Taking Control of Your NSS Results

15% boost in satisfaction at Glasgow Caledonian University Students’ Association
“Red Brick’s proposal was sharp and grasped exactly what we were aiming to achieve. They reacted to our timeframe, conducted the research when we wanted and delivered the results with speed.”

– David Carse, Chief Executive.

The Need for Evidence
Since its inclusion in the National Student Survey, ‘question 23’ (which measures satisfaction with students unions, guilds and associations) had produced disappointing results for GCU Students’ Association.

The Students’ Association team felt their non-commercial focus and lack of a bar may have been counting against them, but in order to put together a clear plan of action they needed evidence. Late in 2012, David Carse, Chief Executive at GCU Students’ Association approached Red Brick Research.

An Urgent Plan of Action
After a rapid assessment of the Students’ Association’s structures and resources, a project plan was agreed on 3rd January, less than 4 weeks before the National Student Survey (NSS) was scheduled to launch again.

Red Brick gathered intelligence on GCU and the Students’ Association, analysed NSS data and reviewed evidence from the Association’s own research.

Interviews were conducted with the Students’ Association management team and all the evidence, opinions and ideas were used to plan a series of focus groups with GCU students.

The goal was to generate rich qualitative insights that would act as a springboard from which to launch a radical programme of improvements.

Expert advice and a clear action plan for growth
The Hyper-Diversity Challenge

In consultation with the Students’ Association team, Online Focus Groups (OLFGs) were selected as the best option to engage quickly and effectively with a highly diverse student population. This included part-time students, parents, disabled, distance learners and those on professional courses.

Using Red Brick’s proprietary web platform, candidates were quickly recruited and managed smoothly through the process via automated SMS and email reminders.

A Twist in the Tale

Despite preconceptions, for the majority of students the lack of a bar on campus was not a significant factor behind ambivalent responses to NSS question 23.

“Red Brick’s research dispelled our initial speculations as to why we were receiving a low score and provided two clear areas for us to focus on for improvement, which we otherwise may have neglected”
– David Carse, Chief Executive.

Two themes were found to underpin much of the discussion throughout the focus groups; Clarity of Offer (Communication), and Service Design (Accessibility).

The final report was delivered less than 4 weeks after kick-off. It broke these primary themes down into sub-sections and included a comprehensive summary of the key insights and recommendations. The report concluded with an outline communications strategy designed to quickly address many of the issues identified in the report.

“The outputs were really good. All the data was qualitative and broken down into clear themes which allowed us to produce an action plan that continues to inform decision making today”
– David Carse, Chief Executive.

New Confidence

The research triggered a new approach to the way the Students’ Association now communicates with their members and continues to act as a backbone for service improvement projects.

Vitally, GCU Students’ Association achieved an 8% boost in their 2013 NSS score, followed by a further 7% in 2014.

The Students’ Association has continued to work closely with Red Brick, leading to the development and launch of an exciting new brand for 2014/15, and they are united in their optimism about what the future holds.

“It’s incredibly important to be evidence based in your approach. We don’t have the level of internal expertise required to carry out research to the depth required. Red Brick have that expertise as well as the experience and credibility to ensure you have the best chance of success”
– David Carse, Chief Executive.
To discuss the current challenges you are facing, or opportunities you may be missing call us today on: 01892 249 650

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