A PENNSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY'S ONLINE PROGRAM

Connecting with personalized Direct Mail, Webpages and Email Communications

▶ **Vertical Market:** Higher Education; Continuing Ed Direct Mail, Personal URL, Email

▶ **Target Audience:** Continuing Education

A Pennsylvania University's Online Programs has been a premier online university since 1996, when it began offering degrees online as an option for students. The Pennsylvania University's accredited online degree programs are designed for professionals who want to complete or advance their education at an online college. The Pennsylvania University's online degree programs – bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and certificate programs – offer the same accredited curricula as their on-campus equivalents and are competitive with other colleges, online and traditional.

Strategy

The Pennsylvania University began to notice a significant amount of people visiting their website and beginning applications, but then leaving the site without completing and submitting the application. There were also considerable numbers of people inquiring about online courses, but not signing up for the courses. Alcom was hired to develop a new approach to encourage these interested students to submit their application, and sign up for online courses.

Alcom printed and mailed an oversized postcard to 8,592 potential students, each highlighting the area of interest (major) for the potential student. Potential students were encouraged to visit their PURL for more information concerning The Pennsylvania University Online and their area of specific study. The site utilized imagery and copy that highlighted the specific segment that the student was interested in pursuing.

A four-question survey housed on the Personalized URL asked which term the student intended to enroll, if they had ever taken an online course, if they would like additional information about certain subjects, and if they had already started filling out their online application. Each of the four questions were multiple choice, with the last question having the option of either yes or no. If a person chose the answer, "Yes", they were given a link leading them directly to their incomplete application. If "No" was chosen, the person was given a link leading them to the appropriate page to begin filling out their Pennsylvania application.

Two weeks following the initial mailing, an email blast was sent to each person to serve as a reminder. The email basically re-capped what the mail piece had originally stated, and again encouraged each person to visit their Personalized URL. Two weeks following the first email blast, a second email blast was sent, but this time, only to those potential students that had not already responded to either the mail piece, or the first email.

Results

8,952 mail pieces with a personalized URL were sent. There were 921 unique visits to the Personalized URLs, and 1,298 visits total. The overall response rate was 10.72%. The Pennsylvania University was incredibly pleased with this response rate, as it far surpassed all previous response rates.

The Pennsylvania University achieved over two million dollars in lifetime student revenue. The Pennsylvania University continues to pursue and utilize this program.

Alcom *"**YES** is the answer!"...*
Now what's the question?