



TELLING THE VERMONT STORY

AS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK, LIVE AND DO BUSINESS

A 3-Year Economic Development Marketing Plan
To Attract and Retain Residents and Businesses to Vermont

May 16, 2016



Submitted by
Development Counsellors International
Spike Advertising





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After a competitive RFP (request for proposal) process with the receipt of 13 proposals in Fall 2015, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) selected Development Counsellors International (DCI) of New York, NY and Spike Advertising of Alburgh, VT to develop a three-year economic development marketing plan for the State of Vermont.

The pairing of the marketing agencies provided a powerful combination to coalesce the “inside” perspective on Vermont given Spike’s history working within the state and with the state itself, and an “outside” perspective afforded by DCI’s 55-plus years of working with economic development organizations around the U.S. The following is an executive summary that recaps three months of highly focused work:

Goal: To develop an economic development marketing plan to retain and attract residents and businesses to the state.

Research and Discovery: Through meetings or interviews with more than 100 companies, industry organizations, universities, public sector representatives, students, second-home owners and other entities; surveys of Vermont business owners, corporate executives in the Northeast and young professionals that yielded a total of 629 responses; and an audit of regional and national media coverage during the past year, the team synthesized key findings to inform the strategy and plan.



Strategy: The marketing strategy focuses on generating growth, with a focus on growing existing Vermont businesses, new Vermont businesses and Vermont’s workforce. To this end, the marketing plan outlines tactics to reach:

- Business owners in-state and in the Northeast and Eastern Canada
- Young professionals with an affinity for Vermont who currently live in the Northeast
- In-state influencers such as elected officials, news media and industry associations

Key Messages: Shaped by the brand mantra, “What a difference a state makes,” Vermont’s key message boils down to this: Vermont is where you can be different—live differently, work differently, do business differently. Here, you can make a life, a living, a profit ... and a difference.

Marketing Tactics: There is no silver bullet in economic development marketing. Instead, the plan outlines an integrated marketing approach, with a focus on earned and owned media given budget limitations, but also envisions what would be possible if additional funding is allocated.

Earned Media/Public Relations: The plan recommends pushing out a steady stream of positive Vermont business news to targeted in-state, trade and national media through proactive pitching; hosting press familiarization tours; and working to get more business-related content in *Vermont Life*, alumni magazines of Vermont colleges and universities, and resort publications.

New ThinkVermont Website: Using the ThinkVermont.com URL that the state already owns, ACCD needs to build a new website to tell Vermont’s success stories and provide a hub for content that inspires people to live, work and start or grow a business in Vermont.

Owned Media – Digital/Social Media: Vermont’s digital strategy should encompass a strong presence on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, as well as the launch of a “Digital Ambassadors” program, which harnesses the social media networks of people who are passionate about Vermont, to spread positive messages to key target audiences. The plan also recommends a new ThinkVermont e-newsletter and planting success stories in existing Vermont e-newsletters.

Videos: The plan suggests creating five new success story videos to augment those already produced by ACCD; developing a campaign launch video and an infographic video; capturing video vignettes at Vermont business events; and repurposing existing video produced by others to stretch the budget.

Paid Media – Advertising: While pointing out that traditional advertising campaigns can quickly gobble up large sums of money, the plan recommends leveraging existing Department of Tourism & Marketing (VDTM) ad buys by incorporating business messaging in ads; using targeted Google AdWords; exploring a “trade deal” with Vermont Public Radio; testing quirky “wanted” ads in publications akin to *Seven Days* in target markets like Boston and New York; and exploring cooperative advertising.

Collateral: The plan suggests creating fresh “Why Vermont” collateral materials consistent in design and messaging with ThinkVermont.com to offer as downloads on your website and to use for meetings, events, trade shows and direct mail marketing.

Trade Shows and Events: Armed with a new ThinkVermont-branded pop-up and/or display, the Department of Economic Development (DED) should seek to have a presence at or sponsor targeted in-state events ranging from Young Professionals events and Tech Jam to events like the 2016 Women's World Cup Ski Events.

Higher Education Outreach and Alumni Marketing: In addition to spotlighting successful apprenticeship programs, as well as products, research and companies spinning out of Vermont colleges and universities, we recommend harnessing the



Source: University of Vermont

Governor to piggy-back on alumni events in New York City, Boston and other key markets to carry the ThinkVermont message directly to these important targets.

Direct Outreach for Business Retention and Expansion: To augment the work that DED does on a daily basis, we recommend that the Governor write hand-written thank-you notes to Vermont companies that are growing and host “Thank You for Investing” roundtables.

Big Ideas: Additional “big ideas” run the gamut from exploring partnership opportunities with Long Trail Brewing Co., Ben & Jerry’s and other Vermont brands that may be interested in helping to attract young professionals to the state to events/displays at Vermont Welcome Centers to a ThinkVermont bus and ski resort “takeovers.”

Execution Priorities and Timeline: The plan details a month-by-month timeline for executing the priority marketing tactics recommended for the 14 months from May 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017.

Budget: The budget provides a recommended allocation for the major marketing tactics over a three-year period.

Metrics: Realistic success metrics are suggested throughout the plan and synthesized as business development metrics (leads and inquiries, projects, jobs created/retained, capital investment) and marketing metrics (impressions, advertising equivalency, website visitors, click through rate, etc.).



Source: State of Vermont



THE SITUATION

A leader in the global tourism market, Vermont has built and burnished its brand for decades by astutely marketing the state as a four-season destination for visitors. The state is recognized and admired the world over for its beauty, recreational opportunities and other tourism offerings.

The time has now come to tell the “other side” of Vermont’s story. The state is rapidly developing a reputation as a place where entrepreneurs and innovators can succeed and where they can come to start and grow great businesses. Vermont needs to do more to promote the growth of its technology and advanced manufacturing sectors, its entrepreneurial spirit and its startup culture, as well as to bridge real or perceived gaps about the benefits of doing business in the state.

This is especially critical in view of Vermont’s aging population and shrinking workforce. Vermont has the second oldest, as well as second smallest, population of all U.S. states, with a median age at the end of 2014 of 42.8 years – lower only than Maine’s 44.1 median age. Exacerbating the problem of the aging population is a low birth rate – only Rhode Island’s is lower.

Vermont has a clear need to attract and retain more “young blood” to locate or remain in the state. According to a February 21, 2016 article in *VT Digger*, University of Vermont economics professor Art Woolf said a shortage of working-age people poses problems for the state’s economy, saying: “Businesses are going to have a harder time finding qualified workers. They aren’t going to be able to expand or they’ll expand someplace else or relocate. The economy is going to grow more slowly.”

Vermont needs to do more to attract more workers and more companies to the state. Simply put, there's a pressing need to stimulate job growth in order to insure a healthy economy.

Vermont has traditionally focused most of its "outward" marketing on tourism – which, of course, is vital to the state's economic health. Now, a sustained economic development marketing effort is needed to highlight the many positive features that make Vermont not only a great place to visit, but also a great place to live, work and do business. It's crucial that the state allocate money and resources to economic development marketing on an ongoing basis – not just this one time – because stop-and-start programs get nowhere fast.

Nearly every other state in the nation has aggressive economic development marketing programs and significant budgets

and staffing to support them. There's not only a battle for business, there's also a talent war being waged across America and beyond. If the current competitive landscape for talent and business attraction were a race, Vermont wouldn't even be on the race track.

Some argue that Vermont would be waging a losing fight. We believe that to do nothing is dangerous. Marketing the state as an attractive place for companies and people to be in business can help generate leads, which can create jobs and employment, which produce income tax revenue, which ultimately supports the state's general fund. If we can be successful in creating opportunity for Vermonters, we can reduce the dependence on public assistance.

There's an urgent need for growth in Vermont. It's that simple.



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RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

Goal

To develop an economic development marketing and communications plan to attract and retain people and businesses to the state.

Research & Discovery

To build a solid foundation for the development of a comprehensive economic development marketing plan for the State of Vermont, DCI and Spike Advertising conducted intensive research to uncover current perceptions of Vermont as a place to work, run a business, live and raise a family—both from an inside and outside perspective. Our collaborative efforts encompassed the following:

Immersion Tours: During the course of five days, DCI, Spike and ACCD met with more than 90 private companies, industry organizations, universities, public sector representatives and other entities in roundtables and one-on-one meetings to better understand the state's strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. See Appendix A for the full list of participants and key findings.

In-State Business Survey: ACCD distributed an online survey, which was developed by DCI, to an internal database of businesses located throughout the state. A total of 343 respondents accessed the survey during January-February 2016 and provided in-depth and thoughtful input on the strengths, as well as the challenges, facing the state. See Appendix B for an executive summary and details.

Corporate Executive Survey: DCI distributed a slightly different survey aimed at garnering the perceptions of corporate executives in the Northeast. A total of 41 out-of-state business executives responded to the survey. See Appendix B for an executive summary and details.

Young Professional Survey: Through digital and social media channels, ACCD, DCI and Spike distributed a third survey tailored to out-of-state young professionals between the ages of 20 and 35. Responses to this survey totaled 217. See Appendix B for an executive summary and details.

Media Audit: DCI conducted an analysis of 175 articles in national and in-state news outlets published over the course of the past year (January-December 2015) to see what stories and issues were most frequently being covered by the media and if the tone was positive, negative or neutral. See Appendix C for details.

Brandcensus Interviews: To further define and refine key messaging beyond what was learned in the immersion tours and through the surveys, Spike conducted an additional 24 in-person or telephone interviews with business owners, influencers, entrepreneurs, young professionals, second-home owners, students and recent graduates of Vermont colleges/universities and ACCD stakeholders. See Appendix D for details.

When assimilated as a whole, the discovery work yielded these 10 key findings and recommendations that inform our strategy and marketing tactics to follow:

- 1. Make growth Vermont's number one priority.** Although "growth" is a dirty word to some Vermonters, it must be the state's top priority. The marketing plan needs to: address population growth (Vermont's aging population and workforce gap); support the growth of startups and entrepreneurial businesses; and grow the number of out-of-state-businesses that relocate and start-up here. Many Vermonters believe that the state should focus on attracting people not businesses, but we believe that the latter should not be ignored. Organic growth and creating the proper environment in which businesses can flourish is a challenge that Vermont should wholly embrace.

2. Amplify Vermont's tech and advanced manufacturing stories. Less than 10% of the corporate executives or young professionals surveyed associated either information technology or advanced manufacturing with Vermont, yet the state is home to a promising technology sector with jobs going unfilled. During the course of our immersion tour, we also encountered a disconnect between the perceived lack of jobs in the state and the reality that a surprising number of tech businesses and advanced manufacturers are desperately looking to hire. Vermont's tech and advanced manufacturing story must be told in a bigger, louder way. Our media audit underscored this point: tech is the single most popular topic in top-tier media coverage of Vermont. The media loves that Vermont is both quirky and innovative—particularly when that innovation is related to agriculture, sustainability and other things for which Vermont is already known. Vermont is also becoming increasingly well-known as the home of innovative entrepreneurs and startups to watch.


