

Advertising and Marketing

# Targeting the Web Savvy with Direct Mail Marketing

with Eric Schanz

*Utilizing a new solution that combines the Internet with direct mail, two career college marketing executives are increasing their campaign response rates and generating more meaningful dialogue with prospective students.*

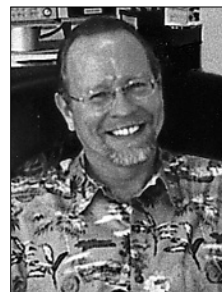
**J**ulie Blake is a seasoned marketing executive, but relatively new to career college marketing. Before taking over as senior vice president of marketing for Northface University, she held executive-level marketing positions at Kimberly Clark, American Express, 3COM, and Three Fold Corporation.

As Blake's background demonstrates, a talented marketer can be effective across a variety of industries. That being said, each organization faces its own unique set of challenges and opportunities, and career colleges are no exception.

"After being here a little over a year, I see three main things unique to education marketing," says Blake. "Number one is that the decision to enroll is often made by a committee of influencers; second, the audience is more pragmatic; and third, a more focused and targeted approach is required."

Blake's last point is perhaps more applicable to Northface University than to other career colleges. Based in Salt Lake City, Northface has one degree program, a B.S. in Computer Science, and recruits heavily from the top 20 percent of high school graduates in math and science.

Wendy Johnston, VP of marketing and admissions for Collins College, is a twenty-year career college marketing veteran. Based in Phoenix, Collins College, with two associate's and seven bachelor's degrees, targets a larger and



**ERIC SCHANZ** is the president and founder of CONTACT Direct Marketing. After years in the proprietary school direct mail industry, Eric decided that the school industry needed a direct mail advertising agency that was more customer-oriented. So in 1996, Eric started a company known as CHEEPER Direct Mail. The name of the company was changed in the summer of 2003 to accommodate the addition of telecommunication,

Internet, and admissions training services. Through CONTACT Direct Marketing, Eric has greatly influenced the school and college marketing business by constantly looking for innovative ways to get leads for his clients.

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more diverse audience than Northface. But like Northface and most other career colleges, Collins recruits both high school students and adults.

“Adults are career changers.

They know they need to do something

different. They’re looking for the end result,” explains Johnston. “In contrast, high school students are looking for a college experience. So, even after high school students have

enrolled, a key marketing activity is to remind them why a Collins education is so important and to maintain close contact—a process we call stitch’n.”

According to Johnston, the stitch’n process takes place from the time a

student enrolls to the time they start classes and includes marketing activities such as events, follow-up direct mail and email communications, short surveys, as well as giving each student a Collins College e-mail account. “We devote significant resources to the stitch’n process. This is where a lot of schools make mistakes.”

Whereas Northface University relies heavily on direct mail and the Internet, Collins College employs a more diverse marketing mix that also includes national grass roots campaigns and TV and newspaper advertising.

Starting last year, both executives began looking for ways to leverage the Internet to boost the efficacy of their direct mail campaigns—in part to increase response rates, but also to track online responders for each campaign. After a thorough search,

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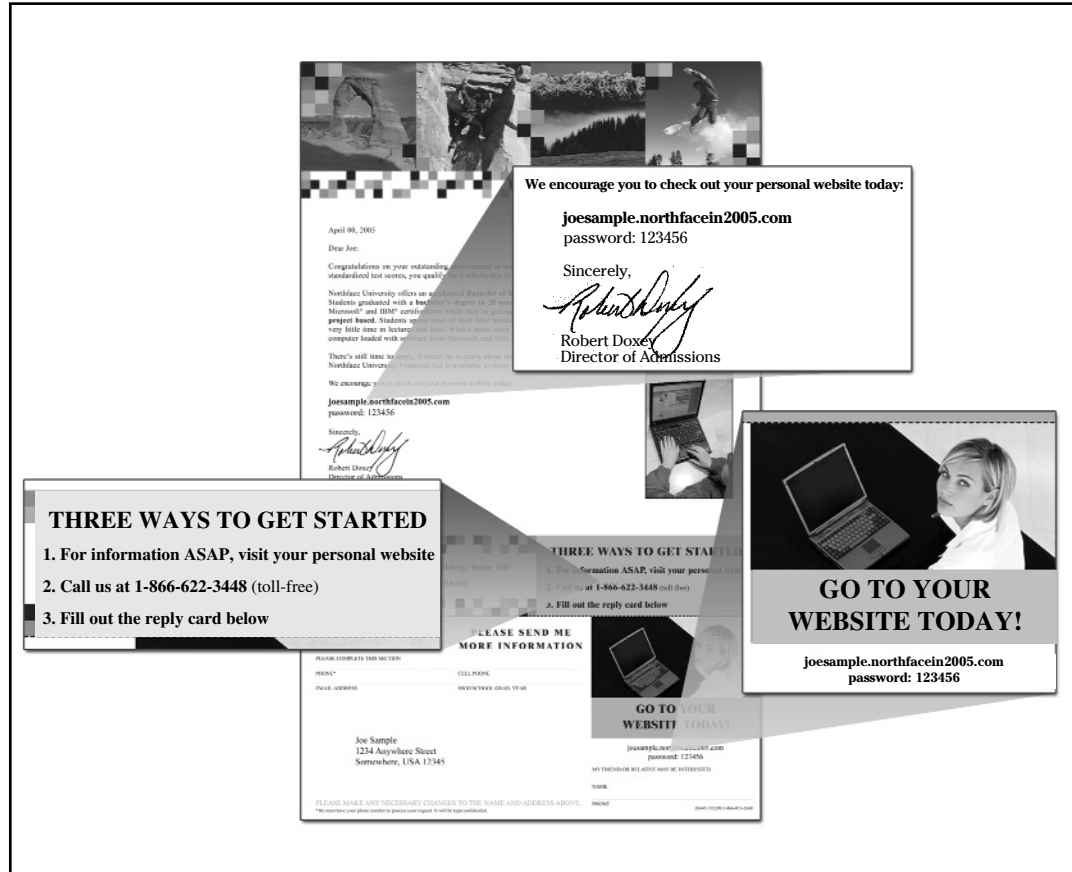


