

Proven Strategies To Boost Your Enrollment

An Emerge Education White Paper



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More Students, Same Staffing Levels

Higher education marketing and student recruitment has changed dramatically in recent years. Between 2002 and 2014 the number of students enrolled in at least one distance education course increased from 1.6 to 5.8 million students.¹ More and more students are looking for alternatives to the brick and mortar classroom.

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Nontraditional is the new "traditional" in higher education in the United States
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Additionally, the volume of students attempting to go back to school is increasing, however the volume of college staff members that support those increased inquiries has not maintained the same pace of growth.



ISSUE #1. The volume of students going back to school is out-pacing admissions staffing levels.

Recruiting Challenges

In addition to being understaffed, our higher education partners cite additional challenges that prevent them from meeting the needs of their prospective students:

- **Meetings and administrative tasks take up a large portion of the business day**
- **Busy with face to face interviews with other potential students**
- **Lack of immediate follow-up due to sheer volume**
- **Inability to be available the moment the student initiates the call**

These challenges prevent many institutions from providing the level of customer service that students demand, which negatively impacts enrollment and revenue. Here is a sample of the complaints we hear when we can finally get in contact with our university partners' leads:

"I asked for information and no one has ever called me or emailed me"

"I have called multiple times and no one seems to be available to take my calls"

"I can't get the answers I need to apply and become a student at your college"

"The representative didn't take the time to get to know me"

"I have not heard from anyone at that college since I applied"

"I don't have time for this and I am going to contact another college"



ISSUE #2. Administrative tasks and meetings prevent recruiters from providing requisite customer service.

The Importance of Immediate Response

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, marketing budgets have increased by more than 100% percent from 2001 to 2010 - this is the case for both smaller colleges and larger research institutions.³ Competition for the student has become much more aggressive as institutions scramble to acquire leads.

Today, the average 18-34 year old college student owns seven media devices including smart phones, laptops, computers and gaming devices.⁴ Students' access to instant information provides them less reason to wait if there is a gap between their request for information and a school's response.



ISSUE #3. In a competitive higher education landscape, if you don't reach out immediately to your prospect, someone else will.



If initial contact is not made to a prospective student within 120 seconds, it takes an average of 8 calls to eventually reach that prospect again.



Using a Call Center

In today's environment, it can be challenging to effectively build a "speed to lead" strategy, yet this is critical to the success of your institution. If you do not contact a lead immediately, one of your competitors will. One way to ease the burden on your recruiters and hit immediate response goals is to use a call center. This allows the admissions staff to focus on having effective communication with qualified students rather than dialing, hoping to find one.

A call center can triple the volume of potential recruiting conversations. Based on our experience, a team of four admission recruiters can make up to 200 cold calls a day. A call center can increase that volume to over 600 calls a day. The ability for a call center to make more "speed to lead" dials and the ability for your admissions staff to have more engaging conversations will boost your enrollment.

New Lead Strategies

The ability to respond quickly to new leads is critical in meeting your enrollment goals. As an enrollment or marketing leader of your campus, you must ask yourself this one important question: Can your admissions staff continually call students within 120 seconds of the lead or application being submitted? The 120 second time period is critical because research indicates that you can increase your immediate response rates by over 50% with this effective “speed to lead” strategy.⁵ This will have immediate impact on your conversions, which will help you reach your enrollment goals.

Even with an immediate response, recruiters will still have some leads that they will not be able to reach right away, which is why it is important to have an effective contact strategy to reach that student within 72 hours. See page 7 for an example of a contact strategy that includes phone, voicemail and email.

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A lead contacted within 120 seconds is four times as likely to convert as a lead whose initial contact is after 24 hours.

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Re-contact Strategies

In our tests of multiple colleges across the United States, Emerge personnel submitted an application for admission through college websites. Nearly 80% of the colleges had zero contact attempts with the student applicant in the first week following the application. The remaining 20% of tested colleges made a call attempt, but no other activity followed from the college after the initial call. This is hard to believe when so many small and mid-sized colleges rely so heavily upon tuition revenue from enrollments. A re-contact campaign can be highly effective for colleges because of the lack of response to both lead requests and application submissions.

So what does a re-contact campaign involve exactly?

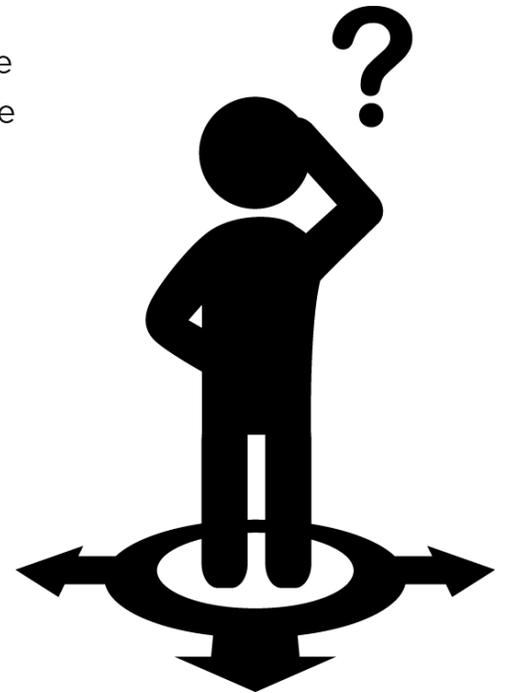
A re-contact campaign is a concentrated, full-time, focused effort to re-engage missed opportunities by reconnecting prospective student candidates to your college. A recontact campaign is another resource where an industry-trained, customer service call center will focus on finding those opportunities while your recruiters continue to focus on new student candidate inquiries. A re-contact campaign can literally start new conversations with old inquires who have been lost in the administrative shuffle.