In addition, Vermont fared very well in two tech-related rankings released in 2015; the state ranked #5 among states with the most startup activity according to a study by the Kaufmann Foundation, covered in *Fortune*, and Burlington ranked #9 among the nation's most innovative tech hubs, according to a NerdWallet study, covered by *Forbes*.

There are many technology and advanced manufacturing companies thriving in Vermont. These businesses, as well as other tech entrepreneurs, should be showcased in the state's marketing efforts – through earned media, success stories on a new website, digital/social media and by maximizing events like Tech Jam.



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- 3. Leverage the success of Vermont’s iconic companies.** Unless prompted, very few people mentioned Vermont’s biggest or most iconic companies – Keurig Green Mountain, Ben & Jerry’s, Simon Pearce, Vermont Teddy Bear, Burton, Cabot, National Life and IBM when asked to name successful companies in the state. Vermont needs to take more credit for and celebrate the companies that were born, took root and grew in Vermont as a way of inspiring other entrepreneurs. Their founders – and their stories – also need to be harnessed through marketing.
- 4. Focus on Vermont’s “sweet spot” for attracting workers and entrepreneurs.** Based on our discovery work, we believe that Vermont’s “sweet spot” for attracting workers can be refined and defined as follows:
- **28-40 Year Old Age Span:** Although trying to “capture” some of the 40,000 students that Vermont imports each year to attend its colleges and universities has been suggested by many, we believe a more receptive audience will be those in the 28-40 year old age group who have perhaps gone off to work in urban areas, as millennials are prone to do; have gained some business experience; and are now ready to get out of the “rat race” or “settle down” before they start a family. These are not slackers, but young professionals who want to continue to advance their careers or start their own business in a setting where they will be bigger fish in a smaller pond and can perhaps help make a difference. Vermont should narrow its focus to begin by targeting those currently living in the Northeast corridor.
 - **A Drop of Vermont:** There was strong consensus that Vermont’s best bet is to target people who have a “drop of Vermont” in them. That can be defined by those who grew up or lived in the state, went to college or camp in Vermont, or vacationed here. We met several “boomerangs” – men and women who had returned to Vermont after moving away – who confirmed the strong pull to come home.
 - **Outdoor Enthusiasts:** It’s clear that Vermont has a national reputation as an outdoor paradise and that people are drawn to the state for that reason. Like those who want to live in Colorado to hike, bike, ski and enjoy the great outdoors with other recreational pursuits, people in the Northeast that place a high priority on access to the outdoors – and may not want to move West – should be targeted. Many outdoor enthusiasts also want to embrace a healthier lifestyle by being closer to sustainable, organic or local food sources – another area where Vermont excels.

5. Balance Vermont’s lifestyle assets with messaging that job and career opportunities exist. A key theme that emerged from the findings all three surveys is that Vermont is perceived highly from a lifestyle perspective, but that Vermont is not a “top of mind” location for advancing your career or growing a business.

Despite the challenges faced, Vermonters understand that they have a very strong lifestyle brand upon which they can build future marketing efforts. In-state survey respondents believe the greatest opportunity for growth lies with educating businesses (both in- and out-of-state) as well as current residents on the advantages of growing your business or career in Vermont. By correcting any misperceptions and further educating these audiences on the importance of economic growth in Vermont, they believe that Vermont can achieve success not only as a tourism destination, but also as a location for other industry sectors.

Likewise, the young professionals surveyed have a positive perception about some aspects of Vermont’s lifestyle (“beautiful, nature, green, peaceful, laid back” and “friendly”), but they also offer associations such as “remote, cold, small” and “lack of work.” This translated into a mixed response regarding whether respondents would be willing to relocate to Vermont if a position that matched their skill and salary requirements was offered to them. Approximately 58% of respondents report that they would be willing to relocate to Vermont, while 42% would not be willing to relocate.

Marketing efforts must help remove the barriers to workers relocating by promoting the fact that Vermont does have jobs, the state is not as remote as many people think, and thriving cities, towns and villages exist amongst more rural areas.



Source: State of Vermont

6. Market what is “right” about the state now. In both the surveys and during the immersion tour, Vermont businesses were quick to point to lack of affordable housing, public transportation, healthcare access, high taxes, excessive regulations, the overall cost of doing business, and a host of other problems as barriers to growth.

Out-of-state executives specifically, identified the following as perceived weaknesses of doing business in Vermont:

- Availability of skilled workers
- Competitive utility costs
- Telecommunications infrastructure
- Accessibility to interstates, airports and ports
- Corporate tax rate
- State & local incentives
- Proximity to customers/suppliers

Due to those perceived shortcomings, Vermont is generally perceived less favorably than other competitor states including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine and New York. In fact, 32% of the corporate respondents had considered the state for a new facility, but of these, only 17% ended up locating the project in Vermont.

Given Vermont’s lack of marketing that specifically targets the business community, there is tremendous opportunity to create messaging that will elevate Vermont’s profile as a good place to grow businesses. We must market what is “right” about Vermont now and not get hamstrung by what is “wrong” – leaving those issues for the state to tackle over the longer term.



Source: State of Vermont

- 7. Be aggressive about reaching out to business owners – both in-state and out of state.** Retention and expansion of your existing businesses is job #1 for Vermont. Research has shown that 60-80% of all new jobs come from existing businesses. Knowing your in-state companies and their challenges, opportunities and hot button issues is crucial to keeping and growing businesses in the Green Mountain State. Several of the marketing tactics will be aimed at both communicating with and showcasing the successes of Vermont companies.

In terms of out-of-state companies, we recommend focusing on the following:

- Companies in the Northeast, as well as Eastern Canada that may need a U.S. foothold, especially for U.S. defense contracts
- Businesses that align with your existing industries: green/clean tech, value-added agrifood and beverage, IT, advanced manufacturing and defense contracting
- Captive insurance companies, for which Vermont is already a national leader

- 8. Educate influencers about “good news” happening with Vermont businesses.** Vermont’s success in retaining, attracting and growing businesses hinges on a better understanding among key influencers of the positive things happening around the state in terms of its business climate. Chambers, Regional Development Corporations (RDCs), elected officials and the news media need to be fed a steady stream of “good news” so they aren’t the first to be so negative about the state. Vermonters are often your own worst enemy.

Whether coming to Vermont for business or pleasure, visitors to the state need to be left with positive impressions about the state’s business climate. Likewise, second-home owners – although tougher to reach directly – are important in terms of shaping impressions with your primary audiences. Finally, students, parents and alumni are key influencers who should not be forgotten in Vermont’s marketing efforts.



Source: State of Vermont

9. Communicate the brand mantra “What a difference a state makes.”


Vermont’s key message boils down to this: Vermont is where you can be different—live differently, work differently, do business differently. Here, you can make a life, a living, a profit ... and a difference. These brand attributes should be woven throughout all marketing messages:

- Vermont’s **small scale** fosters opportunities for individuals and businesses to make a meaningful impact on things that matter to them and to access decision-makers with influence.
- Vermont is **forward thinking**. Innovation doesn’t happen by accident; Vermont is purposefully conscientious—environmentally, socially and culturally.
- Vermont is **beautiful and bold**, with natural beauty and seasonal diversity that are a joy to behold and easy to access.
- Vermont is home to many remarkable brands and extraordinary businesses because we foster originality, respect **quality**, and bring out the best in people.
- Vermont fosters a strong **entrepreneurial spirit**. Start-up, emerging and innovative businesses thrive here with community and government support, and collaboration among colleagues.
- Vermont is **safe and sound**, and Vermonters are relaxed and respectful.

10. Stretch scarce resources to implement a long-term economic development marketing plan. Not only is Vermont’s \$200,000 allocated budget very low to develop and implement a three-year marketing economic development marketing plan, it is also clear that ACCD’s staff is spread very thin in terms of having the bandwidth to execute a plan.

Even with strategic reallocation of people and resources, Vermont will need to be very smart about how to leverage work created by others – including Vermont PBS, Vermont Public Radio, *Vermont Life* and other entities telling Vermont’s stories – through earned and owned media. In addition, Vermont residents are clearly passionate about their state and can become an army of “Digital Ambassadors” that can spread key messages far and wide at low cost with third-party credibility. It may also prove prudent to outsource some of the marketing tactics to make sure they get executed in a timely and efficient manner.





STRATEGY STATEMENT

Our marketing strategy focuses on generating growth, with a focus on growing:

- Existing Vermont businesses
- New Vermont businesses
- Vermont's workforce

To this end, our marketing plan outlines tactics to reach:

- Business owners in-state and in the Northeast and Eastern Canada
- Young professionals with an affinity for Vermont who currently live in the Northeast
- In-state influencers such as elected officials, news media and industry associations

Our messaging is authentic and positions Vermont as a place to live, work and do business with a purpose. It promises that Vermont is a state where you can be different and make a life, a living, a profit and a difference.



MARKETING TACTICS

Following are our recommendations for strategic tactics for an integrated economic development marketing plan for the State of Vermont. The following plan is laid out as we would execute it in an ideal world—where budget and staff resources are no object. In the sections that follow, we will prioritize and attach estimated budgets to all major activities—but, first, we want to give a sense of what would be optimal.

Earned Media – Public Relations

According to DCI’s 2014 *Winning Strategies in Economic Development Marketing* survey findings, the leading source of information influencing executive perceptions of an area’s business climate is dialogue with industry peers, followed by articles in newspapers and magazines. A positive write-up in a top-tier national business outlet is the ultimate third-party endorsement—and one of your most powerful tools when it comes to shifting perceptions about Vermont as a place to live and work.

But securing interest from top-tier media can be challenging. As a general rule, the story you’re telling has either to align with or stand out against a national trend, include a timely announcement or event with broad significance, or include some level of controversy. On top of that, an existing relationship with a journalist is often imperative to get your pitch read in the first place.

Because of this, the goal should not be to land Vermont in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* every other week, but rather to establish and maintain a steady stream of positive coverage in trade, industry and other news media, while simultaneously developing your storylines and building relationships with top-tier contacts so you’re ready to pitch and secure positive media coverage when the time is right.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
In and Out of State

Influencers

METRICS

Impressions

Advertising
Equivalency/Impact

Key Message Placement

Proactive Pitching

We recommend a “ready-aim-fire” approach to proactive media relations:

Ready:

- **Build out storylines**—Make sure you have the “latest and greatest” data, rankings, facts and stories in your tool belt. The more “best, first and only” claims you can make based on hard data, the more compelling your storylines will be to media. Look for surprises and counter-intuitive storylines.

