**Making the Most of the Moments that Matter**

Aimee Kleinman and Vicky Green from SMRS

Reporter: Mari Higginbotham

SMRS are a Marketing and Communications Agency who are an education, employer and youth marketing business. They have locations in London and Manchester with 32 University clients. They deliver strategic marketing focussing on:

Who? Identifying Target Audience

What? Portfolio Development

Where? Identifying Opportunities

How? Brand Definition

Conference Session

Introduction – Customer experience, why it’s important and where to start.

Focus on perceptions and interactions

Perceptions – Reputation, Rankings, Third Parties, Advertising and Press

Interactions – Digital, Web, CRM, Offline, Direct Contact, Third Party and Rational & Irrational Decision Making

Customer Experience Manager must focus on all of the above. 89% companies expect to compete on customer experience. 5x more likely to repurchase and 4x more likely to refer if they have a good customer experience. Second word of mouth is most important for Generation Z (48%) compared to Millenials (41%) and Generation X (38%).

Four important aspects to understand

* Touchpoints applicants have with you
* Importance of each touchpoint
* Expectations
* Experience – what are we trying to achieve?

What is most important? Make sure to focus on the customers perspective – not internal looking out!

Workshop

Workshop – Each table was given a persona. Two tables were working on each persona so they could compare their findings. Plot the journey of Importance in touchpoints (see slides). We explored a journey map which included Processes, People and Systems. What does the persona need? We ranked importance of each touchpoint for our persona and overlaid with the table who had the same persona to look at where we ranked them similarly or different. All the personas in the room differed dramatically in the level and frequency of engagement they were likely to prefer.

Case study – University of Wolverhampton (Rebecca Hollington)

Students are at the forefront of everything we do. Academics thought everyone had a different student body. Age, course, where they are from etc. Realised that interests and motivations is a more innovative way to characterise this.

It was difficult at times to find good data for persona building as there were lots of gaps for certain groups and certain aspects of the student journey. The data was patchy and not qualitative. They did not have an overarching approach to the student journey from enquiry to graduation. There was a drive within the institution to identify good practice, make informed data-driven decisions to progress in an evidence-led way. It is important to make sure that the activity underpins the ethos of the institution.

Rollout within the Uni of Wolverhampton

Student Recruitment → Enrolment → Progression → Alumni Engagement

SRMS were appointed and UoW shared their data – segmentation of student body. Salient quotes were collected from prospective students. Stakeholders – IT, Accommodation, Faculties, Admissions, Student Recruitment and Deans. Follow-up on assumptions through additional focus groups. The report helped to set the priorities – finite staff could be invested in key areas. Answers can be obtained to key questions, for example, are subjects regional?

Questions from the floor

How do you overlap applicants with enrolments? The persona should not really change from application to enrolment as the persona is based on their motivations and interests.

Are they the same for UG and PG, the personas? No, they have seen vocationally driven, career changing and CPD/Progression personas for example.