



Making Your Digital Ads Count

12 Lessons on New and Emerging Techniques in
Independent School Recruitment Marketing

EAB Enrollment Services

Project Director

Tom Cakuls

Contributing Analyst

Elizabeth Kee

Content Editor

Sharon Rosenfeld

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How to Use This Report

This Report Has Two Main Sections

A General Overview of the Digital Terrain and a Deeper Dive on Display and Social Ads



Four Lessons on the Digital Marketing Landscape

*A **primer** on digital marketing*

This section covers basic concepts required for understanding digital recruitment marketing for independent schools



Eight Lessons on Digital Ads

*A **deeper dive** on display and social ads*

This section offers guidance on specific issues enrollment managers can encounter when using digital ads for independent school recruitment

How Different Audiences Can Benefit from this Report

Helpful Information Based on Enrollment Managers' (EMs) Experience with Digital Marketing



Beginner

Representative Audience Members

- ✓ EMs new to digital marketing
- ✓ Full admissions team
- ✓ Non-marketing stakeholders



Representative Uses

Quickly gain crucial background knowledge to make smart decisions about digital marketing investments

Use the report as a reference when you need a quick refresh on complex aspects of the digital terrain



Advanced

- ✓ EMs with digital experience
- ✓ Data and analytics teams
- ✓ Marketers new to independent schools



Learn which new digital lessons have the greatest relevance for independent school recruitment marketing

Advance your understanding by seeing familiar strategies and techniques in a new light



All Audiences

- ✓ All EMs
- ✓ All enrollment staff
- ✓ Key stakeholders



Understand your digital marketing approach compared to higher education

Create a common frame of reference for digital investment decisions across your institution



Section 1

Four Lessons on the Digital Marketing Landscape

Digital Strategy

- Lesson 1: Start with a comprehensive view of digital marketing channels
- Lesson 2: Factor in existing content assets when developing your paid strategy
- Lesson 3: Use digital techniques selectively and strategically

Assessing Marketing Impact

- Lesson 4: Scope your impact-assessment efforts realistically

What we mean by “digital”

A useful but imprecise term

While “digital” is a helpful and commonly used catch-all term, a deeper understanding of emerging communication channels requires us to clearly define what we mean when we say “digital.”

This study is specifically concerned with *digital marketing*. Under this heading, it is helpful to further consider the two perspectives on the right.

A functional perspective

The functional perspective focuses on the aims that digital marketing (as distinct from traditional marketing) tries to advance—for example, claiming some of the attention your audiences are shifting to the new channels they favor.

A taxonomic perspective

The taxonomic perspective focuses on the tools available for advancing those aims, including channels, techniques, and strategies. The bulk of this study concerns the final item on the list—digital advertising—but will also touch on many of the other items listed on the right.

Two Perspectives That Can Help Organize Your Thinking About Digital Marketing

1 Functional

What Digital Marketing Aims to Accomplish

- Leveraging newly dominant media
- Understanding audiences via data
- Mass customizing communications
- Dynamically adapting to a buyer’s journey

2 Taxonomic

How Digital Gets Done

Channels

- Email
- SMS
- Social media
- Websites
- Chat
- Apps

Techniques

- Marketing automation
- Geolocation
- Predictive modeling
- Search engine optimization
- Website analytics
- IP targeting

Strategies

- Content marketing
- Digital advertising

Study’s focus

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Different paths to acquiring digital capabilities

Assembling core capabilities

As enrollment teams look to boost their digital marketing capabilities, they must make decisions about how they to acquire the necessary skills and expertise. While approaches vary, any successful digital operation will possess the same key capabilities, including analytics, technical infrastructure, and familiarity with digital content networks.

Accounting for differences

One of the primary reasons for variation in digital marketing team structures is the rapid evolution of the digital landscape. Facing an ever-changing landscape of trends and technologies, enrollment teams across the country are experimenting with varied digital outreach.

Few independent schools are fully utilizing digital marketing to its fullest potential when it comes to enrollment management. Although many admissions teams are beginning to integrate digital marketing strategies into their larger recruitment efforts, most have yet to fully make the shift from traditional marketing techniques.

Approaches Observed in the Enrollment Management Space

Digital Dabblers

"We've tried some Facebook-promoted posts, some Instagram ads, some SEO, and a little SEM."

Digital Hobbyist

"Our EM has a keen interest in data analytics, so we've set up a new system for tracking and testing in digital."

In-House Agency

"We partner with our marketing department to execute all our digital campaigns."

Vendor Varsity Squad

"We work with a long list of digital vendors but keep only the ones that make the biggest impact."

Full-Service Outsourcing

"We work with a media buyer who manages all our digital ad spend across different channels."

Digital Tutor

"We bring in a digital consultant for six hours each month to answer our questions and train our staff."

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 1

Start with a comprehensive view of digital marketing channels

Match digital options with your unique aims and capabilities

A complex landscape

While the basic categories of digital marketing are relatively straightforward, their complexity quickly increases when you consider the many options within those categories and how they can be combined. A helpful first step is to lay out all the available channels—social media, content platforms, search engines, etc.—and to identify the types of marketing activities that can be undertaken in each.

Determining which focus is right for you

A key distinction shown in the chart is that between paid and unpaid approaches. *Paid approaches* are ones in which hosting networks charge a fee to display your content. *Unpaid approaches* use content posted on “free” channels, including your social media accounts and school website, to engage parents and students. Schools that have a great deal of high-quality content on those channels may choose to emphasize search engine and content marketing approaches, while those that do not may want to lean more heavily on paid approaches.

An Overview of Online Channels and Associated Marketing Approaches

		Unpaid	Digital Channels	Paid				
Social Media								
Content marketing	●	✓	Facebook	✓	●	Ads and sponsored content		
		✓	Instagram	✓				
		✓	Twitter	✓				
		✓	Snapchat	✓				
Content Platforms								
Content marketing	●	✓	YouTube	✓	●	Ads and sponsored content		
			Pandora	✓			●	Ads
			Spotify	✓				
Search Engines								
SEO ¹	●	✓	Google	✓	●	SEM ²		
Websites								
Content marketing	●	✓	School Website		●	Ads		
			Google Display Network	✓				

1) Search engine optimization

2) Search engine marketing, also called “sponsored search”

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 2

Factor in existing digital content assets when developing your paid strategy

Paid and unpaid digital marketing efforts are mutually reinforcing

Paid versus unpaid

As described on the previous page, many digital channels offer both paid and unpaid marketing options. Because that distinction has far-reaching implications for your digital marketing strategy, this page provides further explanation for how the two approaches interact.

Mutually reinforcing approaches

While paid and unpaid approaches can be impactful when pursued separately, they work best when coordinated together.

Imagine, for example, that an independent school has created rich student-facing content for the admissions team's Facebook account. The impact of this (unpaid) content will ultimately depend on parents and students actually seeing it—an outcome that can be advanced by using digital ads posted on Facebook that link to the content. Conversely, the downstream impact of those ads will ultimately depend on how engaging the content is that it links to.

