



The student marketer's guide to:

NET NATIVES

A successful open day

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A successful open day

Open days are about creating an opportunity to build an emotive connection between applicants, parents, lecturers and an institution. It provides an opportunity for you to link all your digital and out-of-home campaigns with a real physical experience, enabling parents and applicants to start building their own connection with your institution and get a feel for the on-campus vibe.

But with a tonne of competition out there, and institutions across the country running open days at the same time, how will you make your institution stand out? How will you engage and nurture prospective students through their open day journey? And ultimately - how will you get bums on seats?

We've created this guide to help you address all of these questions as we run through the four most important components for any successful open day.

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THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

Number one

Data and research on your students

As student marketers, you might not always have control over what happens on and at your open day. Or the feel students get for your institution on your open day. So, if you don't have complete control over that, how can you use data to help influence people to make those open days more successful?

The **National Clearing Survey*** surveyed thousands of students who went through Clearing and found that many students did not visit the institution prior to Clearing. But, we found that a lot of students who did end up at the university visited the institution's website before A-level Results Day. In 2017, just 36% of students attended an open day at their Clearing destination, but 69% visited the website prior to A-level Results Day.

So, although open days are very vital, a lot of students aren't going to them when it comes to their final destination. So it's essential

to ensure your website still provides that experiential element of the university for those that don't go to your open day.

However, when looking at data that doesn't just focus on those students who went through Clearing, over half of pre-university students went to an open day to help with their university choice, while 60% visited the University website**. And interestingly, when broken down, it's Year 13 students who felt open days were most useful, with 94% of this year group saying they felt events were very (76%) or somewhat (18%) useful in deciding on a university.

So, what does all this data tell us? When looking at promoting your open days, really think about who your target audience is and whether you're reaching the right audience. And how are you using the right copy and imagery to engage with the right people?

Don't just think about data you can gather to improve the open day experience itself, through surveys and feedback you collect on the day, but also consider how you can use other data sources to look at new and emerging markets and where you should be targeting before the event.

*Data from the National Clearing Survey 2017. The National Clearing Survey was launched by Natives Global Consulting to better understand the journey that students take through the Clearing process.

**Data is from The Student Room

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

Number two

Innovation

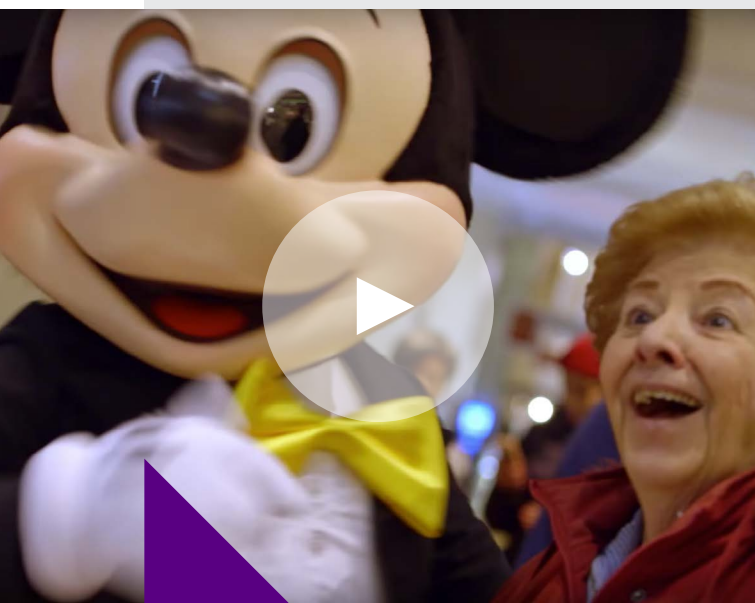
Open days are all about a student coming to your campus and feeling something. And then sharing that feeling.

Creating a unique experience at your open day will leave your prospective students with a story to remember. Stuck for inspiration? You can always look outside the sector. For example, there's a reason festivals sell out and you can take inspiration from how they market their events. Look at what Disney achieved with a straightforward idea to build anticipation around the opening of a new shop - something you could replicate as visitors attend your campus with your own ideas for silhouettes and characterisation:

And **here's** a great example of how this University in Australia welcomed over 40,000 visitors to their open day by creating an experience. They've created an event where prospects can go and actually experience the subject course they're interested in studying rather than just seeing or listening to information. So, rather than saying what your open day will offer - show it!

