

Unleashing the power of user-generated content

A guide for the education marketer

pinkorange

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Step into the captivating realm of User-Generated Content, where creativity knows no bounds and everyday people become the storytellers of our digital age. Dive into the phenomenon that has transformed the way we create, consume, and connect with content.

2 UGC in education marketing

Get ready to witness a revolutionary shift in how educational institutions connect with their students and build thriving learning communities - all while leveraging the power of UGC.

3 Strategies recommended by ed marketers

Explore our top strategies for using UGC to captivate audiences, ignite engagement, and build authentic connections. From social media takeovers to student showcases, unleash the power of UGC and revolutionize your education marketing efforts.

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Are you ready to tap into the goldmine of user-generated content in education marketing? This chapter unveils the tried-and-true best practices that can revolutionize your approach.

Introduction

Welcome to the world of education marketing, where creativity meets innovation and authenticity reigns supreme. In this digital age, connecting with our audience goes beyond mere advertising; it's about creating meaningful experiences that resonate with the very soul of our prospects. That's where user-generated content (UGC) steps in, armed with the power to captivate, engage, and inspire. It's not just a passing trend; it's a game-changer in the realm of education marketing. It's the authentic voice of our students, alumni, and faculty members echoing through the digital landscape, reminding us of the transformative power of education.

In this ebook, we embark on an exhilarating journey to uncover the secrets of leveraging UGC to propel your education marketing efforts to new heights. We'll dive into the heart of UGC, exploring its multifaceted nature and its remarkable impact on the student journey. Together, we'll navigate the best practices, empowering you with practical insights and proven strategies to unlock its full potential.

Whether you're a seasoned education marketer or just starting on this adventure, this ebook is your key to unlocking the true potential of UGC.

What exactly is UGC?

1

Digital marketing is anything but boring. In fact, we learn something new each day. Sure, the knowledge might be in the form of a confusing acronym, but it's knowledge nonetheless. PPC, CPL, CPC, and now - UGC.

But what exactly is UGC, and why does it matter in education marketing?

UGC refers to any content created and shared by individuals not directly affiliated with your institution. It's the stories, photos, videos, and reviews crafted by your students, alumni, and even faculty members. It's the unfiltered expression of their experiences, opinions, and achievements that hold immense power.

While your primary objective may be increasing online enrollments, UGC serves as a crucial piece of the puzzle. It acts as a bridge that connects your institution to prospective students and creates a sense of belonging and trust.



2

But how does UGC boost long-term engagement?

You likely already have a social media strategy in place. That is, content that you create that serves your end goal. Sure, UGC isn't something that you can predict or schedule, but it is something that you can willingly share. In sharing UGC that resonates with your target audience, you're not only providing valuable information, but you're also forging a genuine connection. UGC humanizes your institution, showcasing the real-life impact of education and building trust in the minds of prospective and existing students alike.

UGC has the power to create a ripple effect. When prospects see their peers sharing positive experiences, it piques their curiosity and boosts their confidence in your institution. This, in turn, leads to increased engagement, loyalty, and advocacy within your online community.

What do the numbers say?

- Half of social media users agree that UGC effectively humanizes a brand
- UGC campaigns report a 29% higher web conversion rate
- 75% of people agree that UGC is more authentic than purposefully created content



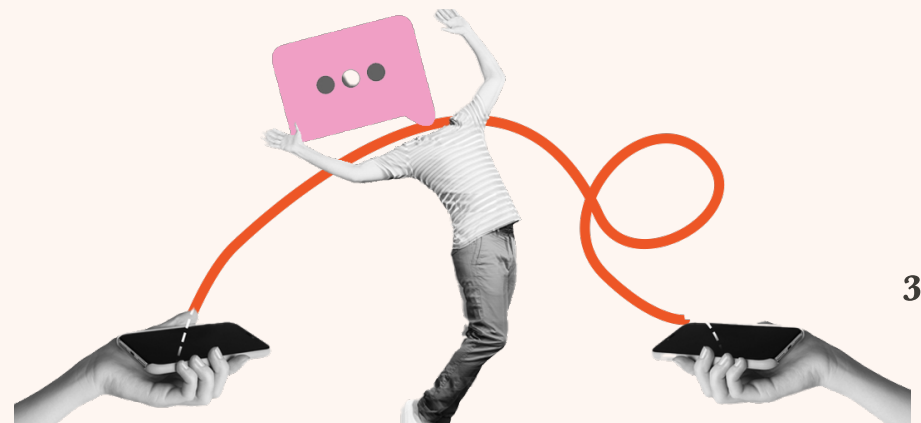
UGC in education marketing

2

Captivating the attention of prospective students and building trust are essential ingredients for success. That's where UGC takes center stage, offering a compelling and authentic approach to engage your audience and enhance brand perception.

