

Head of the Class: Blue Mountains School Drives Enrollment & Revenue With Marketing Automation

Torrens University Australia is an innovative and global further education provider and includes some of the world's most prestigious schools, including Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (BMIHMS). Established in 1991, BMIHMS is Australia's leading institute for hospitality education. The school provides internationally recognized advanced degrees in management and business programs, which are highly respected in the global hotel, restaurant, catering, and event management industries.

Blue Mountains currently has over 1,000 students, 70% international and 30% domestic, enrolled in two campuses in Sydney and Leura. The school prides itself on delivering personalized education, with smaller classroom sizes. This enhances educational delivery in its Bachelor of Business degree courses in International Hotel and Resort, Events and Restaurant and Catering Management, as well as Master degrees in International Hotel Management and Global Business Management.



The Issue:

Blue Mountains needed to reach different stakeholder groups, including educational advisors, school counselors, parents, and potential students themselves, with messaging that spoke to each group personally.

The Solution:

The right marketing automation system let Blue Mountains build a tailored outreach program with messaging at its core. The platform also gave Blue Mountains the ability to see where a potential student was in the process, and reach out at precisely the right time.

The Results:

Blue Mountains' marketing team deploys automated nurture campaigns, and is able to pull behavioral data to target those who display the highest interest level. The team can walk a student up to and through the enrollment process, and then use an automated onboarding program to ensure that the student gets the most value from their experience.

The Need to Reach Educational Counselors and Parents as Well as Potential New Students

Blue Mountains has been marketing to a variety of audiences throughout their 25-year history. In addition to connecting to potential students, they've also been communicating with the students' parents or guardians, as well as educational advisors and counselors.

"We have what amounts to a business-to-business (B2B) audience, because we need to reach out to and appeal to the influencers, the counselors, and advisors of potential students," said James Flannagan, Digital Manager for Blue Mountains. "But we also have a business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-student (B2S) component, where we reach out to our customers, those potential students, as well as their parents, who often are highly influential in the decision making process."

Blue Mountains has four intake periods per year. Although the intakes are seasonal, the school targets new students year round, since they begin recruiting programs every three months. This gives them the flexibility to take in more students throughout the year, and to offer an opportunity to enroll beyond the once or twice a year enrollment offered by most universities.

In order to reach their diverse audiences, Blue Mountains needed to deliver targeted marketing campaigns to specific audience segments. However, they soon found that the marketing platform they'd originally selected had several limitations: It couldn't integrate with Salesforce, and it didn't offer automated programs, which were key to recruiting and onboarding students. Once Blue Mountains replaced the platform with Act-On, they were able to reach their audience in more targeted, proactive ways.

Blue Mountains uses both inbound and outbound marketing to reach new students and educational influencers. They employ a mix of

digital and print advertising, including search engine marketing and display advertising on Google and Facebook.

Additionally, they work closely with high schools in Australia to build close relationships with career advisors.

"Now we can reach out to our new and potential students through outbound marketing, rather than relying solely on inbound advertising. We've used Facebook and Google to generate more leads, but now, once a potential student fills out a form from that inbound activity, we can put them into an automated program that leads them through the recruiting process," said James.



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Automated Programs For Recruiting New Students

Blue Mountains' automated programs for potential students are designed to walk a student up to and through the enrollment process. It uses targeted emails, along with personalized phone calls, to nurture them through a cycle of communications as they progress through their stages of consideration and enrollment. Using Act-On, the marketing team is able to automate these communications and to pull out behavioral data to target those who display the highest interest level.

"This reporting has been very beneficial to our sales teams," said James. "We pull the behavioral data from Act-On into our Salesforce instance, so when our enrollment team contacts them, they can discuss the potential of coming here as well as what interested them on the site – what links they clicked. This helps us build that rapport that nurtures the relationship to the point that they decide to enroll and become a student," said James.

Onboarding New Students

Act-On has a native integration with Salesforce, which Blue Mountains leverages to set up programs that ease new students through the onboarding process. This program allows Blue Mountains to get to know their new students better by understanding how they engage with emails they've received on new courses, housing, and extracurricular activities.

"Having the Salesforce integration and automated programs was key for us," said James. "We know that the personal touch was extremely successful throughout the recruiting process, but now, with the integrations between our CRM and marketing automation, we can increase that level of personalized communication as new students arrive to attend the next term."

The school is also using the platform to deliver data to both international and domestic enrollment teams. The data generated from these campaigns assists our team in Salesforce so they are aware of the actions of potential student leads and their potential to enroll.

"Looking at data in real time is key to our teams. Some new and potential students can move very quickly through their decision-making process, so if we can see clickthrough rates and real-time website visits, we can reach out to a student at just the right time to influence their decision," said James.

"Our agents work with each student to build a relationship," continued James. "The automated portion of this process is necessary to continue to deliver this level of service as we grow our enrollment base."



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Expanding Marketing Programs; Doubling Email Strategically

The school is continually expanding its marketing plans and exploring new ways to use marketing automation. Currently they send about 1,000 recruiting emails a month through their automated programs. They plan to double or triple this in the month prior to student enrollment using Act-On's automated programs. They also plan to increase overall email volume in order to include surveys and alumni communications.

"We are planning on adding additional communications with the system right before intake. This gives us the chance to remind people there are still opportunities to enroll, and then provide them with information about arrivals, and what to expect on campus," said James.

Reducing Tasks From Days to Hours

The easy-to-use templates for emails and forms save time and make it possible to respond quickly to new opportunities. So if the marketing team has a special communication they want to deliver to new and potential students, they can now send an email in hours, rather than days.

"At the end of April this year, I had to make a change to an existing template," said James. "With Act-On, I didn't have to rewrite and reprogram the entire piece. Because I just needed to refresh one section, I just copied

it over and checked that everything was correct. I went to the test, checked the links quickly, and within half an hour I had the email ready to go. In the past that process would have taken a couple of days – at least."

Reporting Lets the Team Focus on the Best Opportunities

In-depth reporting on behavior is a significant benefit for the Blue Mountains team. As they get closer to intake dates, they need to be able to identify the students who are most interested so they can mobilize their enrollment team to focus on the best prospects. Potential students who engage with emails and spend a lot of time on the site receive a personalized call. Students who are still in early researching stages continue in an automated program. This way, the enrollment team can concentrate on calls to students who will most likely enroll this term, not ones that are more likely to enroll later.

"Before Act-On, we've just used what we had, but now that we have better, more sustainable platform, we can enhance our overall presentation, use data to further personalize our communications, and see just how people engage with us. Act-On enables us to reach our audiences in the most effective ways," concludes James.

About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

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