

# Unit 5:

# Planning Marketing Communications

## INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, we look at the development of integrated marketing communications plans. In some ways, then this unit represents the capstone of the course. In addition to introducing the remaining key areas in, and inputs to, the development of integrated marketing communications plans, we also draw together many of the key concepts covered in Units 1-4. This means that you have a lot to cover. In particular, you need to do a lot of reading from the module textbook. Don't be worried if you find this unit takes longer to work through than the other units.

In this unit, you will need to read the following chapters from the textbook:

Chapter 9: Integrated marketing communications

Chapter 10: Marketing communications: strategies and planning

Suggested marketing communications plans for 'North West Valley Sailing Club' at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill)

Chapter 11: Marketing communications: objectives and positioning

Chapter 14: Financial resources for marketing communications

As you can see there is a lot of reading in this unit! You will be pleased to know however, that in order to help you, you use a slightly different approach to working through the unit. At this stage, it is helpful to outline how this unit is structured and in particular, you need to know how you should approach the extensive reading.

The unit starts with the material encompassed in Chapters 9 and 10 involving the nature of integrated marketing communications and the development of marketing communications plans. Together, these chapters contribute the essential framework for the unit with Chapter 9 establishing the need for, the meaning of, and the steps involved in

achieving an integrated approach to marketing communications. Chapter 10 proposes a systematic planning framework for achieving an integrated marketing communications plan. Because these two chapters are so central to this unit we work through them in some detail as you have done in previous units. With Chapter 9, this will involve our usual 'activity' approach. With Chapter 10 however, although once again we work through in some detail, the learning process is built around applying the planning framework in this chapter to a case study – 'North West Valley Sailing Club' (see Appendix B). You are first required to read through the chapter, familiarising yourself with the marketing communications planning framework. You then complete a number of activities based on applying this framework to the case study. As we work through this framework on the case study, you do some further background reading from the textbook.

This means that there is a lot of 'background' reading, although as you know this does not mean it is optional, it is still essential reading!

At this stage, don't worry if this all sounds somewhat complex. This unit has been structured in this way to facilitate your learning process. You will be given clear instructions about how to proceed with the reading, activities and applications to the case study. Simply follow these instructions.

## **OBJECTIVES**

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After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the importance, meaning, and complexities of planning integrated marketing communications
- identify the key elements of planning integrated marketing communications
- understand and explain the key inputs to this planning process
- assess how marketing communications strategies can be developed for different target audiences
- develop integrated marketing communications plans.

## **INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS**

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A constant theme throughout this course has been the need for integrated marketing communications programmes. Often, in the past, this integration has been lacking in the marketing communications plans of any organisations. Even in this course, as we have dealt with each promotional tool individually we may have inadvertently added to the notion that each element can be planned and managed separately. However, it is

increasingly recognised that not only must the individual tools of marketing communications used by an organisation be integrated with each other, but the overall mix must also be integrated with marketing and corporate strategies. There are a number of issues concerning the development of integrated marketing communications. The most important of these issues include:

- What is meant by **integration** in the context of marketing communications plans?
- Why is it important to develop an integrated approach to marketing communications? Why has the recognition of this importance grown in recent years?
- What are the advantages of an integrated approach?
- What are the problems and difficulties in achieving an integrated approach?
- What is involved in achieving an integrated approach to marketing communications? How can an integrated approach be achieved?

**Read Chapter 9.**

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## WHAT DOES AN INTEGRATED APPROACH MEAN?

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Essentially, an integrated approach to marketing communications means that every facet of an organisation's communications with all its audiences, both internal and external, is synchronised and co-ordinated to present a coherent and unified set of themes and messages. This seemingly simple statement means that everything an organisation does or 'says' to all its target audiences whether customers, intermediaries, or stakeholders, and whether involving sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, packaging, sponsorship, direct marketing or indeed any facet of how an organisation communicates, must be planned and co-ordinated. Thus, achieving integration is far from simple!

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### ACTIVITY 5.1

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In the light of this meaning of integrated marketing communications, to what extent is your own organisation achieving integration?

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#### Commentary

Assessing an organisation's degree of integration of its marketing communications plans is not always easy. It would be very surprising if your organisation is achieving fully integrated marketing communications, as indeed very few are. Note that full integration

encompasses not just the integration of the major promotional tools but **each** facet of a company's communication and not just communication with customers, but with **each** public and audience, internal and external. Finally, full integration entails integration of marketing communications with the organisation's overall marketing and corporate strategies.

