



SOUTH EAST BUSINESS HUB

Minutes of the Growth Hub Communications Strategy Workshop held on Monday 9 November 2020

Attendees:	Ellie Clow	South East LEP
	Emma McCulloch	Thurrock Council
	Emma Lindsell	Southend Borough Council
	Ian Smallwood	Business East Sussex
	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer	South East LEP
	Jo Simmons	South East LEP
	Julian Gibbs	Anglian Ruskin University
	Kane Tudor	Business East Sussex
	Kate Thompson	BEST Growth Hub
	Laura Moore	Essex County Council
	Lewis Mills	Thurrock Council
	Rachel Evans	Business East Sussex
	Rebecca Horne	Thurrock Council
	Susan Berdo	Kent County Council
	Tudor Price	Kent & Medway Growth Hub
	Zoe Gordon	South East LEP

1. Welcome and introductions

Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer welcomed everyone to the Growth Hub Communications Strategy workshop and gave them an opportunity to introduce themselves.

2. Aim and rationale for the session: Building a collaborative approach to business focussed communications

Zoe Gordon, SELEP Business Engagement and Communications Manager, outlined the aims of the session as:

- How we might build a more collaborative approach to communications across the central South East LEP team and Growth Hub delivery partners. Ensuring join-up and clarity of messaging across partners who are aligned in seeking the same outcomes.

WHY?

In anticipation of the launch of a new SELEP Business Support and Skills COVID - 19 Recovery Funds expected to go live in December – so it is helpful to build an understanding of everyone's position to make that as successful as possible.

- Wider context. COVID-19, and end of the UK-EU transition impact on businesses therefore Government is placing greater emphasis on LEPs role in providing, funding and commissioning direct business support than it has in previous years. We should expect greater scrutiny of this area of LEP's work and of local provision.
- Our federated way of working means we have to work hard to ensure:

- that key stakeholders see the links between LEP funding and Growth Hub activity, and
- to show Government what it is paying for and what is being successfully delivered locally.
- Getting this right will be partly about:
 - ensuring that we are operating in a way that is consistent with an overarching communications strategy, all working towards, agreed, same goals
 - ensuring that partners' brands are used appropriately when sharing communications
 - ensuring that we are telling the right stories to our various audiences, and that we are sighted on each other's communications to different audiences supporting wherever we can, and
 - showcasing success at the local level to national stakeholders – ministers, senior civil servants, MPs etc. - and regional stakeholders including Federated and SELEP Strategic Boards

Therefore the purpose of today is to understand existing activity, shared goals and messaging. Where we are now and where we would like to get to and agree some actions.

3. Where are we now?

Zoe Gordon provided a short introduction to the SELEP Communications Strategy and Protocols (the '**strategy**').

- The strategy was developed towards the late part of 2019 and considered and approved by the Strategic Board in January 2020
- The initial implementation work started in February 2020, but it was halted by the outbreak of Coronavirus
- The reason for developing of the strategy was a direct outcome of the LEP Review of which one of the recommendations was to provide a transparent, open and accessible information to partners and stakeholders including the business community about SELEP activities
- It is a useful guidance document for all SELEP partners and stakeholders and was shared with the group in advance of the meeting

Moreover, Zoe Gordon said that she would welcome an opportunity to discuss the strategy in more detail with each individual Growth Hub in the near future.

Action: *To make the offer and schedule appointments where desired between Zoe Gordon and each individual Growth Hub in order to discuss the strategy and protocols document.*

A short outline of the SELEP Communications Team was provided:

- Zoe Gordon, Ellie Clow supported by an external agency, White Label

- The Communications Team is obliged to share and promote the work undertaken by SELEP including capital projects, working groups and the Growth Hub
- The majority of the messaging around the Growth Hub has been signposting the businesses, stakeholders and other business support providers to the Growth Hubs themselves
- More to be done in order to showcase the work undertaken by the Growth Hubs not only locally but also nationally

To do this it was suggested that it would be good to understand what messaging has been undertaken at the local level and how the SELEP Communications Team could support the Growth Hubs going forward.

