



Telling the Vermont Story

An economic development communications plan to attract new people and businesses to the state by sharing the stories of why Vermont is a great place to work, to live and to raise a family.

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Vermont Department of Economic Development | April 3, 2015

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I PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF WORK

What are we trying to do here and why?

In 2015, there was a call from stakeholders and legislators to rethink how Vermont communicates its assets and attributes to better attract people and businesses.

Before the state can contemplate any comprehensive communications or branding strategy it should answer the question: “What problem are we trying to solve here?” and set goals. As such, this plan will strive to identify what actions we are seeking to influence, who our target audiences might be and what measureable outcomes we might use to gauge success.

As a reminder: perceptions that have been built over time can rarely be changed in a day or a year. It takes years of consistent communications to the same audience to help shift thinking and drive actions. This plan is a start.

Task:

Determine what communication and outreach efforts could have the greatest impact on growing Vermont businesses (in addition to tourism and its related industries) and economy within the state’s foreseeable resources.

This plan will:

- Establish primary mission and parameters: *Why are we doing this and what do we hope to accomplish?*
- Set measureable goals where possible: *How will we measure success?*
- Profile specific target audiences: *Exactly whom are we trying to reach? Age/location/interests?*
- Recommend any research needed to determine needs/wants of those audiences: *What appeals to them and why do they need Vermont?*
- Recommend a suite of strategies: *Identify and document Vermont’s unique offers/benefits to those audiences.*
- Identify suite of tactics to accomplish each strategy: *How do we communicate those offers/benefits and engage the target audiences? What’s the best way to reach them?*

This plan will not:

- Be a branding document or attempt to identify or alter the Vermont “brand”
- Address creative execution (taglines, visuals, ads)
- Develop primary research, use focus groups or other objective audience research
- Research or recommend media buys

Process:

The Commissioner of Economic Development (Lisa Gosselin) spent time In March 2015 developing this plan, working with an internal team and outside advisors, stakeholders and representatives of the target audiences we hope to reach.

A number of people dedicated their time and the ideas and the materials referenced in this report. With more time, it would have been good to reach out more extensively. A recommendation from this report is that a Communications & Marketing Council be formed that includes representatives from the state, business groups and businesses, educational institutions, as well as marketing and human resources professionals

Input was provided by:

Pat Moulton, Secretary, Agency of Commerce & Community Development
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 Steve Terry, Consultant
 Amanda Mahoney, recent Champlain College graduate
 Emily Piper, Burlington Young Professionals

II GOALS

What do we hope to accomplish?

Communications Goal:

Convince target audiences that Vermont is a great place to work, to build or start a business, and to invest in.

Desired Outcomes:

- a) New people, employees and businesses relocate and invest here.
- b) Current Vermonters and businesses stay and grow here.

Measureable Objectives:

- a) Increase in student applications to Vermont schools
- b) Increase in workforce
- c) Increase in employment opportunities and jobs
- d) Increase in number of businesses
- e) Increase investment in Vermont businesses
- f) Increase in residents (primary homeowners)

These goals, actions and measurements will be further defined later in this document as they relate to each of the target audiences.

III BACKGROUND

Why do we need to do this?

“Over the years Vermont and Vermonters have built a powerful brand image for their state. Like all brand images, this brand image of Vermont exists in peoples’ minds—the people who live and work here, the people who come to visit, the people who make a habit of buying Vermont-made or Vermont-grown products.” – O’Neal Strategy Group,

Few states have brands that enjoy the recognition and values associated with them that Vermont does. Say “Vermont” and the word conjures up images of red barns and dairy farms, flaming maples, snow-capped mountains, white steeples and historic villages. These are what have helped develop an economically critical tourism and second home market, one of the strongest in the country.

The word “Vermont” also conjures up people: visionary hippies, creative craftsmen, hardworking loggers, adventurous skiers, ardent back-to-the-landers, innovative entrepreneurs, inventive manufacturers and independent-minded politicians. It is associated with products (maple syrup, cheese, beer) and companies such as Ben & Jerry’s, Green Mountain Coffee, Burton, and Orvis. It stands for attitudes: quirkiness, liberal politics, innovation, and authenticity. Lastly, it stands for a state of mind: nature, health, and a peaceful way of life.

Business and the Vermont Brand

Many businesses outside tourism have leveraged Vermont's brand perceptions to add value to their products. Ben & Jerry's, Burton, Green Mountain Coffee, Cabot, the Vermont Country Store, King Arthur Flour, Merchant's Bank, Localvore and EatingWell are just some of the many companies that have deployed and supported Vermont's brand attributes in communications that have reached millions of consumers.

The prevalence of both B to C (business to consumer) product marketing and marketing by the Department of Tourism and by other tourism companies has meant that Vermont's reputation as a place of peaceful communities, healthy food and natural beauty is further reinforced.

