



## THE FOUR S'S OF COLLEGE STUDENT ORGANIZATION MARKETING

By: The Social Excellence Project

**Marketing.** That word confuses so many people. It's loaded with so many false expectations and blatant misunderstandings. For many student leaders (many of which are not formally trained in marketing), that word intimidates and befuddles.

I'd like to offer what I believe to be 4 "S" words that will help you understand effective student organization marketing. Can you guess what they might be?

Many people might guess...

**Sexy:** Perhaps you think effective collegiate marketing has to appeal to our animal desires for sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. Nah.

**Sneaky:** Maybe you assume marketing has to trick people — brainwashing them into membership. Nope.

**Super Bowl:** Some people think marketing has to be HUGE. Like a Super Bowl Ad. We've got to make one big giant splash. I disagree.

**Stuff:** When many think of marketing, they think of stuff. Branded give-aways, T-shirts, bottle openers, beer koozies, fliers, notepads, etc. No.

**Social:** Maybe you assume that social media is the key to student organization marketing. It's a helpful tool, but not one of my 4 S's.

So, here's what I think. The "S" words I recommend to do effective, results-driving college student organization marketing are a little different than the ones listed above. To be honest, they're a little boring in comparison. But I don't think flash and pizzazz are the keys to being successful. They're alluring and easy to be seduced into doing (and paying lots of money for), but YOU WANT RESULTS, right?

**So, here you go. The 4 S's of student organization marketing that I believe you should be focused upon are:**

**SLOW:** Good marketing takes time. To plant a story about your organization in the minds of your primary audiences, and to build a positive, wide-spread, trusted reputation, takes a LOT of time. Longer than a year. It's slow.





**STEADY:** Good marketing is repeated over and over and over. Steve Jobs once said, “It’s a complicated and noisy world, and we’re not going to get a chance to get people to remember much about us.” Pick a single narrative, an emotional appeal to shared values, and repeatedly share that in a steady manner over time.

**SOPHISTICATED:** Good marketing uses lots of brain power. It requires data, measurement, research, and a scientific approach. It starts with a deep understanding of the decision making process of your target audience. Every tactic should be tied to clear objectives that feed the overall strategy.

**SUBTLE:** Good marketing is a whisper, not a shout. It is primarily about the audience, not your organization. It is helpful, generous, and thoughtful. It isn’t blatant, loud, or in-your-face.

Slow, steady, sophisticated, subtle.

Don’t be seduced by the other S’s.

