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Marketing Saskatoon
Strategic Plan - Final Report

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Section 1.0

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

Marketing Saskatoon, also known as Team Saskatoon, comprises various private and public sector companies and organizations. Its goal is to increase the coordination of marketing efforts for Saskatoon and region and to maximize these efforts' effects. Marketing Saskatoon identified the need to create an overall long-term strategic marketing plan and brand for the city. It requested proposals from professional marketing firms to assist with the project. A joint venture between The Marketing Den and Fast Consulting was awarded the contract in January, 2001.

The objective of the strategic plan is to position Saskatoon through branding in diverse markets of interest, to identify and establish partnerships between and among organizations wishing to penetrate compatible markets, and to develop widespread community awareness and support the initiative and its accompanying strategy. The project has been led by a management committee, which comprises the organizations that funded the development of the brand and the strategic plan. These organizations include:

- Tourism Saskatoon
- Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority (SREDA)
- City of Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan Economic and Co-operative Development
- University of Saskatchewan
- Ag-West Biotech
- Saskatoon Prairieland Exhibition Corporation.

The other members of Team Saskatoon include: the Saskatoon and District Chamber of Commerce, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Saskatoon Hotel Association, Canadian Light Source, Innovation Place, North Saskatoon Business Association (NSBA), Saskatchewan Exporters Association, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, Western Development Museum, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, Downtown Partnership, Centennial Auditorium & Convention Centre, Saskatchewan Place, and Saskatoon Sports Tourism.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the project is to provide Marketing Saskatoon with a comprehensive Strategic Plan. As defined in the Request for Proposal, the objectives are:

- to develop a long term strategic marketing plan for Saskatoon;
- to position and brand Saskatoon in its diverse markets of interest;
- to consult with the community to ensure its buy-in for the brand; and
- to make the brand applicable to diverse sectors of the community.

Positioning through branding in the diverse markets of interests for Saskatoon will be an essential component of the plan. Community buy-in for the brand is critical. Its application by diverse sectors of the community will be crucial to the implementation of the strategy.

The targets are diverse. They include everything from companies with the potential for relocating or expanding to Saskatoon, to students looking for post-secondary education opportunities.

1.3 Report Process

This strategic plan has been developed for a five-year time period. At the outset of this process, the project steering committee acknowledges that Saskatoon has limited awareness in many markets. Thus, the plan's purpose is to set the future activities of Marketing Saskatoon so that it may raise the awareness and create positive perception of Saskatoon in these markets.

This strategy has been prepared through the implementation of the following phases:

- Secondary Market Research - Initial information gathering consisted of compiling existing market research data. Markets of interest were studied to gauge their awareness and perceptions of Saskatoon.
- Internal Research and Community Involvement - Eight focus groups and 20 one-on-one surveys were conducted to gather opinions for the community consultation portion of the project. These opinions were gathered to gain information on perceptions, core values, ideas, and opportunities for the development of the brand.
- Branding/Image Development - The development of an effective, believable brand

is an important part of the strategy. Utilizing the information gathered in the previous phase, the consultant team developed a brand comprising a slogan and a logo. This brand was first tested with the project steering committee to gauge its effectiveness with diverse community interests. It was then tested in an on-line focus group with selected participants from across North America to determine its potential.

- **Strategic Plan Development** - The consultant team developed a detailed list of opportunities for the use of Saskatoon's new brand. These range from short to long term strategies. A strategic planning session comprising the consultant team and members of the project steering committee was held to identify collaborative opportunities for the various users of the new brand. These opportunities were merged with information gathered from focus group and interview research to form the basis of the strategic plan.
- **Communication Strategy** - This strategy consists of the unveiling, promotion, and review of Saskatoon's new brand. The project steering committee and the consultant team will schedule a formal review six months following the official unveiling to measure the early effectiveness of the brand and the strategic plan.

1.4 Report Structure

The report is organized in four main sections, including this introduction which provides a background to the project. Section 2.0 presents the research process and subsequent development of the brand and Section 3.0 of the report identifies the resulting opportunities and strategic initiatives. Section 4.0 presents the implementation framework which includes the tactical steps and an implementation schedule required for the plan.

