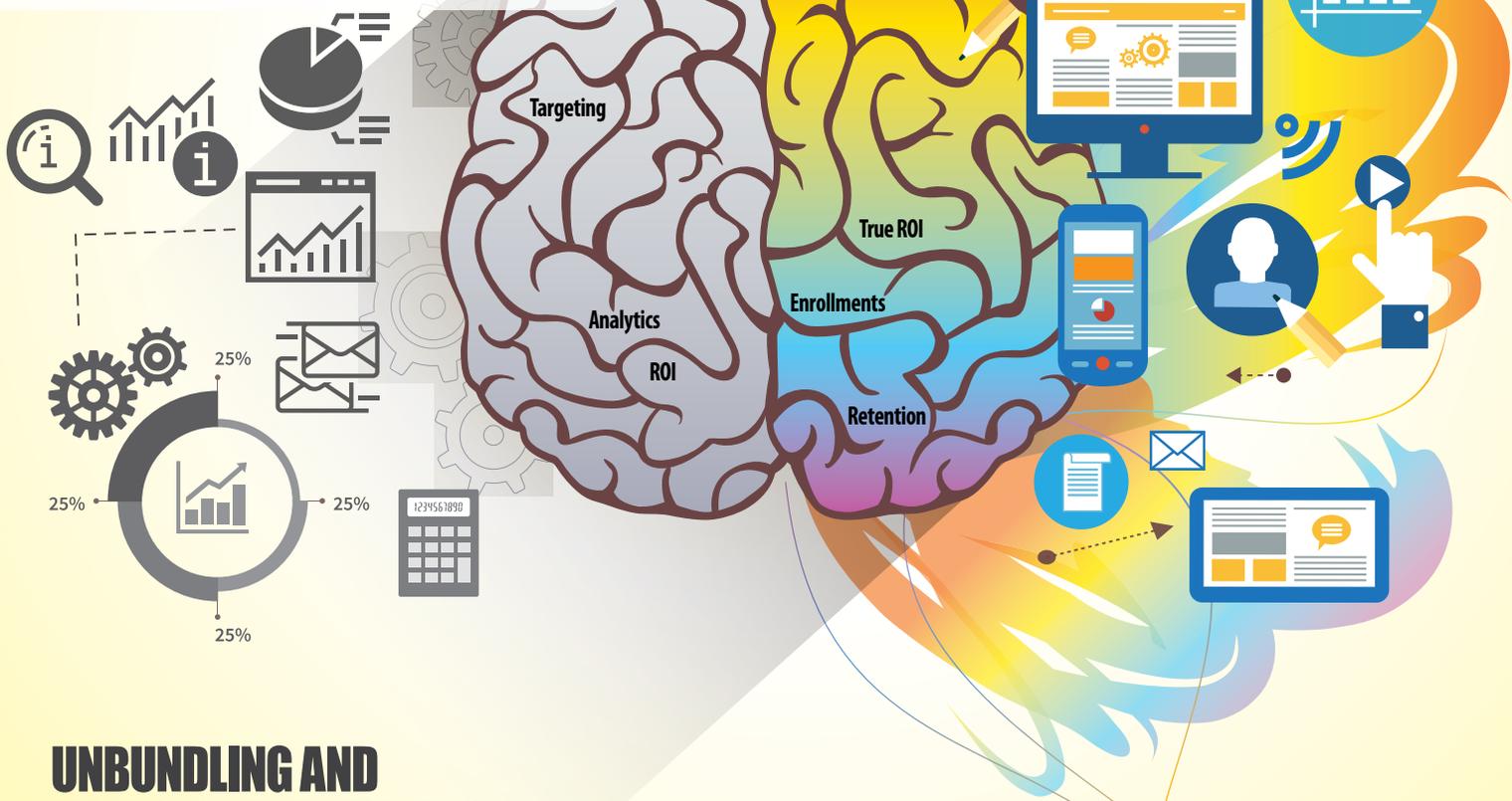




# SHIFTING MINDSETS

RETHINKING OLD MODELS  
IN FAVOR OF TRUE ROI



**UNBUNDLING AND  
MICRO-CREDENTIALING**

**AI IN HIGHER ED**

*Applying Positive Disruption  
to Your Brand*

THE **frank** AGENCY

Creative Marketing Solutions. Real Results.



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SPRING 2018

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Drop us a line, we'll be listening. For comments, suggestions or general inquiries contact us at [hifrank@thefrankagency.com](mailto:hifrank@thefrankagency.com)

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# From the President



INSIGHTS,  
INNOVATIONS AND  
STRATEGIES FOR  
THE HIGHER  
EDUCATION  
MARKET

ARE THE THINGS THAT SET YOUR SCHOOL APART ACTUAL DIFFERENTIATORS?

When you're thinking of the factors that distinguish your institution, there are probably several things that come to mind: The quality and credentials of your faculty. Your campus and student amenities. Your specialized programs and degrees. Your flexible schedules. Your winning sports teams. And, although these are all incredibly important, unfortunately, they don't necessarily set you apart.

That's because, in truth, these qualities are already expectations in prospective students' minds. You'll need something beyond just the bar if you're going to stand out.

Here's what you need to be asking yourself to find your *true* differentiators: *What is the pulse of my brand? What is the lifeblood of our culture? What do we do, not just well – but better – than everyone else in our segment?*

These are the things that will give your institution that gut-level pull, that true distinction within the EDU "sea of sameness." And once these differentiators are found, they should completely encompass your brand. Employees, faculty, alumni, students, prospects – everyone should not only know who you are, but experience it fully.

