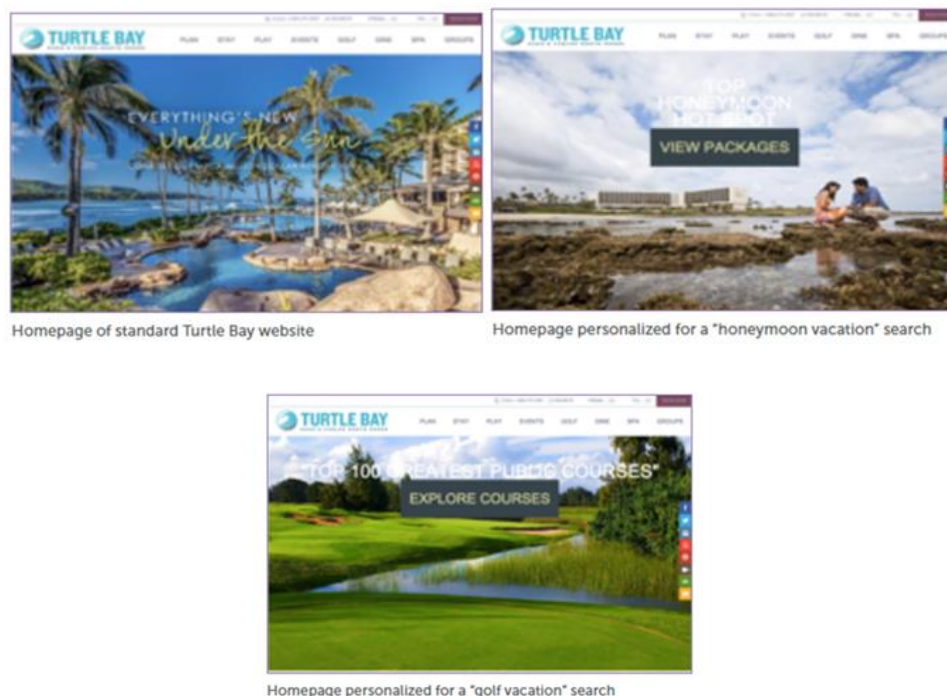
Additionally, because this URL would service multiple stakeholders with different agendas, it would be essential to have a community manager monitoring this asset and any subsequent social media, reacting to detractors and leveraging the conversation in a positive and timely way. The messages, sentiments and influencers in social media can help inform content creation. It is also recommended that social media listening (SML), using platforms such as Radian6, should be used to track messages and sentiment to ensure the correct messages are being shared and to identify influencers. Therefore, it is not enough to create an online portal, it must be managed to maintain its voice and relevancy within the community.

Phase 4: Personalising the content and the experience

Personalisation means that every persona will receive the content and experience they are seeking. The portal would be personalised to the user needs in two easy ways. Firstly, the portal would be personalised by search activity. For example, if someone searches 'Help for parents on tertiary education', the portal should deliver a visually-attractive landing page for parents, with a relevant yet different look and feel, and featuring different resources. Similarly, if another person searches for 'Help for adult-entry to university', the landing page this person receives should look very different and contain highly relevant resources, even though the URL might be exactly the same. In other words, the portal that a parent and an adult learner sees will look very different, and the content will need to be curated so it is relevant to their different needs (see Figure 2 - Example Portals).

Figure 2 - Example Portals: Same URL but Different and Personalised Content

Homepage of standard Turtle Bay website

Homepage personalized for a "honeymoon vacation" search

Homepage personalized for a "golf vacation" search

A second way in which the portal can be personalised is through the log-in. On first entry, the user should take a quiz which identifies whether they are a student, parent or school staff and what needs they are hoping this website will address. Based on this information and the unique identifier of the log-in, the portal could then be personalised to provide a visually-pleasing interface and deliver the required resources. Furthermore, this unique log-in can then be tracked to show the user behaviour online across time, and the profile could be updated as the school student goes to university. Personalisation should provide better resources to the user, and also measure the functionality of the portal, identifying resources which are well used and those neglected. This would then help in refining the content.

Phase 5: Acquire users through Search

While some target markets would be directed to the portal by their school (including WP outreach activities) or their peers, others will be unaware that the portal even exists. Therefore, it is important to use 'Search' to activate users to the project portal. This should involve both organic search, through the identification of relevant keywords, and paid search, where ads for the portal appear at the top of the user's search activity.

