



STRATEGY, BRAND & MARKETING

It's an education

Insider continues its series talking to chief marketing officers – CMOs – this time hearing from Jenny Browne, head of marketing at Bath Spa University



Attracting new students each year in the increasingly crowded marketplace of higher education can be a challenge when marketing teams at universities look at the best ways to position their institution to each year's potential new intake.

Bath Spa University has worked hard to articulate its offering over the past year. The institution has been around since the mid-19th century as an arts college, growing to university status in more recent years. Jenny Browne, head of marketing at Bath Spa University, says the focus of the university is on creativity and enterprise, and the ambition is to put students first and support them in realising their talent and potential.

"The higher education marketplace as a whole is going through a period of rapid change," Browne explains.

"The biggest thing that's influenced the whole of the higher education sector over the last few years has been the demographic dip in 18-year-olds."

This phenomenon saw a particularly low birth rate in the UK back around the year 2001. According to the Office for National Statistics, fertility rates in the UK reached a record low in 2001 and 2002 of 1.63 children per woman, which is why there are so few 18-year-olds around today. It is thought to have been caused by a cultural shift towards women choosing to work longer into their thirties before considering starting a family, a shift which emerged through the 1990s, peaking after the turn of the millennium.

"The number of 18-year-olds going into higher education has declined

in recent years and won't start to rise again until 2021," Browne explains. "That has meant there's less demand in the marketplace. Universities have had to become more commercial and really up their efforts to attract students."

The marketing team at Bath Spa has focused particularly on understanding its audiences better.

"We commissioned research in that space; it was about really understanding what young people want from a higher education experience. That insight has helped us create a marketing strategy focused on supporting students' needs."

The university has worked with Clifton-based marketing agency Bray Leino CX to articulate this strategy.

Browne says: "They have helped us articulate our strategy and package it up as a commercial offer and developed a campaign to support it. It is called '3,2,1 Go!' – a package that offers students a guaranteed place if they demonstrate talent and potential in an interview, portfolio or audition, a cash scholarship of £750 to help alleviate any money stresses and a guaranteed offer of accommodation.

"So in the single phrase – '3,2,1 Go!', we're able to address three things that we know through research that students worry about most – helping to articulate something that's potentially complex, and also cut through in a very crowded and competitive marketplace." ■



Jenny Browne

Tracking the results

When it comes to tracking the results of a campaign like '3,2,1 Go!', Jenny Browne says while it's possible to measure performance via media channel metrics, the real success of the campaign will be measured by the number of students recruited and their engagement.

"One key measure has been the take-up firstly on open day bookings, secondly 'applicant visit days', a visit after they have made an application. But the big difference has been that applicants can then have an interview, in person or over the phone, with an academic here to see if they qualify for a guaranteed place at Bath Spa. That has been our main measure for engagement this year – the take-up on invite to interview, then whether they choose us as their firm choice, taking the offer of a guaranteed place. The emphasis we're placing on that one-to-one interaction is being received very positively."

Drop the

C-bomb

Consumers.

Not an attractive word, is it. Not a helpful word either. Because effective marketing doesn't address consumers.

It talks to people.

Real human being people. And the better we understand them, their motivations, needs, wants, dreams, demands, worries and pressures, the more relevant and effective and personal our creative response and communications will be.

We're Bray Leino CX, and we help brands to create genuine emotional connections with people.

To start your marketing conversations
off the right way, give Alan a call.

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