



INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND NETWORK OPERATORS

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Bachelor's thesis
May 2015
Degree Programme
in International Business

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ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Degree Programme in International Business

POUSSA, KIRSI:
Internal Communication and Network Operators

Bachelor's thesis 35 pages, appendices 9 pages
May 2015

The aim of this thesis was to create an internal communication plan, which was commissioned by Conference Support Services of University of Tampere. The Conference Support Services provides assistance in the practical arrangements for different conference organisers at the University of Tampere. The Conference Support Services was established in 2013 and this changed the internal processes of conference management at the university. The main purpose of the internal communication plan was to increase the visibility and awareness of the Conference Support Services within the University of Tampere.

The other aim of this thesis was to define external network operators within the conference and meeting industry in Tampere and in Finland, and to describe how communication and cooperation with these operators would benefit the Conference Support Services and the University of Tampere in general. Another purpose of this thesis was to utilise the benefits of collaboration with the defined network operators in the events organised at the university.

The theoretical framework consists of theories regarding marketing communications, corporate and organizational communication and PR, and internal communication. This thesis was based on qualitative approach as it defines a problem from the author's perspective as an employee at the Conference Support Services of the University of Tampere. Primary data were collected mainly based on author's own observations and discussions with key personnel related to the topic of the thesis.

Efficient internal communication is essential in a large organisation, especially if there are only a few internal communication channels available. It takes time for a communication of change to reach all the employees and in many cases, word of mouth is a very strong element of the communication mix. The Conferences Support Services is part of the organisational identity of the University of Tampere and this internal identity is made visible in the external identity, or image, of the organisation with corporate communication. Corporate communication with external operators benefits both parties by creating and maintaining cooperation and partnership.

Due to confidentiality reasons, the internal communication plan is not published and it can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

Key words: communication plan, internal, network, cooperation

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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to create an internal communication plan for Conference Support Services of University of Tampere. The Conference Support Services assists conference organisers in practical arrangements when organising conferences and other events at the University of Tampere. The other aim was to define external network operators within the conference and meeting industry in Tampere Region and in Finland and to describe how communication and cooperation with these operators would benefit the Conference Support Services.

The main purpose of the thesis was to increase the visibility and awareness of the Conference Support Services within the University of Tampere, and to utilise the benefits of collaboration with the network operators in the events organised at the university.

Conference Support Services was established in 2013 to provide services for conference organisers at the University of Tampere. This changed the internal processes of conference management at the university. Previously trainees were hired to work as conference secretaries, but to increase efficiency within the workforce and internal processes, event management professionals of Conference Support Services are now in charge of certain steps of the event management processes.

The objective was to create an internal communication plan for different communication channels of the University of Tampere. There is a large variety of different channels available, but as the Conference Support Services are available only for internal use, the channels to be used had to be carefully considered.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Topic

The author has been working for University of Tampere for almost two years. Main part of the job is to assist in different conferences and other events organised at the University of Tampere. As the organisation is very large, it has been a challenge to get the information across that Conference Support Services had been established to assist university conference organisers in practical arrangements as well as in graduation ceremonies and other academic celebrations. This change also meant a change in the internal processes, when arranging a conference. Therefore, an internal communication plan was needed to make sure that the Conference Support Services, and also the new internal processes, would be known by every staff member of the University of Tampere. An important aspect was also public relations with stakeholder groups in the conference and meeting industry mainly within the Tampere Region, but also in a larger scale.

Since 2013, the Conference Support Services of the University of Tampere has been assisting conference and other event organisers of the university in event management. There are about 40 international conferences or other larger events organised at the university each year. Previously many university conference organisers recruited trainees for conference secretarial tasks. These trainees would use most of their time trying to find out, how conferences are organised and how internal processes at the university work, and while doing this, they would take valuable time from their co-workers. When the trainees learned everything there is to know about organising a conference at the university, the event was over and the trainees had left the university with all the knowhow they had obtained. The reason why the Conference Support Services was established was that conference organisers would not have to “invent the wheel” repeatedly, but there would be professional conference organisers to take care of the practical arrangements. This means that the organisers would be able to focus more on the content of the conference. These services would also set a standard for the level of execution standards for all conferences organised at the University of Tampere, such as online registration and payments of registration fees, but also visual elements of signage, name badges, folders etc.