Rationale for Paid and Unpaid Digital: Marketing Approaches and How They Interact



Paid

Includes ads and paid search

Prime "real estate"

Paid platforms offer access to the highly coveted digital spaces where audience attention is easiest to claim

Advanced targeting capabilities

Paid platforms typically have proprietary targeting methodologies that can improve efficiency of ad spend

Advanced analytics

Paid platforms offer advanced analytical tools to help understand audience response, ad performance, etc.



Unpaid

Includes social media and school website content

Table stakes

Presence on social media has become a basic expectation that parents and students have of schools they are evaluating

Deep engagement

Content-based approaches enable you to flexibly and comprehensively engage specific parent and student concerns and aspirations

Unpaid isn't free

Generating high-quality content at scale—a requirement for impactful unpaid approaches—is costly

Paid approaches ensure that prospects see your unpaid content

Mutually reinforcing

Unpaid approaches boost the downstream impact of your paid work

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 3

Use digital techniques selectively and strategically

An evolving toolkit largely focused on audience targeting

Performance-boosting add-ons

Alongside the digital channels and strategies already described, there is an additional category of related innovations that might best be described as “techniques”—add-on approaches that can be used to boost the impact of core elements of digital marketing outreach.






Because of the focus in other industries on lead generation, many of these innovations are focused on audience identification and targeting.

Uses in school recruitment

In the case of school recruitment, targeting at both the top and further down the funnel allows digital targeting techniques to more effectively engage with mission-aligned families.

They can also be useful for finding and communicating with key stakeholders outside of the traditional independent school audience, such as community leaders and realtors.

Selected Digital Marketing Techniques and Strategies for Their Use in Independent School Recruitment

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
 List-based targeting Ads served selectively to individuals you specify, based on purchased lists	Boosts efficiency of ad spend by avoiding inappropriate audiences; provides subtle, targeted marketing in line with independent school brand
 Geo-fencing Ads served selectively to individuals within a geographical boundary	Can improve impact of location-based recruitment events
 IP targeting Ads served to students and families based on household IP addresses	Engages parents, compensates for limits of cookie-based targeting
 Look-alike audiences New audience created to mirror an existing group of parents	Could provide candidates in recruitment pipeline
 Behavioral/responsive Ads served based on users' observed behaviors (e.g. browsing history)	Helps deliver tailored content to “qualified” audiences

To learn more about using Facebook to target prospective families, check out the **Social Media Primer: Maximizing Lead Capture with Facebook**

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 4

Scope your impact-assessment efforts realistically

Striving to create a complete picture of marketing interactions

A burden of proof

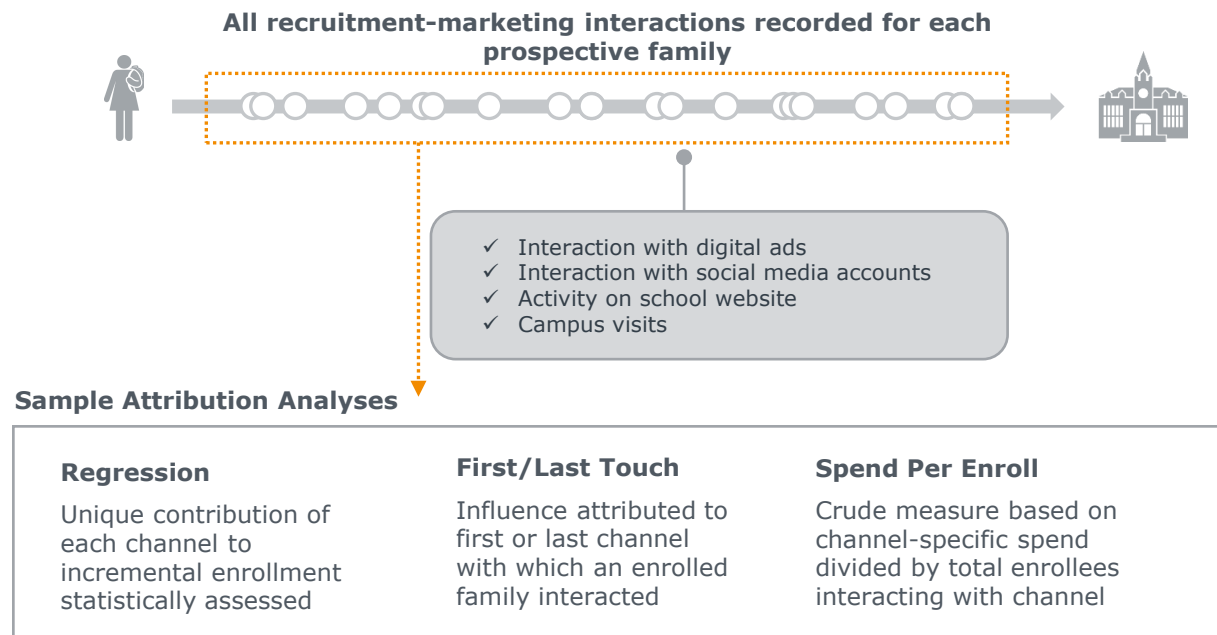
Acquiring digital capabilities can require a significant commitment of time and effort, as well as additional money for expenses such as fees paid to networks that host ads.

Because of the costs involved, measuring the impact of digital marketing is a common goal of marketers everywhere.

A promise of transparency

Demonstrating ROI is important for any marketing investments; one difference in the digital era is the substantial trail of data that Internet users leave in their wake. This data trail can allow enrollment teams to get a comprehensive picture of the recruitment marketing interactions they've had with prospective families to better understand which elements of recruitment outreach contribute to success.

An Aspirational Vision for Evaluating Marketing Activity



Source: EAB research and analysis.



Section 2

Eight Lessons on Digital Ads

Section 1: Networks and Audiences

Lesson 1: Favor networks with the right audience demographics and a robust ad offering

Lesson 2: Use list-based targeting to maximize the performance of your digital ads

Section 2: Ad and Campaign Design

Lesson 3: Scope your ad-optimization efforts broadly to ensure the best possible performance

Lesson 4: Integrate your ads into larger communication flows to ensure downstream impact

Lesson 5: Take a multichannel approach

Section 3: Gauging Ad Performance

Lesson 6: Consider contextual factors when evaluating digital ad performance

Lesson 7: Use both proximal and downstream measures of ad impact

Lesson 8: Take advantage of digital ads' proven impact on recruitment outcomes

Two major categories of digital ads to consider

A focus on digital ads

The first section of this report offered a general introduction to digital marketing; this second section focuses more narrowly on digital advertising.