When your differentiators are defined, then you're ready to make a positive disruption via your marketing. In so doing, you'll create an authentic and unexpected experience of your brand – one that carries your culture into every message and interaction you have with potential students and beyond.

Through differentiation and disruption, your institution will carve itself out as a leader, an innovator – a school that wears its identity on its sleeve, not because it's trendy, but because it's your culture and part of who you are.

I encourage you to read through the articles and insights we've put together here and share your thoughts with us. Do they strike a chord? How are you attacking these challenges? Reach out with your comments and questions – we'd love to hear from you.

**Tony Ali**  
CEO/President

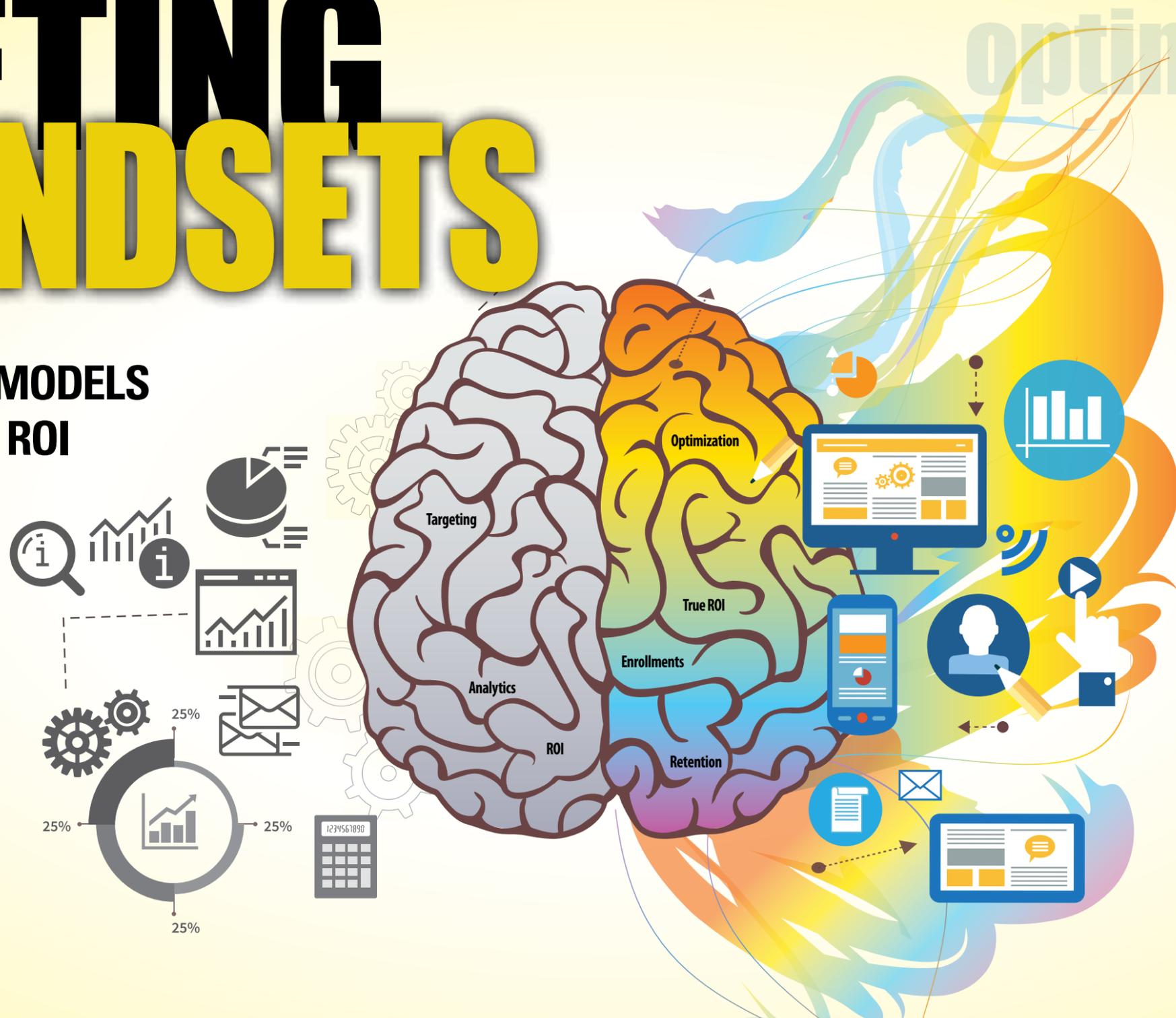
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# SHIFTING MINDSETS

## RETHINKING OLD MODELS IN FAVOR OF TRUE ROI

The first step to changing your outcomes is changing your thinking.

One of the most common problems in higher ed marketing is the almost myopic focus on cost-per-lead and cost-per-enrollment. Although these figures are crucial to knowing how your marketing budget is being spent, unfortunately they're not indicative of your institution's overall financial goals.



Most schools need to do “more with less” in the current environment. Going beyond basic CPL and CPE results provides a more holistic view, letting you see exactly how your marketing is performing down to the penny, and whether it's truly doing its job of bringing in profitable enrollments.

But, in order to obtain this view, what first needs to happen is a change of mindset to one focused on optimizing each level of your marketing. And to change your mindset, there must be a break with the typical higher education marketing approach.

# THE CONVENTIONAL ENROLLMENT PATH

The usual route to increasing ROI in a higher ed institution generally looks like one of these three models

## Decreasing cost-per-lead

When it comes to optimizing marketing spend and determining ROI, lowering the cost-per-lead is often the first go-to approach – the thought being that by generating more leads at a lower cost, you cast a wider net that will yield more enrollments – and thus, more tuition revenue. However, this is not always the case. Having a higher volume of lower cost leads doesn't necessarily mean they will turn into enrollments. And, if they do turn into enrollments, they still may not yield a high lifetime value. So your CPL is not necessarily an accurate measure of true campaign success.