## ADVANTAGES OF INTEGRATION

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Despite the difficulties involved in achieving integration, more companies are recognising the need for an integrated approach. Why is this, and in particular, what are the advantages of integrating marketing communications plans?

**Review** Table 9.1, page 268.

## ACTIVITY 5.2

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Which, if any, of the **drivers** given as reasons for the move towards greater integration in marketing communications shown in this table apply to your own organisation and markets?

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### Commentary

You will have found several of these drivers relevant, as many of them apply to all organisations. Some are the result of changes in customers and their needs, others because of changes in the nature of organisations and their structures, and yet others the result of changes and developments in technology.

In addition to the drivers shown in Table 9.1, another key factor which has helped underpin the need for an integrated approach to marketing communications has been the increased awareness of the fact that potentially everything an organisation does conveys something – intended or otherwise – to its publics. This is particularly important in the context of ensuring integration of promotion with the other elements of the marketing mix.

**Review** Chapter 9, pages 256–268.

## ACTIVITY 5.3

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To what extent are all the elements of the marketing mix in your organisation consistent in what they communicate to your target customers? In assessing this, consider the ZSL London Zoo approach to integrated marketing strategy and communications described in ViewPoint 9.2 on page 260.

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### Commentary

Although ZSL London Zoo's approach would appear to be logical, this degree of integration between the different elements of the marketing mix is unfortunately quite unusual. It would be surprising if some elements of the marketing mix in your organisation was not in some way incongruous with the other elements, and/or with the target market and positioning strategy.

## PROBLEMS IN ACHIEVING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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If there are so many factors in support of an integrated approach to marketing communications, then why do so few companies apparently achieve satisfactory levels of integration? Quite simply, the answer is because it is problematical. Some of these problems derive simply from the sheer complexity of achieving high levels of integration. You can imagine the difficulties associated with ensuring that every facet of a company's communications with its target audience is integrated within the promotional mix and at the same time is integrated with overall marketing and corporate strategies. Even if it were not complex however, integration is often difficult to achieve because of internal organisational and particularly 'people' issues. For example, integration may be difficult because of lack of training of company personnel. Similarly, there may be resistance to change with regard to the procedures and approaches required to increase integration. A particular problem in many organisations is the lack of appropriate organisational structures required to achieve integration. We have seen that in many organisations sales, PR, and marketing functions are all organisationally separate from each other, making integration difficult and sometimes impossible to achieve. Finally, there is the problem of the structure of the marketing communications industry itself where the majority of outside agencies specialise in certain areas of the promotional mix such as advertising or public relations. Although this is changing, with more and more agencies beginning to offer fully integrated services, currently the structure of the industry limits the degree of integration which can be easily achieved. Clearly, effective integration of marketing communications requires that

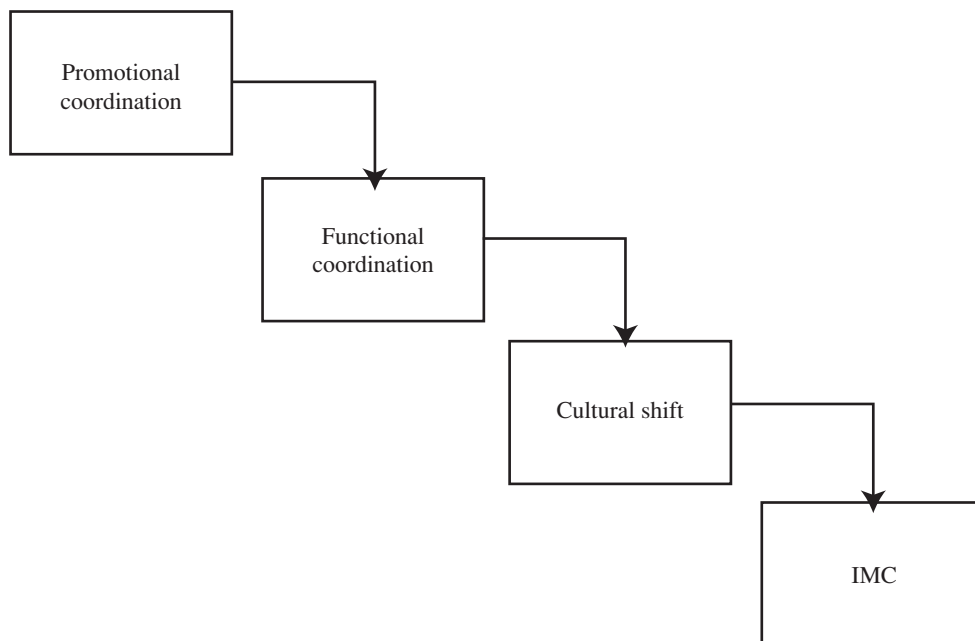
the necessary steps be taken to overcome or at least minimise these problems.

