

UVM Football



Marketing Plan

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Introduction and Mission Statement

Mission Statement: This marketing plan will focus on gaining exposure for the University of Vermont Club Football team within the university community, in Vermont High Schools, and amongst the alumni at the institution. The lack of awareness that a football team exists at the university is the primary problem, and this marketing plan will address it using multiple marketing strategies.

The specific goals for this marketing plan are as follows:

- The attendance at home football games will increase as a result of greater awareness within the university community. Incentives will be established that will encourage students to come to the games.
- The financial resources available to the team will increase as a result of an improved relationship and dialogue with football alums, both new and old. These resources will be utilized to improve the image of the team both in the minds of the target market, and the physical image of what is seen on the football field.
- Merchandise will be produced at a low cost from a local vendor and sold on campus, on the team website, and at the games. This will help to spread awareness for the team by making the team more visible around the community.
- This marketing plan will utilize the team website as a promotional tool in order to maintain a strong relationship with the fan base, alumni, and also to encourage students from Vermont High Schools to join the team. Increased participation on the team will improve our image on the field, and also give us a greater foundation to attract more fans.
- Events will be established for game days that will provide incentives for our specific target markets to attend the games. In doing so, we will be encouraging stronger and more loyal fans.

The following marketing plan has been inspired by the members of the University of Vermont Club football team, and the need for a football team beyond the high school level in Vermont. For many students, entering into a college environment as a freshman can be a very intimidating experience. The UVM Club Football team allows students to continue playing the game that they love, while also providing a social

outlet for students entering into a new environment. By increasing the level of awareness around the University community and in high schools throughout the state, more students will be able to experience the tradition that is enjoyed on the team.

UVM Football Overview

Undefeated Since 1974? Not So Fast



(Still Available at the UVM Bookstore)

The t-shirt says it all, “undefeated since 1974.” The fact that this shirt is still available at the University bookstore, and still worn by students around campus makes it very clear that there is an awareness issue with the Club Football team. The shirt is in reference to the existence of a NCAA Division 1AA football program that existed at the University until it was disbanded in 1974 (NY Times). Talking to folks around the community, mention of a UVM football team almost always gathers some degree of excitement, however, that excitement is more often than not followed by a confused comment along the lines of “UVM has a football team?” This marketing plan will assess the demand for football in the community, and suggest steps towards embracing that demand in a way that will advance the goals of the program.

Thirty-three years after the last touchdown was scored by a University of Vermont football player, a group of young men took it upon themselves to give the community something they had been lacking for some time, some good old fashion gridiron gladiators. Doug Deluca, a University freshmen in 2006, was a football player at his high school, and like many other freshmen coming to the University, he missed the game of football. Unlike many other young men that came before him, he decided to do something about it.

Deluca faced resistance throughout the University community, and the hurdles he overcame only strengthened his resolve. He faced challenges in gaining right to the University colors and logo, he had to raise

\$35,000 for equipment, he negotiated a million dollar insurance policy, and he had to find coaches, opponents and a conference (NY Times). It took him a year to take all of the steps needed to establish a tackle football team by the fall of 2007. It was at this point that the University of Vermont Club Football team was born. Deluca's use of modern-day social media tools to get the program started is a format we will replicate in this marketing plan.

The trends associated with this team provide evidence that there is a demand for a football program at the University. The research provided in this document will support the theory that both the University community, and incoming freshmen from Vermont High Schools are supportive of the team. The team's participation has steadily increased over the last 3 years, and the success that the team has experienced on the football field has resulted in more exposure through such media as the Burlington Free Press, the school newspaper (The Cynic), and also the New York Times. This plan will focus on gaining more exposure through these mediums, as well as others that are available throughout the state.

The athletes that make up this football team are not your traditional college athletes that are on scholarships to play a sport. These young men are working part-time while working to overcome the challenges of a collegiate schedule. They play football because they love the game, it provides them with a sense of catharsis that only someone that has played the game can truly understand. The passion that they have for their sport, and for their team, will be essential to the success of this plan. The program has relied on the players for everything, from its conception to the management of its daily operations. The club has a President, treasurer, and several other potential presidents in training. The responsibility that these students have volunteered for is inspiring, and this marketing plan will embrace their passion in a way that will increase the exposure of the team.

