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# **From Prospects to Graduates Enrollment and Retention Strategies**

# Today's Presenters



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**THE NEW NORMAL  
...and the impact on enrollment,  
retention and graduation**

# The Evolution of Student Engagement

- One year ago, the world was in the middle of “The Shut Down.”
- In 2020, screen time increased by 70% in the United States.
- Marketing efforts had to change significantly with the increase of online usage.
- Schools had to rethink their engagement processes with potential students and current students alike.
- The population increased their online knowledge and usage in months when that level of usage was projected to take years.

# The Evolution of Student Engagement

- As we return to campuses and move on with our lives, we need to ask these questions:
  - What has changed?
  - What remains the same?
  - What have we learned about student engagement?
    - Enrollment?
    - Retention?
    - Graduation?



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**Marketing**

# Marketing Engagement

- Your website is still the most important and highest converting screen destination your school has. It needs to be optimized and User Friendly (UX/UI).
- Identify which social media platforms are right for your schools and keep them current and posting regularly.
  - 50% or more of posts should be about the school.
  - 25% or more can be about the industries of the programs offered.
  - No more than 25% should be about community, quotes or other non-school related messages.
- Develop fresh content creative for all marketing initiatives. Content needs to be relevant, have strong visuals and be engaging to the target audience. Use video and animation whenever possible. Keep on brand with everything you do.

# Marketing Engagement

- Pay Per Click is still typically your highest converting paid lead source.
- Social Display is climbing in popularity and lead generating abilities.
- Pay Per Lead has one of the best cost per starts if aggregated and managed properly.
- Online TV and Radio are evolving and can target specific audiences for branding.



# Marketing Engagement

- Most of your marketing efforts are done online. This might not be a big leap from what you were doing in 2019, but HOW you are marketing online should have dramatically changed.
- Due to the surge in online usage, creative needs to be thumb-stopping.
- Brand consistency is important for recognition and breaking through the ever-increasing clutter.
- Segmenting and targeting audiences by program of interest is not only possible now it is critical to gaining the attention of your audience and getting them to react and inquire.



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**Enrollment**

# Overcoming Today's Students Obstacles

The obstacles today still fall into the same four categories:

- Health
- Time
- Financial
- Fear

# Overcoming Today's Students Obstacles

The solution to overcoming today's students' obstacles is the same as it has always been - listen to the obstacle and have a "Plan Of Action" to overcome the obstacle by providing solutions.

- Fear of Covid, wearing masks, social distancing and staying safe – **Health.**
- Homeschooling kids, no family support, working two jobs – **Time.**
- Pandemic layoffs, non-essential jobs – **Financial.**
- Worry about having the tools for success – **Fear.**

# Admissions Obstacles

- Providing the virtual tools needed to engage and enroll students was the biggest obstacle in 2020 for admissions.
- The enrollment process was the second.

Most of us scrambled to provide video conferencing, virtual tours and access to the faculty and staff which are essential to the enrollment process. It was a huge adjustment and there was a learning curve, but as our industry has proven repeatedly, we are innovators and always put our students first.

# Admissions Obstacles

Obstacles of the virtual enrollment versus on-site enrollment:

- Lack of focused attention
- Building rapport and trust
- Disruption of the process
- Emotional and technical support

# Admissions Obstacles

Obstacles that diminished with the adaptation of the virtual enrollment:

- Transportation issues
- Childcare issues
- Time management issues
- Decision makers involvement

# Admissions Virtual Advantages

- Implementation of video conferencing
  - New contact source to set interviews
  - New way to include decision makers in the process
  - New tool to introduce referrals
- Paperless enrollments
- Remote process when needed
  - Snow days don't lose momentum (could increase momentum)
  - Remote or seasonal team members
  - Flexibility to adjust schedules for best contact times







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**Retention**

# Retaining the Students

- Last spring, teachers around the world completed a crash course in shifting to virtual teaching and online learners.
- “Hands on Learning” is a term used throughout our industry. It is how we teach and how our students learn. With some programs, it is still essential that it stays that way.
- However, the pandemic did teach us we have more in our arsenal to increase retention rates than we previously were open to or allowed.