## ACHIEVING INTEGRATION

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**Review** Chapter 9, pages 268–282.

**Figure 5.1:** An incremental approach to the establishment of IMC (Fill 2001, p.469)



### ACTIVITY 5.4

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Consider Figure 5.1 above. At what stage in developing integrated marketing communications do you consider your organisation to be? What steps would be necessary in order to move to the next level of integration?

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#### Commentary

Obviously, the steps required to move to the next level of integration depend on your assessment of where your organisation currently is with regard to the possible levels of integration, and also your assessment of the factors which currently inhibit greater integration. Examples of steps that an organisation could take to increase integration include:

- systems and organisational structures which facilitate more co-ordination and co-operation between the different functions

involved in developing marketing communications and particularly between sales, PR and marketing

- use of full service agencies
- less reliance on brand management systems.

These are some ways in which integration between marketing communications elements can be improved but remember integration must also be achieved with both corporate and marketing strategies and between internal and external communications. Integration of marketing communications must be achieved with respect to communications with customers, intermediaries and all relevant stakeholders. This integration can only be achieved by adopting an appropriate framework for developing marketing communications plans which is not only systematic but is also based on achieving integration. We now explore such a framework, but first we explain the structure and approach which you follow here.

### **A note on structure and approach**

As you know, the learning and study approach in this unit is slightly different to that used previously. You have been introduced to the nature and importance of integration in planning effective marketing communications, now we look at a suggested framework for helping to develop integrated marketing communications plans. The learning approach for developing your understanding of integrated marketing communications plans is built around a case study from Chapter 12 of the fourth edition of the textbook (see Appendix B). This is the mini-case 'North West Valley Sailing Club' and we use it to introduce the marketing communications planning framework and also with further directed background reading, to introduce you to the remaining key concepts which you need to understand and apply this framework.

It will help you if now we summarise the approach to studying this part and the steps you need to work through.

- You will start by reading through Chapter 10, familiarising yourself with the suggested framework in the chapter for developing marketing communications plans, together with the key elements and inputs to this process. **You will not be asked to consider** the 'North West Valley Sailing Club' case study until towards the end of the chapter.
- When you are familiar with the marketing communications planning framework in the chapter you will read through the 'North West Valley Sailing Club' mini-case. However, **you will not be asked to prepare your own marketing communications plan** as suggested in the textbook.

- Using the case, together with the marketing communications planning framework, you then work systematically through **each successive element** of the planning framework, building on the knowledge and concepts developed in earlier units. In addition, as you work through each element you will do further background reading of the textbook not already covered in previous units.
- Next, using a series of activities, you use the marketing communications planning framework to develop your suggested marketing communications plan for the 'North West Valley Sailing Club' case. You work through each element of the marketing communications planning framework step by step.
- Finally, we compare your approach to each step in the marketing communications plan for the 'North West Valley Sailing Club' case (from the fourth edition of the textbook) with the one suggested at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill).

This final step in the process raises the issue of why you should not simply turn to the suggested plan in the first place rather than taking the time and trouble to attempt your own. We stress that by doing so you will be negating the learning process. **It is very important that you first attempt to develop each element of your own proposed marketing communications plan using the framework outlined before consulting the one proposed in the textbook.** This is a key facet of the design of this part of the course. It is also important that you do not miss out or skimp on the background reading that you need to do as you work through each element of the marketing communications plan. This is not optional even though it may involve areas which you have covered in your foundation marketing course. You don't need to worry about remembering all of this, just follow the directions. We start with the marketing communications planning framework.

## **MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

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**Read** Chapter 10, pages 308–317. Do not, at this stage, read through the case study.

