



2017-2018 Marketing Plan

UPDATED ON April. 30, 2017

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction & Context	2
II.	Objectives	3
III.	Research	4
	A. Foundation	4
	B. Benchmark Research	5
	C. Demographics	8
	D. Marketing Strategy	9
	1. Target Market	9
	2. Sponsorships/Partnerships	10
	3. Training Facility	11
	E. Limitations	12
IV.	SWOT Analysis	14
	A. Strengths	14
	B. Weaknesses	15
	C. Opportunities	16
	D. Threats	16
V.	Marketing Mix	17
VI.	Marketing Plan	18
VII.	Evaluation	23
VIII.	Conclusion	25
IX.	References	27
X.	Appendix	28

I. Introduction & Context

The National Hockey League (NHL) is a professional hockey league, which was formed in 1917 and consisted of four Canadian teams. This creation of the NHL came from the disruption of World War I, when a Canadian group of men playing in the National Hockey Association were called to fight in the war overseas. This diminished the league to five teams and they decided to create the NHL. Since the start of the NHL in 1917, the league has added over 24 teams to the league. In 2016, the NHL commissioner, Gary Bettman, announced the expansion of the league to 31 teams. This expanded team is the Vegas Golden Knights and will be the first major professional sports team in the Las Vegas, Nevada area. The Golden Knights will be playing in T-Mobile Arena, a multi-use facility located on the Las Vegas strip. Additionally, the Golden Knights are building a practice facility in Downtown Summerlin, about 15-20 minutes from T-Mobile Arena. The team broke ground on October 5th, 2016 with the estimated completion and opening of the facility on September 1st, 2017. The facility will be 120,000 square feet and will include two full length ice sheets. The majority owner (85%) of the team is Bill Foley, a wealthy businessman and chairman of the board for Fidelity National Financial. The other 15% of the team is owned by the Maloof family who live and operate many businesses throughout the west coast. The team will be coached by Gerard Gallant who previously coached with the New York Islanders, Montreal Canadiens and the Florida Panthers. There will be an expansion draft from June 18th-20th to complete the team's roster. Because of the newly formed team, the Vegas Golden Knights hired a group of sport marketing students from the University of

Minnesota to develop a branding plan to help obtain a more prominent hockey fan base in the Las Vegas community, in the State of Nevada, and in the NHL community.

II. Objectives

The mission of the marketing plan will focus on gaining exposure of the newly added Vegas Golden Knights throughout the NHL community, the Las Vegas community area, and the youth hockey program. The lack of awareness of the sport of hockey and the newly added team is the primary problem, and this marketing plan will address it using multiple marketing strategies.

The goals for the increased promotional tactics are to increase attendance and viewership of the hockey games as a result of greater awareness of the team within the Las Vegas community area. Tactics will be established within local community businesses to encourage families and friends to attend the Vegas Golden Knights' games by providing promotional giveaways, which will encourage a stronger and more loyal fan base.

One of the most important aspects of having a brand new professional sports team, especially in an untested market like Las Vegas, is creating new, lasting relationships with the fan base. Las Vegas has overcome some of the issues with gambling and fixing games, there are some concerns on whether or not they have a strong enough fan base to support a franchise. However, the Golden Knights have received over 16,000 season ticket deposits for the upcoming season. With the excitement of having the first professional team in Vegas, there will be thousands of loyal Golden Knights fans. It will be essential to be able to not only be able to sell tickets, but to also retain those season ticket holders by creating a lasting relationship with them and to make sure to

provide a unique fan experience to compete with other entertainment options in the city.

The following marketing plan has been inspired by a group of sport marketing students at the University of Minnesota for the Vegas Golden Knights to help in obtaining a more prominent hockey fan base in the State of Nevada. For much of Las Vegas, tourism is the number one hotspot for the city. By increasing the level of awareness around the city, the NHL community and amongst the youth, more families and friends will be able to experience a brand-new tradition with the sport of hockey in Nevada.

III. Research

A. Foundation

To identify the awareness of the Vegas Golden Knights' nationally, our group compiled a survey questionnaire to be posted on Facebook for friends to complete and share. The group received eighty-eight survey responses (see Appendix A1 for a copy of survey question). The responses provided a general data outline of the market group outside of the Las Vegas area. When analyzing the data, seventy-one respondents were aware that the Vegas Golden Knights was a new NHL expansion team and seventeen were unaware. The results indicated a lower awareness of the team's brand outside of the Las Vegas area. However, fifty-six respondents said that they would consider attending a Vegas Golden Knights hockey game if they traveled to Las Vegas for vacation or work. Being a tourist city, sixty-seven respondents indicated that the Vegas Golden Knights should offer package deals with the hotels and casinos. Offering online ticket promotions and package deals with hotels and casinos will attract people to attend hockey games and establishing/increasing the Vegas Golden Knights fan base (Goll, R. Personal Survey).