Gen Z are well-known FOMO sufferers. Could this fear of missing out be used as a way to create a buzz and ensure your open day is an event not to be missed?

We know from the 2017 National Clearing Survey that university applicants are using Snapchat more than any other platform to communicate with their friends (71% of respondents use Snapchat on a daily basis - up from 65% in 2016). But, are you using this platform in your social media mix? Snapchat's Geofilters and custom lenses are a fun way to encourage prospective students to document their experience at your open day on a platform that has the potential to reach a wide audience.



THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

Number two

Innovation

How do you create brand loyalty from someone? How do you get someone to be loyal to your brand the moment they see it? Open days play a really pivotal part in this.

Connecting and influencing tribes at your open days can help you build this brand loyalty...

Marketers use tribes to create a feeling of attachment, an integral element in building brand loyalty in their potential consumers. Engaging a tribe doesn't necessarily mean you need to lead them, but rather provide a platform and opportunity to bring like-minded individuals together and facilitate conversations.

Take a look at how ASICS built a tribe by creating "community connections and igniting the passions of young people through sport and social good" with their [#IMoveLondon campaign](#).

ASICS built a tribe by creating community connections and igniting the passions of young people through sport and social good.



The key is to appeal to unique ties that connect individuals to existing tribes by creating valuable content and memorable experiences. This is where open days offer the perfect opportunity.

Use your open days to orchestrate interactions in a way that will allow your prospective students to create meaningful, long-lasting connections before, during and after your open days, with your brand at the centre of these relationships.

Research and identify your tribes - That all-important data you've collected from your open day campaigns and sign-up forms can give you the insights with which to identify tribes, groups and shared social interests. By segmenting your audience based on their interests, you'll be able to

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THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

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Innovation



create content that will engage and shape your event to meet expectations whilst providing potential students with the opportunity to connect with other like-minded attendees.

Create valuable content and memorable experiences -

Encourage your influential alumni to get involved in running workshops. Has a successful author graduated from your university? Ask them to run a creative writing workshop for your attendees interested in a similar career path. Bring those who have a passion for sport and fitness together for an unforgettable workshop hosted by a sports star, utilising your cutting-edge campus facilities. Of course, not every university has a claim to fame. If this is the case, you can always use your own data to find micro-influencers who have shared interests.

Once you've brought your tribes together; use your open day as a

chance to organise something shareable and engaging on the day. Just don't forget to provide a platform or channel for those that attend your open day to connect before, and after the event - keeping the conversations going.

Are you thinking about parents? Your target audiences' other key influencers.

Again, using data from the National Clearing Survey, we know that students' university applications are influenced by their parents as well as their friends and peers. So don't just create messaging targeted at students. Influence their influencers too. Start to think about content that is targeted towards parents - what will they want to know about your institution?

Create a unique landing page that is designed specifically with parents in mind and include the content and information relevant to their queries. Alumni could be particularly powerful when influencing parents who are interested in career progression and opportunities post-university.

**Are you thinking about parents?
Your target audiences' other key
influencers.**

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

Number three

Cross-platform advertising

With all these great ideas, and innovations, how do you then get the message out there? We're now going to run through some of the best digital ad formats to promote your open days:

Facebook and Instagram lead generation adverts

Facebook and Instagram's lead generation adverts are a great way to encourage open day registrations within each social platform. LinkedIn also offers lead generation adverts, which would be great to utilise when promoting your postgraduate or MBA open days.

Initially, the advert looks like a standard image ad. But, once the user clicks the CTA, you have the option of using a context card with up to five bullet points or a short paragraph, followed by a form and then a thank you message with a link to a website page for more information. You can use up to 15 custom form fields allowing you

to collect more from your leads to better qualify them.

After you've received a registration, you can send a follow-up email with further information that open day attendees will need to know. To make this process as manageable as possible, we'd recommend using a tool like [Akerio](#). Your Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn leads can all be integrated into Akerio or another CRM system for further lead nurture and conversion.

And for those that don't complete your forms, you can retarget them with tailored messaging that prompts them to "complete your registration".

Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories are a really engaging platform for promoting open days. They are a great format for awareness raising and also for generating registrations as you can use a "Book Now" swipe-up style CTA that takes the audience straight to a registration page.

