

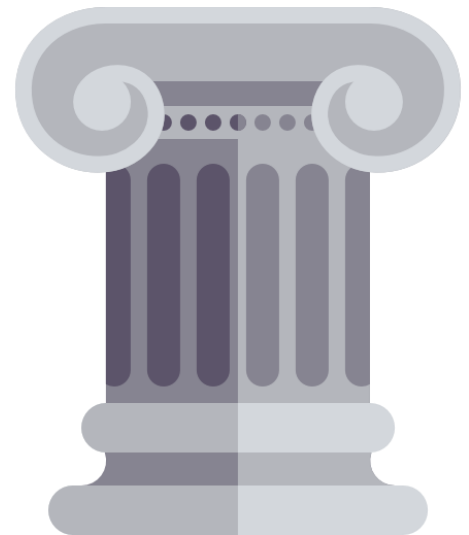


**HOW TO
MARKET**

**COLLEGES &
UNIVERSITIES**

ONLINE

Higher education has become one of the most competitive industries in the world. Universities, colleges, trade schools, and other institutions are all scrambling to attract the brightest minds of the next generation.



But with a limited number of possible applicants, only *some* institutions can **win the fight for new students**.

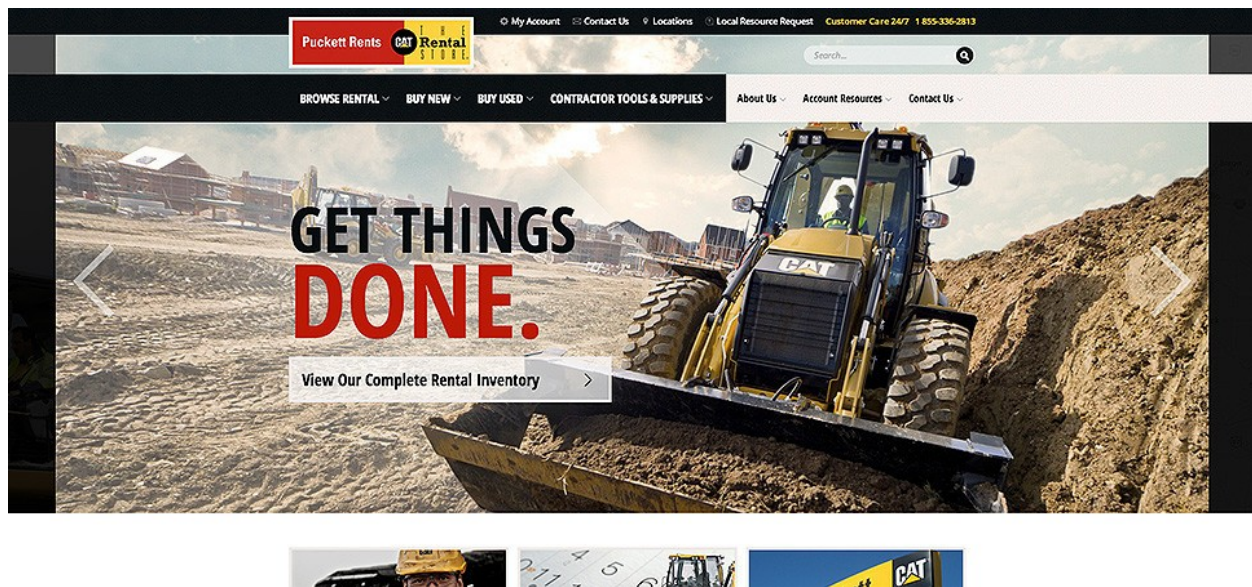
That means you need to use the newest and most effective marketing tactics to get as much visibility as possible.

Fortunately, it's a **cinch with Internet marketing**. All you have to do is follow the six steps below to get started.



**GET A
WELL-DESIGNED
WEBSITE**

1

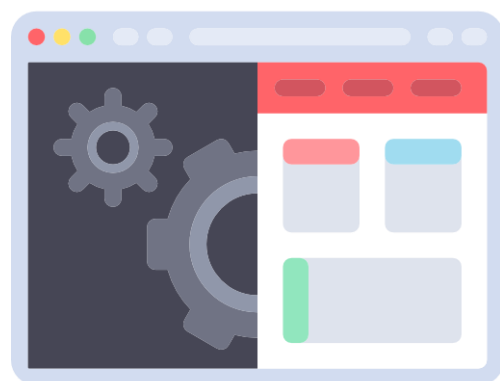


The heart of any Internet marketing initiative is a **well-designed website**. You need a site that accurately shows your college, who you are, what you do, why you're successful, and why students should choose you.

You also need to provide a way for students to apply to your college online, preferably through a form that allows them to attach cover letters and other application materials.

