South of Scotland Enterprise
UR Communities

28 February 2020

Scottish Enterprise

Objectives & Methodology

Purpose

- A new corporate website is being developed In preparation for the launch of South of Scotland Enterprise agency. The aim of the website is to raise awareness of SOSE and to support the agency's objectives. This UR explored what information users, or potential users, require from the enterprise support services and how this information might be best presented on a website to meet the user needs. The new corporate website will supplement existing enterprise support services such as FindBusinessSupport and other Scottish websites.

- The scope of the corporate website is to provide users with information around the different products and services that SOSE could offer and signpost them onto a centralised service provider who will deliver these.

Methodology

- 19, 20 & 26 February 2020
- F2F and Skype Meetings x 5
- 4 male/1 female
- Sourced via partner groups

Our Mission

To explore……

- specificities of the South of Scotland area
- the role of various communities in the area and how they interact with businesses
- community needs and pain points
- expectations of how SoSE can address gaps and opportunities
- Review of prototype

South of Scotland Agency

We asked initial thoughts about the new agency

They told us….

- Excitement versus Disappointment (could say more about social and environment)
- Dedicated support for the region is welcomed
- Communities have lots of experience to share and want to be part of it
- Lack of consultation with communities (often not right individuals at meetings)
- Young people were missed in the consultation process
- Need for human interaction (not a faceless bureaucracy), someone with understanding of the geography and communities
- Need for partnerships with England to foster better connections in education and working opportunities - Borderland style development is welcomed
- Expectations of quicker application processes, approvals and flexibility
- Concern over what might happen with BG connectivity
- Hub Approach welcomed
- SOSE to be a strategic lead/role in planning and delivery for the region. Must be more than business models and advice – needs capital investment, development trust roles, community ownership and local democracy etc. How SOSE will integrate this and be advocate for at national and international level important.
- Will help implement stronger and affordable IT / broadband

South of Scotland Specifities

We asked what differentiates companies operating in the region

They told us….

- Steeped in cultural heritage which people are proud of
- Smaller businesses (farms, tourism)
- More fragmented and isolated (and do not work/connect well) *"There is a lot happening but everyone is playing in their own backward, no one is coordinating this"*
- Lack of infrastructure (problematic in attracting bigger companies/events)
- Lack of ambition to grow (content as they are)
- Difficult to secure project funding (LEADER European funding)
- Start/Stop approach – (eg effort to get the funding for 2 years, you hire someone, but as you don't know what will be next, after 18 months that person starts to look elsewhere).
- Difficult to access training and recruitment
- Broadband is sporadic (something that is taken for granted elsewhere)
- Hard for others to understand role of social and community aspect of region
- We need longer timescales and ongoing support. We need to nurture the change in attitudes, the collaboration and the social enterprise.

Role of Communities

We asked about the role of communities

They told us….

- Community organisations underestimated in terms of knowledge and networks
- Community organisations often the conduit for small businesses [they will relay info on SOSE and FBS]
- Well connected with BG for local point of delivery for courses and training
- Good contact with businesses
- Often deliver what councils are unable to
- Local groups and associations are very active, really good networking and outlooking
- Community sector functions like a business *"everyone knows each other, it's a small world, so we bump into each other quite often"*

Pain Points

We asked about pain points, gaps and opportunities

They told us….

- Low wage economy, so hard to attract people into the region – low skilled work force
- Unable to plan long term (often only funded project by project)
- Need to diversify (one changing status to enable them to become landowners which will help them with some innovative ideas)
- Too much time spent trying to secure and apply for funding (taking valuable time away from doing the real job)
- Sustainability is an issue
- The energy gets dissipated very quickly if there are barriers – waiting on decision making often results in not applying again
- Public sector uses remoteness as an excuse not to come to them
- Visibility of funding process (eg of Community Manager being funded and still who you know gets you the funding)

Website Expectations

We asked about the type of information they would expect to see on the website

They told us….