The University of Tampere is a loosely coupled organisation as different schools and independent institutes of the university operate quite autonomously and without coordination between each other. When organizing a conference, an external event management company, also known as Professional Congress Organiser (PCO), can be used instead of Conference Support Services of the University of Tampere. This is sometimes even justified, if the resources of the Conference Support Services are not sufficient to handle for example a conference of a thousand participants, especially if there are other conferences taking place at the same time.

2.2 Communication concepts

Communication is a transmission of messages between a sender and a receiver. Communication is a process, in which a sender converts an idea into a message, which is a combination of different elements with different characters, and delivers the message to a receiver through one or more communication channels. The received message triggers some images within the receiver and in order for the communication to be successful, the sender must have formed the message in a way that the receiver understands the intended idea. (Åberg 1993, 11 – 12.)

Communication models are used to explain the communication process, which is full of nuances and complexities. Smith and Taylor (2004, 75 – 84) argue that a Single-step communications model is the basic model defining the three fundamental elements; active sender, inactive or passive receiver and properly comprehended message. To be successful in this, the sender has to have an idea, what is important to the receiver and how symbols, signs and language are interpreted. Mass communications model suggests that receivers are active in processing information selectively and often distortedly, and they also talk to each other, thus the communications process is influenced by opinion leaders and opinion formers, for example journalists and critics, who are formal experts and whose opinion has influence. In Two-step communication model some of the messages are going directly to the receivers, but mainly messages are filtered through opinion leaders, who often are of higher status and have more confidence to try new products and services. In the basic Multi-step communications model opinion leaders talk to their listeners, who talk to each other and subsequently supply information back to the opinion leaders. To make the Multi-step communications model more realistic, noise, channels

and feedback as well as group roles, group norms and attitudes can be added. In addition to these, other psychological variables, such as perception, selection, motivation, learning and attitudes, affect the communication process. Today's new Web communications model revolves around the brand and the communications between customers and opinion leaders are in the internet and possibly the conversations are facilitated by the company keeping close to the customer. Adoption model states the mental process of a journey of a person heading towards regularly purchasing a new product and service.

Overall communication of an organisation is a combination of three different aspects; marketing communications, corporate or organisational communication and internal communication. Marketing communications is targeted to customers and the goal is to influence indirectly or directly on the awareness of and sales of products and services. The goal of corporate or organisational communication is to influence on the awareness of an organisation and to develop public relations within stakeholder groups. The objective of internal communication is to commit and motivate the staff to achieve the set goals. (Isohookana 2011, 30.)

2.2.1 Marketing communications

Marketing communications is a tool, and one of the competitive advantages of a company to affect its markets and thus create a demand for its products directly or indirectly. Typically, marketing is a mix of the four P's; product, price, place and promotion, in which the objective of the four different characteristics is to support one another. (Vuokko 1993, 9 - 11.)

Promotional tools of marketing communications are selling, advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, publicity and public relations, sponsorship, exhibitions, packaging, point-of-sale and merchandising, word of mouth, e-marketing, social media, and corporate identity. Different industries emphasise different tools of this communication mix, but used tools should be integrated with other elements of the mix in order to consistently reinforce a unified message and present a reassuring sense of order for the customers and stakeholders, whereas disjointed messages in unintegrated communications create confu-

sion and frustration in customers. Long-term relationships can be advanced with consistent images as well as with relevant and useful messages. (Smith & Taylor 2004, 8 – 16.)