Section 2.0

Research and Development of the Brand

2.0 Research and Development of the Brand

2.1 Composition of Consortium

The Marketing Saskatoon team, as described briefly in Section 1.1, represents a broad cross-section of the city's public and private businesses and organizations. Table 2.1 identifies the project steering committee - Team Saskatoon - which includes the organizations and respective individuals directly involved in the development of Saskatoon's brand and this corresponding strategic plan.

Table 2.1 Team Saskatoon

Organization	Representative(s)
SREDA*	Dale Botting & Catherine Tourigny
Tourism Saskatoon*	Todd Brandt & Jennifer Pesenti
Saskatchewan Economic & Co-operative Development*	Alan Thomarat & Elaine Unrau
City of Saskatoon*	Chris Dekker
University of Saskatchewan*	Tina Merrifield & Elaine Cadell
Saskatoon Prairieland Exhibition Corporation*	Mark Regier & Morris Neault
Ag-West Biotech*	Peter McCann & Judy Hume
Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce	Kent Smith-Windsor
North Saskatoon Business Association	Shirley Ryan
Centennial Auditorium	Rob Jones & Kim Gallucci
Saskatchewan Place	Ken Wood
Western Development Museum	Ian Olsen
Wanuskewin Heritage Park	Sheila Gamble & Michelle Pelletier
Canadian Light Source	Rob Slinger & Sandra Ribeiro
Innovation Place	Austin Beggs
The Partnership	Terry Scaddan
The Métis Nation	Wilf Blondeau & Tristen Zachow
Meewasin Valley Authority	Doug Porteous
Saskatoon Tribal Council	Darrell Balkwill
Provincial Exporters Association	Brian Hnatiw
Saskatoon Hotel Association	Chris Beavis

The organizations that funded this project are listed with an asterisk (*) beside their names in Table 2.1. Representatives from these organizations formed the management committee which directed the work flow of the project. It is expected that as the Marketing Saskatoon initiative moves forward, more businesses and organizations will become members of the steering and management committees.

2.2 The Branding Process

Regional branding or place marketing refers to the development of integrated marketing strategies that target all of a community's markets. These markets can be divided four ways:

- Tourists - pleasure, business, convention and other travellers
- Residents and Workers - potential citizens who bring needed skills to the community
- Business and Industry - new businesses, industries and entrepreneurs to generate jobs and investment in the community
- Export Markets - businesses in other Canadian jurisdictions and countries that do business with Saskatoon industries¹

In addition to considering these new markets, the consultant team was charged with developing a brand that would meet the following criteria:

- be simple;
- be applicable in a variety of uses;
- be effectively used by all stakeholders;
- be believable;
- reflect the future;
- invoke pride;
- capture Saskatoon's spirit;
- be distinctive; and
- be used domestically and internationally.

The steering committee and the consultant team agreed that in order to meet these criteria, an extensive community consultation process needed to be undertaken. As a result, a series of focus groups and personal interviews were conducted with community representatives - and with representatives from several markets of interest - from the months of May through August, 2001. This community consultation resulted in valuable

¹ Haider, Donald, Philip Kotler and Irving Rein. Marketing Places. The Free Press Maxwell Macmillan Canada Inc., Don Mills, Ontario, 1993.

input representing a broad cross-section of Saskatoon and its markets.

2.3 Overview of Consultation Process

2.3.1 Introduction

The consultant team held a total of eight focus groups, including two with Team Saskatoon members, one with SREDA's Board of Directors, three with various boards and committees affiliated with Tourism Saskatoon, one with city councillors and community association representatives, and one with young professionals and student representatives from the University of Saskatchewan. In addition, the consultant team conducted telephone interviews with key representatives from the community and from target markets. This section summarizes opinions expressed during these consultations.

The purpose of the focus group discussions was to gain insight from a representative cross-section of the community. The ultimate goal was to better understand how target markets perceive Saskatoon and how Saskatoon can be positioned as a preferred destination, place to live, and place to do business.

2.3.2 Perceptions of Saskatoon

The following perceptions of Saskatoon's key markets are based on input from the focus groups and interviews.

