**UBC Bookstore - Student Ambassadors**

The Bookstore is delighted that you would like to become involved with us more closely. Our aim is to engage with our student community, to ensure that what we’re providing is exactly what you want and need throughout your time at UBC.

This program began in September 2010, and you will be working closely with our marketing team to evolve and adapt it. This will give you the opportunity to gain good business and marketing experience for a large on-campus commercial institution that is fundamental to UBC’s future growth.

**Role and responsibilities**

We will ask you to work us closely to ensure that your peers are aware of or are involved in the following ways with the Bookstore – both friends and fellow students, using the methods most appropriate to you:

- Messages from the Bookstore
- New idea generation including products and events
- Website testing
- Feedback – both negative and positive
- Events including sales and promotions (+ encouraging your peers to attend)
- Designing areas of the Bookstore
- Photography/video.

You can also be involved personally in the following ways:

- Shaping and evolving the ambassador program
- Website development and recommendations for content
- Shaping and testing the new name of the Bookstore
- Shaping and testing our messages
- Testing mobile commerce and text messaging; possibly in the future, Bookstore phone applications
- Recruiting new ambassadors.

You can share information with your peers in the following ways:

- Face to face/peer to peer – both socially and through lectures/classes or your professors
- Social media – through your own networks, including Facebook, Twitter and youtube.com
- Promotional – through posters and leaflets. We can print these off for you at the Bookstore as needed.

This role will provide you with the following experience and skills:

- Team building
- Communication - both verbally and written: clear and succinct in the appropriate format
- Leadership
- Marketing – web, branding, messaging, mobile commerce, direct engagement, social media, events and promotions, photography, reporting and evaluation (working with a skilled marketing team with over 20 years experience).

What you will receive in return:
• End of first month – we will provide each of you with a Bookstore gift card, dependent on your successful involvement and reports provided
• End of third month – once you have committed, we will provide you with a UBC clothing item to keep and wear
• After six months – if you would like to continue the program and are reaping results, we will confirm a store discount for you (certain exceptions will apply)
• Throughout the year, we give you opportunities to trial and keep new products.

Initial outreach

We will provide you with up to four main messages or events for the Bookstore we want you to share with your fellow students each month. It is up to you how you do this (see ways to share information). We do not require you to input a lot of time (between two to three hours). However, at the end of each month, you will be asked to submit a short one page report (template will be provided to you). This will measure how many people you potentially reached out to and provide their anecdotal feedback (both positive and negative).

September

Messages:

• Opening of Tech Central at UBC Bookstore. This is to celebrate the recently renovated technology section of the store. From 19th September watch out for special offers including $50 gift cards with the purchase of the first 10 laptops/computers and a free memory stick with the purchase of any accessory, as well as laptop covers with the purchase of additional computers
• Opening of UBC Bookstore at Sauder. This will happen in next two weeks
• Name change – open house consultation will take place in September on 21st. Over the summer, a new name was proposed for the Bookstore. The idea behind a name change is simply that we are evolving and do not want a name that defines us by a particular service or product. The book industry is changing rapidly and books make up less than 50% of our sales. It is also something that many other universities are looking at. After reviewing many names, UBC Central works well in terms of being translated into other languages and because of our location. We are:
  ○ Central on campus
  ○ Central to UBC’s academic needs
  ○ Provide one stop shopping and services.

We did not want to be called ‘UBC store’ as services are such a big part of what we do too: UPass, UBCcard, IT Help, 300+ donations, events etc etc.

What we’d like to know from you and your friends is whether they heard about change. Then we would like to know whether they are neutral, like, dislike it or simply prefer the Bookstore. We are gathering up to 1000 student responses before end of September. So far, the feedback we have had during RUSH is that most understand, and are neutral or quite like the new name. About 15% prefer us to keep the Bookstore.

From all ambassadors, we would like to know whether you think the following are a good idea or not at the Bookstore:

• Rental books
• Fair Trade products
• TOMS shoes
• In-store yoga - we’d like to know what other activities you think would be popular
• Bed Bath and Beyond
2012 Innovation Achievement Award

Student ambassador program
Why the program was developed

The UBC Bookstore has identified students as its primary customer audience. With this in mind, we wanted to engage our students directly by asking them to spread key information on our behalf through their own networks using their own language (whether social media or face-to-face), gain feedback and research what they would like to see in terms of products and services, as well as what we could do better. Finally, we wanted them to become more involved in marketing initiatives including photography, building our new website and re-naming our store.

