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MARKETING WORKSHOP LAUNCHED AT BUDAPEST COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND BUSINESS

ABSTRACT

Budapest College of Communication and Business (BCCB) aims to develop its presence in the labour market through a tender, namely the TÁMOP 4.1.1 VALID project. For this project BCCB teamed up with two other institutions and received EU funds for the above mentioned objective. The aims of the project include the improvement of students' opportunities when entering the labour market and decreasing unemployment in Hungary. According to the requirements of the project, BCCB has established five workshops in different fields of study. These workshops can serve as a platform for students to gain more practical knowledge in contemporary issues and enjoy the opportunities offered by real projects and research. The aim of the marketing-workshop is to hire 8-10 students who can actively participate in upcoming projects. The possible areas of research for the marketing-workshop include SME marketing, country branding, country image-building and contemporary issues in marketing communication. All of these projects will contribute to a better opportunity for these students upon entering the labour market.

Keywords: *marketing, higher education, partnership, knowledge-management, research, workshop*

Introduction

In higher education the quality level of education and the services provided to students is of utmost importance. The growing competition in the higher education sector only elevates the necessity of providing the best possible services. Many studies discuss the ingredients of good quality higher education and the types of services necessary in order to create a positive perception. The most important stakeholders to judge the level of the services are the students, including the potential and already graduated ones as well as employers. Their expectations characterise the definition of good quality in higher education.

Budapest College of Communication and Business (BCCB) along with two other institutions, Heller Farkas Faculty of Economics and Tourism and Budapest College of Management, wishes to develop its service to students in order to achieve better labour market opportunities for them. This initiative is achieved through a European Union tender namely the TÁMOP 4.1.1 VALID project. The aims of this project include the improvement of opportunities of those participating in the higher education system in addition to better satisfying the needs of the labour market, decreasing the unemployment rate of professionals and creating a more competitive economy. One of the emphasised elements of the project is nurturing talents, which is an important part of knowledge management. For this purpose BCCB launched five different talent workshops in 2010. These workshops will serve as a platform for professional, research and educational work. Furthermore, they will provide an opportunity for participation in various events and in-depth co-operation with companies associated with the college. The focus of this paper is the establishment of the marketing workshop. The aim is to prove its validity and purpose to improve students' services. It is our belief that these services will greatly enhance the labour market opportunities of those who will successfully participate in this workshop. The long-term sustenance and successful operation of this project is part of our aims.

Aims of the project

Taking part in this project was necessary because of the changing needs of the labour market. In the past decade the most important index of quality in the Hungarian higher education system has become the rate of employment of those with a fresh degree and their employment in their respective fields

of study. This all comes down to the relevance of the knowledge gained in the years spent in the higher education system to the real needs of the employers. For this purpose Budapest College of Communication and Business along with its partners intends to build its range of services designed to ensure better opportunities for its graduates in the labour market. This consortium of private colleges has recognised this need and has been very active in the past years to modify its educational programmes according to the requirements of the labour market.

According to the aim of the project, the different experiences and knowledge base of the three institutions will be used to harmonise and systemize the career centres of each institution and to further develop them. Another important objective is the tracking of graduated students. The advantage of the consortium form enables cost effective operation and also the opportunity to learn from one another.

The project focuses on the following three issues:

- Providing better labour market opportunities for the student;
- Student satisfaction;
- Satisfy the needs of employers in the areas covered by the college's programmes.

Furthermore, these issues cover:

- the orientation of prospective students;
- the enhancement of institutional services provided;
- the nurturing of especially talented students;
- the establishment of the best method of contact with alumni;
- the support of graduated students in the labour market;
- the development of available programmes for the needs of the labour market;
- the improvement of data supply².

The project terminates in September 2011. However, the institutions of the consortium have agreed to run the project with all its components until the end of 2016.

The planned activities of the Valid project in accordance with knowledge-management include the establishment of the following areas:

- a system of career management;

² Feasibility study, TÁMOP 4.1.1 VALID PROJECT

- the tradition of nurturing talented students;
- development of career services;
- online services for alumni;
- extensive dissemination of project results.

The next section of the paper focuses on the talent development programme and the establishment of the marketing workshop.

The role of talent development at BCCB

The services and the processes used vary due to the differences of the three institutions. An important aspect of the project is the co-operation between the career centres, which allows the different methods applied to be shared among these institutions. Furthermore, this co-operation enables regular consultations between the organisations. The same principle applies to the talent development at BCCB.

The talent development programme is directed by the project leader, who is responsible for the professional aspect of the project. The role of the project leader includes gathering various project opportunities from the corporate sector, filtering and forwarding them to the concerned workshop directors.

Planned workshops:

- Marketing
- Media
- Management
- Social sciences
- Tourism

Each workshop is headed by a workshop leader, whose responsibilities include overseeing the work and at the same time managing and co-ordinating students' progress. The projects that the co-ordinator submits to the directors are then fitted into the respective workshops' schedule and their progress and outcome are supervised by the workshop director.

The application procedure for the workshops are decided on by the directors, however, in some cases special conditions need to be fulfilled by the students in order to join the workshop. This factor depends on the particular workshop and the application requirements designed by the workshop leader. The procedure is therefore not open to all students as they need to be qualified for this special opportunity. They need to have two successful semesters completed before applying for the workshop of their choice. Nevertheless, a successful application holds many advantages for the students, out of which perhaps the opportunity to gain practical experience is

the most important. Successful participation in the workshop can definitely be an advantage for the students when applying for their first job.