## Decreasing cost-per-enrollment

Probably the most popular KPI, a bit deeper in the pipeline, is optimizing cost-per-enrollment (CPE). This method looks not only at CPL, but conversion to new enrolls. In many circumstances, this can require a higher investment on front-end CPL to attract those students most likely to convert.



There's still a drawback to this model, however. Often students enroll, but don't stay with the program long enough to graduate. Attrition, as discussed more in depth on page 10, is a significant problem in higher education. When you're paying to nurture inquiries and secure enrollments, only to see these students drop out, this equates to marketing dollars wasted. This challenge has resulted in yet a third model.

## Optimizing for lifetime value

Since looking at success in terms of a particular CPL or CPE only shows a slice of how your marketing spend is paying off, a more holistic approach needs to be taken.

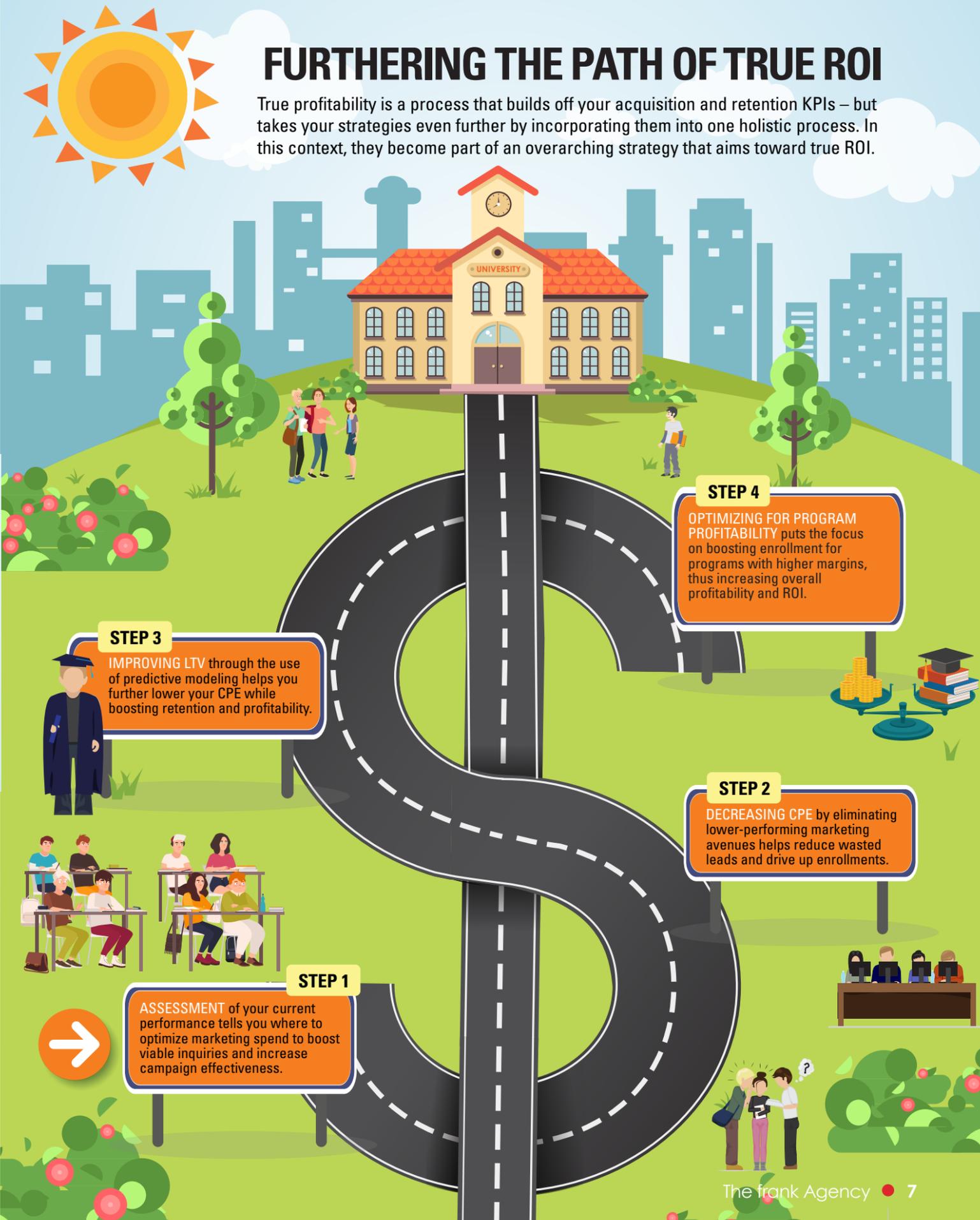
By determining your ROI based on the lifetime value of enrolled students, rather than merely the number of enrollments, you see a more complete picture of the net institutional gain. This is done by weighing the costs you spent to acquire the inquiry and enroll the student, versus the total value gained from their entire lifecycle as a student.

While this model obviously provides a much more comprehensive look at your marketing performance and your marketing's profitability, it still doesn't give a **true ROI** figure. In order to obtain this, there are far more factors to work into the model; when you take into account these variables, you can reach a total, detailed view of your actual net profitability.



# FURTHERING THE PATH OF TRUE ROI

True profitability is a process that builds off your acquisition and retention KPIs – but takes your strategies even further by incorporating them into one holistic process. In this context, they become part of an overarching strategy that aims toward true ROI.