Objectives

In line with the NACS College Store of 2015 objectives, the ambassador program was developed to:
- build closer connections with our students, especially in co-created products and services
- communicate our store's value to our key stakeholders, students and through them, to faculty
- increase sales
- increase frequency as they encourage more fellow students to visit the store and attend events
- increase understanding of our processes, pricing and role within the UBC community.

The program was also developed to provide students with:
- business experience in one of the largest college stores in North America
- increased confidence through networking with different years and faculties across both campuses (Vancouver and the Okanagan). The Okanagan is growing; through cross- collaboration, they feel part of the bigger picture.

How the program was developed

Initially, the idea was sounded out through some of our student staff, as well as our social media channels and on-campus partners, by our marketing team. We have since recruited more through our cashiers, as well as at events. We also produced a video to explain the program posted through our social media channels and website:


We set up an initial meeting with the ambassadors and shared with them a program outline, a reporting template and a confidentiality agreement (see attached documentation). Their volunteer commitment is up to three hours per month.
In return, we provide them with gift cards, clothing and if they commit in the longer term, a staff discount. We have also offered job references. They are also invited to all our events, and to work more closely with the marketing department.

These are example messages we ask them to share:

April 2011 activity

1. **Graduation.** The Bookstore will be renting gowns, selling graduation frames. If you’re graduating, don’t forget it’s your last chance to buy a new computer at educational pricing!
2. **Buyback of course materials (text books) will end on** April 5. Save money and trees by selling your books back!
3. **Earth Day takes place on 22 April** – we would like you to promote the sustainability initiatives at the Bookstore (list provided).

September 2011 activity

- **Opening of Tech Central at UBC Bookstore.** To celebrate the renovated technology section, from 19th September, watch out for special offers including $50 gift cards and a free memory stick with the purchase of any accessory
- **Opening of UBC Bookstore at Sauder** (details provided)
- **Name change.** Open house consultation will take place in September on 21st. Please find out who has heard of the name change. The idea behind a name change is simply that we are evolving and do not want a name that defines us by a particular service or product. The book industry is changing rapidly. It is also something that many other universities are looking at.

What we’d like to know from you and your friends is whether they heard about change. Then we would like to know whether they are neutral, like or dislike it.

We would also like to know whether you think the following are a good idea:
- Rental books
- Fair Trade
- TOMS shoes
- In-store yoga
- Bed Bath and Beyond
- IT Help Services.

**Reporting back**

The ambassadors have to reach out to a minimum of 200 contacts every month and report back at the end of the month using the template (attached). We then amalgamate the reports and feed those back into the buying and management team.
In between, we ask for their input on initiatives such as volunteering for events and giveaways/trialing of new products. If they want physical promotional materials, such as posters, we provide these.

Overall, the program, once implemented, is relatively easy to manage. Using the templates, we believe that this is a relatively easy program for any campus to roll-out. Analysis of monthly reports takes one to two hours, and email correspondence and monthly meetings, about two hours a month. The students enjoy this method of working as they have freedom to use their own time and channels.

**Timeline of development and execution**

**2010**

1. **August** – development of idea
2. **September** – initial outreach during back-to-school. Introductory meeting with a UBC student who works at the Bookstore shared his enthusiasm about the store
3. **October** – after one month, provision of UBC clothing, instead of paying them and ensured that they are wearing our clothing

4. **November** – after second month, a gift card was given equating to their number of volunteer hours
5. **Nov–December** – a further push for recruitment.

**2011**

6. **January** – program extended to our Okanagan campus with the aim of recruiting five ambassadors
7. **March** – after six months of successful service, given the equivalent of a staff discount. The card expires within six months, in case they leave the program
8. **April** – to ensure that the ambassadors felt they were part of a wider network, we organized a social gathering so they could share their experiences after their first year.

9. **May** – asked to confirm commitment for next year.

10. **August** – recruitment started again. This time, we also put posters in all Residence Halls. In addition, new messages for back to school were confirmed.

11. **September** – a further 15 ambassadors were recruited.

**Why the program is innovative**

- **Social media** is one of the key ways of successfully communicating with students. Allowing them to use their own channels ensures that the messages we send out are ‘real’ using their own language and the viral impact of reaching 1000s more students than we could via our direct channels, is considerable.