Questions raised

What's the overall objective of the Communications Strategy? How does this correlate with the function of the Growth Hub and what's the expectation on the Growth Hub to engage with it?

- The overall objective of SELEP Communications is to raise the profile of SELEP and the work of all its partners under its aims and objectives
- It is for SELEP to understand how the Growth Hub fits in the wider aims and objectives of the LEP
- SELEP is particularly focussed on the messaging to the business community due to its public, private sector representation
- Government has set a role for LEPs in providing, funding and commissioning direct business support; we expect greater scrutiny of this area of LEP's work moving forward
- Therefore it is in our interest to help make the Growth Hub as successful as possible, which includes sharing activities, successes, promotion and collaboration - sharing the stories to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the great work taking place locally
- Due to the federate nature of our Growth Hub we also seek to ensure that a combined message about the strength of the Growth Hub is shared more widely to a different audience than the Growth Hubs themselves are targeting.

Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer outlined the main aspects of the BEIS Branding and Communications Guidelines document. It was noted that:

- The national guidelines were developed to ensure appropriate Government branding was used uniformly across the Growth Hub network. To demonstrate that Growth Hubs are part of high-quality England-wide, Government supported network
- The guidelines are to complement, not replace the unique brands Growth Hubs have developed. They provide clarity on which logos should be displayed on Growth Hubs' websites and collateral
- The guidelines sit alongside the LEP LGF Branding Guidelines
- The document sets out procedures for obtaining ministerial quotes, securing Ministers attendance at events and use of appropriate hashtags on various social media channels

A brief overview of current approaches to managing branding, social media, websites, newsletters, conferences, digital events in each Growth Hub.

Kent & Medway Growth Hub – Tudor Price

- The marketing/communications part is supported by an internal resource
- The Growth Hub is compliant with the Growth Hubs: Branding and Communications Guidelines
- The Growth Hub continues to use #Ask Phil, a campaign that was developed as part of the original Growth Hub campaign
- Currently, the Growth Hub is not using the hashtags as suggested in the guidance document
- Main social media channels are Twitter and LinkedIn; the Growth Hub tried Facebook and Instagram in the past. There is a dedicated person for social media
- The Growth Hub uses Mailchimp as newsletter direct mail platform
- The Growth Hub used to produce a newsletter in the past but not currently. A decision was made to issue email alerts only which seems to work very well with very successful opening/click through rates
- In the previous years, the Growth Hub has been involved in large exhibitions (before COVID-19)
- Virtual events – the Growth Hub brand is always present
- Recently produced 10 case studies as part of the Growth Hub Bi-annual Report. These are to be converted into short videos also
- 2 team members recently trained in premier pro for creating videos

Questions raised

- Have you used the mail outs more this year than in previous years? *Yes, however we keep our messaging to the minimum and only provide information that is pertinent to the businesses we deal with*
- Do you receive our newsletters? *Yes, we receive SELEP newsletter and we tap into other newsletters such as the Business Readiness Bulletin produced by BEIS but are not currently sharing much of this messaging beyond into Growth Hub audiences*
- Do you do any paid for advertising? *Have done in the past i.e. created the Phil character and ran a campaign for a year, Pay Per Click (very effective, but expensive), geo-targeting, purchased mailing lists, ran a telemarketing campaign, back of the buses campaign, used local media and sponsorship at various events. Most effective but most expensive campaign was back of the buses; thought about billboard advertising but it didn't fit the customer profile of customers; otherwise social media but in a targeted fashion and direct marketing*
- How are you going to use the case studies? *We don't have time to do any further editorial due to lack of resources*
- Do you communicate with MPs? *Not as a matter of course*

