**HELOA National Conference**

**Workshop 5 Notes**

**“What do students want when it comes to University marketing?”**

* 7 x Student ambassadors made up from Warwick University (3), Leicester University (2) and University of South Wales (2)
* Chaired by Rebecca Montgomery, with questions from the room and pre-sent questions asked.

***Q: When applying to university was there any marketing or advertising that stood out or informed your decision?***

***A:***

* “Unleash your colours” campaign – bold, bright – award from chartered institute of marketing for campaign.
* Student life talk in school – That particular university wasn’t thought about in that region, changed decision to hear from real students.
* Subject based sessions delivered by academics or taster days– showed quality of teaching and allowed chats with current students
* Spotify advert from a university – was annoying after a while – but did actually remember it!
* Received a book from course reading list from one university – felt less intimidating, more or a community, part of something
* Student day in the life via Instagram story – useful and felt personal
* Attending open days was the key – support on the day and felt a truly real experience
* Youtubers – unofficial to the university but promoting the local city or town proved really popular

***Q: Do you see marketing as trustworthy? Is there a platform that proves the most trustworthy?***

***A:***

* Diversity of students can sometimes seem fraudulent content – we know same students appear in prospectus year after year.
* Pictures that don’t show reality – no bedrooms shown in less modern or cheaper accommodation
* Youtubers, students, virtual tour prove the most trustworthy
* Seeing ambassadors in photos or videos then seeing them at fairs or UCAS events – allowed connections to be made

***Q: Do ex-students, ambassadors or staff make a difference?***

***A:***

* Nice to see – makes it more relatable and real

***Q: Before experience days did you receive a phone call? Did you answer?***

***A:***

* Some universities called about unconditional offers
* Students find it awkward – put on the spot
* Most of them agreed that they wouldn’t answer – prefer an email with an attachment or link instead
* A text reminder can still be really important – as long as the university doesn’t reply, this makes it informal
* Calling would definitely make a difference to older students – they would appreciate it more

***Q: Do you still engage with emails? Do you get too many?***

***A:***

* Depends on your pre-conceived choice – only respond or read the emails from the institution you prefer
* Letter really appreciated – more personal as a 17-year-old don’t receive many letters – feels really nice!
* Calls seem malicious – who’s ringing? Private number – so does snapchat – should universities really be on there!?
* They feel they aren’t bombarded – its appreciated that they are “kept warm” so to speak between application and arrival.
* Header of the email massively important – use of bold or colours to highlight key words – also depends on subject and focus

***Q: Following on from this, what do you think is bombarding?***

***A:***

* Would prefer just dates and reminders that’s all
* Don’t use big sweeping statements – not brash or talking nonstop about awards
* Think about location and type of event with reminders – am I genuinely going to get there on that day for that time for a random guest session I’m not interested in!?
* Some current students still getting marketing emails from universities they applied two/three years ago.
* Don’t really want pens and lanyards – one once received a colouring book and pencils – not relatable and felt childish – want something in a freebie that matches ambition/potential, something really useful and preferably related to their course choice
* Unless you are fully number one in the country for something – don’t claim it! (e.g. we are the best in student experience in a 15-mile radius)
* TV adverts, train stations and billboards don’t seem desperate – look back and remember some of those adverts still!

***Q: Do university freebies impact choice of institution?***

***A:***

* Most students just want the freebies, but quality of freebies can be important – could remind them of that university – more likely to talk to that university too
* Useful freebies at UCAS & HE Fairs – pens and bags – environmentally friendly if possible.
* Significant thing is still prospectuses – sometimes you forget what you heard from practitioners
* QR Codes always really useful on literature – especially in prospectuses - means the student can see that page or information immediately and easily
* Smaller prospectus much handier with the amount they take away – even department prospectuses could work really well

***Q: Do you prefer text or whatsapp? Did you get any from any universities?***

***A:***

* Much rather receive texts – feels much more formal. But university shouldn’t text back as this makes it feel informal
* Standing out from the crowd – something different and more personal

***Q: Did you notice tailored cookies to a particular university? Where in the cycle did this make an impression?***

***A:***

* Facebook in particular this was most apparent – but those adverts only there as they had looked at the university previously
* More seemed to be from places they hadn’t applied to later in the cycle – especially through snapchat adverts – which did prove annoying – unless it was student life focused which proved interesting

***Q: Spaces on social media, where do you want to see universities?***

***A:***

* Not snapchat or whatsapp – Instagram definitely
* Good way to attract students – swipe up from student life and accommodation tour for example
* The key is to make it interactive – stories, posters, questions, events
* Not tiktok at all – very inappropriate

***Q: What is the most helpful communication from universities?***

***A:***

* Short picture-based emails – facts and events
* Interact with university they want to go to – otherwise don’t engage
* Didn’t find they needed lots of information emails – just links or actually sought information themselves

***Q: Student ambassador talks – do you see this as marketing?***

***A:***

* Think it is, but very subtly done – but can be seem as impartial in some instances
* At 17 don’t see it as marketing – builds a rapport – main reason they all become ambassadors because of ambassadors they spoke to when applying
* Don’t underestimate Student Ambassador impact – make a huge difference in choosing institutions – resonates more, especially when going back to their old school or college.

***Q: How are you accessing Post Graduate content if interested? Hard or digital prospectuses preferred?***

***A:***

* A lot more focused undergraduate information than PG
* PG fairs are the best source of information and most helpful for current students
* Universities seem to expect you just have that PG information
* Would be happy to have a digital or hard copy – preferably hard copy