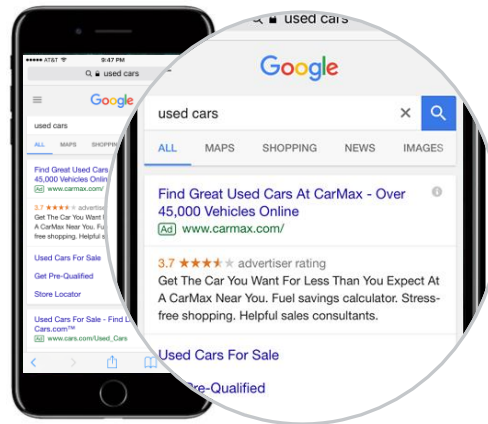
Two main types of ads

Digital ads present a significant number of options in terms of networks, formats, and cost, which can overwhelm marketers. One helpful generalization is that most digital ads fall into one of two categories: search-based or display and social ads.

These two categories correspond to different approaches to recruitment marketing. Search-based ads rely on parents taking the first step (i.e. conducting a search for local independent schools) and are closely associated with lead-gen efforts. Display and social ads are better-suited to either building an affinity with parents who have already engaged or establishing contact with those who have not (i.e. by targeting parents identified by purchasing a list of names of mission-aligned families).

Two Types of Digital Ads Most Commonly Used

Search-Based Ads



"Sponsored" results in search engines and on some content sites (e.g. YouTube)

Display and Social Ads



Image-based ads on websites, social networks, and content sites

The focus of this report

Other ad types and formats:

- Native advertising
- Video ads
- Carousel ads
- Flash display ads
- Opt-in text messaging
- In-app messaging

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 1

Favor networks with the right audience demographics and a robust ad offering

Who should host your ads?

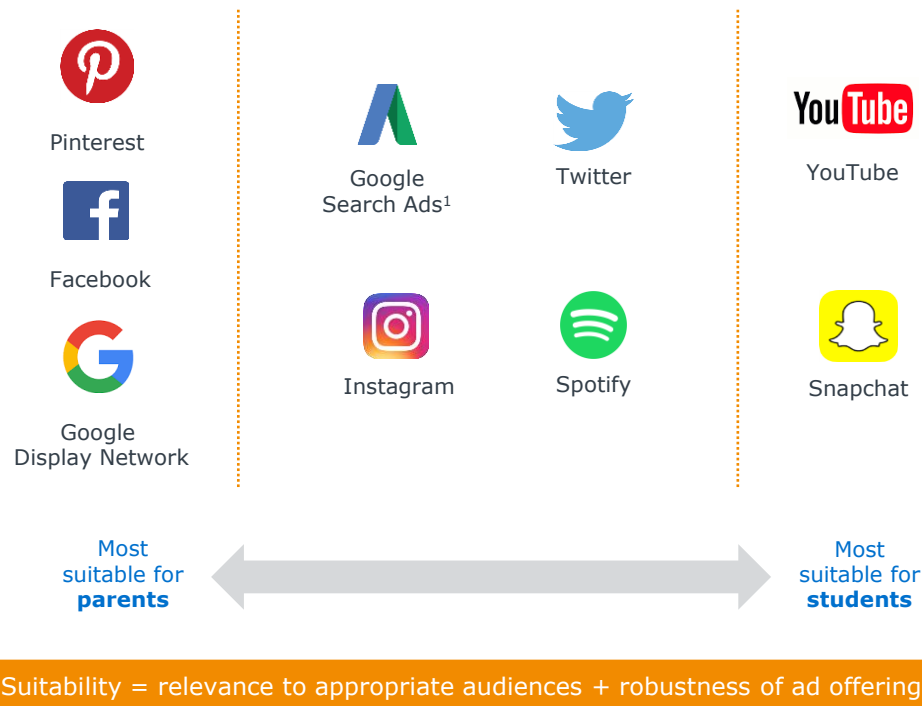
Assessing best-fit platforms

When deciding where to place display and social ads, you have numerous options to choose from. Two criteria can be helpful to assess your options: the network's relevance to parents and students and the robustness of the ad offering. The first seeks to ensure that advertising reaches the right people, while the second aims to provide recruitment marketers with the necessary tools for analyzing and optimizing ad performance.

Today's top options

While the digital terrain changes quickly and some schools may have their own reasons for favoring certain networks, three currently stand out as strong options: Facebook, Instagram, and Google Display Network. These networks offer comprehensive advertising capabilities, including the ability to fine-tune ad creative, call to action, and budget; advanced targeting techniques; and comprehensive, customizable reporting and analytics.

Selected Digital Networks by Suitability for Parent, Student Recruitment Marketing



1) For search-based (not display and social) ads

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 2

Use list-based targeting to maximize the performance of your digital ads

Focus your ad spend on ‘qualified’ audiences

Targeting + lists

As we have already discussed, sophisticated targeting is one of the main advantages of digital advertising. This page discusses how targeting is used to generate the lists of names that enrollment teams commonly purchase from third parties.

Direct and indirect list targeting

There are two main approaches to consider when it comes to list targeting. The first, which might be called direct targeting, is the ability to use a platform like Facebook to serve ads to parents you specify, such as names you’ve acquired via list purchases.

The second, usually called retargeting, involves serving ads only to parents who have interacted with other digital communications you’ve specified. In cases where your initial outreach is guided by list purchases, the population of retargeted parents will be a subset of names from those lists.

Both approaches increase the efficiency of ad spend by reducing the number of ads served to inappropriate audiences.

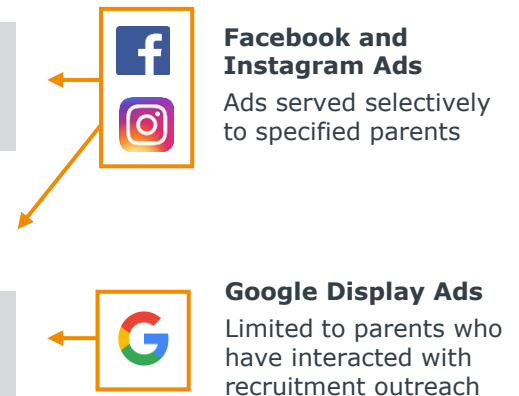
Example: A Targeted Marketing Campaign Using A Purchased List

Parent Names Purchased from a Third-Party Group



Recruitment-marketing email and direct mail

Responders



Benefits

Leveraging an existing resource

Thoughtfully compiled lists contain a wealth of insight into your prospect universe

Minimizing unproductive audiences

A list-based approach eliminates spend on nonhuman traffic and inappropriate demographics

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 3

Scope your ad-optimization efforts broadly to ensure the best performance possible

Impact of ad campaigns depends on effort and expertise invested

Lots to get right

As mentioned earlier, beginning your digital marketing efforts with display and social ads make sense as an initial approach as they present less of an execution challenge than other digital channels.

However, ads can be more or less effective depending on how expertly they are executed; success depends on many steps, from initial planning to post-deployment assessment.

A digital to-do list

The checklist on the right offers a partial list of activities involved in planning, launching, managing, and assessing display and social ad campaigns.

