

## Case study

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# Setting organisational vision and values that impact marketing strategy

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## Background

NEMO is a Science Centre in Amsterdam, and one of the Netherlands leading attractions. It has over 550k visitors per year and is dedicated to science learning and communication. The venue, near Amsterdam's central station is an architectural icon – and a destination for many visitors. The main visitor demographic at NEMO is families – who visit in their 1,000s on peak days – coming for the interactive exhibits and vibrant lively experience that the centre offers

NEMO wanted to reassess its organisational priorities – and worked with Wonderbird (an arts consultancy) to establish with NEMO 3.0 (the title given for the vision of NEMO in the future) could look like.

## Objectives

The objectives were:

- To set organisational goals that are aspirational yet realistic
- To support the organisation to go from good – to great – creatively and commercially
- Communicate the common vision of 'NEMO 3.0' to the public and internally
- To be able to set a marketing strategy that can support the vision

## Target audience

NEMO target audience is families and children. However through this process NEMO decided to think about repositioning itself – not just as a place for young people, but also the person attending with them – be that parents, relatives or teachers.

NEMO also recognised that in defining its vision and values – there was scope to look at diversifying their audience to reach more niche markets (tourists / science community / primary school teachers).

## Process

NEMO recognised it needed to have a structured, cross-departmental process when articulating the new set of vision and values.

This was started by a series of workshops run by Sarah Chambers, Wonderbird, looking at what the aspirations for the future 3.0 plans were – and how that would fundamentally change the organisation. Through these sessions, which involved Heads of Department plus the Directors, the focus was on setting 7 core objectives for the company.

From a marketing strategy point of view it became very clear very quickly that the role of the visitor was central to the new vision. It was also realised that the marketing team were going to be pivotal to all aspects of the process.

These 7 strategic goals and overall vision and values were then agreed and circulated. There was then a process where a business plan was written which would lead NEMO into its next phase of development (3.0) and led into a multi-million Euro Capital campaign – due to launch end of 2013.

## **Outcome**

From a marketing strategy point of view – the articulation of the vision and strategic goals allowed the department to be very clear on what was expected of them in terms of delivery. This fell into four key areas:

### **Research**

There was a clear need for the commercial and creative proposition outlined in the new vision to go through some testing – and also for key assumptions around the audience to be fully checked out. NEMO will be implementing an in-house programme of on-going research, looking at visitor demographics, behaviour and commercial habits that will – over time – form the basis on which 3.0 will be evaluated.

### **Data capture**

In order to build a robust foundation for targeted marketing communications – and lay the blocks for the 3.0 ideas, NEMO had to invest in a system of better data capture. A process will be put in place where there is a commitment to gather all data from visitors purchasing an entrance ticket, plus better capture at points of sale. In-house protocols for staff will be written, and modifications made for only the very peak times when sheer traffic volume stops full and accurate capture.

### **Audience development**

NEMO recognised that the market they had been targeting (ie children aged 5-15) were not the decision-makers, and they needed to put in place a plan that had a meaningful dialogue with an older audience. They also recognised that resource and money meant that they needed to very clearly match the 3.0 vision with the target market it most appealed to – and not just go for as broad a visitor base as possible.

They identified a number of key markets where they currently didn't have penetration – but with the 3.0 plans (which included a new rooftop café with spectacular views, revised exhibition content on every floor, and new 'research labs' for the public) they had the opportunity to have a real dialogue with these groups.

### **Visitor Experience**

To deliver any new vision it was clear it would take people. People front of house that were engaged and able to transmit the 'personality of the venue and all of the 3.0 aspirations across to the public. NEMO is investing on a programme of retraining for all of its customer facing staff, which will run in tandem with the 3.0 capital project plans

### **Key points for effective practice**

The most important point we have learnt from the process was that redefining the organisational objectives and really articulating the 3.0 vision has to happen first before the marketing strategy could be written.

Also in realising this vision the process of working cross departments was critical to ensure that every bit of 'potential' and every opportunity was realised.

It was also important to focus. Once the strategic objectives for the overall organisation were set, the marketing director could assess what strategy would deliver those objectives – and what just didn't fit in anymore. This means that all attention can be given to delivery of the 3.0 vision – and meeting the 'physical' (new café / shop / floor content) and 'strategic' (better visitor experience/ new learning objectives) needs of the organisation... and ensuring that the visitors understand the transition too.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Going through the process of really defining who you are and what you stand for can be long and at times painful (In NEMO case it's taken a year since starting to work with Wonderbird to finishing the business plan ready for launch) However, getting cross-departmental buy-in, and really setting in stone easy to understand (but ambitious to deliver) objectives will prove invaluable in how the marketing department – and their strategy – develops between now and 2018.