While that functionality is critical to your website's success, your site also needs to **look good** as a whole.

A fresh, **modern-looking** site will attract and keep far more visitors than a site that looks like it was quickly cobbled together. And if you have a website that hasn't been updated in a few years, you're probably **losing applicants**.



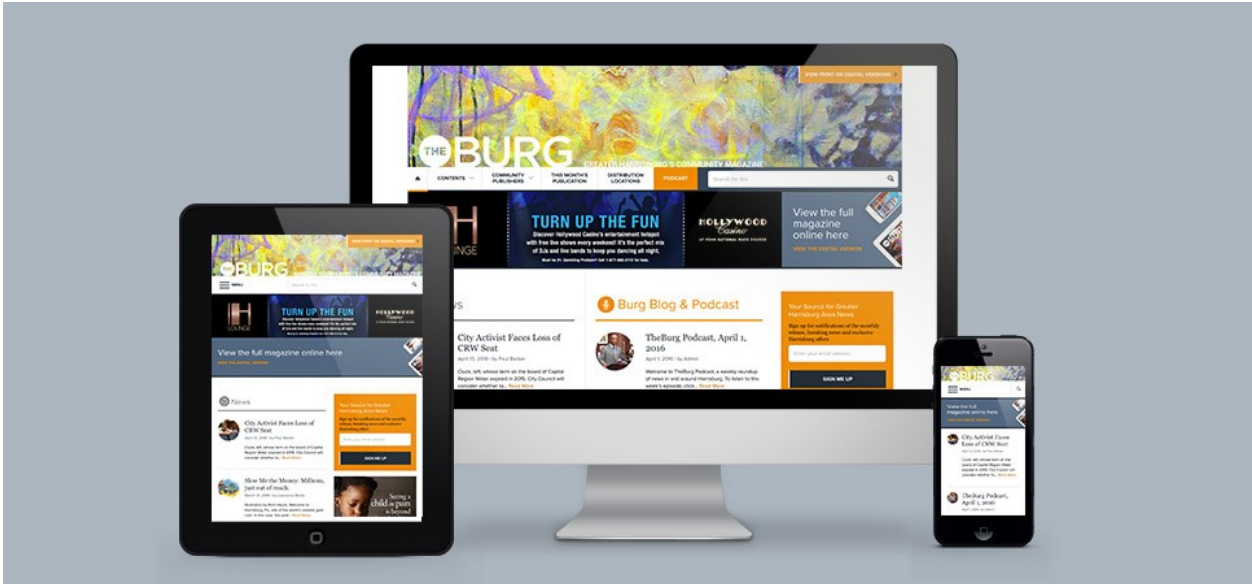
That's because today's websites are fundamentally different from websites in the 2000s and 1990s.

Today's sites are fast, sleek, high-definition, and mobile-friendly. They give visitors a **great user experience** no matter where they are or what device they're using to access information.

Beyond that, good websites help users find information they want almost immediately. To do that, your website has to cover lots of **highly-specific topics** that relate to your college. We'll talk more about this process later in the guide, but it's important to keep in mind as you're reading.

For now, let's take a deeper look into one of web design's newest trends — responsive design.

Responsive Design



Creating a website with **responsive design** means your site will automatically adapt to the device someone is using to view it.

So if someone views your site on their smartphone, they'll get a great experience just like they would on a desktop computer.

There are a few ways you can approach responsive design.

The first way is to force your site to automatically **conform to size restrictions** while keeping the overall format of the site consistent.

The second way is to **create a second version of your site** that's accessible via non-computer devices.

Both of these options are great ideas for your site — it boils down to a matter of preference.

The first option is easier to implement in most cases. You just add code to your site that automatically restructures its appearance depending on user devices.

The second option is often better from a user experience standpoint. Creating a separate mobile site includes making text easier to read, turning text links into easy-to-touch buttons, and creating a scrollable interface for your customers.

Those are just **three basic criteria** that help your site succeed with potential new students. There's a lot more that goes into responsive design, but hitting those criteria is a healthy start.

Now that we've covered responsive design, you probably have one burning question on your mind.

Why does responsive design matter?

Responsive design is important because it lets users get the information they want from your site no matter what device they're using.



In addition, Google recently made **mobile-friendliness** a **ranking factor** in its **algorithm**. That means if you want to compete with other institutions of higher education, you need to get on their level of website sophistication.

But even without considering Google, responsive design simply makes sense.