Personal selling is a communication process, which aims to transmit tailor-made and situation specific messages simultaneously to one or more recipients. This communication tool uses personal channels that are face-to-face relationship or communication relationship through a telephone conversation. This creates an immediate two-way communication between a sender and a receiver, where the receiver is able to react instantly to the message received, and the sender is able to react to the questions or comments of the receiver, thus immediate feedback is possible. (Vuokko 1993, 49.)

Word of Mouth (WOM) is a very strong element of the communication mix as people talk about, either recommend or criticise, companies and organisations, their products and services, their staff and their experiences as customers. Reputation, referrals and recommendations are hard-earned benefits of WOM, but the actual product or service experiences are the fundamentals. (Smith & Taylor 2004, 590 - 591.)

Corporate identity is defined by Smith & Taylor (2004, 654 - 657) as how a corporation, company or organization expresses itself visually. Corporate identity is an important strategic asset to set expectations and to meet those expectations when sending clear messages about who it is, what it does and how it does it. Corporate identity mix is influenced by advertising and customer communications, staff communications, architecture and interior design, uniforms, livery and signage, product design and packaging, annual reports and website; therefore corporate identity is the prime interface between an organisation and its key audiences.

2.2.2 Corporate and organisational communication and PR

Corporate communication can be defined in many ways and in different scales of the meaning. According to Fill (2002, 386 and 389) “corporate communication is simply part of the process, in which the internal identity of a company is made visible in the external identity of a company, also called as the image. The goal is to clearly communicate to

different stakeholder groups the values and beliefs of the company, and the way a company has planned to achieve the set goals". Åberg (2000, 98) states that "organisational communication and public relations are a work community function, where the work community is supported to achieve the objectives by the means of communication with long-term profiling, information services and cooperation as well as environmental scanning." (Isohookana 2011, 190.)

Department of Communication at University of Jyväskylä states that the aim of the academic discipline of Organisational Communication & Public Relations (OCPR) is to analyse communication between organisations and various stakeholder groups. In education and research, OCPR focuses on the following key themes; Monitoring and perception management, Communication and management, and Innovation and change (<https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/viesti/en/subjects/org>, last entered 25.3.2015).

Isohookana (2011, 190 - 191) writes that corporate communication is interaction between a company and its different stakeholder groups and that it is a way of communication, which is used to create, maintain and strengthen the interaction with the significant stakeholder groups. Corporate communication is used to achieve the objectives of a company by influencing the awareness and image of a company. The entire company and its operations are in the focus in corporate communication messages to the stakeholder groups of the company. Corporate communication differs from marketing communications mainly in objectives and target groups. The objectives of corporate communication are to create and maintain the awareness of the company to all stakeholder groups, the objectives of marketing communications are to promote and to sell products and services to customers and all parties influencing the buying process. Well-managed corporate communication influences marketing communications as customers are not only buying products and services, but they are buying products and services of a particular company. Customers can also have different roles as they can be the users of the products and services of the company, but at the same time, they are part of a stakeholder group. Due to these aspects, integrating marketing communications and corporate communication is essential.

Integrating communication is a planning and organising process, which aims to form an entity of different parties of an organisation practising internal and external communication. (Juholin 1999, 22).

Smith and Taylor (2004, 444 - 446) state that “a simple definition of public relations is: ‘the development of and maintenance of good relationships with different publics’. The publics are range of different groups on which an organization is dependent.” The UK’s Institute of Public Relations (IPR) defines public relations as ‘the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics’. In 1978 the ‘Mexican statement’, World Assembly of PR Associations in Mexico, describes PR as “the art and science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organization leaders and implementing planned programmes of action that will serve both the organization’s and the public interest.” A separation of product PR (product/brand publicity) and corporate PR (corporate image enhancement) is needed as their objectives are different, but they both integrate with each other. However, PR is not just product marketing or corporate strategy. Organisations need to prove to the stakeholders that they are responding to the increasing demands of social responsibility on a global basis.

