

CUnet enrolls more students by expanding marketing to mobile channels with Call Extensions



At a Glance

What they wanted to do:

- Tap into the high growth in mobile channels and unique mobile conversion opportunities
- Incorporate calls, which typically convert at 3x the rate of online inquiry forms, into their mobile digital marketing strategy
- Offer schools a simple, measurable and effective way to reach and connect with mobile audiences

What they did:

- Integrated Google's click-to-call (C2C) solution, also known as Call Extensions, into their mobile digital strategy

What they accomplished:

- Delivered a personal, measurable, and scalable mobile platform that helps schools reach and attract students
- 26% of the total quality leads delivered came from calls
- 6% start rate, which was 3 times higher than other types of online marketing
- Gross cost-per-start was 40%+ lower than the client's targeted goal

"The high quality of mobile leads, coupled with lower CPC rates, opens up a valuable new universe of prospects that does not overlap with desktop traffic."

—Kim Kelly, Managing Director of Agency Services, CUnet

Business

Since 2003, CUnet's marketing experts have helped colleges and universities reach, recruit and enroll the best students for their programs. By combining an industry-leading technology platform, a comprehensive set of online marketing services and a network of targeted media providers, CUnet delivers qualified inquiries to meet enrollment and retention goals. CUnet's Sparkroom technology was named a 2012 Top Product by University Business readers, demonstrating CUnet's ability to use technology effectively to attract and enroll students.

CUnet's recruitment marketing services are supported by a network of proprietary websites, including their flagship site, CollegeInfo.com, and the CollegeQuest.com student advisor service. Headquartered in Paramus, NJ, CUnet is a subsidiary of Nelnet (NYSE: NNI), a leader in education planning and financing for more than 30 years.

Challenge

CUnet's client schools use a mix of traditional outreach and technology-based recruitment tools to support enrollment efforts. Over the last few years, they've seen high growth in smartphone traffic as students expanded their online presence on mobile. CUnet saw an opportunity to evolve their digital marketing efforts to incorporate click-to-call, making it easier for these potential students to convert while on the go. Mobile search created a cost-effective opportunity to expand pay-per-click (PPC) marketing activities, and by extension, overall enrollment numbers.

Optimizing the experience for smartphone users was essential in keeping conversion rates high and the cost of leads within performance goals. CUnet's research showed that inbound phone calls converted at a rate of 3x that of data leads, so CUnet began investigating solutions to increase inbound phone activity to schools. With phones playing such a large role in the everyday lives of students, CUnet sought a proven mobile click-to-call solution.

Solution

Click-to-call ads allow marketers to reach potential customers through a phone call, rather than through a website, opening up an entirely new conversion channel for direct response marketers. Seeking a new way to deliver cost-effective and high-quality phone leads, CUnet chose to evaluate Google's call solutions.

In the first test campaign running on Google mobile search, 26% of all pay-per-click (PPC) inquiries came from potential students on smartphones. Since these calls converted extremely well, CUnet began incorporating calls into more campaigns, improving overall enrollment rates and reducing cost-per-enrollment and cost-per-start.

Click-to-call ads represented the first foray into mobile marketing for most of CUnet's schools. Google offers multiple call extensions for marketers to generate phone calls, including a call-only extension for advertisers who prefer calls over mobile website visits. After proving the unique way that

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"Click-to-call works for the majority of our clients that use it."

—Kim Kelly, Managing Director of Agency Services, CUnet

mobile can drive value, CUnet augments these campaigns with mobile-optimized short forms to expand conversion opportunities for visitors with different preferences.

Results

CUnet immediately saw strong results integrating mobile into the media mix and discovered that the quickest and fastest way to get a mobile campaign up and live is with Call Extensions. In early 2012, CUnet launched their click-to-call program, then launched a mobile short form later in the year. The program delivered total impressions of almost one million, a click-through-rate (CTR) of 0.8% and a gross cost-per-impression (CPI) of \$60. Of the total quality leads delivered, 26% came from calls. The 6% start rate was 3 times higher than other types of online marketing, and the gross cost-per-start (CPS) came in at more than 40% below the client's targeted goal.

CUnet sees that schools understand the value of inbound calls generated from mobile paid search. According to Kim Kelly, CUnet's Managing Director of Agency Services, "The high quality of mobile leads, coupled with lower CPC rates, opens up a valuable new universe of prospects that does not overlap with desktop traffic."

Google's Call Extensions have helped schools reach the right audiences in a highly personal, cost-effective, and measurable way. The solution gives schools a way to interact with prospects instantly, thereby reducing reliance on indirect web messaging. CUnet's clients found that this type of instant gratification leads to more effective personal interactions and higher close rates.

CUnet already expects the mobile channel to grow to 10% to 15% of lead volume in the coming year. Mobile paid search and click-to-call will have increased budgets and importance as smartphone usage continues to climb. CUnet's mobile inquiry generation services have doubled since the beginning of 2012, and they expect it to continue to grow at the same, if not accelerated, rate in 2013.

