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Whitman's soft sale approach to building brand awareness holds promise

As Executive Director of Graduate Admissions and Student Recruitment at Syracuse University's Whitman School of Management, Chris Wszalek has continually tried new marketing strategies to build the school's brand awareness. One new tactic they tried this year was the Resume Clinic, which they piloted during The MBA Tour in February.

A new option for building brand awareness

Whitman's admissions team knows from experience that The MBA Tour guarantees they will have dynamic conversations with potentially strong candidates. When the Resume Clinic was offered as an option, they viewed it as another way to reinvigorate the brand through face-to-face interactions in a virtual space. They strategically picked Eastern North America event for the pilot, because they receive a large volume of applications from people in the New York metro area.

Their soft sale approach worked

Chris didn't expect to draw a lot of leads from this event. Because the real intent was to build brand awareness, they took a soft sale approach.

While he and his colleagues staffed the virtual experience booth and meet-ups, one of Whitman's career counselors staffed the clinic. The hope was that her expertise with resumes and willingness to

"We haven't seen an application yet, but there's been some good conversations. Our career counselor said that she had a great time getting to meet these candidates and felt like she was able to give them some really good advice."

answer students' questions about preparing resumes for graduate school applications would be a nice soft sell.

"We've been very focused the last two years on using building domestic interest in our programs through in-person events, digital marketing and virtual events. We are currently up 60% in admitted students overall for the MBA program." We're up 62% in domestic admitted students, and right now, our matriculation is up 87% versus last year."

She ended up being busy throughout the entire clinic and talked to eight great candidates. Whitman's recruiting team has followed up with them, and they've had additional meetings with some of those candidates.

Asian countries could reach us. And we created eChat account so candidates could contact us there."

Consistency has boosted enrollment

In his discussions with colleagues at other institutions throughout the year, Chris confirmed that building brand awareness has been a juggling act. Trying to figure out which events, locations and part of the event are best is hard. The a la carte approach for The MBA Tour has been a great option.

Though events yield a small number of applications and enrollments for Whitman, the events get the program's name out there. Chris encourages fellow admissions professionals to consider holding a Resume Clinic in specific markets they want to target.

To hear Chris' full 15-minute solution story visit:

<https://www.gmac.com/reach-and-recruit-students/gmac-connect/marketing-advice-and-best-practices>