Yet there is another side of Vermont that is lesser known: one that stands for innovation, entrepreneurship, science and technology. Vermont is gradually becoming known for burgeoning high-tech software and manufacturing firms such as IBM, Dealer.com, Mack Molding, GW Plastic, Global Z, Seldon, NSK, Kaman, Mylan and others. These are highly successful, innovative businesses and important employers whose success is crucial for Vermont's economy.

Yet, since these companies often do not communicate directly with the general public—either in or outside of the state—fewer people are aware of their presence or the role they play in the Vermont economy. Further, their marketing often does not make use of the Vermont brand or their location here.

This can make it more difficult to attract employees and harder for the state to be considered by other tech and manufacturing businesses which often look to co-locate within a cluster. As manufacturing accounts for 11% of the current workforce and both this sector and the technology sector are poised for growth, it is doubly important that Vermont has the talent these businesses will need to grow.

Growing Tech

However, things are starting to change, particularly in Chittenden County. In recent years as Vermont's tech businesses have grown and gained national attention, Vermont has begun to build a reputation for innovation and entrepreneurship. In March 2015, Burlington was named one of the [10 Best Places to Live Now](#) by *Men's Journal*. But it was also named as one of the [Top 10 Most Innovative Tech Hubs](#) by *Forbes* (picking up on a survey by WalletNerd). And just weeks later, Chittenden County ranked [#1 in the U.S. in the Fourth Economy Index](#) first among "regions that are poised to achieve sustainable economic growth while attracting people and investment." Counties in Massachusetts and North Dakota placed second and third.

The 2014 launch of Ello, the social media platform, and founder Paul Budnitz's vocal passion for Vermont, drew attention to Vermont from world wide media including *the Wall Street Journal*, the BBC, *The Economist* and others. Inc. Magazine named Ello (supported by Vermont's FreshTracks Capital) as one of the [9 Most Significant VC Deals of 2014](#), alongside Uber and others. Andy Dice.com noted via its 2015 survey that Vermont is among the [5 fastest growing states for tech salaries](#), growing 8.3% in 2014 to reach an average of \$87,484.

The Vermont Technology Alliance's three [Tapping Tech](#) publications have highlighted the growing tech sector and its importance to Vermont's economy, Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies and venture organizations such as North Country Angels and Fresh Tracks Capital have helped to nurture it. Events such as Tech Jam, Hack VT and Woodstock Digital Festival have helped to publicize it.

As we look to continually improve the state's economy and grow high-wage tech and manufacturing jobs, it has become clear that we do need to promote the opportunities that are here and attract new ones, especially beyond Chittenden County.

This is of particular importance since Vermont is faced with a declining and aging population, and many businesses report having trouble filling openings and attracting employees.

So the question, often asked before, arose again in 2015: is it time to update the Vermont brand? And how can it be leveraged to attract new businesses and new potential employees to the state?

IV Marketing History

Wait, haven't we already tried this?

Vermont's state-funded marketing and communications efforts have, historically centered on attracting tourism and vacationers. Over the decades, campaigns such as "Play Vermont" (1950s) and Secretary Al Moulton's "The Beckoning Country" (1960s) have helped to position Vermont as a pastoral place to escape to.

These and other campaigns have consistently shown a strong return on investment. According to the U.S. Travel Association, in 2013 alone, travelers to Vermont spent \$2.2 billion in the state and generated \$268.5 million to federal, state and local governments. They created 20,603 jobs accounting for 8.3% of the state's non-farm employment.

Tourism campaigns were not only successful in attracting tourists, but also getting a number of them to fall in love with the state and want to live and work here. Many not only came but also brought their business with them, creating jobs here. Examples range from Tom Watson, who came to ski and then started IBM's Essex Junction plant to Ben Kinnaman, a skier from the Chesapeake Bay region who discovered the quality of life here. He [moved to Vermont and started Green Sea Systems](#), a growing business in underwater robotics.

Tourism has not only provided a way for people to "sample" the Vermont life but also has appeared to have a halo effect. As *Forbes* reports: [A recent study by Longwoods International](#) sought to quantify this halo effect. In one example, it looked at North Dakota's "Legendary" campaign, which (according to the state) *"plays to the authenticity that defines North Dakota and connects the landscape to the people in a real, emotional, simple way."* Longwoods' survey showed the following "halo effects" of this campaign. This has been confirmed in other states, as well.

Tourism & Economic Development?

The question has continually come up as to how tourism marketing and economic development marketing can work together. In 1998, the state Department of Tourism commissioned The O’Neal Group to do a large-scale study of the Vermont brand with visitors. In 2000, the Department of Economic Development hired O’Neal to do the same thing with business owners and in 2003, the state’s Marketing and Promotional Team (M.A.P.), a working group of 10 government agencies and departments, commissioned O’Neal Strategy Group to look at the brand from the perspective of all the state’s major stakeholders—residents, tourists, in-state and out-of-state businesses and purchasers of Vermont products.

The work that was resulted helped establish a vocabulary and visual identity for the state that was used consistently across departments, ranging from tourism to ads for captive insurance.

