GATEWAY
INTERNATIONAL GROUP

CASE STUDY #12

LARGE, PUBLIC RESEARCH INSTITUTION ANNUAL RECRUITMENT BUDGET: $120,000

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International Enrollment Management goes beyond the element of international student recruitment. In a post-pandemic period of both hope and confusion, a comprehensive international enrollment management framework needs to focus on not only developing international student recruitment initiatives, but also develop innovative international partnerships and student mobility pipelines that build around the challenges faced in a global health crisis or travel limited/restricted world. A comprehensive IEM will also develop marketing needs specific to demographics, financial planning for budgetary considerations, lead through data driven solutions and emphasize upon the key performance indicators for regular measurements and benchmark developments.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Recruitment Initiative	Projected Cost	Projected Activity	Additional Comments	Anticipated Outcomes
Third Party Branding Service	$5000	Develop recruitment content for key international markets	Materials will be distributed during travel and to partners and recruitment agents	Lead generation, maintaining rapport and visibility with partners
In- Country Recruitment	$5,000/week **Or** $75,000/15 weeks **And** $10,000 for domestic travel	Making connections in-person and collecting leads Visit current partner institutions and recruitment agents -Fairs, HS visits, yield events	Flights, hotels, fair fees, meals	Lead generation and improved yield outcomes
Virtual Campus Tours	$10,000/year for three years Plus an additional $5,000 for extras	Develop a professional campus tour in a timely manner to attract international audiences	Outdoor campus tour Add on additional building tours for Business, Engineering, and Computer Science and student center	Improve yield
Swag	$10,000	Purchase branded giveaways with staying power	Phone wallets, pop sockets, stadium cups, pennants, lanyards Give to students, HS counselors, partner institutions, and recruitment agents	Student applications. New linkages with potential partners.

Gold Key Service	$4,600	Enter into emerging markets and develop partnerships	Nigeria and Vietnam	Lead generation, improved yield, partnerships

BACKGROUND

Large research university (LRU) is in a major metropolitan city with a growing population of immigrants. The LRU offers an array of more than 200+ academic majors from bachelors, masters, and doctorate programs. As a major research university, the university attracts several top-level researchers from many parts of the world particularly in STEM focused programs both at the masters and doctorate level. With a $120,000 international recruitment budget and with 3 full time staff in the role of international student recruitment, the institution is not only focused on undergraduate international recruitment, but also heavily focuses on graduate international recruitment working closely with the various academic departments. As part of its post-pandemic recruitment strategy the LRU has developed several transnational academic programs where students are able to get started with the individual academic program in an online format or at a partner HEI in their home country. The LRU utilizes a combination of merit-based scholarships along with graduate assistantships to attract and recruit international students at various levels. During the pandemic LRU developed several digital campaigns working with several digital marketing service providers for international outreach and partnership development. In the post-pandemic world, the LRU has decided to return to in-country recruitment while maintaining some digital presence with virtual tours and outsourcing to third-party services.

RATIONALES & KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Prioritized & Incompatible Recruitment Strategies

Third Party Branding Service

LRU contracts with a third-party branding and marketing firm as they can do market research and develop content quickly and efficiently. The firm is also able to provide translation services and print high quality materials and understand the importance of unique international markets.

Working with the university marketing team is more cost effective, however they are too often overloaded with work and are not able to provide timely development of materials. They also are not able to provide translated materials and may not understand the unique needs of international markets.

There are a few KPI's worth looking at to measure the success of a Third-Party Branding Service. Most KPI's for a third-party service should be a trackable point in time analysis. To begin with, a KPI of new relationships and agencies started per start of service will show how much brand awareness the service brings to the university. A second KPI would be Leads per start of service. This will show the amount of brand growth the university has received with students. The final KPI that is suggested is the increase of web traffic per start of service. This will show how much the university's brand has grown over time.

