
A Guide to **MAKING YOUR SCHOOL WEBSITE AN ENROLLMENT MACHINE**

A guide for educational institutions with challenges in turning website visitors into students.



Introduction

Promoting your school used to be easy, didn't it?

Gone are the days you would send out some printed brochures and wait for the phone to ring.

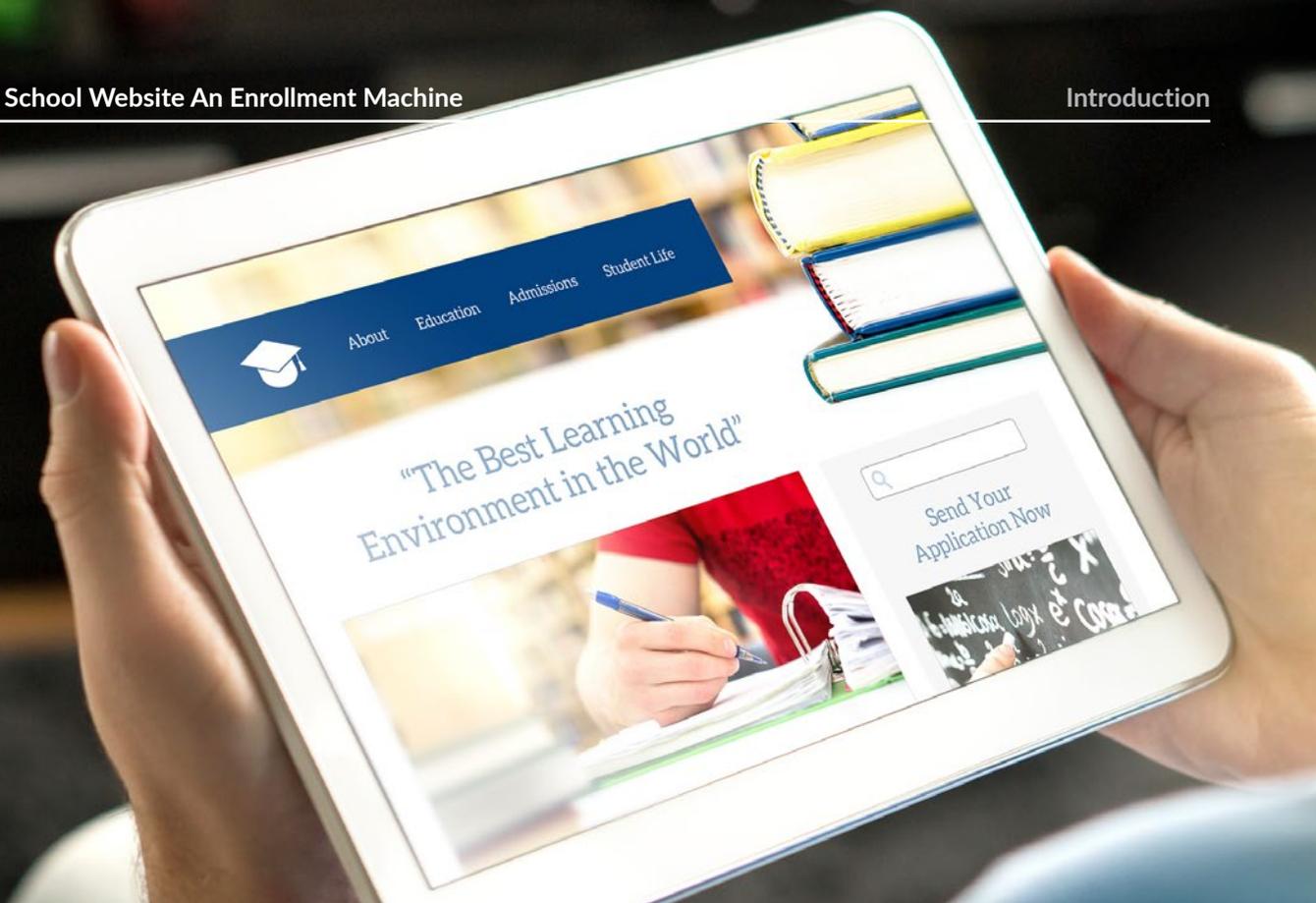
Today, schools are finding themselves in a position of needing to market themselves to increasingly savvy students.

