



Partnership Abstract

Opportunity

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) wanted to increase the effectiveness of its fiscal-year-end direct mail campaign. The university looked to maximize overall giving regardless of channel, and to accomplish that by piloting a digital advertising campaign with its alumni.

Partnership

As an RNL client that had been using multichannel outreach to its alumni for years—including crowdfunding, email, direct mail, and phonathon—expanding into digital advertising was a natural progression for the university.

UNI turned to RNL to orchestrate the overall strategy, creative, testing, and analysis for the digital advertising pilot. In the test campaign, 60 percent of UNI's prospects for its fiscal-year-end mailing received the mailing along with targeted digital advertising through the RNL Digital Dialogue product.

Results

The results were clear: the Digital Dialogue test group had an average pledge of \$115 more than the group that did not. Response rates were 43 percent higher for the digital group. In terms of ROI, the dollars raised per record for the Digital Dialogue group were \$7.12 compared to \$2.11 for the group who did not receive digital ads.

The University of Northern Iowa sees 80% increase in average gift in RNL Digital Dialogue pilot

Opportunity

With a fiscal year that always seems to end too soon, the University of Northern Iowa wanted to maximize the effectiveness of its fiscal-year-end mailing. However, the university wanted to not just amplify the mail results, but raise overall giving.

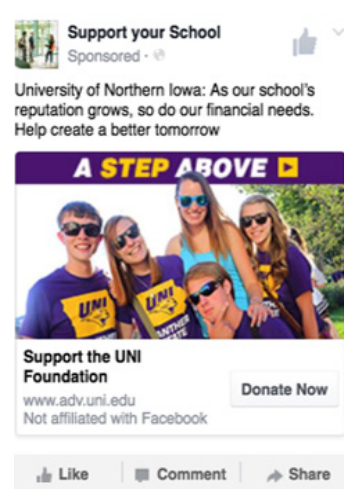
“We had already been using a multichannel approach with our donors, from phonathon and direct mail to crowdfunding,” said Sunni Kegebein, director of annual giving programs. “So expanding into digital advertising made sense for us. However, we like to make decisions based on data, so we wanted to test a digital campaign with our alumni first.”

Partnership

UNI has partnered with Ruffalo Noel Levitz for multichannel fundraising over the years, including on-site phonathon, direct mail and email, and crowdfunding via the firm's ScaleFunder platform, as part of its annual giving program. When the institution wanted to expand into digital advertising, they turned to the RNL Digital Dialogue product.

“Working with our existing partner made a lot of sense, especially because it would help us be consistent in our approach,” said Ms. Kegebein. “We wanted the digital ads to have the same voice and feel of our other communications.”

RNL managed all aspects of the Digital Dialogue pilot, developing the creative and design, data management and segmentation, publishing, and analysis after the pilot concluded.



The ads appeared on websites and social media sites like this Facebook ad. Ruffalo Noel Levitz was able to target specific UNI alumni to receive these ads, and institutions have the ability to do that same level of digital targeting to specific segments of prospects and donors.

Results

UNI decided to test digital ads with about 60 percent of the prospects included in the fiscal-year-end mailing. They saw impressive results from the Digital Dialogue group:

DIGITAL DIALOGUE GROUP



43% higher response rate
80% greater average gift
237% increase in dollar-per-record rate

Response rate (2.76%)
Average gift (\$258)
Dollar-per-record rate (\$7.12)



NON-DIGITAL GROUP



Response rate (1.93%)
Average gift (\$143)
Dollar-per-record rate (\$2.11)

These results came after UNI and RNL examined all the gifts made by the prospects on the mail list, from the first time the mail piece was dropped and the digital ad campaign began until the end of the fiscal year. This allowed for a true accounting for the impact from the RNL Digital Dialogue pilot, as donors who had been influenced by a digital ad may still have given through other means rather than responding directly to the ad.

When examining the results by the solicitation codes for the mailing, the digital group also had stronger overall results. Their response rate was 50 percent higher, and they had an average pledge increase of \$32.

“Overall, we were very pleased with this pilot,” said Ms. Kegebein. “It also showed that ‘digital fundraising’ is more than putting out ads online. This campaign worked because we incorporated digital into our overall strategy, allowing us to reach our alumni wherever they are and making it easy for them to give however they want. That keeps them more engaged and likely to make that donation.”