Based on our research, here are four “starter” storylines for pitching Vermont proactively to national business and trade media. (Note: Example companies are just that – examples. Others should be identified and added, with the list constantly being refined.)

1. Why Entrepreneurs are Growing their Startups in

Vermont: The Green Mountain State is growing entrepreneurs these days like they do trees. In fact, Vermont ranked No. 5 in the nation for startup activity and No. 3 for the rate of new entrepreneurs last year, according to the Kauffman Foundation’s 2015 Index of Startup Activity. Many of the innovative companies that started and grew in Vermont thanks to the state’s startup culture dream of growing big, like Ben & Jerry’s, Keurig Green Mountain, Burton and Vermont Teddy Bear Company—all of which got their start in the state. It’s no wonder—for entrepreneurs looking to master the work-life balance, Vermont may be the ideal place to get started. Thanks to the state’s collaborative tech community and world-class lifestyle amenities—from skiing and hiking to microbrewery and locavore scenes—entrepreneurs are taking a cue from Vermont CEOs who decided to grow their own businesses in Vermont.



Dealer.com Office; Source: Vermont Economic Development Authority

2. Vermont's Agriculture Sector Spurs Economic Growth:

With the highest sales from agricultural production (\$776 million) in New England, Vermont is a leader in agriculture. Vermont food products are in high demand nationally; the state produces 41% of the nation's maple crop—making it the national leader—and 63% of all milk in New England. Vermont also ranks first in the nation for craft breweries per capita and is regularly recognized for its award-winning cheeses from companies like Jasper Hill, Cabot Creamery Cooperative, Parish Hill Creamery, Spring Brook Farm, Sweet Rowen Farmstead and Vermont Shepherd. The sector is now stronger than ever. Since the state began implementing the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan five years ago, Vermont has added 5,387 food system jobs—which now total 63,398—and increased food system gross sales by 32% and value added food manufacturing by 58%. Over the past year alone, 23 new meat facilities and 20 new dairy processing facilities came online, fueling continued sustainable growth in the state's thriving agriculture sector.

3. Vermont Proves a Leader in Renewable Energy:

With its progressive inhabitants and environmentally friendly policies, Vermont has become a national leader in renewable energy. Burlington recently became the first U.S. city to run entirely on renewable electricity. And despite its small size, the city already has nine charging stations for electric vehicles. This trend extends to the entire state, which has 10 times the amount of solar power it did in 2010 and 20 times the wind energy. The state's economy, which has seen a boom in solar jobs, reflects this continued growth. Vermont has the third-most solar industry jobs per capita of any state, according to a report published by national non-profit The Solar Foundation. Green Mountain Power, the state's largest utility, also recently became the first U.S. utility to sell batteries from electric car company Tesla to its customers—just one of the new technologies the utility has embraced to deliver clean power and low carbon products to the state's progressive customer base, as well as the world over.



Source: VermontVacation.com

4. In Vermont, Manufacturing Reinvents Itself: Home to major operations of Global Foundries, GE Aviation and GW Plastics, Vermont is growing a new generation of advanced manufacturers. Homegrown Vermont companies BioTek Instruments, Vermont Precision Tools and Chroma Technology, among others, are driving innovation in the sector, which accounts for approximately 11% of state GDP. Traditional manufacturers are also reinventing themselves. Cabot Hosiery Mills, for example, has invested millions in a 19th-century mill in Northfield, VT and launched a cheeky marketing campaign for its “Darn Tough” socks that are being sold at a brisk pace by EMS, REI and other top outdoor gear retailers.

- **Make sure you’re in on business announcements**—Encourage companies, local chambers and RDCs and industry leaders to send business news your way in advance and offer to partner on pushing out newsworthy announcements to relevant trade and national media. This is also a great way to build out your network of potential spokespeople so you can offer media interviews with specific contacts in your outreach and gives them a boost in their own media relations efforts.
- **Add to VDTM’s clipping service to look for business-oriented stories**— As we learned in our media audit, Vermont may be generating positive coverage in the national media, but it’s not always played back at home—or played up at all, for that matter. To change this, the first step is to make sure positive business coverage of the state is always on your radar. Asking VDTM to add business coverage to their clipping service is a great first step to ensuring you catch good news as it happens.

Aim:

- **Know your media**—Zero in on “most wanted” national and trade outlets and specific journalists that might be interested in covering your stories. Monitor top-tier media especially closely to see where your storylines might fit into national trends or a specific journalists’ coverage areas.

Based on Vermont’s storylines and target audiences, we recommend targeting the following national business and trade publications as a starting point in your proactive media outreach. Trade outlets, which are easier to penetrate than national, top-tier outlets, are a great starting point to begin to secure a steady stream of coverage. We’ve added an asterisk next to those we believe should be your top 10 targets to begin.

National

Bloomberg News
*Boston Globe**
Boston Herald
Business Insider
BuzzFeed
CNNMoney
*Entrepreneur**
Fast Company
Forbes
Fortune
*Inc.**
MarketWatch
Mashable
New York Times
NPR
Reuters
The Atlantic
The Daily Beast
TheStreet
USA Today
Wall Street Journal
Wired

Tech Trade & Online

BetaNews
CNET.com
Engadget
The Information
InformationWeek
InfoWorld
ITWorld
Motherboard (Vice)
MIT Technology Review
Network Computing
Network World
TechCrunch
TechNewsWorld
Tech Republic
Tech Cocktail
The Verge
VentureBeat

Site Selection Trade

*Area Development**
*Business Facilities**
BusinessXpansion Journal
Expansion Management
*SITE Selection**
Trade & Industry
Development
Urban Land Magazine

Manufacturing Trade

Assembly Magazine
Automation World
Engineering News-Record
*IndustryWeek**
Industry Today
Machine Design
Manufacturing & Distribution
Executive
Manufacturing News
*Manufacturing Today**
Material Handling & Logistics
Popular Mechanics

Agriculture & Food Trade

Beer Advocate
Cheese Reporter
*Craft Beer & Brewing**
Dairy Foods
Food Logistics
Food Manufacturing
Food Processing
Food Technology
Meat + Poultry
Specialty Food
The Brewing Network
The Progressive Farmer
The Beer Connoisseur

Renewable Energy Trade

Breaking Energy
EnergyBiz
*Greentech Media**
GreenBiz
North American Clean
Energy
Power Magazine
Renewable Energy World
Renewable Energy
Magazine
SmartGridNews
Sun and Wind Energy
Magazine
The Daily Energy Report
Treehugger
Triple Pundit
Wind Systems Magazine

- **Position yourself as a resource**—Push out big company and industry announcements to relevant trade outlets, offering more information and/or interviews with specific contacts. Even if this doesn't result in a placement, it puts you on their radar as a resource for future coverage. This kind of outreach should be done sparingly with top-tier reporters, who should get only your biggest and best news.

Fire:

- **Strike while the iron is hot**—With a robust set of storylines and spokespeople and a network of targeted journalist contacts, you'll be ready to make the most of big announcements in-state and national trends relevant to Vermont's storylines. Here are just a few tips for cultivating and courting reporters:
 - **Be a student:** Know your top media targets and their reporters – what kinds of stories do they cover; what are their beats; what kinds of stories have they covered in your target industries; are there certain sections of the publications you can see your story appearing?
 - **Get personal:** Almost every story begins with an interesting person. Make sure you illuminate the interesting/quirky personalities and people behind Vermont's business success stories. Paint a picture of how they got started and are succeeding. Make it something you'd be interested in reading.
 - **Use flattery:** Follow bylines and if you see a story you like/find interesting, don't be afraid to reach out to the reporter to compliment him or her on the story. Be specific about what caught your interest. They are likely to be more receptive when you pitch them the next time.
 - **Be ready when they are:** Have your ducks in a row with stats, interview contacts and other information for when the reporter is ready; nothing kills a story faster than a long lag time. They're on to the next story.
 - **Be persistent but not pesky:** Reporters are inundated with pitches that quickly drop down to their bottom of their email inbox. Never follow-up with "Did you get my pitch," but rather forward your original pitch with a new tidbit of information, a slightly different angle.



- **Leverage good news, in and out of state**—When Vermont secures a positive story or ranking in a targeted outlet, it’s a great opportunity to generate excitement both in and out of state. Extend the reach of the positive coverage by:
 - A. Pushing it out to local media and/or relevant trade publications
 - B. Posting a tweet using relevant hashtags and an image, if applicable
 - C. Creating a news item for your website and pushing it out through your e-newsletters and other social channels, if the news warrants

FORTUNE

Home Depot Likes This Crunchy Vermont Gardening Startup

by Daniel Roberts @readDamwrite DECEMBER 30, 2015, 7:45 PM EST



Vermont Economic Dev @VTEconDev · Jan 15

Vermont gardening #startup helps urban #millennials grow gardens at home for.tn/1P30U9l #ThinkVermont



Press Familiarization Trips

One of the best ways to guarantee positive coverage is to invite a targeted group of journalists to visit the state for a familiarization tour. We recommend arranging for 3-5 journalists to visit Vermont for 2-3 days of meetings that revolve around a specific industry or strength. When ACCD proposed this tactic in its original work, a “Tech and Taps” theme was suggested to combine the state’s business and tourism assets. We think this is an excellent strategy to showcase Vermont’s thriving tech and microbrewery scenes as well as a great opportunity to combine resources with VDTM to achieve positive lifestyle and business coverage for the state.

With this kind of broad theme, Vermont could aim to secure a mix of trade reporters and top-tier journalists with relevant interests to attend the trip. In subsequent years, an industry-focused trip targeting trade media in agriculture, renewable energy or manufacturing could also be very effective.



Source: VCET



Source: State of Vermont

Leverage *Vermont Life*, Resort Publications and Alumni Magazines

Capitalize on *Vermont Life*: Vermont is fortunate to have a first-class publication like *Vermont Life* that already has a highly targeted readership with an affinity for the state. Although we applaud the new “Next” feature on the next-to-back page, which showcases an innovative company each issue, we think the magazine could do more to feature interesting businesses and entrepreneurs around the state, as well as to paint a picture of what regular life is like in cities and towns for people who live and work in Vermont.

Similar to a current feature in *Yankee* magazine, *Vermont Life* could develop a regular feature called “Could You Work Here?” or “Could You Live Here?” that would showcase cool companies and communities in Vermont. These would leverage the talents of *Vermont Life* writers and photographers and could be repurposed in all or part on a new ThinkVermont website, e-newsletters, etc.

Infiltrate Resort Magazines: Nearly every resort in Vermont publishes its own glossy magazine, which is placed in every hotel room and distributed at consumer trade shows. We recommend that VDTM reach out to the resorts to see about accepting contributed content for their next issues about interesting companies that are thriving “behind the scenes” in communities that surround and support the resorts. Again, we believe the *Vermont Life* team could be harnessed to research, write and deliver photos for ready-made content for the resorts.

