



The Career College Information Source

Career College Broadcast Media Commentary and Analysis

*By Cheryl Hentz with Tammy Quadrini, president and CEO of
Griffin Marketing Group*

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This is part of a continuing series of quarterly reports on the media environment for career colleges.

We finally have the election and all of the political advertising behind us. What kind of effect does that have on 4th quarter for career colleges?

We're looking toward better weeks ahead now that the election is over. It may not happen as early as November or December, but my expectation is that even as early as 4th quarter we're going to see some availability open up, schools cut back on advertising, competitive go down, and other category advertising declining as well. Plus, if it does impact 4th quarter, then most certainly it will impact next year. I think we're also going to find a great deal of additional unemployment, which generally in our business is a good



Tammy Quadrini

thing because there are more people out there looking for training and jobs when unemployment is higher. There are a number of businesses that are

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already talking about cutting back on staff and a number of businesses that are putting employees on part-time status versus full-time because of the *Affordable Care Act*. This fact alone (increased unemployed or part-time employed) will drive additional traffic to our schools. But in general, I'm expecting things in the 4th quarter to either be a little bit better or flat. The avails are going to open up a little bit and clearance is going to get better. So if there's any opportunity for our competitors to cut budgets and still swing by, then they'll do that and that will, in turn, open up the field for us. So

for our clients, we're certainly not recommending any kind of budget cutbacks.

Is there anything else about 4th quarter?

It's not like we don't care about 4th quarter, but the reality is everybody's focused on 2013 now. The budgets are slimmer in 4th quarter; they're not doing new creative right now—that

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will come out of new budgets for next year; and a number of our schools have their class starts in January. So they're wanting to ramp up for 2013 and are concentrating on that. They're not as worried about 4th quarter at this stage of the game. Budgets aren't going to change and for the most part you're not going to get any increases at this juncture unless you're really falling short. Coming into 2013 we have plenty of year-to-date information to know what we're going to do for next year, so at this juncture our focus is to negotiate for 2013 and get the best deals that we can, figure out the avail situation, pull competitive for year-to-date and see where our competitors lie in the various market areas, see where our leverage lies with the individual stations and do a heavy, heavy-duty push for 2013.

How do you think the election is going to impact 2013?

Looking at how the election is going to impact 2013, first and foremost my guess is going to be that we're going to be seeing more regulations and more watchdog entities come into play. Schools are going to have to be extremely buttoned up regarding compliance, financial assistance, the scripting that their admissions reps use and so forth.

But on the bright side, I fully anticipate that a majority of the publicly traded schools are going to be doing a tremendous cutback in advertising, TV and radio especially. There are numerous school entities that have been closing campuses. University of Phoenix, for example, closed over 100 campuses across the country—that's huge. Kaplan has also closed numerous campuses. So a lot of this advertising from a



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Since 1995 **Griffin Marketing Group (GMG)** has been providing direct response advertising services for education clients. GMG specializes in media negotiation, placement and detailed lead analysis, and can provide production, print and Web services, as well.

Tammy Quadrini joined GMG in 1998 and has been president and CEO since 2007. She has over 23 years of school TV direct response experience, starting with several small agencies and then switching to Bates USA as the direct response media supervisor in charge of ITT Technical Institutes and the Indiana Department of Tourism. Quadrini supervised the local buying for the 44 ITT school locations (at that time), as well as purchased all national cable. She left Bates to gain media buying and planning experience for Subway, Union Federal and Indianapolis Raceway Park. Quadrini's overall media experience includes buying/planning for local television, national cable, local cable, radio, newspaper and billboard advertising.

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competitive standpoint is going to back off. That's good for us in the sense that not only does it mean the avails open up, but with less competition our share of voice increases.

