Marketing Plan: Craft Center

Meredith Wong

University of Oregon
Overview

The Craft Center is a prominent organization within the University of Oregon’s Erb Memorial Union. It provides opportunities for students, staff, and faculty members at the University of Oregon as well as the larger, Eugene community to participate in visual arts, educational programs and workshops. These opportunities specifically include unique crafts, such as ceramics, metalsmithing, glassblowing, and woodworking, which supplement the more traditional, fine art practices, such as drawing and painting, that are offered within the School of Architecture and Allied Arts. As such, the Craft Center supplements the gap in participation by providing an opportunity for a wider audience to take part in educational workshops in crafts and visual arts programming (The Craft Center, n.d.).

Marketing Objectives and Strategies

As an integral part of student and community life on campus, the Craft Center relies heavily on reoccurring and new participants. The challenge with this population, however, is continually engaging participants when the turnover rate occurs every four or five years when students graduate. Additionally, the Craft Center is currently experiencing changes with their website as well as their location within the Erb Memorial Union (EMU). Due to these major transitions, the Craft Center will need to focus on a marketing plan, which aims to not only increase participation in workshops but also maintain awareness as an open and available organization on campus, even during the move and construction of the EMU.

As a part of this organization, staff members utilize various social media and web-based platforms to promote participation in craft-based workshops, including Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, MailChimp, and the hub – the Craft Center website. Although these forms are actively used, the marketing plan will discuss additional marketing platforms, including Instagram, the University of Oregon’s Events Calendar, and Eugene A Go-Go. Beyond these web-based outlets, the marketing plan will also include email marketing and word of mouth as additional strategies in order to increase participation from students, particularly incoming freshman and students, who do not consider themselves artistic or creative.

Desired Outcomes

- Maintain/Increase awareness of organization
- Increase student participation in workshops
- Increase community participation in workshops

Situational Analysis

Economic Scan

The Craft Center mostly relies on student incidental fees, which are a portion of each student’s tuition. They support various cultural and physical programs, such as student unions and intercollegiate athletics to childcare (FAQs, n.d.). In this case, these fees maintain the salary for full-time staff members at the Craft Center, which include six employees, ranging from the Director to the Studio Technicians.
Other than incidental fees, the Craft Center is supported through earned income from locker rentals, studio passes, and a wide variety of workshops. Locker rentals are based on the university’s academic terms, in which participants can rent a small ($8) or large ($12) locker for the day or the length of the school term. This portion along with the studio passes, which allow participants to use the Craft Center’s facilities even without registering for a workshop, and workshops take advantage of the value-based pricing strategy. The value-based pricing strategy, as suggested by the name, is determined on the value of the product or service. Like the locker rentals, the studio passes are offered on a daily basis ($4-$10) or by the term ($15-$25). Additionally, the Craft Center offers brief, one-day introductory workshops ($15) for new and potentially ongoing participants. These workshops, in particular, provide a glimpse of a certain craft practice at the Craft Center, such as sewing, which hopefully entices participants to continue to take longer workshops at the center.

However, in order to accommodate the different audience members, who attend the Craft Center, the studio passes also operate on a tiered pricing system. The tiered pricing strategy favors students, since they already pay an incidental fee. Students ($15/term or $4/day) pay a lesser fee compared to faculty and staff members ($25/term or $6/day), alumni ($35/term or $10/day) from the University of Oregon as well as the larger Eugene community ($35/term). This encourages students, in particular, to participate in workshops as well as use the Craft Center’s facilities for creating pieces of work.

Demographic and Audience Scan

As previously mentioned, the Craft Center is not only open to students but also faculty, staff members, alumni, and community members of Eugene. Students comprise about 70% of all participants, while faculty and staff members combined as well as alumni and community members each make up 15% of the remaining participating population. Although the Craft Center breaks down the make-up of participants, it does not fully capture demographic information, such as sex, age, ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status, or area of study for students.

Additionally, the Craft Center hosts a wide age range of participants from college age students to retired individuals. However, despite the variance of age, the Craft Center does place an age restriction such that only college-age and older, typically 17-years-old and up, individuals may participate. This age restriction is based upon safety purposes, especially working with potentially high-risk machinery and tools, such as table saws in the woodworking studio. As such, the Craft Center does not allow participants younger than college-age unless given permission by staff members and attended by a parent or guardian.

