

Smartphone Marketing for Student Housing

A February 2012 Nielsen study of 20,000 mobile phone consumers showed that in the core 18-24 age group, 62% of students in the United States have a smartphone, with 8 out of 10 new phone purchases in the last three months being for smartphones. This is significant, as it serves to illustrate how technology can bridge the marketing divide between you and your student tenants by using mobile technology.

The 18–24 age group spends just 9% of their free time consuming content online while 20% of all their content consumption in 2011 was performed using a mobile phone, according to Nielsen. This makes mobile phones a great way to immediately ratchet up the marketing of your off-campus housing aimed at this demographic.

Drawing Together Traditional Marketing and Technological Marketing for Off Campus Student Housing

We all know that the closer your units are to campus the easier they will be to rent. What is less often considered is that most universities have multiple mini-campuses because buildings can be spread over a wide geographic location. If you heavily target those locations which lie closest to your property (these “mini-campuses”), you can fill your rentals faster and create the word of mouth to keep your housing the place of choice in those areas.

The first technology you might consider using is Google Maps or the website of the particular college your property is near. You can print out an exact campus map to start working out a specific plan of attack for your deeper targeted marketing campaign.

For illustration purposes, we'll use the campus map for Harvard, <http://map.harvard.edu/>. It immediately becomes clear when you look at that map that certain schools are located at the periphery of the campus. The Law and Engineering School is at the northernmost edge. The School of Design is in the southeast quadrant, and the School of Education is on the west side of the campus.

The significance of this is to plot where your rentals are in relation to the facilities at your own nearby college, because before you can make a plan, you need to know specifically who you are targeting for this focused approach.

If your property was located to the west of the Harvard campus, for example, then you should start off by targeting the School of Education for your focused campaigns, because it is in close proximity to where all of the students' lectures will take place. This becomes a major selling point to your advantage, and you will already be starting to differentiate your property from the competition using this additional feature in a more specific way.

The first thing you should do is to create a QR Code that can be embedded onto any marketing that you do. A QR Code is a two-dimensional barcode that you may have seen popping up on cereal packets, magazines, and other places. This can be read by smartphones like the iPhone, which would immediately pass messages and web links to the phone.

There are a number of ways to have the codes created, but you can do it yourself for free at any of the following websites:

<http://createqrcode.appspot.com/>

<http://qrcode.kaywa.com/>

<http://www.qurify.com/en/>

It's really as simple as typing out a message and clicking 'create!' on any of these sites. The image will then be created which you can download and have printed onto flyers or posters for distribution. Your printer can also take care of the QR codes for you.

Another free service that also includes tracking, plus the ability to embed a map link to your property in the QR Code, can be found at <http://myqr.co/>

You will want to experiment with various messages that you embed in the QR Code, because this is your opportunity to really hit home about the features and benefits you want to stress to parents and students.

It must have a call to action in it somewhere that invites student to call for more information. Beyond that, what you say will depend on the features and benefits of the particular property, while being careful to really talk to your core audience. To track the codes and how they are being scanned you can use this website:

<http://www.youscan.me/>

You can consider offering a bonus drawing for an iPhone, or a choice between the two most popular smartphones available with QR code reading capability, if students take the code and scan it onto their Facebook and Twitter accounts to start following your off student campus news.

In this way, you will also ensure that you have the ability to contact them whenever you like through their social media accounts, and build in a viral element by giving them the ability to share property details with friends. As long as you approach your marketing with that in mind, keeping it low key, fun, and friendly, then reaching students who will be interested will be easier.

Have other thoughts on using technology to market your units? Please share them here! We always welcome comments, feedback and questions.

Posted by **Global Administrator** on 3/12/2012 7:31:17 AM