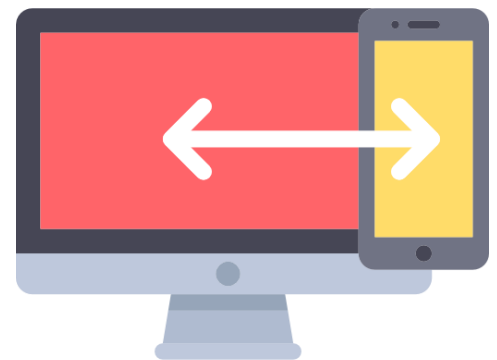
Nobody wants to try and touch small, text-based links with their fingertips when they're using a phone or tablet. It's much easier (and more satisfying) to touch a large button to go to another page or download a document.

So if you want your website's users to enjoy their time on your site, it's important that you **cater to them** no matter what device they use.

If you don't, they'll probably leave your site to find another one that's easier to use.

Finally, responsive design shows your website's users that you keep up with the times.

Nothing sends users away from websites faster than seeing a website that just *looks* hard to use. Responsive design definitively shows your prospective students that you're a **modern, streamlined institution** that understands their needs.



Without responsive design, you can bet you'll lose students and revenue to your competition.

Still, your website is just the beginning. You also need to make sure that your site is **optimized** to appeal to users and show up in search engines.



OPTIMIZE
ALL OF THE PAGES
ON YOUR SITE

2

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
  <title>The Cost of Hackers in the US [Infographic] | WebpageFX</title>
  <meta name="author" content="WebpageFX">
  <meta name="description" content="Hackers cost United States companies money every day.
  Learn how those costs add up to cause billions in damage.">
  <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1">
```

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving your website so that search engines and users can find what they want from you right away.

For Internet marketing, SEO is **essential**. It's practically the only way to get your site discovered on search engines like Google and Yahoo that can direct huge amounts of traffic to your college.

If you don't optimize your website for search engines, you'll miss out on tons of prospective students who are looking for their next step in education.

While there are **200+ SEO factors** that determine how search engines display your site to users, there are a few basics you can follow to get started.

Title tags

```
<title>The Cost of Hackers in the US [Infographic] | WebpageFX</title>
```

Title tags dictate the name of a certain page on your site. They're shown as `<title>` and `</title>` in HTML code, and they're the **blue links** that show up in **search engine results pages (SERPs)**.

That makes them critical from SEO and user experience standpoints.

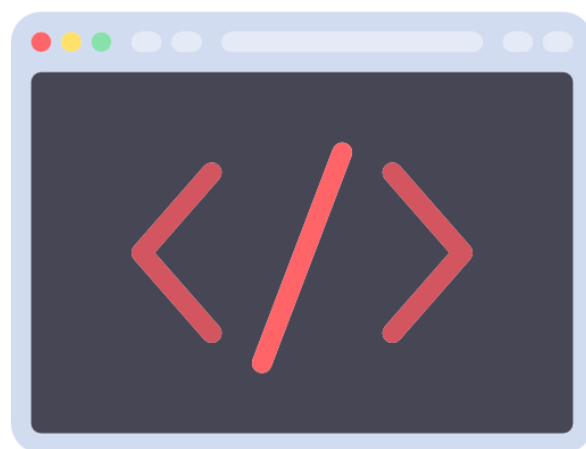
They're important to SEO because they tell Google how to match your pages to certain **keywords**.

They're important to users because they're the words that a user will see first when your page appears in SERPs.

Without proper title tags, Google won't be able to find your pages. And even if it could, Google users wouldn't click on them because they don't know what your pages are about.

In other words, your site simply **won't get traffic if** you don't use title tags on every page.

Technically, title tags can be as long as you want them to be. But it's best to keep them to **67 characters or fewer** since that's all Google shows in SERPs.



You *could* stretch title tags out to 300 or more characters, but it's unlikely that your page would rank for anything. Google essentially reads the whole Internet — if it can't understand what your page is about at a moment's notice, it'll skip you and **promote your competitors** instead.

And even if Google did show a page with a super-long title tag, your potential visitors wouldn't be able to read the whole title anyway. They'd probably skip right over your page and go to your competitors instead.

With all of that in mind, it's essential that you create a **concise, strong title tag** to engage potential visitors the moment they see your page in SERPs.

Meta descriptions