In-Country Recruitment

LRU has allotted a significant portion of their budget to active in-country recruitment. In-country recruitment allows for in-person connection, visual representation at fairs, and high school visits, and provides opportunity to visit EducationUSA offices for presentations and visits all while connecting with students at various stages in the funnel to improve yield and brand awareness. LRU casts its net wide with in-person recruitment while maintaining a strategy that makes sense for their size, resources, and recruitment goals. LRU prioritizes the following for in-country recruitment

Collaborate with consortiums and conferences, such as state consortiums, athletic conferences, etc. for recruitment

Plan yield events in the evening or on a weekend during travel

Add high school visits on days when there are no fairs or short fairs

Plan visits with agents that LRU has agreements with and/or participate in agent hosted fairs and events during travel

LRU focuses its in-person recruitment on countries where there are established markets with the institution based on historic and current enrolments to build up recruitment numbers to pre-pandemic numbers and beyond. LRU also plans recruitment strategies based on the time of year. For example, the fall semester includes a lot of fairs and lead generation events, whereas the spring semester is more heavily focused on the yield of students in the funnel.

While counselor fly-ins are a great long-term plan for recruitment and building rapport and pipelines with high school counselors, it is not among the top 5 recruitment tactics for LRU. Building rapport with counselors during high school visits is a good alternative.

By using a KPI of Cost per Leads, the recruiter will be able to look at the entire cost of the country visit and divide it by the number of students who they were able to get to inquire to the university. This number would be the return on the investment of the trip. If the cost per student is low then the trip was worth going on, as it would show that many students in that area were interested in the university. However, if it was high then the trip may not be worth the resources given. Another KPI that could be useful would be a Point-in-time analysis of the trip. Tracking the number of applications before and after a recruitment trip will show the success or failure of the trip.

SWAG

LRU has budgeted for swag to market the institution to both students and families. Swag can be sent ahead of time or easily travel with the recruiter. Picking the right swag can have staying power in the students' household. Items such as magnets, stadium cups, lanyards, and branded phone wallets are a few examples. Pennants for high school counselor's offices are also an example of swag that has staying power.

Online versions of swag, such as phone or computer backgrounds, zoom backgrounds, and stickers are more cost effective, but are not as visible outwardly and are not tangible reminders. If Digital swag is used, it should be in conjunction with tangible or physical swag. Digital swag also requires a level of collaboration and expertise with the marketing team and is not always a feasible or efficient option as it requires time and implementation.

Use of Material would be the best KPI for this. If the university buys many materials and notices that one of them is not being used as much, if at all they could remember to not buy those materials the next year.

A personal anecdote would be from Raghvendra Singh. During his time at the University of Missouri Columbia. Here he used many varied materials to recruit. One of the materials that he expected to be popular were Arabic translated documents. Since his university had such a strong presence in the middle east, he ordered many brochures for the trip he was taking. However, these materials were not as popular as anticipated and he realized that it may not be something he would want to do in the future, as the cost of the material was not worth it.

Virtual Campus Tours

As a large research institution, LRU is keen to show off its campus, including its facilities. To do so for international students who are more likely not able to visit in person prior to enrolling at LRU, LRU has contracted with a video software company that specializes in virtual campus tours. The tours will include the campus as well as campus buildings that correspond with their most popular majors, including business and engineering, for international students. This is an opportunity to show off the campus and can aid in yield. LRU plans to purchase a translated guide for its top non-English markets.

Digital campus visit brochures may be an effective supplement to a virtual campus tour, but are not the same as being able to see the campus as if walking around on an actual visit.

Asking the university marketing team to do a project like this is not feasible as they likely do not have the time necessary to complete a project of this size, and they may not have the equipment or expertise.

Virtual Campus tours are wonderful resources that can be used to completely show off a university. A few KPIs should be used in the tracking of the success of these programs.

The first KPI that should be used is the number of clicks per start of service. This will help the university see just how many people are visiting the campus virtually. The second should be the number of leads per start of service. Many CRMs can track where a lead is generated. This would be helpful in showing how many new students have utilized this service and started an application after.