The next three pages offer examples of how individual elements of designing a digital ad campaign may be optimized.

A Display and Social Ad Campaign To-Do List

- ☐ Set goals for ad performance
- ☐ Set and allocate ad budget
- ☐ Choose type of ad to run
- ☐ Choose ad network(s)
- ☐ Determine and specify audience
- ☐ Develop required creative
- ☐ Design and build tracking system (cookies + pixels)
- ☐ Build out landing page(s)
- ☐ Design larger communication flow in which ad operates
- ☐ Evaluate special targeting options (e.g. geolocation)
- ☐ Choose ad parameters to split test
- ☐ Execute ad buys with relevant network(s)
- ☐ Continuously manage ad parameters
- ☐ Gather data on ad performance and parent response
- ☐ Analyze relative performance of variants tested
- ☐ Adjust ad parameters based on findings from testing
- ☐ Reallocate spend to most impactful networks, formats, etc.

Effort Versus Impact

Most steps are fairly easy to execute at a basic level.

However, significant innovation and/or expert performance within any given task can pose significant challenges for typical independent school enrollment teams.

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Campaign design should account for a variety of device types

Working across devices

One important parameter to consider when optimizing digital ad performance is device type.

Parents and students are spending more time on smartphones, but they also still use computers to search online. Effective ad strategy understands and accommodates parents' and students' communication preferences and media habits.

Mostly mobile

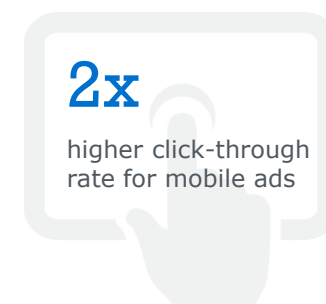
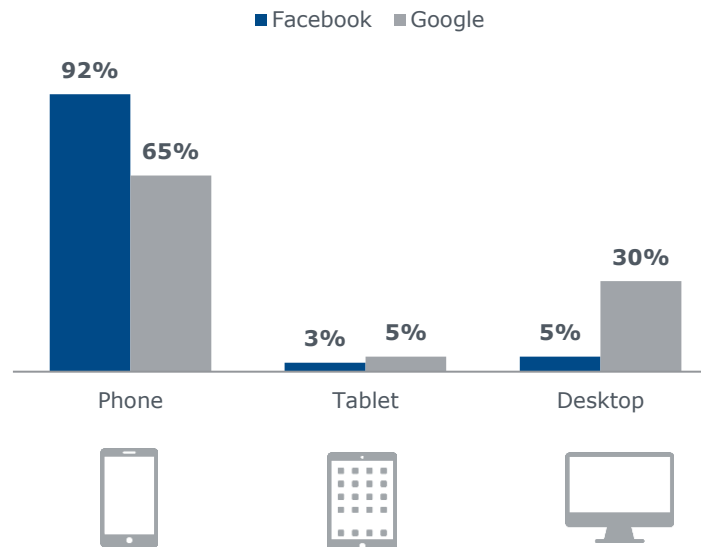
Data from EAB testing sheds light on some important related questions, two of which are addressed on the right.

One is that students' attachment to their smartphones impacts how display and social ads are served; as illustrated by the graph, most impressions occur on mobile devices. Another has to do with networks: Google display ads are far more likely than Facebook ads to be viewed on a desktop device.

Since Google display ads tend to be viewed more on desktops, they are an example of an ad type that may be better-suited for parents. However, an important consideration is that many millennial parents may have communication and media habits similar to those of students.

Share of Viewable Impressions

By Device and Network, EAB Client Testing



Source: EAB research and analysis.

Creative grounded in testing boosts student response to ads

Guidelines for impactful ads

While local testing is needed to truly optimize display and social ad performance, adhering to certain guidelines can boost results. EAB research has identified several important rules of thumb, with examples described on the right.

Within and across networks

Although ads function similarly on Facebook and Google in many ways, there are key differences between the two advertising platforms that impact how users engage with copy and images.

Facebook allows you to fill 20% of the ad image area with text; its ad template also provides three structured areas for copy to support the story the image is telling. This structure plays an important role in what the user sees while scrolling through a newsfeed, with an emphasis on imagery. Google's display network, on the other hand, doesn't have this built-in separation, which means you can choose the size of text in an image.

Design Guidelines

For Facebook Ads

Do



- ✓ Use strong visuals of school
- ✓ Include a clear "main character"
- ✓ Utilize strong copy-image link
- ✓ Include candid experience visuals

Don't



- ✗ Use hard-to-understand images
- ✗ Include multiple focal points
- ✗ Utilize weak copy-image linkage
- ✗ Include staged visuals

For Display Ads

Put your audience first

Ads are most effective when they focus on one specific concern or aspiration for your audience (one message per ad)

Have a clear call to action

Be transparent about the intended action and what is to be achieved if a prospect clicks your ad, but avoid click bait

Be brief

Keep body copy short—long copy feels very long on mobile—and have one clear takeaway

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Optimized ad frequency means maximum impact per dollar spent

How much should you spend?

An important part of designing digital ad campaigns is figuring out how much to spend. This, in turn, depends on an understanding of how much it costs to get the desired level of response from the prospects you're recruiting.

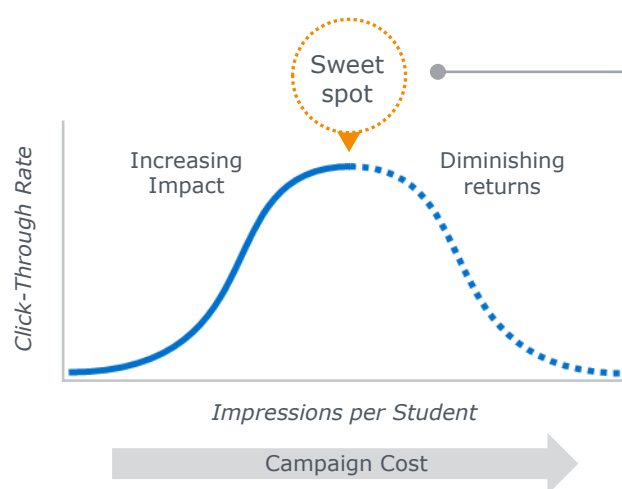
It can be difficult to generalize about campaign cost given the difference in pricing and performance across ad-hosting networks and ad-buying strategies. That said, looking at a specific example can help give a feel for the considerations involved.

A point of maximum impact for an ad campaign at a higher education institution

The material at right shows how ad spend relates to impact for a campaign in which ads are purchased based on number of impressions. As shown in the chart, as the number of impressions per parent/student increases, so does the likelihood of prospects clicking on the ad—up to a point. There is a “sweet spot” after which buying additional impressions does not increase the probability of a click (and thereby dilutes the click-through rate).

