Solving for Student Recruitment: CRM-Based Marketing Solutions for Colleges and Universities

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Postsecondary institutions are up against reduced enrollment. As noted by the Hechinger Report, over the last six years universities and colleges have seen enrollment drop by 2.4 million students — partly due to falling birth rates and partly thanks to an uptick in the economy that pulls older students in their mid-to-late twenties back into the workforce.

CRM-based marketing solutions can help colleges and universities make student recruitment campaigns more engaging and authentic.

The result? Student recruitment is now a top priority for postsecondary institutions. Here's a look at how the right CRM integration can help schools fill seats and boost revenues each year:

Making Marketing More Authentic

With student enrollment falling and competition heating up across the postsecondary space, it's no longer enough to have solid undergraduate or postgraduate programs — universities and colleges must convince prospective scholars that their institution is the best

fit for both academic and social pursuits. To achieve this goal, schools need marketing solutions that appeal to students and parents alike without breaking yearly budgets.

What does this look like for postsecondary institutions? According to Times Higher Education, actually listening to students is a must for any successful marketing campaign. As noted by Emma Leech, director of marketing and advancement at Loughborough University — which ran a successful personalized golden ticket campaign for new admissions — she's seen "a lot of examples of campaigns that have clearly been dreamed up by middle-aged hipsters in a studio, who don't actually understand students or people's emotions."

Instead of this tried-and-true focus on targeting solutions, universities need to ask currently enrolled students what drew them to the school in the first place and what types of marketing would pique their interest.

Also critical? As Inside Higher Ed describes it, "marketing the why." This means talking to staff, students, and alumni about how the school has positively impacted their lives and then creating a campaign that reflects this experience.

Georgetown University accomplished this goal in 2014 with a marketing effort that had 11 students recording first-person video blogs of their everyday campus experiences. The authenticity of this effort set it apart from more traditional marketing methods by capitalizing on students' use of social media and their desire to know what life is really like on campus.

Marketing + CRM = Student Recruitment Success

It's one thing to tell postsecondary schools they need to improve their student recruitment processes — it's another to actually follow through. Consider: In a world driven by digital interaction and mobile devices, old-school marketing campaigns that cast a wide net but have limited ability to capture or record funnel data don't offer much value to colleges and universities. The solution? CRM integration.

Here's how it works: While many schools now employ some type of college CRM, these systems are often limited in scope and function. As a result, they provide basic data without the ability to leverage this information for effective marketing campaigns. With cloud-based CRM integrations, it's possible for schools to both craft better campaigns and track their impact in real time. Here are some key benefits:

> *The right college CRM integrations can help unify marketing campaigns and provide a springboard for multimedia advertising that delivers consistent tone, branding, and impact.*

1. Personalized Communication

Regular communication is key to success. Cloud-based CRM tools help universities and colleges keep accurate records of all student and parent contact data. The marketing advantage? Personalized campaigns based on geolocation, academic history, and potential areas of interest. Instead of sending out generalized email blasts advertising school programs and services, postsecondary institutions can craft marketing efforts that treat students as valuable assets rather than revenue streams.

From first contact to follow-up, from initial conversations about programming to long-term student strategies, schools must be able to easily and quickly communicate with students and parents. Integration solutions make it possible to call directly from any contact, follow

up on missed calls immediately, and take notes mid-call for accurate data recording in real time.

2. Multimedia Marketing

As noted above, Georgetown's social media campaign was a runaway success. Why? While authenticity helped boost the signal, the campaign correctly leveraged a key student platform: social media. For postsecondary schools looking to boost recruitment, it's no longer enough to use billboards, craft marketing emails, and run television ads — social media integration that's responsive, authentic, and speaks to student needs is essential to capture interest.

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3. Amping up Acceptance

While the golden ticket campaign isn't something every university can replicate, it is possible to increase student excitement by shifting the paradigm on acceptance. Instead of delivering traditional letters, for example, postsecondary schools can stand out and provide a personal touch by delivering video acceptance letters.

Using CRM data, admissions officers and department heads can ensure these personalized acceptance videos make it clear just how much the school values a specific student's enrollment, as well as showcasing exactly what their program has to offer that individual.

As numbers drop and costs rise, the fight for the most coveted freshmen is changing. Solving for student recruitment means thinking outside the box — and leveraging cloud-based CRM integrations that help drive A+ marketing campaigns.

Looking to improve your college CRM? Talk to a Vonage expert.