US Commercial Service – Gold Key Service

The US Commercial Service Gold Key Service aims to "provides U.S. companies with matchmaking appointments with up to five interested partners in a foreign market. The full service includes identification and outreach to potential matching firms, sending clients' information to identified matching firms, preparing a profile of interested firms, attending the appointments, and providing a report with the profile and contact information for interested firms'' (via https://www.trade.gov/gold-key-service). LRU works with the US Commercial service to enter into emerging markets, including Nigeria and Vietnam. The expertise of the US commercial service and affordable price point are key factors in LRU's decision to pay for the Gold Key Service.

There are other similar groups that are of no cost that provide similar services, including Cormack Consulting Group, which focuses on assisting European institutions with finding US partners.

While finding partnerships on their own is more cost effective up front, it is time consuming and can be difficult to break into emerging markets, vet institutions, find the right match, and pursue an agreement or partnership.

Commercial Service is another wonderful way to spread brand awareness. Similarly, to using a third-party service, there are a few KPIs that should be used to track success.

First would be the number of applications per start of service. This will show the success of Brand awareness through this service. Another KPI worth mentioning would be the number of leads per country of service used. This will show just how much the emerging markets are benefiting from recruitment goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Third party branding service

There are hundreds of third-party branding and marketing firms that exist to help institutions with their market research to develop content. This includes translation and print material services. As recruiters would want to travel lightly, it's recommended to consider working with these third-party vendors to print materials in the country that they are in, so that it can be picked up upon the recruiter's arrival, rather than bringing thousands of printed materials onto the plane. Additionally, although most of the students that recruiter's interact with will have a basic level of English Language proficiency, it is important to have translated materials for family members who do not.

In person recruitment

Arguably there is no other more effective way to connect with prospective students, high school counselors, family members, alumni, education agents, and other partners than to make connections in person. The pandemic forced the entire world to move towards virtual learning and with that, virtual recruitment efforts. This allowed for institutions to continue their recruitment efforts through platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meets. What seemed to be the new normal, quickly turned into what's known as "Zoom fatigue."

Into the second year of the global pandemic, institutions saw less attendance and less engagement from their audiences on these platforms. Therefore, as HEI's navigate through post-COVID, it is so incredibly important and beneficial to prioritize physical in-person recruitment to engage with international students, families, and counselors. Though Large Research University (LRU) would still recommend virtual recruitment when most convenient, part of the budget would be allocated towards in-person recruitment activities, which also includes yield activities.

LRU will utilize its own institution branding being a large research institution to visit other current partner institutions and recruitment agents. It is often that large research institutions are part of a larger conference, such as the Big10, who offer their own group tour for travel.

Virtual campus tours

One of the challenges of international student recruitment is not being able to have prospective students and their families onto campus. It's highly recommended that a portion of the budget be allocated towards virtual campus tours. The development of a professional campus tour will attract international audiences for the simple fact that they can engage and have a better idea of what campus is like. Depending on the service that is chosen, institutions can have as little as 8 "stops" to as much as 30 in their virtual tour. The tour should highlight both indoor and outdoor spaces on campus, particularly areas of popular demand, such as Business building, STEM, student center, dining and residence halls.

Swag

Brand awareness is about spreading the name of an institution through more than just word of mouth. This can include social media marketing, but more importantly swag. A portion of the budget should be dedicated to branded items used to give away. Recommendations of these items are, but not limited to, phone wallets, pop sockets, stadium cups, pennants, lanyards, pens, pins, stickers, etc. These should be given to students, school counselors, partner institutions, and recruitment agents. The more swag and materials are given away, the more likely it will create an interest to someone who might not be familiar with the institution.

Gold key service

As institutions explore and enter emerging markets, it is recommended to collaborate with organizations such as the US Commercial Service. The Gold Key Service provides US institutions with contacts in these foreign markets. That way, it will assist recruiters in their outreach to different firms in those markets. The cost is relatively low-to-none and there are many other organizations that provide similar services. This is a great way to not only connect with counselors and agents on the ground, but also helps brand awareness.

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