## DEVELOPING A TRUE ROI MODEL

True ROI is far more than a simplistic ratio of student value versus cost to enroll – rather, it's a complex and variably-weighted formula which factors in the actual student cost.

The actual cost of having a student at your school is, itself, a variable. Consider this hypothetical scenario: a student who's in an RN degree program costs your institution more than one who's majoring in childhood education due to various factors (such as the highly credentialed faculty, additional course requirements, and so forth). Conversely, even though the RN student costs your institution more, they have a higher rate of retention than the average childhood-ed major. The ROI of the RN student must then be looked at in terms of this lifetime value, minus the costs associated with keeping the student, minus the costs to initially enroll them – then weighed against the ROI of your average childhood-ed major to show you which student is, in the long run, more profitable for your institution.

The profit margins of your programs are a considerable factor, both in the value of your students and in the net profitability of your institution. If you're investing marketing dollars into specific programs because they tend to attract more students, but these programs have slimmer margins than your other programs, it may be time to reassess where your marketing spend is going.

You're probably beginning to see why many schools don't take the time or effort to dig into their institution's true ROI: the system is

incredibly nuanced, and requires you to look at broad, yet off-neglected, characteristics like program profitability and costs of retention all the way down to more granular aspects, such as the effectiveness of the keywords you bid on in your paid ad campaigns. In short, it requires a complete change of mindset that is simultaneously comprehensive, and yet scrupulously attentive to details.

Each point in your multi-tier marketing campaigns, each aspect of your enrollment funnel, and each point in the student journey to graduation have costs and revenue associated with them. A true ROI model gathers all the data, weighing it carefully to show you a highly precise picture of your school's net profitability.

With this picture comes power – the power that you gain from having a deep awareness of where your institution can improve. And armed with this knowledge, you can then optimize your marketing spend, tailoring it to those students and programs that will ultimately provide the most net revenue.

Now, lest this appear pragmatic, having such a mindset is the best way to mutually benefit both school and student. If your outlook is bent on reducing wasted marketing spend and boosting net profitability, you'll have the funds to invest in your faculty, enhance your programs and credibility, and improve the student experience. And with these advancements at play, you create an institution as a whole that stands out from its peers as an excellent and preferable school option. ●

“  
**HALF THE MONEY I SPEND  
 ON ADVERTISING IS  
 WASTED; THE TROUBLE IS,  
 I DON'T KNOW WHICH HALF.**  
 ”

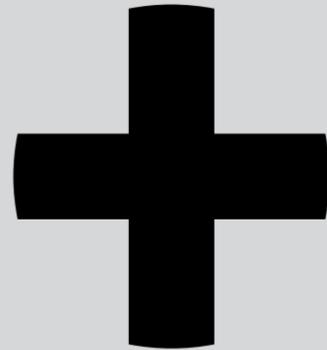
John Wanamaker couldn't figure it out, but today you can. Attribution U tracks all your channels, both traditional and digital, getting smarter with each use. So you can tell exactly where your marketing dollars are best spent, and know they're not being wasted.

### LET'S TALK.

Nick Barkman, VP Business Development  
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# ATTRITION EXAMINED

READJUSTING STRATEGIES FOR DECLINING COMPLETION RATES



**Enrollment rates may finally be leveling out after several years of decline at some schools. But even for those schools, there's yet another (and maybe an even more pressing) challenge facing them: retention rates. For most institutions, retention rates are still low and, for many, they're steadily falling.**

According to *Forbes*, only about two-thirds of students who enroll in college actually complete their degree. That means a good 30% of students drop out, never to return – but it doesn't take into account another 12% who leave their original institution to transfer and complete their degree at a second school.

These high attrition rates not only affect schools' reputations, they also cause severe financial strain on institutions, limiting the extent to which schools can advance their programs and offerings. **For as long as retention rates lag, institutions will be held back by high costs and low ROI. So, what can be done to retain students longer?**

**One study performed by The Educational Policy Institute showed that the average school loses nearly \$10 million per year due to attrition.**

These are funds that could be used to develop new programming, to extend technological advancements to reach a new generation of tech-minded students, to funnel into new marketing campaigns that will increase enrollment. Yet instead, these funds will never be seen by schools as students drop out before their degree is complete.

In addition to this lost revenue, there's also a cost to attrition that hasn't been quantified: the money lost in marketing to students and enrolling them, only for them to fall off the wagon. Many schools' low marketing ROI can be attributed in part to high attrition, as the students who don't complete degrees cost money to enroll but never deliver a profitable return.

The problem seems dire, and it certainly is significant. But before we make any attempts at solving the problem, there first needs to be an assessment of the catalysts behind the attrition rate.

## The Student Erosion

It's often hard to pinpoint a specific cause for attrition rates, as students typically have very individualized reasons for leaving a school. However, the main causes of attrition could be chalked up to four generalizations.

**COST.** One of the biggest reasons students give for dropping out is the rising price associated with obtaining a degree. The cost of tuition and fees has steadily risen over the years, and unfortunately financial

aid has not kept pace (*Inside Higher Ed*).

In an increasingly cost-conscious generation of students, the sticker price of education can be a turnoff, especially when there isn't adequate financial aid or parental support. Thus, even many students who do enroll find themselves dropping out before completion, as they aren't confident their eventual career paths will outweigh the cost of their degree.

**STRESS.** NBC News recently noted that college counselors are seeing a rising number of students who are suffering from stress, depression or anxiety. Typically these mental health issues stem from the rigorous academic demands and difficulties associated with

transitioning to a college setting. For other students, particularly newtraditional students who are older and trying to manage other responsibilities, maintaining a healthy work-life-school balance is an incredible challenge that may lead to heavy stress.