- Mission and purpose important (clear road map on how agency will work, services offered)
- Need for up-to-date information
- Openness and transparency about decision making
- Help in how to secure the right funding
- Someone to talk to *"I want someone I can pick up the phone and call"* -
- Visibility of contact information (names on website)
- Opportunity to ask question/interact/webchat
- Eligibility criteria for services
- Support for funding, skills, training, policy info, legislation and work standards
- Easily accessible information (meaning easy to read/apply for)
- Network information (ability to connect with others doing similar things)
- Map of who is doing what in the region
- Case studies
- Connections to wider policy framework

Prototype

We asked them to review Prototype

They told us….

General

- Human element will still be important (how useful relationships and networks are built)
- Would welcome ability to speak with knowledgeable individual instead of making an enquiry
- Routing to FindBusinessSupport was generally painless
- Slight confusion initially working out how to search and filter but got it quickly
- Wish for contact information/photo of Board Members etc
- Generally would not use social media so ask for updated news items on website
- Response times to enquiry submission impressive
- Content to be signposted so long as it is credible
- Mild confusion about transferring to FBS for events [if this is for Scotland-wide, why do we have SOSE
- Website not always first port of call (would use of own networks/information)
- Some language used is SE Language and barrier for small business or community organisations
- "Product" is more business orientated and not relevant to community orgs – feeling that 'service' would be more suitable
- 'Co-innovate' not something used and would "just switch people off" (working together would be better language)

Prototype: Content

We asked them to review Content

They told us….

Home Page

- Content generally liked - Who we are/Our organisation.
- Low appetite for logo
- More about environment
- Include regular updated feeds
- Simple layout preferred
- Include hyperlinks for ease of use so long as they work)

Contact Us

- Straightforward and understood what was needed to do
- Email the confirmation message
- Are You Trading: felt more a business term but would say yes
- Phone number is helpful
- Wording about 'explain your idea' felt out of context and preference for friendlier approach such as 'we don't need a business plan at this stage but want to know a bit more about…'

Prototype: Content cont

Who we are/Our organisation
- Well received but could relate more to communities
- Much more than economic or business development
- More information on 'Border Land Inclusive Growth Deal'
- Be clear where regional hubs will be placed in the area
- Say more on environment
- Talks more about the region than it does about the agency/area
- Need for a mission statement
- More about organization structure staff, where we operate etc

Events page
- Initial shock at no of events but worked well once they got familiar with postcode and miles filter
- List of categories could be confusing for some
- Some participants wanted choose region rather than town
- Heading referencing business support doesn't change when switching between Event/Services tab
- Would be useful to get alerts about interested events
- Liked the map

Prototype: Content cont

Communities

- Well connected and established in the area
- Use of 'social enterprises' appears formal and the term is not used within communities
- Clarity required on "working with partner organisations because they're funded by the Scottish Government" ie will partners who are not funded still get support
- Reference to 'Just Enterprise' is only one example and not pan-Scotland as focus is on local needs
- Community groups do understand trading but not why they exist
- Include all 4 partners in TSI
- Clarity on definition of census information (referring to existing agencies and information sources related to towns or rural areas might be more helpful)

Work for us

- Fairly straightforward
- Many jobs websites have filters, explain without flowery language what the mission and purpose is, and present as a professional and non-hyped place
- If the jobs landing page resonated with the mission, purpose and objectives then it would offer the degree of professionalism people would understand.
- Focus on the nature of the business, which is the business advice offered to many small businesses and communities on a day to day basis

Summary

- Communities are conduit between various agencies and small businesses
- Ensure communities are not excluded (from consultations/decision making etc)
- Grateful that we took the time to visit in them and seek their opinions
- Requirement for simple overview, about what the agency will do and how
- Avoid the use of business terms in language used
- List of Hub addresses on website
- Ability to speak to someone
- News items on website as not all use social media
- Visible updates on website
- Lots of interest in Borderland Inclusive Growth Deal and would be good to link from SOSE
- More mention of 'Environment' due to this being a key SOSE goal
- FindBusinessSupport was well received and navigated well
- Enquiry Form easily understood and completed
- Confirmation page impressed with providing response time and SLA

Quotes