As with any planning activity the approach needs to be systematic and based on sound concepts and techniques. A planning framework should provide a means whereby the planner can identify and work through the key steps in the process in a logical manner. There is a danger with planning frameworks that they become too rigid and inflexible. Planning in any area of business can never be achieved in a 'painting by numbers' approach; business is never as simple as this. However, without some sort of systematic framework the planner is left without any real guidance about how to proceed other than intuition and experience. The reality of



effective marketing communications planning probably lies somewhere in between these two extremes. We need a framework to guide our planning, but within this there should be sufficient flexibility to take account of a wide range of varying, and often fast-changing circumstances, and it should also be able to reflect the experience and judgement of the planner.

You will now be familiar with the marketing communications planning framework suggested in the textbook. This is only one approach to the process and you will find different frameworks in different textbooks. However, the framework outlined is both systematic and well-founded. More importantly, the framework proposed is designed specifically to produce more integrated marketing communications plans. In practice, marketing communications planning is perhaps not always as 'neat' as the framework would appear to suggest. Often the planner will lack full information; inappropriate organisational structures and processes may detract from the effectiveness of the planning, and plans may have to change at short notice to account for unforeseen events. Nevertheless, the planner needs some sort of framework around which to build marketing communications plans.

We can now work through this planning framework, building on your previous learning in earlier units and adding the remaining concepts and knowledge needed. The main learning vehicle in this part of the unit is the application of the planning framework to a case study. We now introduce this case.

## APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

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**Read** Mini-Case: North West Valley Sailing Club (Appendix B). At this stage you should simply familiarise yourself with the content and the issues in the case. Do not yet begin to prepare a marketing communications plan for the company in the case. Please note that you will probably have to keep reviewing the case as you work through the activities that follow.

Now you have read through the North West Valley Sailing Club case, we are going to work through each element in the marketing communications planning framework and at the same time bring in the further background reading. However, it is essential that you remind yourself of the main elements of a marketing communications plan.

**Review** Figure 10.6, The marketing communications planning framework, Chapter 10, page 309.

We now work through each element of the plan using the North West Valley Sailing Club case study.

## Context analysis

The process of developing the integrated marketing communications plan starts with assessing the key situational factors which will affect, shape and eventually determine the thrust and content of the plan. Virtually all plans and planning processes start with an assessment of the situation. The only real issue is what should be included in this assessment and perhaps how detailed and extensive it should be. There are no simple answers to these scope and depth issues but the analysis should encompass both internal (organisational) and external (market, customer and environmental) factors.

**Review** Chapter 10, pages 310–311, Context analysis.

This section sets out the key components of the context analysis. Again, remember these are only guidelines and the marketing communications planner must use his or her judgement and experience about the appropriate factors.

We have already explored some key components of the context analysis including, for example, buyer decision-making processes and the notion of stakeholders. You do, however, need to familiarise yourself with some other aspects encompassed by the context analysis.

Together with the knowledge developed in earlier units, you should now be in a position to complete a context analysis for the North West Valley Sailing Club case study.

## ACTIVITY 5.5

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Complete a context analysis on the North West Valley Sailing Club case study encompassing **each** of the following elements:

- business context
- customer context
- stakeholder context
- organisational context
- environmental context.

When you have completed your context analysis compare your analysis with the one shown in the suggested communications plan, at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill).

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## Commentary

Don't worry if you found this exercise difficult – it is! You probably felt that sometimes you did not have sufficient information to complete as detailed an assessment as you wanted to. Obviously, this is because you have only been given limited information in the case study. Also, it is highly unlikely that you have any further knowledge about this market and company as you would have if it were your own. Such limitations are typical of case studies. However, in real life the marketing communications planner often has gaps in information. In some ways, case studies reflect reality. Hopefully, you have made a reasonable attempt at conducting a context analysis on the case.

## Promotional objectives

The second element of the marketing communications plan is the determination of promotional objectives. You are already familiar with the importance of setting specific measurable, realistic and timed (SMART) objectives in any planning process. Clearly we are concerned with objectives for promotion here, but you will appreciate that these are a sub-set of marketing objectives, which themselves are a sub-set of corporate objectives. This notion of a hierarchy of objectives is important in achieving integration between the different levels of plans in the organisation. Communication objectives need to reflect and be consistent with a number of key areas in corporate and marketing plans, and in particular with overall corporate mission statements, marketing objectives and strategies, for example brand and positioning strategies, and the other elements of the marketing mix. You will be familiar with these key areas of corporate and marketing planning from your foundation marketing course. As they are so essential to the development of promotional objectives and strategies, it is worthwhile reviewing these areas and how they relate to the process of marketing communications planning.