B. Benchmark Research

In past years, the NHL has expanded by adding existing and new teams to the league. By comparing the newly added teams to the league, the marketing team can determine an efficient marketing plan. One NHL team that expanded into the NHL was the Dallas Stars. The Dallas Stars were previously known to hockey fans as the Minnesota North Stars until 1993 when the team moved to Dallas, Texas. This move marked a transition of a hockey team branded by the “State of Hockey” to a state that was warmer and less attracted to the sport of hockey. To learn more about the Dallas Stars organization and how they branded the team, the group contacted Dan Stuchal, the Vice President of Brand Development and Broadcasting for the Dallas Stars.

Dan Stuchal discussed many issues the team faced when making the transition from Minnesota to Dallas. This included a sports culture in Dallas that was not aware of the sport of hockey. In 1993, the City of Dallas had no organized youth hockey programs and only had one sheet of regulation ice in the entire metropolitan area of 6 million people. The Dallas Stars benefited from having other well-respected professional sport teams in the city including the Dallas Cowboys and the Dallas Mavericks. The Cowboys’ and Mavericks’ generate high amount of revenue per year as wells as having a great fan base. These great sport teams had fans with excess disposable income.

Being aware of the lack of ice rink facilities, the Dallas Stars reached out to the community and built ice rink facilities throughout the city. These ice rinks were operated and maintained by the Dallas Stars thus increasing the awareness of hockey and branded the identity of the Dallas Stars. Because of the increased awareness and participation of hockey in the Dallas community, youth participated and got hooked on hockey as well as

their parents, grandparents, extended family, and friends who continue to follow and support the team. Now that these youths are now adults, Dan Stuchal explained that most of them are now the team's season ticket holders, television viewers, and merchandise buyers. This wide expansion from the start of the Dallas Stars in 1993 has grown exponentially with the fan exposure. The community will soon have 23 sheets of ice in the city with 16 of them being owned by the Dallas Stars.

This massive expansion of ice rinks in the metropolitan area of Dallas, which is comprised of roughly 6 million citizens has created great brand exposure in the community. Dan Stuchal explained to me that this brand presence throughout the outlying Dallas communities was intentional and very strong. The Dallas Stars are the only NHL team in a wide geographical area of the southwest. The southwest as described by Dan Stuchal includes Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and New Mexico. This wide variation in team exposure has the team's ultimate goal of being an entire regional team that generates revenue (Stuchal, D., April 20, 2017. Personal Interview).

Going away from the branding initiation for the youth program of the Dallas community, the Dallas Stars have not employed longevity themes or statements to associate with the team. In Minnesota, the Minnesota Wild have successfully branded their organization around the platform of the "State of Hockey". They utilize the roots and tradition of the sport within the state on a nostalgic level to connect with their fans. In their debut returning season of 2000-2001, they introduced the State of Hockey Anthem that has become an integral part of the game presentation at Wild home games. In the state of Minnesota, "where the tradition of our game runs deep, [the] lyrics symbolize the elements of Minnesota's rich hockey heritage" ("State of Hockey Anthem", n.d.).

Furthermore, the Wild continue to revolve around their platform of including the sport of hockey throughout all levels of the state, including such things as featuring all of the high school hockey team jerseys around their arena (the Xcel Energy Center) and having local individuals be the honorary puck dropper of the game.

Similarly, in Minnesota, the University of Minnesota Gophers men's hockey team utilize a similar approach of branching onto the heritage of the sport and the connecting to the communities within the area. The Gophers have achieved plenty of successes on the ice and have used these successes to catalyze their brand throughout the nation. However, their fan engagement and game production still stays true to the grassroots of the State of Hockey. For example, the Department of Fan Engagement structures promotions to include local communities and hockey programs into their game production schedules, providing these fans with heightened experiences that enhance their perspective on the team. One of the largest and most well-known promotions is the Old Dutch Little Chippers scrimmage where one or two local youth hockey programs can go on the ice during an intermission break and play a shortened game in front of the 10,000-seat Mariucci Arena. This creates a direct engagement with the local community programs and provides an enjoyable in-game entertainment piece that boosts the outside perspective of the team and their brand.

Using the marketing concept discussed by Dan Stuchal, knowledge of the Minnesota Wild and Dallas Stars organization, and the Minnesota Gophers, the Vegas Golden Knights have a large capacity of potential for breaking into the market and achieving success both on and off ice. The team could, for example, construct, operate, and maintain ice rink facilities in the Las Vegas area. This will increase awareness and

participation of hockey in the community. It has been shown that youth will get hooked on the sport and follow the team throughout their youth and into adulthood. These adults and their families and friends will also support and follow the team, thereby generating revenue and increasing the fan base. More along these lines can be found in the Marketing Plan below.