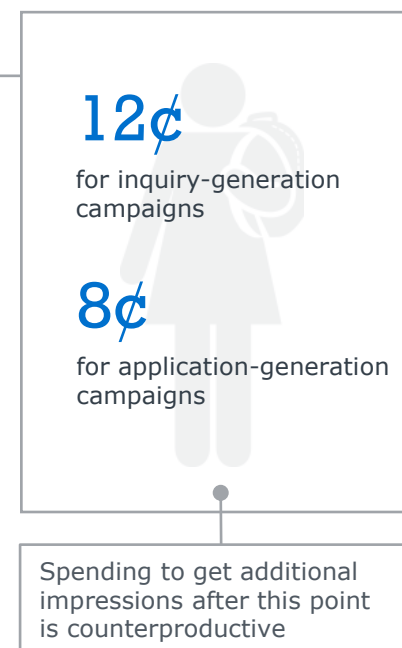
Click-Through Rate

Versus Total Ad Impressions per Parent/Student



Optimized Campaign Cost¹

Per Targeted Parent/Student per Month, by Campaign Type, EAB Enrollment Services Partners



¹) Refers to finding the most cost effective or highest achievable performance under given constraints

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 4

Integrate your ads into larger communication flows to ensure downstream impact

Using ads to drive parents and students to action

Designing communication flows

More often than not, display and social ads are designed to prompt action—a student or parent is invited to click on an ad, at which point he or she is linked to a landing page.

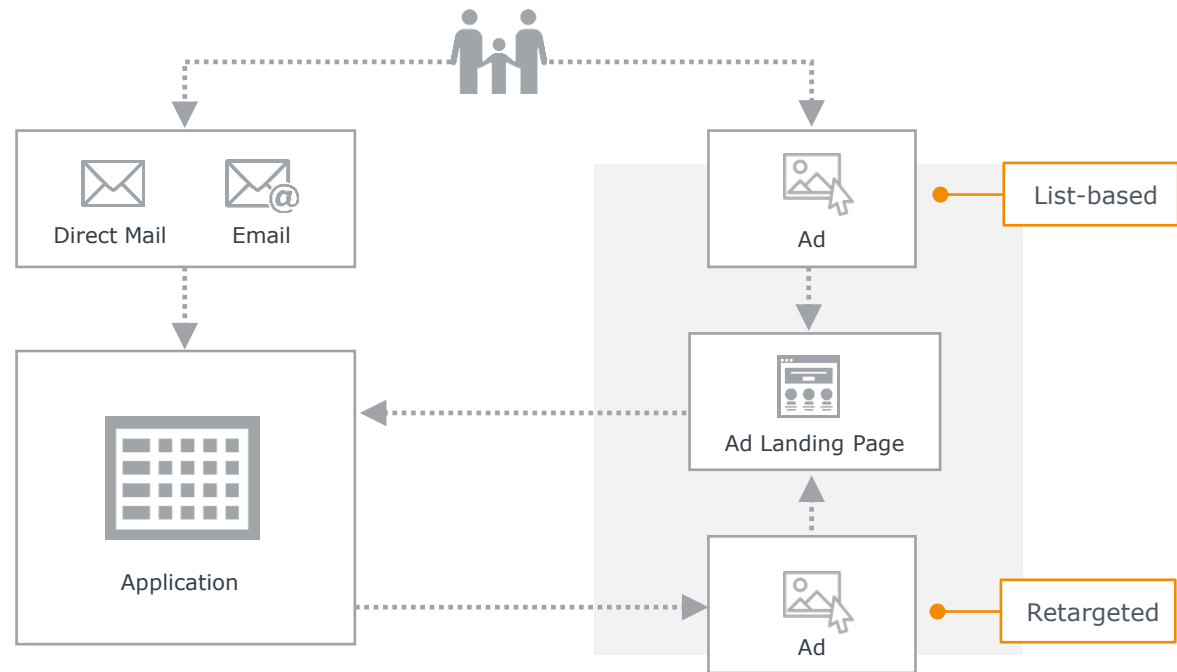
The ad and the material it links to can be designed to serve a number of recruitment-marketing ends, including inquiry generation, application generation, and yield management. Whatever the goal, the ad will exist within a particular communication flow, which must be designed as part of the campaign.

An example

By way of example, the graphic at right shows how display and social ads are incorporated into EAB application-generation campaigns.

Within this structure, list-based targeting serves ads to prospects who have not yet interacted with the school's application, prompting them to apply. Parents or students who have already interacted with the application are retargeted with ads based on that interaction, which keep the application front-of-mind for prospects until they have completed it.

Example: EAB Application-Generation Campaign



Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 5

Take a multichannel approach

Give students a variety of ways to engage

Greater than the sum of its parts

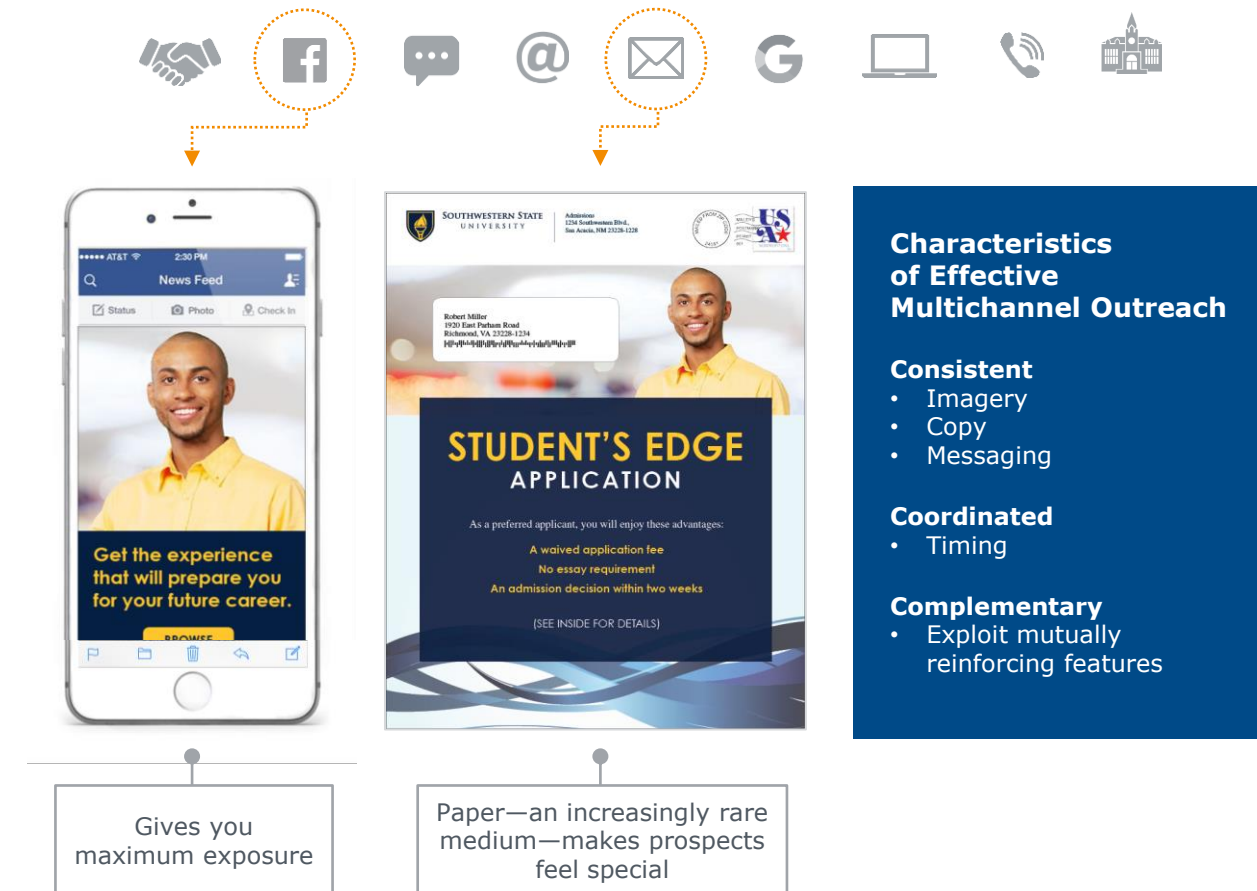
Digital ads are most effective when used in tandem with other media. There are several reasons for this. One is that this multichannel approach honors different parents' and students' varying communication preferences. Another is that each channel has unique strengths and weaknesses, which can be balanced when they are used in combination.