In order to enhance the audience and potential participants, the Craft Center has the opportunity to develop target segment strategies. These segments may include undergraduate and graduate students, who are divided according to major or discipline. These would provide an understanding of how to advertise workshops to increase involvement with under-engaged groups of students.

Cultural Scan

The atmosphere of the Craft Center is one of the selling points for participating in workshops or purchasing a studio pass. The staff members, including the student workers, provide a welcoming and all-inclusive ambience. Additionally, the workshops and the opportunity to work with one’s
hands allows participants to engage in a stress-relieving and relaxing activity while learning technical, practical, and problem-solving skills.

As a part of these workshops, the Craft Center offers specialty programs, which facilitate leadership for students and teambuilding for staff and faculty members at the university. Although these types of workshops are not advertised as widely as typical programs, they support the benefits of participating in traditional craftsmanship practices as well as general handiwork that is present with such workshops as lip balm making and calligraphy.

The emphasis of the Craft Center, however, is based upon teaching and learning traditional craftsmanship skills. With this in mind, the Craft Center limits the use of advance technology in their workshops, such that the work done with hands is highlighted and the utilization of cutting-edge machinery is minimized. This aspect of the workshops supports the cultural value of the Craft Center by offering unique opportunities for participating in and uncommon resources related to crafts.

Although the Craft Center regulates the amount of technology and machinery used in each workshop, it does take advantage of various social media outlets, such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Youtube. Though, these forms of advertisement, especially Pinterest and Youtube, are seldom used to promote workshops and services at the Craft Center and connect with participants and potential audience members – with at most 30-40 followers. Facebook, however, is the preferred social media platform with over 300 followers. This outlet is frequently updated with statuses and pictures that highlight activity at the Craft Center, including upcoming workshops and events.

The main, digital platform, however, is the Craft Center website. This is the hub for learning about this organization, the workshops and programs offered at the Craft Center, as well as the online location for registering for workshops. The interface of this website, though, is not the most conducive for advertising and promoting programs, such that special workshops or events are not clearly featured on the homepage. The navigation system, as well, adds an element of confusion with the numerous menu options. In order to remedy these issues, the Craft Center website is currently undergoing renovations, and the new website is expected to be launched toward the end of spring.

Environmental Elements

Since the Craft Center is a university-affiliated organization, it is subject to policies and restrictions of this academic institution. These include the amount of incidental fees appropriated to the Craft Center, which in turn affects the salaries of full-time staff members and the necessary revenue that needs to be generated from other sources of income. Other than funding, the Craft Center is also subject to space limitations. Placed in the Erb Memorial Union (EMU), the Craft Center has limited space for each studio, which does not allow for expansion due to facility requirements and other organizations that are housed under the EMU. In relation, as a part of the university, the Craft Center is continually competing with other organizations and activities on campus. Thus, it’s a constant struggle to increase the visibility of the Craft Center through advertisements and social media outlets.
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges

Cultural Products

The Craft Center offers unique workshops and programming, which sets itself apart from other organizations within the University of Oregon as well as the larger community of Eugene. Although these workshops feature traditional craftsmanship practices, these may not appeal to all members of the audience. However, the Craft Center, in its mission to provide arts programs beyond traditional crafts, opens up the opportunity to expand their audience and level of participation. This is represented through such workshops as making soaps and lotions with a personalized scent and tie dying.

Pricing

Pricing is a large component of the Craft Center’s marketing strategy. The center makes use of multiple pricing strategies, such as valued-based and tiered pricing, which encourage students as well as other audience members to participate due to the low price points. However, these prices do not reflect competitive pricing with other organizations in Eugene, which leaves room for the Craft Center to alter and ultimately increase their pricing structure. The challenge, though, is maintaining affordable workshops for students – the Craft Center’s main population of participants. This also provides an opportunity for the Craft Center to extend the tiered pricing strategy toward workshops, such that students participate at a lower cost.

Place and Accessibility

The space for the Craft Center will be drastically altered toward the end of spring term. The Craft Center will have a new, but smaller, space in the EMU. The layout of the space and the process for moving equipment and materials is in the planning stages. Additionally, the new space will have an “outdoor” exposure, so that craft practices such as glassblowing and welding, will be viewable to the public. However, the construction of the new space as well as the EMU as a whole, will pose a barrier to the visibility of the Craft Center, and staff members will need to reconsider ways to generate, and even heighten, advertisements across multiple platforms.