The Tourism Market

Unless they have been here, pleasure travellers tend to perceive Saskatoon to be a small city in a large, flat agricultural landscape. Convention travellers are often said to have little or no impression of the city coming in, but are very impressed with it once they stay here.

In the sports tourism market, Saskatoon is perceived very positively due to its volunteers, its facilities, and its history of hosting national and international events. The people in Saskatoon are considered to be friendly and helpful and have a strong sense of volunteerism. In general, Saskatoon has a very positive perception among those who have been here, but it remains something of an enigma to those who have not.

The Business Community

Across the Prairie Provinces, the business community perceives Saskatoon positively, specifically as a dynamic, growing, educated, and entrepreneurial city. In other parts of Canada, however, businesspeople have less knowledge of Saskatoon and consider it to be

relatively isolated. They perceive Saskatchewan as a whole to be economically disadvantaged and less business-friendly compared to other provinces, although focus group participants see Saskatoon as being a thriving, entrepreneurial place. In the United States and other international markets, though, there is almost no recognition nor perception of Saskatoon, except in specialized markets such as biotechnology, agricultural implement manufacturing and, increasingly, the scientific community.

The Scientific Community

Much of the scientific community knows Saskatoon for its biotechnology sector. The city is expected to become increasingly well known for the Synchrotron. Saskatoon's reputation as a science centre, however, appears to be primarily limited to scientific circles.

Saskatchewan Residents

Within the province, Saskatoon is viewed as the premier educational centre, particularly because of the presence of the University of Saskatchewan. The city is also known as the business hub of Saskatchewan and as a cultural destination (concerts, plays, and other events).

Saskatoon Residents

Saskatoon's residents see their quality of life - including such facets as cost of living, short commutes, beauty, the river, recreation and cultural facilities and programs - as the city's most distinct advantage. Younger professionals see Saskatoon as a city of opportunity, albeit not necessarily as a location to become wealthy. Rather they see it as a place where they can grow their skills and make business connections rapidly, as opposed to making more money but having less responsibility in larger centres.

2.3.3 Competitive Advantages

Focus group participants identify numerous competitive advantages of Saskatoon. They are listed below.

- Low cost of living
- Central location/western hub
- Excellent facilities
- Nice summer weather
- Beautiful scenery
- Family-oriented city
- Clean air
- Friendly, hospitable
- Cultural
- Success-oriented
- Educated citizens
- Skilled workforce
- Business-friendly

2.3.4 Cities Saskatoon Competes With

Most focus group participants feel that Calgary is Saskatoon's strongest competition with target markets. This is true in many respects, especially in the recruitment of young, educated people. Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Regina are also seen to compete with Saskatoon.

2.3.5 Core Values/Major Strengths and Opportunities

The focus groups included discussions on Saskatoon's competitive advantages and its core values. Attributes that differentiate Saskatoon from other Canadian cities were central to this discussion. The following core themes represent the suggestions of the focus group participants whose thoughts were often summarized as: "Saskatoon does a lot of things well."

Community

One of the most important attributes of Saskatoon, according to focus group participants, is its people. Participants describe the community and workforce as "young, vibrant and friendly" with "energy" and an "upbeat attitude." This is the source of tremendous community spirit and involvement. In Saskatoon, residents enjoy a healthy balance of career, family and activities.

Value

Saskatoon's has a reputation for value. Past loyalties and successes attract conventions where patrons get "a lot of bang for their buck." In addition, ex-patriots "sell" Saskatoon in whatever communities they move to. The relative low cost of living compared to other Canadian cities makes it an affordable place to work and raise a family.

Science and Technology

Saskatoon's business community is multi-faceted with a combination of technology, science culture and industry. Science and technology are at the forefront, especially at Innovation Place and the University of Saskatchewan, including the Synchrotron. In addition, participants emphasize Saskatoon's educated and entrepreneurial workforce.

Aboriginal/Multi-cultural Character

Saskatoon's cultural diversity is seen as a strength. Its residents' varied backgrounds give the city character and pride. Saskatoon is also seen as a growing hub of aboriginal business.

Scenic

Saskatoon's scenery - the river valley, its architecture, its skies ^B are almost universally cited as one of its key strengths. Residents take immense pride in these attributes of their city.