Credibility elements, such as product quality, customer care, design management, corporate identity, caring ethics and socially responsible policies, have to be developed before publicity and visibility can be raised. News releases, news conferences, publicity stunts, conferences, events, exhibitions, sponsorship and sales promotions are examples of visibility or publicity-generating activities. This PR mix has far-reaching effects all the way to the environment, safety, organisation logos, buildings, and event management. (Smith & Taylor 2004, 446 – 450.)

2.2.3 Internal communication

Internal communication is the core of organisation’s overall communication and it is surrounded and supported by marketing communications and corporate communication. Successful internal communication is visible externally and it modifies the image of the organisation as well as its products and services within the stakeholders. Internal communication combines different people, levels, departments and processes of an organisation and the objective is to create and develop the identity and internal relations of the organisation in order to achieve the set goals. (Isohookana 2011, 221.)

The basic forms of internal communication are personal interactions (face-to-face), written communication, and electronic communications. As communication in general becomes more technical, the differentiation of the different communication forms becomes more indistinct. Communication between a manager and an employee, meetings on different levels of an organisation, and interaction between colleagues are examples of personal interaction. Newsletters and internal magazines represent samples of written communication. Methods of electronic communications, such as email, intranet, internet, multimedia, social media, and active databases, have been the most fast-growing channels and the definitions of internal and external communication have become more indistinct. Network communication has evolved rapidly in recent years, but channels of personal communication are still essential in internal communication. (Åberg 2000, 102 – 106.)

According to Åberg (2006) there are four challenges in internal communication. Lack of information movement creates information vacuums, which people tend to fill with information from the grapevine. The best way to avoid this is to use internal communication quickly, actively and reliably, but only for the information that creates collective need for information, for example organisational changes. Second challenge is networks and storing data, which is used for personal need for information, and it cannot be predicted when this information is needed. Managers and their way of communication to and from the unit forms the third challenge, because managers are responsible for tailoring general information to the unit, but also forwarding viewpoints of the unit to the upper management level. The fourth challenge is to provide physical spaces, where random communication is possible between the people who are present in that specific space at the same time.

Communication planning is done at strategic and operational levels. Strategic planning consists of defining the purpose and the objectives of communication, defining the basic principles of communication, and communication strategy: key results, profit targets and purposes. Defining emphasis and selecting operations, for example for the next year, are representatives of operational planning. (Juholin 1999, 106.)

Changes in technological, financial, political or social environments change the operational environment of an organisation, also markets change. Due to these environmental changes, an organisation needs to change also internally and this requires communication of change. The fundamental of change is the change in culture, as things are being done

in a new way, and to this change, people should adjust. Every person reacts to the same change differently as for some even a small change is overwhelming, and for some a change is a challenge with new opportunities. (Isohookana 2011, 232.) Connecting communication with other activities of an organisation as an ongoing process, and the contents of communication, such as what are the reasons and consequences of the change, are two relevant aspects in communication of change. (Juholin 1999, 196).

2.3 Research questions

The research questions had arisen from author's own experience while working at the University of Tampere. How to make the Conference Support Services known for the whole organisation of University of Tampere? What are the available internal communication channels and how they can be utilised? Even though the offered support services are not available for external operators, co-operation with the conference and meeting industry is essential. Some relationships have already been formed, but what other external operators are there? What kind of cooperation with these external operators is valuable and beneficial for the University of Tampere?

2.4 Data and methods

This thesis was based on qualitative approach as mainly verbal data were used when collecting information. Qualitative research is also more subjective as it defines a problem from the author's perspective as an employee at the University of Tampere.

Primary data were collected mainly based on author's own observations and discussions with a colleague and a manager as well as with stakeholder groups within the conference and meeting industry in the Tampere Region. In addition, the Head of Communications of the University of Tampere was interviewed for collecting the data. Secondary data were collected from the online sources.