Promotional Efforts

The Craft Center takes advantage of a variety of advertising and promotional efforts, including sandwich boards, newspaper advertisements, and social media outlets, which were mentioned previously. The sandwich boards, which display the Craft Center’s bulletin around campus, are typically used before the start of a term, in order to advertise upcoming workshops. These are placed at various entrances around the EMU. The Craft Center also advertises through Eugene Weekly and the Emerald once or twice a term as well as the Register Guard on a more infrequent basis. These advertising outlets, though, are expensive, at least in comparison to the sandwich boards.
**Scheme**

*Social Media – Instagram, UO Events Calendar, Eugene A Go-Go*

The Craft Center will implement three, additional social media platforms as a part of this marketing plan. Since the Craft Center is currently situated on the first floor of the Erb Memorial Union (EMU), the center receives a high amount of foot traffic. However, the challenge with the layout of the Craft Center is to encourage students and community members to enter the space, especially for those who have not participated in the arts or know about crafts. Taking advantage of Instagram, on the other hand, would provide potential consumers a glimpse of what the Craft Center has to offer, including the space, equipment of each studio, and workshops, as well as the process of moving that will occur toward the end of spring term.

Since the main source of revenue, other than student incidental fees, is workshops, the Craft Center could also take advantage of University of Oregon’s Events Calendar. This is a free, web-based platform for university-affiliated organizations and student groups to promote one-time events, such as the annual Craft Center Staff exhibit, or recurring events, such as studio workshops. This would be an efficient way to extend the awareness and promotional efforts of the Craft Center, as it replicates information that is already posted on Facebook and the Craft Center’s website. As such, this could be an opportunity for a student worker to lead or an additional responsibility of the current staff members. Additionally, this platform incorporates its own tagging system, in which organizations can enhance their presence by selecting tags for subject matter, target audiences, and organizational affiliations. The challenge, however, is reaching a wider audience than Facebook or other media outlets. Since this platform is specifically for events, this option may be rarely used unless students, faculty, and staff members are looking for a particular event.

Although the Craft Center’s largest audience is students, the Center could benefit from media platforms that target and increase the participation of community members, which consists of about 15% of consumers at the Center. In order to do this, the Craft Center could use a local web-based platform – Eugene A Go-Go. Like the University of Oregon’s Events Calendar, Eugene A Go-Go promotes events that are occurring in the community. In addition, a portion of these events are sent in a weekly email to subscribed members, reaching a larger potential audience than those who only search through the website.

*Email Marketing*

The purpose of email marketing strives to maintain communication with an audience through email messaging in order to elevate the awareness of an organization. Typically seen as an inexpensive, instantaneous, and preferred form of communication, email marketing, however, requires organizations to continually reevaluate the content, format, and design of an email in order to increase the effectiveness of an email campaign. (C. Spencer, personal communication, February 10, 2014; Aquino, 2012; Gao, n.d.; Klie, 2011; Merrett, 2012; Ray, 2012). As such, the Craft Center will take advantage of this marketing strategy by highlighting upcoming events and workshops to increase awareness of the organization and purchases of workshops. The additional purpose of this marketing strategy is to target workshops that are struggling to “run” due to low attendance rates.
Word of Mouth (WoM)

Finally, the Craft Center will implement a word of mouth marketing strategy. Although the Craft Center makes use of this strategy already, it is the most effective tactic to increase awareness of this organization as well as purchases of studio passes and workshops. There is, however, room for the Craft Center to expand this strategy, further heightening its awareness and revenue through purchases, especially during a transitional period with the move. Additional plans for expanding this strategy include targeting incoming students through tabling events and orientations as well as working with residential halls and classes to spread awareness of the Craft Center.

