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Case Study



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Anderson University

Engaging Students in a Digital World

Nationally recognized for its student engagement, Anderson University (AU) is one of the fastest growing private universities in the country. Anderson has a great reputation, known for its strong traditional undergraduate programs. Located in Upstate South Carolina, the university is committed to offering a liberal arts education as a means of preparing its students for all areas of life.

Director of Marketing & Communications for Online and Graduate Programs Amy Gutzmer remarked, “While Anderson University is the largest private University in South Carolina, we maintain a close family atmosphere. Our students are interested in strong academic programs and our dedicated support services. We have the most caring faculty and staff who truly want to help students succeed—not just on campus—but beyond their time at Anderson.”

Gutzmer has been at Anderson University for a year and a half and has had the unique opportunity to be the first to serve in this director role at the university. Having come from a background in business, she now serves incoming students for Anderson’s online and graduate programs. The incredible challenges faced by higher education as a whole—brought on by COVID-19—prompted her to consider how she can use her experience and leverage the institution’s partnerships to best reach these students.

Challenges

- Market awareness of online programs
- Interest from local technical schools
- Pandemic threatening national enrollment numbers

Solution

- Digital Marketing Solutions: Geofencing
- Digital Marketing Solutions: Custom Audience Targeting
- Digital Marketing Solutions: Over-the-top TV

Benefits

- 23% increase in summer 2020 non-traditional & graduate enrollment
- 16% increase in fall 2020 non-traditional & graduate enrollment
- Expanded market reach resulting in an increased number of out-of-state inquiries
- Enhanced marketing to technical school students about articulation agreements

VIRTUALLY PREPARED

One of the first tasks Gutzmer was charged with when joining Anderson was to create more market awareness about flexible learning options for non-traditional students. She explained, “Our learning design team worked with our deans to build quality online undergraduate and graduate programs; therefore, we needed to create market awareness of them. At the same time, Anderson University wanted to expand the

Eduventures® Research, and Enrollment Analytics designed to give higher education institutions the tools to strategically recruit and yield their best prospective students.

“By using the Encoura platform, we were able to look at our existing degree programs to research regional and national trends, as well as student demand. We also asked for an evaluation of a potential new program to see if the market would support it. Encoura provided invaluable insights into master’s



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geographical market outreach to include areas outside of Upstate South Carolina. With a limited staff, we knew our best option was to partner with an outside agency.”

Gutzmer reached out to one of Anderson’s long-time partners, Encoura®, to support these new initiatives. Specifically, she expressed interest in collaborating on increasing market awareness of their flexible learning formats. “Educating the general public about AU Online has been a priority since I began my new role as Director of Marketing and Communications for Online and Graduate Programs,” she said.

To find the best students to market these programs to, Gutzmer turned to her representative to leverage the Encoura platform.

The Encoura platform is enrollment technology available to members. The Platform includes numerous applications including Class Planner™, Enrollment Lens™,

degree trends, online providers, and current labor market data to highlight potential opportunities in this market,” Gutzmer shared.

When asked what she valued most from the Encoura platform, Gutzmer quickly replied, “The most valuable information is the deep dive into market research that we do not have the time nor resources to access—pertinent information that is needed to evaluate new and existing programs. We analyze the data and current higher ed trends to align our programs, marketing, and recruiting strategy, as well as to anticipate growth areas.”

MASTERING DIGITAL

With the information gleaned from Encoura, Anderson University then looked at specific strategies for achieving its marketing and recruiting goals. Encoura Digital Solutions were exactly the resources it needed in this time of virtual admissions.

Gutzmer shared, “COVID-19 forced us to re-evaluate our marketing strategy. Rather than geofencing certain businesses where people were no longer present, we instead shifted our digital efforts to Custom Audience Targeting, social media, and Over-the-Top TV ads where we saw large success. There’s no way I could have completely changed marketing strategy and increased enrollment without the help of my team and NRCCUA. We have a great partnership.”

Gutzmer has seen direct results from their Over-the-Top TV digital strategies created with NRCCUA. Over-the-Top TV reaches students and parents on emerging channels like Hulu from their favorite streaming devices including smartphones, game systems, tablets and more. Gutzmer remarked, “We could see that an increasing number of inquiries about our university were coming

employ its Next-Gen Custom Audience Targeting service. This service allows Anderson University to digitally market to its prospective students on their favorite mobile apps. Gutzmer shared why she values this particular service. “Custom audience targeting works well because I can focus on a particular program and set parameters to target those prospective students.”

Anderson University has certainly seen strong results from utilizing these digital solutions this year. Gutzmer remarked, “Using both geofencing and custom audience targeting resulted in increased leads, ultimately increasing the number of applications submitted. Despite the challenges of COVID, non-traditional and graduate enrollment for summer 2020 increased by 23% and fall 2020 enrollment increased 16%.”



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in from students in Georgia, exactly where we had been marketing with TV ads. This type of data is invaluable. It allows me to make strong budget and strategy decisions when exploring potential new markets.”

“We are also able to target potential student populations within a defined geographical location by geofencing. One area where this digital service has continued to work well for us despite the pandemic is in marketing to the 2-year technical schools in the area. Since we have articulation agreements with the institutions, students are able to transfer their credits from a technical college seamlessly to our school to continue their educations,” Gutzmer pointed out.

In addition to Over-the-Top TV and geofencing, Gutzmer also partnered with NRCCUA to

COLLABORATING TOWARD SUCCESS

“My Encoura Digital Solutions representative listens to me explain my overall lead generation goals. Then, based on her experience with diverse marketing platforms, we collaborate to create a campaign strategy. Once the campaign has launched, current data is provided on a regular basis and we make adjustments as necessary.”

Together, Anderson University and NRCCUA have already been able to achieve many of the goals that Gutzmer had set: creating market awareness about “AU Online,” driving interest from local technical schools, and increasing overall enrollment.

“I was able to immediately pivot with my NRCCUA rep when COVID-19 hit. We didn’t skip a beat. We had built all this momentum working together months before and even though we were confronted with a crisis, we were able to hit pause, regroup, and put a new plan together. Now our enrollment is up —both undergraduate and graduate. I was very pleased.”

The NRCCUA partnership is one that Anderson University looks forward to continuing. “Our Digital Solutions representative is a true extension of Anderson. She’s the type of team member I would employ in my office. She genuinely wants the best for our university and is a big cheerleader for us.” The collaboration is one that has become a seamless part of the AU team and they are already planning strategies for the next year together.

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