And unfortunately for a portion of these students, the stress takes a toll that causes them to leave school – some only for a period of time, others for good.

**LACK OF DIRECTION.**

There's a steep learning curve for students entering a school for the first time. They often

programs to directly counter these specific problems, attrition would continue to be a perennial battle. So, rather than dealing with these external causes, schools need to look deeper into the matter and begin at the source: enrollment.

**From the Outset: Developing Models for Improved Retention**

Surprising as it may sound, retention starts even before a student sets foot on campus. It starts with data.

From here, marketing efforts nurture these inquiries into solid enrollments that have a greater potential of becoming future graduates.

Yet finding the "ideal-fit" student demographic is only half the battle. In order to continue boosting retention, efforts have to continue throughout the student's lifecycle. This is where data-based retention programs come into the mix.

Recently, some schools have begun collecting data on the activities, grades and attendance of current students. Analyzing patterns in this data helps inform the school of individuals whose behaviors are shared by others who have failed or dropped out, thus allowing counselors and advisors to step in pre-emptively to offer support and guidance.

In addition to this proactive system, schools may also see a decrease in attrition when on-campus support is emphasized and fostered. By having advisors and professors take active roles in reaching out to students, ensuring expectations are clearly defined, students become more confident and secure in their school trajectories. And, when this is combined with a strong sense of community through clubs, activities or organizations, the end result is a student body that is ready to succeed and push forward in their education.

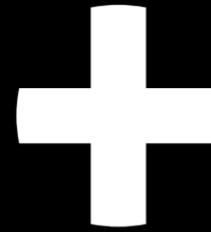
**Improving retention starts long before a student begins their academic journey. It starts with the data that informs your enrollment process.**

need guidance in particulars like signing up for classes and activities, figuring out financial aid, finding a tutor when one is needed and so forth. But when active support and direction are not readily available, students are more likely to drop off after a period of time.

While the reasons we cover here may be some of the most-cited for student attrition, the fact remains that these are merely generalities, and there are far more individual catalysts for dropout beyond this scope. Thus, even if schools were to implement

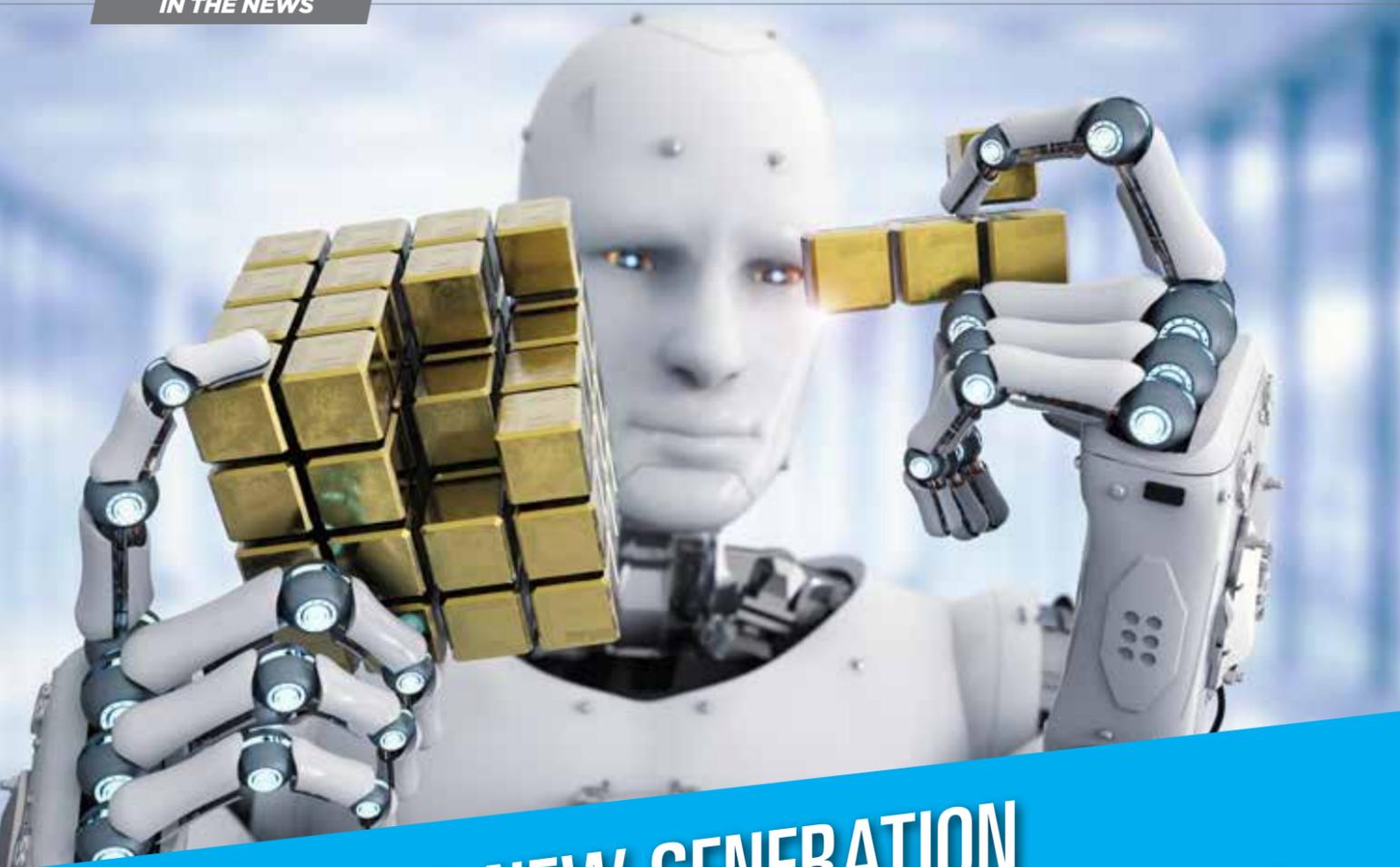
Through data-gathering strategies, institutions can examine those students who enroll, succeed and graduate – characteristics analogous with the phrase "highest lifetime value (LTV)" used frequently in ROI-based marketing. Their characteristics become the model off of which personas can be built.