Profile Successful Vermont Businesses in Alumni Magazines: As a way to inspire other graduates to think about returning to Vermont to start or expand their business, ACCD should work with the communications departments at Vermont colleges and universities to identify alumni who have either stayed or returned to the state to work, live and start or grow a business.



TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
In and Out of State

Influencers

METRICS

Unique Monthly
Visitors

Engagement

Bounce Rate

Downloads

Conversions (meeting
requests, calls, etc.)

A New ThinkVermont Website

In order to build a solid foundation for a long-term marketing plan, the state must have a robust online presence that serves both as a resource and an effective marketing tool.

If you start a Google search for key phrases like “work in Vermont” and “live in Vermont,” job sites like Indeed, Monster and JobsInVT.com currently turn up, or articles from Movoto on the “Best and Worst Places to Live in Vermont”—but no site where Vermont is actively telling its own unique and positive stories. If a young professional or business does happen to find their way to the current Department of Economic Development (DED) site, it’s more likely that the look of the government site will be more of a “turn off” than a “turn on.”

This is where Vermont is missing the boat. The Internet has become an integral part of how people make decisions. Today, most people won’t even dine at a restaurant without an investigatory Google search—let alone make the decision to move to a new state.

Using the ThinkVermont.com URL that DED already owns, a new website could be the perfect vehicle through which to tell Vermont’s success stories. It should live as its own site – dedicated to content that inspires people to live, work and start a business in Vermont. Without it, the state has no real hub for great resources like the video success stories DED is creating and no good platform to drive traffic to through media relations, social-digital initiatives, special events, collateral materials and other marketing initiatives.

The new ThinkVermont.com website would not duplicate or replace DED’s portion of the current ACCD website. Detailed content on specific incentive programs, funding opportunities, etc. would remain on the “government” website and be linked to as appropriate. The ThinkVermont.com website would instead be a new gateway to that content, providing an opportunity to first sell the state from a big-picture perspective with effective marketing specifically as the goal.



With that in mind, here are 10 recommendations for creating the ThinkVermont.com website.

1. Create a Content Hub for Vermont Success Stories and Videos

Showcasing Vermont’s leading employers and entrepreneurs is a great way to show website visitors, not only that everything from small startups to major companies are already thriving in the state, but that strong business and industry networks exist in Vermont.

As noted, ThinkVermont.com should serve not as a replacement for DED’s current online presence, but as a complimentary platform for pushing out these success stories. As proposed, this website could also serve as a one-stop-shop for relocation resources.

2. Create Simple, Engaging Content

We recommend keeping copy “short and sweet,” drawing the site visitor in and linking to DED and other resources for more in-depth information. Include clear “calls to action” to learn more, subscribe to the e-newsletter, connect on social media, etc. The “voice,” as well as the copy, should reflect Vermont’s unique character and value proposition and not be stilted government speak. Make it authentic and “different.”

3. Highlight Key Industries

Vermont’s leading industries—including agriculture, tech, energy and advanced manufacturing—have strong stories to tell about Vermont as a place to live, work and start/grow a business. Tout your top industry sectors with a dedicated page for each. As with all other content, these can be “short and sweet” with plenty of links and downloads from resources like the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, the Vermont Technology Alliance and the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center. Clearly identify the sector’s strategic advantages and feature logos and success stories for the top employers within each sector to demonstrate a robust industry network.



Source: State of Vermont

4. Think Modern, Fresh Design

High-quality photos, balanced with an appropriate amount of “white space,” bold colors and text is a great recipe for modern, fresh web design. Whenever possible, use images and infographics to visually communicate Vermont’s creative, entrepreneurial spirit and innovative qualities, rather than through blocks of text.

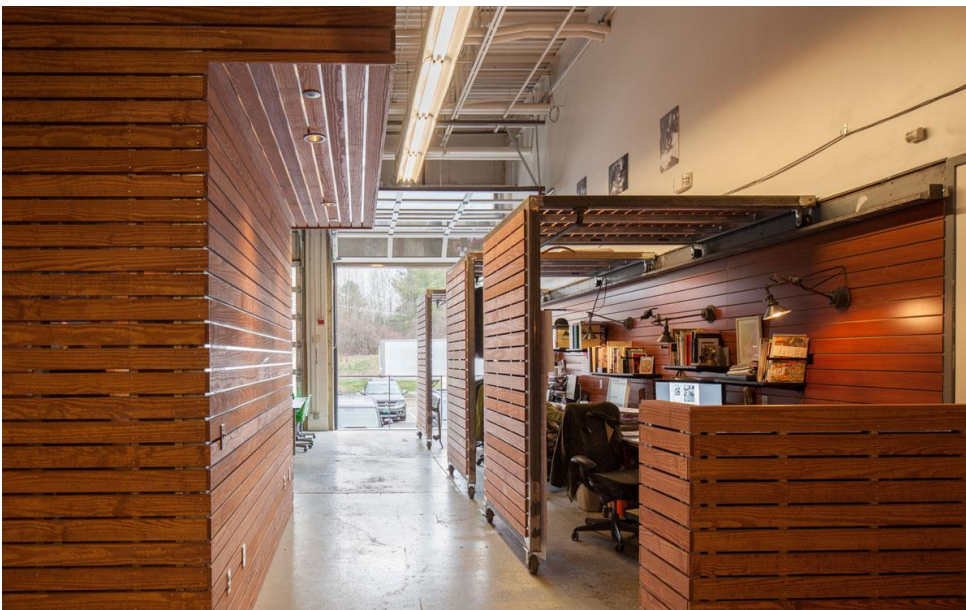
5. Take Stock of Image Resources

Using large, crisp images is a great way to enhance your website — especially when those images feature the unique entrepreneurs, businesses and visually stunning landscapes found in Vermont. Vermont has a great visual story to tell and ThinkVermont.com should take advantage of that. Paint a picture what life is like in Vermont with photos of downtowns, kids walking to school, young techies biking to work, people hanging out in a coffee shop or bar, etc.

Develop a resource bank of dynamic, high-resolution photos for your website and other marketing materials. Capitalize on existing photos in the image banks of *Vermont Life*, VDTM, chambers, RDCs, local companies, organizations and photographers—then decide if additional photography is necessary.

6. Consider User Experience

As a rule, visitors should be able to find what they’re looking for on your site within one to two clicks of the home page. Another major component of user-friendly experience is responsiveness across mobile devices. Smartphones and iPads are among the most popular devices for browsing the Internet and your site should be built with that in mind.



Source: Burton

7. **Spread the Good News**

Keep visitors up-to-date on what's going on in Vermont by posting all the latest announcements, events and accolades to your site on an ongoing basis. As you saw in our media audit, Vermont technology and innovation was featured prominently in top-tier news outlets last year. This kind of success should be featured prominently on your website and used as an opportunity to spread your key messages.

Funneling news through your website also allows the opportunity to influence the tone of news that's being disseminated locally. Some media outlets like *VTDigger.org* and *Vermont Business Magazine* may take a neutral to negative stance on incentives awards, but *ThinkVermont.com* can highlight the job creation and investment that the state will see as a result of a VEGI (Vermont Employment Growth Incentive) award. When posting big news to social media, link directly to the news item to drive traffic to your site and direct visitors to the "positive version" of the story.

8.

Get Social

Feature a live feed of #ThinkVermont Twitter activity on your homepage to showcase your latest tweets. Make sure social icons are prominent on your site so it's easy for users to connect to and follow your social platforms.

9.

Provide Comprehensive Contact Information

It should be as easy as possible for site visitors to get in touch with the right contacts to get more information. When they're ready to make that call, they should be able to get on the phone or a direct email conversation with the right contact—ideally within one click from the homepage. Make sure to provide comprehensive contact details (direct phone, e-mail, title) along with a photo of the right contact so site visitors know exactly who they're talking to.

10.

Follow SEO Best Practices

One of the biggest challenges that websites face today is maintaining relevance in the eyes of the search engines. It's widely accepted that if you're not in the top two or three search results, you're losing out on site visitors, which is why SEO (search engine optimization) is arguably one of the most important aspects of web design. Start with comprehensive keyword research and integrate them into your title tags, meta descriptions and page content. Create unique page descriptions to stand out from the pack of results and use keyword-rich alt-text to insure that your images aren't ignored or devalued by search engine spiders.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
In and Out of State

Influencers

METRICS

Opens

Click-through Rates

Impressions

and Growth in # of
Digital Ambassadors

Shares, Likes, Retweets

Owned Media – Digital/Social Media

A strong digital strategy is vital to conveying Vermont’s overall message as a great place to live, work and start a business. Digital/social media has the dual benefit of being lower cost than most traditional earned or paid media and of being highly targeted. In fact, it would be good for ACCD to explore working with one Vermont company we met in particular – Faraday.com – which offers a data-driven marketing platform for predictive targeting.

An analysis of current user-generated content on Vermont on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook during a one-month period revealed that people are indeed posting about Vermont on social media. If Bernie Sanders and tourism-specific posts are excluded, business and tech are among the top themes that emerge in a key word search for Vermont—though 55% of business-related posts and 66% of tech-related posts are coded as negative. But that doesn’t negate that fact that there are lots of positive business and tech posts out there—hundreds of them, in fact.

Similarly, an analysis of top themes that emerge from a #Vermont search reveals that posts using the hashtags #Vermont, #VT, #vermontlife and #vtlife are largely positive—as are posts about Vermont as it relates to agriculture, local food and real estate. And though it falls slightly lower on the list, the hashtag #LetsGrowVT promoted by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce surfaced as one of the top 25 themes, meaning that it’s been effective in penetrating the social-digital sphere with positive posts about Vermont.

Top Themes for Vermont on Social Media

Keyword Search:



#Vermont Search:



All of that is to say that the conversation is already happening—and will continue to happen with or without ACCD’s involvement. From our perspective, it’s now ACCD’s job, not only to join the conversation, but to contribute to it in meaningful ways. As we saw in the case of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce’s efforts, it is indeed possible to have an impact on the social-digital sphere with consistent posting and a single hashtag. With that in mind, here are our recommendations on how to strengthen your social-digital presence.

Twitter

With more than 140 million active users and over 340 million tweets a day, Twitter is a social media network that Vermont should not overlook—and one that we recommend focusing on over LinkedIn and Facebook, at least for the time being. It’s one of the simplest and most effective ways to keep your website content relevant and to push out positive news about the state—plus it’s a great way to join in the positive conversations that are already happening in the state.

Taking a page from VDTM’s highly successful @ThisisVT Twitter program which has more than 11,200 followers, here are our recommendations to take your Twitter presence to the next level.

