

CE MARKETING TIPS & IDEAS

INTERNAL MARKETING IDEAS

If you outsource your complex graphic designs and branding to a professional firm, have them create templates for all your ongoing needs. Your in-house graphic designer can usually make changes while keeping the firm's intent of the designs and use intact. Your in-house designer can keep up with the advertising demands much more efficiently and affordably.

Be sure to send fulfillment packs at first-class postage to new prospects within one or two days of the initial inquiry. As time elapses interest fades. The cost of sending the packet first-class is usually \$3-\$4. That's nothing compared with cost to get the lead in the first place. Even worse, why risk losing interest due to lost time or a competitor getting materials to them first? Your fulfillment packets should also be heavily personalized with cover letters, well-branded marketing collateral, and have extras included like save-the-date cards, financial aid brochures, etc.

All members of the CE unit must recognize their marketing responsibilities to get the customer and recognize their service responsibilities to keep them. They must function like a business, and use sophisticated tools to help get the work done and make the marketing efforts effective and rewarding.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Just do it! Public Relations is essentially free press and nothing can beat that. And regardless if your releases get published, post everything you write on your web site to show off your activities, achievements, appointments, etc. Your institution's Public Relations office can also probably provide you with distribution support with access to some powerful resources they already subscribe to.

DATABASE/CRM

Make sure your prospect (a.k.a. inquiry, recruitment, lead) database performs as an effective data management system that compliments the whole marketing business process. It should have a solid **entry** module that prohibits user error; **tracking** functionality that identifies source, interest areas and costs; **fulfillment** capabilities that assist with the outgoing mail packets; **inventory control** to keep tabs on all printed collateral; **event** solicitation and reservations; and **contact management** to facilitate the sales process through the appropriate program representatives. This sounds like a lot but these systems do exist. Such a system can reduce your staff efforts immensely, while improving your marketing decisions, your customer service, and your bottom line.

An effective database system brings you more economies of scale, marketing expertise, and the ability to identify and exercise powerful cross marketing opportunities and the infrastructure to target individuals or groups with ongoing personalized messages.

Your prospect database system will become your most powerful marketing asset if you run it correctly. Make sure the data entered is valid and properly coded for all the programs that benefit from the system. This source of leads will always prove to be an effective tool for follow-up and closing sales. Make sure every prospect makes it into the database, whether they've walked in, phoned, inquired through your web site, or visited you at an event. You must get those leads in! And if you think you're doing someone a favor by manually handwriting an envelope and getting a request out the door fast – you're wrong! If that mailing information wasn't recorded and just went out with the mail, you've most likely lost that potential student due to not having the chance to hit them again.

Maintain a corporate database. Most companies and organizations want stacks of your materials for their staff or members. Be sure to get them what they ask for every semester when you print new materials. It's one of the best ways to build a relationship for contract opportunities as well as being in front of new prospects everyday.

ADVERTISING

Code and track all your responses, including placement of where the ad hit the page. You'll need to know all this so that you can make informed decisions for the next time you want to run that ad in that publication. And if you get terrible placement or it falls into the wrong section, don't be afraid to ask the publication for a "make good".

Do a monthly calendar for all your ads and get sign-off from the program managers before it begins. This will help get you better placement and usually frequency discounts too. Plus your ad designer will love you for it!

PUBLICATIONS

Sometimes ads just don't cut the clutter. Ask your best channel publications if they allow inserts or tip-ins. You'd be surprised how well one of your mailers (with Business Reply Cards) will do when it's stapled right into the publication of your most targeted readers. If the publication has never done it before, encourage them to try it for you.

DIRECT MARKETING

Direct Mail – there are steps to getting it right:

1. List choice is key. That's at least 80% of the battle – getting your message to the right people.
2. Content and design is next. You don't want your mailer thrown away at the mailbox. Make sure it carries your brand and clearly and instantly conveys benefit.

3. Time the drop to benefit you, while paying attention to high-traffic times. Also, budget enough time to send it bulk rate. Don't miss Non-Profit Standard Presort rates — they are a fraction of the cost of first-class and deliver quite fast!
4. Make sure the mailing is easy to respond to. Provide at least all five channels for responses to come back to you: phone, fax, mail, email and web.
5. Business Reply Cards (BRCs) will be the most popular return vehicle and it's well worth the return postage to provide the extra incentive to respond. And size matters — keep your BRCs to postcard size and pay postcard rate.
6. Always try and secure list source information. The best way to obtain it is through the BRCs, where you can have the code marked at the mail house right onto the BRCs.
7. Try a tri-fold design for your mailers. These, simple, tab-closed mailers are great because they can start flat at the mail house for ink-jetting and then be folded down to affordable letter size post that nicely hides the BRC.
8. Always include your house lists in your mailings. They always get the best responses and they count towards the multiple hits you know you need to do to close sales. Consider cross-marketing your lists too. You'd be surprised how occasionally swapping leads from similar (and sometimes competitive) programs will have a serendipitous result for both.

At least annually you should send your non-profit bulk mailings with "Address Service Requested". There's a small fee the USPS charges for each correction they mail to you, but it's better to pay that once than to continue to mail to an address that's not receiving your mailings. (Undeliverable Non-Profit bulk mail is just trashed and never forwarded.)

MONEY-SAVING TIP

Save your precious marketing dollars with postage savings. Most schools are eligible for non-profit rates, and Non-Profit Standard Pre-Sort (a.k.a. Bulk) is a fraction of the cost of first-class. So use a mail house for your larger mailings, have everything sorted and bar-coded, and take advantage of huge savings, with surprisingly fast delivery times!

Check back for more tips as this list is frequently updated.

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Teeboom LLC was founded in 2002 on the premise that Continuing Education (CE) marketing practices can be handled smoothly and cost effectively using the right data management system. Since the beginning we have dedicated our development resources to build AccQuire, a user-friendly software tool that can help CE marketing units get the most from their prospective student leads and make the best use of their limited marketing dollars.

At Teeboom LLC, we understand that continuing education—even with its noble mission—is a business, needing to sell, prompt, and convince prospective students to buy. Our commitment has made us a leader in helping any educational institution get more students for their part-time programs.

Teeboom LLC president and founder Troy Teeboom was the Director of Marketing for The George Washington University and Assistant Vice President of GWSolutions, a George Washington University Enterprise. Troy managed a \$2 million marketing budget for over 50 continuing education programs, generating revenues of over \$25 million annually. From 1994 to 2002, he earned more than 20 marketing awards from the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA), including "Best of Show".

Troy earned a B.S. in Marketing with a minor in Computer Science from the University of Massachusetts and an M.S. in Business Technologies from The George Washington University.