Students as Customers: Managing The Lifelong Relationship with PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education

The relationship between an institution and its students is more complex than ever. The service, communication, and technology expectations of today’s college students, combined with an increasingly competitive market and the demand for lifelong learning, brings a world of challenges and opportunities to today’s institutions of higher education. Nurturing this unique relationship for a lifetime, from initial application or recruitment, enrollment, and graduation, through alumni status and years of financial giving, is more crucial than ever. No longer can institutions view their operations as independent and separate. Today’s higher education constituents expect a continuum of services across all academic, administrative, social, and alumni activities. Oracle has the tools and expertise to help any institution implement a powerful and flexible management solution to deliver these services.

Already in use at higher education institutions of all sizes, both public and private, Oracle’s PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education melds student relationship and integrated service management into a comprehensive solution. This makes it possible to achieve enrollment goals while delivering consistent, superior service to academic, administrative, and external constituents. Collaboration is the key. Think of a salesman who logs every customer call into a database so that the entire organization can see and manage customer success. Similarly, every interaction with an applicant, student, parent, alumni, and sponsor can be managed for maximum success.

These interactions, which together constitute a relationship lifecycle are at the very core of Oracle’s PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education. “What differentiates us from other offerings is this comprehensive solution that maintains contact through every aspect of the student’s lifecycle,” says Joe Burkhart, Oracle’s Director of Higher Education Solutions. Key features include:

- Attraction: As students compile their college wish lists, keeping your institution’s name and image foremost in their minds is essential. PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education does this through segmentation and personalized content. This simplifies the execution of multiple rounds of communication that convey tailored messages to prospective students, based on their demographic, geographic, and academic profiles. With this personalized content the institution can deliver proactive, individualized follow-ups that establish a relationship even before a student enrolls.

- Engagement: Using PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education to promote events, activities, and services engages students and strengthens their relationship with the institution. By leveraging students’ profiles, they can be informed about programs and activities based on their interests. Surveys of students, faculty, and parents can be used to measure satisfaction or gauge interest in new programs under consideration.

- Retention: Institutions must quickly identify at-risk students to prevent them from transferring or dropping out. Using PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education to identify risk factors, educators can more quickly intervene and work to encourage student success and prevent at-risk students from leaving.

- Connection: Following graduation, PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education becomes a powerful platform for promoting alumni programs that encourage contributions and endowments. Armed with profile information, development organizations can easily target specific alumni for financial and volunteer
opportunities.

- Promotion: By identifying students and alumni likely to have high levels of interest in specialty, evening, and weekend courses, it's possible to create targeted marketing for continuing education programs.

Designed specifically for this market, PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education is built upon powerful, well-established technology in use throughout dozens of industries. "We've taken the maturity of our solutions from other sectors and ported them to higher education," says Burkhart. The advantage to this approach, he says, is flexibility to implement relationship management for any scenario large or small. "Once you license it, your only limitation is your creativity," Burkhart adds.

Real Solutions

With more than 23,000 students, Chicago's DePaul University is among the 10 largest private universities in the United States. In an effort to increase student retention, DePaul implemented an Oracle PeopleSoft CRM solution. In a pilot program that surveyed stress-level factors in a portion of the student population, the system alerted the university to five students at risk of dropping out. Staff intervention and counseling led to all five being retained.

With its primary goal met, DePaul went on to leverage the power of CRM in other ways, including using surveys to fine-tune course scheduling, increasing first-call closure rates, speeding student case-management workflows, and broadening support for the DePaul community by establishing a call center to handle requests for building permits and grants funding.

"When we first implemented our CRM initiative, we wanted to boost student retention and improve service," says Audrey Bledsoe, DePaul's Manager of CRM Technologies. "Since then, we have expanded our use of Oracle's PeopleSoft Enterprise CRM to better serve our campus community."

Arizona State University, with nearly 65,000 students, is ranked as one of the top 100 universities worldwide. Nevertheless, a key business challenge was to improve recruiting results and provide key performance indicators to management. To do this, ASU installed a suite of PeopleSoft solutions, including CRM for Higher Education, Campus Solutions, Human Resource Management, and Financial Management. According to Associate Vice President Max Davis-Johnson, lead conversion in one year grew from 10 percent to 35 percent, and new student registration rates jumped. Additionally, senior management can view dashboard results. The solution is a "critical component in ASU's mission to recruit and retain students," says Davis-Johnson.

Similarly, the Gemological Institute of America, the world's largest nonprofit institute of gemological research and learning, increased its prospective student pool by more than 75 percent in just one year by implementing the PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education.

Worthy Investment

While all of these objectives are essential, it's equally important to tally successes and understand the costs. The real-time analytics in PeopleSoft CRM for Higher Education track key metrics, such as cost per applicant, prospect-to-applicant yields, retention rates, and response rates to fund-raising efforts. These analytics make it possible to spot success or failure early, allowing appropriate personnel to make mid-course corrections.

Raising an institution's brand awareness with prospective students, boosting application and enrollment rates, and increasing student satisfaction are just one part of a comprehensive CRM solution. That solution must also lower recruiting and fund-raising costs while simultaneously maximizing revenue and increasing endowments through targeted opportunities. Oracle's PeopleSoft Enterprise CRM for Higher Education accomplishes these diverse goals while developing high-value, lifelong student and alumni relationships. To achieve these goals, PeopleSoft Enterprise CRM for Higher Education also delivers superior service and ease-of-use to academic, administrative, and external constituents. Results that prove it is an investment worth making.

For more information on managing the lifelong relationship with your students, go to:
http://www.accelacommunications.com/microsite/oracle/rr.html

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