Develop Social-Digital Voice

Vermont’s unique character is one of its strongest selling points, as it sets it apart from other locations. Your social-digital voice should reflect that and help to tell Vermont’s stories in an authentic way. It’s also a low-cost way to spread your messages to targeted audiences.

Ramp up #ThinkVermont

Currently, a search for #ThinkVermont on Twitter turns up just five posts. From our perspective, this hashtag presents a great opportunity, both to solidify and continue to communicate your key messages, and to join forces with the people, businesses and organizations that are already putting out great social content.

In order for a hashtag to have a meaningful impact, it’s important to post consistently and encourage others to use it through social-digital campaigns and events. As a point of reference, our social media audit revealed that the Vermont Chamber of Commerce posted or contributed to 38 posts using the hashtag #LetsGrowVT in the course of just one month. By extension, it’s a good idea to post with #ThinkVermont at least once per business day and ideally more often.

Use Multi-Media

Mixing more high-resolution photos, videos and other visual elements into your social posts is a proven strategy for increasing engagement. In fact, Buffer reported that for its user base, tweets with images earned 150% more retweets and 18% more clicks than tweets without images. If the article you're tweeting includes a striking image, include it as part of your tweet. If not, consider tapping into your photo resources to make your post more visual.

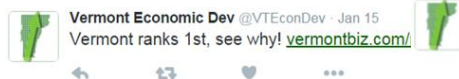
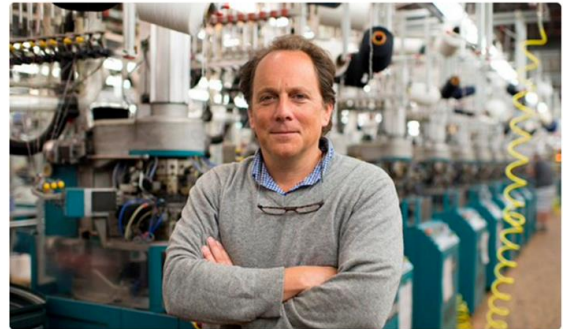
Shortening your links is another easy (and free) way to make your social content cleaner and more visually appealing. Tools like [Bitly](#) or [Google URL Shortener](#) are helpful for streamlining your posts.

Here are some examples of how to take your presence on Twitter to the next level:

Original



Next Level



Be a Reliable Resource

If you become a resource to your key audiences, your following will naturally grow. Part of being a resource is posting consistently. As we said previously, aim for at least once a day, but posting five times a day is not excessive. Schedule evergreen content that promotes your website and videos in advance and mix in timely news to ensure consistent posting.

Digital Ambassadors Program

The importance of user-generated content cannot be overstated, especially when seeking to reach and attract young professionals, technology companies, entrepreneurs and investors.

With that in mind, we recommend a grassroots campaign that galvanizes these audiences by using Vermont's online influencers to communicate the state's unique story. Dubbed the "Vermont Digital Ambassadors," the program would use Vermont businesses, community leaders, entrepreneurs and other Vermont-loving influencers from in and out of state to share business announcements, national media placements and other information that reflects well on Vermont as a great place to live, work, start and grow a business, and raise a family through their own networks. Messages are amplified to hundreds or thousands of others and, because they are coming from a friend or connection, the content has more credibility than coming straight from the State.

A Digital Ambassadors program is a great strategy, both for spreading news among outside audiences and out-of-staters with a "drop of Vermont" in them that may be interested in serving as ambassadors, as well as for connecting with in-state companies and influencers.

We recommend taking the following steps to launch the program.

- **Develop a Visual Identity:** The Vermont Digital Ambassadors should employ a visual identity that ties to your key messages, state of Vermont brand standards and is stylistically consistent with your website and social-digital platforms.
- **Build Your Digital Army:** Results from the in-state business survey revealed that 46% of respondents would volunteer as a "state ambassador" should a program of this type be developed—meaning there's a pool of potential ambassadors waiting to be tapped. Assemble a "digital army" of the people passionate about living and working in the state to help tell Vermont's economic development stories to a larger social-digital audience. Identify individuals with a passion for Vermont and a large following through research and network outreach. From there, continue to recruit ambassadors at events and through your social-digital channels. Here are some examples of potential Vermont Digital Ambassadors.



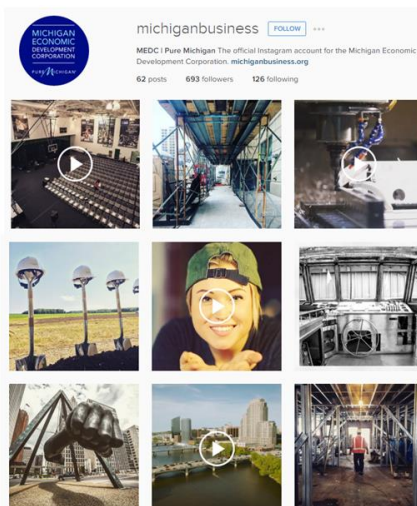
- **Create Engaging Content:** Push out positive news about Vermont by providing ready-made social content for your ambassadors. Compose a short description of the news and posts for Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, linking to a news item on ThinkVermont.com. See the mock example we've created for the Cabot Hosiery expansion.
- **Measure Success:** Measure effectiveness of the program by tracking email open rate and post engagement; tweak content as necessary. Aim to send between two and four posts per month, with a focus on the quality and “share-ability” of the news, rather than the quantity of posts to ensure that you're seen as a resource, not a source of spam.



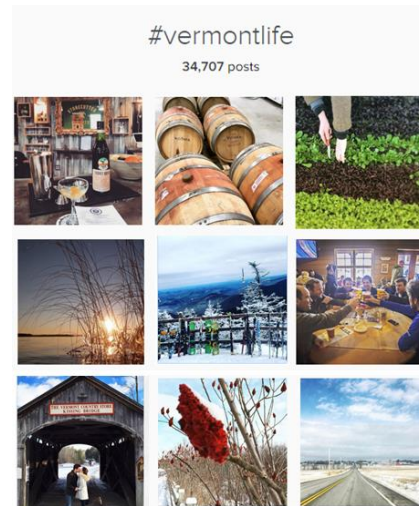
Instagram

Frequented by young professionals, Instagram is a great platform from which to reach that target audience—which is why economic development organizations are taking a cue from consumer companies and establishing an Instagram presence to grow their brand and attract talent.

Vermont’s scenic landscapes, cultural amenities and innovative businesses lend themselves very well to pictures and videos, which is why a great deal of content is already out there. We recommend that you harness this by establishing an Instagram presence and populating the platform with #ThinkVermont content.



Source: [Michigan Business Instagram](#)



Source: [#VermontLife on Instagram](#)

Here are our recommendations for rolling out the ThinkVermont Instagram:

- **Crowdsource Content:** Populating your profile with crowdsourced photos is a great way to diversify your content, engage with your following and tap into the great material that already exists. Encourage followers and event attendees to post using #ThinkVermont for a chance to have their photo featured on your page.



24 likes

nycedc We love seeing these #FutureNYC visions! Brian Wilson, President of Bronx-based drone technology company Duro UAS, envisions his #FutureNYC tech as a safe and sustainable metropolis. #NYTech #NYCEDC #DuroUAS #UAS (repost via @DuroUAS)

durouas Thanks!!!

iamcuan Awesome

New York Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) asked locals to imagine the #FutureNYC during events to spark digital dialogue and grow engagement.



desmoinesmetro
Historic East Village FOLLOW

95 likes 2d

desmoinesmetro Did you take a stroll through @eastvillagedsm yet this season like @paigebriann? #OutOnTheTown #LoveDowntownDSM #NightLife

Share your photos of the Des Moines Metro with our hashtag, #SeizeDesMoines. You can find many other ways to CarpeDM Seize Des Moines by visiting SeizeDesMoines.com.

paigebriann Hey thanks! 🙏

♥️ Add a comment... ⋮

The Greater Des Moines Partnership boosts their talent attraction initiative, CarpeDM Seize Des Moines, with community engagement, regularly posting photos taken by followers who use #SeizeDesMoines.

- **Host Instagram Takeovers:** Leverage influential Vermont entrepreneurs, young professionals and businesses with significant followings by asking them to take over your account for a week. It's a great, no-cost way to showcase a "day in the life" of a Vermonter on the ThinkVermont platform and to engage with the state's business community.



As part of the “Calgary. Be Part of The Energy” campaign, Calgary Economic Development regularly turns over the reins to the city’s up-and-comers to show why they love being “part of the energy.”

Facebook

Facebook has proven to be an effective marketing tool, particularly when funds are used to increase the reach of targeted content. Allocating a budget to posts allows you to extend their reach and target them to specific Facebook audiences, based on age, interests, location and other factors. This is a great way to make sure that your content gets seen by the right people—particularly as organic reach continues to suffer.

Doing this consistently, however, is an easy way to eat up your funds—which is why we recommend focusing your paid efforts behind large pieces of content or campaigns that you want to reach in- and out-of-state professionals within a specific timeframe. We recommend allocating \$500 each to two campaigns during the first year of the program. You might consider timing these following the launch of the new website and the creation of new success story videos.

We also recommend focusing on uploading native content—particularly success story videos—when appropriate. The Facebook algorithm has proven to be very friendly in highlighting native videos in users’ newsfeeds, resulting in significantly higher reach than simply posting a link to content from YouTube or Vimeo.

E-Newsletters

A New ThinkVermont E-Newsletter

DED's current newsletter is a great resource for in-state business and those interested to learn about the "nitty-gritty" of economic development programs in the state—but it doesn't cater to key out-of-state audiences (such as the 11% of young adult survey respondents who said they would be interested to learn more about Vermont).

That's why we recommend you create a separate quarterly newsletter, consistent in design with ThinkVermont.com, to push out your best success stories and news to an audience of prospects.

As proposed, portions of this newsletter can be repurposed for VDTM and *Vermont Life* e-newsletters lists to give visitors and subscribers who already know and love Vermont for its tourism assets a taste of what it's like to live and work in the state.

We also recommend sending the newsletter to in-state companies and influencers as a means of educating them about good news happening in the state, instilling pride and inspiring them to share their own success stories with ACCD.

Example: Invest in Holland (right), the monthly e-newsletter from the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency, has a long-scrolling, mobile-optimized format, short and sweet content with high-quality images and geo-targeted contact information—many of the qualities of a "best practice" economic development newsletter.

Leveraging Existing Vermont E-Newsletters

Leverage existing e-newsletters—like those maintained by VDTM, *Vermont Life*, Vermont Captive and the state's colleges and universities—by providing them with content and calls-to-action to include in their mailings. This content can range from company and young professional success stories that could be included as sidebars to a simple icon or line of copy urging readers to learn more about living, working and doing business in Vermont.

We also recommend that you ask VDTM to include an item in their newsletter about subscribing to the ThinkVermont newsletter or sponsor a giveaway to boost list development. Cross pollination is key.