2.5 Process of creating an internal communication plan

The author planned the internal communication process by setting the goals, creating an internal communication plan (Appendix 1), and choosing the communication channels with the Head of Communications of the University of Tampere. In addition, execution of the internal communication plan was part of the thesis process. There was no need to create new communication channels, but to use diversely the existing ones in order for the receivers of the communication process to receive information in a way that they are used to. This increases the level of understanding the message the way the sender intended to. On the other hand, the Conference Support Services needs to be aware that internal communication in mass creates a greater demand for the services they need to be able to supply, and that raises a question about resources.

3 CONFERENCE SUPPORT SERVICES OF UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

3.1 University of Tampere

There are some 15,200 students studying at the University of Tampere (UTA) and the personnel number is about 2,100. The organisation of the University of Tampere consists of nine schools of different study fields and three independent institutes. Administrative services to support the operations of the University of Tampere, schools and independent institutes are provided by University Services. The University Services is responsible for the strategic development of these services and for overseeing their implementation and acts as the general preparatory and executive body for the university management. The University Services is divided into eight different service areas; Financial Services, Continuing Education and Development Services, General Administration, Human Resources, IT Services, Press and Information Office, Research Services, and Study Services.

To ensure consistent standards and quality in operations on the university level, Continuing Education and Development Services have been organised. Since 2011, continuing education is a part of the schools' operations. This coordination unit at the University Services develops continuing education at the university as whole and offers support services for the schools. The tasks of the coordination unit are for example supporting client-oriented product development, offering support for budgeting, sales invoicing, and economic monitoring, maintaining customer data management systems, and handling the relationships relating to continuing education with authorities and stakeholder groups at the university level. History of continuing education at the university precedes in the Institute of Extension Studies, which was an organiser of multidisciplinary courses and seminars among other things. Gained expertise and used practises in event management developed into the founding of the Conference Support Services, which is now part of the Continuing Education and Development Services.

3.2 Conference Support Services

The Conference Support Services was established in 2013 to support the different schools within the university in organising conferences. At the same time, the internal processes of conference management were changed. For example, efficient event management software was purchased and the software is operated only by the employees of the Conference Support Services. This software is used for conference attendee registrations and it is now the only method at the university of collecting conference registration fees.

When an event or a conference is being planned at the University of Tampere, it is suggested that the organiser contacts the Conference Support Services well in advance. A start meeting is set and the representative of the Conference Support Services explains what are the options for services for the event in question. As shown in Figure 1, the organisers are responsible for the contents of the conference and the Conference Support Services provides services in event management and practical arrangements.

In addition to the attendee management and registration payments, the Conferences Support Services offers services for financial processes of conference project management, abstract management, conference website, hotel room pre-reservations, reservation of event premises, social programme, transportation, reservation of catering, travelling and hotel reservations for speakers, and any other special arrangements needed in the practicalities.

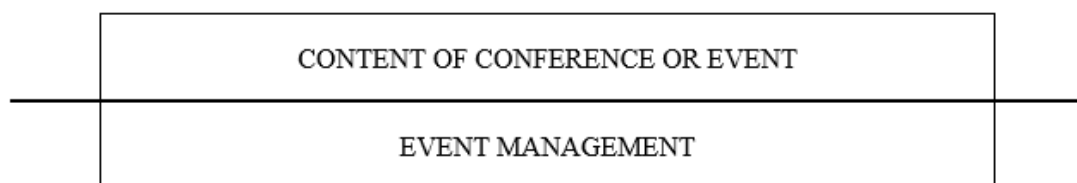


FIGURE 1. Roles in organising an event

When the Conference Support Services is taking care of the practical arrangements of a conference, also sustainability is taken into consideration. The University of Tampere and therefore also the Conference Support Services is committed to promoting sustainable development in the strategy by following sustainable ecological, social, cultural and economic development in all actions and activities carried out at the university, including

conferences. This means for example that distributed conference materials as well as conference related transportations are minimised, disposable cups and plates are not used, and right quality and quantity of conference coffee, lunch and dinner portions are served by minimising no-shows. In addition, waste is sorted and recycled paper is used in the conferences.