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**shandyrae**
Nov 30, 2010, 5:31pm via ÜberSocialOrig
Huge turn out @UBCBookstore for #reznight! Bargains and karaoke, you can't go wrong!

**Monsieur_Mac**
Jan 25, 10:54am via Web
HOLY CRAFT! $0.99 ice cream at the @UBCBookstore !!! Think I’ll stop in for a treat :)

**lizzie_king**
Jan 24, 4:55pm via Web
Finally! Can’t wait to see it! RT @UBCBookstore Our new website is coming on 7th February! We are excited. It's been a long-time coming.

**cecepoint**
Jan 22, 10:28am via Web
@UBCBookstore has GREAT activity books for kids They’re busy doing activity books while i do homework:D #workingmomstudent

**jennifer_moule**
Jan 21, 2:23pm via Twitter for BlackBerry®
I'm seriously addicted to @UBCBookstore ...its a major problem

**scottthran**
Jan 21, 8:50am via Web
@UBCBookstore I am a renter and am happy with the process so far, should be available for all texts over $100
• **Viral outreach to other student organizations:** through the ambassadors who belong to them, such as the yoga club, music department and the Residence Halls. In addition, we also have a number of skilled ambassadors such as a graphic designer and a videographer.

• **Easy to roll-out for other stores and even other departments/faculties.** When we have explained the program to some of our key campus partners, as well as vendors, such as Apple, they see this as a great opportunity. The latter has actually provided funding.

• **Advertising commercial brands at UBC is very limited,** so using students as a marketing channel ensures that we really can get information out.

• **Net cost to the store is minimal.** As they are volunteers and see the value in the business experience and networking opportunities.

• **Honest feedback about products and services** is provided rather than through biased surveys including where we are not hitting the mark in communicating effectively, such as the rental program.

• **No similar volunteer student program** exists at UBC.

**Budget**

**Expenses**

Hard costs of the program are easy to track.

Month:

**One:** we provide one gift card which is equivalent to three hours work (the same as our cashiers would be paid). So, when we started this was 25 x $40 = $1000

**Two:** clothing is pre-ordered, so we provided 25 x $20 items = $500

**Five:** social gathering = $150

**Six:** discount cards do not hit our bottom line.

**Total for year 1 for 25 ambassadors = $1650**

We have saved $14,500 overall on our marketing budget, so $1650 is a minimal cost.

**Results**

As our marketing team’s resources and budgets are limited, this program ensures that promotional outreach has been expanded considerably at minimal cost.
Statistics

Our current number of ambassadors is 36 across both campuses. The numbers of students who are interested in becoming ambassadors is steadily increasing which has shown many Bookstore staff that we are well-liked.

Through the reporting system, we have been able to track that each ambassador is reaching out to 200 – 500 students per month. That equates to at least 7,200 students per month and up to 18,000 (our campus has 42,000 undergraduates), so that is between 17 and 43% of our undergraduate students. We have received qualitative and quantitative feedback, and this has been used to inform purchasing and service decisions in-store.

Financial

As the ambassadors work with us throughout the year, we will not break down every financial contribution. However, here are some key examples:

- Overall marketing/promotional budget has been reduced from $76,100 in 2009 to $61,600 in 2010/11. Instead of traditional print advertising, we have been able to reduce costs through the ambassadors. This is a 19% saving or $14,500
- Rez night 2010: sales increased three times compared with any other Rez night to over $42,000 (previous sales were about $14,000). Four of our ambassadors are on the Residence Hall committees and they spread the word face-to-face, through social media, dissemination of posters and organizing actual groups on the night
- Tech Central promotions September 2011: we had a number of promotional offers which were shared by our ambassadors with 2040 students.

Sales for the same week (20th September, so just after our back-to-school Rush):

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>Increase</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>$96,197</td>
<td>$114,291</td>
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<td>Accessories</td>
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**All benefits**

As the ambassadors work with us throughout the year, we cannot breakdown every benefit. However, we can provide some key examples:

**Traffic increases**

- **Rez night November 2010**: in line with sales outlined above, traffic rose from 300 to 700 +

- **Tech Central promotions September 2011**: our promotional offers went within two hours. Please see detail above under ‘financial’

- **Book sale November 2010**: after a decline in 2009, the general book sale revenue increased in 2010 by up to 5%. Ambassadors promoted in a number of ways, such as posting our graphic as their profile picture:

- **Yoga club**: one of our ambassadors runs the UBC yoga club. The majority of our customers are young women, so we set up in-store yoga classes increasing opportunities for attendees to purchase leisurewear.

