

# Tool #17: Segmentation Briefing Sheet: Motivations

One danger of segmentation is settling on a parameter that draws meaningless lines between prospective students. Just because you can classify your prospects into males and females, professionals and unemployed, and so on does not mean their primary concerns about and interests in returning to school stem from—or are in any way related—to those features. The banking industry ran into this unhappy truth about segmentation several years ago. They realized that segmenting according to life changes was far more effective. By accessing motivations, the banks were able to make a stronger case for how they could support those life changes.

Segmenting according to motivations is a powerful way of indicating to a prospective student that a specific institution or program is best able to help accomplish their goals. This tool will outline how to identify individuals in each microsegment as well as their unique shopping behaviors.

Implementation note: exact identifying features used to classify a prospect into a motivational segment, decision timeframes, communication preferences, etc. are likely different for each organization's target population—and even with an organization's portfolio. This tool synthesizes members' lessons learned into a guide for staff to create their own motivational segment profiles.

## Key Motivational Categories

Below are descriptions of the motivational categories uncovered by 100+ conversations with COE marketing leaders. Use the profiles to understand how to identify and cater to the needs of each microsegment.

### Constituency 1:



#### Enrichment-Seekers

**Description:** Typically older individuals considering a return to education for personal improvement reasons unattached to professional growth; less likely to be looking for “quality” and more likely to make decisions according to loyalty and convenience.

#### Identification Checklist:

- ☐ 55+ years old
- ☐ “Leisurely browsing” tone during conversations
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Interested in individual courses

**Decision Timeframe:** ~10-16 weeks

**Consideration Pool:** 2-3 programs, quite possibly multiple at the same institution

**Desired Product:** Individual courses

**Cross or Up-sell:** Financially comfortable individuals (as suggested by career information) might be interested in an encore career in a more humanitarian field. Such individuals could be interested in a certificate.

#### Critical Information to Address in Communications:

- ✓ Variety of courses to choose from
- ✓ Course delivery
- ✓ Schedule
- ✓ Institutional loyalty (target alumni or family and friends of alumni)

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## Constituency 2:



### Hesitant Graduate Student

**Description:** Typically younger prospects (22-25 years old), recently departed from undergraduate programs, who are considering a master's program but are not certain. These prospective students have of questions about most everything—the institution, specific programs of interest, faculty members, etc—because they have not done as much research or spent as much time ascertaining their needs and preferences. They typically reach out to the institution earlier in their decision-making process and they are more swayable than other microsegments. Hesitant graduate student are more likely to be interested in certificates or freemium offerings as a “test run.”

**Identification Checklist** (a prospect needs only have a majority of these features to confidently placed in the microsegment):

- ☐ 22-25 years old
- ☐ Graduated from college within the last 2 years
- ☐ Stated interest in a graduate degree program
- ☐ Has many questions and undefined needs
- ☐ Takes more than 2 days to respond to emails from the institution

**Decision Timeframe** (from start of active research to application submitted): 30+ weeks

**Consideration Pool:** 3-4 programs

**Desired Product:** Master's degree

**Cross/Up-sell:** Could be sold on a certificate that counts toward a graduate degree

**Critical Information to Address in Communications:** (in addition to the basic information about cost, quality, and outcomes that most microsegments desire):

- ✓ Reputation of school overall
- ✓ Reputation of school in field of study
- ✓ Faculty
- ✓ Availability of freemium resources

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## Constituency 3:



## Career Builders

**Description:** Typically 25+ years old, seeking additional education for professional mobility or certification. These prospective students will have done their homework. They will reach out to the institution later in their decision-making cycle when they have specific questions the answers to which they know they cannot find on the website. They will expect prompt responses to questions and will respond promptly themselves.

### Identification Checklist:

- ☐ 25+ years old
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Reach out with specific questions
- ☐ Respond to emails and phone calls within 24 hours

**Decision Timeframe:** ~16 weeks, ~24 weeks if interested in a master's degree

**Consideration Pool:** 2-3 programs

**Desired Program:** Certificates and certification courses; master's degrees if looking for a career change or a more substantial move up the career ladder

**Cross/Up-Sell:** Additional certificates and executive education courses that will help in the "journey to the corner office"

### Critical Information to Address in Communications:

- ✓ Faculty's practical experience in the field
- ✓ Reputation of the school in the field
- ✓ Specialized accreditation
- ✓ Career status of alumni
- ✓ Tuition reimbursement and preferred provider arrangements with employers

If a motivational group that you commonly encounter is missing from the profiles above, you can use the fields of information to guide your own brainstorming.

## Motivational Segmentation in Action at Seton Hall University

Stand-out institutions seek to classify prospective students into motivational categories as early as possible, recognizing that motivations greatly influence the type of information the prospect wants and how quickly they want it. Seton Hall University does this, despite a very limited budget, by developing a communications plan that encourages individuals to respond. Once the admissions advisor is in a one-on-one conversation with a prospect via email or phone (75% of all prospects), he can identify the prospect's motivations using the trigger actions outlined above. This contact estimates that he can classify 90% of prospects from the first conversation. Once he has identified the motivation microsegment of a prospect, the contact customizes the information he provides the prospect in light of the critical information outlined above. Anecdotally, he notes that motivational segmentation saves him time by helping him deduce the ideal content to deliver to a prospective student; an increase in conversion rates suggests that his strategy is just as helpful in the eyes of the prospect.