The first point of call these days is online and a good search strategy should take people to the site. Parents would largely be attracted to the site by a strong search strategy, so if they are looking for information online, they will be directed to the site. The site would also be promoted in the people-rich events, and schools would be used as distribution channels to show parents the site at personalised parent–teacher sessions, or sessions provided by WP outreach.

It is also proposed that events in the major capital cities would launch the portal to parents, school staff, school students and recent school leavers.

For parents who are not using search (possibly the Possums and Penguins) due to disinterest, fear or lack of awareness, it is critical that the gap is bridged between disinterested/disengaged and interested enough to be on a portal seeking answers. This should be achieved through leveraging existing or new people-rich activities. It is important to note that any new people-rich activities have not been costed in the budget as there are too many variables and combinations for this to occur. Some examples of the people-rich activities that can serve as a stimulus to drive traffic to the portal would be:

- **key school events**: traditional 'careers nights' or more subtle, embedded opportunities e.g. having Student Ambassadors from similar backgrounds (as the prospective students) available to share their stories
- **non-school events**: embedding messages at sports events/community events and festivals and via booths at lifestyle and special interest expos
- **adding personal and community networks acquisition/tactics:** sharing an idea or an endorsement via friends, family, neighbours and colleagues (hyper-localised content) would be an effective way to change attitudes/behaviours; this 'sharable' content would help to bridge the interest/disinterest gap and address myths through source credibility.

Phase 6: Identify advocates and influencers

Given this is an online site, the cohort of influencers would likely extend beyond the immediate community of parents, teachers and peers and into the areas of interest, or aspiration, in their lives. Therefore, it would be important to research the kinds of influencers these personas would like to connect with. Our existing resources have identified a strong connection between young school leavers and gaming. Therefore, an influencer might be sought from the games industry. Industry groups are likely to be an important influencer group, as well as potential funders of the portal. By tracking user behaviour in the portal, analytic evidence will attest to the recruitment value of the portal to industry. Further, workshops could be conducted with industry associations to encourage collaboration on resources and events.

Phase 7: Optimise online behaviour

By having a log-on to the portal, it is easy to track individual identifiers to see how the different stakeholders and their personas are using the site and the resources. Through this monitoring it would be possible to:

(1) Track stakeholder behaviour in the portal. Using metrics such as resources accessed, time spent online and the time between visits should provide a clearer picture of the way in which the portal is being used. Also monitoring the websites used immediately before and after would enhance the search strategy. Knowing this, the portal should be optimised to leverage the important aspects and to revisit areas from which users click away.

(*2*) *Track behaviour across time and at different stages of the decision cycle*. It is also possible to track which of the stakeholder groups are using the site and when, profiling use across different stakeholders and personas, and across time.

(3) Identify the role of influencers. It can also help to identify the power and the different types of influencers at different times across the transition to tertiary education. Data could also identify the type of influencer based on registration profile information (e.g. employer, tertiary institution, school).

(4) Test the online resources. Through analytic breakdowns of the way in which resources are used, it could be determined which resources work best for which personas at which time in the decision process. This allows for refinement of the guidelines of best practice for the development of resources.

(5) Track the role of mobile devices. By looking at the type of device from which the content is accessed and the kind of content delivered, recommendations can be made as to how mobile devices can be better optimised.

IMC Tactics

Across the 7-phase implementation, four key tactics should be used to acquire new users through search strategy and lead generation, engage users, retain and convert users, and encourage advocacy. These are explained in the following tactical overview as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - IMC Tactics for the Digital Portal.