News from the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency
July 2015

MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS



NFIA Launches New Website

In what may well be one of the smartest foreign investment agency websites in the world, the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) has just launched www.investinholland.com. The website is "geo-targeted" so it serves up content based on the users' location and interests. It's checked full of useful information. Check out our video introducing the site!

[Read More](#)



Stryker to Expand Dutch Operations in Venlo

After five years in the Netherlands, Stryker, one of the world's leading medical technology companies, will expand its existing location at Trade Port North Venlo by constructing a new warehouse. The expansion will total 32,000 square meters, with the first phase opening in early 2016.

[Read More](#)



Holland: It's All the Fashion

When Michael Kors announced last month that it will begin construction of a 1 million square foot European distribution center in Venlo, it was the latest in a string of global fashion brands that have recognized the Netherlands as the apparel gateway to Europe. *American Eagle*, *TDMS*, *Tommy Hilfinger*, *Cabon Klein* and *Esprit* 21 are the latest on a long list of companies that have their European headquarters in the country.

[Read More](#)

TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
In and Out of State

Influencers

METRICS

Views

Shares

Videos

ACCD has already begun to build a library of success stories to showcase Vermont's unique assets as a place to work, live and do business. As you say, "successful Vermonters are the best advocates for Vermont"—and we agree. We recommend that you continue to build out this library, both by creating new, streamlined content of your own and by tapping into the video resources already available in the state.

Showcase CEO and Young Professional Success Stories

With four videos already completed, ACCD is well on its way to developing a robust library of success stories. We recommend that you continue to create video content to showcase on ThinkVermont.com and push out through social-digital efforts. Ideally, you'll develop a healthy mix of testimonials from major companies, small businesses, entrepreneurs and young professionals in a range of industries. Here are a few concepts to consider:

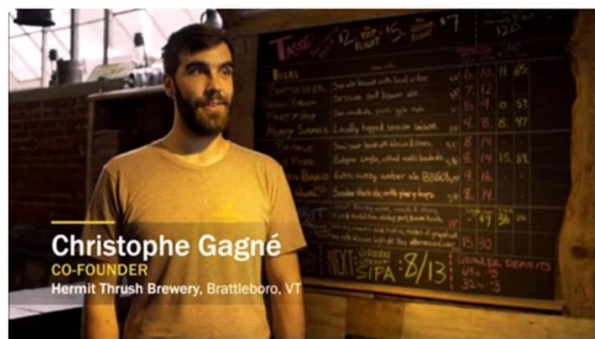
- **"Why Vermont"** – Featuring short testimonials from everyone from CEOs to a young worker who found a good manufacturing job and now has benefits and a 401K.
- **Day in the Life** – Featuring a telecommuter, young professional or people who recently moved to Vermont for a job.
- **Boomerangs** – Featuring Vermonters who have returned "home" and are doing well and doing "good."
- **Old Meets New** – Featuring a value-added agriculture business that employs engineers and IT professionals to show the diversity of "tech" jobs and the sophistication of Vermont's food producers.

In addition to showcasing these videos and "snippets" of these videos prominently on your website, you can extend their reach and relevancy by repurposing interesting quotes, facts and images for evergreen social-digital content. Keep some ready-made posts on file to help populate your social feed on days where news coverage is slow.



Vermont Economic Dev @VTEconDev · Jan 15

"People in VT understand that business is a network, not a single entity."
bit.ly/1RwNpAi #ThinkVermont

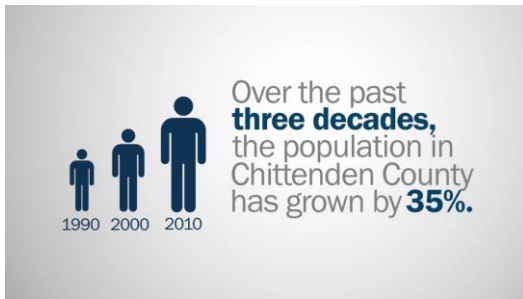


ThinkVermont Campaign Introduction Video

Produce a short video to announce the launch of the new website and the ThinkVermont campaign as a whole. This can be used at a press or launch event, pushed out on social media and repurposed for use in paid ads on streaming services to piggyback on VDTM ad buys on Hulu, YouTube, etc.

Create “Infographic” Videos

Produce short, compelling videos highlighting Vermont’s strengths as a place to work, live and do business in infographics. This fact-driven approach to communicating Vermont’s assets would serve as nice contrast to the pathos of storytelling videos. Plus, they would likely be faster and more cost-effective to create. See Appendix E for tips and best practices for creating infographic videos.



Repurpose Existing Video Content

There’s plenty of great video content that already exists in Vermont that ACCD would be smart to leverage. We recommend the following tactics to take advantage of these existing assets:

- Explore an in-kind partnership with Vermont PBS for Season 2 of InnoVaTe
- Connect with Coldwell Banker, the Town of Bennington (VermontBeginsHere.com) and other entities producing Vermont stories to explore opportunities to repurpose their content to house on ThinkVermont.com

Capture Video Vignettes at Events

Capturing videos during events is another cost- and time-efficient way to build your video library. The Chamber of Commerce Business & Industry EXPO, Tech Jam and Vermont Young Professionals events, among others, present great opportunities to crowdsource “Why Vermont” content for your website and social-digital channels. Although the production values of the videos you’ve already shot is very high, these new videos could easily be shot with an iPad or iPhone, which may then seem even more “authentic.” Encourage those featured to share the videos on their social networks using the hashtag #ThinkVermont to help extend the reach.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
In and Out of State

Influencers

METRICS

Impressions

Click-Through Rate (Aim
for about 0.5-2.0 % for
search ads and 0.5-1.0%
for display ads)

Conversions

Paid Media - Advertising

Strategic paid media can be a valuable aspect of an economic development marketing program—the key word is *strategic*. While your mind might immediately jump to a spread in a top-tier business publication when you think of paid media, the reality is that print advertising is extremely expensive and often not worth the cost. A single full-page, black-and-white ad in the *Wall Street Journal*, for example, is upwards of \$300,000.

Given your budget and today’s increasingly digital climate, we recommend focusing your energy on digital efforts as well as co-op and in-kind opportunities.

Digital Advertising

Leverage VDTM’s Ad Buy: Digital advertising is where you’ll get the biggest “bang for your buck” in the paid media arena. This is particularly true, given that VDTM already makes significant digital buys. If just some of those ads contained business and talent attraction-focused messaging, ACCD could see real results – especially because the Vermont visitor target demographic overlaps well with your target audience. Here are just three ways to partner with VDTM in this effort that combines tourism and economic development messaging:

- Showcase companies whose founders or top executives came to Vermont to ski, fell in love with the state and built businesses here, with messaging along the lines of “Came to Ski. Stayed to Build a Business.”
- Show tech workers biking to work with messaging along the lines of “Vermonters don’t have to go on vacation to take a bike ride. They can ride to work.”
- Couple a beautiful photo of a microbrew and plate of Vermont cheeses with a headline like. “Great beer and cheese aren’t the only things Vermont makes, but photos of microchips and IT gizmos just aren’t as pretty.”



Test Google AdWords Pay-Per-Click Campaign: Following the launch of ThinkVermont.com, we recommend launching a Google AdWords pay-per-click (PPC) campaign to extend the reach of your messaging and drive traffic to the new website. The ads should incorporate your key messages targeting young professionals, entrepreneurs and businesses and include calls to action to visit ThinkVermont.com for more information. The beauty of Pay Per Click campaigns is that you can continually monitor and tweak the ads to optimize their effectiveness.

Here are a few examples of PPC ads – both text-only and display

[Tech Jobs in Vermont - ThinkVermont.com](#)

Ad www.ThinkVermont.com

Dream Job Meets Work-Life Balance. Grow Your Tech Career in Vermont.
Forward Thinking · Beautiful & Bold · Entrepreneurial Spirit

[News & Events](#)

[Success Stories](#)

[Outdoor Recreation](#)

[Arts & Culture](#)

[Work in Vermont - ThinkVermont.com](#)

Ad www.ThinkVermont.com

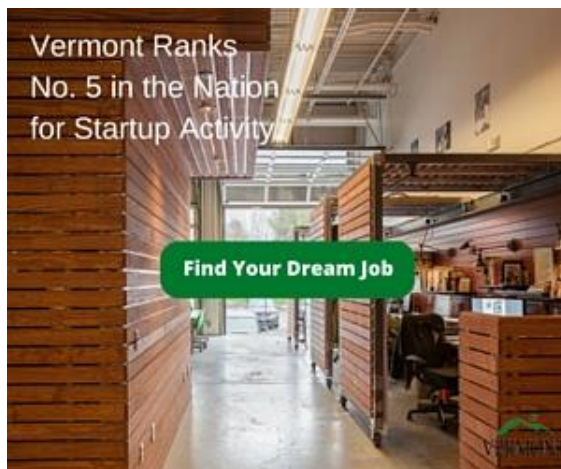
Make A Life, A Living, A Profit ...And A Difference In Vermont
Forward Thinking · Extraordinary Quality · Entrepreneurial Spirit

[Careers](#)

[Success Stories](#)

[Outdoor Recreation](#)

[Arts & Culture](#)



Cooperative Print Advertising

Explore “pay-to-play” cooperative advertorial opportunities similar to those negotiated by VDTM with the *Boston Herald*, with a focus on attracting young professionals from the Greater New England market. To help underwrite the cost and expand your supporter network, invite in-state companies to partner in a “Vermont is Hiring” feature, with various sponsorship levels – and corresponding levels of exposure – to encourage both small and large companies to participate.

Regional Public Radio Test Run

Connect with in-state business owners, influencers, entrepreneurs and young professionals by underwriting Vermont Public Radio – on air and online (VPR.net). VPR covers the entire state and surrounding regions, including part of New Hampshire, New York, Massachusetts and Quebec – reaching more than 170,000 listeners each week. VPR has also indicated they may be receptive to a “trade” deal in lieu of cash. Ideally, the sponsorship would run during peak tourism seasons to capture those listeners – some of which likely overlap our target audiences.

Depending upon how the VPR test goes and if budget allows in future years, ACCD may also consider a test on Boston’s WBUR with a strong call to action about “What a difference a state makes.” We spoke with Matt Peters, National Sales Manager for WBUR, and he said that they’re open to doing all sorts of deals to fit in with budgets/target programs and audiences, but they like to sign underwriters on for at least 10-13 weeks (quarterly), with at least 5 spots per week. On the low end, that’s likely around \$20,000. Average buys are between \$30,000 and \$50,000, so you see how that can gobble up your budget quickly.

