

South of Scotland Enterprise

UR Findings

07 February 2020



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 corporate-only information about SOSE (e.g., who they are, what they do, Board member biographies, etc), and to signpost SoSE customers onto a centralised source who may be seeking business products and services.

Methodology

- F2F and Skype Meetings x 7
- 5 male/2 female (sourced via account managers; specialists; partner groups; council/ community orgs)
- Interviews held w/k 27th January 2020

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
- customer and stakeholder needs and pain points
- expectations of how SoSE can address gaps and opportunities

South of Scotland Specificities

We asked initial thoughts about the new agency

They told us....

- Great that South now has a voice to champion them
- Mixed views about relevance of another agency but important to have focus on the region
- High level of opportunity
- Expectation that the agency will overcome previous issues of competing with central Scotland and will do things differently
- Expect much more flexibility on RSA and grant funding (feeling they need more support than others)
- Need for change around performance measurement information (e.g., can't keep measuring job creation as not measuring like-for-like)
- Region has low unemployment (albeit jobs lower paid and lower skilled)
- Unable to attract young skilled workforce and keep them in the region
- Need proposition for the area
- Potential for confusion as services still delivered via SE, BG via findbusinesssupport.co.uk

South of Scotland Specificities (cont.)

We asked what differentiates companies operating in the region

They told us....

- Great place to live and work but this will be dependent on age/skill
- Geographically causes logistical issues within as well as outwith the region
- Age extremes and skills issues affect workforce development
- Transportation curtailments affect business, social development and networking
- Unable to attract investment
- Telecomms infrastructure problematic
- Lots of knowledge and expertise that should not be lost
- Lack of willingness from businesses to travel
- Lack of training to meet skills-gaps

South of Scotland Specificities

We asked about the role of communities

They told us....

- Lack of funding and support for communities – majority of funding only specific to business
- Missed opportunities and relationships and business development within communities could be maximised
- Communities often made up of retired business people wanting to give something back so have lots of expertise and knowledge
- Communities often small and close-knit but for bigger communities harder to speak with one voice
- Strong community groups, but can be internally focused on their own organisation or group and want to protect their own area
- Need more sectoral involvement

Website Expectations

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

They told us....

- Clear messages about what the Agency will do and not do
- Sectoral information
- A bit of everything as this will be first port of call for most (especially local companies)
- Who we are and what we do
- Mission, values
- Support that is available (for my company/community)
- Case studies
- How the Agency will operate (Operating Plan)
- Examples of how the new agency will be different/operate differently from others in the past
- Targets and measurements
- Type of Services on offer
- Quality of life in the area
- How to access services
- Pitch – why do business here

Staff Pain Points

We asked about pain points, gaps and opportunities from an internal perspective

They told us....

- Helping companies find skilled staff (opportunity for joined up working with schools, colleges, industry and careers advice)
- Vacancy restrictions to individuals with driving licence due to poor infrastructure (opportunity for subsidising bus routes for business)
- High rent prices and unfilled property (opportunity for rent concessions)
- Need for good advisers that know the area (previously worked in this way with ear to ground but fear that has been lost)
- Assist companies to increase risk taking (by allowing flexibility in rules around funding products, unsecured loans agreements and other services)
- Ability to cut through bureaucratic red tape (lots of companies in South don't fit into what's the norm for companies in central belt)
- Restricting company to fit our product range (we should have the ability to determine company needs and flex the products to fit these needs)
- Potential confusion with FBS offering (companies in South need more handholding so linking off to FBS could be more problematic)
- Fear of losing portfolio of companies where trust and reputation has been built
- Referrals have dried up from South region so need something to reignite this (lost 'finger on pulse' due to nationalised programmes)
- Need buy-in from partners Chambers of Commerce and BG – to join up all the support available
- Understand landscape more and relate to other programmes especially for communities and social enterprises which isn't visible in South (opportunity for better communication and outreach)

Customer Pain Points

We asked about pain points, gaps and opportunities from a customer perspective

They told us....

- Speed up the application process
- Reduction in rental costs
- More flexibility around the criteria for RSA to enable better funding opportunities
- Businesses forced to leave the region due to lack of skills and transportation links
- Need better linkages between councils and agencies for granting approvals processes
- Skills issues lead to poaching staff due to lack of appropriate talent pool availability
- High value skilled jobs lacking (area known for low skilled low paid work)
- Transportation links problematic
- Need more ability to access bespoke support
- Companies need to build trust with advisors
- Customer journey needs to be visible and understood

Summary

- Be clear about what the new agency will do and will not do
- How will SoSE be different – what is our pitch?
- Align with expectations that have been set to date - companies are expecting something different and better
- Capitalise on what does work well
- Look at where influence lies (especially within social enterprise and communities)
- Focusing on right things will be a gamechanger for the region
- Councils big influence but spread too thinly across region
- 1-1 relationships important and take time to build
- More focus on nurturing key skill-sets for region (opportunity for joined up working with schools, colleges, industry and careers advice)
- Make better use of use of assets (e.g., ageing population not seen as problem but a centre of excellence for dementia, etc)

Quotes

