

Capturing and Applying the Student Voice Throughout the Recruitment Journey

Chair: Mark

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Presenter: Matthew Usher, UK Marketing and Student Recruitment Manager, Bournemouth University.

- Matthew has a background in outreach, student recruitment, marketing and student recruitment manager, and digital communications.

What do and could we know and how effectively are we implementing it?

- Turning that into something meaningful
- Then using that something with purpose – making a meaningful change.
- Keep asking and responding

Is our content practicing what we preach? (I.e. Vlogs, Blogs, case studies etc.)

Authenticity

- Authenticity has become core to what we do and how we deliver.
- Why? Consumers are inundated with messages, and becoming more conscious of brand values. Because of the amount of messages out there, consumers are more aware when things are inauthentic.

How do reach Gen X, and what can we do?

“Gen X marketers are apparently struggling to connect with consumers under 25, as their habits and values are so different, but without stereotyping there are a few simple approaches they can take.”

Useful links on this topic:

The Age of Authentic Marketing: A Guide to Gain Consumer Trust

<https://www.marketingweek.com/missing-link-marketers-gen-z/>

The Missing Link between Marketers and Gen Z

<https://www.powerreviews.com/blog/authentic-marketing/>

Consumers want authentic messaging, for example as a ‘more scientific example’:

- Matthew shows the difference in views for videos produced on student accommodation. The highest amount being a VLOG made by someone disconnected to the university. Below:

Accommodation student interview video	11k views
BU Accommodation – by students, for students	26k views
Moving to Uni VLOG!!! Helping my brother move into university 2019 (+room tour!!) <i>Produced independently from the university.</i> (Jack Edwards)	76k views

KEY Point: “Relevance Trumps Gloss”

- Matthews used the example of TripAdvisor to illustrate that whatever you put out there content wise, your audience will also be looking out for information relevant to them.
- For this reason, sense check what you do because others will post about it.
- A question to ask: Is what you’re saying, matching up with the current experience?

Do we have an excuse for not reaching gen X?

No –

- We can use our student communities.
- We can gain insight from events (Exhibitions, School Visits) to shape what we produce.

Touchpoints and Data

1. What do you already know?
 - Age, Financial Background, WP Indicators, Educational Background, They Chose us...
 - BU have translated what they know about their audience into a detailed applicant profile for each major segment. This document profiles their audience using data.
2. Where can you find out more about your audience?
 - a. Acceptors/Decliners Survey
 - b. Induction Surveys and SU
 - c. Academic Staff and Faculty Surveys
 - d. First impressions (Your experience on the stand...
 - e. Goal Completions (i.e. Open Day goal completion)
 - f. Search Behaviours
 - g. Social Insights

Matthew mentioned using ‘Hotjar’, a tool which allows you to see a user’s onsite behaviour and journey, for example during Clearing.

Consider where you can find out more about your audience, and make it meaningful and actionable.

Using Personas

Personas described as fictional characters to represent user/buyer/audience type, ‘variants of data personified’.

- BU are at an early stage with using Personas – currently only for UG & first pilot.
- They chose to do this to explore more characteristics of their audience.
- Personas are created through qualative and quantative insight (workshops with students services and teams, personal survey, acceptors/decliners survey)

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Limitations to using personas

- Non-scientific basis for development
- Practical implementation, for example – what do they mean to you? How will these meaningfully engage in the development process?

What did BU do with their personas?

- BU came up with 26 personas, and narrowed it to 7.
- Did not use a character/person as it would encourage unconscious bias.
- They decorated and shot a student rooms reflecting the 7 personas they created.
- They gave the Personas titles: i.e. Subject Passionista, Social Butterfly
- They translated what BU values would look like for each persona.

What is the application?

- General: Personas can be used to create broad, inclusive and considered content/messages.
- Personalisation: personalising CRM messaging, i.e. in Conversion Campaigns, CRM data-driven segmentation with tailored messaging.

Keep Asking: Look for actionable insights, and feedback to question what you're doing.

Summary; Instead of working of assumptions, keep asking and finding out what is relevant to student's current experiences ("relevance trumps gloss").