C. Demographics

The city of Las Vegas is known for many things, yet hockey has not yet become one of them. Las Vegas is an enormous untapped market when it comes to sports. Therefore, we are starting to see professional franchises popping up in this city such as an NHL team and an NFL team a few years down the line. Per the U.S. census, Vegas is the 28th most populated city in the United States and on top of that they get around 40 million tourists a year. This will allow for us to bring in new customers to each game if we market effectively and attract these newcomers. Because the city is very well known for entertainment there will be a lot of competition for the Golden Knights organization when we start playing. It is important for us to make sure that we are targeting the right audience to fill our seats. Per NHL.com the Vegas Golden Knights have already received deposits for all 16,000 available season tickets for the 17-18 season. In February 2015, the team began a season ticket drive with the interested candidates placing a ten percent deposit on season tickets for the initial season. The initial goal of the franchise was to get to 10,000 season tickets, but because we already have built a strong base for the tickets, it only leaves about 1,500 remaining tickets for each home game because the arena seats 17,500 people for hockey games. One way that the Golden Knights plan on reaching a new demographic is by broadcasting some games in Spanish. About 650,000 people,

which is 31% of the region, are Hispanic and by broadcasting some games in Spanish it would help to reach more of that population and maybe spark an interest in people that have never had the opportunity to experience hockey before.

D. Marketing Strategy

1. Target Market

We have gathered information about the southwest region of the United States and the Anaheim Ducks and Arizona Coyotes get about 60% of their fans from out of state (Anaheim Ducks, 2015) (Margulies, J., April 25, 2017. Personal Interview).

Because Las Vegas gets even more tourism than these two cities it would be smart to focus a big portion of marketing on people flying into the Las Vegas airport. Not only are most fans from out of state, but they also have a high disposable income. For the hockey teams in the same region as Las Vegas, about 40% of fans have an income of \$100,000 or more. The Vegas Golden Knights are going to target a fan base comprised of families with kids. We are going to target middle to upper class families with children. The predominant target gender would be white males who follow a wide variety of sports. We are going to try to reach other ethnicities including the Hispanic population with the Spanish broadcasts. Aside from the geographical area, we plan on reaching people that are flying into Las Vegas because Las Vegas attracts so many tourists which gives us the opportunity to expand our fan base and brand nationally. The city of Las Vegas is known for its spectacles, whether it is the flashy casinos, luxury resorts, or one of many shows and entertainment productions put on. The amount of tourism traffic within the Las Vegas area provides an immense capability to draw visitors to games on a nightly basis by providing a lively and engaging spectacle within the arena.

Segmenting the targeted Vegas Golden Knights audience will help the marketing team focus on specific areas to market in (Pitts & Stotlar, 2013). This will provide efficiency in resources toward markets that lack awareness of the team and those that can help in our marketing outreach. Groups listed as the team's primary audience including youth hockey players, families with disposable income, and local businesses will be marketed the most. Secondary audiences gained through partnerships and advertising will also be targeted to gain extra following and influence in the sport market. The secondary audience is comprised of the general citizens of Las Vegas, the southwestern part of the United States, and the tourists that do not normally follow the Vegas Golden Knights or the sport of hockey.

2. Sponsorships/Partnerships

With the Golden Knights being stationed in Las Vegas, there are numerous opportunities for the team to find corporate sponsors, partnerships, and advertising campaigns with casinos and other large businesses. In March 2017, according to Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (2017), Las Vegas had 3.8 million visitors alone. Many of these visitors come to casinos to spend their vacation time; Las Vegas casinos brought in \$2 billion in revenue in March alone. This being said, there are many opportunities to fulfill corporate partnerships with these wealthy casinos. Some of the major casinos that the Golden Knights can look to partner with include: the Stratosphere, Mirage, Bellagio, New York-New York and many others. These casinos may also become sponsors for the Vegas Golden Knights and buy advertising time with the team. The team signed their first in-ice sponsor recently. They signed a three-year partnership with Toyota to be the in-ice sponsor of the Golden Knights. According to Ian Thomas of

the Biz Journal (2017), “The deal will make the Southern Nevada Toyota Dealers Association the preferred automotive partner of the team in the non-luxury category, and includes branding elements throughout the bowl at T-Mobile Arena, including two dashboard signs, Zamboni wrap and the in-ice logo, one of the highest-priced sponsor positions with NHL clubs.” This was a step in the right direction for the Golden Knights organization. They are still in discussion with potential partners and sponsors for the upcoming season(s).

