
Breakthrough in online digital marketing

May 2009, London: A pioneering agency has achieved a major breakthrough in digital marketing by harnessing the power of social networking online.

Integrated marketing agency SERIOUS Ideas has created a unique model for London Business School's new Masters in Management course, which has brought a fivefold return on target in its first year as well as an entire new demographic for the institution's database.

What is especially impressive is that the model, which is self-sustaining, not only continues to benefit the London Business School without any further input from them, it also provides prospective students and employers with a unique and targeted online source of vital information.

So successful has it been that there is already a dedicated Masters in Management Facebook group with 55 members and 77 recent conversations, as well as a number of other blogging forums increasing online debate and information supply.

And one applicant due to take up a place on the course in September has even launched their own blog forum dedicated to all of the Master in Management students. The aim of the forum is to provide a diary of experiences whilst on the course and providing useful tips to future candidates applying for the 2010 programme.

The project is a clear example of how the emerging generation of fast-moving, compact and versatile integrated marketing agencies are often at the cutting edge of development, especially in the digital sector. As well as for the education sector, SERIOUS is already at work on showing how similar projects could be rolled out in another area in which it has developed specialist niche expertise: healthcare.

The breakthrough happened after SERIOUS was brought in by the London Business School to market the new postgraduate business degree programme, which was designed specifically to target immediate graduates with little or no experience and provide them with the business skills and acumen to broaden their career prospects and enable them to stand out in a crowded graduate job market.

Using industry and client research, SERIOUS took London Business School through a series of lecture-style interactive workshops to establish media consumption, target segments and to discover demographic insights.

This led to the unique new strategy: If potential candidates for postgraduate education linked up with each other via the internet, contributing opinions and making recommendations, they would build a community that would attract its own searches.

Once initially seeded, it would become a self-perpetuating entity.

"In essence, we initiated a self-perpetuating marketing campaign that continues to grow organically developing its own messaging and tone of voice," says SERIOUS Ideas managing director Scott Williams.

The project was in some way a development of the Wiki – in that information was put into the open online community and allowed to grow through online contribution and debate.

"The difference was that we were 'seeding' this debate and directing prospects to sites where their interest could be captured and converted into sales," explains Scott.

SERIOUS backed up the social networking content with a blogging campaign. Members of the team registered on postgraduate information forums/blogs to seek out questions that genuinely needed a response regarding the Masters in Management programme.

The tone and content of each post was kept at an advisory level and each post was a direct response to a question in which the Masters in Management programme actually suited the enquirer.

They reinforced the campaign with online PR posts to syndicate key press releases to targeted audiences. These were aimed more at those supporting potential students, decision makers such as parents and educational mentors.

The press releases had an editorial style and provided factual data that would aid the decision maker in their assessment of the programme value.

The site link was also added to various user-generated content sites (like Wikipedia) and was distributed to a host of free-to-list directory sites.

SERIOUS then filtered the online traffic to reduce vetting responses and dealing with enquiries.

Further refining, through targeting content and links, helped the programme focus on the most suitable candidates for the course. The filters took into account mental ability and financial status before directing suitable candidates to the landing page.

More than 100 back links were created through to the main Masters in Management page and from seeding initial interest over 40 sites were reported to contain blogging conversations. This was in addition to the dedicated Facebook group.

The SERIOUS campaign also brought increased online brand awareness for the London Business School course by creating the number one organic Google search for "Masters in Management", the number eight search for the general word 'Masters' and the number one search for the string <Management> & <Masters>.

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About SERIOUS Ideas (www.seriousideas.com)

There are great ideas and then there are 'SERIOUS ideas'. SERIOUS is an ideas agency working in the new creative industries providing a range of integrated agency services through the power of the idea, shared knowledge, thinking and creative excellence.