3.3 Communication channels of University of Tampere

The Press and Information Office of UTA is responsible for the internal communications, communications coordination and maintaining and updating the university's own communication channels. It also provides help and gives training to employees on issues related to internal communications.

Aikalainen is a science and culture newspaper of UTA published on paper and online, alumninet.uta.fi is a networking service for the alumni of UTA, *Opiskelijablogi* – online publication publishes blog posts about studying and student life in Finnish and English. Posts are authored by students in the UTA press club, *Rehtoriblogi* – Rector's blog (in Finnish) is posted by the Rector and Vice-Rectors, *Research & Study* is an online publication about research, studying and events at UTA published in English. *Coming Events calendar* informs about guest lectures, seminars and other events in Finnish and English. *Press releases* is an archive of press releases sent out by the Press and Information Office, *Research News* is about researchers at UTA and their research results, and *University News* writes about the events and high points of life at UTA.

Social media is also used for communication; UTA Facebook in Finnish and in English, UTA Facebook for alumni, LinkedIn University of Tampere in English, LinkedIn group for the alumni/nae, Twitter @UniTampere account in Finnish and in English, Twitter @Aikalainen account of Aikalainen newspaper, and YouTube University of Tampere is the joint YouTube channel of UTA.

The main channel for the internal communications at UTA is the joint intra.uta.fi service, also for students. The intranet gathers in one spot internal information at UTA (materials and instructions) and communications about current affairs in Finnish and in English. UTA.staff is an intranet community for university staff, which publishes announcements

in both Finnish and in English and YOP.staff intranet community for University Services staff has announcements in Finnish. Open thematic intranet communities are published and updated by the University Services, and Sähköpostiutiset newsletter gathers links weekly to the most current news at UTA, but in Finnish only.

The purpose of UTA intranet is to support the work and activities of UTA and to carry out the university strategy. The aims of internal communications are to produce and maintain the joint materials and instructions shared by the university community, disseminate current information, support interaction in the university community, and help to build feelings of community and identity. Each member of the university community is responsible for internal communication and each employee is in charge of communicating about her/his own tasks and expertise in a way that the message reaches the people whose work is impacted and whom the issues concern. In addition, the schools and units of the university build their own internal communications practices and define the key emphasis areas for their communications.

3.4 Communications of Conference Support Services

The University of Tampere has many communication channels available, but for internal communication, only a few are relevant. At the moment, the Conference Support Services only has intranet pages in Finnish describing the services provided in event management, and also contact information can be found. Intranet pages need to be updated and the pages need to be also in English as many of the University of Tampere employees are English speaking. Even though the main channel for the internal communications is intranet, the intranet is not widely used by many UTA staff members, therefore a website is also needed both in Finnish and in English. Thus, the website will consist of only basic information about the provided services, as the services are not available to external clients. Website is also part of the corporate communication, which affects the image of the University of Tampere and increases the cooperation between network operators. Word of mouth has been an efficient communication tool in promoting the Conference Support Services.

4 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN

The internal communication plan for the Conferences Support Services is included only in the appendices in order to protect the privacy of the University of Tampere and the Conference Support Services. This plan has been created for the use of the personnel and manager of the Conference Support Services.

5 NETWORK OPERATORS

Communication and co-operation with stakeholder groups are essential in all organisational functions. Co-operation is a source of added value for all network operators and they all have their own interests and reasons for co-operation, such as sharing information, learning from others, developing know-how, adding credibility as well as reaching mutual benefits. Lack of resources can obstruct these objectives.

5.1 Tampere Convention Bureau

Tampere Convention Bureau (TCB) offers free of charge assistance to any national or international organiser planning an international meeting in Tampere. TCB is a non-commercial organisation for promoting Tampere as a conference destination and they provide information on for example facilities, hotels, transportation and social programmes with pictures, videos and tourist material. They also arrange tailor-made site inspections for international meeting planners and key personnel within the international organisations.