3. Training Facility

The Vegas Golden Knights also have many opportunities to promote their team and their brand with their new training facility. As stated earlier, the new training facility will be located in Downtown Summerlin which is approximately 15-20 minutes from T-Mobile Arena. The two full length ice sheets will be used by the Golden Knights as well as youth and adult hockey leagues. Recently the team has decided to partner with the Nevada Storm, a youth hockey organization. The partnership will be forming a traveling youth hockey program with teams from the mite level (ages 8 and under) all the way up to midget (16 and under). The teams will be using the practice facility as one of their facilities (Jesse Granger, 2017). Having the rinks open to the public will help promote the sport of hockey as a whole. With hockey not being a popular sport in the hot desert, having a training facility that kids can play on will help promote it. Simultaneously, this will help promote the brand of the Golden Knights. There will be many opportunities where young children will be able to skate on the same ice as an NHL team and possibly even meet the players. Being able to share a close relationship with the public will be an important factor in creating a good brand image as well as support for the team. This

relationship will strengthen the support system and bonds with the fans. Along with strengthening their public image, there will be many community engagement opportunities. The Golden Knights could have an open house at the training facility when it opens for season ticket holders, where they may have the opportunity to meet a few of the players and coaches. This would encourage more fans to purchase season tickets due to the exclusive benefits of being a season ticket holder. The team could also have a weekly skate with kids' day where a player or two will skate for a few hours with kids who were selected for the exclusive, weekly activity. One could go on and on about the various promotions that the Golden Knights could do with the facility to increase community involvement.

E. Limitations

The Las Vegas Golden Knights are most likely to going to face similar challenges that most expansion teams have faced in the past, such as winning games and establishing a strong fan base. They are going to have to go through an expansion draft to acquire players, and it is likely that the team is going to struggle to win games. With the Golden Knights just starting out in the NHL, it is going to be crucial for the organization to sell results rather than wins and losses. Jeff Munneke, the Vice President of Fan Experience for the Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx has had the unique opportunity of being part of the expansion process for both of those teams (Munneke, J., Personal Interview). Per Jeff Munneke, some of the biggest challenges that expansion teams face includes having a short amount of time, building a relationship with the fan base, and providing an extraordinary fan experience.

One of the biggest limitations for the Las Vegas Golden Knights is going to be the relationship building with the fans. Jeff Munneke mentioned that this is by far the most important aspect of establishing the team's brand "it's the fans that support the team." Although it is easy to assume that there is much excitement going into the brand-new franchise, it is important not to base your market research on assumptions. One of the things that Munneke spoke about in regards to what he would do differently when the Lynx became a team was that the organization assumed that they automatically had fan base for the Lynx because they had great success with Timberwolves fans. However, they initially struggled to get fans to Lynx games because a lot of people were not interested in watching women's basketball or they were not aware that there was a new women's basketball team in Minnesota. Jeff Munneke suggested that it is crucial for Las Vegas to make sure that they conduct quality research on their consumers to identify which consumers they should target, and any challenges or limitations to their goals. With the use of analytics and the help of business intelligence teams, it has helped the Lynx and Timberwolves identify potential customers and think of different marketing strategies. Munneke also said that "Technology and social media have been great tools to the team's success, however it becomes difficult because you have to be more strategic than ever."

Another challenge that the Golden Knights will face is the limited amount of time that they have going into their inaugural season. It will be especially difficult for Las Vegas to be able to get themselves prepared for the upcoming season because there is so much for them to accomplish not only on the ice, such as branding, ticket sales, marketing strategies, operations, community relations, etc. Jeff Munneke stated that when the Timberwolves were starting out, they only had about eighteen months to prepare for

their first season. At first it may seem like a plentiful amount of time to start up a franchise but with so many things to accomplish in a short amount of time it became overwhelming at times and it appears time was going by too fast. It was also challenging because the technology in the late 1980's is nowhere near as it is today, and it seemed that they were "playing catch-up" to the rest of the league, while competing with other entertainment options around the Twin Cities. With today's technology, the Golden Knights would be able to be more efficient with their time and business operations through various software and other programs. However, they would still have to face the issue of catching up to the rest of the league, creating lasting relationships, and providing a great fan experience so they can stand out as being the premier entertainment option in Las Vegas.

IV. SWOT Analysis

In order to better understand the culture of the expansion and all that lies within and behind the progression, a segregated SWOT analysis method was taken. Within this method, the different strengths and weaknesses are touched on for the current situation of what can be seen from the expansion. Then, opportunities and threats are included to present a perspective on future behavior and success. Below is the SWOT analysis for the Las Vegas Golden Knights and their expansion into the NHL.