Your website is the virtual front door of your campus and needs to attract and inform current and prospective students and their families.

They have a long list of things that they are looking for in a school.

They want to get a great education for an affordable price.

They want the best and they want all of the answers NOW.



This is why your website is more important than ever before.

Your marketing must be focused on getting traffic to your school website.

You may be spending a lot of effort, time, and money doing just that. However, you still aren't seeing enrollment numbers rise despite an increase in web traffic.

It's frustrating, we know.

We call this problem **Website Traffic Evaporation**.

Website Traffic Evaporation is the traffic that comes to your website and disappears without a trace.

These website visitors have made it a point to come to your website but, for whatever reason, they leave without filling out a form to schedule a campus tour or meet with your admissions department.

And there's more bad news: ***Once gone, the likelihood of return isn't great.***

So how do we combat Website Traffic Evaporation? We think this guide will provide some answers. We cover the following:

- 1. WHY MOST OF YOUR WEBSITE TRAFFIC LEAVES WITHOUT CONTACTING YOU**
- 2. UNDERSTANDING YOUR WEBSITE VISITORS**
- 3. 3 KEY COMPONENTS NEEDED TO INCREASE STUDENT ENROLLMENT**
- 4. CONTENT OFFERS YOU NEED ON YOUR SITE TODAY**
- 5. HOW TO GET STARTED**

This Guide for Making Your School Website an Enrollment Machine is perfect for any school with challenges in turning website visitors into leads that will eventually become students.

It was created by Neon Goldfish as part of our mission to help vocational and post-secondary schools improve their website and online marketing strategies.

With our help, your enrollment WILL increase.



The Truth About Your Website Traffic

Schools are consumed with data.

You are already concerned with graduation rates, test scores, and enrollment numbers.

Well, here is a staggering statistic for you.

It is estimated that 95% of the visitors to your website are not ready to make a decision.

This means that only 5% of the visitors that you attract to your website are at the point where they are ready to submit their application to continue their education.

01

No Sale

95 out of every 100 visitors are not ready to buy.

02

No Contact

They are not ready to contact you to schedule an appointment.

03

No Talking

They do not want to talk to someone from your admissions department.

You want to speak to the 95% who aren't quite ready for the next step.

Most school websites fail them.

These failed potential students are site visitors still looking for information and weighing their options before they move ahead and become some of the 5% that will take action.

This is why it is so important to get to know your website visitors.





Getting to Know Your Site Visitors

Think about the last time you went to your school's website. Did you have a TMI problem? Too many websites bombard potential students with Too Much Information.

We get caught up in the “what if’s”.

What if the student is looking for Nights? What if the student is looking for Nights and Weekends? What if the student is looking for Nights, Weekends, and wants to dual enroll?

You can't speak to every single question that a potential student has on your website, and you shouldn't. **You need to answer basic questions and help them come to the conclusion that they need to schedule a tour to learn more about your school.**

Short of a potential student with a “Pick Me!” sign over their head, it can sometimes be difficult to identify the right students for your program. And let’s be honest, sometimes even the “Pick Me” students, aren’t the best students for your programs.

You need to make sure you are NOT exhausting resources (time and money) to get in front of individuals that are not a good fit for your school.

You need to deliver the right content to the right person at the right time.

You need to create and focus on your **Buyer Persona**.



What Is A Buyer Persona?

A Buyer Persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal student. They represent that perfect student you wish would walk in the door and enroll on the spot.

You might be asking how a buyer persona is different than a target market.

That's a fair question.

The buyer persona does include demographical information such as age, income, geographical location, and maybe even interests as a portion of its total composition.

