



HOW TO CONVERT MORE APPLICANTS INTO ENROLLED STUDENTS



In the higher education sector, one of the most critical marketing goals is to convert applicants into enrolled students.

With increasing competition, universities across the world are striving to turn more leads into applications while converting more applications into enrolments.

Typically, a candidate starts an application to four or five schools but they'll choose the one that makes them feel personally connected.

This sense of belonging is critical to student conversion and retention.



HOW CAN YOUR UNIVERSITY CULTIVATE A SENSE OF BELONGING?



A SENSE OF BELONGING IS ACHIEVED THROUGH:



- MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS WITH STAFF AND FACULTY MEMBERS
- SUPPORTIVE RELATIONS WITH THE STUDENT AND ALUMNI COMMUNITY
- DEVELOPING A DEEPER INTEREST IN THE UNIVERSITY BRAND
- ENSURING THE COURSE IS RELEVANT TO PROSPECTS' CURRENT INTERESTS AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Also known as nurturing campaigns, your university needs to be at the forefront of your candidate's mind.



WHAT'S THE FIRST STEP?



The place to start is with data and effectively tracking the engagement level of your applicants. This can be achieved by monitoring the percentage of completion, number of logins and last login date.



This data can then be used to interact with these potential students and to provide them with relevant and informative content that could influence their decision making process.



WHICH MESSAGES SHOULD BE INCLUDED?



It's not about hard-hitting, pushy messages. It's about recognising that these candidates are about to make important decisions which will have significant impact on their lives and careers. It's about supporting them with the choice they make.



This could involve keeping them up-to-date with course news and developments; introducing them to a student buddy who works in their sector of interest; providing them with a recommended reading list; or giving them a taste of life on campus.



WHAT'S THE BEST WAY OF CONTACTING YOUR AUDIENCE?



With every campaign, it's vital to communicate through a range of media streams to ensure that your message reaches your audience. This includes notifying the candidate via the application portal, email, chat, social media and SMS.

It's also important to adapt the tone of voice to suit the demographic and type of media.



WHEN'S BEST TO RUN A NURTURE CAMPAIGN?



Timing is key in any nurture campaign. It's always good to send regular emails to check-in with prospects. This will make potential students feel valued and satisfied, so they are less likely to look at other options. It's about creating loyalty.



If a candidate has started an application but hasn't finished, send them some persuasive facts about the course and alumni success stories. If you don't keep in contact and stay fresh in their minds, they'll turn their attention to another university.



Once they've been admitted, provide prospects with information about finding accommodation and applying for visas, and let them know you are there should they have any questions.



WHO ARE NURTURE CAMPAIGNS AIMED AT?



The primary audience in any nurture campaign is potential students. But there are different types of potential students that need to be considered – and you should tailor your communication to each type.



You have those who are 99.9% certain they are going to choose your university. It could be that you have the perfect course for them; the best career prospects; your university is in ideal proximity to their home; or it's where their boss studied.



You also have those who are undecided. They like what your university has to offer and have shown an interest, but they are also tempted by other institutions.



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And you have those who are reluctant – and may need a little more persuasion.



This is where the interaction aspect of the nurture campaign comes in handy. You can find out what may be holding them back, and target messaging to either change their minds or answer any queries they may have. Knowing the engagement level of each candidate will help you segment these prospects to address their needs more effectively.



POST-ENROLMENT SUPPORT



Despite the main objective of converting applicants to students, nurture campaigns can also extend to post-enrolment events.

First impressions count and those first few weeks at a new university are vital.

Ensure support is on-hand and information is available, because you need to reassure them they have made the right choice.



HOW CAN THE SUCCESS OF A KEEP WARM CAMPAIGN BE FULLY EVALUATED?



There are a number of ways in which you can monitor the success of a nurture campaign. The most obvious one will be the percentage of applicant/enrolment conversions achieved. However, along the way, you can gauge how the campaign is going by looking at click-throughs, data comparisons after each activity, number of touchpoints, competition entries and social media responses.



These are all great ways to monitor results, but student feedback is also incredibly valuable. Evidence that your campaign was successful can be seen through positive comments from those who matter most, so ask them their thoughts and how the campaign could be improved for future prospects. You can also ask for feedback from students who applied and didn't enrol with you.



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