```
<meta name="description" content="Hackers cost United States companies money every day.  
Learn how those costs add up to cause billions in damage.">
```

Meta descriptions are **one- to three-sentence summaries** of what someone can expect to find on a page. They display as **gray text** underneath your page's title tags in SERPs, and they're a great way to attract traffic from Google.

Meta descriptions are shown in HTML with the tags `<meta name="description" content="">`.

The first section of the tag tells Google what you're about to write. Then, you enter your actual description after the word "content." It's important that your description is in quotes — that text will display in search engines exactly as you write it.

Like title tags, meta descriptions have **character limits**. If you go beyond **160 characters**, Google and other search engines will truncate your meta descriptions.

That takes away your ability to appeal to your users. Meta descriptions help you **attract more traffic** to your site by explaining your title tags.



You can use meta descriptions to ask enticing questions, present eye-catching ideas, and otherwise draw visitors to your site.

Plus, meta descriptions are great places to use any **major keywords** that are important to a page since search engines highlight keywords.

So if you're creating a page that sells running shoes, you could use "running shoes" in the meta description and Google will make the **phrase bold** every time your page shows in SERPs.

While meta descriptions don't directly contribute to SEO strength, that extra help from search engines could be enough to get a new customer for your business.

Text length

```
<h2>How much cyberattacks cost the US</h2>  
<p>One of the most important parts about this infographic is how Keith B. Alexander &mdash; the former head NSA, CSS, and USCC &mdash; calls cyberattacks "the greatest transfer of wealth in history."</p>
```

When you're creating a page for a website, you always need to include text.

Text is important because **Google constantly reads text** to determine how relevant your page is to certain keywords and how extensively you explain answers to questions.

Google shows the most preference to pages that have **more than 1000 words**. In fact, pages between 1200 and 3000 words tend to perform significantly better than pages with 300 or 500 words.

There are a few reasons for this.

First, Google assumes that length of text is **correlated to the quality of text**. So if you're writing 3000 words about student governments, Google assumes you know *everything* there is to know about student governments. A Google user will probably have a good experience on your page, so Google will show your page higher in SERPs.



Second, people who want answers to questions typically **don't want generalizations**. So if someone really wants to know about a topic, they

want to know the details. Pages that have more extensive text *probably* discuss information more in-depth and offer holistic answers that consider an issue from multiple points of view.



In other words, when you write longer pages, Google recognizes you as an **authoritative source** in college education.

3



Blogging is a practice that's been around for decades. Its popularity has fluctuated over the years, but it's recently become more popular because of how much it helps with SEO.

Google likes websites that **regularly publish authoritative information** — and blogs fit those criteria perfectly.

There are two main questions you have to ask when you create a blog:

- What are you going to write?
- How often will you update your blog?

Let's take a closer look at both of those questions to get an answer.

What to write



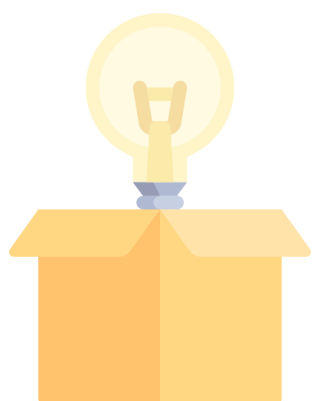
4 Tips for Creating Mobile Content

Typically, a blog is the perfect spot to write about anything new happening in education.

This can be information that you've seen from other blogs, emerging trends, major changes, legal issues, upcoming laws, or even personnel profiles at your college.

Basically, your blog is **part self-promotion** and **part industry publication**, allowing you to reach a huge potential audience just based on Google queries and other searches.

To get ideas for your blog, you can use online tools like **FaqFox**. FaqFox lets you enter a keyword and websites you want to examine. Then, FaqFox will show you a list of corresponding results about your keyword from those websites.



Then, you can read through those results and see if anything catches your eye. You never know when inspiration may strike!

Other sources of inspiration include other **college blogs and industry publications**.