Non-Traditional Print Advertising

Create quirky, classified ads in *Seven Days*-like newspapers in New England and the Northeast, personifying Vermont as the “seeking” / “offering” party in the following sections: Personals/Dating, Employment, Housing, Home Improvement, Lost & Found, etc.

These curious, intelligently funny ads have the potential to catch the eye of target audiences and even generate earned media. Because this is an unusual tactic, it is wise to run a test in Boston or another target market, like New York or Philadelphia, to test its effectiveness. Focus on quirkier, independent newspapers like *DigBoston*, *Philly Weekly* and Rochester’s *City Newspaper*, whose readers are more likely to be responsive to this kind of creative ad than those of a more conservative publication. Here’s a sample personals/dating ad:

Up for something different? Open-minded, natural beauty seeks multiple partners to live a different lifestyle. I’m small in stature and big on creating opportunities. You’re a forward thinker and love the outdoors. Together, we bring out the best in each other. If you’re ready to live and work differently, we need to connect and explore the possibilities. I am the state of Vermont, and I mean business.
www.thinkvermont.gov/different

Explore Limited Buy In-Kind Partnerships with Local News Media

Given the need for buy-in from in-state influencers, we recommend looking into partnerships with local news media to push out your content to a regional audience at a limited cost. Reach out to WCAX (CBS Burlington), WPTZ (NBC Plattsburgh) and other target regional broadcast media to explore limited buy advertising and partnership opportunities to stretch resources. For example, would they be willing to run abbreviated versions of your videos – almost as PSAs to promote that they are good jobs in Vermont for young residents? If they aren't interested in partnering, go the earned media route because straight paid advertising would be too expensive and not targeted enough.

Collateral

While print collateral seems to be going the way of the horse and buggy, it is necessary to have some material on hand for use at meetings, trade shows and for targeted mailings. We recommend creating digital-first collateral that can be easily updated and printed on demand according to need.

Create Fresh Collateral

Create fresh “Why Vermont” collateral materials consistent in design and messaging with ThinkVermont.com. These materials can be housed as downloads on your website and printed on demand in small batches for use in meetings, events, trade shows and direct mail marketing. Here are core collateral pieces we recommend as first priorities:

- **General Vermont Business Brochure:** This should be Vermont's business story “at a glance” with content on strategic advantages, area companies, success stories, incentives and others items that can be repurposed from your website.
- **Vermont Programs and Incentives:** This would detail VEGI and other programs, services and incentives available to businesses.
- **What A Difference a State Makes:** Aimed at young professionals, this general brochure would promote the benefits of living, working and growing a business in Vermont and communicates that there are good jobs to be had at interesting companies.
- **Vermont is Hiring:** Aimed at Vermont college students, this fun, edgy brochure would plant seeds early that Vermont offers job and career opportunities, as well as fertile ground for entrepreneurs to start a business.

Use Existing Partnerships & Events to Distribute

We recommend distributing relevant collateral pieces using existing partnerships—akin to the joint mailing to incoming Vermont students sponsored by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation and VDTM each summer—to spread your key messages among current students and tourists and drive traffic to your website. Another low cost way to distribute these materials is to offer them at the Harlow's Vermont Farmstand at the Boston Public Market and at relevant trade shows that VDTM and other state agencies plan to attend.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
In and Out of State

Influencers

METRICS

Leads Generated

Downloads

TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
In and Out of State

Influencers

METRICS

Meetings/conversations
with companies

Leads generated

Social media
engagement – shares,
likes, retweets

Trade Shows and Special Events

A good starting place for maximizing trade shows and special events would be to post relevant events, including Tech Jam, Vermont Young Professionals networking events and trade shows DED plans to attend, on ThinkVermont.com to serve as a resource for the in-state audience and to showcase all that's going on to an out-of-state audience. Here are a few additional recommendations to reach influential audiences.

Updated Pop-Up/Display for Trade Shows

Create a new ThinkVermont-branded pop-up and/or display for use at trade shows and in-state events where DED or VDTM has an established presence.

Young Professional Networking Events

Vermont is home to a strong and growing young professional network that can serve as an asset in Vermont's economic development marketing efforts. These young professionals serve both as success stories and as advocates for Vermont among other young professionals living and working out of state. Any presence that ACCD can have at young professional networking events would be a great way to generate social-digital and video content, grow the Vermont Digital Ambassadors program and generally establish ties within this influential community.

Tech Jam, Manufacturing Jam, etc.

Vermont's Tech Jam has become an important resource and networking event for the state's tech community. Aligning with this event and its influential attendees is a smart strategy to engage both in- and out-of-state audiences. As with the young professional networking events, we recommend exploring partnership opportunities to establish a meaningful presence at the event, where ACCD can crowdsource video and social media content and encourage buy-in from this audience.

Given the great success of this event, it's worth exploring the possibility of extending the format beyond tech to other industries. Creating or playing a role in establishing "Manufacturing Jam," for example, would give ACCD a presence among another influential industry group in the state. This might also be an opportunity to extend the program to other parts of the state beyond Chittenden County.



Source: Vermont Tech Jam

Maximizing In-State Events

With thousands slated to visit the state for the 2016 Women's World Cup Ski Events at Killington and other crowd-drawing events like the Spartan Race, Wanderlust Stratton, Burlington Discover Jazz Festival and the Vermont City Marathon, ACCD has an opportunity to access a key out-of-state audience. We recommend maximizing these opportunities by:

- Creating relevant Twitter calendars using the event hashtags to access the social-digital conversation surrounding the events
- Showcasing collateral and/or branding materials at the event, if possible
- Partnering with local companies/organizations to sponsor a food/beverage booth with #ThinkVermont materials

Higher Education Outreach & Vermont Alumni Marketing

In a private meeting with the University of Vermont and again at a roundtable with 10 member universities and colleges from the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges, it became abundantly clear that universities crave a better connection with local businesses as a means of offering apprenticeships and internships to their students. Some are further along on initiatives and programs than others, but there is clearly a need to strengthen the connective tissue to align higher education and economic development. In terms of the marketing plan, Vermont's strong higher educational opportunities are clearly part of the story.

In addition to the VSAC mailing and sharing content for alumni magazines recommended previously in this document, here are three additional marketing ideas to consider:

- **Showcase University Apprenticeship Programs:** Vermont can showcase colleges that have successful apprentice programs with local businesses in its newsletters, on its website and in other marketing materials.
- **Shine a Spotlight on University Success Stories:** Likewise, the state can illuminate products, research and companies spinning out of its colleges and universities in your marketing efforts. Perfect examples are Seedsheet and Iris Virtual Reality, which were among the Middlebury College companies showcased in a recent *PBS Newshour* show entitled "Move over Silicon Valley: The next startup nexus is...northern Vermont?"

TARGET AUDIENCES

Young Professionals

Business Owners:
Out of State

METRICS

of meetings with
Vermont college alumni

of inquiries from
Vermont college alumni

- **Piggy Back on University Alumni Events in Key Markets:** One tactic that some few other states employ with great success is to have the Governor speak at alumni events in key markets that are prime hunting ground for talent and companies. It then becomes a “win-win” for the institution and the state. Key events in the coming year where we would recommend this tactic (at similar events in 2017), are:
 - UVM Spring Social at Penn Club, New York City, May 24, 2016
 - UVM – Vermonter Day at Fenway Park, Boston, July 2, 2016

Middlebury College has chapters in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington DC (among others) and has ongoing “Mini-Reunions” of young professionals hosted by alumni. ACCD should reach out to other Vermont colleges and universities as well to investigate the best out-of-state alumni events to attend.

Direct Outreach for Business Retention and Expansion

Although direct outreach to Vermont’s existing businesses falls last on this long list of tactics, it is far from least. ACCD is acutely aware that “hugging and holding” existing businesses is a high priority and part of their everyday jobs. To augment those ongoing efforts and give them additional exposure, we recommend two additional tactics:

Handwritten Letter by the Governor to Businesses

We recommend working with the office of the Governor to develop handwritten letters from the Governor to send to businesses thanking them for investing in Vermont. If appropriate, these can be sent along with the new collateral pieces you create. This personal touch will go a long way toward communicating to in-state businesses that they are valued and appreciated.

“Thank You for Investing” Roundtables

ACCD should also work to organize small “Thank You for Investing” roundtables with the Governor and area businesses to demonstrate that the Governor is committed to helping existing businesses to thrive and expand in the state. A smart strategy would be to organize these on a regional level, partnering with regional economic development organizations to host the region’s biggest employers for luncheons or roundtable discussions. Local media should be invited to attend and report on the events.

TARGET AUDIENCES

In-State Business Owners

METRICS

of letters sent to Vermont businesses with tally of jobs and investments they represent

of Vermont businesses attending roundtables with tally of jobs and investments they represent

A Few Big Ideas

Here are a few “big ideas” to consider once you’ve built the foundation of your program.

Explore Brand Partnerships

With VDTM’s history of successful marketing partnerships with Cabot Creamery and the Vermont Ski Areas Association, it’s a smart strategy to explore how ACCD can participate in or leverage these kinds of partnerships. Explore partnership opportunities with Long Trail Brewing Co., Ben & Jerry’s and other Vermont brands that may be interested in helping to attract young professionals to the state. While these may be “reach” partnerships, they are certainly worth exploring, given the companies’ alignment with the Vermont brand and large consumer base.



Think Vermont Events & Displays at Vermont Welcome Centers

Organize events and/or displays at Vermont Welcome Centers on high-traffic weekends—like those surrounding freshmen orientation or major ski events—to disseminate your messaging among visitors, students and other key audiences. You might consider partnering with Vermont Young Professionals to get some young techies and other professionals to “work” the event—handing out flyers and engaging passersby to talk about what it’s like to live and work in Vermont.

This kind of event would be excellent fodder for social media content as well as a great opportunity for a campaign. Set up a ThinkVermont branded photo booth or green screen with fun props to encourage visitors to take pictures with their friends in front of Vermont backdrops (not just scenic landscapes—cool work spaces, microbreweries, downtowns and other landmarks, too) and post to Instagram and Twitter using #ThinkVermont for a chance to win a ski weekend or dinner at a local restaurant.

Longer term, Vermont should work to tell its business story better in Vermont Welcome Centers through permanent or revolving displays. This might be explored as a co-op opportunity with some of the state’s top employers.



Resort Take Overs

Given the overlapping target audiences frequenting Vermont resorts, we see huge potential in working with the properties to “take over” one or more major resorts for 1-2 weeks. Ideas for promoting Vermont for business include:

- Chairlift/tower advertising
- Calling cards/collateral for hotel rooms
- Special events in the lodges/pubs
- Social media contests



VT Bus: Take Your Story on the Road

Customize and visually brand a small bus, van, or car and trailer to serve as a mobile economic development office. The van can tour in and out-of-state delivering messages on job and investment opportunities and related incentives and programs, as well as tourism. The effort presents a natural opportunity for public and private entities to partner to spread positive messaging and feature products. The bus would serve as a mobile billboard to station at high traffic locations along the highway as well as at farmers markets, street fairs, concerts, sports events, college campuses, etc. This initiative also has the potential to generate a great deal of social media content as well as earned media opportunities.