Using footage of a previous open day is

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THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

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Cross-platform advertising



a good way to advertise your upcoming open days and give the audience a taste of what they can expect when they attend. Try testing different creative and video types for your Instagram Stories to see which has the best effect.

An important consideration with Instagram Stories is that you need to use compelling content to see the best results. And your advertising results will prove your creative ROI. Look to see whether you've received an increase in leads, a reduction in the cost per lead and a reduction in the cost per open day attendee. The importance of strong creative applies to most of the advert formats that we've mentioned in this guide, but Instagram Stories and Snapchat Ads in particular.

Snap Ads

The National Clearing Survey 2017 found that Snapchat is the platform that prospective undergraduate students use the most on a day-to-day basis. So, it's a perfect platform to include in your open day strategy.

Snap Ads are an immersive advertising experience similar to Instagram Stories. They can be used to raise awareness or to encourage registrations with the 'swipe-up' style CTA. The audience can then be taken to a mobile-friendly version of your landing page within the Snapchat interface. Or, a form can appear without a landing page (similar to lead generation adverts).

You could also create a Snapchat Geofilter or a custom lens for the day of your event to create user-generated content and encourage attendees to share their experience of your event with their peers. The screenshot on the left is a Geofilter example, and the one on the right is a Lens. Using Geofencing you can draw a boundary around your campus to have highly targeted Snap Ads or Geofilters served to people in that locality.



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Cross-platform advertising

Facebook Messenger and Facebook Live

Use Facebook Messenger ads in your open day campaigns to provide students with an interactive platform to ask questions and find out more about your event. The adverts look like Facebook Newsfeed posts but with a “Send message” CTA. When the CTA is clicked, Facebook Messenger will open and the student can send a direct message to your Facebook

account. This is a great way to engage students and build relationships ahead of your open day, which in turn will help increase the likelihood of attendance on the day.

You do need to bear in mind that if you’re going to run Facebook Messenger ads you’ll need someone to monitor and reply to the messages you receive.

If you want to engage an audience that is unlikely to be able to make it to your open day, you could consider using Facebook Live to provide them with a virtual open day experience. Some universities have even used the live video as an interactive experience, where the audience comments to tell the advisor which direction to walk in.

Google Search

We’ve found Google Search to be the strongest platform to use in open day campaigns in terms of lead generation and the conversion rate from leads to attendees on the day.

Running local campaigns on Google Search

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The University of Salford
Sponsored · · €

Want to start your course this September? We might be able to make you an offer through Messenger. Message us now to start the conversation.

Clearing places available
Clearing places available

Like Page

Send Message

Like Share

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Cross-platform advertising



is important, particularly if your organic SEO doesn't rank too highly, as you want to ensure that the audience who are most likely to attend your event can easily find your institution and access important information like event times and agenda.

However, thinking strategically about the regions you target is important too. Think about how competitive you want to be and whether you could focus on new regions where people may not be as aware of your institution. Test, get the results and identify where you are seeing the best ROI, then use this insight to inform future campaigns. If you're running your open day campaigns through Net Natives, you can use your personalised live campaign dashboard to collect this data.

That being said, don't just target the whole country. You need to be strategic with your budget. Otherwise, you will get people engaging and clicking on your ads

that aren't likely to come to your open day.

Out of Home

Remember that your advertising doesn't always have to be solely online. You can effectively promote your open day using a combination of both digital and offline channels.

[Take a look at how Anglia Ruskin University welcomed over 500 students for Medicine alone at their summer open day using both online and offline channels.](#)

When using both online and offline advertising in your open day campaigns, it's important to make sure the two formats work alongside each other with consistent creative and messaging. Kantar Worldpanel, a company that run consumer panels, executed simultaneous TV and Facebook campaigns and found that their audience were 1.3 times more likely to purchase when exposed to adverts on both channels, rather than just one.

Exciting new technology called 'location intelligence' is improving how effectively we can integrate online and offline channels.



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Number three

Cross-platform advertising

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The data is collected through the apps on a person's mobile and there are different ways to use the insight gained. One option is for 'hyper-location targeting', to measure whether a segment of people who received online advertising visited a specific location. For example, to see if those targeted with your online ads actually attended your open day.

Another possibility is to use location intelligence to see where your open day attendees came from and identify their journey to the event. You could then use this information to run targeted online adverts in those locations after the open day, in order to encourage application.

