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Project: Robert Morris University Grows Enrollment Through Hyper-Personalized Cross Media Campaign

Vertical Market: Education

Business Application: Direct Marketing/ Lead Generation

Business Objectives

Robert Morris University (RMU) had the fundamental business objective of convincing high achieving students to select their school for undergraduate study. In the very competitive higher education market, these decisions are both objectively and subjectively made by the students and their families. In addition, 18-year-olds are notorious for not following up, making multiple touches even more critical than usual. To be successful, Robert Morris University needed a way to:

- Drive prospective students to all-campus open houses and visit days
- Provide follow up opportunities for students who express interest in events or applications but who do not commit
- Increase the number of high-quality leads
- Increase the overall number of applications
- Drive enrollment

Results

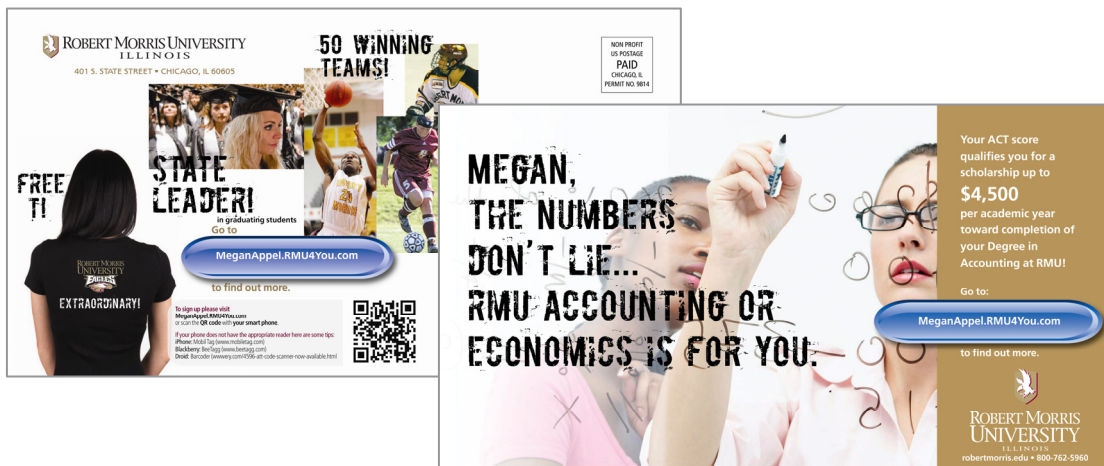
- In the first year of the campaign, RMU nearly doubled its response rate, while the conversion rate of prospects into inquiries went up 79%
- The latest campaign saw the response rate increase another 30% and lead purchase went up 58%, while costs dropped 56%
- Overall, student enrollment has increased 6.1% on the campuses

Campaign Architecture

This was a highly personalized marketing campaign utilizing four waves of direct mail and email along with online and social media channels over a course of seven months. RMU has 10 campuses and students were pushed to open houses and visit days at the campus nearest their home.

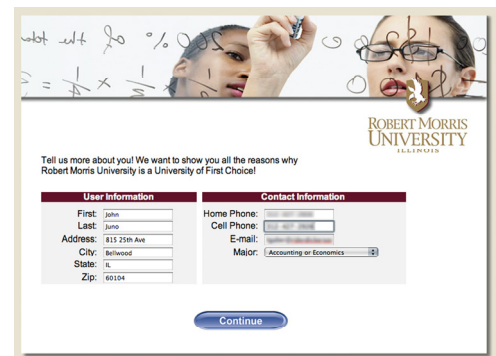
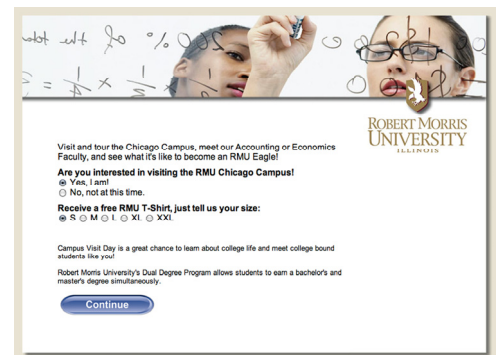
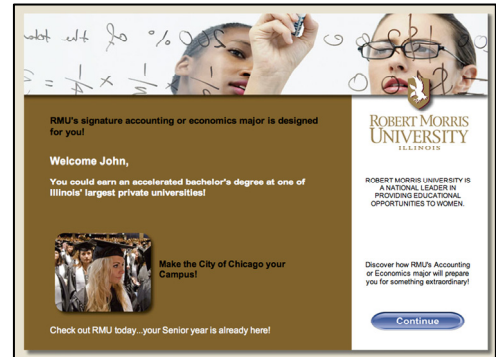


