McNally Smith College of Music Uses Act-On to Drive Recruitment and Save Money

McNally Smith is a for-profit music college that offers degrees in performance, composition, songwriting, music production, audio engineering, hip-hop studies, and music business. Most faculty members are active musicians, songwriters, and music industry professionals. Over its 30-year history, McNally Smith has built a strong reputation for preparing students to make and sustain careers in music.

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JOHN KROUGH
Vice President of Marketing
McNally Smith

Challenge

When John Krogh became vice president of marketing in 2013, McNally Smith was facing a number of challenging market headwinds: increased tuition price sensitivity, prospective students questioning the value of college degrees, and a projected decline in high school graduation rates in the Mid-West through 2020. In response, the school needed to reinvigorate their approach to the market.

"While we are a music school, it's also important to think of the college as a business. From this viewpoint, prospective students who request information about our programs are considered 'leads,' which is a common B2B or B2C business concept. And most businesses today depend upon modern marketing techniques to nurture leads throughout their purchase decision," says Krogh. "Our extended buying cycle also required significantly more visibility, tracking, and lead nurturing than we had in place because our typical incoming student can take up to two years to decide which college they want to attend."

McNally needed a marketing solution that could:

- Assist in the recruiting process.
- Keep the college at the forefront of prospective students' minds.
- Leverage segmentation to get the right message to the right prospective student at the right time.
- Personalize communication between college admissions reps and potential students.
- Accelerate response times to student inquiries.

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JOHN KROUGH
Vice President of Marketing
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Solution

McNally evaluated several marketing automation solutions before they selected Act-On, basing their decision on the product's strong feature set, ease of implementation, and the availability of APIs for WebEx and other tools that would make importing data simple, at no additional cost.

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Because they lack a complementary CRM solution, McNally creatively leverages Act-On to gain all the intelligence they need to close the loop with prospective students. Today, the school tracks everything, and Act-On reporting capabilities provide them with a snapshot of all prospect interaction over a given period of time. They can use this information to identify who's ready for the next step, or run automated programs triggered by specific student behaviors. These campaigns keep students interested and excited about attending the college.

Benefit

Act-On has rapidly become the number one student acquisition channel for McNally and a vital force in driving student traffic, bolstering recruitment, and saving the college money. And Act-On's analytics have given them greater visibility into the results of their direct mail and radio and TV advertising programs. Seeing how these campaigns were actually performing spurred the college to reallocate more than $60,000 in broadcast advertising towards more productive programs.

Today, individuals on the marketing team can easily construct and run their own campaigns. And through Act-On, the college has created automated lead notifications for reps that have cut average inquiry response times from 4 or 5 days to less than 24 hours.

While there are many venues available to communicate with students, the school finds email the most effective for students in the early to middle stage of engaging with the college. At around 45%, their open and click through rates are in the top percentile for the higher education sector. And that has translated to a 23% year-over-year increase in lead flow and improved registration numbers.

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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