

Education Marketing in a Mobile World

How to join the mobile revolution—and win more student enrollments.

INTRODUCTION: THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TEXTED TO YOU.

THE MOBILE REVOLUTION IS HERE.

The way we interact with information, computers, and devices is changing rapidly—and dramatically. Today, one of every seven minutes of media consumption is done through a mobile device.¹ And by 2013, mobile phones are projected to overtake PCs as the most common way to access the Internet.² It's a radical transformation that impacts how we live and communicate. In fact, it's a revolution.

“A huge tidal wave is building now,” says Ken Inman, Vice President of Research and Development at TARGUSinfo. “We're beginning to see mobile web access grow exponentially, and many prospective students now prefer text communication to a phone conversation. This preference for texting is already true for the core younger demographic market, but text will also be a primary channel for reaching older prospective student groups, as they, too, get caught by the tidal wave.”

Already, more than 70 percent of the U.S. population uses text messaging,³ and the typical American teen sends 1,500 texts a month.⁴ But the movement toward texting is just the beginning. As the mobile revolution gains momentum, students and prospects won't just be using their phones to send text messages or look up your contact information. They'll be using their devices to connect with you everywhere they go, and on their own terms. They'll look for your school on Twitter and Facebook, and on foursquare and YouTube—all while browsing from a mobile device.

DIGITAL NATIVES ARE LEADING THE WAY.

Mobile technology is already a staple of life for teens and 20-somethings, often referred to as Generation Z, or “digital natives.” Their phones, which are with them at all times, are their first source of information—and a primary source of entertainment. Jason Katcher,

¹Strategy Analytics, *BoA Wireless Matrix*, *Canalys*, *eMarketer*

²Strategy Analytics, *BoA Wireless Matrix*, *Canalys*, *eMarketer*

³Sources: *US Census Bureau, Jul 2008*; *CTIA Quick Facts, Dec 2008*; *Internet World Statistics, Nielsen, 2008*; *Nielsen Mobile Messaging – Observations, Trends & Data, Q4 2008*; *Newspaper Association of America, Trends & Numbers – Total Paid Circulation, 2008*

⁴Pew Internet Research: *Teens and Mobile Phones, April 2010*

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Head of Education and Recruitment Advertising at Google, explains how our mobile phones are also becoming true extensions of who we are: “The phone has a microphone, which gives it ears. It also has a camera, which are its eyes. And a speaker, which gives it a voice. The touchscreen is its skin. And its GPS chip is a sort of internal compass that always knows where it is.”

Digital natives, who see their phones as part of their identity, already understand this. In fact, they’re living it every day. And with their ravenous appetite for all things mobile, they will be the force that breaks down mobile cost and coverage barriers, and quickly makes the mobile web ubiquitous for all of your students and prospects, including adult continuing education students.

START A NEW CONVERSATION WITH STUDENTS.

Schools that begin now to use mobile marketing’s unique capabilities to meet their highly connected students and prospects where they are—on their devices—will be able to start new types of interactive conversations with them, and to create richer, more individualized dialogs than ever before. By offering new mobile channels to students and prospects, schools can develop more meaningful conversations, create higher levels of trust, boost their institution’s credibility, and build brand loyalty—all of which will ultimately lead to stronger recruitment and increased engagement.

“With mobile, the medium truly is the message,” says Paul Reddy, President at Datamark. “It has the power to shift the conversation we have with our prospects in significant ways.” As schools deploy text communication and mobile web capabilities, they give students the ability to connect whenever they have time—whether searching for continuing education information during their coffee break or receiving and responding to enrollment advisors while they’re out with friends.

“Meeting prospective students in the mobile space demonstrates that your school understands who they are,” says Reddy. “You’re connecting with your future students in the way that they already connect with other trusted brands, and with their friends, teachers and advisors.”

THE FALL OF THE WEB FORM, AND THE RISE OF MOBILE INTERACTIVITY.

A DESKTOP? THAT’S SO LAST YEAR.

