

Live On Campus

Category 25, Best Web Site, Individual Page or Section

Indiana University Southeast

Submitted by:

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General description:

Live On Campus is a micro website designed to create an on-campus buzz (and generate applications) for our first residence halls. It features extensive interactive media to engage the audience while they see and hear our marketing messages.

Goals & objectives:

In January of 2008, Indiana University Southeast was faced with a challenge. Our first residence halls would be opening for the fall semester, and there were more than 400 beds to fill. Research told us that our current students were the most likely customers. While the construction was under everyone's noses, there was curiously little "buzz" about housing. Applications simply weren't coming in.

Jenny Johnson Wolf (then newly-appointed Director of University Communications) and I had a triage meeting to assess where to start. Our very immediate challenge was to sell apartments and a living arrangement that was new and innovative, but could not be shown for real (it was too early in construction). As IU Southeast had always been a commuter campus, there were no former residents to talk up how much fun it was to live here.

Another challenge was that we had to sell our new lodge living concept against the strong negative image of traditional dorms. This meant touting amenities and floor plans that would amount to a better living and learning experience for students. In short, we had to sell "vaporware" during a time frame of February until mid-May, when the first model apartments would be open. We needed to appeal to students and catch them while they were here during the spring semester.

We had to come up with an approach to maximize output in the shortest possible time. We would merge our creative teams to brainstorm a campaign that would involve real portable bulletin boards around campus covered with handbills and posters that would not be slick and institutional, but would instead aim for a handmade and authentic feel. We decided also to build a micro website that looked like the real bulletin boards with the same handbills, but each item would be interactive when clicked.

The first time bringing our two teams together was hugely rewarding. The group meshed well and ideas were flying. We had one group meeting for the first rush of concepts, then a second one to refine them

and brainstorm the interactivity. Beyond simply generating ideas, the two teams shared the execution of all elements, with print designers creating web elements and web designers creating print elements.

Featured handbill ideas on the physical and virtual bulletin boards were based upon concepts that campus research indicated were hot buttons for students, such as personal freedom and saving on commuting costs. The featured video clip is called "Don't Use the D-Word," and was our frontal attack on why our lodges were not "dorms."

Live On Campus was a project that represented a lot of firsts: It was the first website created to tie-in with a word-of-mouth marketing push; it was the first project where our marketing and web teams creatively brainstormed and worked together on ideas and executing for both physical and virtual media; and it was our first time having to market a non-existing product/experience.

Description of how project fits into overall institutional and/or advancement goals:

Besides the immediate need of filling beds in residence units, using a cutting-edge, interactive website helps to reinforce our image as an innovative, tech savvy institution.

Total number of professional and support staff who worked on the program:

A total of ten people contributed to the site creation, seven of whom were professional staff.

Program budget and unit cost:

The website and video production had no budget, as development was completely in-house.

Any special circumstances or challenges faced:

The timeline of barely three weeks was the biggest hurdle. Creating the number of elements and the amount of code in that brief window challenged each staffer.

Documented results, measurements of effectiveness:

While the Live On Campus website is one element of a campaign, it attracted about 90 visitors per day and tracking of individual interactive modules showed the visitors took time to explore and interact with the site. However, the greatest measure of success was the immediate flow of housing applications that kept growing and carried the campus until the magical May 15th date when tours of model rooms began.