And if you're ever stumped, you can always reach out to major personalities in higher education — like your college president or chancellor — to write a blog about the **general state of your institution**.

The possibilities are pretty much endless for a college blog. All it takes is a little brainstorming and a little time!

How often to update



by Ryan Maake on April 22, 2016

Ryan is a Jr. Content Marketer. Follow him on Twitter [@rmaake107!](#)

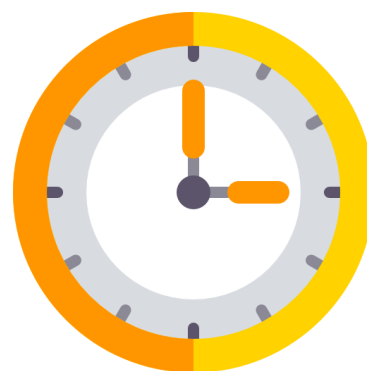
Now that you know what you're going to write, you have to decide **when you'll update**.

Different organizations update their blogs at different times, and there's not necessarily a "right" answer for when to update yours.

In fact, most blogs update during the **weekdays** since they cater to workers in a certain industry. But since you're appealing to potential students — a demographic that doesn't necessarily have a set schedule — you could update your blog **any day of the week**.

But it's still important that you *choose* specific days of the week. Regardless of when you do it, you need to be consistent.

If you want to update your blog on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, then that's a great idea. But *only* update on those days of the week, and don't miss a single day.



The **more consistent and thorough** you are with your blog schedule, **the better results** you'll see.

Those results include more traffic to your website, better rankings in SERPs, and more applications from qualified students (among others).

The best way to stay consistent and get those results is to use a **content management system (CMS)** like **WordPress** to update your blog.

With those systems, you can create blog posts and schedule them ahead of time to ensure you never miss a day.



So if you wanted to get all of your blog posts for next month done *before* next month starts, you can do that!

It's **generally good** to work that **far in advance**, too. It protects you against any sudden illnesses or life events that may prevent members of your blogging team from updating one day.

But if you have everything scheduled ahead of time, you don't have to worry about it. And on top of that, team members who are sick or otherwise out of the office don't have to worry about that part of their job while they're gone.

All in all, creating a **consistent blogging schedule** makes your life easier and strengthens your college's brand in the long run.



START (AND MAINTAIN) YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

4

In addition to a blog, you have to create and maintain social media accounts to **keep in touch with prospective students and promote your college**.

This practice, called **social media marketing**, is a staple of Internet marketing as a whole. It makes you accessible, shows that you're an active presence online, and gives you the potential to reach thousands of potential students you couldn't otherwise find.

With social media, you place yourself **on a level playing field** with your potential students. Your college doesn't become an intimidating, high-standards institution anymore — it becomes a relatable brand with a friendly, human face.



Plus, potential students **can reach out to you directly** on social media instead of traditional email. That keeps the setting less formal, more comfortable, and more conducive to helpful conversation.

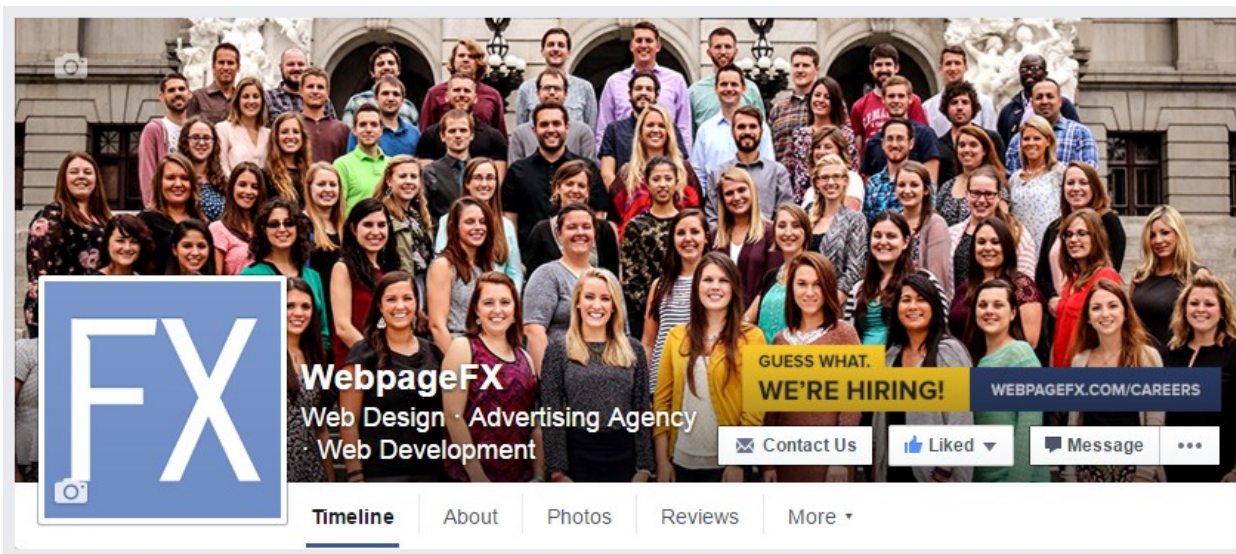
It's kind of like getting the chance to sit down with every single student who takes a campus tour to hear what's on their mind. And maybe your college already does that (in which case, kudos to you).

But even if you do, social media **lets you talk to these potential students** from across the world. They don't *have* to take a scheduled tour — they can ask questions right to you and get their answers straight from the horse's mouth.

Or, at the very least, they can see that you're a **modern institution** who understands how to reach new students.

With that in mind, let's take a look at some of the most popular and useful social networks to use for colleges.

Facebook



Facebook is the ubiquitous social network of the world. Nearly 1 billion people in the world use it, including **72% of all Americans**.

In addition, **82% of all people aged 18-29** — a college's prime student demographic — use Facebook. That means you can reach more than 4/5 of Americans just leaving high school or searching for deferred higher education with *one* social media account.

That's an impressive reach. And if you're not on Facebook, you can bet other colleges and universities are.

That means you're constantly losing students who would otherwise attend your college to other institutions of higher education.