**Positive image building**

The ambassador program has raised our profile on the Vancouver campus, as well as our other campus in the Okanagan, and beyond, among other universities:
Bookstore in the Okanagan:

“We signed up two more students yesterday (total of 4. We are working on getting two more and will send over the contracts & sign-up sheet. We have also asked the students to stop by the Bookstore next week to introduce themselves to our staff. I love this project! Thank you!!”

Other universities:

“I’m contacting you from Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, OH, USA). We received some information from NACS about your student ambassador program. It sounds like a fantastic idea and we were hoping you would be willing to share some additional details with us.”

Branding

Over the past year, the UBC Bookstore has reviewed its name and undertaken research amongst students. Our ambassadors have played a key role in educating their fellow students about the reasons for the change:

Number of people reached: 598

Feedback:
- Didn’t know about the proposed name change
- Will continue to call it the Bookstore
- It’s going to take 4-5 years for transition of new name
- UBC Bookstore has “been around since 1918!! Keep the tradition please!!”
- Makes sense, you provide many products and services and you’re at the centre of campus
- If name change is proposed, do it soon. Get it engrained in the students’ vocabulary.

Loyalty building

A key part of this program has been to increase loyalty. Those who started as ambassadors a year ago have seen the benefits and have been enthusiastic to continue.

“Thank you for the discount cards and I would love to continue as an ambassador and be a part of this expanding program!”

“I would also like to confirm that YES! I’d love to continue being an ambassador in 2011–2012.”

“I just wanted to thank you for this amazing opportunity of being a UBC Bookstore Ambassador this year. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and gained lots of
marketing skills in the process. I would love to come back as an Ambassador next year so I will be all ears for any announcements on the Bookstore Facebook page!”

They have spread the word to others, and our biggest increase this year has come from word of mouth recommendations:

“My friend showed me your Facebook video. I am currently a first year Sauder student and I’d love to develop my marketing skills and the Ambassador program definitely sounds like a really interesting opportunity!”

**Improved service to students**

These have included business skills, job references and confidence for ambassadors:

“I actually also got accepted into an advertising agency’s internship.”

“The program looks great! It really looks like a flexible opportunity to help develop my marketing skill set. What do I need to do to sign up for this great opportunity?”

Sharing our other innovative and cost saving programs which benefit them, for example:

- **Rental program**: has increased so that we have become the highest rental university in Canada as of September 2011. Ambassadors were not the sole contributors to communicating this message, but they have gained significant feedback from their peers.

**Improved service to faculty**

Some of the ambassadors have spoken during lectures or explained new processes to faculty, such as rental books and the associated savings. This is very important to us to improve faculty relations.

**Measuring program success**
As outlined above, we have measured success through:
- Financial data
- Feedback from ambassadors, campus partners, suppliers/vendors and beyond
- Loyalty of those who have remained ambassadors since the first year, as well as the ongoing increase in ambassadors (we are only two months into this year, and we already have 15 new ambassadors).

We have measured success by feeding back the ambassadors input into our buying and management teams to determine product assortment (for example, graduation rings and Fair Trade products), promotional giveaways for back-to-school events and pricing.

**Changes made/issues along the way**

Issues have included:
- The time taken to respond individually to ambassadors. This effort has been reduced through semi-annual meetings and a joint email address
- The ambassadors need to be communicated with regularly and managed closely to ensure that they stay engaged
- Amalgamating all the monthly reports which can prove time consuming. One of the ambassadors has volunteered to help to augment her own skills
- Ensuring that each ambassador is reaching out to a different set of students. We found that friends of friends wanted to be ambassadors so we have to check that they are in different groups before accepting them.
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We need you!

Join the UBC Bookstore as a volunteer ambassador

Benefits include:

• Business and marketing skills in a multi-million dollar business
• Gift cards, discounts and more
• The opportunity to build your network across campus?

Interested in joining our team of 35+?
Please contact us: feedback@mail.bookstore.ubc.ca