Digital Marketing Plan Checklist

for Higher Education

VONT

Top Digital Marketing Tactics for Higher Education

Are you making the most of the power of the digital world to improve your college or university's awareness, lead generation, applications, and yield? Find out which tactics are most effective with VONT's checklist below.

Awareness

Awareness advertising is different for each institution. Lesser known colleges and universities stand to gain the most from building awareness and by doing so improve the performance of lead generation advertising down the road. Build your Awareness campaign with the following:

Social Media

With low cost per impression and good targeting capabilities, social media is a great vehicle for building awareness of your school and programs.

PROS: Quick to deploy powerful targeting; low cost; high frequency; supports remarketing and targeting by email; ads can appear as "native" content; creative is inexpensive.
CONS: Most impressions and traffic will be on mobile devices, which can be harder to convert.

SEO

Search Engine Optimization makes your website more visible to search engines by tailoring and expanding content on your website to appeal to search engines. As a result, your website will appear higher up on a Search Engine Results Page (SERP) – and more of your target audience will see and visit you.

PROS: High organic search rankings bring a lot of credibility; investing in SEO brings long-term dividends because you build a set of content assets you own forever.
CONS: Takes time and dedication for content creation to be successful; no guarantees of when or by how much search engine visibility will improve.

Display Advertising

Individual Website Placements
Place ads on specific good-fit websites such as a feeder or professional site for one of your programs.

PROS: May perform better than network buys.
CONS: More expensive than network buys; you may pay too much if you do not have media buying experience; good creative can be expensive.

Display Network Placements
Display Network campaigns place ads across hundreds of relevant websites in a single buy casting a broader net than individual website placements.

PROS: *Broad reach; relatively low cost.*
CONS: *Low clickthrough rates and conversion rates; good creative can be expensive.*

✅ Directories

Listings in general purpose directories give your site more SEO authority, which helps it score higher on SERPs. Paid or free directories offer more exposure as well.

PROS: *Inexpensive; helps organic search rankings (SEO)*
CONS: *Not likely to deliver much traffic unless directories are highly targeted.*

✅ Content Marketing

Creating and refreshing great content on your site as well as broadcasting your new content through vehicles such as social media help build a relationship with your audience and drive traffic to your website. Content marketing is also the gateway to a potential Inbound Marketing strategy.

PROS: Great for brand building; places you in thought leader role; higher engagement than traditional ads; strong targeting through social media; helps organic search rankings (SEO).
CONS: Requires committed strategy and planning to be effective; good content creation can be complex and costly.

✅ Digital Earned Media

Also known as Digital PR, earned media involves getting in touch with bloggers and other buzz-makers to create additional exposure for your school or programs on Internet without paying fees for it.

PROS: *Creates implied endorsements from influential 3rd parties, which helps with authority; builds trust in target audiences.*
CONS: *It has become harder to get influential blogger support without paying for it.*

Lead Generation

Lead generation is used to increase the number inquiries, as well as the number of attendees at campus visits and webinars (the virtual equivalent of the campus visit). Build your Lead Generation campaign with the following:

✓ Paid Search

Reaches prospects who are already searching for educational programs by placing your website at the top of the Search Engine Results Page (SERP).

PROS: *Quick to deploy; very adaptable; most targeted of all media; highest conversion rates; often highest performing channel.*
CONS: *Increasingly costly; complex to do right; good at harvesting existing demand, but not generating new demand (i.e. you can present your ads when people search for a keyword but you can't make more people search.)*

✓ Social media with Facebook Custom Audiences

Ads use the rich demographic and psychographic data known about social media users, and can promote content, visits, webinars, or ads for school or individual program.

PROS: *Quick to deploy, powerful targeting, low cost/high frequency; supports remarketing and targeting by email; ads can appear as "native" content; creative is inexpensive.*
CONS: *Most impressions and traffic will be on mobile devices, which can be harder to convert.*

☑ Remarketing

Reach out to your previous website visitors with both display and text ads that include calls-to-action (CTAs) that encourage them to return to and reengage with your website. Ability to customize messages based on whether or not the past visitor is already a lead.

PROS: *Powerful tool to get more leads out of any of your other marketing; strong conversion rates; good reminder channel for ongoing communications.*
CONS: *Important to use' frequency caps' to make sure your target audiences do not feel "stalked"; good creative can be expensive.*

☑ Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Optimize both landing pages and key pages of website for correct page elements such as headlines, copy, form, graphics, page layout, and call-to-action (CTA). Be sure to explore options for conversion types focusing on the difference between what works in a desktop space and what works in the rapidly growing mobile space.