Figure 1: The direct mail piece encourages John to visit a custom site built just for him.

Blake and Johnston both turned to Eric Schanz, president of Contact Direct Marketing, for help.

According to Schanz, “The ability to effectively combine Internet technology with traditional direct mail can help clients like Northface and Collins capture more responses by appealing to prospects that prefer to respond online...this is especially important with Millennials—students under 23 years old that have grown up with Internet access in the home.”

In early 2004, Schanz partnered with interactive marketing company MindFire to create a new product for career college recruitment. The new product is called “Click to CONTACT™.” Like Northface University and Collins College themselves, the way each institution employs Click to CONTACT™ reflects their particular market focus and campaign goals.

Click to CONTACT™ is Web-based software that automates the creation and management of Landing Pages—special Web pages that capture direct mail response. Using a campaign’s Mail File (e.g., a list of prospective students), Click to CONTACT™ automatically generates and hosts Personalized Landing Pages with unique URLs for each prospective student. When the prospective student visits his unique Web address, he’s visiting a personalized Web site with his name and other information pre-loaded into both the URL and content of his site.

For example, when John visits JohnStudent.UniversityandYou.com,

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***Web-savvy recipients such as Millennials prefer to respond to a direct mail piece via the Internet...—yet most career colleges have not kept up with their preferences.***

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**Figure 2:** Once there, the messaging and relevance of John’s site reinforces and builds on the direct mail piece he holds in his hands.

a personalized welcome message thanks him for visiting. This has proven to be a cost-effective way to deliver detailed, personalized content to every prospective student. It's also an opportunity to request additional information directly from John via a short questionnaire, as well as collect it automatically through click stream analysis.

Finally, campaign managers can use John's visit to his Personalized Landing Page to trigger subsequent marketing activities such as a follow-up call from an admissions representative, or an invitation to an event.

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the Internet...—yet most career colleges have not kept up with their preferences. Our Personalized URLs create intrigue, flattery, and a call to action. The result can be a dramatic increase in response rates."

Northface University uses Contact Direct Marketing's solution exclusively with mailing lists including the top 20 percent of math and science high school graduates. For Blake, the most important aspect of the solution has been what she calls "speed-to-respond," essentially the amount of time it takes Northface to call back prospective students once they've responded to the direct mail piece.

"With a BRC [business reply card], the speed-to-respond time can be seven to ten days, whereas Contact Direct Marketing's Web response channel allows us to respond within one day or

a matter of hours," she says. "We also capture some basic information about the prospective students' programming experience so when our admissions representatives call them back, not only is interest still fresh, but our response to them is more meaningful and productive."

Collins College just started testing Click to CONTACT™. Johnston took leads that were 30 days old and resent them using direct mail including the unique URL. She's also used it for students that enrolled and then cancelled within the last two years.

"Whenever you do a recirculation, you're trying to recapture leads in a different way than you did initially. We've had a very good success rate with it—about double the response rate from similar efforts that used direct mail alone," says Johnston. "Also, due to the more anonymous nature of the Internet, I think people respond more honestly online than they would in person or over the phone."

Johnston also likes being able to start the process of connecting the student's name with Collins College. "I think there's a psychological benefit of having the prospective student's name linked to the university in the Web site URL and content of their personalized site."



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