Please view the UVM Football Timeline that I have completed using Prezi:
[Click Here](#)

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- * Passionate team members who will work hard to spread the word
- * Games will be played on campus, rather than at a local high school
- * Growing recognition from media sources including the Burlington Free Press, The New York Times, and the school newspaper
- * The success of the team over the last two years has resulted in an increase in interested high school athletes
- * A common coaching staff for multiple seasons that will provide continuity to the team and help to create a culture that is conducive to team success

Weaknesses

- * Very poor awareness around campus outside of members of the football team that a football team exists.
- * Very little awareness around the local community
- * Minimal relationships with High School coaches in Vermont
- * The perception that 'Club' football is a joke, referring to the t-shirt "Undefeated Since 1974"
- * No merchandise available for sale to the public

Opportunities

- * Private surveys of community members have revealed that a football team at the University would be supported by local community members
- * The popularity of football around the country will produce a greater number of athletes
- * The emergence of ESPN Radio in Burlington may be utilized in a way that could gain exposure
- * A passionate group of UVM football alumni
- * A new president at the University may provide additional support

Threats

- * The growing issue of head injuries in football
- * The new President at the University may not support the team
- * Lack of financial support may limit the resources available to the team.

Target Market



UVM Football

Target Market

UVM Students

- The student body at the University of Vermont will be the first group that this plan will target.
- According to the U.S. News and World Report list of top schools in the country, UVM has an undergraduate enrollment of 11,593.
- When combined with the Graduate population and the faculty at the University, a strong focus on campus will result in greater exposure on account of the high number of people involved at the University

Why the students?

- College students are well-known for supporting athletics at their school, particularly football.
- Students also have a lot of positive energy that can be used to help spread the word
- Many of the tools we are hoping to employ utilize tools that are frequented by students, such as social media
- The relocation of UVM Football Games to Centennial Field makes it very accessible to students on campus- walking distance

Segmentation of the Student Population

Freshmen Boys

- We will approach this segment of the student population specifically because they are the most likely candidates to join the team
- As a club organization, our greatest challenge is gaining members who will contribute on the field, this segment is vital to the success of the team
- The greatest push will come at the beginning of the season, when students arrive on campus

Segmentation Continued...

The Remaining Students

- A separate emphasis will be placed on the remainder of the student population in order to encourage a loyal fan base
- This is our most captive audience as far as our ability to attract people to the games, so we need to capitalize on these students.
- Our promotional efforts will utilize the players on the team in order to promote specific events

Football Alumni

- I have chosen former football players at the University as a target market because tradition is very important in sports, and if these former players were to embrace the team, it could result in a great deal of enthusiasm for the team
- The University played their last NCAA affiliated football game in 1974, and the players from those teams would be encouraged by the efforts of the Club football team to bring football back to UVM

How to Attract Former Players?

- The marketing efforts towards the former players will be very different when compared to the marketing of students
- The football alumni are not on campus, so we will need to consult the alumni office in order to attain contact information
- The efforts made towards this segment should involve a level of sentiment that will attract this group (for example using the old football helmets on a postcard)

Vermont High School Athletes

- This is another important segment of the population that is important for the growth of our team
- Making this group more aware of our team will increase our team roster, and also increase the level of hometown fans attending the games.
 - The most loyal fan base are parents and friends of the players that come to the games from nearby towns in Vermont
- This effort will require a presence in schools around Vermont, mostly by the coaching staff

Target Market Conclusion

The Populations this plan will target are:

- UVM Students
 - Freshmen Boys- Specifically to join the team
 - Remainder of students and faculty- To attract a larger fanbase
- Football Alumni
 - Necessary to create a sense of tradition with the team
- Vermont High School Athletes
 - Purpose is to increase the roster on our team
 - Also, local players encourage fans from local towns

Consumer Behavior and Customer Relationship

Consumer Behavior and Relationship Management

UVM Football

What do we know about how University students behave that can help create a buzz around the football team?

- Freshmen Boys-
 - Freshmen boys are entering a very unfamiliar environment where they do not know many people and they may need some help finding their way into social networks
 - A student that signs up on the football team will instantly have 40 plus friends at the University, and a social network to help them assimilate into the University culture
 - According to Education.com, making friends and finding a comfortable and safe social environment are the greatest fears for incoming freshmen

Freshmen boys, continued...

- Many freshmen entering college have played athletics throughout their high school career, and would consider playing at a collegiate level
 - The most important goal associated with this behavior is to improve the level of awareness about the football team in order to attract some of these freshmen. The primary time to make this focus will be from mid-August through September

Freshmen Relationships:

- The foundation for a strong relationship with incoming freshmen will require a strong effort from current members of the football team
 - Organized Team Activities will be emphasized at the start in order to help these students effectively make the transition
 - Tutoring assistance can be offered through the Student Government Association
 - Through regular conversations with team captains, we will create and monitor an "at risk" list for students who are considering leaving the team

Remaining Students and Faculty

- Heavily trafficked areas of campus:
 - Dining Halls
 - The Davis Center
 - Facebook?
 - Campus e-mail
 - The Quad
 - Library Area (Outside)
 - Patrick Gym (Exercise Area)
- The primary focus area will be between the Davis Center and the Library based on a study of common traffic patterns on campus

Remaining Students and Faculty...

