

Session Title:	How to Level up student engagement in the ever changing Higher Education Landscape
Speaker(s):	Chris & Johnny from Gecko
Chair:	Charlie Smith
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Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	Chris and Johnny from Gecko
Overview/Aim of session:	An overview of Gecko and what they do, followed by learnings from the last few years
Workshop Content	<p>Gecko Overview: Gecko is now 10 years old. They started as a data capture tool for Higher Education providers but have now expanded to cover full student engagement. They've had over 100 million interactions over the past 10 years and 3 million in 2022. The platform includes Data Capture, Event Management (for in person, online and hybrid), a call Centre tool (for use at Clearing for example), Live Chat/Chat bot, marketing and video. Gecko provides the tech that wraps around your team to give "superhuman ability".</p> <p>Learnings from the past few years: Integrations / CRM: 60% of their customers are now using an enterprise CRM. 4/5 customers use Gecko alongside their CRM. CRM are huge systems, which claim to do everything, but often focus internally on how they can make internal systems/teams more efficient, there are often gaps in what they do from a customer facing point of view. This is where Gecko can add value, as it is designed specifically</p>

for HE, is user friendly, puts the power in the hands of the team that use it, is fast to implement, and means you have access to expert knowledge from the team.

QR Codes: When QR codes first came out nobody used them, but during the pandemic they became more widespread as a “safe” way to transfer/access information, and they are now here to stay. They are everywhere and are part of everyday life. But they are not yet used in Higher Education as much as they could be.

See example 1. This demonstrated how much more efficient a QR code be if you are at a busy event and trying to capture lots of student data. Can be used for data capture, checking in attendees at events, link direct to student chat, or link/point to web pages or forms to fill in/download.

Communications Channels:

Email: Number 1 communication channel is still email, but it is not as impactful as it used to be.

Social media: social media channels are also important. Students live their lives on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp etc. so we should be engaging with them on these channels too.

SMS: SMS messaging is not dead. Students will still receive SMS messages, even if they don't use SMS to send messages anymore. Last year the Gecko system sent more SMS messages than on any other media/platform.

They shared a quote from Northumbria University who had used SMS to promote their events and found they had a 90% increase in registrations for events and 30% increase in attendance. So instant great results.

SMS can be used for confirming bookings for events, event reminders – “1 week to go”, “about to start”, to send updates and reminders, and to request feedback post event.

Chat bots: They are everywhere now.

(asked for a show of hands for anyone using them in their own institution and no-one put their hand up). When they first came out everyone hated them and tried to avoid them and wanted to just speak direct to a person, but they have improved. Universities could use them for engagement outside the 9-5 office hours. It offers students the opportunity for instant engagement at any time. They can be used for FAQ's but can also be used to triage conversations/enquiries and for event bookings. Example shared from City University, London, who wanted to try and reduce email traffic coming in. They've

	<p>used a chatbot to answer more standard questions. University of Glasgow have now closed down their call centre as they use a chat bot and live chat to answer enquiries.</p>
<p>Case Studies/Examples:</p>	<p>QR Codes: All workshop attendees were asked to stand and half the room was asked to use a QR code on screen to access and fill in a form – the other half of the room passed round an ipad to complete the same form. Those using the QR code were finished and seated before even half the others had had a chance to complete the form. Showing how much quicker it can be to use a QR code to collect data.</p>
<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	
<p>Questions and Answers:</p>	<p>SMS Messages: Do Gecko find that students put in false/wrong numbers or are suspicious of putting in their mobile number when collecting data? A: This isn't something Gecko have found. Usually students are giving their data as it is something they are interested in finding out more about, so they are happy to give their actual number.</p> <p>Chat Bots: Are chatbots accepted internationally in the same way as they now are in the UK or are there still markets/cultures that don't like them? A: Yes there are definitely still some markets that push back on using chat bots, but it is changing. For example, a few years ago in the UK people hated chat bots but now students would almost prefer to speak to a bot to get an answer than speak to a person. You can use triaging to assign certain markets to a person rather than a bot, if they are from a market that isn't keen on chat bots.</p>
<p>Summary Key takeaways:</p>	<p>Number 1 communication channel is still email, but things are changing, and it isn't as impactful as it used to be. Social Media channels, SMS and QR codes are all valuable ways of communicating with potential students.</p>

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