More than 10 years later, however, that work is dated. It can and should evolve, ideally to include more contemporary graphics and imagery, fresh language and an acknowledgement of the innovative businesses and opportunities Vermont is becoming known for. It could also highlight, as the O’Neal report pointed out in its original brand work, that Vermont is an ideal home for “Skilled Professionals and “Great Place to Raise Family:”

“These two attributes are not part of the current shared image of Vermont, so it will take a conscious effort to plant these associations in people’s minds. However, the effort should be worth it. These two associations in no way undermine the current collective Vermont brand image. They take nothing away. In fact, they simply “add back” two aspects of the Vermont reality—aspects that are important to retaining and attracting jobs for the people of Vermont.”—O’Neal Strategy Group, [Vermont Brand Case Study](#)

Attracting People & Employees

More recently, Vermont’s economic development marketing efforts have focused on attracting employees to address what economists have noted is a pending workforce crisis, a result of both economic growth and an aging and stagnant population.

In 2007, the Department of Economic Development created a campaign that called “Pursue Vermont.” It began with a “Pursue Vermont” survey of 2,800 individuals that revealed that 67% of them would move back to Vermont, with 93% saying that finding a place they can afford to live is the key factor.

In response, the state allocated an estimated \$200,000 or more for to a “Pursue Vermont” campaign. This included a dedicated web site, sponsoring recruiting events in Boston and other cities to try to attract potential workers to Vermont for open jobs. The campaign did not have any measureable outcomes and fizzled due to lack of ongoing funding.

In 2014, the [Vermont Roots Migration Project](#) surveyed 3,692 people who had some connection to Vermont as to why they stayed, why they left or what would bring them back.

Among those who stayed:

“I enjoy Vermont’s landscape” received the highest number of responses; 70% of Stayers selected this factor. The second most selected response was proximity to family members; 62.3% said this

was a factor in their decision to remain in Vermont. Also cited as important were Vermont's culture and community (56.2%) and Vermont's small size (54.2%). Just over 35% of Stayers said their work kept them in the state (35.3%).

Among those who left, the reasons to return were:

Missed my family 49.5 %. Missed the VT landscape 45.2 % Missed VT culture/community 43.7 %, Appreciate VT's small size 39.8 %

The strong attachment to the Vermont landscape, community and family helped inform work the state did in reaching out to "leavers" via a campaign developed in 2014 to target alumni and tourists and to raise awareness of the opportunities here. Jobs alone were not a primary reason to return.

In July 2014, Governor Shumlin asked the state's Department of Economic Development and Department of Tourism to work together to leverage tourism's "halo effect" by promoting a "Great Jobs in Vermont" campaign via the VermontVacation.com web site. The web site (which was co-sponsored by Cabot) was promoted at Phish concerts, Boston Red Sox games and other events around New England.

Ads and copy created within the Agency are provided to alumni groups and partner organizations around the state for inclusion in newsletters and outreach. A landing page that is part of VermontVacation.com drives visitors to learn more about the quality of life in Vermont and to look for jobs posted on the Department of Labor's job site and on a new, dedicated [Great Jobs in VT LinkedIN](#) group, hosted by HR directors from around the state. Regular communications via email blasts to partners also highlight facts about the state's economy, businesses and quality of life. As of March 2015, the LinkedIN site had more than 700 members. The project was created using existing personnel and resources and has not been allocated a budget.

In addition, in 2013 the Department of Economic Development relaunched its ThinkVermont e-newsletter and increased frequency to 10x a year in 2014. It also maintains a Facebook and Twitter account and the Commissioner has maintained weekly posts on LinkedIN. Press releases are sent out on a monthly (or more frequent) basis and the web site, ThinkVermont.com, is updated weekly. A marketing "package" has been assembled for international trade efforts and content has been identified that could be used in recruitment materials.

In fall of 2013 and again in 2014, the Department released two lists of 50 innovations each that now make up "[100 Innovations Made in Vermont](#)" a list and slide show of businesses that have created exceptional products and innovative breakthroughs.

These have been highlighted via social media, in Op Eds, at the 2014 InnoVaTe Economic Development Summit and via ThinkVermont.com. In addition, the state worked with partners to promote manufacturers "Open Houses" during Manufacturing Day and encouraged schools to coordinate with their regions largest employers.

No additional resources were allocated to any of these efforts. The \$30,000 in marketing funds the Department of Economic Development had previously devoted to ads in Vermont Business Magazine was rescinded in 2014.

In 2015, a bill in the Vermont state legislature proposed creating a “waterfall” funding mechanism to provide a budget for marketing economic development. At the same time, Vermont’s tech community voiced concern that the state was not doing enough to promote the growth of the technology sector.

In response, the Department set out to look at what might be done to help better communicate the assets that could help attract new employees and businesses to the state, highlight the growth sectors and combat a growing negativity in the business community. A list of some of these is found in Chapters VIII and IX.