2.4 Brand Development - The Official Logo and Slogan

Through the compilation of the preceding research, a logo and slogan that meet the criteria outlined in Section 2.2 were developed. The resulting design and rationale is presented below.



The new identity is something that all Saskatonians can embrace. "Shines" has a number of definitions which directly describe Saskatoon. It means to show great aptitude, to glow with pleasure or happiness, to distinguish oneself in an activity or a field, to excel, and to show excellence in quality or appearance. It describes the large amount of sunshine the city receives every year and it also speaks to its scientific community and the synchrotron.

The new logo is a spirited, stylized graphic composed of coloured dots. It consists of a spectrum of colours that represent Saskatoon's many cultures, enterprises and seasons. Each ray in the vibrant spectrum contains the same pattern of coloured beads representing rings of light, and it is inspired by the beadwork of First Nations and Métis Nations. The graphic is placed once and then placed on itself again out of alignment so that it overlaps. This repetition strengthens its intensity. It represents the overlapping of cultures and traditions that exist in Saskatoon and it gives the logo movement. It symbolizes Saskatoon as a growing, changing, city.

The logo and slogan, or brand, speak to the entire target audience and can be adopted and used by all of the consortium's members. The brand can be used to effectively promote the city by any one of Saskatoon's organizations. With frequent, consistent use, the brand will become instantly recognized as the symbol of a unique, modern city that excels in every task it undertakes.

2.5 Testing the Brand

In order to gauge perception of the brand in outside markets, the consultant team held an on-line focus group and conducted individual interviews with individuals in various North American cities. Members of the steering committee and the consultant team recommended participants, including business people, media and Canadian trade representatives based in Calgary, Guelph, Toronto, Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Washington D.C. Their familiarity with Saskatoon ranged from very low to very high.

Before seeing the logo and slogan, participants described their overall perceptions and awareness levels of Saskatoon. Participants referred to Saskatoon as “a nice safe place to live” and as “a growing city.” The beauty of Saskatoon’s river and bridges and its strengths in science and technology were also mentioned.

The focus group participants were presented with an on-line version of the brand graphic and were asked to give their first reaction to it. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Comments included the following:

- “It’s exciting - the graphic “pops”, making me think of fireworks, light, prairie colours...”
- “It has a dynamic, tech-oriented feel to it.”
- “Bright! Welcoming... warm...Of course - the sun shines a lot there.”
- “Straight forward, positive and quite true.”
- “Creative, interesting... makes me curious.”
- “Easy to read... looks clean and confident.”
- “Nice blend of meteorological and tech-savvy messaging.”
- “The slogan is good... it’s a strong, positive statement.”

Participants were then presented with the criteria from Section 2.2 and told that the brand was intended to meet all points. When asked if the criteria has been met with the logo and slogan, all participants agreed that the brand has accomplished its objectives and that the branding effort is definitely “on the right track.” After gaining the steering and management committees’ approval, the project moved on to the next phase, strategic plan development.

Section 3.0

Opportunity Identification and Strategic Initiatives

3.0 Opportunity Identification and Strategic Initiatives

3.1 Introduction

The consultation process was designed to generate feedback from a diversity of organizations with an even greater diversity of interests. Focus groups and interviews with key representatives of the community and of markets of interest elicited numerous opportunities for the promotion of Saskatoon both within and outside its borders. The linkage between internal and external applications of the brand and the strategic plan is critical. Successful external initiatives will drive growth within the city while internal successes will bolster initiatives in external markets. This section outlines opportunities to promote Saskatoon, describes general objectives which stem from them and introduces strategic initiatives designed to address them. Each initiative has a set of corresponding tactical activities, or steps, to meet the challenges inherent in the opportunities. These tactical activities are outlined in Section 4.0.

3.2 Opportunities and Objectives

3.2.1 Promote “Saskatoon Shines” Message Internally

Establishing the brand within the borders of Saskatoon is critical to its success. Adoption of the slogan and the logo by the city’s businesses, organizations, and the general public will ideally generate civic pride and enthusiasm. This, in turn, will create the momentum necessary to carry the brand’s message(s) beyond Saskatoon.

The community consultation generated a vast array of ideas regarding internal promotion of the brand. These ideas have been condensed into the strategic initiatives that follow.