Shaped by this input, targeted digital campaigns help find students that best fit these personas (i.e., "lookalike" audiences) and, thus, are far more likely to have higher retention and graduation rates.



**A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

Though attrition is often thought of as a risk only after a student enrolls, the truth is that retention begins long before the moment of enrollment, and must be fostered through each step in the student journey. Well-rounded data modeling will be just as critical as student experiences – a cooperation of digital strategies, along with in-person connection and support. Only with these two in tandem can attrition be fought and lifetime value increased. ●



# REACHING A NEW GENERATION THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Most of us use AI every day – whether it's video and music streaming services suggesting which shows and songs we might like, shopping sites predicting what products we want, our smart devices autocorrecting our spelling and grammar, or GPS routing that helps us avoid traffic.

It shouldn't come as any surprise that AI is also being used in higher education, both as a method of streamlining enrollment and retention, and for the longer-term goal of appealing to a young, up-and-coming generation of students.

Since AI has advanced and become more accessible and intuitive, higher ed marketers and leadership have found several ways to harness this development to converse seamlessly with their target audience with great levels of success. But, to understand why this technology is so effective, we first need to take a look at the audience proven to have a special affinity for AI, specifically because it mimics their tendency toward mobile communications and engagement: Generation Z.

## The Young and the Practical: Introducing the Next Generation

Higher ed institutions are experiencing a changeover in their target demographic from millennials to the younger Generation Z (born between 1996 and the early-to-mid-2000s), and along with this change has come a huge shift in tactics due to their differences.

First off, this generation is incredibly pragmatic. They're focused on job security and career viability, which influences much of their decision-making process when it comes to education.

And, when it comes to actually conversing with this generation, their technological immersion and shorter attention span heavily influence communication choices. They're far more likely to text than to call, and social media and messaging platforms are their go-to mediums for communicating.

These characteristics are some of the most

prominent of Gen Z, and they directly affect the strategies used in higher ed marketing. But how does artificial intelligence fit into this picture?

## AI Applied

When it comes to enrollment and attrition, it's hard for institutions to craft and execute on-demand, one-to-one dialogue with each and every student – and for Gen Z, this authenticity and convenient communication are keys to keeping their interest. What is an institution to do, with hundreds of students needing attention and only a small window of attention span to break through and engage?

Enter artificial intelligence.

With chatbots that quickly respond to questions, and programs that learn and adapt to student behavior in order to predict and prevent attrition, schools can now provide more immediate contact and assistance to those students who need it most.

One notable example of this could be found in Georgia State University, where administration introduced a smart text messaging system that students could turn to with questions. The system was designed to intelligently address student concerns, ranging from financial aid to class registration and everything in-between. And, in a trial of its effectiveness, GSU compared summer melt rates of students who utilized the system with those that did not; **the result: a 21.4% lower rate of summer drop-off in students who exchanged texts**



BECOMING  
A BRAND

THAT CREATES  
**POSITIVE**  
DISRUPTION



Every institution sees itself as unique – and to an extent, it's true. Each school has a legitimate claim to fame. But although you may have outstanding programs, a robust culture, world-renowned faculty, or all of the above, the truth is that these are *baseline expectations* in prospective students' minds – not necessarily true differentiators.

The challenge for institutions lies in understanding the difference, and then finding those true, *specific elements* that set you apart. Most schools tout general traits, but to really distinguish your school requires digging deep below the surface to identify what makes you entirely different from the competition.

Once your true, unique personality and brand differentiators are identified, the challenge doesn't stop there.

You still have to effectively convey your differences through all of your brand touchpoints.

Anymore, it isn't enough for a brand to just be different. Rather, you have to be able to break through the ordinary, actively disrupting expectations and eschewing the familiar and generic in favor of the unique and memorable. You have to generate *positive disruption*.

**The Principles of Positive Disruption**

Our daily brand and message exposure is at its peak. Some experts have estimated that the average person is hit with over 10,000 brand impressions per day. Then there's the added challenge of attention span, which for most people is now around 8 seconds due to the fact that we're constantly switching between screens and tasks.

Given this information – the inundation of messages, the narrow window of attention span – marketers are looking for ways to break through and not only be noticed, but remembered. And it won't be accomplished by simply being the loudest voice, as this may only cause your brand to be pegged as obnoxious. A completely new tactic must be taken.

You have to actually disrupt people's mentalities and thought cycles – but in a manner that creates a positive memory of your brand. This is what we mean by positive disruption. It's incisive and direct, but always in a way that makes people want to pay attention.

Positive disruption could be summed up in three main characteristics:

**It upends expectations.**

Because of the flood of marketing surrounding us, we've come to anticipate certain qualities, visuals and verbiage. Positive disruption can only occur by inverting those expectations, abandoning the norms, and giving something completely unanticipated.