The rapid transition from the desktop web to the mobile web appears to be accelerating in tandem with five converging trends: 3G, social networking, video, VoIP, and the increasing adoption of multi-functional mobile devices.¹ For education marketers, this shift from desktop Internet access to mobile Internet access creates both threats and opportunities.

5 TRENDS ACCELERATING MOBILE WEB ADOPTION:

1. 3G
2. Social networking
3. Video
4. VoIP
5. Multi-functional devices

“Meeting students in the mobile space demonstrates that your school understands who your students are. You’re delivering information—and education—in a way that truly fits their lifestyle.”

— Paul Reddy,
President, Datamark

¹ December 2009 Morgan Stanley Internet Report.

BAD NEWS: MOBILE PHONES DON'T LOVE YOUR LEAD GEN FORMS.

Many colleges and universities rely heavily today on form-based Internet lead generation sources to help them fill their enrollment funnel. Forms are often cumbersome on traditional mobile devices (less so on tablet computers), potentially creating a significant barrier to what is now the standard way for prospective students to indicate interest. Enrollment web sites and landing pages with lead generation forms must take mobile access into consideration, or they run the risk of actually discouraging interest from mobile-enabled students.

GOOD NEWS: MOBILE OFFERS NEW WAYS TO COLLECT DATA—AND CONNECT WITH STUDENTS.

As the mobile phone becomes more feature-rich and omnipresent, and network speeds increase, schools have an opportunity to move beyond today's form-based web interactivity to an even richer level of two-way communication, where the user is empowered to interact with your admissions department anytime, and from anywhere. From SMS campaigns that empower prospective students to text you their contact information, all the way to new mobile profiling and scoring strategies that provide marketers with richer identity information, the lines of communication between schools and students are more open than ever before. And the opportunities for education marketers are growing and changing as quickly as the mobile revolution itself.

GETTING STARTED: TEAR DOWN THE WALLS.

So what can education marketers do to connect with the mobile generation? “The first step is to take the web assets you already have and optimize them for mobile in order to drive increased enrollment and engagement,” says Reddy. He also believes that marketers should begin using a basic text communication strategy, leveraging third-party messaging platforms and deliberately experimenting with simple text messages to drive improved conversion rates.

Quick Fact:

In the first four months of 2010, the percentage of traffic to Datamark-hosted mobile web sites increased from under 1% to over 6%.

BECOME A DESTINATION FOR MOBILE SURFERS.

Here are a few things you can do right now to catch the growing demand for mobile content, ensure that mobile searchers can easily find your school, and make their mobile experience positive once they navigate to your site.

- 1. Be at the top of the search results.** Most users don't scroll on mobile browsers, so search engine optimization is more important than ever. Using SEO best practices to bump up your school's position in the search results will determine whether prospects find your school, or move on to something else.

2. Get prospects calling with a single click. Make sure your search result listing includes your phone number, with prefix, so that mobile users can take advantage of click-to-call technology. By simply clicking on your hyperlinked phone number, they can engage the calling process right from their mobile browser—and instantly be in touch with your recruitment agents. You can also buy Google Click to Call ads, which ensure a prominent, top position for your site along with seamless click-to-call technology.

3. Optimize your current website for mobile. You can take simple steps to optimize your current web site for a mobile browsing experience. For starters, place the most important information at the top of the page, make the site easy to navigate using a mobile device, add social media links to the top of the page, and use brief text links instead of graphical buttons when possible.

USE TEXT TO DRIVE CONVERSION AND ENGAGEMENT

Robust SMS/MMS (text) campaign options are now available to help education marketers build deeper, more productive dialogs with prospective students. But before embarking on more complex text campaign strategies, marketers should begin by building a strong foundation. Here are a few initial steps to take right now.