Another special opportunity is also available to the students successfully joining one of the workshops. This opportunity is a test to measure the competencies of students. This is another important element of the talent development programme.

In order to help students in their search for jobs, the management of BCCB – among the first higher education institutions – has decided to add a new service to the traditional career centre activities, a competence-based test recognized and accepted by employers. This test measures the ability of the candidate with regards to the competences necessary for work. In other words, it shows the attitude towards work, a sense of purpose, persistence, and goes as far as providing a picture on the candidate's ability for individual- and teamwork. Based on the results, it is also possible to see whether this person is a born leader or shows signs of becoming one. By completing the test the students evaluate themselves in their present position and also provide a picture of how they want to see themselves in the future in a particular position. This test is designed for the labour market, but in the case of students participating in the workshops the test can serve as a value-added service, which enhances the students' opportunities to work on various abilities that need to be improved and by doing so they can strengthen their career opportunities when choosing an employer for the first time.

The competence test generally indicates the test subject's suitability for the assessed position. It measures and evaluates:

- the attitude towards work and the characteristics of his or her work;
- the attitude towards leadership and leadership style;
- decision skills;
- personality;
- relationships with co-workers, behaviour at the workplace and
- other abilities.

The test is available for employees, executives, but more importantly it is also available for students, graduates, which can be a great asset for them when entering the labour market looking for their first jobs. The associates of the Career Centre of BCCB have been trained to evaluate the results of the tests and deliver them to students in the framework of a personal consultation. The students joining the talent workshops have the option to take the test twice, once when joining and once again upon leaving the workshop. This is an important element as the two tests will be able to show the improvements the students have made during the time spent in the

workshop. Furthermore, the results of the tests, especially the second one can be an advantage for the students finding their first jobs. Along with the second test they also receive a two day training that focuses on co-operation, group dynamics and time management.

Marketing workshop

To construct the aims of the marketing workshop, the objectives of the VALID project had to be considered. The aim is to provide students with more opportunities and to offer selected students extra services by the college. Thus they will be able to participate in special projects gaining practical knowledge in the field of marketing.

According to the aims of the marketing workshop, it is important to find the most suitable projects that can provide students with an extra opportunity compared to other students following the regular curriculum. In order to be informed of all incoming projects, a co-ordinator is employed to organise and distribute all incoming projects among the workshop directors. Many companies seek the help of the student base of BCCB for various marketing research projects, but due to the fact that there is no co-ordinating department dealing with these incoming projects and also because of the lack of student interest and motivation to participate in these projects, most of them is left unanswered or neglected. This problem can be bridged by the concept of the workshops, because these teams will react to these opportunities and actively participate in the chosen research projects. The students of BCCB take part in various national marketing competitions organised for students almost every year, but they have never had the opportunity to be managed and supervised by one organisation or tutor. The aim of the marketing workshop is to seek out all the opportunities open for the college students and teams and participate in those competitions where we can achieve good results. The role of the marketing workshop is also crucial for the colleagues about to complete their PhD studies. Joint publications and help in various marketing research projects can facilitate their progress as well. In fact, this is real knowledge-management where both parties benefit from this partnership.

The operation of the workshop is determined by the projects it undertakes. These projects can surface from the research areas of the marketing institute of BCCB and the incoming company possibilities. They include areas of marketing such as SME, country branding, country image building, pharmaceutical marketing and new marketing communication tools. Projects in these areas will require the help of the colleagues of the marketing

institute of BCCB. Furthermore, the needs of the corporate sector will be a determining factor in the selection of workshop projects.

Synergy among the five workshops is part of 21st-century knowledge-management. This means that workshop directors need to be constantly updated on each other's progress and about the incoming opportunities enabling the co-operation of the competences of two or even three workshops in a given project.

Application for the BA students is open upon completion of two successful semesters. Ideally members will spend two active semesters in the workshop. Successful membership for these students means credits at the end of a semester and the time spent in the workshop can also be accepted as internship in their cases. The ideal number of participants is 8-10 persons. Meetings with the workshop director will be held every two weeks, where the students need to present their so-called progress reports of the activities. At the end of the semester the marketing workshop will present its activities to the rest of the workshops and to everyone interested at the college.

Application to the marketing workshop holds numerous advantages for the talented students. Some of these advantages include the following:

- The participants can learn a great deal about the marketing, advertising and PR profession both in theory and in practice.
- The students are supported in their preparation of academic papers and participation in media competitions.
- The participants can build important contacts with the marketing profession.
- Practical experience in research methodology, data analysis and presentation of findings.
- Publication opportunities in journals of the marketing and media profession (PR Herald, Brand&Trend, Mediainfo, Marketing and Media, etc.).
- Opportunities to participate in conferences free of charge.

Conclusion

The VALID project of BCCB presents the opportunity for the members of the consortium to upgrade and increase the quality of their student services. A vital part of this project is talent development, which is a milestone in knowledge-management. The role of the five workshops is to provide talented students with an extra opportunity and to give them more support during their years spent in higher education. The aim of the marketing workshop – in accordance with the VALID project – is to provide a special

platform for talented students, where they can meet the challenges of the marketing profession through real projects and research. This platform provides grounds for practical knowledge transfer, thereby helping them prepare for their first real marketing jobs. The successful students will receive much more than just a degree. The experience of the marketing workshop will serve as an advantage for them when looking for their first jobs.