**Marketing Champion of the Year**

**Museums**

Marketing Champion of the Year, entry by: June Francois, Head of Marketing, National Museum Wales

Name of Nominee: Marie Szymonski

Job Title: Marketing Communications Officer

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Why are you nominating this person?

Marie has many successes to commend her as a marketing champion that range from achieving record visitor figures with consumer audiences, to nurturing positive relationships with stakeholders, generating new income streams from business, building up her professional development, to embracing change by using marketing techniques that reflect changing consumer trends and developments in technology.

Marie's personal qualities also make her a worthy winner with her constant enthusiasm and bubbly personality, 'can do' attitude, desire to learn and an extremely supportive colleague and team player who always appreciates the 'big picture' on how to get things done, and reassuringly as a manager, knowing there will be a perfect execution in all areas of her work.

Marie has an acute sense of the importance of the customer experience and aligning this to the Museum as a ‘product’ by drawing on customer insight to ensure that the Museum is marketed to meet the needs of its many different audiences. An understanding of the Waterfront’s main visitor touchpoints that form the brand experience has meant that Marie has concentrated on the visitor welcome and using the most appropriate marketing techniques to achieve the best reach of target audiences and for communicating the ‘wow’ factors of the visiting experience from the main collections and the Waterfront’s packed events programme.

Here are just a few examples of Marie’s approach. To boost the number of positive reviews on TripAdvisor Marie introduced a 'Share Your Experience' card for front of house staff to hand out to visitors on exiting who had clearly enjoyed their visit. Since its inception positive reviews on Trip Advisor have increased and there is less of a need to respond to unhappy visitors. As a result of a major visitor survey that indicated visitors were drawn principally to the events programme and were overlooking the core collections, Marie introduced ‘An Object of the Month' campaign on Twitter that is also supported by a series of posters for display in the public areas. Objects that feature in the collections that are sometimes hard to spot are featured in these campaigns by working with the Museum's Exhibitions Officer. The posters are colour coded to the galleries to help draw out the different themes i.e. Coal, Money, Networks.

The same study identified the potential to attract more tourists to the Museum and Marie turned her hand to this straightaway by maximising the effectiveness of traditional marketing methods by introducing a new leaflet to profile the breadth of the permanent collections for more actively targeting tourism hotspots and securing support from Swansea Council's Marketing Partner scheme.

Never one to sit on her laurels, last year as part of the new corporate marketing strategy to diversify the socio-economic profile of our visitors, Marie immediately identified the potential to work with her Museum's learning team by using their community contacts in disadvantaged areas to introduce a new Passport scheme, as a fun and engaging format to meet the expectations of this audience, to encourage visits from people living in those communities. The new Passport will be introduced in 2015.

The synergy of this diverse marketing activity to local audiences and tourists have contributed to the National Waterfront Museum’s success as a key attraction in Swansea and a vital part of the visitor economy.

A great marketer manages to get close to their customers by using customer insight to inform the strategy and execution of campaign plans. In a fast changing environment especially with the growth of digital platforms marketers need to ensure that the most appropriate marketing channel is used to best effect for target audiences. However, the best laid plans will not succeed without the support of colleagues for plans and instilling a sense of enthusiasm to ensure their successful delivery.

Museums are staffed by many highly intelligent experts who can unlock fascinating stories on the many objects held in their collections. Marie has coached curators into using Twitter to share these fascinating stories of the collections with the public and also to act as spokespeople for the Museum on Welsh and English media outlets. Front of house have also been involved to help with running the social media accounts. Three training sessions have taken place with curatorial and front of staff in the use of social media in the last year. Partners are also included in cross-promotions and the use of hashtags to coordinate and collate content.

Since its inception in 2010 Facebook has accumulated 1,019 likes of which 367 are from people in Swansea highlighting the importance of the Museum in the local market. Twitter has accumulated 4,819 followers (up from 3,711 in November 2014). In the last 28 days there have been 10,400 impressions.

She is always keen to learn and embrace new opportunities to stretch herself. Marie takes her professional development seriously and regularly attends marketing seminars keep herself up-to-date with the latest thinking on marketing. She the ability to constantly reflect on her way of working and to instigate innovative marketing solutions.

Since August she has taken on responsibility for the marketing of the National Wool Museum within the group as a result of a loss of the post for this museum through natural wastage. Marie could immediately see this was an opportunity to develop her skills further with the marketing of an entirely different museum with an entirely different catchment area located in a rural part of Wales. It was also an opportunity to work on a multi-site basis. Since August active marketing support has been provided for a series of very well attended events.

Marie's talents do not stop at consumer and business-to-business marketing. She is also adept at corporate communications and earlier this summer when the corporate communications team of two officers found itself depleted of staff as a result of one going on maternity leave and the other person suddenly going on bereavement leave, Marie stepped in without hesitation to provide support for the wider organisation's corporate communications programme including being on call by providing an out of hours cover throughout this period.

Despite having been in her role for 7 years, Marie has never tired of promoting one of Swansea's premier attractions. Marketing methods have evolved over this time and she has the ability to refresh the marketing for the Museum. All this has been achieved whilst the organisation has gone through a difficult re-structuring programme over the last two years. This has not dampened her enthusiasm to her role and she been resolute in her approach.

'Bring me solutions, not problems' is the management adage that perfectly sums up Marie's approach making her a deserving candidate for the Marketing Champion award.