Going into next year, I also anticipate a number of different categories, outside of the school sector, are going to decline in TV/radio advertising, one example being the pharmaceutical industry. Any industry that is regulated will be getting more pressure, more government oversight, more requirements, more regulations on advertising, and so on. So those regulated fields are likely to back off on the electronic advertising—both radio and TV—because there's a time constraint. If you look at a pharmaceutical ad on TV the first 20 seconds or so are taken up with disclaimers, leaving what's left to convey a message. Conversely, when it comes to their Internet advertising and anything else that doesn't have time limitations, like Facebook and other social media, they have the ability to do whatever it is they need to do from a disclaimer standpoint. On top of that, there are numerous large companies, including Fortune 500 companies that are petrified of national healthcare because of the requirements that are going to come with that. That's a double-edged sword, as well, because not only are they going to be cutting back on staff and trying to make sure that they stay solvent—which leaves even more people in the unemployed category—but they'll take full-timers and cut them back to part-timers so they don't have to provide the health insurance being mandated. So that's a half-unemployed person who may be looking for training and a different career. In addition, if they're worried about their pocketbook, and they will be, the first thing they're going to do is cut advertising. So in our school world, I'm very positive about

the anticipated media environment next year.

What are your planning recommendations then for career colleges in 2013?

First and foremost there are still some consistent absolutes going into next year. There are always exceptions with regard to client, market or station, but by and large there are some real consistencies.

Number one, the initial focus should be on daytime advertising. Daytime, in every analysis that we pull, with few exceptions, still rules for lead generation. Sixty-second spots still outperform 30s, generally speaking.

Regarding creative, I've seen a nice uptick recently where your broad combo or generic spots are still outperforming the discipline-specific spots. You're casting a wider net with something that's broader. Of course, that involves the school's admissions staff being able to convert their leads that perhaps don't know for sure what they want to do, as opposed to somebody that is completely certain about what they want to do.

I also think it's going to be even more important than ever in 2013 that employer testimonials in your creative still need to be key. I think it's an extremely wise move for schools to ramp up and get into gear with corporate partnerships—whether that be a physical therapy institution, a med-check type place, a hospital, or an automotive plant—whatever you can think of that makes sense from a partnership standpoint related to what programs your school offers. You want to hook up with these employers and be able to

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put it in your advertising because the big name of the game in 2013 isn't going to be just education, but the job, too. So schools have got to be able to associate their advertising with the fact that they've got these great connections and can help students get jobs. It is a win-win situation for any company in a good partnership. The school basically gets an endorsement from the company

Focus on multimedia packages with the TV stations. Many of these stations are able to put deals together through their associations with Yahoo—they can do texting, email blast initiatives—there are numbers of different ways to get to your viewer.

that is golden and the company gets free advertising, as well as well-trained employees. It takes a lot of meetings, a lot of conversations, a lot of contractual agreements, but it is well worth it and should be a heavy focus for schools.

If there are certain programs or disciplines that have difficulty getting starts or conversions, those are key places to start in terms of corporate agreements. It's important to let people know what potential job opportunities there are and what careers are available. Many times when schools are talking about their course offerings they may know and understand the various opportunities available, but the viewing public and the target demo does not necessarily know this. So tell them. Tell them what they can do with such and such a degree or certificate. HVAC, for example, may not be just about fixing heating and air-conditioning. Explain to these people all the different opportunities that might be available to them.

Here's another thing that we've tried with different clients in the past and it will probably be extremely impactful in the coming year for those who do it. It's a new year, new start message. If they haven't done it already they

should do it quickly. The message can say something as simple as "It's a new year, so get a new start. Figure out what you want to do. We can help you if you need help, but now's the time to make a change," or something along those lines. Those are always very impactful messages and if people are getting laid off in December, which is more often than not the case, this kind of message really resonates.

Something else that could be a good focus is the possibility of DirecTV. This satellite provider is now available through certain cable systems in the major markets. This is a trend that has been growing since the tail end of last year and it's going to continue to grow into 2013. This is a fantastic opportunity to get additional viewership. So in the major markets you can now buy DirecTV locally, whereas for years and years you could only go national.