Location intelligence also offers the potential to work out ROI concerning cost per footfall. If you'd like more information on location intelligence and how you can use it for your open day campaigns, [**get in touch with our experts here.**](#)

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Hyper-locations targeting; to measure whether a segment of people who received online advertising visited a specific location.

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Cross-platform advertising

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Think about parents too

You could perhaps run a campaign aimed at parents or one targeted at teachers. Just make sure you do your research and are using the best platform to reach that demographic. For example, Snap Ads are unlikely to be the best format to use to target parents, since the majority of its users are of a younger demographic.

If you're targeting a different audience, also consider your objective. Is it the best idea to ask parents to register on behalf of their children? Or should your goal be to raise awareness with parents?

And if you're feeling brave...

When it comes to promoting your open days, think outside the box in terms of advertising. If what you've done before has worked well then, by all means, try it

again. But it might also benefit to be brave and try some new things...

Google Search Ad Customisers

Google's ad customisers are perfect for driving awareness and consideration, as they allow for your ad content to be dynamically updated and tailored to keywords, device type, audience and time of day.

Displaying messages which are hyper-personalised for a specific audience will make your ads stand out. Customisers let a single text ad have hundreds of variations, and will then show the most relevant variation to each potential open day attendee. For example, you can include a live, and automatically updated, countdown to your open day event, or you could create different sets of copy to display to either potential students or their parents.

Google's ad customisers are perfect for driving awareness and consideration.

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

Number four

Data capture and lead nurture

This section is all about exploring the different ways to drive conversion before, during and after your Open Day...

Use the **Four A's Framework** to construct your nurture emails for the pre- and post- event communications to ensure the emails are doing what they are supposed to do.



Audience

These are the people you're speaking to. Think about what you can do to narrow down your audience by asking specific questions on your open day forms. For example, by asking them what they intend to study will allow you to tailor your communications with them using more course-level information.



Assets

Think about what content you can use in your communications to create excitement around your event and drum up that 'fear of missing out'. No doubt you'll have great content scattered all over your platforms, from landing pages, websites and social channels which you can pull together to use for your nurture emails.



Actions

This is what you want your audience to do. And open days provide you with an incredibly clear and short-term objective; to get people onto campus. So, always keep this in mind when writing your initial set of emails and then expand this more broadly to include other micro-conversions after your open day, like downloading a prospectus or following your social media to help you get to your final goal of increasing applications and enrolments.



THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

Number four

Data capture and lead nurture



Activities

The triggers for your emails. For open days you'll mainly be thinking about form submissions on your landing pages, or it could be engaging with reminder emails and then whether or not they attend the event.

Before your Open Day - what are your objectives?

So, after people have visited your open day landing page and they've filled out your form - what next? You need to focus on getting your potential students from that form submission through the doors of the event itself. But, how do you match up your nurture emails to this objective?

You need to make sure your potential attendees always know the next steps; how to find the institution, where to park, who to contact with questions and so on. This may seem dull to include in your follow up emails, but it's off-

putting not to know what you're supposed to be doing or where you're supposed to be going on the day. Don't forget that you can mix these messages up with more aspirational content-driven emails that include information on what life is like at your institution, student stories and testimonials.

During your Open Day - make the experience seamless for your guests

This is where you can make the most of any opportunities to capture new, and also enrich existing, data about your potential students whilst also making the experience seamless for your guests.

Using technology, like **Akero**, you'll be able to check off attendees from a guest list to capture attendee data on the day of the event. You can also use Akero to create an offline form that you can use at your open day to mark people as attended. These can be run on tablets, laptops or even a mobile phone to make sure all the data you have in your system is enriched with the fact they did come to your open day - a good qualifying action on behalf of potential students.

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Data capture and lead nurture

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And you can then use these offline forms to collect entirely new leads. It might be the case that your attendees bring guests with them, so make sure you're collecting their details and valuable data too with your sign in forms.

And what about after the event? The hard work doesn't stop there. You'll need to start thinking about converting those attendees to drive applications and enrolments.