**Read Chapter 11, Marketing communications: objectives and positioning.**

Together with the knowledge developed in earlier units, you should now be able to complete the promotional objectives element of the marketing communications plan for the North West Valley Sailing Club.

## ACTIVITY 5.6

Develop a set of promotional objectives for the North West Valley Sailing Club. These should include specific and measurable communication objectives and should reflect and be consistent with both marketing and corporate objectives.

When you have completed your set of promotional objectives, compare your objectives with those in the suggested plan at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill).

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### Commentary

Again, this is not an easy task but there is sufficient information in the case study to indicate both corporate and marketing objectives. These could then be used together with the information from the context analysis to derive specific marketing communications objectives for the Sailing Club. Note the relevance and importance of positioning strategies in this part of the communications plan.

### Marketing communications strategy

This third element of the marketing communications plan is where the detail of the communications elements begins. There are various facets to a marketing communications strategy encompassing many areas that we have examined in earlier units such as message design, positioning and target audiences. However, a major aspect of the communications strategy is the decision between the strategic options of **push**, **pull** and **profile** communication strategies.

**Review** Chapter 10, pages 287–308, Communications strategy.

The strategic options of push, pull and profile respectively equate to strategies for reaching consumers, intermediaries and other stakeholders. These options are not mutually exclusive and indeed often all three are used in a company's communication strategy. Obviously, these options differ in terms of their objectives and implementation, and will require the use of different promotional tools, channels and messages in order to reach the different target audiences. You need to be familiar with the nature and types of communication strategies to reach the different target audiences of consumers, intermediaries and stakeholders.

Together with the knowledge developed in earlier units, you should now be in a position to develop a proposed communications strategy for the North West Valley Sailing Club case study.

### ACTIVITY 5.7

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Develop a proposed communication strategy based on the North West Valley Sailing Club case. Your proposal should distinguish between pull, push and profile strategies and should suggest which should be used and why.

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## Commentary

See the commentary that follows Activity 5.8.

## Promotional methods

In the marketing communications planning process we can now develop proposals about the promotional methods to be used. Those selected must achieve promotional, marketing, and corporate objectives with selected target audiences in the most cost-effective manner. This part of the promotional plan involves selecting between the different promotional tools – the selection of the **promotional mix**. Earlier units have encompassed the nature, uses and management of the individual mix elements. It is important to note that each promotional strategy – pull, push and profile – will require a different promotional mix to support it. Determining the most appropriate tools to use in a campaign is not always easy, particularly as many tools are interchangeable. We could find that two different planners suggest very different promotional mixes for a given campaign even where there was agreement regarding the context analysis and its implications, the promotional objectives, and the promotional strategies. However, these preceding steps in the marketing communications planning process should, if carried out effectively, help to delineate the choice of promotional methods.

Having completed these steps for the case and using your knowledge of the range of promotional tools, you can now suggest an appropriate promotional mix for your selected promotional strategies.

## ACTIVITY 5.8

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Outline an appropriate promotional mix to support **each** promotional strategy you have proposed for the case in Activity 5.7.

When you have completed your outline, compare your suggestions with those shown in the suggested communications plan, at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill).

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## Commentary

You will note in the suggested communications plan that often all three promotional strategies of push, pull and profile will be used. It is important that where necessary these different elements of strategy are co-ordinated and consistent. The suggested plan proposes a promotional mix to support each strategy. Remember, don't worry if your proposed mix differs from those shown, though there should be

some degree of consistency with the suggested methods shown here.

## Budget

Unfortunately, many marketing communications planners tend to ignore, or at least gloss over, this element of the marketing communications plan. There are a number of reasons for this: for example, many marketing communications specialists feel uneasy with financial aspects of planning. Another reason is the notoriously difficult problems of determining appropriate levels of promotional expenditure and measuring the effectiveness of these spends. It is important that we consider the financial context within which organisations undertake promotional campaigns and aspects of this including:

- role of the promotional budget
- approaches to budgeting techniques
- different costs associated with the elements of the promotional mix
- allocation of the overall budget to the different promotional elements.

**Read Chapter 14, Financial resources.**

Together with the knowledge developed in earlier units, you should now be in a position to develop a proposed promotional budget for the North West Valley Sailing Club case study.

## ACTIVITY 5.9

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Develop a promotional budget for the company in the North West Valley Sailing Club case study. Obviously this should reflect the preceding steps and proposals in developing the marketing communications plan for the company.

