Effective Communications for Student Recruitment
Joanna Turner
My name is Joanna Turner I have been involved in all aspects of international education for the past 15 years. My experience includes:

- Director of an English School in NZ
- Recruitment and marketing contracts with universities across the globe
- Recruitment and communications consultant to universities

I have taken all the knowledge and skills gained from these experiences to develop more effective and successful approaches to student recruitment through improved communications.
The expression that fits what I am going to talk about is:

“You can’t see the wood for the trees”

A much used English Metaphor, and this is how I sum up some of the websites I audit:

There is so much information that students can't find the answers they require
However, we are focused on SEO and keywords we are paying little attention to content.....

What we are saying

and how we are saying it
Research the courses they are interested in and make an enquiry, more than often they will use a portal - one enquiry form that gets sent to lots of universities.
Then students get lots of email response....... Generally these come in a number of different forms.
Dear Joanna,

Thank you for completing the enquiry form for information related to study at Carnegie Mellon University in Australia. Over the course of the next few weeks you will receive a series of emails containing information relevant to your chosen field of interest and important information related to the application process and application deadlines.

This information is designed to keep you informed during the application, offer and enrolment stages.

You can contact the Admissions Office at any stage of the process if you have specific questions related to studying at Carnegie Mellon University in Australia.

Admissions Office
Hello,

Thank you for your interest in studying with us at the University of Tasmania, a university that is proudly located in the beautiful state of Tasmania.

The University of Tasmania, an internationally renowned university with a proud history of over 150 years, is located in the top five universities in Australia. The University of Tasmania is committed to providing a world-class education to our students.

Why University of Tasmania?

The University of Tasmania is proud of its commitment to teaching and research excellence. With a campus spanning over 150 years, the University is ranked in the top 5 universities in Australia.

Life in Tasmania

Known as the “Island of Opportunities,” the University of Tasmania is located on a beautiful island that is a gateway to metropolitan Australia.

Low cost of living

TAS students have some of the lowest living expenses in the country. "Cost of living" includes the cost of accommodation, food, and transportation.

Scholarships

The University of Tasmania offers a wide range of scholarships to support students in various disciplines and levels of study.

English & Foundation programs

The University of Tasmania offers English language programs and foundation courses to support students in improving their English language skills.

Student testimonials

Testimonials from current and past students can be found on the University of Tasmania’s website.
Dear Joanna

Thank you for your interest in studying science with us at the University of Tasmania (UTAS). UTAS ranks in the top 2% of universities worldwide, the faculty of Science at UTAS ranks number ______.

You have indicated an interest in science which will be taught in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology. We offer a comprehensive list of Science degrees. UTAS proximity to diverse environment provides a unique experience for you to learn how to tackle the world's most complex scientific challenges.

UTAS has competitive fees and an extremely generous scholarship programme. You could be offered a 25% reduction in first year fees all students are assessed on application.

125 year old UTAS is ranked in the top 10 research universities in Australia. You will benefit from the excellent links UTAS has with industry/Business, the internship opportunities, and student support. Have a look at what our students have to say.

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Tasmania offers a breathtaking natural environment, Hobart a cosmopolitan City and saving you money with one of the lowest costs of living in Australia.

The application process is very straightforward as your student advisor we can advise you and answer any questions about UTAS, application and admissions. I look forward to meeting you on campus! Are you ready to apply now?

Best Wishes

UTAS
These first communications are the start of developing a relationship with the potential student.
MOST IMPORTANTLY

From the students point of view how the university engages with them will be reflective of their time at the university
You only have seconds to engage with the student

Attention Span

- The average attention span at present is just 5 seconds long.
- Ten years ago, it was 12 minutes.

That’s a pretty drastic change

- Younger people have shorter attention spans than the elderly.

This indicates that social media and technology have an effect, as opposed to age.
An instant response is essential, it has to engage the student with concise and relevant content that links into further information on the website.
What is the relevant information that a student wants?
Programmes

Teaching Quality

Student Services

The Institution

Admissions Process
Within each of these areas there are a number of information requirements. For example: Teaching Quality includes

- Rankings
- Professional recognition
- Tuition Fees
- Contact hours
- Student/staff ratio
- Student Satisfaction
- Academic Profile
- Technology in Teaching
- Links with Employers
Website content needs to be **interesting** with **relevant information** presented in an engaging and accessible way……
Don’t try and be everything to everyone -
Our campuses offer high quality learning, teaching and research spaces to better meet the needs of students, academics and researchers.