# Retaining the Students

Using virtual learning for some of the classes or modules that can be done online is the biggest advantage we gained for retention efforts.

- Saves time and money for the school.
- Allows students some flexibility.
- Decreases the amount of drops due to childcare, transportation, illness or job-related issues.
- Students can continue their education—staying enrolled and on track for graduation.

# Retaining the Students

## Virtual Learning Retention Strategies

- Only require set-time videoconferencing when two-way communication is expected.  
Create recordings of presentations not requiring two-way communication and students can view as it fits their schedule.
- Set up work for smaller groups to participate instead of the whole class.
  - Students become more engaged in the project work in smaller groups.
  - Smaller groups have less time management issues.
  - Easier to identify at-risk learners.
  - Smaller settings encourage more conversations allowing students to share ideas.

# Retaining the Students

## Virtual Learning Retention Strategies

- Use off screen reading when possible as a break from screen time learning.
- Personalize homework for higher engagement.
- Family/friend involvement with homework assignments. Video of demonstrating bandaging techniques on a family member or friend is a great example.
- Flipped homework assignments
- When creating assignments ask, “What is the desired learning outcome?”
- Establish regular office hours for instructors (and post them for students).

# Retaining the Students

Increase your retention rates by:

- Identifying at-risk learners using electronic alerts for missing attendance and homework.
- Establish a collaborative student support plan, i.e., virtual guidance/counseling.
- On-going training and support for faculty and instructors.
- Establish an active student services department that focuses to enhance student engagement and school spirit.



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**Graduation**

# Getting Students to Graduation

As students approach graduation, several obstacles arise:

- Fear of completion
- Interviewing anxiety
- Starting a new career
- Adjusting to their “new life”



# Getting Students to Graduation

Fear of completion – Students have spent the last several months or years being a student. The light at the end of the tunnel is nearing and that can be scary.

Monitor the success of students about to graduate. Typically, the more successful students will be the ones afflicted with this obstacle.

- Acknowledge the fear and help them understand it is a normal.
- Help students visualize themselves in their career.
- Create seminars on what to expect in the workplace.
- Set up tours with employee partners (on-site or virtually).

# Getting Students to Graduation

Interviewing anxiety – For many “almost” graduates this will be the first experience interviewing for a professional career. Help them be prepared.

- Set up resume workshops.
- Hold mock interviews.
- Provide seminars on soft-skills.
- Create a repository of appropriate attire.
- If employee partners are willing, conduct the initial interview at the school where the student is comfortable.
- Invite employee partners to present on what they are looking for in an employee and what the students can expect during the interview process.



# Getting Students to Graduation

Starting a new career – Many programs include an externship that can turn into a career or help students gain the experience of working in the industry. As students graduate and start their new careers:

- Check in with them to see how they are adjusting.
- Check in with their employer.
- Identify any red flags or issues and help provide a solution.

Placement rates and employer partnerships are important, taking this extra step can prevent future issues for the school.

# Getting Students to Graduation

Adjusting to their new life – This doesn't mean giving up the school family they have come to love.

- Create an alumni community they can join.
- Encourage graduates to send pictures for social posts.
- Invite alumni to open houses, graduations and other organized activities (even if they are virtual).
- Promote testimonials from your graduates.
- Ask for referrals.

Retaining students is one of the best “Image, Reputation and Revenue Strategies” for your school.



# Enrollment...Retention...Graduation

Over the last year and a half things have drastically changed and evolved, creating more opportunities and some new obstacles. Through it all one thing remains the same...

We really do change people's lives!

# THANK YOU

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If you would like learn more about Gragg Advertising or the topics discussed during the presentation today,

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Or call 816-931-0050 and ask for Lisa Olmedo

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