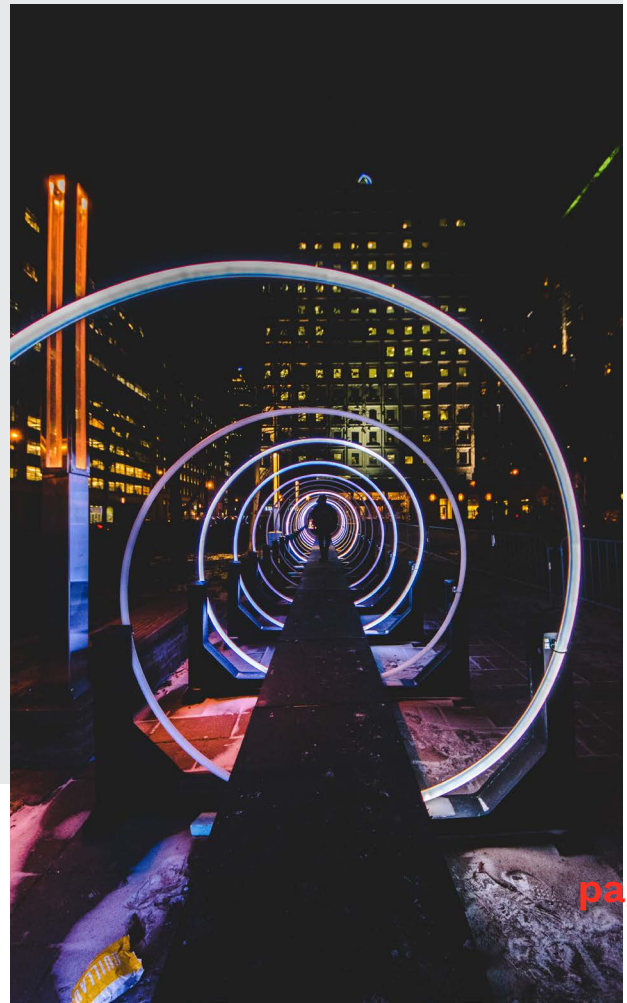
After your Open Day - engage with your potential students after the event

Immediately after your open day event, you'll have two distinct sets of data; those who attended and those who registered but did not attend. And with this data, you can create all kinds of nurture funnels...

For example, for those who attend why not send them a thank you

message a few hours after they check in? And why you're at it, you can gain some valuable feedback on your event ready for the next open days you plan.

But, most importantly it's time to start thinking about your next objective - driving these attendees to an application. So make sure they know what to do next.



THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

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Data capture and lead nurture

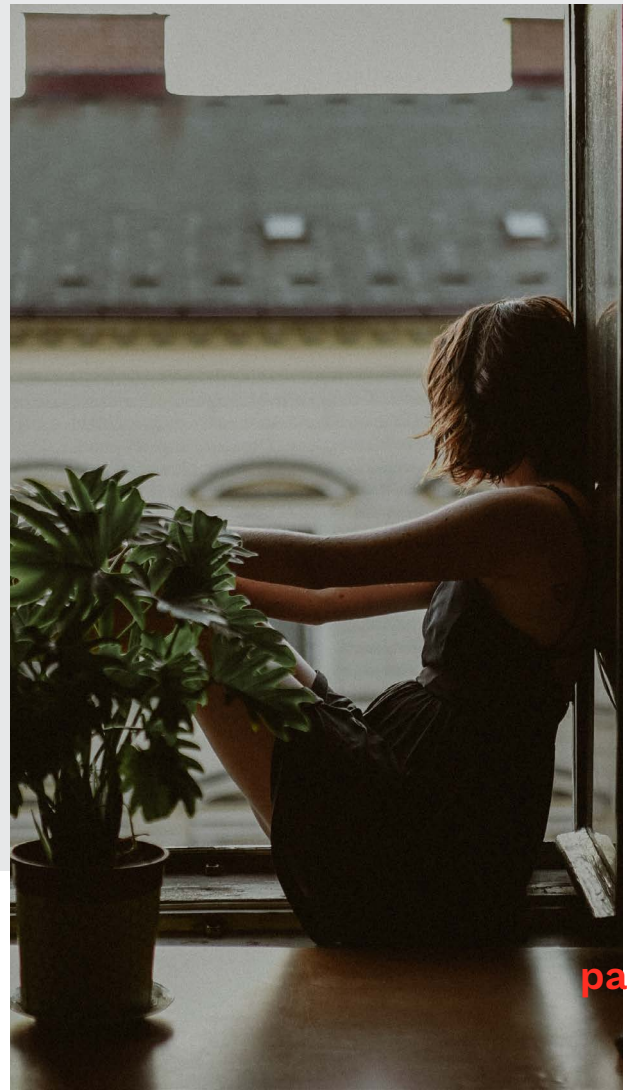


Armed with the tonne of data you would've collected from your attendees, be personal and treat every prospective student as an individual, not a number. Use the data you have at your disposal to create tailored comms to individuals, with the information that is relevant to them. Don't just send out bulk blanket marketing emails. These are not engaging and lack the personal connection you want to be building with prospective students.

