



Understanding What Converts an Audience

If you are a student of the Arts or know the basic marketing principles that activate audiences in a marketing funnel, you've probably heard about the part that emotion, credibility, and logic play in your creative. Generating these notions in the audience will have an impact on their response to your advertising, and where each appears depend on where they are in the funnel or what stage of the decision journey you are targeting. (That's another blog for another day.)

But in working with a higher ed client that hoped to attract new nursing students to its nursing programs, our team was asked, "What do we say to our audience to get them to take action?"

TWO APPROACHES: STATISTICAL AND EMOTIONAL

After some discussion, we learned from the university that they found two distinctly different reasons for enrollment. Either the student was practical, pragmatic, and cared about the "numbers," or they felt the work was a calling and were attracted to the program because it matched their own values system. Learning this, we leaned into a two-pronged approach.

STORYTELLING FOR BOTH AUDIENCES

Each of these notions – statistical and emotional – were told narratively, expanding on the points that were part of the student recruitment conversation. These were told in sponsor content and accompanied by infographics to drive recall and time on page with each article. These launched with article click-through impressions, driving the prospective students to read more about the program and learn more—the first layered with statistics like student-to-faculty ratios, learning facility specs, and anticipated income for graduates. The second contained deeply emotional messages about servant leadership, volunteer service where students helped community members, and the nursing profession as a calling.

MEASURING WHAT WORKED

Each Infographic showed "the whole message" with each of the illustrated elements in a single place. But the display units featured only one of the many messages found in the larger graphic. In this way, clicks could be measured for individual statistics or points of interest, and a list formed of those elements that were most highly converting.

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THE AUDIENCE SPOKE, AND WE LISTENED

The audience “voted” on what they perceived impactful through their clicks and engagements on social and display. It was easy to quickly determine which key statistics and phrases were converting the audience. As is usual for our campaigns, we removed those that were lesser converters and built more of those messages that were driving action. What’s more, these elements became the recommendations for:

- A new phone script for prospecting new and transfer students
- The featured points covered in the first conversations with student advisors
- The headlines/content featured in mailings or other pieces focusing on students and their influencers
- The subjects of future campaigns and web content

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

Creative isn’t just art. It serves a purpose – to attract and engage. It isn’t enough to be attractive, these units must perform for the campaign. But if you look deeper, you begin to understand how creative performance can drive downstream decisions about messaging your audience.

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