A. Strengths

There are many strengths that the Vegas Golden Knights can use to their advantage. First off, they are located in a city known as one of the world's most visited tourist destinations. Many visitors each month come to the city on vacation and would be willing to spend money on an NHL game while in town. The franchise is situated in a

city with a growing population and large short stay population. The Vegas Golden Knights have the advantage of being a new attraction in town; many visitors like to try new things when they are in Las Vegas. This franchise playing in Las Vegas will boost the economy for restaurants, transportation services, hotels, and small businesses in the area. The arena was privately funded without taxpayer money; no taxpayer in Las Vegas had to pay for this arena. Additionally, the presence of past expansive NHL teams has had massive growth in the sport of hockey including Texas, Arizona, and North Carolina. This new franchise would help promote hockey, especially at the youth level. Along with that, previous specialty games played in Las Vegas, (1991 and 1997-2015) were well attended. This shows the team that when the time comes, there will be a good turnout for their games. Each year the NHL awards ceremonies are held in Las Vegas, putting the city in the spotlight and drawing national attention. There will be a new practice facility in Downtown Summerlin that the team will be able to promote and use as a marketing tool. Having a new franchise in town, with a relatively new arena and a new practice facility will create many job opportunities within the Las Vegas area. Finally, the team is projected to be amongst the middle of the pack in total attendance in its first season, ahead of teams like San Jose, Arizona, and Anaheim.

B. Weaknesses

Although teams don't like to discuss their weaknesses, it is important to know and acknowledge their weaknesses. First off, the state of Nevada lacks hockey exposure; only 1,305 kids registered to play hockey in the state of Nevada for the 2015-16 season. By no means is Nevada thought of as a hockey state and this may affect the attendance at games and the support of the local community. With Las Vegas being a primary tourist city, the

Golden Knights may not have a strong set fan-base. Additionally, there is little awareness and recognition of the team outside of the Nevada area. As far as working, the Las Vegas workforce works different shifts, primarily at night, compared to other states. Being in the city known for gambling, having a franchise in this city may promote gambling more in sports. Finally, the lack of elite NHL caliber players on the team for the first few years may discourage fans in their following of the team.

C. Opportunities

With the Vegas Golden Knights being a new franchise, the organization has many opportunities. There was a private survey that asked tourism people outside of the state of Nevada that if there was a hockey team in Las Vegas, would it be supported by tourism interest. A majority of respondents did believe that the Golden Knights would be back by tourism interest and support. Along with that, the popularity of hockey around the country will produce more athletes and eventually some of these elite athletes will become team members of the Golden Knights. Additionally, the state of Nevada has no income tax, saving the team a large sum of money to be spent on other expenses. Sponsorships, advertising, and corporate partnerships are easily available with the popularity of the casinos in Las Vegas. The team has a unique opportunity in the growth and promotion of youth hockey through the new training facility shared with the public. Lastly, the Golden Knights can boost community relations through team organized events including: reading to kids, boys and girls club, etc.

D. Threats

With the Vegas Golden Knights being situated in the middle of a desert in Las Vegas, there are potential threats to the organization. First off, the city of Las Vegas may

not support the team due to the unpopularity of hockey in the area as well as the necessity for gambling. Tourists that may be in Las Vegas may lose all their money for the trip on gambling and have no way to buy tickets. Also, people in the area may support other NHL teams like the Anaheim Ducks, Arizona Coyotes, etc. These teams have been around a lot longer and fans of these teams in the Las Vegas area may be unwilling to support the Golden Knights. With the team being in Las Vegas, there is a higher opportunity/chance that the players and staff members get in trouble for late night activities as well as gambling and betting on the team. This is true for the Golden Knights and the opposing teams. The importance of this is the fact that if players and coaches get in trouble, this is bad for public relations and the NHL. The final threat that we discussed was that the Raiders are moving to Las Vegas for the 2019-2020 season. The football and hockey seasons overlap from October through January which is a large portion of the season. The relevance of this is that with the NFL being much more popular fans in the area may be more inclined to spend their money on a football game rather than a hockey game. Football is a more popular sport in the area and in the country.

V. Marketing Mix

The Vegas Golden Knights is the newest NHL team in the hockey league. It brings the best hockey players in the world to Las Vegas, Nevada to provide an intangible entertainment and services for the local community. We will provide team-sponsored clothing and products for purchase to create a branding effort for fans to follow and support the Vegas Golden Knights. We will build a partnership with local companies and business to sponsor and advertise our products throughout the community.