- 1. Build your list.** Begin creating your list of “textable names” by ensuring that your form pages include a “mobile” field, and that mobile phone information is captured in your CRM system.
- 2. Get permission.** Text messaging is a highly personal channel, subject to strong norms, carrier-specific rules, and laws designed to protect user privacy and control. Education marketers may not use SMS to communicate with students until they “opt-in” to text communication. Make sure you’re asking for this permission in all appropriate marketing communications, and maintaining accurate records of who has granted permission, and who hasn’t.
- 3. Know the rules.** Familiarize yourself with accepted guidelines in mobile text message marketing, including message length and format, click-to-call specifications, and links to web sites. View all best practices and technical specifications on the Mobile Marketing Association web site, or by downloading the MMA’s guidelines at www.mmaglobal.com/mobileadvertising.pdf.
- 4. Start with a simple text response.** Many education marketers use an auto-responder email to respond to students who submit inquiries to their enrollment teams—and many marketers find these emails remain unopened. Instead of always using email auto responses, evaluate a simple text message as an alternative. This allows you to provide a highly timely response with an embedded click-to-call action.

BUILD ON YOUR SUCCESS.

“The mobile marketing landscape is like the Wild West,” says Google’s Katcher. “And you simply have to get comfortable with the risk of it in order to profit from it.” Katcher describes Google’s steps for engaging with the emerging mobile medium as follows:

- 1. Experiment**—While schools should keep their core marketing programs intact, they should reserve money on the side to experiment with mobile marketing. Only one of these experiments (and there are many to try) needs to pay off in order for schools to see a benefit.



Above: An example of a Google “Click-to-Call” ad. The user simply clicks on the phone icon at the top right to respond to the ad.

2. Measurement—Gauging the success of emerging media is difficult because established metrics haven't been developed yet. Because of this, schools shouldn't expect to hold mobile marketing to the same metrics as traditional mediums. Instead, they should evaluate all data carefully, and form their own conclusions about what defines success.

3. Implement—After schools have experimented with a variety of mobile marketing techniques, they're ready to put the most-likely-to-succeed strategies into play as formal elements of their marketing mix. As pioneers in mobile marketing, these schools will discover new ways to engage more students and prospects—and boost recruitment success.

THE SMART PHONE MYTH. AND THE NEW IPHONE REALITY

- Myth: Everyone has a smart phone.
- Fact: Only 13 percent of mobile phone users have a smart phone.¹
- Future: Bigger screens, faster networks, and cheaper data plans and devices will encourage adoption of high-end devices like iPhone en masse.

“Even though mobile marketing is in its infancy, the generation of prospects and students that schools are talking to live and breathe by their mobile devices,” says Tom Dearden, CEO of Datamark. “The schools that succeed in the future will be the ones that start experimenting with mobile now.”

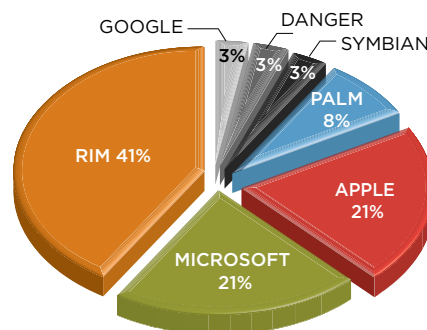
MAKING THE NEXT MOVE: EIGHT ADVANCED MOBILE MARKETING STRATEGIES.

Mobile search and text messaging are the foundation for building an effective, database-driven mobile program. But how you build up from there is as wide-open as the new mobile medium itself. The trick is to figure out what works best for your school when there are no completely proven best practices to pull from yet.

“You can't just take what works in one medium and assume it's going to work in the next medium,” says Tom Dearden, CEO of Datamark. “Education marketers must think differently about what will succeed—and what won't succeed—in the mobile world. To stay ahead in this space, you must be willing to embrace a little bit of risk, and make it part of your program development process.”

Once you've moved beyond the basics, here are eight mobile marketing techniques that forward-thinking organizations are implementing right now—and that schools can begin using to generate more leads, drive more prospects to admissions, and make it easier for interested students to enroll.