- The University Culture has also become highly digitized, so an emphasis will also be placed on email and Facebook
- Since the primary goal for this group is to create a fan following for the team, the message to be delivered will provide incentives for attending the games

Remaining Students and Faculty...

- In order to maintain a relationship with fans of the team, we will enact the following strategies:
 - Regularly Update the team website
 - Post videos and highlights from previous contests
 - Post video interviews with team members and coaches
 - Offer Loyalty Programs for regularly-attending fans

Football Alumni

- This population represents a very strong opportunity for the club football team in that they have experienced UVM football before, and are already passionate about the team
- The passionate behavior exuded from this population can be capitalized in a way that would provide a greater sense of pride to these alumni, and also help to advance the goals of this marketing plan to create greater exposure for the team.

Football Alumni

- In order to promote a more positive relationship with the former football players, a greater emphasis will be placed on the UVM QB Club
 - To do so, the newsletters will be regularly sent out, and updates about the team will be sent using an e-mail list of all former players
 - This effort will likely help with both funding and recognition for the team
- An annual Football alumni flag football game will be sponsored by the team where former players will challenge the current roster in a flag football game.

The Four P's

The 4 P's of UVM Football

Product

The product for UVM football has multiple dimensions:

1. The team roster
2. The performance of the team on the field
3. Merchandise used to build recognition



Price

- For an athlete to join the UVM football team, they need to pay \$175. This helps the team pay for operational costs such as travel and field rentals, equipment, and other necessary expenses

- To attend a UVM football game, fans need to pay \$5 at the door



Place

- As of 2012, the UVM football team will be playing its home games on the UVM campus at Centennial Field (Games were previously held at local high schools)

- This new development will be very important in providing an easily accessible venue for fans of the team. The promotional tactics can also be centered around the field.



Promotion

- The UVM QB Club
- Provides financial support for the UVM Club Football Team and players

- Members are added to the weekly newsletter during the season, invited to team events, receive an auto decal, free admissions to home games, and recognition for their support!

- UVMfootball.com (updated rarely)

- T-shirts and Auto decals

- Events such as "Buffalo Wild Wings" for fundraising

- Sponsors (Mama Mia's Pizzeria, Big Fatty's BBQ, Nothing But Noodles, Balfour Studios)



Market Research

I. Primary Data

a. Internet Surveys

i. Using the UVM Football website, I will collect data from viewers of the website that will help me to gather relevant information regarding:

1. Purpose of visiting the website
2. Awareness of the football team
3. Frequency of attendance at games

ii. [View the Sample Survey here](#)

b. Entrance Surveys at Games

i. Upon entering our home games, fans will be asked two simple questions to limit the inconvenience

1. "What brings you to the game"
 - a. Family member playing
 - b. Friend Playing
 - c. I'm a fan of UVM football
 - d. I'm a UVM alum
 - e. Other (Please write in)
2. "How many games have you attended?"
 - a. Over 10
 - b. 5 to 10
 - c. 1 to 4
 - d. My first game

c. Random Stratified Sample Interviews

i. The strata (groupings) for our sampling will be individuals that attend the home games

ii. From this population, we will select 10 individuals to hold a casual conversation regarding the UVM football product

iii. These conversations will address the following issues:

1. What are your overall impressions of the UVM football product?
2. What do you see that we are doing well as an organization?
3. How can we improve upon what we are doing in order to attract a greater following?

iv. Individuals who participate in these surveys will be given a free t-shirt

d. Mailers to UVM Football alumni

- i. The purpose of this mailer will be to invite any and all members of the UVM football alumni to the alumni barbecue flag football game against (with) the current UVM football team
- ii. The mailer will be sent with a pre-stamped return post card that will include an RSVP option
- iii. This RSVP data will help us to plan the “annual” alumni event, and also help us to connect the current UVM team with its long history of intercollegiate football
- iv. The RSVP will also include some basic questions that will help guide future marketing decisions
 - 1. Did you know there was a current UVM football team?
 - 2. How can we connect our current team’s efforts to the long history of teams at UVM?

II. Secondary Data

a. Data Regarding the UVM Population

i. How Many Students?

- 1. 13,478 total students in Fall of 2011

- a. <http://www.uvm.edu/~isis/f2011enr/f2011eh.pdf>

- b. This provides us with a baseline for who we need to target, and allow us to set realistic expectations for a marketing effort

- 2. The percent of first-time first year students who are Vermont residents is up 2.0% from last fall. The first-year students from Vermont consist of 26.4% of the population.