This plan is a limited attempt to identify target audiences and strategies for reaching them.

V TARGET AUDIENCE

Who are we trying to reach?

Over the course of three weeks, Commissioner Gosselin met with both the internal team and representatives from businesses, organizations, educational institutions, students, visitors, tourism and marketing experts and more.

In speaking with representatives from these groups, there was a common recognition that we need to identify our audience and what it is we want them to do, before we attempt to communicate with them.

In nearly every conversation, the following primary target audiences emerged. Each of these audiences could (and should) have it’s own communications strategy but certain common needs arose and a number of “strategies,” outlined in Chapter VI, could address multiple audiences.

1. Vermonters & Influencers

A serious challenge many cited is the fact that many Vermonters do not believe Vermont is a good place to set up a business or to work. We have heard this from business leaders and even economic development professionals. This is reinforced by national rankings for “business friendliness:” [Forbes ranks Vermont #43](#) of states to do business in. Because of its small population and workforce and relatively high taxes, Vermont may never reach the top of these rankings, but the good news, this is up from #49 in 2011 and Vermont still ranks ahead of New York — which is #50.

A negative business outlook has also been reinforced by the best-funded campaign in the state, Campaign for Vermont, which has consistently highlighted the challenges businesses face in the state in its editorials and social media outreach.

Before changing outside perceptions we must ensure the internal dialogue is consistent and that Vermonters are well educated as to the benefits the state offers to workers and to employers. Audiences here include all Vermonters but with a focus on leaders and influencers (business leaders, legislators, media, economic development partners, educators) who could be “ambassadors” in helping to spread messages. There is also an added challenge from Vermonters who do not wish to see growth here.

Targets: Business group leaders, legislators, national and in-state media, state officials, economic development partners.

Measures: Improve “business friendly” rankings in internal survey results.

2. Businesses

In-state businesses are often the first place other businesses turn to when deciding whether or not to locate in Vermont. As [DCI's Winning Strategies Survey](#) reports, in 2014 the leading source of information influencing executive’s perception of an area’s business climate was a dialogue with industry peers (55%), followed by articles in newspapers and magazines (44%) and business travel (37%).

LEADING SOURCES INFLUENCING EXECUTIVE PERCEPTIONS	
Dialogue with industry peers	55%
Articles in newspapers and magazine	44%
Business travel	37%
Meetings with economic development organizations	31%
Rankings/surveys	24%
Online sources	22%
Word of mouth	21%
Personal travel	13%
Other	12%
TV/radio newscasts/shows	9%
Advertising	4%
Direct mail	2%
Social media	2%

As with the other audiences, we need to make our current business leaders ambassadors and recruiters for the state. The team identified several ways that we can work with existing Vermont businesses to identify new audiences, attract new businesses and grow opportunities here.

- a) Supply Chain Relationships: Work with businesses to discover if there might be efficiencies or new business opportunities by locating other businesses both up and down the supply chain in Vermont. Example: Aerospace suppliers.

- b) Cluster Build Out: Identify specific and highly focused clusters where Vermont has a unique strength (expertise, workforce, regulations, supply chain) and can provide a benefit to other businesses in this arena. Example: Solar and renewable cluster.

In both these instances, both outreach by CEOs and efforts to attract businesses to Vermont by hosting industry conferences and events could be effective.

We also identified two groups that are most likely to be open to relocating:

- c) Entrepreneurs: Entrepreneurs are at a stage when they are often more mobile and can decide where to locate their ventures based on availability of capital, expertise and mentorship, related businesses (clusters and supply chain), workforce availability and other opportunities. Vermont, a state known for growing start-ups, is a natural for “Fourth Economy” growth, which Ron Davison, author of the book of the same name calls “*An emerging entrepreneurial economy that will change our definition of business.*”
- d) International: Businesses seeking a U.S. footprint could take advantage of Vermont’s proximity to 80 million people in urban hubs (New York, Boston, Albany, Montreal), access to the port of Montreal, access to Congressional delegation and state government, Free Trade Zones, and other benefits.

Targets: Vermont businesses that have extended supply chains (advanced manufacturing, aerospace) where co-location could be an advantage; clusters with exceptional expertise (microchip manufacturing, solar, medical devices, beer, dairy, etc.). Start-ups and entrepreneurs. International businesses seeking a U.S. footprint.

Measures: Growth of NAICS codes in targeted areas; new business recruitment; current business expansion, new business registration.

3. Visitors/Second Home Owners

Visitors and second homeowners are excellent prospects for relocation. Visitors (skiers, leaf peepers, art hoppers, etc.) essentially “sample” our product each time they visit, have an affinity for the state and may be open to its lifestyle benefits. Second homeowners are largely affluent and educated and may already be predisposed to moving here if they can find the right economic opportunity. Skiers, in particular, offer what is often a younger and more active demographic that could bolster the Vermont workforce. Second homeowners and skiers also represent a potential investor market.