Implementation:

Timeline

- **Spring Term Workshops Begin: April 1, 2014**
  - UO Events Calendar/Eugene A Go-Go: workshops beginning at the end of term
  - Email Marketing:
    - Workshops beginning at the end of term
    - Reminder of the move
  - Word of Mouth: class presentations
    - Workshops beginning at the end of term
    - Reminder of the move

- **Craft Center Closes: May 24-June 22, 2014**
  - Instagram:
    - Process of moving
    - New location/space
  - Email Marketing:
    - Process of moving
    - New location/space
    - Workshops for Summer term
  - Word of Mouth: class presentations
    - New location/space
    - Workshops for Summer term

- **Craft Center Reopens for Summer Term: June 23, 2014**
  - Instagram:
    - New location/space
    - Workshops
  - Email Marketing:
    - Workshops beginning at the end of term
    - Commemorative event in Fall term
  - Word of Mouth:
    - Workshops beginning at the end of term
    - Commemorative even in Fall term

- **Craft Center Commemorative Event: Fall Term 2015**
Social Media – Instagram, UO Events Calendar, Eugene A Go-Go

As mentioned by the staff members at the Craft Center, the student workers are an underutilized resource. Although they understand and implement daily functions, there is room for growth in terms of increasing marketing efforts with the help of these students. Instagram, as a popular and user-friendly application, would be an effective media platform for multiple student workers, and staff members, to promote the Craft Center in a visual manner. The challenge, however, is keeping a consistent look and branding image, as multiple individuals could be using this platform. In order to address this problem, the Craft Center should consider establishing policies that include deciding what images to post, how often to post those images, what hashtags and GEO tags to use, as well as filters to use.

- **Personnel**
  - Instagram: student workers
  - UO Events Calendar and Eugene A Go-Go: administrative staff and interns

- **Materials and Technological Resources**
  - Instagram: iPad
  - UO Events Calendar Account and Eugene A Go-Go Account

Email Marketing

Although email marketing is an already utilized tactic, for this marketing plan the Craft Center will heighten awareness and purchases of workshops by sending weekly email campaigns, specifically targeting $15 Term Specials, upcoming workshops, and major events. The content for these email campaigns would be developed through collaboration between administrative staff and interns. Staff members will provide the purpose for the email – outlining the specific workshops or events that will be highlighted – and will approve the content of the email as well as distribute the email campaign. The interns would organize the layout of and specific information within the email, including images and links to the Craft Center’s website and Facebook page.

- **Personnel**: administrative staff and interns
- **Technological Resources**: MailChimp account

Word of Mouth (WoM)

As the most effective form of marketing, the Craft Center will increase the word of mouth strategy to increase awareness of the organization as well as revenue. Through this strategy, the Craft Center will, again, take advantage of the administrative interns and the student works to implement class presentations, with the approval of professors, and tabling events throughout the year, specifically at orientations.

- **Personnel**: administrative interns and student works
- **Media**
  - iPad
  - Projections for Slideshow
- **Printing, Production, Distribution**
  - Workshop Brochures
  - Handbills/Flyers
Evaluation Plan

In order to generally measure the effectiveness of these marketing strategies, the Craft Center will track the number of purchases of lockers, studio passes, and workshops. This will include differentiating between segments – students (undergraduate versus graduate), faculty and staff members, and community members – as well as determining if the participant is new or a reoccurring one. This will be accomplished through the registering database, which collects information about each participant, including demographic information as well as how each participant heard of the Craft Center. In addition, this will be duplicated through follow-up surveys of each workshop that will indicate how each participant heard of a particular workshop, including one of the social media outlets, an email campaign, or through word of mouth.

For email marketing, however, the Craft Center will establish additional evaluation strategies to determine their effectiveness as well as changes in implementing each one. This will include analyzing open rates and “click-through” rates – built-in features of MailChimp. Through these features, the Craft Center will be able to determine whether or not these clicks, depending on the type of email campaign, resulted in purchases of studio passes and workshops.

Although the Craft Center is currently limited with resources, including time and the number of full-time staff members, who are available to implement marketing strategies, the center could take advantage of alternative tactics in order to heighten awareness and increase participation in workshops. One possible direction, especially when considering the move and relocation of the Craft Center, is gorilla marketing. This could include removable decals of the Craft Center’s logo that could be placed in- and outside of the EMU, leading to the new location of the center – similar to the duck footprints that are placed throughout the sidewalks of campus. In addition, these decals could be used as ways to develop partnerships with organizations through sponsorships, in which each logo would contain the name of different student and community arts organizations on campus and in Eugene.

References


Klie, L. (2011). Email marketing has the look: Responsys’ third annual Email Design Look Book highlights strategies vital to marketers’ future success. CRM Magazine. 13