To get them back, **create a Facebook page for your college**. Then, you can provide regular updates about your college and events — kind of like your blog.

But there are a few big differences between your blog and your Facebook account.

First, you can use Facebook for much more than just industry or college updates. You can post **polls, questions, or promotions** about your college that go *straight* to the potential students who want to hear about them.



You can also post photos of your team volunteering, celebrating the start of spring, working with students, or otherwise improving your college.

Most importantly, Facebook lets your potential students reach out to you directly. They **can message you at any time**, and you can reply to them at any time.

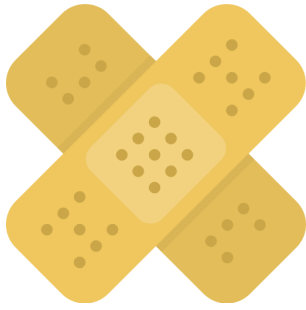
Facebook posts how long it takes you to answer though, so it's in your best interest to **answer promptly** so you can show your followers that you're actively listening to them. That helps create a two-way street of communication, which in turn builds relationships and trust with your followers.

And when you're a college looking for more students, **trust-based relationships are essential**.

But your Facebook doesn't always have to be serious or all about recruitment. You can post **fun videos, promotional photos, inspirational quotes, or even your own blog posts**.

As long as you're cultivating a **positive image for your college** while helping your followers, you can constantly benefit from a Facebook page.





And even if someone posts a complaint on your page, you can still respond to them to **remedy their situation**.

In that event, you can either respond **publicly or privately**.

Public responses are good if you want to **field a complaint** that you've heard before or answer a question that lots of people have. That way, people with the same question or complaint can see your response instead of bringing the same issues to your attention over and over.

Private responses are smart for **unique issues or situations** that need to be straightened out privately. They also show someone that you respect their privacy enough to take care of their issue away from the eyes of other Facebook users.

Ultimately, the best way to respond to user complaints is up to you. But when you do it, it's important to **maintain the brand image** that your college wants to promote among potential students.

With that under your belt, we can jump to another important social network for your college.

Twitter

Twitter is the second-most popular social network in the world. It's famous for limiting users to **short messages with eye-catching photos, short videos, and links to content**.



Whenever you tweet, you're restricted to 140 characters, and images count for 24 of those characters right off the bat.

That means you have to **fine-tune your college's message and brand personality** so you can make the most of every tweet.

Generally, colleges tweet to reflect an air of esteem and professionalism that shows potential students how serious they are about education.

While that formality may seem strange on an informal, slang-heavy platform like Twitter, it works for colleges because of your demographic. No student wants to spend money on an education just to find out their college doesn't take students seriously.

Plus, Twitter makes it easy for your followers to **ask quick questions about your college**. You can respond to them either privately or publicly — just like Facebook — **to offer excellent "customer service"** for potential students.

Fielding questions, interacting with followers, and posting updates about your college will probably make up the bulk of your tweets. But you can also initiate contests, ask questions, and even poke fun at your collegiate competition to gain extra visibility.

With all of that potential on your side, Twitter basically has one major rule — **play it cool**.



Twitter users won't always be nice to you, even users who happen to be your current students. Because of **how Twitter is set up**, it's easy for people to feel like they're yelling into a vacuum — even when they've tagged you in a tweet.



The key to handling this kind of **backlash** (however unmerited it is) is to play it cool. **Keep a level head, ignore the riffraff**, and if you feel the need to respond, do what you can to ease the tension.

Engaging belligerent users on Twitter is always a **risk**, and nobody likes unhappy people tweeting at them.

It's ultimately up to you how you deal with random aggression on Twitter, but you should always stay cool, calm, and professional.

Pinterest