When planning an international conference, TCB assists in preparing tailor-made bid documents and presentation materials, drafting budgets and promotion plans, reserving venues and accommodation as well as choosing business partners for co-operation. They also consult on practical arrangements as well as on marketing the planned conferences for example by promotional activities at the preceding conference.

TCB has an extensive cooperation network in the Tampere Region with all major operators in meeting and tourism services. TCB announces to have unique cooperation with the scientific organisations in Tampere and that academic conferences are their special field of expertise. University of Tampere is a member and a partner of TCB. Other members and partners are different organisations, such as congress venues, catering companies, municipalities, commercial organisations, hotels, and professional conference organisers.

TCB has launched a blog as a modern guide to how to organise a conference. It is also a forum for those attending a conference in Tampere. The website can be found at www.congresswise.com.

The University of Tampere utilises TCB services for some of the international conferences organised by the university. In return, TCB offers leads for possible interests of international operators wanting to organise a conference in Tampere. TCB and the University of Tampere are true cooperation partners as there is no competition involved. The University of Tampere also compiles statistics for TCB, which forwards the information to Finland Convention Bureau (FCB) for national conference statistics to be compared internationally. The statistics show that Tampere continues as one of Finland's top conference destinations. (<http://www.tampereconventionbureau.fi/?x1732=255180>, last entered 5.4.2015)

5.2 Round Table

In the autumn 2014 Tampere Convention Bureau and Tampere Hall Congress and Concert Centre invited persons in charge of conference activities from the three higher education institutions in Tampere; University of Tampere, Tampere University of Technology and Tampere University of Applied Sciences to a meeting. The idea is that the key personnel of conference organisers from these three universities can informally meet 2 – 3 times a year. The purpose of this forum is to share best conference practices, to discuss possible mutual challenges and to think, how the conference industry in Tampere could be promoted and how the good reputation and the awareness of Tampere as a conference destination could be improved.

Tampere Convention Bureau and Tampere Hall Congress and Concert Centre are planning to continue organising a conference school for the decision makers, such as professors and researchers, as well as to the hands-on staff arranging the practical arrangements of a conference. This benefits the Conference Support Services to learn about the best practises and it creates and maintains cooperation and partnership among the network operators.

5.3 Tampere3

The three higher education institutions in Tampere, University of Tampere (UTA), Tampere University of Technology (TUT) and Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), are in collaboration to build a unique cross-institutional academic community.

They are planning to develop degree programmes in their main fields of study in order to provide high-quality education for all students pursuing a doctorate, a master's degree or a bachelor's degree. In addition, increasing multidisciplinary collaborative research is one of the Tampere3 aims and to achieve these common goals, institutional barriers need to be broken down. Not only degree programmes and research are undergoing plans for preparatory proposals, but also necessary support services are being considered. At the moment the University of Tampere is the only institution out of these three, which has appointed support services for conferences in a larger scale. It remains to be seen, what this collaboration means to the UTA Conference Support Services, in every case, it is going to experience some kind of an organisational change in the future, if this collaboration project is implemented.

5.4 Congress Network Finland ry

Congress Network Finland ry is a registered association established in 2010 and currently with 67 member organisations. CNF offers for its members training and information within the conference and meeting industry. In addition, benchmarking, networking and excursion possibilities are provided as well as results of international and national researches. CNF cooperates closely with Finland Convention Bureau (FCB), which promotes Finland actively in the meeting industry sector (meetings, incentives, conferences, events). CNF and FCB aim in their efforts to maintain and to improve the positive reputation of Finland as a country of professionally organised conferences.

The University of Tampere is in the process of becoming a member, thus provided education by the CNF will improve the services level of the Conference Support Services. CNF is also an addition to the network of operators increasing cooperation at the national level, and increasing the good image of the University of Tampere.