PROS: *Gets the most out of your marketing spend; without it you spend too much for each lead.*
CONS: *Requires expertise to do well; should be an iterative improvement process.*

Applications

Digital Marketing can be a valuable tool used to increase your applicant pool. Build your Applications campaign with the following:

✅ Email

Use the email list from your lead generation activities to remind people of the approaching application deadline.

PROS: *Direct, low-cost channel; effective, expressive medium*
CONS: *Typically only 20%-30% of your email recipients will look at your email, so it should not be relied upon as the only means to reach your email list.*

✅ Paid Search

Focus shifts from driving inquiries to driving applications – especially near the application deadline.

PROS: *Quick to deploy; very adaptable; most targeted of all media; highest conversion rates; often highest performing channel; advertising application deadlines creates a sense of urgency that drives higher response rate*
CONS: *For first time searchers, driving straight to the application may be asking too much for the first conversion type.*

✅ Remarketing

A remarketing pool can include both visitors to your website who did not inquire as well as your known leads. Promote applications and cite deadline.

PROS: *Promoting upcoming application deadlines is the perfect use of remarketing as reminder advertising to past visitors and leads.*
CONS: *Important to use' frequency caps' to make sure your target audiences do not feel "stalked"; good creative can be expensive.*

Social Media

Use Facebook's Custom Audiences to load your email list of leads from your CRM and promote applications and their deadlines to these leads.

PROS: *Allows very specific targeted use of social advertising to reach your leads list.*
CONS: *Typically only 10-15% of your email list will be matched to Facebook users that can be targeted, so it cannot be relied upon as the only mechanism to reach your entire email list.*

Content Marketing

Use social media custom lists to drive people to your site for the content you are posting on the road to applying.

PROS: *Strong reminder advertising without being as direct as "Apply Now"; good compliment to other forms of application advertising.*
CONS: *Not as direct a form of advertising so conversions not likely to be as high.*

Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Optimize landing pages and key website pages for applications and application deadlines.

PROS: *Will get you the most applications out of your marketing spend.*
CONS: *Not much time to iterate with application deadlines approaching.*

Yield

Yield is an important metric for success. Digital marketing can also help to increase the number of accepted students who choose to attend your school. Build your Yield campaign with the following:

✓ Remarketing

Keep accepted students engaged with your school. As accepted students visit web pages devoted to them, they become members of the remarketing list of accepted students and begin seeing ads and promoted content also created just for them.

PROS: *Great way to deepen relationships with your accepted students and employ reminder advertising of accepted student days.*
CONS: *Important to use 'frequency caps' to make sure your accepted students do not feel "stalked"; good creative can be expensive.*

✓ Social Media

Target your email list of accepted applicants using Facebook Custom Audiences and engage them on social media.

PROS: *Provide targeted ongoing content so they can feel the energy and buzz of your college or university prior to decision time.*
CONS: *Typically only 10%-15% of your email list will be matched to Facebook users that can be targeted, so it cannot be relied upon as the only mechanism to reach your entire email list.*

Email

Use the email list of your accepted students to build a relationship on an ongoing basis as they are making their decision about what college or university they will attend.

PROS: *Direct, low-cost channel; effective, expressive medium*
CONS: *Typically only 20%-30% of your email recipients will look at your email so it should not be relied on as the only means to reach your email list.*

Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Optimize landing pages and key website pages for Accepted Students Days.

PROS: *Eliminates barriers and makes it easy for accepted students to sign-up for Accepted Student Days and other information.*
CONS: *Requires expertise to do well; should be an iterative improvement process.*

About VONT Performance Digital Marketing

At VONT we believe that change is the only constant in the digital world – and that excites us. When tools and environments are constantly changing, new opportunities to help our clients achieve success are constantly arising. Each new advertising technology, social platform, or design approach allows us to improve on the results we achieve for our clients.

We believe in this idea of continual fine-tuning so much that we named our company VONT, which means to achieve exponential improvement in incremental steps. It is our core belief, and the reason why we are not simply a web design company or simply a digital advertising agency, but rather a long-term, single source partner providing a comprehensive array of web development and digital marketing capabilities.

In short, we're here so that our clients achieve success in the ever-changing digital world.

Get in touch at:

17 Ash Street
Westbrook, Maine 04092
207.887.8333
hello@vontweb.com | www.vontweb.com