Pinterest is one of the most **valuable social networks to marketing**. For B2C and B2B companies, a Pinterest account translates to major dollars and cents.



And it can do the same for colleges.

As a college, you probably have memorabilia with your name and logo on it — T-shirts, caps, sweaters, socks, cups, dossiers, you name it.

That's incredible marketing potential for your college as a brand, especially online.



To capitalize that, you can start a Pinterest account and pin all of the products from your college that people can buy online.

The only caveat to this is that your users must be able to buy your memorabilia online. That means your college's website (or wherever you sell your clothing) needs to be built with **ecommerce functionality**.

On top of posting your own products, you can also **interact with your followers and re-pin anything that they post** — *especially* if they're posting more photos of your college's name, logo, or products.

With Pinterest on your side, you can sell more of your college's products to increase revenue to your school.

Plus, you also advertise your college with every sale you make.

That means Pinterest can advertise for you online, earn more revenue for you, and then advertise for you *offline* too.

That's a winning formula for marketing success.



USE
PAY-PER-CLICK
ADVERTISING

5

Pay-per-click advertising (PPC) is a system of online advertising that requires you to bid a small amount of money to show an ad to your potential students.

PPC systems often operate on an **auction system**. You base your ads on search **keywords** or **people's interests** (depending on the platform) and set a bid amount. If your bid is highest, your ad is shown first.

If you don't have the highest bid, you may have the second or third listing. Or, if lots of your competitors are bidding for the same keyword, you might not get listed at all!

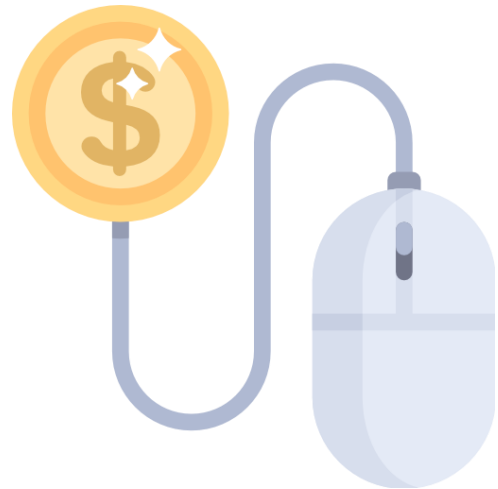
On the plus side, almost *no* PPC outlets charge you for an ad when they don't show it. In fact, most won't even charge you when your ad shows up.

Instead, **you're only charged when users actually *click*** on an ad that you created.

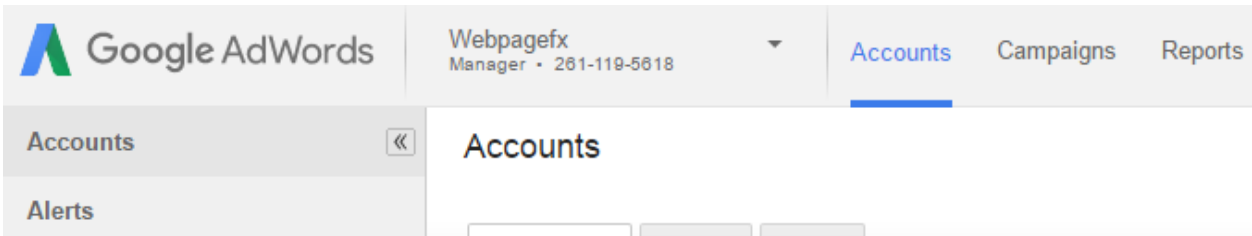
In other words, you only pay for your ads when they succeed. You don't pay a thing if someone ignores your ad.

However, not every PPC system operates this way (ironically). Some of them may charge you based on how often your ads display to users, which is called an **"impression."**

Still, these PPC outlets **are valuable advertising platforms**. Thousands of brands frequently use the three systems below.



Google AdWords



Google AdWords is by far the **most popular PPC outlet** in the world. It's also the original PPC system, released in October 2000.

Since then, it's become Google's cash cow.

To start using AdWords, you just need a Google account and a credit card. Then, it's up to you to **research the keywords** that matter to your college, create ads based on those keywords, and launch campaigns.

Your campaigns will then show your ads for Google searches that match the keywords you entered earlier.



So if you take out an ad for “colleges in [your city],” your college will show up in that search as soon as you **activate your campaign**.

But there's **one big catch to that**. If you have a lot of competitors fighting for ad space on one keyword, your ad might not appear.

Google has a **limited number of ad slots** for every keyword. Unfortunately, that means there are sometimes definite winners and losers, and not everyone can have a chance at earning new traffic.

On top of that, search AdWords ads **don't offer** the opportunity for you to **target users based on their personal data**. Google has an abundance of data on all of its accounts, but that data is primarily used for AdSense and Gmail ads.

Gmail ads are a great supplement or alternative (depending on your needs) to search ads. They let you create an ad that shows up **right in someone's inbox**, where people frequently look at least once per day.

That's a great opportunity for you to **talk directly** to potential students in an area they may not expect.

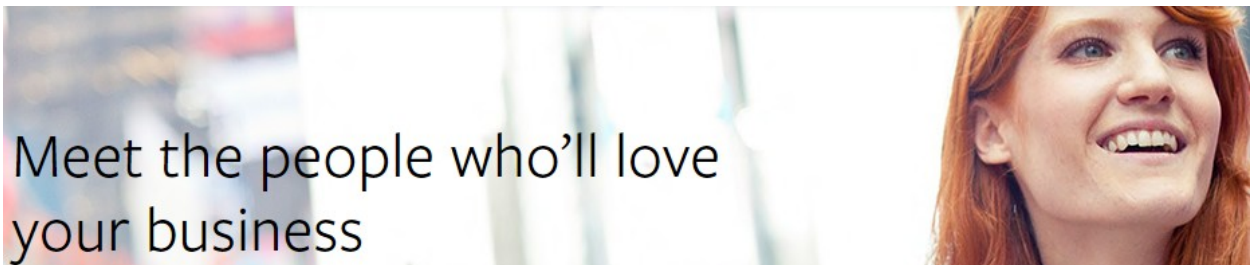
But there's a **downside** — Google has even **fewer spots** for Gmail ads than search ads. Most of the time, you're looking at one or two ads in someone's inbox at a time.

That makes Gmail ads **significantly more competitive** than their search counterparts. The tradeoff is that Gmail ads can have a much higher success rate since you're only competing with one or two brands at a time.

So if you're looking to reach potential students on Google search and Gmail, AdWords is the **best place to start**.