5.5 Tampere All Bright Ambassador Network

Tampere Region Economic Development Agency Tredea is planning to start an Ambassador network to gather people who are internationally oriented and keen on professional networking regardless of their nationality or professional background. The aim of this

network is to promote Tampere internationally and to make Tampere known all over the world by creating new ways of doing things. Co-operation with this network would also benefit the University of Tampere. It would increase the level of awareness of the university in the world and attract international students as Finland has one of the most advanced educational systems in the world. This encourages also international conference organisers to bring conferences and other events to Tampere.

5.6 Benchmarking

Kozak (2004, 3) states that benchmarking is “an action discovering the specific practices responsible for high performance, understanding how these practices work and are achieved, and adapting them to one’s organisation”.

University of Vienna was founded in 1365 being today the oldest university of the German-speaking world and one of the largest in Central Europe with about 92.000 enrolled students and 9.700 employees. In 2014, more than 1500 events took place at the university in addition to standard curricular teaching activities. City of Vienna has a renowned position as a conference destination and the University of Vienna is one of Austria’s leading conference and event venues with about 180 national and international meetings and 10 – 15 congresses hosted every year. The University of Vienna has Conference and Event Management Service Unit and its responsibilities are for example conference services, abstract and attendee management, hotel and lecture room allocation, technical equipment services for fairs and exhibitions, graduation ceremonies and other academic celebrations, tours and other tourist services. This unit also has contacts to external companies and services, such as childcare services, interpreters, photographers and stage shows.

The University of Vienna has a massive impact on the Austrian society and it requires a special responsibility for the environment. Thus, the University of Vienna’s Conference and Event Management Service Unit is planning to increase its role as a Green Meeting licensee which means all their future events will be developed and implemented on the basis of socially and ecologically responsible practices. Their objective is to contribute to new and improved concepts and approaches in the conference industry.

In Great Britain, universities have taken a step further in organising events. For example, Bangor University Conference Services offers the following services: Conference & Meetings, Weddings and Events, Group Travel, Educational Visits, Holiday Accommodation, Special Offers, Holiday Events, Delivered Catering and Sports Facilities. (http://www.bangor.ac.uk/conference_office/, last entered 23.4.2015)

The University of Manchester Conferences and Venues offer also large range of services, such as hotel, accommodation, catering, event management, and weddings. They are promoting their services by saying that hosting an event at their university is also supporting its research, the education of their students and investing in the future society. (<http://www.conference.manchester.ac.uk/>, last entered 30.1.2015)

In Spain, the Association of University and University Foundation Conference Offices offers a portal, which is a meeting point for professionals in charge of managing events with contact details and details of university facilities, calendar of events, and other information of interest to organisers of conferences and events in general. It also outlines the services offered by Conference Offices of Spanish universities, which are members of this association. (<http://www.ocue.org/index.php/en/>, last entered 23.4.2015)

A benchmarking would more than likely give new perspectives on event management and innovative ideas for best practices for conferences organised at the University of Tampere. Perhaps in the future, the Conference Support Services could be ready to promote the university for external clients to host their conference at the university facilities.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This bachelor's thesis contains the internal communication plan for Conference Support Services of University of Tampere. Even though Conferences Support Services has been operating since 2013, many of the staff members were still unaware of the changed processes involved in conference management within the university.

In 2014 about 75 % of the University of Tampere conferences and other events were organised in cooperation with the Conferences Support Services. That percentage is quite high already, but the goal is 100 %, therefore internal marketing of the services needs to be done, as there are still many staff members, who are not aware of the existing services.

In order to develop the provided support services, feedback is needed from the conference organisers at University of Tampere. After each organised conference, a feedback meeting is suggested to be held. Online feedback questionnaire is in the making process, in order to receive the required information for service development, also constructive criticism is welcomed. Larger feedback questionnaire is planned to be made and sent for those organisers, who have used the Conference Support Services during 2014 – 2015.

Cooperation with network operators should be developed even more, because cooperation creates new knowhow, supports the organisation's own activities and promotes the objectives of the organisation. High level of cooperation increases the probabilities of obtaining more conferences to Tampere and to the University of Tampere.

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APPENDIX

Internal Communication Plan