A buyer persona dives deeper and looks at the challenges this semi-fictional representation of your ideal student has. It looks at their goals, where they spend their time, the actual language they use, and common objections they have to enrolling in a program at your school.

Your buyer persona will be the guide you reference for everything. The text on your website should be addressing their challenges and goals. The images you use should connect with them.

The content you create on your blog and the headlines you use in your marketing will speak directly to what matters most to them.



Ways to Create Buyer Personas

Creating Buyer Personas is much easier than you may think.

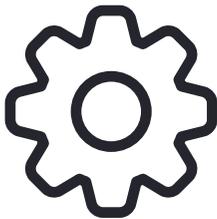
Here are a few places to start:



Interview Current Students

Existing students are typically more than happy to share some of the details needed in creating a Buyer Persona.

Focus on some of your top students and ask if you could interview them so you can attract future students just like them. Nothing beats a one-on-one conversation, but an online survey might make sense if you have a large group you want to collect feedback from.



Get Feedback From Your Admissions Team

Your Admissions staff talks with prospective students all day, every day. They have an inside track on the goals, challenges and objections of your Buyer Persona. Talking to them about the prospects that did not turn into students will be extremely helpful.



Research

Put yourself in their shoes and turn to the Internet for additional insights. Try to search like they would search. Seek out blogs, industry resources, or forums they might reference.

Find out what interests them, what concerns them, and what makes them feel special.

Know Your Student.

We want to help you understand your target audience.

Instead of marketing to everyone, market to your ideal students. We've created a step by step process to help you identify and better understand them.

We will walk you through:

- Why you should create a Buyer Persona
- How to use our Buyer Persona Template
- An outline of what questions to ask and answer
- How to use your completed Buyer Persona effectively

You're already half way there, use our template to help you create a physical document that represents your dream potential student.

Share your Buyer Persona with other departments and get everyone at your school on the same page for your marketing plan.



DOWNLOAD THE BUYER PERSONA TEMPLATE





Understanding The Student/Buyer's Journey

Once you have created a buyer persona, you need to discern each step they will make as they go from a potential student checking their options to making the ultimate decision to enroll in your program.

This is called the **Buyer's Journey**.

You will see that these three steps apply to every purchasing decision we make. Anything from choosing where to go for dinner to choosing the school that will provide the education we need to begin or further advance our careers.

It is important to note that 70% of the buyer's journey is complete before a buyer even reaches out to an organization. The following steps specifically correlate with the two groups of site visitors we are focusing on:

- **THE 5%: Visitors ready to enroll and in the Decision Stage.**
- **THE 95%: Visitors researching in the Awareness & Consideration Stages.**



Stage 1: Awareness

To reach potential students in the Awareness stage, you should understand that there is an issue that these potential students are trying to solve.

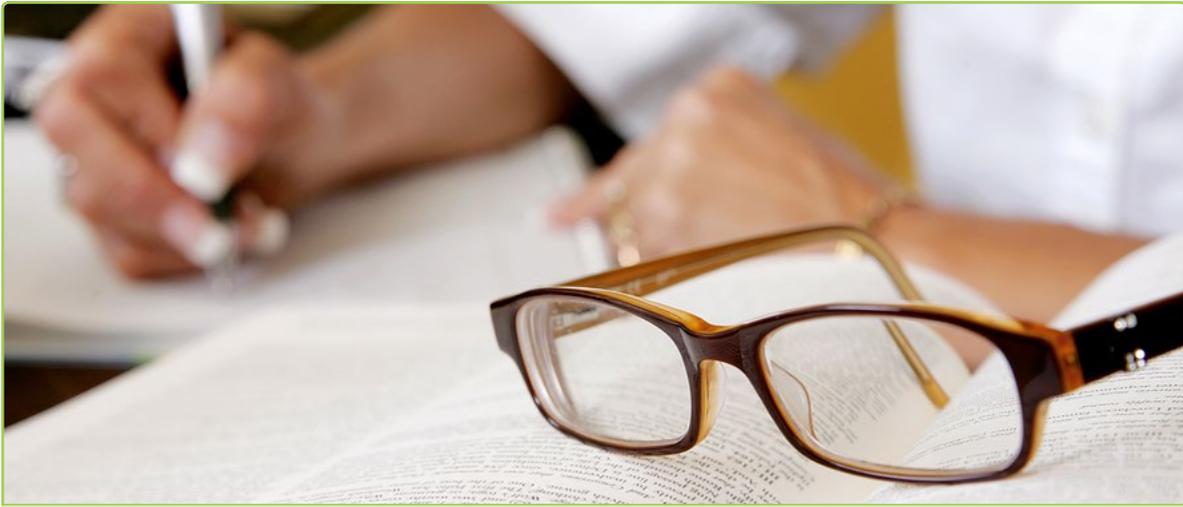
They may be interested in starting a new career and they want to look into your programs, or they may be trying to solve an underlying problem, like do you offer night classes and financial aid?

