



Union of the Baltic Cities

Communications and Marketing

Report to UBC Executive Board in Kemi, 26 February 2015.

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1 Preface

This report is based on the *Plan of Action for UBC Communications and Marketing 2014–2015*, approved by the UBC Executive Board in Växjö 29 October 2015, and *UBC Communications and Marketing Strategy*.

Not all activities that are listed in the plan of action are mentioned in this report. Instead, I have narrowed the focus to those actions which are, at the moment, of primary concern. Naturally, all sections of the plan of action are continuously advanced.

Please note that the suggestions for the development of each activity are under headlines “State of play in Kemi, February 2015” and “Proposal for the future”.

2 ubc.net – public website

State of play in Växjö, October 2014:

Development must start from defining anew the content: what do we (the member cities, commissions) want and need from the UBC website – as well as from the overall communications.

Proposal for the future: Review anew the answers to the surveys and questionnaires made to the commissions and member cities. If needed, conduct a new questionnaire where the focus would be on what kind of content, changes etc. is needed. After completing the content analyses and assessing the future needs, we need to decide whether to hire an advertising agency to make suggestions for the new layout and visualities – or to go ahead with the current layout and/or the options given by the City of Gdansk IT unit.

State of play in Kemi, February 2015:

Initial tenders from the advertising agencies have arrived. However, before making decisions about the platform, some things need yet to be considered.

It is apparent that developing UBC website and web services is a significant process that affects both how UBC serves its members and the overall UBC brand. Due to the extent and importance of the process, it requires time and consideration as well as the active participation and involvement of UBC commissions and member cities. The change is not only about technics but also, significantly, a matter of adapting new ways of working and connecting within the organisation, between cities, commissions, and UBC administration.



All this will require more flexible and advanced tools, including technical ones. It is evident that actions according to Communications and Marketing Strategy will require more eminent solutions.

Renewing UBC website is part of the larger process of possibly renewing the whole UBC look: logo, visualities, typography etc. All these elements are part of strengthening the UBC brand.

Proposal for the future:

Discuss and analyse the requirements and needs for UBC website and UBC look at UBC Communications Seminar in Turku 15–16 April (more about the seminar in a separate document *UBC Communications Seminar*). After the seminar, a report of the event and the conclusions as well as propositions for further action will be handed to UBC Executive Board.

3 Creating UBC intranet – internal website

State of play in Växjö, October 2014:

Present situation: In addition to external communications, internal communication requires updating. In general, it is quite often beneficial to start developing communications from the internal point of view, since this enables a better use of the resources already at hand in the organisation. Furthermore, creating an intranet would lessen email traffic.

Proposal for the future: Re-organising/developing ubc.net while at the same time being prepared that an internal website might also need to be developed – preferably with the same platform as the public website. Developing and creating intranet contents and technical platform in case the means of re-organising contact information systems, creating cloud services, and organising training of internal communications are not sufficient. Also, need for working group domains should be taken into account while creating the intranet. Possibilities of organising intranet: SharePoint, Drupal, WordPress, Yammer.

State of play in Kemi, February 2015:

In independent platforms, it is possible to organise both www.ubc.net and internal website in one platform.

Proposal for the future:

At this stage we should concentrate on designing and refining the contents of the public website. Simultaneously, we should continue developing, creating and re-organising UBC's information management, enabling also segmented approach to target audiences as well as by allowing all members the possibility to update information online, creating cloud services, and organising training of internal communications, e.g. at UBC Communications Seminar in April (more about the seminar in a separate document *UBC Communications Seminar*).

4 Strengthening the UBC brand

4.1 Internal strengthening of the UBC brand

State of play in Växjö, October 2014:



Present situation: UBC as an organisation and its achievements are not very well known in the member cities – not as well as there are possibilities for them to be.

Proposal for the future:

- ✓ Making UBC's services and know-how known to the member cities, communicating to them about the possibilities of getting involved and benefitting of the UBC activities and work. Getting the member cities to act as UBC ambassadors (print, online, face-to-face communications etc.).
- ✓ Organise workshops in February/March 2015 for the (communications) representatives of the new commissions and city (communications) representatives. It is also possible to extend the invitation to other partners, e.g. CBSS, BDF: their representatives would participate in the workshops with two roles as both speakers and participants: they are able to give insight into communications and marketing practices in organisations similar to UBC.
- ✓ Content of the seminar needs to be prepared carefully in order to get participants – a boost campaign for the member cities.