The following details a month-by-month plan for executing the priority marketing tactics recommended for the 14 months from May 1, 2016 through the end of the state’s fiscal year on June 30, 2017, when we believe the current budget allocation will be depleted. Although we’d love to see the entire program be front-loaded with all the assets and marketing tactics launched in the first quarter, we tried to be realistic about staffing bandwidth, so we’ve spread out initiatives throughout the year. Timing may change, depending upon the need for RFPs and other issues.

MAY 2016
<p>Begin strategy and plan for developing new website, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define requirements • Site map and wire frames • Content plan, including 5 success stories to be researched and written by <i>Vermont Life</i> staff • 4-month project schedule/assignments
<p>Take stock of business-oriented photography; solicit photos from RDCs/universities, etc.; develop plan for filling in holes</p>
<p>Develop target media lists with contact details for targeted reporters for top ten media outlets; disseminate good news throughout the year</p>
<p>Attend Chamber of Commerce Business & Industry EXPO on May 26 to start capturing video vignettes of Vermont companies</p>

JUNE 2016

Design website

Write all content and success stories

Work with *Vermont Life* to launch “Could You Live/Work Here?” series

Work with Killington to get business content in 2016-2017 resort magazine to capitalize on the Women’s World Cup Ski Events at Killington on November 26-27, 2016

Finish gathering all visual assets for website

Edit 4 existing videos to 30- and 60-seconds

Scout Burlington Discover Jazz Festival (June 3-12) and Wanderlust Stratton (June 16-19) if schedules allow to determine best ways capitalize on these events in 2017

JULY 2016

Develop/program website

Design new template for ThinkVermont e-newsletter

Begin rest of collateral based on content/visual assets from website

Work with VDTM to integrate ThinkVermont messaging into existing ad buys for fall and winter season

Work out sponsorship for Tech Jam in October

AUGUST 2016

Finish website; optimize content based on keyword research; develop title tags, meta tags, alt tags; do beta testing/quality control

Develop content for first ThinkVermont e-newsletter; augment distribution list

Finish and print new collateral

Develop Student Brochure for inclusion in September VSAC mailing

SEPTEMBER 2016

Develop 15-30 second campaign introduction video; Develop social/digital calendar for website launch; draft press release

Launch website with aggressive media and social/digital push

Ramp up #ThinkVermont, posting on a daily basis

Launch new ThinkVermont e-newsletter, which drives traffic to the new website

Design and produce pop-up banner for trade shows, using same branding as the website

Develop pay-per-click text and display ads

Launch Google AdWords campaign to drive traffic to new site

OCTOBER 2016

Ramp up Facebook account; launch first paid campaign

Explore sponsorship of Young Professional events

Attend Tech Jam (traditionally held about October 23-24) with new pop-up banner and collateral; take additional video vignettes

NOVEMBER 2016

Launch Instagram account

Explore "trade" deal with VPR; write copy and prepare to launch in early 2017

Bring pop-up banner and new collateral to distribute at Killington for Women's World Cup Ski Events

DECEMBER 2016

Start developing Digital Ambassador program, including:

- Identifying and recruiting ambassadors
- Naming program and designing template

Start work on infographic video



JANUARY 2017

Launch VPR sponsorship

Launch Digital Ambassador program

Complete infographic video

FEBRUARY 2017

Develop copy for non-traditional print advertising; launch small test in Boston

Begin planning for production of five new videos; make plans for shoots in the spring

MARCH 2017

Work with Governor's office and UVM to arrange for Governor to speak at Spring Social in New York City and Vermonter Day at Fenway Park to deliver ThinkVermont for business and careers messaging

Draft Governor's letter and distribute to in-state businesses

Host first Instagram takeover

APRIL 2017

Sponsor and attend Vermonters Ball, which is sponsored by Vermont Young Professionals in early April at Hotel Vermont

Plan for first "Thank You for Investing" Roundtable; find RDC to co-sponsor; get on the Governor's calendar



MAY 2017

Work on and attend UVM Spring Social at Penn Club, New York City

Shoot three Vermont Success Story videos; edit and post; publicize through media/newsletters/social

JUNE 2017

Launch first “Thank you for Investing” luncheon

Shoot two Vermont Success Story videos; edit and post; publicize through media/newsletters/social

Plan for Governor event at UVM’s Vermonter Day at Fenway Park, Boston in early July

Start planning for Tech & Taps press trip for Fall 2017

Plan for 2017-2018 marketing program, including possible WBUR sponsorship to coincide with influx of Boston college students and their parents in August/September



Although many of those interviewed want the marketing plan to solve everything short of world peace and suggested metrics like “growth in GDP,” we need to be crystal clear about what metrics can – and cannot – be used to measure the effectiveness of the marketing plan.

The Vermont Chamber Foundation has created a Vermont Economic Dashboard, which tracks Vermont’s economic performance on six key indicators – economic activity, innovation & entrepreneurs, workforce & talent, Vermont demographics, quality of place and infrastructure & investment. Because this dashboard is already in place and it will take time to move the needles, ACCD should reinforce rather than replicate these metrics.



For the shorter term of this three-year marketing plan, we strongly recommend that ACCD create a dashboard to established baselines and measure the following on a quarterly basis:

Business Development Metrics

- Leads and inquiries received by ACCD
- Conversion of leads to projects
- Jobs created or retained
- Capital investment through business retention, expansion or attraction



Marketing the state as an attractive place for companies and people to be in business can help generate leads, which can create jobs and employment, which produce income tax revenue, which ultimately supports the state's general fund.



> JOBS/EMPLOYMENT = > INCOME TAX REVENUE
SUPPORTS STATE'S GENERAL FUND

Marketing Metrics

- Website traffic, including increase in UMMVs (unique monthly visitors), sources of traffic, etc.
- Media coverage in terms of impressions, advertising equivalency, editorial impact, key messages
- Social and digital media engagement, including shares/likes/retweets; increase in followers
- Number and percentage increase in Digital Ambassadors
- Video views
- Perception shifts, as measured in three years by comparing the baseline perception surveys to new survey results

Detailed metrics associated with each marketing tactic are included as sidebars in that section of the plan.




BUDGET

Vermont is highly unusual in not previously dedicating any financial or human resources to economic development marketing on an ongoing basis.

To give you a snapshot of what's happening around the country, DCI had 16 clients in 2015 that spent more than \$200,000/year on economic development marketing, including five clients that spent well more than \$300,000/year. Most of those programs were for media relations programs only, which were augmented by additional funding for advertising, social/digital work and other marketing handled by other agencies. Those clients range from small cities and counties with populations of less than 150,000 to much bigger states and countries. We are currently working with a rural county in New York's Hudson Valley that has half the population of Vermont, but has an annual economic development/lead generation marketing budget of \$350,000.

Based on the requests for proposals that DCI receives, as well as a recent survey of state economic development organizations, marketing budgets can range from \$90,000/year to more than \$5 million. For example, DCI recently received a RFP for a \$200,000 media relations program from a neighboring New England state that is focused on attracting seven targeted industries.

In addition to funding, nearly all of the economic development organizations we work with have one or more staff members dedicated to marketing – whether a Director of Marketing, VP of Communications or other analogous titles. The fact that the State of Vermont has so few resources devoted to economic development marketing will limit your ability to execute a plan unless staff is reallocated or you outsource some portion of the work to freelancers or PR/advertising/marketing firms.



At a minimum, we would recommend the following to stretch your human resources:

- Explore whether the Director of Communications position under VDTM could execute some of the earned and owned media parts of this plan.
- Tap into the staff of *Vermont Life* as much as possible for content development for the website, collateral materials and other initiatives.
- Reorganize staff responsibilities, or ideally, create a new position for a dedicated Project Manager within DED to serve as “point person” for implementation of the plan.
- Reallocate some of the Chief Marketing Officer’s duties to allow this position to serve as Contract Manager for any outsourced services on this economic development marketing effort.

In the chart on the following page, we’ve indicated recommended budget allocations for the major marketing tactics.

VERMONT 3-YEAR MARKETING PLAN BUDGET

TACTIC	3-YEAR BUDGET	% of BUDGET
Earned Media – PR	\$219,000	29.20%
Proactive Pitching		
Press FAM Tours		
Website	\$90,000	12.00%
Design/Development		
Content Development		
Photography		
Owned Media - Digital/Social	\$24,000	3.20%
Twitter/Instagram/Facebook		
Digital Ambassadors		
E-Newsletters		
Videos	\$41,000	5.47%
Success Stories		
Infographic Video		
Video Vignettes		
Launch/General Campaign Video		
Paid Media - Advertising	\$145,000	19.33%
Digital Advertising/PPC Ads		
Co-op Print Advertising		
VPR-NPR Sponsorships		
Non-Traditional Print		
In-Kind Partnerships		
Collateral	\$43,500	5.80%
Creative Development		
General Business		
Incentives & Programs		
Potential Residents		
Students		
Additional Outreach and Promotion	\$150,000	20.00%
Trade Show Display		
Event Sponsorships		
University Outreach		
Business Retention Outreach		
Big Promotion Ideas		
Opportunity Contingency (5%)	\$37,500	5.00%
TOTAL	\$750,000	100.00%

Disclaimer: Please note these estimates were provided by the consultant team. After a Request for Proposals is issued for various implementation tactics, we will have a more precise budget.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dear Vermont Economic Development Team,

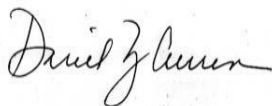
Development Counsellors International (DCI) and Spike Advertising would like to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to prepare this economic development marketing plan on behalf of the State of Vermont—and to acknowledge the insight and support we received from you, your key stakeholders and citizens of the state in developing it.

During the course of our work with the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, we met with more than 100 individuals who have shaped this plan in a variety of meaningful ways. We appreciate the time that each of them took to share with us their insights.

Very special thanks to Joan Goldstein and Heather Pelham, who provided incredible leadership, guidance and input through the entire process, ensuring that the plan reflects a collaborative process and a clear vision for the future of the state's economic development marketing program. We would also like to thank Megan Smith, Steven Cook, Mary Hegarty Nowlan and Kirsten Bourgeois for their support and input during the process.

On behalf of our teams at DCI and Spike Advertising, thank you for the incredible opportunity to partner with you. We are truly excited to see what's in store for the State of Vermont.

Sincerely,



Dariel Y. Curren
Senior Vice President
DCI



Patience Fairbrother
Account Executive
DCI



Ken Millman
Creative Director
Spike Advertising