Facebook Ads



In addition to being the most popular social network in the world, Facebook is also one of the largest digital advertising platforms. You can learn **everything about Facebook marketing on our site.**



Facebook **collects tons of data from its users**, which it then uses to let companies advertise directly to consumers.

This data includes **users' interests, careers, locations, and even brand preferences.** You can market to just about anyone on Facebook, just based on their basic profile criteria.

Then, the more someone engages with Facebook, the more information they give. Facebook stores that data, giving you an ultra-targeted way to get new students.

Facebook's advertising system **charges you on a monthly basis.**

In a nutshell, Facebook advertising consists of a few key steps:

1. Create an ad campaign
2. Select audience based on demographic data (including age)

3. Set campaign budget
4. Set campaign timeframe
5. Create all ad media needed
6. Review campaign
7. Launch campaign
8. Monitor campaign

When all is said and done, it can take **as little as an hour** to get everything together for a Facebook ad campaign.

Whether you're selling merchandise, your website, or something else about your college, you can **reach your audience on the social network that they *constantly* use.**

Plus, if you're simultaneously advertising on Google, then you're reaching potential students on the first- and second-most popular websites in the world.

That's a colossal market share.

The best part is that Facebook ads — much like AdWords — **adhere specifically to your budget.**

So if you only have a few hundred dollars to spend on Facebook advertising, you can make that work for you by setting a limit to your campaign. Then, Facebook will automatically shut off once you hit that budget, and you'll be billed at the end of the month.





But the **best part** about Facebook ads is the **traffic** you get.

Since you're targeting potential students based on their established demographic data, you're only reaching out to **people who would be interested in college**.

So when someone clicks on your ad, **you can be sure they're worth the money you spent**.

After all, you can easily recoup the cost of a Facebook ad campaign with a two- or four-year commitment from a new student.

In fact, you could easily get a return even if a student transfers away from your school after *one semester*.

That **low-cost, high-return investment is a goldmine** for a college, and it can lead your institution to continued success down the road.

Now that you've created and marketed your college online, you have **one final step** — which isn't actually final.



**EXPAND
YOUR SITE
AND REPEAT**

6



You've **sunk a lot of time and energy** into your college's site, and that's an outstanding start to your institution's growth.

But now that you've established yourself online, you have to **maintain and improve your digital presence** to continue earning new students.

This may sound exhausting, but it's essential to maintain what you've created.

Think of the Internet as a fruit bowl, and all the websites are fruit. If you **let a website sit for too long, it will rot.**

Your college's website will rot too — unless you maintain it.

Creating new content, launching new ad campaigns, and staying in constant contact with your social media followers are all essential parts of Internet marketing. If one of those elements falls apart, you risk losing students, revenue, and your college's future plans.

That's why it's essential that your college's **Internet marketing initiatives** are maintained by a full team. Internet marketing as a whole is far too much for one person to do with a typical 40-hour-per-week job.

You need **at least one person for each factor** that we've listed above, and some areas — like blogging or content creation — may require more than one before you start seeing results.



But as you've seen, Internet marketing can seriously pay off. Internet marketing is an investment, just like a television commercial.

Unlike a television commercial, Internet marketing is **affordable, convenient, and exceptionally profitable.**

The Internet is the solution to getting more students and bolstering your college's reputation. If you're not already marketing online, then you've fallen behind your competition.

Fortunately, you can easily catch up. You can start an Internet marketing team like we've described above.

Or, if you want a more affordable solution, you can hire an Internet marketing agency.

WebpageFX is a full-service Internet marketing agency

GET YOUR FREE QUOTE

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