Cable viewership continues to decline, while these alternate delivery systems (ADS) are continuing to grow. Viewership penetration, that several years ago was at 60 or 70 percent for any individual market, is now at 50, 40 or even 30 percent in numerous cases across the country because people are getting their TV programs through alternate delivery systems. But now that you can buy DirecTV locally in many markets, if you are also buying local cable you should be evaluating the last three years of viewership penetration to see how much it's declined in your specific area. If you see a significant drop, you have leverage. Cable has lost audience, so your rates should be better, your added value should be better, and your deals overall should be better. That's a significant opportunity going into next year. Cable TV advertising is still strong and there certainly is a huge impact there, not to mention it is an extremely useful tool for any

organic Internet leads people may get when they have the Web site address on their TV commercial. We consistently see where TV advertising has backed off, or it's been on hiatus, but sure enough, every time, four to six weeks later the Internet leads start to die. So it certainly makes a significant impact, but that's not to say that that should, by any stretch of the imagination, be the only or primary focus.

What should be more of a focus?

Focus on multimedia packages with the TV stations. Many of these stations are able to put deals together through their associations with Yahoo—they can do texting, email blast initiatives—there are numbers of different ways to get to your viewer. People are watching programming on their computer, or on their phone, their iPads, and so forth. So when you're negotiating with TV or radio stations you want to see what other options they have available regarding packaging. Can you get banner advertising on the TV station's Web site, for example, or can your school be listed on the station's Facebook page? These are just some examples of huge opportunities. These multilevel, multimedia packages should be such that they can reach the viewer in any number of different ways.

What about radio? How significant of a role should that play into a school's advertising?

Radio is actually becoming more and more of a big player. You really want to dig into the details more than you ever have if you're going the radio route. It's a really viable entity, but you want to dig into what your best formats are, what the best hours are, who does the best creative by station, that kind

of thing. And be sure to maximize on your radio buy. Don't necessarily consider it the way it has been for such a long time as nothing other than a support medium—that simply is no longer the case. It's a very good reliable lead source in the sense that it brings you very dedicated leads, as opposed to TV leads, which are based more on emotional reactions

where they call right when they see the ad. With radio they have to usually hang onto the

number—maybe they're at work or in their car when they hear the ad—and by the time they call, you know that they're really interested.

Added value is imperative to the enhancement of your buys in 2013. I think that stations are going to be in a real pickle for some of the reasons already mentioned. So these guys are going to be ready to deal. It's a prime year to negotiate added value because we don't have political, we don't have the Olympics, but what we do have are lots of opportunities. You can get the little "news ticker" displays or crawls across the bottom of the screen; you can get what's called a snipe. Some people find them annoying but they do increase your share of voice. Snipes are those little animated ads that you see during programming and you should be able to get those for added value. The beauty of those is they have nothing to do with station inventory; it's not like a limited avail situation. They happen during the program, so it has nothing to do with advertising time.

Getting campus interviews during any of the morning news programs is always very helpful. They can be anywhere from 3, 5 or 9 minutes in length and they give you a full-blown opportunity to have someone from your

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school bragging about the school, its programs and why you're the best of the best.

For 4th quarter and into next year, look at incorporating sponsorship opportunities into your plan. These are not necessarily direct lead generators, but what they do is enhance the share of voice, if you will. They also help build the brand and give you good community awareness. Along with that, anytime there's an opportunity for an employment fair or expo, schools should be all over that.

Radio is going to be a situation of being ready to wheel and deal in the coming year. We've already seen that to a degree this year. So besides just a mere schedule and typical traffic sponsorships, consider doing open houses and remote broadcasts. And if you're doing your job you ought to be able to get those for next to nothing, instead of paying an inordinate amount of money. We have secured deals this year, for example, where the radio station not only provided for free games, but station "swag" like t-shirts, cups, pencils, and whatever else they can give away. They have also provided food and so

forth. So remotes are really an excellent opportunity. However, with regard to open houses, there is a lot of internal promotion that must happen. The success or lack thereof is extremely dependent upon the school excitement and internal promotion. Schools, for instance, should be emailing every student in their database. They should be putting the information on their Facebook page, asking for referrals, doing email blasts, and putting up flyers in their schools. Have the instructors talk about it prior to class to help generate excitement, etc. A school cannot just sit back and expect that the radio station and advertising agency are going to do everything. If they do, the open house will be an utter failure.

So, there are numerous opportunities for schools to focus on as we enter 2013. I anticipate an exciting year for us all.

As always, Tammy, we appreciate it and thanks for sharing your thoughts and insights. We'll talk to you again in a few months.