



HubSpot

FROM STRANGER TO STUDENT

A Marketer's Guide to Increasing
Applications with Early Stage Conversions

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Introduction



You wouldn't go to a car website and click the buy button without doing a little research, seeing the car, or taking a test drive, would you? Of course not. Large purchases require time for consideration. You have to compare features, hop in the driver's seat, and kick the tires a few times. The same goes for a prospective student or parent looking for the right school. You can't expect anyone to click "apply now" on their first visit to your website.

To ready prospects for that big conversion, you must first create several smaller conversion opportunities throughout the enrollment cycle. The goal is to educate potential students or their parents, and build trust so that when the time does come to apply, your school is at the top of their minds.

Instead of providing one door, your job is to turn your website into a lead-generating machine with lots of doors through which prospective students and parents can find their way into your database.

“ Large purchases require time for consideration. ”

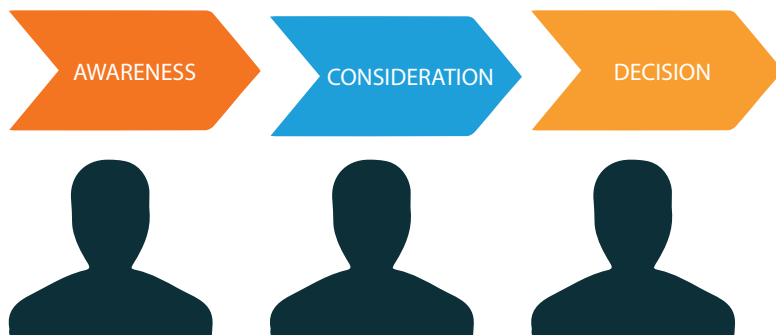


Chapter 1: Map Out the Student Journey



The Student Journey

Just like customers, prospective students and their parents go through a journey when making a big decision. If you want to capture those students and educate them on what your school has to offer, you must understand this journey and map your content to match each step.



Awareness



The prospective student or parent is experiencing and expressing symptoms of a problem or opportunity.

The first step in the journey comes when a prospective student or parent becomes aware of their need and/or desire to attend a school like yours, or pursue the type of education you offer. The content you share during this step should be designed to attract your personas, or target audience with educational resources.

Consider sharing:

- Blogs and articles
- Free guides
- Checklists
- Overview videos
- Social media posts
- Free kits

Chapter 1: Map Out the Student Journey



Consideration



The prospective student or parent has now clearly defined and given a name to their problem or opportunity.

Content during this phase should encourage your prospects to learn more about your school on a deeper level. How does your school help them solve their problem or meet their challenges?

Consider sharing:

- Program guides
- Webinars
- Virtual tours
- Career advice
- Student and alumni profiles

Decision



The prospective student or parent has decided on a solution strategy, method or approach, and is looking to refine their choice.

During the decision phase, your content should work to convert website visitors into applications by explaining why your school is the best option for them. Further, the information on your website should keep them engaged after they apply or even become students.

Consider sharing:

- Calendar invitations
- On-site visit schedules
- Professor interview sign-ups
- Meetings with admissions

Chapter 2: Using Content Offers to Convert Leads



One of the most powerful ways to reach your prospective students is through targeted content offers. Rather than making all content readily available -- like a blog or website article -- you can gate some of the offers you've created to gather information about the visitors to your website.

In order to receive your content offers, prospects should be willing to part with a little information. Start with a simple name and email address so as not to scare them away. This gateway helps you begin a relationship, without relying on an application or inquiry form, that you can build through further educational material.

With everything those potential students learn about your school, you should also learn something about them. Without gated content, this exchange of information becomes one-sided.

“With everything those potential students learn about your school, you should also learn something about them.”



Chapter 3: Creating Content



A blank page is intimidating. Your prospective students are already nervous and unsure, and a lack of quality content only makes that anxiety grow. The most valuable content for a prospect would answer questions they might not even know they have. Instead of pushing your school as the perfect choice, provide information that will help with academic or career goals. Share stories and videos that will help them feel more comfortable with the choice they face.

Fortunately, schools have a lot of information to share. Resources for building that content are ready for the taking, so long as you know where to look. Consider the following:

Current Students

Who better to provide an accurate picture of student life at your school or university than students who are currently living it? These students can provide information about their experiences, from application through to graduation.

Some of the valuable posts you can glean from current students might be “What I Wish I Knew Before Coming to College,” “The 10 Top Hidden Study Spots,” and “7 Cool Classes You Must Take.” With just a few words from your current students, potential applicants will begin to imagine their own lives at your school.

Alumni

Prospects don’t just want to know what life at school will be like; they want to know where they can go after graduation. Information from alumni will paint a picture of success beyond the walls of your institution. Not only that, alumni can shed some light on the experiences they had while in school and urge prospects to seek out those opportunities.

Your alumni often want to give back, even if they can’t provide monetary support. Creating content such as “Your Ultimate Bucket List Before Graduation,” “What I Did In My Next 4 Years,” and “10 Steps to Prepare for Life After Graduation” will keep those alumni involved.

Chapter 3: Creating Content



Professors and Department Heads

If there's one thing that makes a prospective student nervous, it's the idea of meeting new professors. They want to know what will be expected of them, how classes are laid out, and which study track will provide the biggest benefit. Professors can also share past projects and presentations to give new students an idea of what to expect.