We are a revenue based organization that will target different market groups and

price our products accordingly. Our organization will provide season ticket packages that include 41 regular season and 3 preseason games. Costs for season ticket packages vary depending on seat location. Glass seats in the 2nd and 3rd rows are roughly \$15,400 to \$17,600 per year. Center ice will cost a season ticket holder \$9,460 and other lower level tickets range from \$3,740 to \$5,500. Other seats in the building will cost a season ticket holder \$3,000-\$4,000. The team also markets 11 and 22 game packages that have limited seating throughout the arena and cost a fan roughly \$10-\$20 more per seat for each game. Lastly, the team has approximately 1,500 single tickets available starting in August of 2017. This available ticketing option not only helps fans become aware of the team but how we will strategize our marketing plan in the community (Greg Wyshynski, 2017).

Being stationed in Paradise, Nevada, a suburb of Las Vegas, Nevada, the marketing team will target the local community by providing a community outreach program. Banners will also be hung throughout T-Mobile Arena in efforts to build the brand awareness of the team. Signs will also be installed around the city and local tourist attractions. This will include the Las Vegas National Airport, 40 local casinos, and local hockey rinks.

VI. Marketing Plan

The following section will outline the two-month marketing plan that our group proposes to be conducted by the Las Vegas Golden Knights in order to solidify a brand for the team and grow the influence of hockey within Nevada by connecting with local communities and businesses. The name of the promotional platform will be “Protect the (K)Night” to provide a platform to construct the brand around. This platform includes the unique lively nightlife of the Las Vegas area while also promoting protection and uniting

as a community, like a community watch program. Below is an outline of the plan that will run within Las Vegas and surrounding communities for two months leading up to the opening inaugural season of the team.

PROTECT THE (K)NIGHT

August 8, 2017 - October 8, 2017

Date	Activity	Engagement
Tuesday, August 8, 2017 Time: 20:17	Plan Launches - Distribution of plan information & goals	Social Media Blast - Timeline of Events - Activation - Conversation
Tuesday, August 8, 2017	Skate with the Knights Night sign up opens online	Website - Event information - sign-up procedure
Tuesday, August 8, 2017	Release of Golden Knights Grant Program Team's official community fund for improving and increasing the presence of hockey within NV	Website - program details and sign-up procedure Contacting local youth programs
Wednesday, August 16, 2017 & Thursday, August 17, 2017	School Supplies Slapshot Player and team appearances in Wal-Mart department stores within Las Vegas suburbs	Local news coverage Content creation - videos for website/social media - fan posts, tagging the team/players Excitement of local youth Promotion of education
Thursday, September 18, 2017	Strip Swarm #1 Player appearances throughout the strip promoting the opening of the season	Radio promotion - announcements of location/times via top radio stations in the area Social Media Blast - interaction with people on the Strip - Entry for giveaway of tickets to home opener for social media activation
Saturday, September 23, 2017	Skate with the Knights Night Fan Fair style with sponsor	Content Creation - videos/pictures Local News coverage Social Media Blast - online communication

	activation and skating with the players and mascots	- increase of web presence Excitement for local youth
Sunday, October 1, 2017	Strip Swarm #2 Mascot appearances throughout the strip promoting the opening of the season	Radio promotion - announcements of location/times via top radio stations in the area Social Media Blast - interaction with people on the Strip - Entry for giveaway of tickets to home opener for social media activation
Sunday, October 8, 2017	Conclusion of Plan Plan will conclude with a culmination video encasing the activities and creating more excitement for the opening of the season	Online posting of summation video Thank You to fans included - Two separate fans who follow the team will be selected at random from social media and receive two tickets to the home opener

“Protect the (K)night” will kick off on Tuesday, August 8, 2017 at 8:17 pm (20:17) with the public release of event information and program introduction via the team website and social media platforms. Sign-up will open for Skate with the Knights Night as well as the introduction of the Golden Knights Grant Program. This program will simply be the organization and management of a community fund, acting as the team’s direct beneficiary for any revenue from fundraising events or external donations. The program will be open to communities with the Las Vegas and Nevada area that are looking to either introduce a local youth/high school hockey program, or to improve one that is already in place. Communities will be able to apply for a grant from the program to provide a more enriching culture of hockey throughout the area. This program is being kicked off with the “Protect the (K)night” plan but falls more under a 3-5-year scope as sufficient funds will need time to build up in order to support the local programs. Areas where these funds will come from will be profits from the Skate with the Knights Night,

external donations from sponsors/partners/other local businesses, and other channels to be implemented throughout the season such as a 50/50 raffle at home games.

The first event of the plan will be the School Supplies Slapshot on Wednesday, August 16 and Thursday, August 17, 2017 at various times. Partnerships with Wal-Mart department stores throughout the suburbs of Las Vegas and respective school districts will formulate this event. Students, with their school year approaching, will be able to go shopping for their school supplies with the presence of team staff, players, and/or mascots. This event, which would be communicated through the communication channels of the school and external radio stations, will provide creation of content for the team to use online, excitement of local youth around the team, and a promotion of education through the influence of a professional sport team.