Some examples of how BU have done this:

1. Keep Asking: Sustainability

- BU Surveyed students asking how important sustainability/environmental friendliness was to them. A lot of students responded saying it was important.
- They also asked 'How sustainable / environmental friendly do you think BU is?' Students answered: Too much plastic, more bins, Go paperless.
- In response to these insights, BU actioned things like:
 - *introducing re-usable mugs for visitors through hospitality*
 - *removing plastic bottles for staff*
 - *Introducing travel partnerships with National express & SW railway*
 - *Explaining use of printed material*
 - *Actively promoting what they do r.e. sustainability*

2. Keep Asking: Conversion Activity

- BU had a calendar campaign, week countdown on going to BU.
- Areas to improve were greater personalisation.

Personalisation: 'Appetite for personalisation has been an ever growing theme among future students and has been a key feature of numerous competitor initiatives.'

3. Keep Asking: Living and Lifestyle

- Easy to present that everyone does clubs and societies, but do they actually?
- Survey and ask current students, see what students actually do.
- We can present the gloss and the ideal: keep asking so you can keep your content relevant.

What did BU do with their insights?

Moved from one static calendar, to a more personalised and relevant calendar ('Time to discover your degree of difference'. This included personalised names, four versions of the internal design, with content driven by student surveys.

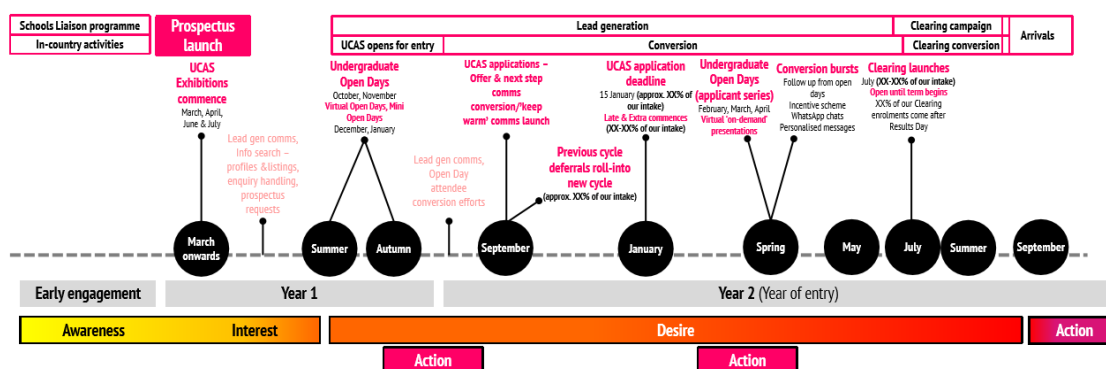
- Use insight to shape content strategy
- If there's an opportunity to ask and do something better, keep asking and questioning yourself/audience at each step.

Group Activity based on student voice touchpoints*

Tasks – in small groups

Which parts of the journey are you involved in – outreach and early engagement, student recruitment?

What insights do you have? Which could you get? How could you use **your** influence?



Group Feedback:

- Touchpoint: Open Days
Insights: Not enough accommodation open
Outputs: Alternative ways to view accommodation – virtual open days.
- Mention of secret shopping at interviews to experience it as a student in order to see the real experience (i.e. long waits). This is then coupled with data from surveys (Decliner's Survey).
- Touchpoint: Interviews
Insights: Students not being able to afford travel
Outputs: Bringing staff to their location, i.e. high pool of students from Northern Ireland, so bring the interviews to Northern Ireland (instead of asking students to travel to Edinburgh).

Content Strategy.

- Content Marketing – Content is developed to answer our audiences' questions at each stage of their journey.
- Storytelling – Focus moving to using student voice in as much as they can, real people and real examples. Creating content which *shows* the university culture and promise in action, and shows the real picture – not just the lovely stuff.

BU Content Examples of this:

- We are who we are – community
Video shown: 'My time at BU' (YouTube and on website) –
No brief, no people lined up, to show the real student voice to your audience.
- Authenticity and Student Voice – students stories in prospectuses, student blogs.
- Social Media 'Influencer' partnership (Evie Flynn) – working with influencers to promote the university, i.e. attending an Open Day.

Q. How did you approach U18 influencer?

Asked if they could have contact, parental consent and attendance at the event.

We are our Community – Overall Points:

1. Keep asking and sharing your insights (and action them)
2. Turn it into something meaningful and actionable insight (share for benefit of all)
3. Apply that insight throughout the SR journey
And remember relevance trumps gloss (and they may have done it better already!)