Targets: Second homeowners, skiers, and active visitors

Measures: Increase primary home ownership, increase investment capital to Vermont businesses, increase business registration.

4. Students/Alumni/Family:

One of our best prospects for changing perceptions of Vermont and creating both new businesses and a tech-savvy workforce here is to reach out to the 40,000-plus students who are

attending our educational institutions, as well as their parents, high school guidance counselors, prospective students and alumni. This is (for the most part), a young, engaged audience whose impressions of the state are still being formed and therefore may be more easily influenced. Many are from out of state and, as such, can be ambassadors.

Primary Targets: Current Vermont students, prospects, applicants, alumni. Families of students. Guidance counselors.

Outcomes: Increase in college applications. Increase in job applications. Increase in membership in Great Jobs in VT LinkedIn page.

Secondary Targets: Students and college communities in the northeast that have strong programs in areas where there is job availability in Vermont. (Examples: Tech majors in Syracuse and Rochester, NY; Northampton and Cambridge, MA)

Measures: Increase in membership in Great Jobs in VT LinkedIn page.

5. Vermont Young Professionals

Young professionals are playing an increasingly important and visible role in Vermont's economy. Burlington's Young Professionals, in tandem with the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce, helped to create the very successful pitch contest, Launch VT and the Manchester/Bennington area YoPros helped kick off the Road Pitch venture tour last year. They provide networking for peers, post jobs, host events, such as flannel-and-heels Vermonters Ball and provide a support system for people who are joining the community. They are well organized by region, have a central group [Vermont Young Professionals](#) with more than 500 members and the Rutland Young Professionals that is looking to organize a statewide YoPro event. Many of these have active Facebook pages with more than 1,000.

Measures: Increase in membership in young professionals groups and social media pages.

VI STRATEGIES

How can we reach effectively reach them? What will drive them to act?

Once these groups were identified, we met with representatives from each group to discuss what approaches might work best to accomplish the desired outcomes. As we discussed approaches with all target groups a number of common comments arose:

- *Our primary focus should be on attracting young talent to fill open jobs. Without that, we won't be able to attract new businesses.*
- *We will not be able to keep talented people unless they and their families find the Vermont lifestyle attractive.*
- *"Our best prospects for new residents and employees are those who already have an affinity for Vermont – alumni, family here, skiers, tourists, etc.*
- *"Any marketing of businesses and jobs should include the recreational opportunities and the quality of life here."*
- *Businesses don't move here. People do.*

These comments point to the need to work in tandem with the Department of Tourism, which is already promoting lifestyle and recreational opportunities in the state and has the greatest reach out of state.

Strategies look at how can we reach these target audiences in a comprehensive and consistent way. Each of the strategies outlined below looks at broad approach that can be fulfilled via a number of tactics. We do not address messaging, creative or materials here. Several of these might be used in tandem for greater impact.

1. Tell the Stories of "Why Vermont"

Goal: Raise awareness among Vermonters and within and outside of Vermont of the benefits of living, working and running a business here.

Before we can convince others that Vermont is a great place to live, work and do business, we must convince ourselves. No slogan, no ad campaign and no amount of chest thumping on the part of state government is likely to change this. Change must come from within and be genuine. To shift the conversation, the "Why Vermont" campaign (working title) would reach out to business leaders, influencers and Vermonters of all types to help tell the stories of why they chose to live and work here. The campaign would have several elements including:

Tactics to Reach Businesses & Influencers

- *“Why Vermont” Survey*
At present Vermont Business Roundtable, the Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility and many other business groups are surveying their members about why they choose to do business in Vermont. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) would work with these and other groups (those listed as Influencers as well as business groups) to ask the same question, compile the answers and share them. This would help respondents first and foremost recognize the positive reasons they are here and to share them with others. The reasons listed would then be publicized and sent out via the state and partner organizations’ communication vehicles. The state would coordinate a social media blast highlighting one reason a week and driving people to the ACCD web site where all the reasons would be listed. Content could be used in future marketing efforts.

- *Why Vermont Business Success Stories*
As Bill Shouldice, president of Vermont Teddy Bear rightly notes: “We need to do a better job telling the success stories of the businesses that have grown here.” A first approach is to collect and document these stories and share them publicly. This could be accomplished in several ways:
 - Why Vermont Video Interviews: Create a video booth at Vermont Chamber Expo and ask CEO’s for a 2-minute video interview on how they have started or grown their businesses here and “Why Vermont?” Tie to *Vermont Life* magazine’s successful video profile library.

 - “Why Vermont” Story Corps: Work with Vermont media (VPR or others) to tell a new business success story each week, building off the “100 Innovations Made in Vermont” list and highlighting “Why Vermont?” This approach could also be used to interview employees and young people who have moved here for jobs and allow them to tell, in their own words, why they chose to work and live in Vermont. Content could be audio, visual (video) or print and would be shared via social media and other channels.