Did you know that the content created by your own students, staff, and alumni can be a goldmine of UGC for your educational institute? From capturing their remarkable journey, showcasing your campus, documenting graduation ceremonies, or simply sharing cherished memories, it offers a treasure trove of authentic content waiting to be harnessed.

When your students, staff, or alumni tag your institute or use your university hashtag, it opens up a world of possibilities. You can collect and repurpose this UGC to supercharge your marketing efforts. It's like giving a megaphone to the knowledge-sharing, engagement, and creativity within your educational community.



The benefits of UGC

UGC becomes a vibrant showcase of your institute's culture, community, and achievements, leaving a lasting impression on anyone who encounters it. But that's not all. UGC has the potential to do so much more. It amplifies the voice of your students, giving their ideas and perspectives a platform to shine. It sparks conversations, fosters connections, and empowers your educational community to collaborate and innovate.

- **It's free content**

Creating captivating content for social media and digital marketing can often come with a hefty price tag. Expenses tied to photographers, graphic designers, and marketing staff can quickly add up in the content creation process. That's why turning to creative content within your school community can serve as a brilliant alternative. By tapping into the wealth of quality and imaginative content from your students, teachers, and parents, you can uncover a cost-effective solution that still exudes creativity and authenticity.

- **It builds relationships with the creators**

People love to be recognized. You'll quickly realize that most members of your school community will be excited to have their content featured, adding a refreshing variety and spark to your own content collection. Before you know it, you'll have a network of community members who willingly create content for you, in the hopes that they will be featured too.

- **It builds trust within the community**

Did you know that a staggering 84% of Gen Zers place their trust in a brand that incorporates actual customers in its campaigns? As a higher education institution targeting Generation Z, it's essential to select content that resonates with this audience. When Gen Zers encounter UGC in your marketing efforts, they connect with the genuine stories and perspectives shared by their peers. This authenticity plays a crucial role in influencing their enrollment decisions and even staff hiring choices.

So you know it's valuable, you can see why. But short of directly asking for it, how do you find UGC?

It's there, you just have to look. In reality, though, finding UGC that is share-worthy can be time-consuming, but not impossible. Here are the best places to look

- **Your hashtag**

If you have a designated school hashtag, it serves as an excellent starting point for discovering UGC related to your institution. Head over to Instagram or Twitter and simply enter your hashtag in the search bar. This will allow you to explore all the public posts that have been tagged with it. Keep in mind that posts from private profiles won't be visible unless you follow those accounts. It's important to note that not every user may use the hashtag correctly. So, it's worth checking out similar or related hashtags to uncover even more relevant UGC. When you come across compelling content that aligns with your goals, it's a good practice to reach out to the user and ask for permission to repost their content. Adding a quick comment shows respect and ensures that they are comfortable with their content being shared.



- **Your tags**

When users tag your school in their posts, you'll receive notifications that provide valuable opportunities for discovering great content. These tags often lead to fantastic UGC that you can explore and potentially request permission to repost.

Be sure to check your notifications regularly to catch those moments when users tag your school. These tags can unveil a wealth of engaging and relevant content created by students, alumni, or other community members. When you come across posts that align with your marketing goals, reach out to the user and ask for permission to share their content. It's a courteous gesture that ensures you're respecting their rights and fostering a positive relationship.

Take a leaf from their book

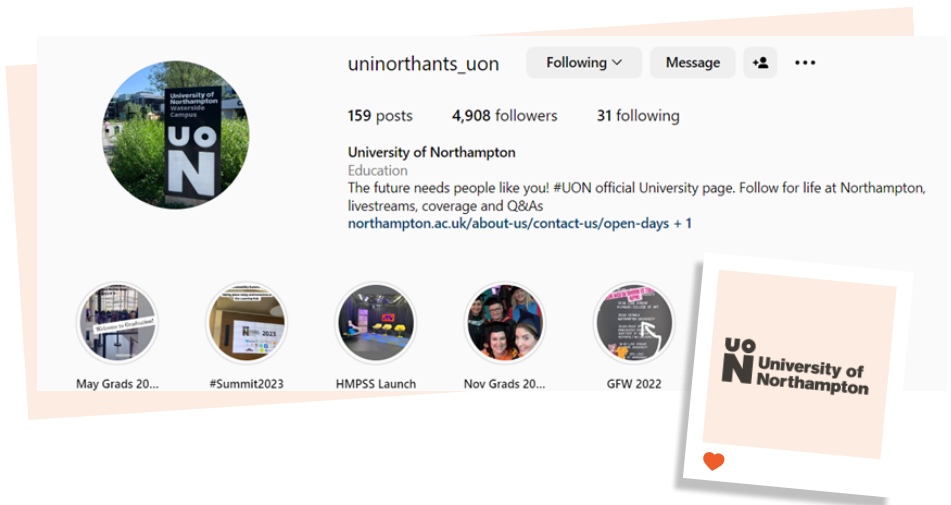
Let's take a moment to explore some real-life success stories of schools that have harnessed the power of UGC in their marketing strategies. These demonstrate the remarkable impact UGC can have on engaging prospective students and building a thriving educational community.