- Direct mails and emails were sent to prospective students
- Variable content was used throughout to personalize the mailings, the emailings, and the landing pages. This consisted of several text and image personalizations including:
 - Name and address
 - Exam taken (SAT or ACT)
 - Degree program – images, links to specific deans, varied thank-you pages
 - Gender
 - Scholarship amount offered
 - Athletic interest
 - In-state or out-of-state student



- Students were driven to personalized landing pages. These landing pages were used to:
 - Provide a means for students to sign up for all-campus visit days or schedule a personal visit if they could not make the scheduled visit day
 - Encourage students to link to the RMU online application and start their application process immediately
 - Drive students to RMU's social media channels
 - Redirect students to relevant content on the RMU website to keep them engaged once they completed their landing page experience

- Students also received a personalized thank you email from the appropriate Dean at Robert Morris, based on information students provided on the landing pages
- Real-time analytics via Rider Dickerson's SmartTrack online dashboard were extensively used to fine tune the campaign
 - They determined increased effectiveness of drops and emailings on specific weekdays and adjusted their timing to target those days
 - RMU noticed a much higher response rate from letters than from postcards in the first two waves. They used this information to migrate all of their outbound direct mail to letters for the subsequent mailings and continued to see good response rates
 - Rider Dickerson identified non-responders and suggested and implemented a priority email just before the admission deadline which delivered substantial results



Target Audience and Messaging

The target audience consisted of high school juniors and seniors who had taken either the SAT or ACT exams. The messaging was tailored based upon:

- The exam taken (SAT or ACT) and the student's score
- The student's major preference
- Their gender
- Any athletic interest
- Whether they were in-state or out-of-state

Offer

For high school students looking to attend college, being contacted by a university interested in having them apply is in itself an offer. The offers specific to this campaign, however, were:

- **Survey offer:** There was a free tee-shirt offer for completing the landing page experience and the image on the postcard showed a male or female wearing the shirt
- **Scholarships:** These financial scholarship offers varied in amount based upon the student's standardized test score
- **Opportunities:** There were offers for students to visit the university on all-campus days or to schedule a personal visit

List

The list for the first wave, dropped in August, is the largest. It consists of Robert Morris University in-house data as well as purchased ACT and SAT lists. This data is filtered by test scores and results in an initial mailing of approximately 250,000.

Subsequent mailings are trimmed by opt-outs, bounces, returns, non-interest and student applications. RMU also purchased additional leads for these subsequent mailings, which ranged in quantity from 10,000 to 145,000 names.

Creative and Outbound Piece

Rider Dickerson collaborated with RMU's graphic designer and data specialist to create this marketing program. Everyone worked together to ensure that everything was coordinated from both the data merge side and the creative side. This ensured that the data file was properly filtered, cleaned, and prepared in a manner that was efficient and effective for campaign use. This involved significant coaching from Rider Dickerson on how to compile the data with legends and codes rather than a large number of data columns. The data specialist and the designer, who is proficient at variable data design, worked very closely together to make this happen.

Reasons for Success

- **Good data:** The data came from good sources, was cleaned and structured with the variable data designer's input, and utilized RMU's modeling process for identifying and segmenting desired students.
- **Intelligent use of segmentation and personalization:** The segmentation, messaging, image and offer personalization was well considered and appropriate.



- **Engagement throughout campaign:** Rider Dickerson took an active role in all phases of the campaign providing key input and suggestions throughout.
- **Print, online and social media integration:** The campaign had a perfect blending of all these marketing communication channels, appropriately leveraging the strengths of each. Students were able to engage through Facebook pages and follow through Twitter which allowed the campaign to go viral.
- **Real time analysis and reaction:** Rider Dickerson and RMU used online tools to track, analyze, react and respond to the campaign. It is important to note that they did not simply study the data – they used it to make informed decisions to alter and improve future phases.



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