State of play in Kemi, February 2015:

UBC Communications Seminar will be held 15–16 April in Turku (more about the seminar in a separate document *UBC Communications Seminar*).

Proposal for the future:

UBC Communications Seminar in April will focus on a targeted audience consisting of representatives from each commission and representatives of member cities. Members of the new UBC Communications Network will be encouraged to attend.

The focus of the seminar will be practical so that it benefits the participants and advances the goals set in UBC strategies, aiming at concrete propositions from the seminar participants to UBC Executive Board on how and in which timeframe to proceed, for instance, with renewing UBC website, internal communications, and the Baltic Cities Bulletin.

4.2 External strengthening of the UBC brand

State of play in Växjö, October 2014:

Present situation: At the moment, the main mediums are ubc.net and the printed Baltic Cities Bulletin. Coordinated promotional activities have not been carried out for some time, although some commissions have been active on their own fields. Plans have been made to organise a coordination group from the member cities, with the help of Ms. Krista Taipale from Turku-Southwest Finland European office, but so far this has not been possible due to lack of man-year resources.

Proposal for the future:

- ✓ Getting new cities to become members – active contacting – while at the same time maintaining and involving the current members.
- ✓ Lobbying/influencing decision-making – needs to be coordinated by Presidium/Executive Board.
- ✓ Creating and updating contacts on city and EU levels both as well as with the (BSR) media, and creating specific contact lists for different target groups, especially EU policy-makers and national policy-makers.



- ✓ Urban Forum and Urban Award – organising and eventually institutionalising these events.
- ✓ Events/hearings with EU institutions and/or other partners, EUSBSR as a theme
- ✓ Possibility for an external digital newsletter

External strengthening of the brand requires guidelines and commenting from the UBC Executive Board.

State of play in Kemi, February 2015:

A plan of action concerning increasing UBC activity on EU levels has been previously made in 2012 by UBC Cities' European Offices in Brussels.

In order for the development of brand building to succeed, UBC Presidium and Board would need to decide upon the relevant brand building and lobbying focuses and themes, in connection with the new UBC Strategy (2015–), which will also define communicational and other measures in the forthcoming strategy period.

Significant question for UBC brand building, in addition to the European level, is how UBC in the next strategy period will be visible and active in relation to governments, municipalities, associations etc.

When UBC officials (Presidium, Executive Board, Commissions' representatives) attend conferences, give statements and represent UBC in official occasions, it would be important to communicate these also at UBC website as news. This is a significant part of brand building and demonstrating UBC's activity and know-how.

Proposal for the future:

Plan and build UBC branding process according to the decisions made by UBC Presidium and Executive Board on brand building and lobbying focuses and themes.

When decisions have been made on occasions where UBC officials are representing the organisation, the information (who, when, what) should be available to the Communications Manager and other Secretariat personnel to use on ubc.net and other channels.

A possibility for the next UBC Executive Board would be to have a board meeting in Brussels in early 2016, to visit the UBC cities' European Offices and meet up with EU Commission's representatives. This would be a chance for UBC to demonstrate its know-how, actors and current strategical themes.

5 Social media

State of play in Växjö, October 2014:

Present situation: Social media coverage consists at the moment of Facebook. In the future other options are worthwhile considering as well but they are not to be prioritised at the moment: Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogs.

Proposal for the future: Start charting possibilities for the use of videos (YouTube) and Twitter while keeping developing of Facebook communications as a priority in the social media sector.

State of play in Kemi, February 2015:



Popularity of the UBC Facebook pages has increased slowly but steadily, when observing the number of likes on the pages (427 in mid-February). However, the likes and shares of individual posts have remained low. The attractiveness of the UBC Facebook pages has increased due to using more captivating photos and videos.

Proposal for the future:

Continue developing the content of the UBC Facebook into more visual frame. Continue to report of events and meetings, including Executive Board meetings and General Conferences, before, during and after events.