As we dive into the incredible stories of schools that have conquered the UGC challenge, we're reminded of that feeling when something seems impossible... until it's actually done. And the world of digital marketing is no different. With a new trend every other week, we all have to try something new eventually. These schools likely faced their fair share of doubts and hurdles along the way, wondering if they could truly harness the power of their students, alumni, and faculty to drive engagement and enrollment. But they did it anyway, and the results were worth the effort.

With a mix of determination, creativity, and a dash of "let's try something new," these schools tapped into the authentic voices of their educational communities. They discovered that their students, alumni, and faculty held the secret ingredients to creating captivating content that truly resonated with their target audience.

The University of Northampton

The University of Northampton has truly embraced the power of student-generated content by introducing an exciting initiative known as the 'Student Takeover.' This annual event has become a highlight for both students and the university's social media channels.



During the Student Takeover, selected students from the Marketing degree courses are given the incredible opportunity to showcase their social media marketing skills and talents. They step into the role of content creators, taking charge of the university's social media platforms and sharing their unique perspectives and experiences. This initiative not only empowers the students but also provides them with valuable hands-on experience in the world of social media marketing. They gain real-time feedback and guidance from the university marketing team, allowing them to refine their skills and grow as professionals.

But it doesn't end there. The Student Takeover is a powerful way for the university to amplify the voices of its students and give them a platform to be heard. By showcasing the authentic stories, journeys, and achievements of these student marketers, the University of Northampton fosters a strong sense of community and engagement. It's a testament to their commitment to student-centered education.

The University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne has cleverly harnessed the power of student-generated content by implementing a strategy that revolves around branded hashtags.

To encourage students to share their university experiences, the University of Melbourne has created unique branded hashtags that serve as a digital gathering place.

Students are invited to use these hashtags when posting photos about their university life, allowing the university to easily discover and curate this authentic content.

The university then has the opportunity to repost these photos on its own social media accounts, showcasing the vibrant and diverse experiences of its students. This interactive approach not only increases engagement but also fosters a sense of community and pride among the student body.

They have also taken student engagement to new heights by implementing Student Takeover initiatives. This innovative program allows students to temporarily take control of the university's social media accounts, giving them a platform to share their unique perspectives and experiences directly with the wider community. During a Student Takeover, selected students are given the opportunity to curate content, create engaging posts, and share their personal journeys as students of the University of Melbourne.

These student ambassadors showcase various aspects of university life, from campus events and academic achievements to extracurricular activities and community initiatives. By putting the spotlight on the students themselves, the university fosters a sense of authenticity, relatability, and student empowerment.



Strategies recommended by ed marketers

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Education marketing is a delicate balance of simplicity and complexity. Crafting a strategy that effectively engages and resonates with diverse student audiences can be daunting. However, with the power of UGC, this complexity is simplified, removing the guesswork from the equation.

In this section, we will introduce a range of UGC strategies specifically designed for the education landscape. These proven tactics will enable you to create authentic connections, foster trust, and enhance your brand's visibility.

Create an open platform where students can share their experiences

One of the most effective UGC strategies for education marketers is to create an open platform where students can freely share their experiences and perspectives. By providing a dedicated space for students to contribute their content, whether through a social media campaign, blog platform, or dedicated website section, you empower them to become active participants in shaping your institution's narrative.

This strategy allows for the authentic voices of students to shine, providing valuable insights and relatable stories that resonate with prospective students. It fosters a sense of community, encourages engagement, and builds trust by showcasing diverse experiences and perspectives within your student body.



"Remember, each student is unique. They come with their own backstory, hopes, and fears. None of them really fit into the box of 'prospective student', Comfort breeds loyalty, and when we give students the room to express themselves, we hand them a loudspeaker to share their unique experience at your institution.