**It's consistent.** Another critical aspect of positive disruption is that it's always in a consistent voice and speaks a cohesive message. A message is only powerful if people know where it's coming from – so this consistency is what links the act of disruption back to your brand in a recognizable way.

**It changes how people perceive you.** Often brands get pigeon-holed in their marketing. They begin to be

seen in a certain light or associated with one notable feature or product. But positive disruption plants a seed in your audience's mind, leading them to question whether they've actually seen your brand for what it truly is. It gets them to think about your brand in a new way.

These traits are, in essence, the lifeblood of positive disruption. But, without a way to practically translate them into concrete actions, we're lost in a web of theory. So, how do we put the concept into action?

Departing from the infamous and overused "Three and a Tree" image is a simple, but effective, way to create positive disruption and show how your student experience is truly unique.





## Bringing Theory to Life

How you implement positive disruption will be entirely dependent on your individual brand. And, as with all marketing campaigns, you must first think about what you hope to achieve through it.

For example, if you're trying to reinvent the way people see your brand, your methodology will be entirely different than if you're simply trying to garner more attention on a specific campaign. But ultimately, positive disruption on any scale should have a shaping effect that causes you to be viewed as a disrupter.

Another aspect of the process to consider is that positive disruption may come in many forms.

Making use of a different media channel can itself become a form of disruption, as it surprises your audience and allows you to reach new crowds. Lesser-known or used channels, or simply non-conventional ones, can be ideal for positive disruption as they defy norms and show your brand as a trailblazer.

But disruption is also found not just in your method of communication, but in the message itself.

Visual treatments in messaging are another means of positive disruption. Take the common offender in higher education: the infamous "Three and a Tree" image, which shows a cluster of diverse students studying or talking in the grass under a tree. The image is so overplayed it's laughable – yet it makes the point for us that if institutions were to depart from stale, static images and opt for unexpected ways of depicting their

schools, the status quo would instantly be overturned.

Finally, positive disruption can even occur in the types of campaigns you run – how you get your audience involved and interacting with your brand. In some cases, it may even be beneficial to bring your audience members in as part of the campaign, asking them to contribute photos or videos to create their own spin on your brand. Not only does this amplify audience engagement, but it also provides useful insight on how your audience actually perceives you, what they value about your brand, and how you can shape your brand more authentically going forward.

## An Expanse of Opportunity

The EDU market is wide open for disruption. The many brands and the unavoidable "sea of sameness" have created a landscape that would welcome a new direction. What's left to make it happen is self-assessment, deep awareness of your audience, and a spark of an idea that departs from EDU norms in favor of the fresh and unexpected.

Positive disruption will be the distinguishing factor that cuts through the marketing clutter – setting you apart from the crowd and truly showing the character and culture of your institution. ●

If you have 32 degree programs and I have 10 computers, how many tacos will fit in a mason jar?

Sunshine.

(because mice don't really like cheese)

Hiring an ad agency that has no education experience makes even less sense.

Let us do the marketing math for you. With over 15 years' experience in higher education, we'll work to deliver the lowest cost-per-enrollment at the highest conversion rates.

## LET US SIMPLIFY THE EQUATION

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# THE ERA OF & UNBUNDLING & MICRO-CREDENTIALING

With international enrollment on the decline, sinking completion rates, and reduced state funding, schools are in serious need of fresh ideas to help them adapt and find new ways to offset lost revenue. And, some higher ed experts argue, an entirely new approach to education needs to be put into play. One particular concept that is gaining attention and discussion is known as unbundling education.

## What It Means to Unbundle

The current college program model typically requires a standardized number and variety of courses. Some of these courses will be directly relevant to the major in question, while others will be more general education-focused. In unbundling, the program is stripped down to the bare essentials that are needed, not to obtain a degree per se, but rather to obtain the skills necessary to perform in a specific job function.

In an unbundled model, students would only take classes directly relevant to their target career path. The result would be a "micro-credential" – an alternate degree that shows the student's proficiency in their particular area but doesn't necessarily contain all the additional coursework that goes into a typical bachelor's degree.

For students, the benefits of this model are immediately perceivable. Fewer courses means lower cost and less time to complete, and thus, a faster route into the workforce. And for a generation where immediacy and cost-effectiveness are essential life tenets (see more on this on page 15), these advantages may become the deciding factor in choosing a school.

Yet the benefits to an unbundled model extend far beyond the students who wish to fast-track their careers – it would also become a source of distinction for institutions themselves.

## Doors of Opportunity Thrown Open

Understandably, offering faster degree paths may initially appear to negatively affect institutional revenue. But, ultimately, offering more versatility – especially in the face of declining enrollment and retention – could be the key to long-term revenue for many institutions.

Unbundled program options could be leveraged in marketing, demonstrating to prospective students the diversity of program and credentialing options. But not only would it show students they can more quickly achieve their goals, it also, by extension, would build rapport and show that your institution is committed to helping students succeed. Unbundling would be the point of differentiation that sets progressive institutions apart from the competition.

There is insufficient evidence to indicate a model like this would drive down the number of degree-seeking students. In fact, the argument could be made that, by tracking program data – including student interest, the employment market and burgeoning fields – schools can potentially discover new degree tracks and convert more students from a larger pool of “unbundled” learners to full-time students.

Further, this strategic approach could enhance the ROI of all programs (see more on this on page 4), and allow schools to reduce wasted marketing spend while increasing program offerings.

## Charting a New Course

With unbundling and micro-credentialing, there is perhaps an emerging new era in education – one that’s built on the principle of focused education and rapid growth for student and institution alike. And, while there’s not yet much research on how employers view micro-credentials in comparison to other degrees, some have expressed the sentiment that skill sets are more crucial to hiring than a specific degree, and in this case, micro-credentials or certificates would verify the desired skill set (*US News and World Report*).