The Dutch education system is one of the most rigorous and forward-thinking in the world. It’s a system based on student-led learning, critical debate and practical experience. Most of our programs involve real work placements, team projects or other ‘hands-on’ elements. We believe that innovation comes from a willingness to explore new ways of thinking.

.........is unique. It is the only independent university in the UK with a Royal Charter, and probably the smallest with around 2,000 students (approx 1,300 on campus). Honours degrees are achieved in two intensive years of study. We keep class sizes small, with a student:academic staff ratio of 10.5:1 and the Oxbridge style tutorial groups are often personalised and always exhilarating.
Develop an ongoing relationship with the student
Across the globe, students preferred method of communication for relationship development is email and if they are interested in the institution they want weekly communication.

* Hobsons Marketing Channel Optimisation
Achieving competitive advantage in higher education recruitment January 2014
How do we develop this relationship?

By ensuring we are **being proactive**

*queries are reacted to, if the student doesn't ask questions the university*
Its not just what we say its the way we say it

*Use engaging and personal content* - students want to feel that the institution is talking to them and is generally *interested in them as a person*
Engage students with interesting subject lines and snippet text.
Dear Joanna,

At the University of ——— we know that employment outcomes are important to you. We are really pleased with our employment outcomes here, you could be one of the 95% of our graduates in full-time employment within 6 months of graduating.

Our links with business and industry ensure that you have access to applied learning and can experience different types of work environments prior to graduating.

We are really proud of our international rankings, our online application system provides you with all the information to ensure a efficient application. I am part of our strong student support team and happy to answer any questions you may have. I look forward to seeing you at the University………

Best Wishes,

Susan Stewart
Student support officer
“The universities degrees are some of the best in the world, the university is in the international rankings, and is academically renowned and are therefore recognised as one of the leading universities in the world”

“We are a world class internationally ranked university, our degrees are the best in the world”
Website content needs to be interesting

A long letter from the Director will not hold student attention

USPs listed in bullet points will make a institution seem interesting and answer questions
If you don't **engage** the student with your content you will not be getting a good return on your marketing investment.
Welcome to UNSW Australia (The University of New South Wales), one of Australia's leading research and teaching universities. At UNSW, we take pride in the broad range and high quality of our teaching programs. Our teaching gains strength and currency from our research activities, strong industry links and our international nature; UNSW has a strong regional and global engagement.

In developing new ideas and promoting lasting knowledge we are creating an academic environment where outstanding students and scholars from around the world can be inspired to excel in their programs of study and research. Partnerships with both local and global communities allow UNSW to share knowledge, debate and research outcomes. UNSW’s public events include concert performances, open days and public forums on issues such as the environment, healthcare and global politics. We encourage you to explore the UNSW website so you can find out more about what we do.
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Changes with google searches and use of algorithms means that the importance of what the content is saying is increasing.
Semantics means that content has to answer specific questions.
Semantics - Answering Questions

Content needs to written to address the way students now search for information.

Students are more than likely to ask questions rather than use a couple of keywords.
For instance a student looking for the top internationally ranked university in natural science will use semantics in the search engine:

Which university is internationally ranked the highest in natural sciences?

Website content therefore has to incorporate answers to semantics:

The university is internationally ranked number 2 in Natural Sciences
The **decision making process** of the students can be **over 2 years**. This means we have plenty of time for relationship development!
An enquiry communications strategy will ensure that students receive appropriate information.

Segment students:

Enquiry to application

Application to enrolment
Don’t students in different regions require different information?

Students across the globe require the same information, however the priority of the information requirements changes across regions.

We can segment students from regions and have a separate communication strategy for each region.
In Summary:

**Relationship development is crucial for generating enrolments**

Understand the *information you students require and be proactive in delivering it*

Ensure students have *access to the information they require*

Make sure your *content is engaging, concise, honest, relevant and answers the questions*

Make it *available again and again*
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