Next, on Thursday, September 18, 2017 will be Strip Swarm #1, happening at some point during sunlight hours of the day. The Las Vegas Strip features the many iconic attractions and spectacles of the town and will provide the opportunity for direct public interaction. For Swarm #1, players and staff from the team will walk down the strip, interacting with fans and promoting the upcoming season. A small giveaway (such as keychain for a continual brand reminder or licensed Bandama for the desert heat) will be passed out to people walking around the strip who interact with the players and staff. Social media will be largely present as those who interact with the players and staff and then post a picture or message with the tag #ProtectTheKNight will be entered into a drawing for two free tickets to the team's home opener. The players and staff will also promote posting of pictures, tweeting reactions, etc. to inform followers of where to find them next. The local radio stations will also be reached out to create excitement and help

spread information on times and locations of appearances, which will be kept to spread by word-of-mouth to maintain the event as spontaneous and genuine. The Strip Swarm #2 event will be structured the same as Swarm #1, yet will feature the team's two mascots walking around instead of players. Swarm #2 will be held on Sunday, October 1, 2017, after the keystone event of Skate with the Knights Night

The major event for the "Protect the (K)Night" plan will be the Skate with the Knights Night on Saturday, September 23, 2017 from 4:00 - 7:00 pm at the team's arena, T-Mobile Arena, located on the Las Vegas Strip. This event will be open to the first 2,000 people who sign-up through the team website at a fee of \$10 for General Admission and \$20 for a 20-minute on-ice skate time. The proceeds for the event will go towards the Golden Knights Grant Program, catalyzing the creation of this community fund for future increase of youth hockey in the area. The Minnesota Gophers have run this event quite successfully for recent years, growing to the point of having over 650 attendees this past year. Our event will be ran with the same structure as the Skate with the Gophers event, featuring 20-minute sections for community members to skate on the ice with team players and mascots and also having a fan fair set up in the concourse area. Within this fair set-up will be sponsor activation through representative booths and interaction, plus concessions and plenty of photo opportunities for social media exposure. Local news networks will be contacted to attend and cover the event, as well as a partnership with one local radio station to come broadcast live at the event and feature an on-air interview with one of the team's players. This event has immense potential for creating widespread excitement around the team and solidifying a brand identity that features community engagement at the core of its foundation.

The “Protect the (K)Night” Plan will conclude two months from its kick off on Sunday, October 8, 2017. The main feature of the plans conclusion will be a summation video featuring footage from the events of the plan and promoting the newly created brand of the team. This video release will be paired with the release of the team’s official hype video for the season. While earlier videos will be released leading up to this date, the official hype video will feature the team’s new roster and their inaugural mission. Lastly, the conclusion of the plan will include a Thank You message sent around to all the new fans of the team through social media following bases and email lists. Along with this, two separate fans who follow the team on social media (one pulled from Twitter; the other Facebook) will be chosen and highlighted, receiving two free tickets to the home opener. This will be a minimal act to promote fan appreciation and spur positive publicity at a grassroots level.

VII. Evaluation

We can measure our successes from our marketing plan through many key evaluations. First off, we can keep an active log of tickets purchased before launching the marketing plan as well as after launching the marketing plan. This will allow us to evaluate how effective our marketing plan was and how we can improve upon it. Additionally, using analytics, we can track the number of clicks on our Vegas Golden Knights NHL webpage. The many different social media and web activations throughout the plan will direct traffic to the team’s webpage. By tracking the number of clicks on the page, we will be able to see the month-to-month changes in views and how well we are promoting the website and team.

Tracking of youth players in the Las Vegas area is an important tool we can use through analytics. By tracking youth players, down the road we can see if they are buying season tickets or single-game tickets and how often they are buying tickets. Our results will

allow us to know whether we are reaching local hockey fans that came to our events are involved in the participation of the sport as well. The results will also help us evaluate how well we are involving the community in the sport of hockey and how we can use the training facility to better relate to the fans. We can monitor the TV ratings nationally to see how the viewership ratings are skewed and see which areas are watching the games more. We can look at social media and other platforms to see the overall tone of messages that are being discussed about the organization. We can look at the remarks of the fans that are commenting and discussing the team on social media to gather an overall impression of the organization and use this to determine how well our public/community relations team is doing. Another thing we can track is our promotional giveaways at casinos to identify if people are utilizing our promotions. If the promotions and discounts are being used sufficiently, we know that our promotional side of marketing is working well and if it isn't, we can adjust our promotions so that they are being used by fans more often. We can track terminal gates at the local airport to determine how many people go through that airport. We can use this to determine where/if we want to use an advertising campaign at the airport to attract fans to the games.