"Xenia Muether, Founder & CEO

Actively search for ambassadors and let them be funny

When it comes to UGC strategies, actively seeking out content ambassadors can yield fantastic results. This could be students, alumni, or even faculty members who have a knack for humor and creativity. When you openly encourage and support their humorous content, you can inject a lighthearted and engaging element into your education marketing efforts. You are human after all, even if your brand is not.

Humor has the power to captivate and resonate with audiences, making your content more memorable and shareable. When content ambassadors are given the freedom to express themselves with humor, it adds a human touch to your brand and creates a sense of authenticity that attracts and connects with prospective students.



"Having content ambassadors who know how to tickle funny bones brings a whole new level of excitement to our education marketing. Their humor-infused content stands out in a sea of sameness, captivating our target audience and making them feel connected to our brand."

Jayde Robertson, Creative Strategist

Always leave room for (their) success stories

Success stories are a powerful UGC strategy that allows prospective students to see the real-world impact of your institution. Highlighting the achievements and accomplishments of students and alumni not only inspires others but also builds trust and credibility. The caveat? Let them do it. While there is a time and place for scheduled, curated testimonials, the authentic ones leave the biggest impact.

Success stories provide tangible evidence of the value and quality of education your institution offers. They serve as social proof, demonstrating the transformative power of your programs and the potential for personal and professional growth. Incorporating success stories into your UGC strategy helps showcase the outcomes and impact of your education, attracting and influencing prospective students.



“Behind every success story lies a powerful testament to the transformative power of your institution. When we share these stories, we infuse hope and determination into the hearts of prospective students, revealing the concrete outcomes and life-altering opportunities that your education can provide.

“Derrick Kwa, Performance Marketing Manager



UGC best practices

4

You might not immediately agree, but this is the best part! Best practices, dos and don'ts, whatever you want to call it give you a strategic action plan to follow. These are the 4 best practices for working with UGC on social media that can help you turn prospects into brand advocates and get a wider audience engaged with your marketing message.

Know your goals

The reality is that while numerous brands are enthusiastic about incorporating UGC into their content marketing strategy, many lack a concrete plan or defined goals for its implementation.

To ensure the effective utilization of UGC on social media, it is crucial to establish specific goals and guidelines in advance. Ask yourself: What do you aim to achieve through a particular UGC campaign? Being clear about your goals and objectives helps you organize and structure UGC in the most optimal way to achieve your desired outcomes.

For example, if your goal is to increase brand awareness, you could focus on encouraging users to share their experiences using your branded hashtag or tagging your institution in their posts. On the other hand, if you aim to drive engagement, you might prioritize UGC that sparks conversations or prompts user interactions. This approach ensures that your UGC efforts are purposeful, effective, and aligned with your overall marketing objectives.

Engage and respond

UGC is an opportunity to foster engagement and build connections with your audience.

- Actively engage with content creators by liking, commenting, and sharing their posts.
- Show genuine interest in their stories and experiences.
- Respond to comments and messages promptly, fostering a sense of community and showing that you value the contributions of your audience.

This engagement not only encourages content creators but also creates a conversation that strengthens the connection between your institution and its community.

Ask permission and give credit

Respecting the rights of content creators is not only an ethical practice but also a way to foster positive relationships and build trust within your educational community. When incorporating user-generated content (UGC) into your marketing efforts, it is crucial to obtain explicit permission from the creators before sharing their content.

Taking the time to reach out to the creators directly demonstrates your appreciation for their valuable contribution. Express your gratitude for their willingness to share their experiences and perspectives.

This simple tactic is also an opportunity to establish a personal connection and show genuine interest in their content.

Monitor and moderate

Keeping an eye on the UGC associated with your institution is a must to maintain a positive and inclusive online environment. You want to stay in the loop, regularly checking the comments, discussions, and interactions related to UGC. It's important to make sure everything aligns with your community guidelines while also encompassing your core values. Think of it as being the guardian of a safe space, where everyone feels respected and comfortable.

Moderation plays a key role in this process. It's like playing the role of a digital bouncer, swiftly addressing any inappropriate or off-topic content that may pop up. By nipping those issues in the bud, you create an environment that encourages constructive conversations and fosters a sense of belonging.

But monitoring UGC goes beyond just maintaining a positive vibe. It's also an opportunity to tap into emerging trends and gain insights that can shape your future UGC campaigns. By paying attention to what your community is discussing and sharing, you can spot opportunities to engage them further and create content that resonates on a deeper level.

Want to become a master of UGC? Dive deeper into the world of UGC with our downloadable infographic: "The dos and don'ts of user-generated content."

[Download infographic](#)