 - @WhyVermont & #WhyVermont: Create hashtag and Twitter handle modeled after Dept. of Tourism’s successful @THISISVT and share with a different business or employee each week.

 - Governor’s “Innovation of the Week:” Have the Governor highlight and commend a business each week for one year. Create a press release about how it has innovated and why it has been successful here. Content would be written within ACCD.

 - Why Vermont? Taps & Tech Media Tour: Create a media tour for select in-state and out-of-state media to the growing businesses that have located here and are passionate about Vermont. Play off Tapping Tech by creating a “Taps & Tech” tour that combines visits to our growing breweries (just to make this a little more fun!) with visits to flourishing tech businesses.

Tactics to Reach Millennials: Young Professionals; Students/Families

- *Millennial Marketing Challenge*
Create a statewide challenge to create the best outreach and marketing plan and materials to attract young professionals and students to come to Vermont and to stay here for jobs. Have teams enter in three categories (high school, college and young professionals) and have them compete for a prize. Create a web site landing page to showcase their efforts in several categories (video, essay, marketing materials) and feature a “Reader’s Choice” award for the best plan and accompanying creative materials. This will prompt students and YoPros to share their work and encourage their friends to view and vote for their projects.
- *Why Vermont? Millennial Video*
Create a short video “Why Vermont?” that targets millennials and focuses on both the quality of life and the job and business prospects here. Feature a variety of Vermont role models students might aspire to be (Jake Carpenter of Burton, Mary Powell of GMP, Ben Kinnaman of GreenSea, singer Grace Potter, Dimitri Garder of Global Z, Michael Jager of Karma Birdhouse) as well as people in their 20s and 30s who have great jobs here. Ask colleges to share with prospective students along with a brochure or fact sheet on the state. Work with colleges to ensure this is referenced in all outbound college marketing materials, on admissions web sites and elsewhere. Tie in with a link or final image driving viewers to Great Jobs in Vermont site. Supply to businesses to download for free and use as a recruiting tool.

2. Build Great Jobs in Vermont

Goal: Increase awareness of business and career opportunities in Vermont, attract new employees and businesses.

Promoting the jobs and career opportunities here in Vermont accomplishes two goals: a) it raises awareness of Vermont’s growth businesses and b) it attracts people to work here. The Department of Labor has a robust [Vermont Job Link](#) site that includes job fair information but it does not promote the quality of life and lacks social media sharing functionality. It has 4070 jobs posted and a search for “Software Engineer” shows 205 results. The Tech Alliance and Tech Council have also worked to raise awareness of tech jobs and set up a [Vermont Internships](#) jobs internship site for tech. It has 158 postings. GreatJobsinVT’s LinkedIN page has 190 posts, largely in professional/managerial positions.

A first step would be to assign responsibility for Great Jobs to one person at the Agency of Commerce to oversee (est. time: 4 hours/week) and grow this program in partnership with one person at Department of Labor. This team should work with businesses around the state to

promote posting on all three sites. A second recommendation is to create a pool of funds to be able to consistently promote this and to do so by engaging private sector businesses to ensure they have skin the game. Ask Young Professionals groups to help publicize.

Tactical executions might include:

- *Great Jobs monthly e-newsletter,*
Create monthly e-newsletter and weekly LinkedIN and Facebook posts with facts about living and working in the state, “Hot Job” profiles that include information about the companies that are hiring, testimonials from people who have moved to work here. Promote sign-up via the Department of Tourism promotions, partners, business groups, HR departments, alumni outreach (magazines, e-newsletters, associations).
- *Great Jobs Career & Internship Fairs:*
Brand current career fairs around the state as “Great Jobs in Vermont “ Fairs and, where possible model them after Tech Jam. By creating one brand (even for fairs run by various organizations) we can heighten awareness of job opportunities across the state. Promote DOL Jobs site as well as GJVT social media sites (LinkedIN and Facebook), and e-newsletter at career fairs and invite participants to sign up. Promote upcoming career fairs via Great Jobs in VT.
- *TechJam Tour/Great Jobs*
Create a second, pilot Great Jobs/TechJam event in the southern part of the state to raise awareness of the tech jobs and talent in, say, Manchester, Brattleboro and Bennington. Include a job fair as part of it and open to advanced manufacturers.
- *Great Jobs Fairs at Ski Resorts*
Work with ski resorts to host Monday or Friday job fairs at the resorts and share the job fairs with their in and out-of-state weekend customers (season pass holders, second home owners, etc.). Highlight professional-level jobs offered by regional and statewide businesses.

Outcomes: Increase GreatJobsinVT LinkedIN group membership from 700 (current) to 2000 and achieve 500 e-newsletters subscribers by January 2016. Increase in job applications to participating businesses.

3. Apply to Vermont Campaign

Goal: Build email database of people who are interested in moving to Vermont so as to maintain steady communications with them and help raise their awareness of job opportunities.

One of the core challenges the state faces is how to communicate with the people who already have an interest in Vermont and are most likely to move here. There are few ways to identify those people via typical media channels and advertising outside the state is an expensive and inefficient prospect.