- a. <http://www.uvm.edu/~isis/f2011enr/f2011eh.pdf>

- b. This trend supports our cause to target Vermont High School Seniors

- 3. The percent of students who are male is higher than last fall in all categories (First-time, first-year students who are male consist of 46% of that demographic)

ii. How Many Clubs / Intramurals are at the school?

- 1. There are 49 athletic clubs on campus
- 2. There are 13 Intramurals on campus
- 3. There are 16 Varsity Sports on campus
- 4. These numbers represent competition that our organization has to gain participants

- b. Data Regarding Vermont High School Sports
 - i. How Many High Schools?
 - 1. There are 323 public schools in Vermont
 - a. <http://teaching.about.com/od/ProfilesInEducation/a/Vermont-Education.htm>
 - ii. How Many High Schools with football teams?
 - 1. Fall 2006 high school football teams: 30
 - a. <http://sports.espn.go.com/sportsnation/news/story?page=communityfbVT>
 - iii. This data will help to focus our marketing efforts on schools in Vermont that have football teams
- c. Data Regarding Attendance at UVM sporting events
 - i. Hockey
 - 1. UVM Hockey had an average attendance of 3,573 at its games in 2011-2012
 - a. <http://www.collegehockeynews.com/almanac/attendance.php>
 - ii. Basketball
 - 1. UVM basketball had an average attendance of 3,266.
 - 2. The only America East men's basketball program to sell out every game for an entire season
 - a. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011%E2%80%9312_Vermont_Catamounts_men's_basketball_team
 - iii. This data will help us to set realistic goals for our attendance at home games.

Marketing Strategy

Marketing Strategies:

- Alumni Football Game and barbecue- We will host an Alumni Appreciation day at one of our home games at Centennial Field. A mailing list will be acquired prior to the event, and invitations will be sent with pre-paid postage. The costs for this event will be redeemed through donations and sponsors acquired from the alums. This event will be a reunion for the former players, and a great way to involve the former football players with our effort to create greater exposure for our organization. It will also be a great way to create a network within the community since many of the former players are professionally involved in the state of Vermont. After the game, we will sponsor a barbecue that will include a 'donations box.'
 - Goals that this is connected to:
 - Increased Attendance at the football games
 - Events established to encourage our target market to become more involved with the team
- Mailers/e-mails to UVM football alums: Throughout the course of our season and offseason, we will have an e-mail list that updates fans and alums about our team's success on and off the field. We will also continue to give updates in the offseason so as to not lose touch. The improved relationship with our target market that will result from this will lead to increased financial resources, and also greater attendance at games.
 - Goals that this is connected to:
 - Increased Attendance at the football games
 - The financial resources available to the team will increase as a result of an improved relationship and dialogue with football alums, both new and old.
- Public Relations Letters to Media Outlets including at the University: Press releases will be sent after each game to local newspaper outlets, including the Burlington Free Press, the St. Albans Messenger, Rutland Herald, and others in the state. This will increase our exposure around the state, and hopefully increase our media following. Letters will also be sent to local television stations in the hopes that they will send a cameraman to our games and play the highlights on the news.
 - Goals that this is connected to:

- This will help to improve the product that we have on the field because more Vermont High School students will be aware of the fact that a team exists at UVM, and will be more likely to join the team.
 - The attendance at home football games will increase as a result of greater awareness within the Vermont and university communities.
- UVM football camp for high schoolers: A camp for Vermont High School students at the University can be held at a to be determined time so as to improve our relationship with the local community. This improved relationship will lead to more sponsors that can help with our financial capacities.
 - Goals that this is connected to:
 - To create and maintain a strong relationship with the fan base, alumni, and also to encourage students from Vermont High Schools to join the team.
 - The attendance at home football games will increase as a result of greater awareness within the university community.
- Regularly Updated Team Website
 - Goals that this is connected to:
 - To create and maintain a strong relationship with the fan base, alumni, and also to encourage students from Vermont High Schools to join the team.
- Creation of a line of merchandise to be sold at home games
 - Examples of Merchandise
 - T-shirts
 - Hats
 - Sweatshirts
 - Car Stickers
 - Goals that this is connected to:
 - Merchandise will be produced at a low cost from a local vendor and sold on campus, on the team website, and at the games. This will help to spread recognition of the football team, and also encourage more people to attend the games.
 - The greater attendance that results will increase the revenue and allow the team to invest more in equipment, and other necessary items needed to run an organization.

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