Acquire	Engage	Retain/Convert	Advocate
Acquire information through search strategy	*Engage with user-generated content*	*Offer rewards to retain and convert participants*	*Use sharability to grow advocacy*
	Amplify engagement through apps		*Optimise content to guarantee return-on-investment*
	Engage through events		
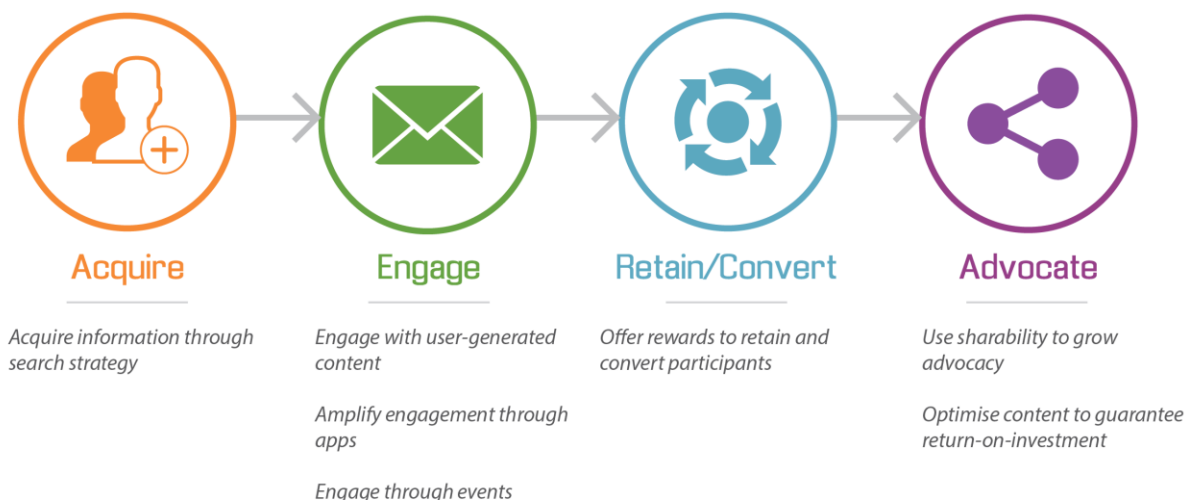
Acquire: Acquisition through search strategy

The portal should be optimised using both Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and paid search. SEO is organic or unpaid search, and its purpose is to develop the right keywords that the target market would use in trying to find out information about tertiary study. When users type in these search terms, our results should come out on top. This is an essential first step.

Building on this, paid search allows for secure placement at the top and right hand side of the search results. Here a similar strategy might be followed, responding to a user's search for help. Alternatively, paid search could be used creatively to catch our user's attention when they least expect it. For example, data collected for this project have shown that many school-leavers who have not gone on to tertiary study, up to three years out of high school, are regular gamers. Imagine if there was a release of a new game and the proposed portal came up beside their search results, suggesting gaming as a future career through tertiary study.

Engage: Engage with user-generated content

Once users have found the portal, they need to be engaged. One way to do this is to give them a voice through user-generated content (UGC). Encourage them to post their experiences, like "what I learned from visiting a university". Or to let students find out what the job is really like through a "Snapchat Takeover", where an employee provides a visual commentary about their job. UGC is more believable than marketing information, therefore projects which amplify

the student or young adult voice, or the employer perspective, or the parent narrative, are very important. Of course, the UGC needs to be tracked in terms of viewing and sharing, to determine which kind of content has greatest impact and to ensure nothing offensive or detractive is posted. It should also identify people who could be asked to advocate in the future.

Amplifying engagement through apps

Research identified the need for personal connection. However, this is often outside the user's immediate community. Using an app-based solution, akin to Tinder, parents could be matched with other parents who can help them by supporting their transition. A similar app could match students with people already working in their dream job to act as an industry mentor. Other kinds of apps could operate as a Career Calculator that suggests jobs that students may not have even thought of, yet may be relevant to their interests and skills. Or a translator app that converts university-speak into the vernacular of parents.

Engage through events

Removing the barriers to parents could involve a fun, no-pressure, parent-only tour of a university campus, which highlights any special support services and could be instrumental in growing their support of tertiary education. Casual interaction with staff and students, similar to their own, could also arm them with strategies to support their children. For those too distant from a campus, a virtual reality tour of universities could be developed and customised to their needs – a strategy already in use in a number of universities. Some universities, such as QUT and Curtin University, already do this and Griffith University has a video for parents on its website.

Another stakeholder group worthy of engagement is industry. Through workshops, industry associations can be introduced to the

purpose and value of the portal and its potential to provide insight into their industry. Analytics could provide evidence of the volume of students looking for career opportunities. The workshop could then introduce collaborative and profile-building solutions such as the development of portal resources, in the form of videos or games to encourage recruitment.

Retain and Convert: Rewards to retain and convert

To retain users or convert visitors, there has to be some kind of reward. This could be informational, such as reviews of participation in transition events or information about accommodation options or emerging careers. It could also be entertaining, such as a career calculator or an app-based game. Another type of reward is economic, such as scholarship information. These rewards would be different for each of the target markets, and should be built into every interaction stage.

Advocate: Use Shareability to grow advocacy

Sharing is an endorsement and an entry into the networks of the users. This is a way to expand the reach of the portal to the attention of others in their social network, who may have similar interests. Shareability should be encouraged through curating great content, and through competitions in which there is some kind of prize. Self-enhancement is also an important trigger for sharing, so access to materials which make the sharer look smart, innovative, funny or first with news about a favourite celebrity are also an important tactic.