Admissions Department

Once the decision is made to apply, prospective students will want any inside information that might help them craft the best application. Some information on how to navigate the process will help those students prepare while also calming a few of their nerves.

Some of the information they will seek include “10 Best Tips for Acing a College Interview,” “Questions You Should Ask on a School Tour,” and “What to Expect at Orientation.”

And Beyond...

Your prospective students will gain valuable insight through these content providers, but others within your institution can also provide important information. Ask for content from residence hall staff and directors, the athletic department staff, the campus career and guidance office, and even members of the local community.

The content that you gather can be worked into gated offers, even if you've already shared it in other ways. For instance, blog posts that have been expanded into ebooks, how-to advice, checklists, information pamphlets and packets, and even old offers that have been updated with new information.

Don't forget that other forms of content exist, too. In addition to written content, consider videos from any of the previously suggested contributors, a campus virtual tour, webinars, and interactive infographics. Changing up the content offers you provide keeps prospects coming back for more.

Chapter 4: Driving Traffic to Offers – The CTA



No matter how clear you think the path to conversion may be on your website, you must still guide prospects to the next step. Using calls-to-action (CTAs), or button with actionable language, throughout your website can show visitors where to go and tell them what to do.

When developing a CTA, there are a few parts you must pay attention to. First is the copy. Your direction should be clear but also captivating. Study words that are more likely to convert and build trust with your prospects. Describe the offer so that anyone who chooses to interact with it knows what to expect. Finally, choose creative that stands out from the rest of the page. No one should ever need to search for the signpost to your offer.

Placement within your website is important, too. Anywhere a prospective student or parent is likely to land will serve as a perfect spot for your CTAs. The CTA should have something to do with the page where it is located so that it serves as a logical next step. For instance, admissions pages might include a checklist for the application process. Pages

about educational programs and majors might include information from professors about the learning process in those classes. Other locations on your site perfect for a CTA and content offer include the blog and the student life pages.

The more content you offer, the better your chances of creating a true path to conversion. Each piece of content a student chooses to download leads to a better understanding of your school, which in turn builds trust.

**Download our
Sample Syllabus**

**Take A Virtual
Campus Tour**

**Get Your Free Copy of
Our Career Guide**

**Download Our Pre-College
Checklist for Music Majors**

Chapter 5: The Transaction

– Landing Pages and Forms



CTAs on your site should lead to a landing page. This page provides more about the content offer and perhaps even includes an excerpt or preview. The goal with a landing page is to collect contact and other information from interested prospects, so a contact form is also included.

Because your ultimate goal is to nurture people toward an application, you want to learn as much about your prospects as you can from these forms. Of course, asking for everything up front could cause users to balk. Once they're in your database, obtaining more information on future visits will be easier. Previous answers will allow you to personalize the experience for each student or parent.

For instance, start with a simple form that asks for their name, email address, and their program of interest. Next time they visit, your website can remember who they are and ask a new question, like when they expect to graduate high school, when they plan to enroll, how many college courses they've already completed, or how many other schools they're looking at. With each visit, you'll only need

to ask one new question, and because your website remembers every past answer, they'll never have to provide the same information twice.

Download Our Pre-College
Checklist for Music Majors



THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

Why is this offer so valuable?
Here's a bit more information about
the content we'll provide.

TELL US A LITTLE
MORE ABOUT YOURSELF TO
ACCESS THE GUIDE NOW!

Chapter 6: Taking Leads from First Conversion to Application



By following the prospect's journey through the decision phase, you can continue to provide content that guides them toward application. Email campaigns that keep the student engaged will help to move them through the three phases. Through automated processes, you can make sure each student gets targeted information that's relevant to his or her journey.

This is where all of that information you collected on your forms comes into play. You can take this information to build segmented lists of contacts. For example: when students plan to enroll, what programs they plan to study, how much financial aid may be needed, and if they plan to visit the campus.

Your emails can then be sent to these different segments to increase relevancy and timeliness for things like:

- More educational resources
- Program-specific information
- Important dates and events
- Offers to connect
- Invitations for campus visits
- Open House dates
- Enrollment information and deadlines
- Application and interview tips

Be sure to end each message with a new call to action that fits the email's content so that you can continue to learn more about your contacts and send them more valuable info. Done effectively, this email nurturing helps you transform contacts from strangers, into application-ready prospects.



Conclusion

While your goal is certainly to convert more prospects into applicants, the overall effect is a win-win. Students learn more about your school and have a better application experience; the admissions department gets more information and more enrollment-ready students who trust your school.



Whether you're an independent school, traded school, graduate program, or traditional four-year university, HubSpot can help you:



ATTRACT NEW PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Optimize new and existing content to attract site traffic and increase program awareness with blogging, microsites, social media, and your website.



PERSONALIZE YOUR ENROLLMENT MARKETING

Engage contacts with customized content unique to their stage in the admission cycle, intended area of study, or website activity.



SPEED UP THE ENROLLMENT CYCLE

Create multiple conversion points to tailor campaigns and shorten the length of time between a prospective student's first visit and their application submission.



TRACK AND ATTRIBUTE CAMPAIGNS

Use closed-loop analytics that directly attribute enrollments to your marketing campaigns and provide a 360-degree view of a prospective student's journey.

[REQUEST A LIVE DEMO](#)

[GET A FREE ASSESSMENT](#)