

INTRODUCTION

The communications plan was developed by Marketing & Communications, at the request of Dr. Joseph Jabbra in March 2017, based on meetings and interviews conducted with the senior leadership of the institution.

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

The plan recommends 4 key communications objectives:

1. Increase the recognition of the university:

As a comprehensive education institution, LAU needs to be known for its intellectual essence.

2. Differentiate LAU from other institutions:

Exploring our “only at LAU” edge, the plan recommends being differentiated as the most forward-moving institution.

3. Build the allegiance to the brand:

LAU needs to be the institution of choice for more students and parents and we must increase the sense of belonging to the institution.

4. Safeguard the brand against crises

LAU needs to have an integrated approach to crisis communications, and a crisis preparedness strength, to allow overcoming crises.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

The plan recommends focusing on the Lebanese market as a primary target audience. Secondary target audiences will include the regional media, regional faculty in the gulf and HR leaders/Employers in the gulf.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES:

1. Building awareness

External Communications

Marketing communications must “get the stories ‘out’”. We must widen the distribution of our communications, beyond the “LAU family”, and prioritize those approaches with ripple-effect potential (digital-first strategies: mobile-first, social media, search marketing).

Brand Model

We must strengthen the branding of our LAU institution by conducting a re-branding through a Branding Working Group with representatives from SDEM, the Provost’s Office, Alumni, the Council of Deans and HR.

2. Building understanding about the brand

To communicate a richer brand message, content-driven approaches will be used: directing more traffic to our website, creating more videos, and engaging in external events, conferences and exhibitions.

Positioning

This plan is recommending the following brand positioning: *Dare Forward: To students seeking to succeed in their careers, the Lebanese American University is the most forward-moving university in Lebanon that enables its students to step ahead with its dynamic, modern, on-the-move approach to education.*

Brand Ambassadors

The plan will leverage the strength of brand ambassadors to communicate a positive differentiating image of the university, by projecting the strengths of our senior leadership, alumni and students, faculty and staff.

Content

The plan emphasizes the need to produce “rich media” content (through videos, infographics, animations, etc.) with a strong commitment to quality.

3. Building allegiance to the Institution

To increase the sense of pride in the institution, the plan aims at increasing the visibility of prominent LAUers, and leveraging the collegial events and the causes we champion.

4. Safeguard the brand against crises

The plan aims to activate the crisis communications group to integrate responses from all departments and identify all relevant channels for communications. The group will be tasked with developing different protocols for crisis communications, and to increase its preparedness by simulating several scenarios and preparing relevant materials.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS & VEHICLES

The following tools will be used: The website (being revamped), database marketing communications (email blasts and e-newsletters), advertising (online and targeted print), PR/media relations, special TV Projects, social media, exhibitions, apps, printed publications and e-publications.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS & VEHICLES

The key tools of our internal communications will include the portal (being redesigned), the campus screen network, and an internal e-newsletter.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS – MISSION & ROLE

A new vision and mission statements for the department is proposed to assist in shaping the culture of the department in its proactive and results-oriented role. The department should increasingly lead on internal communications through the campus screen network, and steering the portal communications.

EXECUTION

In addition to starting the execution of the communications plan, the department plans to cascade sub-plans by School/key divisions. In consultation with SDEM, and with the Schools, we will begin the development of an integrated marketing plan.

STRUCTURE & STAFFING RESOURCES

The Marketing & Communications department has been restructured. For this purpose, some resources have moved to different roles and we still require two key roles – an IMC Director, and an additional PR Officer – to complete the structure in 2017-2018.

INCREMENTAL BUDGETS

While most budget requirements have been set in Q1 2017, this plan requires additional budgets of \$110,000.

NEXT STEPS

Following the approval of President Jabbra, we will finalize the Plan and obtain the formal approvals of the Council of Deans and the President’s Cabinet.