Many of the inquires become lost opportunities because the staff at the college either doesn't have the bandwidth or the motivation to identify and re-engage these students. Admissions staff are typically focused on the latest, new prospect, not the one from last week.

The list of student inquiries laying dormant in the college's database represents potential students who at one time had enough interest in the college to request information and may have even applied, but were somehow lost in the student recruitment cycle.

Re-contact campaigns can revive up to 10%-20% of these inquiries into re-engaged, newly interested prospects over the typical length of a contract with a college. Emerge Education has seen a 400% increase in re-engagement results versus what the college had been able to do in-house.

Imagine employing a call center strategy that engages both new and old leads. Our experience has indicated that when a college attempts this dual-approach strategy in-house, they will typically achieve a 25-35% contact rate. However, when the college partners with a trusted call center focused on higher education, the results typically increase to a 60-65% contact rate.



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80% of colleges made no attempts to contact an applicant within the first seven days of applying.

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Creating a Contact Strategy

A standardized contact strategy allows each recruiter to be aware of the expectations surrounding contacting students. Emerge has made available its initial contact strategy on the following page. This process begins as soon as the prospective student submits a lead form or application.

The critical elements to any contact strategy are:

1

An immediate phone call AND email within 120 seconds

2

Clear, urgency-building email content with a call to action

3

Front-loaded contact attempts while the prospect is most interested

4

Follow up via re-contact campaign with a trusted higher education call center



Learn more about our approach at:

emergeedu.com

Emerge Education's Initial Contact Strategy - New Leads

Process begins immediately once a student submits a lead form or application



DAY 1



Call #1

Within 120 seconds



Email #1

Within 120 seconds



Call #2

Within 30 minutes



Call #3

Within 60 minutes
Leave voicemail

DAY 2



Call #4



Call #5



Email #2

DAY 3



Call #6



Call #7

Leave voicemail



Email #3

DAY 4



Students enter a re-contact campaign

FIRST 3 DAYS

7

phone calls

3

emails

2

voicemails

Strategies That Will Boost Your Enrollment

In summary, higher education admissions professionals face several challenges in today's increasingly competitive landscape:



- The volume of students going back to school continues to out-pace admissions staffing levels
- Prospective students have rising expectations for immediate response
- Administrative tasks and meetings prevent recruiters from providing timely customer service

Here are some proven strategies that you can start implementing today that will help to boost your enrollment:

1

Map out the entire process that a student goes through to enroll in your college, from the time they become a lead to the time they start classes. This will help you quickly identify areas for improvement and allow you to begin streamlining.

2

Identify and monitor conversion rates at the lead, application and enroll stages to establish baseline performance metrics and recognize gaps.

3

Mystery shop your institution by filling out lead forms, contact forms and applications to evaluate the response and communication received.

4

Mystery shop your competitors to determine how your customer service compares, from the perspective of a prospective student.

5

Fill out your online application to determine how easy it is to complete. Many colleges require unnecessary information or have multiple-stage applications that cause students to leave the application.

In addition, we recommend doing a cost-benefit analysis on the following strategies. While there is a cost associated with each strategy, these tactics will result in higher enrollments and increased revenues:

6

Partner with a call center to immediately contact leads and work those leads until they can be transferred to the college's in-house recruiters. This allows recruiters to focus exclusively on meaningful conversations with interested students who are ready to act.

7

Utilize a re-contact campaign to reengage the pool of leads that have never advanced. This will revive 10%-20% of inquiries and eliminate leads that will never convert.

8

Train your admissions staff. Many colleges hire young admissions recruiters with little or no professional sales training, and yet expect professional sales results.

If you want to immediately grow enrollment and revenues and take advantage of the recent trends with virtual and blended growth, then employing one or all of these proven strategies is critical for future success. Contact Emerge Education today to learn how we can partner with you to reach your enrollment goals.



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Our Services

Emerge Education offers a range of full service solutions for both online and on ground higher education. From marketing to matriculation, our services cover the entire student life cycle.

[Learn more](#)

Our Team

Our team is comprised of leaders with extensive higher education experience and a passion for improving higher ed institutions. Our experts specialize in maximizing business operations, allowing our schools to focus on what they do best: educating students.

[Learn more](#)

To schedule a free phone consultation regarding your recruitment operations feel free to contact Jim directly with any questions you may have.



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[Schedule Now!](#)

This white paper was developed in partnership with Suporta. Suporta offers call center support and recruiting solutions for institutions of higher education.

Citations

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