

Mobile Marketing: The Next Big Thing in Recruitment Advertising by Kari Key

Is your cell phone within your reach right at this moment? Would you stop reading this if you received a text message? Of course you would, especially if you have become one of the millions of people who now use their cell phone as a lifeline. Mobile communication has dramatically transformed from a luxurious status symbol to a necessity, right before our eyes. And, as it continues to evolve, its potential for successful recruitment efforts looks to be much more prolific than email or the internet.

Right now, your ideal prospect is more likely to be carrying a cell phone than a laptop. In fact, mobile phones outnumber computers by over 4 to 1, TV sets by over 2 to 1, and internet users by nearly 3 to 1¹. So, when considering which option gives you the most coverage, mobile advertising is the clear choice.

As technological advances continue, mobile phones will supplement and eventually replace many forms of media. In the current market, wireless applications such as mobile internet and mobile television have yet to take a hold. Text messaging, however, is a basic service available on every mobile device with the majority of cell phone carriers.

This is especially relevant because text messaging has become a primary form of communication for the proprietary school target market. According to Mediapost, mobile subscribers in the US between the ages of 13 and 29 send an average of twenty text messages each day. This channel allows quick and non-intrusive messages that convey everything from life events to ordinary small talk. Once you understand the subtle etiquette involved with text messaging, it can become a wonderful way to quickly connect with your potential students.

Mobile marketing not only gives you instant access to your target market, but it also gives them the ability to instantly respond to all your advertisements, wherever they may be. For example, try our mobile service for yourself right now. Text the keyword '**contact**' to **51684** from your mobile phone for a demonstration of what a user experiences.

Just as the Internet created a world where advertisements are personalized and opted-in, the mobile advertising world will require an on-demand, relationship-based approach. However, unlike online leads, the leads are exclusive and will not be passed around to your competition.

Currently, mobile advertising is best used as part of a multiple media package. Partnering text messaging with your TV, print, and online marketing efforts allows you to increase your coverage, response, and referral rates. Each campaign has an individual keyword (like "contact" above) that allows lead sources to be tracked.

The first kind of lead can be created through what is called a pull campaign. This is where the contact is initiated by the prospect. Placing a mobile call-to-action option on different forms of advertising, such as direct mail pieces, allows prospects to instantly opt-in and get on the path to enrollment. Sending the keyword can initiate a voice call back from a representative, a voice message that is sent to their phone, or a mobile admissions advisor who establishes a more personal relationship by sending several text messages.

A push campaign gives the option for the school to contact a list of prospects that have opted-in to receive third party messages. Once again, there are several options for the prospect to respond to the message they receive. With this approach it is essential for the message to speak to the needs of the potential student instead of being a blatant advertisement.

Once contact is established, it is imperative to establish follow up strategies. Using the prospects' messages and points of contact as triggers, it is possible to create automatic responses that keep their interest fresh and help them progress towards enrollment. Throughout any mobile campaign process, it is imperative to keep in mind that this type of communication demands a unique and educated approach.

Furthermore, the usefulness of mobile communication in proprietary schools does not end at enrollment. Students can opt-in to mobile services that will enrich their experience and therefore increase their retention. Faculty can send class information from a user-friendly internet-based dashboard. Administrative staff can send out reminders to students when classes are beginning or when scheduling deadlines are looming. Tuition payment rates will increase as students are gently reminded on their cell phones. Safety issues will be quickly addressed with weather and security alerts. Mobile advertising also can generate continued revenue as it is used in joint promotions with local businesses. The possibilities go on and on, and so do the benefits for both the school and the students.

One thing is certain, mobile advertising is well on its way to becoming a powerful tool in the school industry. As time goes on, it will continue to develop in its purpose and effectiveness. Mobile users are already exceeding expectations in their advertising response rates. Nielsen Mobile reports that of the users who recall seeing mobile advertising in the previous thirty days, half responded to a mobile ad.

It is time to put your message in the palm of your prospect's hand. You will capture their interest when they receive your message in the familiar language of text messaging. And, as they continue to feel that connection through repeated contact points, they will trust you to help them achieve their future careers goals. Position your school to meet their needs now and in the future by using the

mobile medium in your advertising and student communications. As you finish reading this, take a moment to look at the text message you received from us and contemplate how you will take the next step toward using mobile advertising.

¹ Source: Wikipedia