1. Build a mobile-only site. Once you've optimized your current site for mobile, begin developing a mobile-only site that speaks to the task-driven, goal-oriented state of mind that most users are in when they're using their devices for mobile web searches. Your mobile site should feature a simple navigation structure and a stripped-down design that's built for speed. For an example of a mobile-specific web site, see mobile.datamark.com.



Only 13% of mobile users have a smart phone, and of that 13% Apple does not “own” the market. The chart above shows market share of smart phone Operating Systems as of July 2009.

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— Tom Dearden,
CEO of Datamark

¹comScore Metrics, US

2. Make events, presentations, and lectures downloadable to mobile devices.

As the iPhone and the iPod Touch continue to drive much of the growth of the mobile web,¹ schools should seize opportunities to make iTunes U part of a mobile media mix. Consider leveraging iTunes U not only to make your school's digital content available online, but also to make it available on iPods and iPhones. This allows students and prospects to view, listen and download everything from classroom lectures to audiobooks to educational videos—right to their iPhones.

3. Create targeted text messaging campaigns. Send text messages to your mobile subscription list to nurture ongoing dialog and engagement with interested prospects. Texts can help drive enrollments and starts with simple reminders like: “Don't forget to register on August 1.” Or, “Your FAFSA is due in two weeks. Need help filling it out?” For active, registered students, text messages can be used to help plan for the following semester with texts like, “Are you returning next quarter?” They can also be used to encourage involvement and retention with ongoing texts of study skills tips, or VIP text alerts for upcoming events. Make sure all of your text campaigns have clear calls to action for users to click to call, click to register, or click for details.

Quick Fact:

In December 2010, iTunes U surpassed the 100 million download mark.²

4. Develop branded mobile content. Use a strategy that top brands have been successfully implementing for years: Create mobile wallpapers and ringtones branded for your school. An image of your school mascot or a scenic shot of your campus can be easily made into wallpaper for a phone. Your school's fight song can be downloaded as a ring tone. This original content is relatively inexpensive to create and can be provided as a free text alert subscription service to create goodwill and strengthen your brand.

5. Extend branding to include video designed for mobile. Create a visual, mobile format to share YouTube videos on everything from learning opportunities like classroom lectures to campus life promotions, including virtual campus tours.

6. Empower traditional web site users with Send to Phone features. Develop Send to Phone tools on your web site that allow students and prospects to send web site content directly to their phones as a text message. Send to Phone can be used for admissions phone numbers, staff contact info, and directions to your school. It can even be used for media-rich content, like videos.

7. Make print and broadcast media mobile and interactive. Begin including mobile, keyword-driven calls to action and shortcode mobile phone numbers on your print, TV, and direct mail pieces. These can be used to encourage text interaction with admissions agents. For instance, by using a Text2Speak keyword and call to action, prospects can simply text in a time when they'd like to be contacted. You can also experiment with a Text2Enroll keyword and call to action, which enables prospects to text in an email address, to which an enrollment form can be sent. Unique keywords can be used to track each market's mobile interaction with a particular ad.



Above: An example of a site optimized for mobile, mobile.datamark.com.

¹TechCrunch, January 5, 2010

²CNET News, December 18, 2009.

8. Use multimedia messaging (MMS) to fulfill information requests.

Create media-rich text messages to deliver everything from campus photos to brief enrollment videos. As more devices are able to accommodate multimedia text messages, more people are expecting richer interactions and entertainment via text messaging.

PREPAID PLAN OR MULTI-YEAR CONTRACT? THE ANSWER SPEAKS VOLUMES.

To improve and expand your mobile experiments—and to begin turning them into measurable results—you need strong, reliable identity information about your mobile audiences. And by profiling and scoring leads based on your prospects' mobile preferences, including handset choices and wireless plans, your school can begin to leverage powerful new data for creating targeted mobile communications.

“Branding and marketing are all about having the right information at the right time to make every customer interaction as effective as possible,” says TARGUSinfo’s Inman. “And when you find ways to reliably identify mobile users, you can significantly improve the customer experience and messaging by those channels.”