So, for example, while display and social ads have the virtue of being hard for parents and students to miss, paper can feel more "special," and create a more lasting impression with prospects when used in a limited, targeted manner. Used together (and combined with email and other channels), they strike a balance between the frequency and depth of a student's exposure to your brand.

A coordination imperative

As implied above, the effectiveness of a multichannel approach relies on close coordination across channels. This includes consistent use of creative (imagery, copy, etc.) and timing that factors in the often-differing response curves for email, digital ads, and other media.

Taking Advantage of Each Channel's Unique Advantages



Source: EAB research and analysis.

Coordinated timing across channels maximizes ad performance

Channels influence each other

Effective coordination of recruitment-marketing outreach across channels (digital and otherwise) produces a stronger unified impact. While this applies across many different digital ad parameters, one case in point—that of timing—is illustrated on the right.

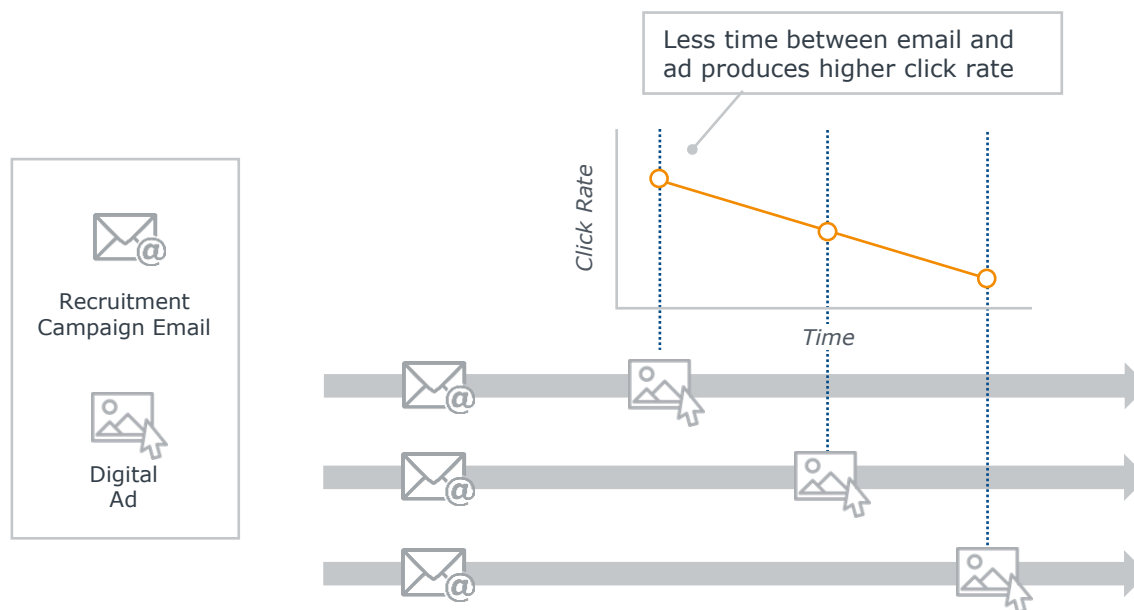
As shown, serving digital ads sooner after related recruitment-marketing emails produces higher response rates.

Leveraging complementarity

Another form of effective collaboration between channels involves response time. Response rates for recruitment emails show peaks and troughs tied to contextual factors (e.g. approaching application submission deadlines). By contrast, response to digital ads tends to be consistent across time. Optimally-designed campaigns take advantage of this, using emails selectively when spikes in response are desired or expected, while creating a steady level of engagement via digital ads.

Display and Social Ad Click Rate

By Timing Relative to Recruitment Email, Based on Data from EAB Campaigns



Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 6

Consider contextual factors when evaluating digital ad performance

Few, if any, channels reach all prospects

Ensuring realistic expectations

Many digital channels hold significant promise for recruitment marketing. However, most also come with limitations, which are important to understand when planning ad campaigns and assessing their performance. One important consideration in this regard is audience reach.

The limits of reach among student-targeted Facebook ads

As shown at right, even in well-executed Facebook campaigns, there are three factors that can prevent individuals within a target audience from seeing an ad. First, some decision-makers may not have Facebook accounts associated with the email address in a school's records. Second, some decision-makers may have ad blockers installed on their devices. Third, some may not use Facebook often enough during the campaign to have an ad served. For these reasons, the proportion of a target audience reached via list-based Facebook campaigns is often in the range of 50-60%, with high performers coming in around 70%.

Case in Point: Not All Decision-Makers Reachable by Facebook Ads

Three Reasons Decision-Makers May Not Be Accessible via Facebook Ads



Email Not a Match

No Facebook account associated with provided email address



Ad Blockers

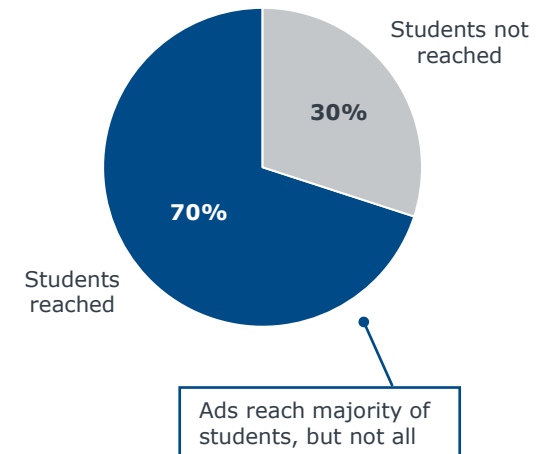
Ad blockers prevent audience from seeing content when Facebook accessed via browser



Limited Facebook Usage

Individual not on Facebook often enough to have ad served

Maximum Reach of Facebook Ads, as a Percentage of Total Targeted Students in University Ad Campaign



Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 7

Use both proximal and downstream measures of ad impact

Proximal measures help you improve ad performance

Two perspectives

When seeking to understand the impact of your digital ads, two perspectives are relevant.