BEST Growth Hub – Kate Thompson

- The Growth Hub is using the website, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram very effectively
- Evolutive CRM is being used for mailings to businesses (approx.3,000)
- Events – Big Business Briefing (as and when however currently on more regular basis due to COVID-19 and EU Transition, the next BBB is scheduled for 25 November 2020)

- This year the Growth Hub has run workshops with the Retail Group and ARU and is looking into partnering with ICAEW in order to deliver post EU Transition workshops in the new year
- Expo and Awards Ceremony – format changed to virtual due to the current situation (it will be delivered over two days)
- Providing regular bulletin to providers and local authorities on current developments
- A Newsletter is in place (delivered on ad hoc bases) covering business and wider stakeholders
- Currently, there is no consistency in use of logos i.e. MHG logo alongside the Growth Hub logo – this is mostly due to lack of resources and not having a marketing person in place (this will hopefully change in the near future)

Questions raised

- Do you find any of the social media channels more successful than others?
Facebook and LinkedIn – most engagement from businesses
- Do you do press realises and blogs? *Not at the moment due to resources however we have developed a video case study for the South East Business Hub (SEBH) and looking into developing more video studies in the future*
- Do you communicate with MPs? *Not at the moment*

Emma McCulloch – Thurrock Council

- Thurrock Council is using Facebook and paid for ads
- Regular Newsletter to approx. 2,500 businesses
- Sharing Growth Hub messaging and supporting the Growth Hub where possible
- Would like to use LinkedIn more

Business East Sussex Growth Hub – Ian Smallwood, Kane Tudor and Rachel Evans

- The Growth Hub has tried a lot of the communications strategies in a similar way to the Kent & Medway Growth Hub in the past (telemarketing was very successful)
- Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (Facebook doesn't reach the desired audience, Twitter following is very good, LinkedIn has good engagement but need to build the following)
- Currently building new mailing list
- Newsletter in place – clear and concise messaging (as and when required) to businesses and wider stakeholder group
- The Growth Hub delivered webinars with TALE and the local university
- Marketing function has been put in place when the pandemic kicked in
- Website – would like to do more now that Rachel Evans is in place
- Making good use of the News function on the website
- Looking into video content

4. Open discussion

Attendees were asked to consider the following questions:

- How would you like to work moving forward with regards to communications?
- How SELEP and local activity could be coordinated to better showcase the activity to a wider audience?

- What should be the process for sharing and creating activity?
- Website – agreeing a way of working for updating the website – through regular meetings/sessions or exchange of emails?
- Peer network, learning from each other, building stronger links – is this something everyone would like to consider?

The spotlight has been thrown on business support this year, the rationale for celebrating success and showcasing activity is there, especially upwards to Government, with MPs, other partners and wider SELEP business community beyond the Growth Hub potential customers. It was suggested that this is the area that SELEP could focus wider communications activity and attendees were asked their thoughts. Attendees discussed what information could be provided to SELEP in order to create this 'story'.

Julian Gibbs spoke about how the University can promote SELEP and its Growth Hubs. He added that LinkedIn is his preferred method of communication.

Growth Hub representatives were asked to consider this proposition and feedback at the next South East Business Hub Steering Group meeting.

5. Identify actions and next steps

Action

Growth Hub reps to consider how they would like to work moving forward with regards to:

- *Sharing information with SELEP to help create content for showcasing the Growth Hub activity*
- *Ways of working for website updates*
- *Peer network and how working together on shared messages could strengthen the local positioning and communications activity*

Workshop closed at 11am.

Action points arising from the workshop – summary

Minute	Action	Completed by
Minute 3	To make the offer and schedule appointments where desired between Zoe Gordon and each individual Growth Hub in order to discuss the strategy and protocols document.	Zoe Gordon/Growth Hub reps
Minute 5	Growth Hub reps to consider how they would like to work moving forward with regards to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing information with SELEP to help create content for showcasing the Growth Hub activity• Ways of working for website updates• Peer network and how working together on shared messages could strengthen the local positioning and communications activity	Growth Hub reps