Your proposals should encompass the following:

- a total suggested promotional spend (£s) for each of the next 2 years
- allocation of this total spend between your different broad promotional strategies (push, pull and profile)
- an indication of the proportion of spend allocated to each element of your proposed promotional mix.

When you have completed your proposals, compare your suggestions for overall budget levels and proposed allocations with those shown in the suggested communications plan, at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill).

### **Commentary**

There isn't a lot of financial information in the case, but it does state that the overall budget will up to a maximum of £10,000 for this year. It does not explain how these levels of expenditure were arrived at. Similarly, there isn't a lot of information to suggest how this level of spend might be most appropriately allocated to the different promotional strategies, and within these, to the different elements of the promotional mix. However, the suggested plan does illustrate the sort of approach to allocating promotional budgets which the communications plan should encompass.

### **Schedule**

The timing of the implementation of marketing communications activities is crucial. We have considered this aspect of managing the promotional elements in earlier units and particularly when we considered the advertising element. Not only must each element be scheduled, but scheduling between the elements of the promotional mix is important. For example, if you are launching a new product, it is pointless advertising the product to consumers before it has been promoted to and accepted by the trade.

When we reach the scheduling stage of the marketing communications plan we are concerned with the detailed tactical aspects of the plan. However, as part of the scheduling element, an overall profile of timings for each element of the promotional mix should be prepared to support each promotional strategy.

### **ACTIVITY 5.10**

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Suggest an overall promotional schedule covering a 12-month period for the North West Valley Sailing Club. The schedule should indicate when over this two-year period each element of your proposed promotional mix is used to accomplish pull, push and profile strategies.

When you have completed your proposed schedule compare it with the suggested communications plan, at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill).

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### **Commentary**

Again, there is not a lot of information in the case with which to enable a detailed schedule, but the overall outline schedule shown in the suggested plan, indicates how the elements of the promotional mix need to be timed in relation to one another.

## Control and evaluation

This is our final, but again often neglected, stage of planning marketing communications. Obviously it makes sense to ensure that our marketing communications is working effectively and more specifically that we are achieving value for money. Appropriate measures of control and evaluation depend on the objectives set for the marketing communications, and each tool within the marketing communications mix will often involve its own specific techniques of control and evaluation. The importance of setting tightly defined and preferably quantitative objectives for marketing communications plans becomes clear at this stage. The planner must select from many possible ways of evaluation those that are most appropriate with respect to the company's marketing and promotional objectives. Methods of control and evaluation range from quantitative budgetary evaluation techniques through to the more qualitative type techniques of focus groups, tracking studies and recall and recognition tests. The techniques of control and evaluation to be used in a particular campaign should be specified at the outset.

### ACTIVITY 5.11

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What would be appropriate measures and techniques to use to control and evaluate your proposed marketing communications plan for the North West Valley Sailing Club case study?

When you have completed this activity, compare your proposals for control and evaluation with those shown in the suggested communications plan, at [www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill](http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill).

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### Commentary

This final but very important part of the marketing communications planning process is often neglected. Measures for control and evaluation proposed in the suggested communications plan range from our more quantitative budgetary control and evaluation techniques to the softer but equally important use of techniques such as focus groups and tracking studies.

### A CONCLUDING NOTE

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This completes our marketing communications planning framework based on its application to the North West Valley Sailing Club case study. You should now appreciate how the various elements of the course come together in the shape of the marketing communications plan. Obviously, the more opportunity you have to practise applying the concepts, the more



you will appreciate their uses and limitations. Hopefully, you should now feel reasonably confident about your ability to prepare integrated marketing communications strategies. The review activity uses the concepts in planning integrated marketing communications in the context of a case study.

## SUMMARY

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In this unit we have looked at the nature of, and approaches to, planning integrated marketing communications plans. We have looked at some reasons for the increasing recognition of the need for integration, and the drivers which are behind this. We have also looked at some reasons why achieving integration can be problematic. The focus has been the introduction of a marketing communications planning framework. Using the textbook case study, we have looked at how to apply this framework to the development of systematic and co-ordinated marketing communications plans. We have drawn together much of the material covered in earlier units of the course and introduced the remaining concepts necessary to develop marketing communications plans. The framework used in this unit can be used in developing marketing communications plans in any organisation or situation, although we have to be careful about using the framework in a rigid manner. It should be adapted according to circumstances. You should now be able to develop integrated marketing communications plans.

## FURTHER READING

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