By offering more compact and defined degree paths, institutions pave the way for a more prepared workforce, better accountability and less wasted resources – while still expanding on specific long-term goals like better ROI and boosted revenue.

## Micro-Credentialing and More: Higher Ed Builds off of Blockchain

It’s one of the biggest technological buzzwords of the past couple years, and it’s continuing to make its appearance in almost every industry. It’s blockchain, and it’s finally emerging in higher ed, potentially as the ideal micro-credential topic.

For those who are less familiar with the concept, blockchain is essentially a decentralized, public digital ledger that is used for recording transactions. Because it’s decentralized and uses verification from a number of sources rather than just one, transactions recorded in blockchain are more reliable, more secure and unalterable.

This is the technology behind cryptocurrency, but it can also be used in other contexts to verify authenticity and prevent forgery.

Tech industry news giant Tech Crunch recently reported blockchain-related jobs to be the second-fastest growing in today’s labor market. Does this make blockchain an ideal candidate for micro-credentialing?

As the market seeks more ways to use and further this technology, it may be beneficial for schools to shore up their own expertise in blockchain and build unbundled programs that center around this new technology. In this way, schools would expand their offerings to a relevant and in-demand field, while providing students more opportunities to expand their knowledge base and keep pace with what’s happening in the labor market.

But the uses of blockchain in education expand beyond the walls of the classroom; it may also be useful for protecting and securing transcripts, student loan info and other sensitive information. It could even be used as a classroom learning medium, for example, as a platform where students could receive information and perform work digitally.

Although some skeptics decry blockchain as “flash-in-the-pan” technology, others believe it will be as disruptive as the internet itself. It’s difficult to predict which way the tides will turn, but developing and furthering blockchain technology may provide more opportunities for students, while bringing institutions into an important part of the technological climate. ●



BEYOND THE  
BRAINSTORM:

# Advancing Strategies through Roundtables



## The Origin of the Roundtable

Surprisingly, the roundtable concept was conceived by Benjamin Franklin in the 18th century. He formed a sort of "club" that consisted of diverse individuals meeting for the purpose of idea-sharing and discussion of a variety of topics – from politics to business and any other prevailing thoughts of the day.

Since his time, the roundtable has continued to be used as a means of bringing together different ideas and expanding beyond the confines of the typical thought processes and methodologies. These types of groups are especially popular in automotive and franchise settings, as participants all tend to have common goals and challenges, yet unique perspectives to bring to the table.

In an open-floor dialogue where there is an overarching unity of goal, but a diversity of opinions and experiences, the discussion is much richer and far more likely to yield out-of-the-box solutions to common challenges. And this is exactly what higher education marketers need in order to break through the routine and achieve the extraordinary.

Wouldn't it be helpful to have open-forum discussions with your higher ed peers – allowing you to gain insights from others with similar challenges? What if you could upend the status quo and acquire unique perspectives? What if higher ed marketers could easily share their experiences and mutually benefit each other through frank interactions?

There is a way to accomplish all these goals at once, through EDU roundtable discussions.

The concept of roundtables has existed for centuries and can be a hugely beneficial way to advance strategies and brainstorm ideas. And, in a landscape crowded with schools all facing similar challenges and sending similar messages, having a fresh approach can make all the difference in meeting your marketing goals.

But what makes an effective roundtable discussion, and how can it be applied in higher education? Here we seek to answer these questions – but first, a little history.



## Bringing the Roundtable to Higher Ed

In a higher ed setting, the door is thrown open to people from every cross-section of the EDU landscape. Incorporating experts from different areas such as marketing, communications and enrollment and then cross-pollenating across non-profit and proprietary, public and private, liberal arts and specialized schools, creates a broad range of mindsets and opinions from which to gain perspectives and tackle the challenges besetting the higher education landscape.

The peer-to-peer relationships formed from this diverse group will open up new ways of thinking through problems. Most schools are experiencing waning enrollments, rising attrition rates and diminishing ROI – but each school will experience them differently and to varying degrees. Getting new insight from other schools' experiences, failures and successes brings to light new processes that may be applied to your institution.

### Advancing Adaptability

With the rising competition and increasing cost pressures facing higher ed, breaking out of the box and developing new solutions is an absolute must.

By stepping outside of typical circles and gaining insight from other professionals, the principle of "iron sharpens iron" is put into action, and everyone involved mutually benefits from new viewpoints and skill sets – and can come back to their own challenges ready to overcome.

**The concept originated with Benjamin Franklin, but today roundtables continue to help participants refine strategies and think outside the box, gleaning knowledge from peers within the industry who bring new perspectives to the table.**

## Join our EDU Roundtable

### Get connected. Be inspired.

At our EDU Roundtables, The frank Agency brings together small groups of individuals and experts from across the higher ed spectrum in an objective, third-party setting to facilitate specific conversations around common questions. In this kind of environment, peer-to-peer discussions become robust and productive knowledge-sharing sessions, as individuals collaborate to find solutions and share their perspectives and experience.

With crowd-sourced topics based on the most relevant, timely and important EDU questions, thought-provoking conversation can be held, while the closed webinar setting ensures each voice is heard equally. All that's left for your institution is to join in and see what your peers are saying, so you can discover new ways to meet your challenges head-on. ●

● **Interested in participating in one of our upcoming EDU Roundtables? Email us at [hifrank@thefrankagency.com](mailto:hifrank@thefrankagency.com) to reserve your spot!**

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