So how do we reach the people who are saying “Oh I’d love to work in Vermont, if I could only find a job?”

Playing off the notion of a ‘college application’ this campaign would seek to capture the names and contact information for those people who are predisposed to moving here via contests. It would drive them to a website with information about living and working here and create a steady stream of communications with them via e-newsletters and social media outreach. It could also, potentially, connect them with businesses that are looking to hire.

The campaign would incent people to visit a dedicated ACCD website page where by entering information, they could be eligible to win prizes (a ski package, etc.). A grand prize might be a weekend at a resort, with informational interviews at businesses tailored to that person’s skills and interests, a visit with a realtor, a welcome basket of Vermont products and more. Further, any non-resident who registered with Apply to Vermont and then got a full-time job with a participating Vermont business or started a business with three or more employees could be eligible for one free season’s pass (pending ski resort approval) at a Vermont ski area and, potentially, other benefits. Businesses would be responsible for submitting names of these people and each business could only allocate a predetermined number passes.

The basic information in an “Application” would include name and email address but optional questions could invite ‘applicants’ to share their age, business sector interest and education level. There would be a chance to opt in (or opt out) of a subscription to a monthly e-newsletter about jobs, businesses and life in Vermont and the site would promote links to Great Jobs in Vermont social media pages (LinkedIn, Facebook).

The website page would also feature information about living and working here with links to regional chambers of commerce, to business groups, job boards, “Why Vermont” testimonials, business success stories and more.

The campaign would be promoted via a simple “Apply to Vermont” ad driving to the website and placed with SKI Vermont, partner ski resort magazines and communications, college alumni magazines, realtor web sites, ski town media, and businesses. ACCD would promote via its media lists and VDTM outreach efforts.

This campaign would have a primary purpose of capturing names and creating a direct communication link with people interested in moving to Vermont to work or start a business.

Targets: Out-of-state: Skiers and outdoor enthusiasts, tourists, college alumni, entrepreneur groups (start-ups)

Promote via: Ski Vermont and ski resorts, college alumni communications, state visitor centers, HR directors, realtors, chambers of commerce, Vermont Life

Outcomes: # of email names, open rates of newsletters, click-throughs to job sites

Campaign elements:

- Contest to promote sign-ups and capture names of those interested in moving

- Promotional ads distributed via partner media and networks: partners include Ski Vermont, Vermont ski resorts, Vermont colleges and alumni publications, chambers of commerce, realtors, Vermont visitor centers, Tourism Vermont, ski town media, regional ski shows, Big E, etc.
- Web site to capture names and communicate opportunities here
- Social media pages on Facebook, LinkedIn (Great Jobs in Vermont)
- E-newsletter outreach to those who opt in via website and social media pages. E-newsletter would promote both Great Jobs in VT and quality of life here and recent business successes.

4. A Better Place to Raise a Family

Goal: Encourage families with children to move to Vermont, hence increasing our potential workforce and ensuring a “next generation” of Vermonters.

Perhaps the biggest challenge the state faces in terms of economic development is its aging population and declining workforce. At the same time, we often hear that one of the catalysts behind a move to Vermont is the desire to raise kids in a “better environment.” This may be especially true for growing families who are finding they have outgrown an apartment or an urban setting.

Create a targeted media/PR campaign highlighting what Vermont offers families including:

- [Healthiest Kids in the U.S.](#) (Per Washington Post)
- [Top 3 School Systems in the Country](#) (per WalletHub)
- [Safest State in America \(24/7Wall Street\)](#)
- Vermont Tech’s VTech program
- Early Childhood Education grant
- Free skiing on Fridays
- Vermont Strong Scholars Program (tuition reimbursement for Vermonters pursuing designated careers at Vermont colleges)
- 25 post-secondary colleges and universities

Outreach via:

- Camps, ski schools, alumni associations
- “Mommy bloggers”
- National media

Outcomes: Increased enrollment in Vermont schools, pre-K through 12.

5. Invited to Vermont

Goal: Enlist current Vermont businesses in recruiting new businesses

Considering the DCI Winning Strategies findings that peer-to-peer conversations have the greatest influence on an executive's sense of a place's business environment, work with current businesses to identify out best prospects for relocation.

- Invitees to Vermont: Work with partners (RDCs) and current businesses to identify 100 prospective businesses that might consider moving. Create "Invitation" mailer with Why Vermont information, a customized letter from the governor and some sort of discounted offer to stay at resort, Hotel Vermont or another showcase property. To take advantage of the offer, a business would have to contact the state, providing another outreach opportunity.
- Host Key Sector Conferences: Identify 6 or more conferences in strong sectors (renewable energy, socially responsible businesses, food, health, brewing, gaming, cyber security) that could bring targets to Vermont and invite/incent conferences to host here. Showcase Vermont's cluster businesses and circulate "Why Vermont" materials.