To start, you must identify and verify mobile users online. It’s not only important to identify a mobile device, but to be able to link back that mobile device to a verified user. Next, to profile and score your mobile users, you’ll need to gather information on everything from their wireless plans to their handset choices.

WHAT ARE YOUR PROSPECTS’ MOBILE CHOICES SAYING ABOUT THEM?

According to a study commissioned by TARGUSinfo¹, your prospects’ choices say a lot about who they are, and what types of messages they’ll respond to. Armed with this valuable identity information, you can refine your mobile marketing strategies—and stay competitive in the crowded education marketplace. Highlights of the study include details on the following:

MOBILE SUBSCRIPTIONS

- T-Mobile Subscribers may fit the profile for an Associates’ Degree
- Verizon Subscribers may fit the profile for grad degrees

HANDSETS

- Kyocera users lack college degrees, could be a fit to get a degree
- Blackberry users are highly educated, potential fit for grad degrees

WIRELESS PLANS

- Financially stable segments have annual or multi-year contracts
- Segments that are not employed opt for prepaid wireless plans

CONCLUSION: LEAD THE WAY, ACHIEVE RECRUITMENT VICTORY.

The mobile revolution is growing at a furious pace—and it will forever change the way schools, prospects and students connect. But it’s also fragmenting the market as new devices, mobile platforms, and technologies make it difficult to know exactly what the winning strategies will be. To succeed in what is quickly becoming a very crowded, noisy space, schools need to jump right in with the mobile-adopting masses—and learn how to lead the way.

“The schools that start experimenting with mobile now are the ones that will succeed in the future.”

— Tom Dearden,
CEO of Datamark

¹2009/2008 Fall Simmons Profile Report, Copyright 2010 Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc. All rights reserved, TARGUSinfo ElementOne, Copyright 2010 TARGUSinfo

“The schools that start experimenting with mobile now are the ones that will succeed in the future,” says Dearden. Reddy agrees. “Our audiences’ behaviors have changed,” he says. “And schools must be prepared to significantly change the way they market to prospects.”

EXPERIMENT. MEASURE. IMPLEMENT.

Today’s mobile leaders are writing their own rules, and they’re only beginning to discover best practices for mobile marketing. At this point, there are no clear victors in the mobile revolution. And that means there are incredible opportunities to capitalize from it—and win.

While there’s no easy shortcut to mobile success, optimizing your current web site for mobile search is a first logical step—and it’s something you can do right now. From there, start experimenting. Keep an eye on the results of your experiments. And implement the most promising experiments into your formalized marketing mix.

DATAMARK CAN HELP.

It’s an exciting, tumultuous time in education marketing—and Datamark has assembled the expertise and partnerships to help you navigate through it. As the leader in data-driven marketing for education, Datamark is conducting mobile research on behalf of clients, testing mobile messaging platforms and connection aggregators, and developing innovative mobile solutions to help schools connect with students.

“We look at each school’s needs in order to determine the level at which they should engage in mobile marketing,” says Datamark’s Reddy. “What we’ve found is that most of our clients can do much more than they think. With our philosophy of being creative solution providers, aggressive problem solvers, and trusted advisors, we’re working together with schools to develop effective strategies, and to help education marketers unlock the potential of mobile.”

By integrating the benefits of mobile into established practices for reaching, engaging, and motivating prospective students, Datamark is helping schools to discover and implement new recruitment and enrollment opportunities—and to capitalize on the biggest revolution since the Internet.

FIND YOUR MOBILE GUIDE.

Learn how Datamark can help your school lead the new mobile revolution.
Call 800-279-9335

ABOUT DATAMARK

Since 1987, Datamark (www.datamark.com) has provided innovative, data-driven marketing exclusively to higher education. The company delivers full-service lead generation and management, complete with conversion marketing solutions designed to reach, engage and motivate prospective students at every stage up to and throughout the enrollment process. Focusing on performance and visibility into the student enrollment cycle, Datamark helps schools drive higher return on their marketing investment.

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

— Charles Darwin