



Sail Scotland Growth Fund Case Study

Sailing to Success - Mixed Media National
and International Marketing Campaign

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Project Overview

Sail Scotland is the national marketing organisation for sailing and marine tourism. Sail Scotland delivers a range of strategic marketing activities, aimed at bringing more sailing visitors to Scottish waters, in order to grow the sector and deliver benefits to members businesses (60 plus) and the wider economy. Sail Scotland is a Private Limited Company owned and operated on a not-for-profit basis by an industry board. Over 2014/15 Sail Scotland delivered a £45,000 12 month marketing campaign project – this was based on a £22,500 Growth Fund award and match funded via Scottish Development International and Sail Scotland’s own funds.

The project was developed to assist Sail Scotland to make a step-change as an organisation from a focus predominantly on UK boat shows, to being a strategic marketing organisation, with a multi-channel approach targeting a balanced portfolio of domestic and European markets. Project activities included offline activity such as consumer exhibitions (international boat shows in Düsseldorf, Gothenburg, Lillestrøm and Wales) and promotional marketing

(working with top brands including Talisker Whisky and outdoor clothing company Musto) driving traffic to digital platforms. This in-turn supported data capture and CRM. In addition, there was separate work on developing Sail Scotland’s brand and shared narrative.

The specific aims of the project were two-fold. Firstly, to generate additional visitor boat nights and associated expenditure in the Scottish economy. Secondly, to enhance Sail Scotland marketing activities and to improve sustainability. The project also had a clear fit with the Tourism Marine Strategy and T2020.



Activity Impact & Learning

The promotional marketing activity was outsourced to an agency and was focused on data acquisitions. The promotional marketing work primarily involved three brand partners – Talisker, Musto and Sailing Today. Over the last 18 months, Sail Scotland’s consumer database has gone from 0 to 22,000 – over 6,000 of these came from the promotional marketing campaigns. This type of promotional marketing was absolutely new to the organisation.

Sail Scotland exhibited at international boat shows in Düsseldorf, Gothenburg, Lillestrøm and Wales as part of the project delivery plan. This was the first time Sail Scotland had exhibited at Gothenburg and Lillestrøm. The face-to-face interaction that comes from consumer exhibitions proved valuable and demonstrated through volume of magazines distributed, data capture entries, and show specific web visits. Overall the consumer boat shows allowed Sail Scotland to make links in international markets that would not have happened otherwise. For example, as a result of the Gothenburg show Sail Scotland are now doing work with an association from Gothenburg -

where they bring members to Scotland who will write blogs.

The development of a brand toolkit for members, partners and stakeholders, which includes brand guidelines, downloadable assets such as a storyboard of words, images, etc., has been successful. It provided an identity and tools for members to use to achieve commonality. To date over 50% of members are using the toolkit and over 40% of businesses are integrating brand assets on marketing materials. Sail Scotland believed that the “benefit of the toolkit will last well beyond the Growth Fund campaign period”.

Overall, the combined impact of the different activities over the campaign period has seen Sail Scotland’s website traffic increase by over 100% (more than 20,000 additional visitors to website) and social media reach increased by over 600%. In turn this drive of traffic towards digital channels has resulted in data capture of over 15,000 consumers, underpinning accurate segmentation, and allowing for future segmented e-marketing activities.

Wider Benefits

Sail Scotland has experienced a number of engagement benefits as a result of the project. A big part of the project's engagement was to go beyond boat shows and move away from the mind-set that boat shows are the only marketing channel. Promotional marketing was a 'leap of faith' for the group's members. Members now have a changed mind-set, and realise promotional activity gives more credibility to Sail Scotland and its members, as consumers see the brand in the mainstream sailing magazines. There is some anecdotal evidence from members of results (enquiries, bookings, etc.) from the promotional campaigns, and the islands very much saw results from the Lillestrøm boat show. This improved engagement with members is demonstrated in a bi-annual member survey conducted by Sail Scotland. Previously 0% of members said that Sail Scotland was doing a good-excellent job, whereas now 69-74% stated that Sail Scotland were doing a good-excellent job. This is because members are seeing a range of activity

being delivered. Over the project period membership has grown by over 30% due to engagement - however it should be noted that membership had been growing incrementally prior to Growth Fund.

Without the Growth Fund award, Sail Scotland would have delivered some marketing activity but not to the same scale or volume. Possibly a third of the delivery activity would have happened anyway, though the results would have been very different. The increase in visitor numbers to the Sail Scotland website wouldn't have happened - it would have been flat without the activity. And while the database would have been developed, it would not have been to the same scale.

Much of the project's campaign activity complements the internationalisation priority of Scotland's Economic Strategy. Further to this, Sail Scotland have been working with SDI, this has included training on international marketing.

Growth Fund Experience

The project was devised with monitoring and evaluation built into each activity – this included monthly reporting to the Sail Scotland Board and an evaluation plan that was signed off by the board at the outset.

Sail Scotland's relationship with VisitScotland had not changed as a result of Growth Fund. Sail Scotland had a strong and established relationship with VisitScotland prior to Growth Fund award. Growth Fund may have formalised some of the ongoing conversations with VisitScotland. One point highlighted regarding the relationship with VisitScotland was the ability to weave theme year activity into the Growth Fund projects – this was viewed as is useful, especially at shows.



Looking Forward

Growth Fund has undoubtedly contributed to Sail Scotland's future sustainability, particularly in assisting the development of a consumer database. Owning a consumer database gives Sail Scotland leverage to have proper strategic conversations with potential partners.

Sail Scotland have been successful in securing another Growth Fund award for 2016/17 - the activity focuses on different international markets. This campaign has a strong focus on content creation for social media channels and paid social media promotion.

A key lesson learnt from delivering the project was the attention to detail

required in project management. This aspect was stressful, particularly the cash flow side, but a useful exercise in terms of learning for the future.





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