One focuses on downstream results: that is, are your ads moving the dial on submitted applications, enrollments, or other ultimate measures of recruitment success? (See pages 9 to 11 for more on this point.)

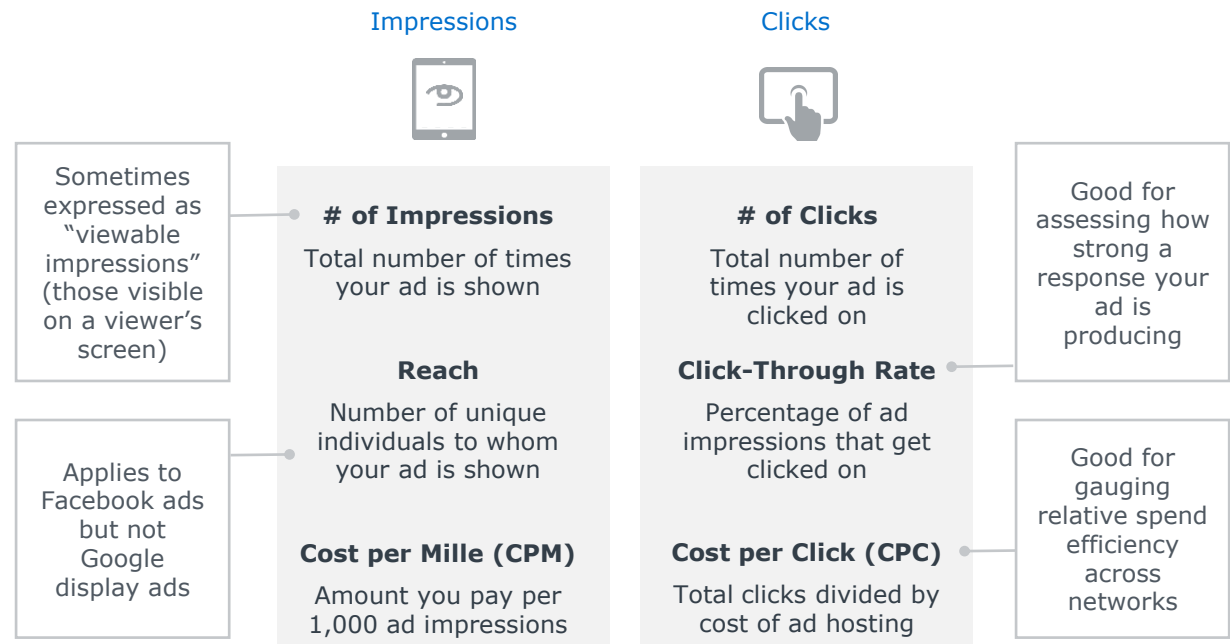
A second is proximal impact—the extent to which your ads are registering with their intended audiences and producing the intended immediate impact (e.g. producing clicks). This perspective plays a crucial role in efforts to optimize ad performance.

Proximal measures

The graphic on the right shows a partial list of measures that are commonly used to describe and assess ad activity. Note that they can be grouped under two headings: impressions and clicks. Also, note that some of these measures lend themselves more to assessing (versus merely describing) performance. For example, click-through rate typically says more about ad performance than does number of impressions.

How Well Are Your Ads Achieving Their Immediate Aims?

Two Main Categories of Measures to Consider



Define Your Terms

Definitions can vary significantly across users and organizations; be sure to establish a shared understanding of terms.

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Lesson 8

Take advantage of digital ads' proven impact on recruitment outcomes

Display and social ads produce a measurable increase in applications in higher education

Typing ads to downstream impact

As mentioned on the preceding page, both proximal and downstream measures should be used to assess ad performance; this page focuses on the latter.

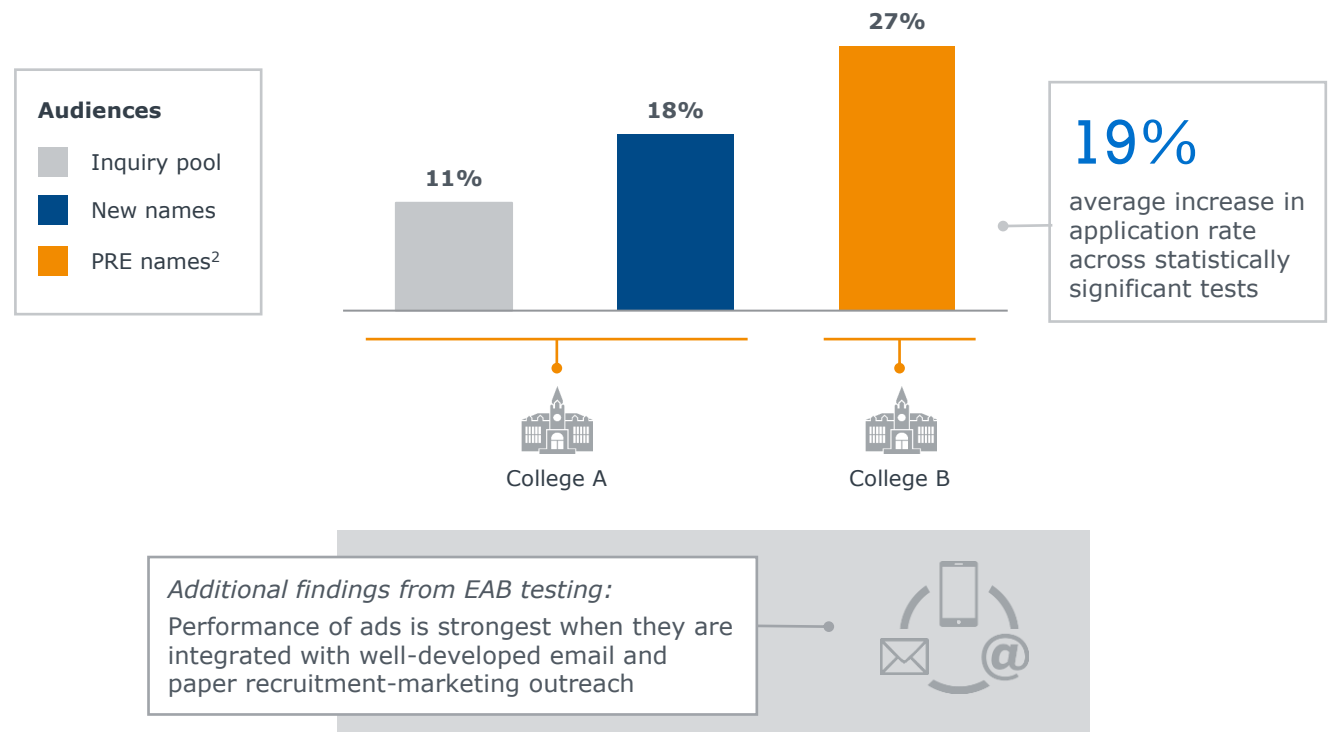
Shown on the right is data from testing performed with EAB partner institutions that compares application rates for students receiving display and social ads plus standard recruitment marketing with those for students receiving only standard outreach. As indicated, institutions using display and social ads saw statistically significant increases in application volume of between 11% and 27%.