If they were a potential UG student, think about including some advice on personal statement writing and important UCAS deadlines. If they were a PG student or international student (or maybe they were a direct applicant), make sure they know how to make an application on your website. Don't let any of your attendees go 'cold' without a follow-up, use the data you've been collecting to divide up your audience and place them into a

longer-term nurture strategy.

[For even more tips on how to build a solid conversion strategy, watch our webinar: Seven top tips for nurturing long-term leads through to conversion.](#)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Plan early

Start thinking about your open day strategy as early as possible. Review your previous campaigns and look at what worked well, and what you can improve on this time.

- Influence the influencers

We know from the National Clearing Survey that students' university applications are heavily influenced by their friends, parents and teachers - so don't just create messaging targeting the student.

- Use your social influencers

Identify your micro-influencers, academics, students and alumni with a large and relevant audience on social media, and work with them to create content in the run-up to your open day to drum up excitement.

- Create platform-appropriate creative

When it comes to creative, one size doesn't fit all. Make sure you're using the right format, size and content for each platform. For example, Snapchat ads need to be vertical, Instagram videos can only be between 3 and 10 seconds. Snapchat content works better with sound, but Facebook videos work better with subtitles.

- Craft your copy carefully

Create copy that's both optimised and engaging to read. Make sure you're at the top for the search terms you want to be with your Google Search Ads. And ensure you identify your market and write copy that will resonate with them.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Embrace innovation

We've run thousands of open day campaigns, and we know what works, but we're never afraid to experiment with new and innovative platforms. Embracing this innovation will revolutionise your open days.

- Nurture your prospects

Use Akero lead-gen forms to collect data from people who have registered to attend your open day, set up workflows and track the progress of their engagement right until the day of your event and beyond...

- Treasure your data

Once they've attended (or expressed interest in attending) your open day - don't let them slip away. Use the data from year-round campaigns to nurture students through the conversion funnel to enrolment.

And most importantly, don't forget the basics; target the right people, on the right platforms, at the right time, with the right message.

ABOUT NATIVES GROUP

Who are we?

We are a collection of specialist brands who can either solve individual problems or work collectively as partners to our clients.



NATIVES GLOBAL
CONSULTING

Akero



edurank

CEREBRO™

THE
NATIVE



your objectives. Then we add knowledge, expertise and superlative execution. And we make something amazing.

We deliver a range of creative solutions that will make your college stand out from the crowd, including; digital and print advertising, email template and microsite design, video production, photography, experiential and animation. We pioneer the use of the latest innovative creative formats for the education sector.

What is the secret to a successful advertising campaign? Combining your data with inspiring creative and copy. We believe in the importance of collecting and using your audience data to inform our targeting and messaging.

Who are Net Natives?

We are **creatives, thinkers, makers, planners and doers** - tenacious, talented and together, more than the sum of our parts. We know great campaigns all start with one thing: understanding. So that's where we begin - with you, your audience, your ambitions and

Contact Us

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/netnatives

SERVICES:

Here are just some of the services our team of experts can work with your institution on:

Advertising

- Direct media planning and buying
- Biddable media (search, social & programmatic)
- Attribution tracking
- End to end reporting

Creative

- Video and photography
- Creative concepts
- Graphic design
- HTML5 displays ads
- Copywriting

Analytics and Insight

- Desk and field-based market research
- Analytics
- Business intelligence
- SEO Training
- Conversion strategies
- Strategic content development
- Lead generation and nurturing
- Competitive analysis
- Performance analysis

Student Engagement

- Student audience panel
- Brand advertising
- Lead generation campaigns
- Community management

International Expertise

- Chinese social platform management
- China digital advertising
- Local website and microsite development

Social Media

- Social media and social content strategy
- Social media training

Strategic Marketing

- Reputation and SEO management
- Consulting and project management

Marketing Software

- Marketing performance software
- Data visualisation software
- Social media content performance software