

UK workshop notes

Paul Starkey provided a very detailed and practical oversight of the procedures which had been followed in the re-branding of the University of Manchester.

A unique opportunity arose following the decision to merge Manchester's two leading Universities. The rebranding was undertaken within a strategic framework with the objective of differentiating the University from its competitors in what is a relatively crowded marketplace. There was a need to focus on the University's unique features which were seen as deriving from the concepts of quality and profile. These are both capable of measurement. It is the responsibility of academic staff to enhance quality; the promotion and marketing team led on enhancing profile.

The University took advantage of and exploited various fortuitous factors, beginning with the merger itself and the co-location of the two campuses but also including more opportunistic events such as the chance of joint promotion with Manchester United Football Club.

There were risks involved, especially while the new brand was being developed. It was vital to manage press coverage on the University's own terms and a need to guard against a dip in reputation during that initial period. This was particularly stressed by teaching staff although the resulting uncertainty also had the potential to affect existing and potential students. It was immensely valuable to have the rebranding explicitly written into the University's Strategic Plan – one beneficial consequence was to make it easier to tap University funds for the project.

One of the most persuasive pieces of evidence in favour of rebranding was identification of the myriad of logos used to brand different elements of the pre-existing institutions – more than 300. A cluttered slide depicting just a small number of these had a huge impact on senior management. A unified brand is now a requirement. This comprises a single logo (incorporating key elements of the profile) which can also be used in approved combinations to identify affiliated parts of the University e.g. the public art gallery.

There was a strong emphasis on communication, involving identification of key groups who needed to know about the rebranding (ranging from ancillary workers, through business interests to potential students.) Key messages were tailored to the needs of each of these groups.

There continues to be a strong emphasis on measurement to plot the success of the rebranding. At the outset Key Performance Indicators were identified e.g. a tripling of fee income from overseas students and these are being tracked on an annual basis until 2015. Early signs are that the University is on track.

The University of Manchester's mission is to become one of the leading universities of the world by 2015. Anyone attending this workshop will have been convinced by the highly professional manner in which the mission is being pursued.