Primary Targets: Out of state businesses with Vermont connections, entrepreneurs, international

Measures: Visits to Vermont by "invitees," conference attendees

VII Recommendations, Resources & Priorities

What do we do first?

Immediate Actions

A number of elements of the various campaigns could be acted on immediately with little or no additional cost or significant staff time. These include:

- Why Vermont Survey: work with partners to ensure the same questions are being asked of all groups or create a Survey Monkey survey with a prize to incent participation.
- #WhyVermont and @WhyVermont Twitter handle and contest
- Create landing page for Great Jobs in Vermont with "Apply to VT" opportunity to capture names and email addresses of those interested in moving here.
- "Innovation of the Week"
- Link Vermont Life videos to web site and create a YouTube channel for them. Have Vermont Life at Expo to film new "Why Vermont" segments with CEOs

- Launch Millennial Marketing Challenge with Young Professionals and Colleges
- Compile list of 100 companies and 6 conferences

Primary Needs

The state currently does not have any marketing materials that tell the full story of why this is a great place to work, play and raise a family.

- About Vermont page on DED and brochure geared to out of state businesses seeking to relocate.
- About Vermont page on VermontVacation.com and brochure geared to out-of-state job seekers.
- Video: Short video highlighting why Vermont is a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Big Picture Recommendations

- The state's typefaces, logo, web sites and marketing materials are all outdated and give the state a "stodgy" look and feel. Updating these with a new brand identity package would help send a strong message that Vermont is ready for a new generation.
- The Chief Marketing Officer should have oversight of all branding and strategy across all agencies. This would be a more significant role than it currently is and not be simply tied to graphic execution. The CMO would help agencies find the appropriate people to help execute creative and have final approval over all creative with a significant audience size.
- *Vermont Life* could play a greater role in producing newsletters, social media and other outreach that promotes the state as a whole, beyond what is included in the magazine.
- Work with major employers to identify narrow target employee audiences in key tech-savvy college towns in the northeast who might find Vermont appealing. Create a very focused media and PR campaign to reach these areas. Example: 20 to 35-year old skiers who live/work/go to school in Syracuse, Rochester, Northampton, Cambridge, Hartford.

VIII Unique Business Advantages

Location

- 80 million people within a 5-hour drive
- Proximity to New York, Boston and Montreal
- International airport (1 hour from NYC, 2 hours from Chicago and Washington D.C.)
- Easy access to Port of Montreal for shipping
- Rail access to Southern New England

Workforce

- Dedicated, quality-driven workforce, 92% complete secondary school
- Vermont Training Program
- Technical colleges
- 25 colleges and universities, including leading programs:
 - Middlebury, language
 - Champlain, gaming and programming
 - Norwich, cyber security
 - Vermont Law School, environmental law

Infrastructure

- 2nd lowest energy costs in New England (after Maine)
- GMP's 2015 rate reduction vs. New England rate increase
- Access to natural gas
- High-speed, low cost internet in sections of state

Nimble regulation

- Vermont Small Business Offering Exemption
- Patent Trolling Law
- Access to state and federal officials and lawmakers
- Cloud tax?
- LLC Act

IX Recent Accolades

Overall

- From 2012-2015, Vermont has consistently been ranked [#1 in the Opportunity Index](#), a national, bipartisan annual composite measure of a state's economic, educational and civic factors that expand opportunity.
- Vermont is one of two "blue states" to make the [24/7 Wall St. list of "10 Best Run States in the Country."](#)
- In 2014, Vermont ranked [4th in the country for inbound moves by United Van Lines' annual survey](#).

Business Environment

- Burlington was among the 2015 [Top 10 Most Innovative Tech Hubs](#) by *Forbes* (picking up on a survey by WalletNerd).
- Chittenden County ranked [#1 in the U.S. in the Fourth Economy Index](#) first among "regions that are poised to achieve sustainable economic growth while attracting people and investment." This was ahead of communities in Massachusetts and North Dakota, which placed second and third.
- Inc. Magazine named Ello (supported by Vermont's FreshTracks Capital) as one of the [9 Most Significant VC Deals of 2014](#), alongside Uber and others.
- Vermont is among the [5 fastest growing states for tech salaries](#) according to Dice.com's 2015 survey, growing 8.3% in 2014. Still Vermont's average salary is \$87,484, which remains slightly less than the national average of \$89,450, which grew at 1.9% last year.
- Vermont is the [#2 state in the country for solar jobs per capita](#).

Quality of Life

- Vermont ranks #3 in the nation for [quality of life, per 24/7 Wall St. and the OECD](#).
- Vermont has the [Healthiest Kids in the U.S.](#) (Per Washington Post)
- Vermont is the [2nd healthiest state in the nation](#)
- The Vermont school system is among the [Top 3 School Systems in the Country](#)
- Vermont is the [Safest State in America \(24/7Wall Street\)](#)
- In March 2015, Burlington was one of the [10 Best Places to Live Now](#) (*Men's Journal*).