In either case, they're not really sure what they need to know before they ultimately make a decision.

So, they begin to do some research, like which fields of study they might find interesting, what the pay grades are in certain programs you offer, and then look for your tuition and fee information.

One way you can help them out is to offer an eBook or guide to assist them with their research.

This not only helps potential students figure out the best way to solve their problems, it also gives your school the opportunity to build credibility, and bring this site visitor one step closer to enrolling.



Stage 2: Consideration

Once a potential student goes beyond Awareness, they move into the Consideration stage.

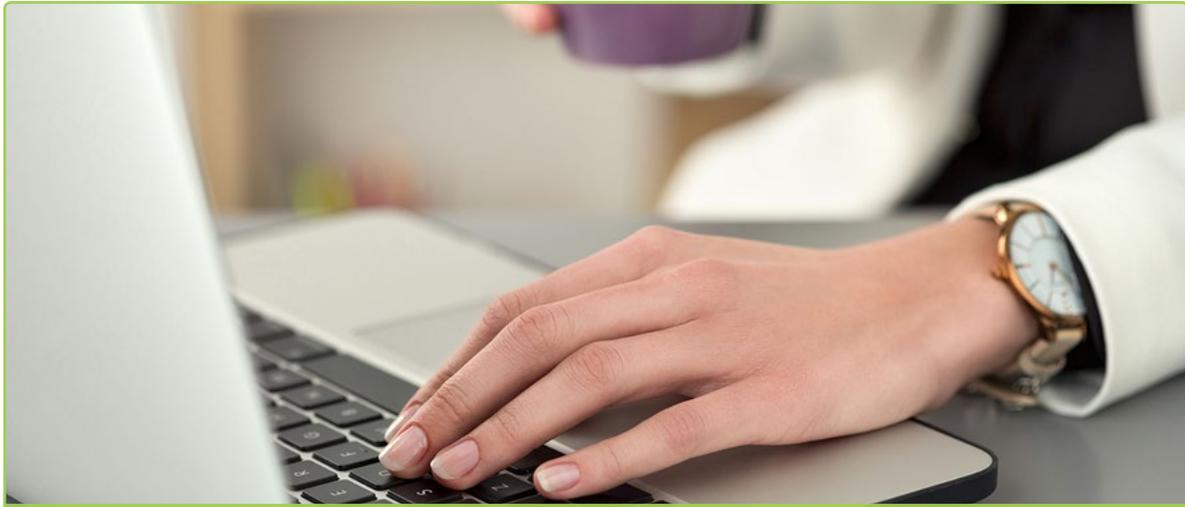
While this phase is a little more involved, they are now one step closer to making their final decision.

In this stage, potential students have clearly identified the problem they are looking to solve. Now, the potential student will start asking more pointed questions, and learning more about YOUR programs and offerings, as opposed to general

search terms like “schools that offer X program/degree”.

Identifying these potential students and being ready with a video testimonial from a recent graduate who is successful in the work force or a comparison of different programs positioning yours as the optimal choice is an effective way to take them to the third and final stage - the Decision stage.





