

20 Tips for Using SM (Social Media) for Recruiting

Different types of students (traditional, international, nontraditional and part-time) can tend to gravitate to different major platforms (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and LinkedIn), so this is a spectrum of tips. For help with your specific SM, call Chris Martin at 404.370.6050 x 114.

1. **Leave classic ROI at the door.** An SM contributor's responsibility is to add value to your prospects' experience – not the bottom line. (ROI in the sociosphere means Return on Intent – and nope, there is no formula.)
2. **Stop for a strategy.** Who are you talking with? On what platform? What are your 3 primary benefits? What are your expectations? And most important, how can you bring value to your targets?
3. **Recalculate your assets.** Redefine "value" the way your prospects do, starting with your most immediate sources. Who are your best faculty, staff & student bloggers? Brightest video & photo folks (including students)? Clearest thinkers, best explainers, most entertaining attendees and passionate advocates?
4. **Set 'em free.** If your contributors are censored, sooner or later, it shows. Reviews and approvals delay response, dilute authenticity and cost you priceless credibility.
5. **Phone it in.** Everything's headed for mobile. Start thinking 3" x 2".
6. **Don't think marketing.** Think entertainment + help desk + insider info. If you're not providing good reading, great photos & cool video, as well as helping strangers and building personal relationships with prospects – all in different places – you're late to the party.
7. **Stay alert.** Monitor and respond to what's being said about you several times daily, if not 24/7 (see #8). While you're at it, check out your competitors' moves.
8. **Never sleep.** Prospects don't keep office hours. If possible, demonstrate that you're responsive, flexible and simpatico with immediate responses 'round the clock.
9. **Be valuable.** Prospects expect to find stuff they can't get anywhere else. (Warning: providing valuable stuff is hard work and takes time.)
10. **Share the experience.** Prospects are eager to know, "What's it like there?" Offer more of the experience – classroom, dorm, frat, rehearsal, anywhere – and you invite more response.

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11. **Be prepared for failure.** In SM, you can't vet what's said about you – which is what makes it compelling. Sure, relationships can fail, sometimes spectacularly. Be ready to respond if necessary, knowing that the best defense is a community ready to rise and defend you.

12. **Let your www do the heavy lifting.** Your Facebook and MySpace pages should coordinate with – but not duplicate – your website.

13. **Think 120.** Sure, tweets are 140 characters – but hey, you're shooting for retweets.

14. **Give yourself a "sniff test."** Every 2-3 months, look over your whole blog presence to ask, "Do we smell like a brand?" If so, you've gone wrong. (You should smell like a motley tribe of helpful, fun, irreverent, approachable individuals invested in a certain school.)

15. **Build a team.** ASAP, bring in parents – with permission. Millennials trust parents and peers over marketing.

16. **Stay hungry for feedback.** Don't be afraid to ask for opinions. Just keep it simple, fun and short – 3 questions, max. – to get your answers.

17. **Bare your black eye.** When you've got bad news – and from time to time, you will – it's better to be the first to announce it.

18. **Throw away the box.** Get audacious. Can you animate your founder or mascot? Would your campus make a good game app? Better, what can you do online that hasn't been done?

19. **See a tree, not a forest.** SM affirms your most compelling benefits in new touchpoints, but it doesn't replace traditional marketing. For the most pow for your pennies, they work together.

20. **Invest in 1-to-1.** Every personal relationship broadens your SM foundation – which is on the way to becoming second in value only to your endowment. How's them apples?

PS: **You can't pan for gold. It's there to be mined.** Don't expect a quick turnaround for any SM efforts. Developing a strong community of online relationships and a solid history of valuable input takes time, transparency, long-term commitment and hard work. But not only do you have zero choice whether to proceed, if you do it right, the payoff can be exponential.