Increase the Consortium’s Membership Base

Marketing Saskatoon represents an impressive coalition of local businesses and organizations that have the potential to create a promotional impact far beyond the reach of what any of them could do individually. There is, however, potential to expand the partnership base to include a broader spectrum of industry in the community. Broader representation should equate to a greater set of resources within the consortium.

Develop Media Partnerships

The local media has the potential to be among Marketing Saskatoon’s greatest allies. Ensuring media buy-in is an essential component of the strategic plan’s success. The media’s ability to spread the brand and its related messages to Saskatoon’s citizens is

unparalleled. In this respect, television and radio stations and newspapers can act as drivers to move the entire plan towards success.

Maximize the Use of the Brand on Printed Materials

The “Saskatoon Shines!” brand has tested well with steering committee members and with representatives of external markets and organizations. It is designed to complement the individual branding strategies of the consortium members and other organizations in the community. This initiative recognizes that the brand is meant to have broad applicability throughout the city.

Ensure Brand Visibility at Events and Attractions

Saskatoon’s events and attractions are ideal venues to promote the brand to the public and to tourists. “Saskatoon Shines!” messaging provides a natural backdrop to almost any application of this type. Adoption of the brand by the city’s tourism attractions and events will further enhance the objective of spreading local awareness and pride.

Utilize Ambassadors to Promote the Initiative

Ambassadors, in this project’s sense, are people who can promote the consortium’s objectives with highly specified target markets. In this regard, they are like the guided missiles in Marketing Saskatoon’s arsenal. Because of this, identifying and supporting the city’s ambassadors with relevant material ranks among this strategy’s most important initiatives.

Platform to Reach the Aboriginal Community

There are several initiatives, sponsored in whole or in part by consortium members, which seek to increase the aboriginal community’s participation in education, training and employment. There is an opportunity for Marketing Saskatoon to provide messaging and other supporting materials and contacts to these initiatives.

Organize “Saskatoon Shines!” Events

Events organized by the consortium have the ability to focus attention on the brand and on related messages such as building pride and community involvement. This initiative includes tactics which are designed to stimulate citizens’ attachment to the community.

Create a Positive First Impression

The University of Saskatchewan, SIAST, other colleges and organizations like the Open Door Society are some of the organizations that new arrivals to the city have the most contact with. In fact, many students pass through local institutions never having been made aware of the local business community or of cultural, recreational, and employment opportunities in and around Saskatoon. Likewise, many new immigrants and refugees are not made aware of all of the benefits the city has to offer. This initiative is designed to respond to this problem.

3.2.2 Promote Saskatoon to Inbound Travellers

There are several organizations that promote the city and its attractions to inbound travellers. The Marketing Saskatoon consortium can enhance the impact of these efforts through greater access to resources and partnerships in the community. It can also promote the city's business community and other competitive advantages through this opportunity.

Establish Brand Presence at Airport

A good part of this initiative is already underway. There are, however, opportunities to promote the brand in unique and provocative ways.

Promote Saskatoon Along Major Roadways

As with the previous initiative, this activity is already occurring to some degree. For example, the City of Saskatoon is currently redesigning signage at major entrances to the city. This strategic initiative targets not only pleasure tourists, but also potential investors and business travellers in promoting Saskatoon.

Encourage Brand Usage in Hotels and Restaurants

The opportunities to incorporate the brand at Saskatoon's hotels and restaurants are numerous. This initiative recognizes the scope of these activities, which will be ongoing in nature.

Sell More of Saskatoon to Convention and Conference Visitors

Saskatoon has an excellent reputation among this type of visitor, at least among those who have been here. There is an opportunity to generate more travel, awareness, and investment from this market beyond conference and convention travel.

3.2.3 Promote “Saskatoon Shines” Message Externally

In conjunction with the internal adoption, promotion of the brand externally presents numerous potential benefits to Saskatoon. External promotion will require the collaborative efforts of many consortium partners. These efforts may produce the most broadly based returns to the partners and to the city as a whole.

