Chances are you’re already using digital channels to recruit students. But are you doing it right? And is it worth the effort and expense? How do you know? The research and testing discipline at the heart of Royall & Company’s approach to recruitment marketing has given us a uniquely detailed understanding of what works in digital—and what doesn’t. This infographic presents 12 representative findings from that ongoing work.

1. **Networks**
   - Just because a social network is popular with college-bound students doesn’t mean it’s a good recruitment-marketing channel. Focus on networks that have both the right demographics and a sophisticated ad offering—areas where Facebook, Google, and Snapchat are currently leading the pack.

2. **Timing**
   - Student response to particular messages varies across the enrollment season. At certain times of year, click rates for different digital ad messages tested in Royall’s campaigns were equivalent; at others times, they varied by as much as 1.4x.

3. **Graphic design**
   - Digital media have a visual “grammar” all their own, and adherence to it drives response rates. For example, display ads featuring images of individual persons get higher click rates than those featuring groups, and images of females do better than ones of males.

4. **Audience**
   - Students and parents react differently to digital recruitment marketing. By way of example, in Royall’s testing, parent response rates for display ads were 1.2x to 1.3x higher than those for students.

5. **Targeting**
   - A large portion of digital ad spend is often wasted on nonhuman web traffic (e.g., click bots) and inappropriate audiences. Targeting ads by cross-referencing with inquiry pool lists and purchased student names helps reduce nonproductive spend.

6. **Copy**
   - Ad copy plays a different role depending on which digital network you’re using for recruitment outreach. It’s critically important for Facebook ads but less so for Google ads, response to which is more image-driven.

7. **Device/Platform**
   - How students engage different networks depends on devices they’re using. In Royall’s testing, around 30% of Google-based ads were viewed on a desktop device, compared with just 5% of Facebook ads.

8. **Customizability**
   - Different digital advertising approaches allow varying levels of customization. List-based audience targeting, for example, relies on predefined ad versions, while a site-based approach allows customization based on audience actions.

9. **Performance metrics**
   - There are different ways to measure display ad effectiveness. For example, while Royall’s research found Facebook ads to have click rates 1.5x higher than Instagram’s, Instagram’s reach is 1.4x that of Facebook. You’ll need to know which metrics matter for which purpose.

10. **Mobile optimization**
    - What works on desktop displays does not necessarily work on mobile, and vice versa. For example, Royall’s research has shown that landscape-format ads perform better on desktop displays while portrait-format ads do better on mobile devices.

11. **Call to action**
    - Students respond better to some calls to action than to others. For example, Royall’s testing showed that display ads with affordability messaging produce response rates higher than those inviting students to apply.

12. **Funnel stage**
    - Early evidence from Royall research suggests that student response to digital outreach varies by funnel stage. For example, list-based display ads were found to perform better than site-based ones during the search phase, while the opposite was true during the application phase.

Learn more about Royall’s approach to multichannel recruitment marketing

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