Stage 3: Decision

The third and final stage in this progression is the Decision stage.

In this stage, future students understand what they need, and they will likely have a few options to choose from, one of them being your school and programs.

It's up to you to have options available that speak to your potential student's needs.

They will likely be ready to visit your campus for a tour and even meet with someone in your admissions department.

They're ready to enroll.

Guiding your web traffic into this stage involves careful attention to detail and a willingness to share information.

With several different options, students will go with who they trust and developing that trust involves understanding the perspectives of potential students as they exist in each of these stages.

The goal here is to build credibility while educating.

3 Key Components to Increase Enrollment

Of course, just targeting your potential students is not enough. While identifying and understanding your target student is useful, you'll need a platform to connect and engage with them.

Below are three key areas that can be improved on most websites that will have an impact on enrolling more of your potential students into the programs you offer.



1. Present a Clear Value Proposition

A value proposition is a concise statement positioning the value you bring to the table. It explains how you can solve the potential student's problem. Clearly state the benefits and tell them what makes you different from all the other schools they are considering.

Your value proposition needs to answer the following questions:

- **What are you offering potential students?**
- **What are the key benefits your school provides?**
- **Who is the target student persona you want to reach?**
- **What makes you different from your competitors?**

A value proposition is something that is read and can be understood instantly. It is usually composed of the following:

1. **Headline:** A short sentence that grabs attention and keys in on the one main benefit provided.
2. **Sub-Headline:** A more descriptive sentence or two that speaks to the benefits of your school and defines exactly who it will help.
3. **Visual:** A compelling image that supports your statements. This can be a visual of the product or a person that is similar to the target buyer persona.

Place your value proposition on the home page of your website above the fold. This is the section of your homepage that is immediately visible when a potential student visits your website before they begin scrolling down the page.

It should grab their attention and instantly let them know they have found a solution to their problem.



2. Use Lots of Calls-To-Actions (CTAs)

You don't want to lose your site visitor once they begin looking around! This is where your website can shine by using calls-to-action to easily guide them around.

A call-to-action (CTA) is a button or link you place on your website to drive prospective customers between the regular content they are interested in, and a page with a higher value offer on it (the landing page) that is relevant and interesting enough to persuade your visitor to complete a short form.

This is an opportunity to guide them through the website so they can easily find content relevant to their current stage of their own buyer's journey and help them along the way.

A CTA is an image or line of text that tells the site visitor the exact action to take on a page of your website. Literally a "call" to take a particular "action".

CTAs can use all kinds of different wording to attract attention from qualified leads, including:

- **Download your eBook now**
- **View exclusive video content**
- **Schedule your consultation**
- **Sign up for a demo**
- **Begin your free trial**
- **Attend the event**
- **Receive a coupon**
- **Register for the webinar**



These CTAs lead to additional content often in the form of a landing page containing a gated content offer they will find valuable enough to exchange information to obtain.



3. Use Content Offers to Convert Traffic into Leads

To be clear, we are still focusing on the site visitors in the Awareness and Consideration Stages of the Buyer's Journey. This is the website traffic that is not ready to directly interact with you yet but would like more information so they can progress to the Decision Stage.

These content offers provide your site visitors with the information they are searching for to solve the problem they are having or achieve the goal they desire.

They'll find it somewhere on the internet, so why not be the one that provides it to them?

When you provide content that is helpful during the Awareness and Consideration Stages of the Buyer's Journey, you gain a few distinct advantages over everyone else.

- 1. You build credibility and trust with them.** When you are the one providing the information they need to make their decision, you become the expert.
- 2. You can influence their buying criteria.** What is your competitive advantage? Is your tuition lower than your competitors? Do you offer certifications others do not?

The content offers that you provide can educate potential students about these details that will position your school as a front-runner when it comes time to make a decision.

Too often, these small details are seeds not planted in the beginning stages of the buyer's journey and end up being "selling points" that we try to force into the mix during the Decision Stage.

Plant seeds early and you will be surprised how better educating potential students will lead to a higher enrollment rate.

