

*client* University of **Liechtenstein**

*project* strategic concept of a new MBA brand

## the organization

The University of Liechtenstein is a public university located in the Principality of Liechtenstein. It focuses on two fields of study – architecture and business economics. The students and faculty come from 40 countries, and the university has partnerships with 80 other institutions. The university was founded in 1981 as Abendtechnikum (similar to a college) mainly for the teaching of mechanical and civil engineers. In 1998 the establishment was formally recognized as the Liechtenstein University of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschule Liechtenstein) and became the Hochschule Liechtenstein in 2005. In 2008 the institution derived the status as a university and received the right to offer doctoral programs in addition to Bachelor's and Master's.

## the challenge

Although the preceding institutions of the University of Liechtenstein had also offered continuous education programs, for several years also in business, it had not yet succeeded in building a strong brand for international business education. Competition in the executive education market is fierce in this region. For example, the University of St. Gallen is situated less than an hour away and one of the most respected business schools in the German language region, offering a wide range of executive programs that are considered top of the league. Furthermore, the University of Zurich EMBA programs rank within the best 100 executive programs globally according to the Financial Times ranking, and UZH is conveniently located in Switzerland's economic capital, easily reachable by public and private transportation. Moreover, various nearby Universities of Applied Sciences in Switzerland, Austria and Germany provide continuous education programs for comparatively low tuition fees.

The now accredited University of Liechtenstein aspires to successfully compete with major research universities and internationally recognized executive education programs, leaving behind its past as an

*applied* research institution. In addition, a more international approach is sought to make the university recognized and relevant to candidates seeking high-quality executive education, also outside the Principality and its directly bordering regions.

## the concept

In workshops, discussions and ideation sessions with managers of the university's continuous education programs and manager of the university's marketing department we discussed and established the university's resources, its major strengths and USPs as a research institution and provider of education. Based on these workshops and an analysis of Liechtenstein University's main competitors, we concluded that a unique and recognizable executive program that would attract an international audience – a signature education product - would be most effective to place the newly accredited *university* on the map of outstanding international education for executives.

Most such signature programs have a relatively broad curriculum (general management), that is relevant to a broad audience of executives. Moreover, they often represent an entire institution in respect to program category and brand, in many cases even the entire city by associating the program with a particular university brand in a city that is reputable for excellent education. Examples are "the IMD Executive MBA", IMDs most reputable and highly ranked executive program; or "the St. Gallen MBA" and the "EMBA HSG", both brands in their own right - although the University of St. Gallen offers additional programs that allow to obtain an Executive MBA degree.

For the new signature executive program at Liechtenstein University, it was clear that the new program should be positioned as to represent the university. However, as Liechtenstein University is the only state-owned university in the Principality of Liechtenstein, not only could this new program represent the university, but in fact – branded and marketed well - the whole country. The new program thus would become the signature executive education program of the Principality of Liechtenstein. The branding and the marketing communication of the program would therefore strongly associate the program with the Principality of Liechtenstein, along with all its very strong and positive connotations to exclusivity, royalty, success, wealth, and others.

## brand building and marketing strategy

In order to successfully associate the program brand with the Principality of Liechtenstein, a similar corporate design would be necessary. Hence a cooperation with Liechtenstein Marketing, the official organization for the marketing of the Principality of Liechtenstein as a business location and tourist destination, was sought; and besides the commitment to a close partnership the license to use the official logo of the Principality of Liechtenstein for marketing the new program obtained. The



## THE LIECHTENSTEIN MBA

denomination and marketing of the new program as “The Liechtenstein MBA”, along with a strong affiliation with the Principality of Liechtenstein would allow to build a very strong and recognizable brand for executive education at Liechtenstein University. Moreover, associating the program with the House of Liechtenstein would further serve to attach the program to the royal family, and make it particularly attractive to candidates from Asia who are particularly receptive to royalty. Such association would be established by company visits and live case with LGT Bank, which is owned by the princely House of Liechtenstein and headed by Prince Maximilian of Liechtenstein. Furthermore, visits to the royal vineyard and guest lectures given by members of the royal family. All these activities would provide valuable content for pr campaigns and social media reporting as well as brochures and other communication materials.

\*this project was led and conducted by Christian Schimmelpfennig while he served as Director Executive Education at Liechtenstein University. However, it still provides a representative example of the work of BRAND LAB and its partners.

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