

Huntington College Case Study

The Business Objective

Huntington College (www.huntington.edu) is a small, Christian, liberal arts college with an enrollment of 1,000 in northern Indiana. Like many small colleges, it depends on strong recruiting tools to keep its dorms and classrooms full. But the marketing of higher education had become repetitious, dominated by a one-way flow of generic documents. Huntington College needed an alternative way to effectively reach the kind of prospects they wanted on their campus; they needed to understand their dreams and aspirations and reach out to them using this personal information.

So Huntington turned to the Internet. The overall goal was to turn Web inquiries into actual student enrollments. Subsidiary objectives included encouraging campus visits, conveying the academic value of a Huntington education and showing the career results achieved by those with recent Huntington degrees.

The Proposed Solution

Scope 1 Marketing Technologies (Portage, MI) approached Huntington College with the concept of a Web-to-print brochure system, and the college readily agreed. Scope 1 designed a Web-inquiry page that allowed prospective applicants to create their own customized brochures. The form captured the prospect's desired area of study and extracurricular interests.

With this data, Scope 1's system created a PDF brochure online that could be viewed by the prospect immediately. A printed version of the brochure was also produced and mailed to the prospect immediately.

Each brochure included personalized text, an overview of programs containing relevant information based on the student's interests, alumni interviews, faculty bios, course lists in the prospect's selected major and extracurricular features. They also included a personal greeting from a student's assigned admissions counselor based on the student's ZIP code.

Only one cover photo was static in the four-page layout. The rest of the brochure was completely variable, based on each student's selected interests.

How it Was Produced

The Huntington College brochure was printed on a 12x18" sheet, trimmed to 11x17" and quarter-folded. Scope 1 has several outside partners who print the digital brochures. Each printer's 80-lb. cover weight "house sheet" is used for the brochures.

Scope 1 supplies its clients with templated layouts, as well as instructions for correctly "designing for digital." The designer is free to create their own look and feel as long as they stay within the stated parameters. The client is also given instructions to pass along to the various college faculty and staff who are asked to write copy for the brochure.

The data culled from the Web interface is stored in a Sequel Server database maintained by a Scope 1 technology partner. On a weekly basis, the data is sent to their Pageflex MPower Server where it is married with the brochure template. The server outputs a VPS, PPML, VDX or PostScript file, depending on the printer's RIP and output device. The Huntington College brochures run on an HP/Indigo digital press. Scope 1 also sends files to print partners who print on Xeikon, Xerox and NexPress machines.

The Results

In the initial phase, Huntington College sent out 377 brochures, which resulted in 34 applications. Of those, 32 students were accepted. Based on this outstanding enrollment rate, Huntington and Scope 1 have gone on to produce several thousand more personalized brochures.

The program was originally launched as a supplement to other student recruitment efforts; however, due to its success in generating a higher yield of applicants and enrollments, it has increasingly become the marketing centerpiece of Huntington's recruitment efforts—so much so that a major part of the PR director's job is to constantly search for new material telling the stories of recent graduates who are experiencing success in careers and life. Their stories are used as variable data and matched in the brochure to a prospect's academic major aspiration.

The ability to capture the data input on the Web also allows follow-up by counselors assigned to a prospect's geographical area. Additionally, Huntington obtained more data about prospective students much earlier in the process than they had in the past. Huntington College finds that the brochure-builder program more than justified its cost, and it also provides a more pleasant recruitment experience for the prospective student.

This case study comes from PODi's annual Best Practices in Digital Print research, the largest collection ever assembled of successful digital printing projects. PODi is an industry initiative with hundreds of member companies, including executive board members EFI, HP, IBM, NexPress, Pitney Bowes, Quark and Xerox. Membership in PODi is open to most types of companies and organizations involved in digital printing. Visit www.podi.org for more information.