The final step of our evaluation is sending out surveys to our various audiences. We can send out surveys throughout the season to determine whether fans are approving of the team and how well our marketing campaign is working as the season goes on. Surveys can be sent to all season ticket holders asking them about their experiences within the facility as well as outside of the facility. These questions would be discussing ticketing, promotions, advertising, and satisfaction on game presentation and accommodation. We would also send out the surveys to fans that were not season ticket holders but attended a game(s). Then to measure how well we have promoted our brand and our image throughout the season, we would have a survey available to the public that would ask about recognition of the team,

logo, and how well the team brand is promoted. The survey would be placed at different businesses within the area, available to anyone to fill out. This would allow us to evaluate how well we are reaching the public in promoting our brand and image. These surveys would be sent out through the mail to season ticket holders as well as the other fans and would also be sent out through e-mail. There would be an incentive to fill out the survey because this would increase the chances that the fan takes the survey seriously and fills it out. Having multiple surveys throughout the year is essential because this would allow us to measure our progress throughout the season and support behind different activities and events, such as the Golden Knight Grant Program. These surveys would help each department of the organization realize what techniques are going well and what needs to be improved upon. Once the surveys are all gathered up at the end of the season, our department could sit down and have a discussion on what will be improved for the upcoming season and how it will be done.

VIII. Conclusion

The expansion team of the Las Vegas Golden Knights provides an opportunity for the growth of hockey to reach the dynamic and unique atmosphere of the Las Vegas area. As our research showed, expansion teams in the past and other successful organizations in general have all successfully branded their team with a core structure that features a heavy involvement and engagement with community members and programs. The sport industry possesses a strong influence on our culture in society, which opens up great possibilities for success in promoting a brand within a community.

In order to promote the brand of the expansion team of the Vegas Golden Knights going into their inaugural season, we have created this plan in order to increase brand awareness by constructing a brand identity and then implementing such identity within the

community. The ultimate goal of the implementation is to drive ticket sales and fill the seats of T-Mobile Arena. The “Protect the (K)Night” plan will spark necessary awareness and excitement around the team leading into the opening of their first season in the NHL.

Additionally, the completion of this plan will include the installation of a long-term identity and prospective influence. The Golden Knight Grant Program will initiate an enduring presence in and beneficial relationship with the communities around the home of the team.

This plan will promote the Las Vegas Golden Knights through a variety of methods and channels, bringing them increased awareness, ticket sales and success prior to ever stepping onto the ice for the first time in their inaugural season.

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Appendix

Appendix A1: Survey Questions

1. Have you heard of the new NHL expansion team, the Las Vegas Golden Knights?
2. If you traveled to Las Vegas, would you consider attending a Golden Knights game?
3. Do you think the Golden Knights should do a package deal with the casino's in the area to giveaway discounted tickets?
4. Do you think the Golden Knights will survive in a climate not known for hockey?
5. What is your willingness to pay for a single game ticket to a Golden Knights game?
6. What is your age?
7. What is your gender?
8. What is your ethnicity?
9. What is your education?
10. What is your yearly income if applicable?

Appendix A2: SWOT Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Tourism ➢ host of NHL Awards Ceremony (yearly) ➢ New practice facility in downtown Summerlin ➢ Growing population ➢ No income tax ❖ Become a new attraction ❖ Boost local economy ❖ Privately funded arena <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ No taxpayer money ❖ creation of new jobs ❖ Prior success of expansion teams ❖ Previous specialty games were well attended (1991; 1997-2015) ❖ High projected attendance 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Support from tourism industry ❖ Flashy, exciting environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Strong game experience ➢ Presentability for larger events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Playoffs, Olympic Qualifying, etc. ❖ The popularity of hockey ❖ Larger amount of hockey players in the NHL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ incentive for more youth to play ❖ The popularity of the casinos and other large attractions in Las Vegas ❖ Growth and promotion of youth hockey ❖ Utilization of new training facility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Private and public ❖ Community relations possibilities
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lacks hockey exposure in the state <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 1,305 kids registered in the state for the 2015-16 season ❖ Little awareness of the team outside of the Nevada area ❖ Las Vegas workforce work different shifts, primarily at night, compared to other states ❖ Could help promote gambling in sports as situated in a town known for gambling ❖ May not have a set fan-base as Las Vegas is a primary tourist city ❖ Lack of NHL caliber players for the first few years in the league and could discourage following of the team 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The city of Las Vegas may not support the team ❖ Fans may already be in support of other NHL teams like the Anaheim Ducks, Arizona Coyotes, etc. ❖ Higher opportunity for players and staff members to get in trouble for late night activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ home and opposing teams ❖ Raiders moving to Las Vegas for 2019-2020 season <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ seasons overlap from October-January