Optimisation to guarantee Return-On-Investment

By tracking the portal analytics for all of these activities one can learn what works best, in order to optimise the IMC activity and marketing dollar. These metrics should also provide evidence and incentive for stakeholders, such as industry

groups or even universities, to invest in the portal, potentially turning the portal into an ongoing self-funded proposition.

In addition, at the end of the two-year IMC Plan, the IMC Objectives should be revisited and measured against the analytic evidence from online behaviour to benchmark the success of the IMC Plan.

Finally, SML can be used to manage and monitor online conversations to understand the life cycle of information, the spread of news, the influencers and the detractors, all in real time. Using industry standard software, such as Radian6, SML retrieves results from more than 150 million sites and sources including mainstream news, blogs, forums, comments, video and photo sharing sites, Twitter and public Facebook. SML not only helps identify key messages and sentiment, but also helps manage risk and avoid detractors.

Monitoring the IMC Plan

The monitoring of the communication mix should occur within the broader social marketing program evaluation. Best practice standards would be used for each of the recommended communication elements with most data derived from analytics associated with the digital tools. Mixed-methods should be used to determine the impact of communication elements and key messages on the target markets and stakeholder groups in alignment with the overall evaluation process (see

Table 5).

Table 5 - IMC Monitoring – Communication Mix

Communication Mix	Indicator	Details	Timing
Social media	Shares Likes Comments Views	Click-throughs Sentiment Conversation monitoring	During IMC
Public relations	Media coverage	Sentiment	Start, during and end campaign
Website	Google analytics Website sessions Pages visited	Visit duration Click throughs # reminders sent	During IMC
App	Downloads Sessions	Frequency of use	During IMC
Communication messages	Awareness Recall	Preference Association	Launch End IMC
Newsletters	Number of responses	Types of newsletter sources	During IMC
Word-of-mouth	Referrals	Sentiment	During IMC
Events	Attendance	Referrals	During IMC
Emails	Opens	Click throughs	During IMC
Facebook advertising	Facebook analytics	Click throughs	During IMC
Competition to generate user content	Number of entries	Quality of entries	Early IMC pre-launch
Google ad words	Liaise with Google to identify appropriate search terms		During IMC

Measurement

The aim of the IMC Plan is not just to deliver the resources that the target markets need, but to continually optimise the portal and the material it contains to grow use and advocacy. Therefore, monitoring needs to be ongoing, including measurement before and shortly after the launch of the portal followed by six-monthly reports on usability, engagement and people-rich participation.

The results of this monitoring should shape the development of the portal, optimising the pages and resources that the target markets use and replacing those which are not as popular. The results should then inform the best practice guidelines. Ongoing monitoring would then be used to measure the success of the program/campaign objectives and establishes the portal as a learning community that continues to meet the needs of the different target markets and stakeholders (see Table 6).

Table 6 - Measurement of IMC components

Component	Measure	Timing
Objective 1 **To empower many different stakeholders to find relevant and useful information and support on the transition to tertiary education**	(1) Number of different personas that accessed the portal across time (2) Resources accessed across time	Reporting every 6 months
Objective 2 **To establish guidelines of best practice for the creation of content and events on the transition to tertiary education**	Set of best practice guidelines developed for the creation of content and events	6 months from start of project
Objective 3 **To grow and manage an online community and outreach events to support stakeholders and grow advocates**	(1) Appointment of community manager (2) Number of advocates (3) Management of detractors (4) Social media listening study	End of project
Objective 4 **To track stakeholder behaviour and optimise content and events to ensure strong return on investment**	Track online behaviour of: (1) different personas of students, young school leavers, parents and teachers; (2) industry, university and government influencers	End of project
Measurement of Portal Usability		
Search activity	Monitor SEO and paid search results	Before launch and then every 6 months
Behaviour in the portal	Time spent online, time per page, clicks on links, websites visited before and after	Ongoing with reports issued every 6 months
Information requests	Frequently asked questions by site users	Every 6 months
Device used to access portal	Desktop versus mobile	Every 6 months
Content created	Number of UGC, entries into competitions	Every 6 months
Use of resources	Download of app/s, views of videos, clicks on links	Every 6 months
Role of influencers	Number of influencers, activity and posts from influencers, users citing influencers	Every 6 months