- 3. You passively participate earlier in their Buyer's Journey.** These content offers are usually gated, requiring the exchange of an email address to download or access the content.



An email sequence can be implemented to begin once the content offer is obtained. This will be a series of emails sent to their inbox with additional information tailored to your potential student's Buyer's Journey.

This process is called Lead Nurturing and allows you to continue educating the potential student by placing your brand front and center. You continue to give them information, and because you've built trust, they return to your website.

Different Types of Content Offers

Your admissions team has a pretty good understanding of problems your potential students might be facing. Barriers to enrollment might include scheduling, types of programs offered, graduation and tuition rates, and earning potentials. These barriers are easily some of the top questions potential students might ask before enrolling in your school.

It's time to answer those questions and become the authority.

From email subscriptions to eBooks and checklists, each type of content you put behind a landing page has a specific job. **By experimenting with different types of offers, you can observe which ones resonate with your audience and result in the most action.**



Email Subscription

This is the most basic opt-in offer. Website visitors will follow those that present value. Do you have great content on your blog or podcast? Do you send out valuable insights to your subscribers? Using a simple email signup form on your website to build your audience is an excellent tool.



eBook / Guide

An eBook or guide is typically a multi-page PDF document that covers a specific topic in detail or is a step by step guide teaching your buyer persona how to do something that will help solve their problem.



Checklist

A checklist is a list of specific actions that need to be covered before completing a certain task. Think of this like you sharing your “secret” recipe where each list item is the ingredients coupled with details on how you make your special dish.



Case Study

This is a real-life story of how you solved a problem for yourself or a student. Case studies help your buyer personas identify with a real-life problem that is likely similar to something they are facing. The explanation of how you solved this problem builds credibility instantly. Share as many numbers/metrics to quantify your success.



Podcasts

Podcasts can build an audience and establish your brand as a source of expertise. They put a voice to your brand. And creating one can even be relatively easy. All you need is a decent microphone and a smart, fun host.



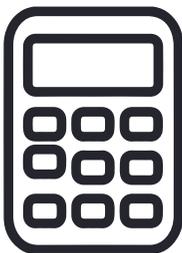
Infographic

An infographic meshes graphic design with story telling to deliver a single image that drives home a message. These visually engaging designs are usually full of statistics that support the infographic theme.



Quiz

Quizzes are a series of questions that your buyer persona will answer to reveal an outcome that will help them with their problem. They can be used to show the best program at your school for their interests.



Calculator

A calculator helps your buyer persona understand the outcome of the variables that go into an equation. These calculators are excellent tools for driving value. An example of this is showing the lifetime earning potential in a particular career to justify the investment in time and tuition.



Video

Video is growing like crazy and rightfully so... it is accessible everywhere. Take advantage of this engaging medium by telling your story using video. Create proprietary videos as opt-in offers. Perhaps it is a video going through the key attributes of potential students that best fit your program.