Develop Central Database and Warehouse of Promotional Materials

The goal of this initiative is to provide easy, one-stop access to materials which promote the city. It is intended for individuals and organization that do any amount of business in other cities, provinces, or countries. By providing consistent, high-quality promotional materials, the message that external markets receive about Saskatoon will also be consistent and positive. Marketing Saskatoon’s new web site is a major part of this initiative.

Encourage Outbound Residents to be Ambassadors

Saskatoon’s people are consistently cited as one of its major strengths. Businesses and organizations in the city are highly connected to national and international markets. As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, the use of these businesses’ and organizations’ people as ambassadors is a crucial to the success of Marketing Saskatoon. This initiative is designed to emphasize the widespread nature of this goal.

Utilize Saskatoon’s Expatriate Population

It is often said cynically that the greatest export of this province and of this city is our people. Saskatoon needs a strategy to turn this negative into a positive. Expatriates have the potential to become some of the best ambassadors and prospective outside investors for Saskatoon.

Generate Good News from Saskatoon

The community consultation process revealed that Saskatoon residents feel that external media portrayals of the city are often negative. To counteract this problem, this initiative has been developed. It targets media and key external markets with positive messaging.

Partner with the Transportation Industry

Many of the strategic initiatives relate to maximizing the visual impact of the “Saskatoon Shines!” brand. This opportunity follows a similar theme through partnerships with highly visible transportation companies.

3.2.4 Promote the Brand in Export Markets

Export markets are the lifeblood of many Saskatoon businesses. Creating a positive impression of the city in them opens doors for other businesses that expand to these markets. It is therefore very important for the Marketing Saskatoon initiative to reach these market.

Partner with Major Exporters/Partner with Trade Organizations

These strategic initiatives are designed to work synergistically to encourage all of Saskatoon's exporters to incorporate the brand and/or related messaging in their products, packaging materials, and business dealing.

3.2.5 Make the Brand Flexible

It is important to make the brand applicable to as many uses as possible for maximum exposure. Ideally, all other promotional messaging regarding Saskatoon should be tied to this brand.

Adopt Liberal Usage and Production Guidelines

Demand is expected for many different treatments of the brand. The "Saskatoon Shines!" image is not intended to be static; rather, it is meant to be used in a variety of applications and by countless organizations. In order for this objective to be met, the production guidelines must be flexible.

3.2.6 Make "Saskatoon Shines!" Merchandise Widely Available

There are numerous opportunities to publicize the brand through the use of promotional merchandise. If well managed, a wide variety of merchandise can be made available to businesses, associations, visitors and Saskatoon residents. Merchandising also can provide income opportunities for the consortium.

Develop a Retail Merchandising Strategy

Discussion of the details surrounding a merchandising strategy is ongoing. Again, the goal is to achieve widespread usage of "Saskatoon Shines" merchandise.

3.2.7 Keep the Marketing Saskatoon Initiative Dynamic

The Marketing Den/Fast Consulting

Now that the branding of Saskatoon has begun, Marketing Saskatoon must continue its momentum in order to maximize results. Leadership and teamwork are key without creating needless and time-consuming bureaucracy.

Develop a Flexible Organizational Structure

The future success of Marketing Saskatoon depends on obtaining high quality input from the team members without becoming a burden on their financial and human resources. The management committee is resolved to avoid the construction of a formal bureaucracy for Marketing Saskatoon. Instead, as this initiative implies, the goal is to create a workable structure that achieves specific objectives without becoming highly formalized.

Section 4.0

Tactical Activity Framework and Schedule

4.0 Tactical Activity Framework and Schedule

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents a number of frameworks that present the tactical activities and the scheduling of activities over the five years of the strategic plan.

4.2 Tactical Components

The guiding strategic initiative set for each of the primary functions of Marketing Saskatoon have been presented in the preceding section. There are a number of tactical activities that will be required for the implementation of each of the strategic activities linked with the initiatives. Tables 4.1 (pages 4.2 to 4.7) identifies and discusses these tactical activities. The table identifies the Consortium function and the related strategic activities, which are followed by the tactical activities.

4.3 Tactical Activity Schedule

The tactical activities discussed in Table 4.1 will be implemented over a five year period, which is the scope of this marketing plan. Table 4.2 (pages 4.8 to 4.12) allocates each of the tactical activities to a specific year in the strategic plan.