The most shared and liked post in recent six month's period is the post made during the Board meeting in Växjö. This suggests that official UBC events and issues are of importance to UBC's Facebook followers, not only cultural etc. events. Suggested that in the future more weight will be placed on communicating UBC's initiatives and takes etc. both internally and externally.

All UBC actors (Board members, Commissions' members, city representatives) who are in Facebook are strongly encouraged to:

- Like UBC in Facebook
- Invite other UBC actors as well as UBC stake holders to like UBC in Facebook
- Like and share posts that are published on UBC Facebook pages
- Give tips and info to the Secretariat/Communications Manager on interesting topics and events that could be published both in Facebook and/or in *ubc.net*.

Being visible and active in social media is part of UBC branding process and requires the effort of the whole organisation, as described above.

Social media aspect will be part of UBC Communications Seminar in April (more about the seminar in a separate document *UBC Communications Seminar*).

6 UBC Communications Network

Secretariat + Commissions' contact person in communications issues + Member cities' communications contacts

State of play in Växjö, October 2014:

Present situation: At the moment, content management is mainly centralized (Secretariat).

Proposal for the future: Selecting those responsible for communications from the commissions and the member cities. They can, if they wish, recruit others to join the communications team – but one individual needs to be the main communications person.

The key communications people in the commissions and member cities need to have an outlook and the capability to communicate the issues of their commission/city in an interesting and thematised way and be responsible for updating of contacts and other information. City contact persons need to make sure that communication between their city and the UBC network (Secretariat, Executive Board, Presidium) and the communication between their city and the commissions it participates in is functional.

State of play in Kemi, February 2015:



Most UBC member cities have nominated a representative for UBC Communications Network. In addition, a contact person on communications issues should be selected also in each new Commission.

Proposal for the future:

Inviting the new Commissions to select a person to be part of the UBC Communications Network.

Members of UBC Communications Network are encouraged to attend the UBC Communications Seminar in April (more about the seminar in a separate document *UBC Communications Seminar*).

Suggested that UBC Executive Board will choose a Board member to monitor the implementing of UBC Communications Strategy and communicational issues.

7 Baltic Cities Bulletin

State of play in Växjö, October 2014:

Present situation: The Bulletin has been published in its current form for quite some time and, despite the thematisation, content of the Bulletin is slightly fragmented and overly broad. The visual look of the Bulletin needs modernisation – this would be included in the updating process of UBC logo etc.

Proposal for the future: Content must be re-evaluated critically – what kind of bulletin do the members and other target groups want and need? Circulation needs to be evaluated (lower costs). Considering taking up a newsletter to support the Bulletin contents in which case the content of the newsletter(s) must be considered in reference to the Bulletin. The editorial board would need to have a meeting about the future of the Bulletin – ideal would be to get also participants from the new commissions. In addition, an inquiry should be made to the commissions/member cities regarding the needs and suggestions they have on the Bulletin.

State of play in Kemi, February 2015:

A meeting of the Editorial Board can be arranged together with the Communications Seminar in April (more about the seminar in a separate document *UBC Communications Seminar*).

Proposal for the future:

Developing the Baltic Cities Bulletin into a more modern marketing tool for UBC's external as well as internal communications. Possibility to extend the Editorial Board. Themes of the Bulletin should be connected to UBC's strategical themes. Organise the Editorial Board meeting in connection with the Communications Seminar in April.

8 Timeframe / dates for 2015

- ✓ Week 10 (after Executive Board's Kemi meeting): Informing the Commissions on the future steps for the consolidation of the new Commissions, the process on allocation of funds for 2015 and other current information.
- ✓ Week 10–11 (after Executive Board's Kemi meeting): informing the cities' communications representatives of the process: how UBC communications and marketing will



advance in 2015.

- ✓ April 15–16 2015, Turku: Communications Seminar for representatives of the new Commissions, city representatives and possibly other stakeholders. Materials and notes (and video) from the seminar will be made available to the member cities and Commissions.
- ✓ June 10–12 2015 Dolina Charlotty: Follow-up meeting after the Communications Seminar with a smaller group at UBC's Executive Board meeting.
- ✓ October 27–30 2015, UBC General Conference: follow-up seminar/workshops on UBC communications.