Online Course

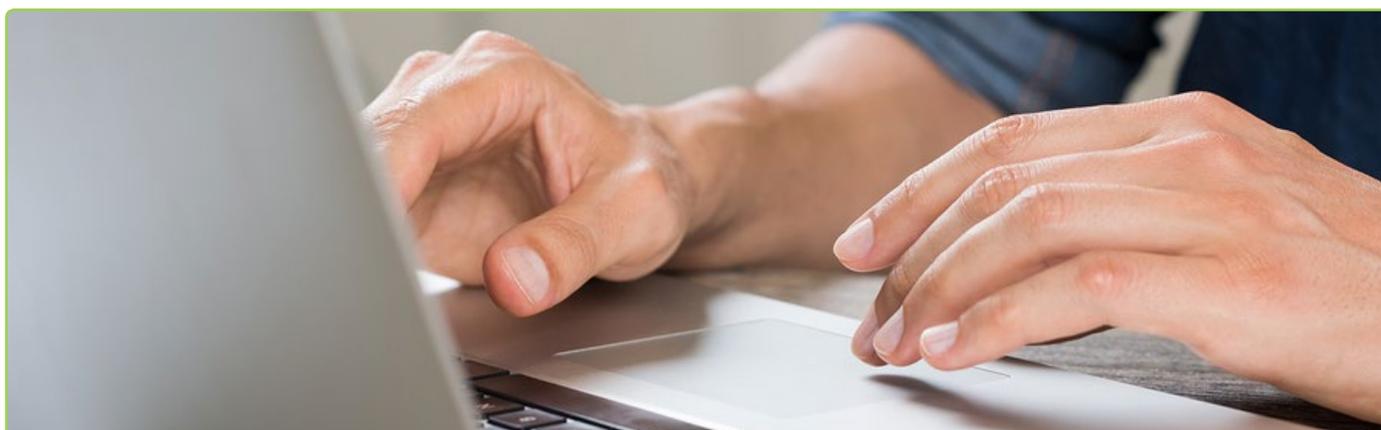
What better way to teach your buyer persona more about alleviating their problem than through an online course. Setup a short mini course that helps them tackle a small problem. This will build trust and increase the conversions for them enrolling into one of your programs.

Next Steps

Now is the time to put it all together.

By applying what we have covered, your school is sure to stand out among the others. It may seem like a huge task, and you will need to take time to plan and carry it out. To make it a little less overwhelming, we have broken it all down for you.

Here are some simple steps you can take to begin:



1. Determine your current traffic to enrollment rate. You have to know where you started to be able to measure your success.

Look at the current level of leads coming into your admissions department and compare the current unique visitors to your website. This will tell you how many leads are coming into your admissions office currently from your website.

Take the current number of enrolled students and compare to the total number of leads. This will tell you how many leads are enrolling in your programs.

2. Revisit your buyer persona. Even if you feel like you have a solid grasp on who you are targeting, go through your buyer persona. Your students might change or evolve. Maybe there is even a need to create a second or third buyer persona to represent a new program or offering from your school.

Your buyer persona is your pulse on your potential students. You should revisit your buyer persona often to make sure you're still targeting and marketing to the right students.



3. Create valuable content offers. Determine which types of offers your personas prefer and address their biggest challenges. Make them thorough and engaging. These offers will likely be the first impression your school has, make it a good one.

4. Take an honest look at your website. Is your website all about you or does it focus on your buyer persona? Make sure it is mobile friendly, fast to load, and contains content that speaks to your persona.

5. Fine tune your value proposition. Is your value proposition clear and positioned front and center? Do site visitors know exactly who you are and what you do the moment they enter your site?

6. Setup CTAs. Provide direction for your site visitors. Act as a tour guide through your site with clear, distinctive CTAs displayed multiple times throughout each page. Be sure to cater these CTAs to all three phases of the buyer's journey.

7. Conjure conversion opportunities. Now that you have site visitors traveling to the beginning of your funnel, you need to capture their information. Integrate your favorite marketing automation software to help you capture and follow up with an email sequence.

8. Measure your new traffic to enrollment rate. Be sure to check back in often to see how you are doing. Measure the increase or decrease in your traffic to lead conversion and lead to student conversion. Try to do this monthly at a minimum.

9. Make adjustments based on your metrics. Leverage these numbers and invest heavier on the things that work and modify the things that aren't working.

Conclusion

If you want to give your school website a competitive edge, you need to truly understand your future students and create content they will find valuable throughout the Buyer's Journey.

This will only further enhance your website's effectiveness, positive branding, and give you the tools to build a strong student body through your enrollment marketing efforts on your website.

We hope our guide has given you some ideas to implement on your vocational or post-secondary school website

But you don't have to go it alone!

NEED HELP? Not a problem.

Neon Goldfish helps vocational schools and post-secondary schools make the most out of their marketing budgets. We take the time to learn about your goals and offer custom solutions that can increase enrollment and retention for your school and its programs.

If you're looking for some guidance on how to turn your website into an enrollment machine, reach out to us at Neon Goldfish today.

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