

Challenges for 2009

Marketing/Communications Faces the Economic Downturn

CASE V

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AND OF COURSE, YOU!

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How did we do it?

- ▶ Step 1: Identify the issues (October 2008)
 - initial open-ended question to 125 thought leaders in higher ed
 - analysis of the results yielded nine top challenges
- ▶ Step 2: Measure their prevalence (December 2008)
 - survey to broader higher ed audience
 - asked top 3 challenges and what strategies and tactics they're using to address them

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Who did we hear from?

- ▶ 234 higher education professionals
- ▶ Primarily marketing, public relations and development staff
- ▶ Good mix of small, mid-sized and large institutions
- ▶ Split evenly between public and private institutions
- ▶ Primarily in the Midwest

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Marketing & Communication Challenges of 2009

Challenge	% rating it in Top 3
Branding and messaging	62%
Rethinking and expanding communication outreach approaches and formats	52%
Incorporating new media and/or technology strategies	38%
Economic downturn in general	36%
Appealing to a wider range of prospective students	35%
Budget cuts or insufficient funding	32%
Decentralization within the university and/or marketing department	19%
Internal organizational struggles and staff turnover	16%
The cost of higher education	10%

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Tactics and strategies for Challenge 1:

BRANDING AND MESSAGING (DIFFERENTIATION, VISIBILITY, OR CONSISTENCY)

- ▶ **Research and evaluation**
 - "We are continuing to run focus groups to determine differentiation points that matter to constituents"
 - "Surveys to understand needs and interests"
 - "Research and creative adjustment"
 - "Research on image and competitive positioning"
- ▶ **Hiring consultants and subcontractors**
 - "Hired outside consulting to help us develop our brand promise and use creative ways to communicate that promise"
 - "Hired an outside firm that crafted new branding/messaging approach"
- ▶ **Coordination and revision of branding efforts**
 - "Trying more coordination within markets"
 - "Coordinating all marketing materials for consistency"
 - "Began implementing branding standards with regards to logo use, external publications, etc."

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Tactics and strategies for Challenge 2:

RETHINKING AND EXPANDING COMMUNICATION OUTREACH APPROACHES AND FORMATS

- ▶ **Social networking**
 - Experimenting with social media tools, such as Twitter and Facebook
 - Using social network sites, as well as bloggers for news coverage
- ▶ **New—or revamped—website**
 - Unveiling a new website that focused on a more targeted content experience
 - Implementation of new alumni website
- ▶ **Utilizing email more**
 - Communicating through email when possible, in addition to mass mailings
 - Doing more electronic communication
- ▶ **Reassessing what works—and what doesn't**
 - We're evaluating our current strategies and adjusting our staff assignments accordingly
 - Using data to drive decisions instead of gut feelings
- ▶ **Technology use**
 - Using technology more effectively
 - Using a variety of formats in order to be ahead of our competition

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Tactics and strategies for Challenge 3:

INCORPORATING NEW MEDIA AND/OR TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIES

▶ Assessing web content

- "Overhaul our university web pages"
- "Reorganize and restructure how we manage the web"
- "Track web metrics"
- "Emphasizing our website—'all roads lead to the website'"

▶ Using new communications technologies

- "Experimenting with 'communities' - video, social site channels, blogging"
- "Video and RSS feeds, and have just initiated a Facebook site"

▶ New staff and training

- "We hired a Web marketing manager to help us identify opportunities"
- "Employ a multimedia producer"
- "Professional development for staff"
- "Expanding staff on this area to capitalize on opportunities"

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