An evidence-based approach

This finding is significant in two respects. First, it shows a measurable downstream impact for ads. Second, it provides an example of the type of evidence that can prove instrumental for investing in recruitment marketing and engaging stakeholders whose buy-in for those investments may be important. As noted earlier, while this testing focuses on students, the lessons learned here may also apply to younger millennial parents.

Increase in Application Rate¹

Percent (Not Percentage-Point) Increase Attributable to Display and Social Ads



- 1) "Application rate" is calculated as the number of students submitting applications divided by the total number of students included in the marketing campaign; increase is for audiences receiving display/social ads in addition to standard recruitment outreach, versus those receiving only standard recruitment outreach.
- 2) PRE names are students who did not respond to outreach efforts during their junior or sophomore years of high school.

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Coda: **Frontiers** in Digital Recruitment

Parent engagement at the speed of conversation

Real-time customization as a common digital-marketing aspiration

A rapidly evolving digital toolkit

The power of digital-marketing techniques is growing exponentially

Parent engagement at the speed of conversation

Real-time customization is a common digital-marketing aspiration

An eye toward customization

A popular vision for the future of digital marketing is providing customers (i.e. parents) precisely the information they need—based on demographics, interests, stage-in-application journey, etc.—exactly when they need it.

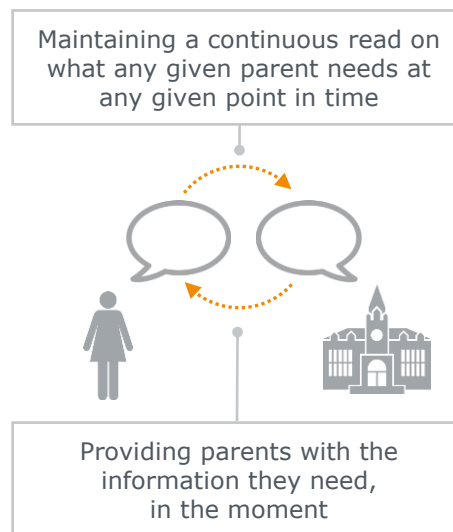
In its most fully realized form, this style of marketing mimics the individualized and responsive style of a conversation.

Common hurdles

One reason this sort of approach is not more widespread is that successful implementation can be challenging. This is especially true of the automated systems in which parents' informational needs are identified and appropriate content is served to them. Key hurdles include successfully gathering and organizing the relevant data on prospective parents; perfecting the analytics that translate that data into insight about parents' informational needs; and the content-creation demands associated with meeting those informational needs across parent segments and funnel stages.

Tomorrow's Promise

*Marketing Interactions
at the Speed of Conversation*



Challenges to Be Addressed



A systems challenge

Understanding individual parents' information needs in a scalable way depends on the ability to gather and integrate data across multiple systems, which is a challenge for many schools



An analytics challenge

The analytics required to turn raw data into a deep and meaningful read on parents' informational needs are highly complex, and therefore, difficult to execute



A content challenge

Creating meaningfully customized content for different parent segments across the enrollment funnel entails a huge amount of work; furthermore, in some cases, segmentation can actually drive down response rate

Source: EAB research and analysis.

A rapidly evolving digital toolkit

The power of digital-marketing techniques is growing exponentially

A guiding vision

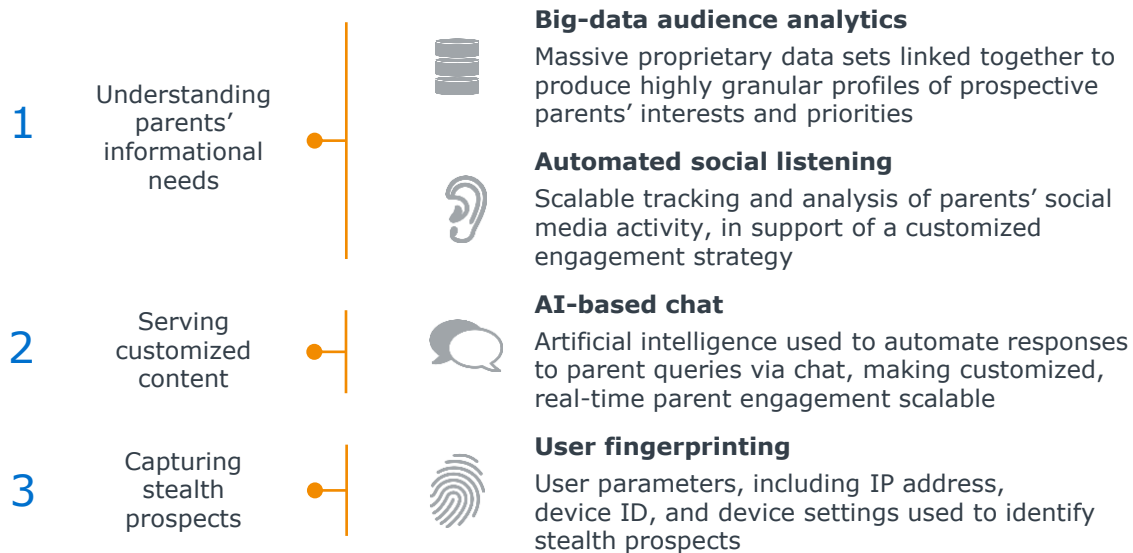
The preceding page describe a common aspiration of digital recruitment marketing to provide individual parents with exactly the information they need, precisely when they need it.

Related areas of innovation

Several ongoing developments in the digital communications landscape promise to bring this vision closer to reality. One is the vast amount of data being amassed on digital media users; analytics based on these data sets can produce an unprecedented depth of insight on the interests, motivations, and behaviors of individuals. A second is automated content creation, based on artificial intelligence, which holds the promise of addressing individual parents' informational needs immediately and at scale. A third, related development is based on improved methods for identifying and tracking stealth prospects, which effectively extends the range of the two developments mentioned above to additional prospective families.

Three Main Areas of Innovation

With Examples of Related Approaches



Source: EAB research and analysis.



Washington DC | Richmond | Birmingham | Minneapolis

P 202-747-1000 | **F** 202-747-1010 | eab.com