

## Gadsden State Gets 7% Response with pURL Direct Mail Campaign

High school graduation is decision time for students planning to pursue a college degree. And competition for those students is greater than ever before. (Just ask any parent of a high school senior, and you'll hear of the bags of direct mail they've received.)

So how does a regional community college compete for the attention of this highly sought-after demographic? Gadsden State Community College (GSCC) thinks personalized web sites (pURLs) are a great start. They recently wrapped up their first integrated marketing campaign geared to the class of '08.

### The Direct Mail Piece

Gadsden State's pURL campaign kicked off with a direct mail piece sent to graduating seniors in communities near the GSCC campuses. This digitally printed postcard was key to getting students to go online and interact with their personal web sites.

Venture Marketing Group is the agency responsible for the design of the postcard. "We wanted the mail piece to be an invitation from Gadsden State students to high school seniors, encouraging them to be a part of the Gadsden State student body," said Heather Rickles, president of Venture Marketing Group. "We kept the design clean and let the student images and simple text do the talking."



The postcard prominently features the recipient's personal URL (a web address containing a person's first and last name) on both the front and back of the card to drive home the call to action: visit your site!

### The Web site

Graduating seniors that went online were offered a free DVD on Gadsden State for answering a few questions about their interests and goals. Carol Sosnin, EBSCO Media's Director of Marketing explains, "It's good to offer a relevant reward to encourage people to participate and share information about themselves. The fact that Gadsden State's reward was hard information means that the leads generated by their campaign were of the highest quality—not just people looking for free goodies."

The survey questions were few and to the point so as not to feel invasive or unnecessary. Once a student survey was completed, an automatically-triggered follow up email was generated, containing contact information for admissions personnel who could answer any questions the student might have. At the same time, a lead was emailed to the admissions department containing the student's contact information along with all of the student's answers to the survey questions. This enabled the school's staff to immediately follow up by phone and mail, while interest was at its highest level.

### The Results

The campaign performed very well—with over a 7% response rate to the direct mail piece (far better than the generally accepted success standard of 1%). What's more, 5.42% of the students that received the postcard completed the online survey, giving Gadsden State the information it needs to personalize its follow up with interested students. Rickles explains, "When you know things like what they want to major in, whether they want financial aid, and what their extracurricular interests are, then you can better tell them why your school is right for them."

Kay Smith-Foster, public relations coordinator at Gadsden State, said, "The direct mail campaign has been beneficial to our staff by giving them an easy way to contact interested students. It is a great tool for matching students with an advisor at an early and significant stage of their career planning. In addition to the benefits for staff and students, it has given validity to marketing dollars for our department."

### Steps in the Process

A pURL campaign can be thought of as a series of events leading prospects toward a sale:

1. A company invites prospects to visit their personal web sites.
2. Prospects interact with those personal web sites, answering questions about themselves.
3. All information learned about these visitors goes into a secure online database that is immediately available to the company's marketing team.
4. Automatically-triggered thank you messages are emailed to prospects that visit their sites.
5. Automatically-triggered leads are emailed to the company's sales team for immediate follow up and closure.



The look of the web site mirrored that of the postcard so visitors knew they had arrived at the right place online.

## FREE Adobe Seminar Set for October!

Back by popular demand—free training from Adobe and EBSCO Media.

Our next training event is slated for October 8th at the McWane Center in downtown Birmingham. The day will be divided into two sessions: Green Design (with ample explanation of FSC and SFI certified

papers—how to use them, how to build them into your company image) and Adobe Acrobat pdf workflow.

Our speaker, James Lockman, is the owner of Working Words and Graphics, a variable data and marketing services company, graphic design shop, and digital prepress services bureau. James has become resource for technical printers and graphic designers nationwide. As an early PDF adopter and evangelist, he has seen just about everything that might derail a PDF-based print project.

Look for invitations in your mail box in early September.

### Next Issue:

New Press & Bindery Equipment Installed at EBSCO Media

Going Green — EBSCO Media gets FSC and SFI Certified!

EM ideas is a quarterly newsletter published by EBSCO Media, a division of EBSCO Industries.

Editor: Peggy Gordon  
801 Fifth Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35233  
205-323-1508  
800-765-0852  
print@ebSCO.com  
www.ebscomedia.com

