



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 schools.

Career Education Review: The Internet generation seems to view TV as little more than “background noise” with all the real action, if you will, online. Certainly online presence continues to grow, but it’s probably not smart to completely disregard television. So it might be a good idea to focus on that topic to start with and then get the usual media recap at the end. What would you say to those who think TV is a washed-up medium, especially when it comes to advertising?



Tammy Quadrini

Radio & TV Versus Internet

Tammy Quadrini: This is a great subject and I can honestly say we increasingly see this mentality as we deal with VIPs and other decision-

makers that grew up with the Internet. They are the Internet generation and are a group of individuals who, in many cases, truly believe that TV and

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even radio has somewhat become passé, especially in getting any kind of response out of the target demo. They believe that no matter what they do, the major focus needs to be online.

We believe this assumption couldn’t be further from the truth. Our clients who use radio and TV are getting good results and a lot of success with conversion from radio and TV prospects. TV is still an emotional lead; people are being caught at exactly that point in time in which our message resonates,

they want to act, and they call when we've hit the mark. Our clients who use TV are getting appointments and people are coming in. With radio it is a bit longer of a process in terms of getting those appointments, but the radio prospects are very dedicated. So, in my opinion, it's an education process for the "Internet generation." That's what they know; that's their comfort zone; that's what they're familiar with. So for them it's easy to believe that advertising is all about the Internet, SEO, banner advertising and mobile marketing, and anything else is old school. It's our job as experienced industry leaders to educate any and all who will listen on the fallacy of that mindset.

What's getting lost is the continued importance of the media mix. That mix was important 20 years ago, 15 years ago, 10 years ago, and it will always be important. Those different mediums may change; the percentage allocation of one's advertising budget may change among those mediums; but that said, it does not change the critical importance of the overall media mix, utilizing radio, TV, online, print, social, etc. to work in tandem with each other. When I make an emphasis on the ability for TV and radio to be tremendously successful, we know that to be true because it still works for us. That is not to say that online and social media marketing are not important; in fact, they're a very important part of the media plan, but what needs to be stressed is that it's only a *part* of the plan, not the plan itself.

CER: So as we think about the overall plan and incorporating radio and TV into it, what are some other general rules of thumb schools should keep in mind?

TQ: There are several things:

- If the gauge is the cost-per-lead gleaned directly from the uniquely dedicated 800 numbers, that's a problem. There's no due credit given to people calling directly to the school, people that are walking in off the street because they've seen billboards, TV ads or heard ads on the radio, and most importantly, Internet prospects whose interest was inspired by



A Workforce Communications Strategic Partner

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, telecenter 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 direct response experience, starting with several small agencies, before 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.

Contact Information:

Tammy Quadrini
 President and CEO
 Griffin Marketing Group
 Phone: 317-585-9161 (Direct)
 Fax: 317-576-0885
 Email: tammyq@gmgmarketing.com
 Web site: www.gmgmarketing.com

TV and/or radio. Most of these schools have their website addresses right on their advertising, so obviously there's going to be a tremendous amount of Internet leads coming in – 30 or 40 percent or more of your organic Internet leads could be coming from TV and radio.

- There are numerous trending reports among our clients that strongly indicate each of these sources – call-ins, walk-ins and Internet leads – spike in volume when TV budgets increase, and even further when radio is added to the mix.
- TV and radio have the unique capability of “speaking” and relating to the target audience – and that is golden. These ads have people in them who look like them or talk like them, and when people can recognize themselves in an ad, and when they see something they can relate to wholeheartedly, that resonates. There's only so far that this relationship, if you will, can be developed with online advertising. The TV medium is still tremendously impactful in that sense from an emotional standpoint. TV and radio still work very well, but only if done right.
- TV and radio offer critical support with image-building, top-of-mind awareness and overall share of voice in the market. If someone believes TV and radio play have no impact, try cancelling it to track it and to see what happens overall. I would be very, very surprised if a cancellation of 100 percent of radio and TV dollars did not tremendously negatively impact call-ins to the school, walk-ins and organic Internet leads.
- It is strongly recommended that any school, or advertising agency on behalf of a school, do its due diligence in researching their target audience viewership levels and TV usage before making any assumptions, or accepting as fact any studies pushing only online advertising without having data to back it up. Everybody is going to push their own area of expertise...but the media mix is the best plan and each component – radio, TV, social media, print, online, etc. – is an important part of the plan.
- A study released just this year by Nielsen, for example, reflects more than 50 percent higher TV usage for high school education only viewers versus those with four or more years of college during morning hours, and almost twice the TV usage during the day as a whole. So decision-makers need to decide if they are trying to reach the college graduate, or the high school degreed prospect in need of further education. The same type of statistics is reflected in income levels, as well—the lower the income, the more they watch TV.
- Before drastically diluting your TV and/or radio budget, do your research. Quantify to the best of your ability the call-ins, walk-ins, and Internet prospects coming from traditional media.
- The pendulum seems to be swinging back to a direct response objective, both with creative and the buy. Evaluate what your competitors are doing.
- Complement the direct response initiatives and have a separate budget for a branding buy and creative.

- Test radio with web address only; there is more time for the message and radio pushes OL results anyway.

CER: Sounds like some excellent information. As we look at wrapping things up for this quarter, how are things going, generally speaking?

TQ: They're going better than average. It still is a challenge when compared to some years past, and I think the days when it was "easy" are gone. We're still fighting the same issues we have been for awhile with regards to some of the negative press about schools that went on for years,

The bottom line here is that the direct response media buy is no longer simply a unique phone number direct response media buy; it's the added-value components that make all the difference.

and the Gainful Employment requirements. That's all still active, so it's still presenting challenges for us. Likewise, the schools are having difficulty with regards to financial aid and

some of the other regulatory restrictions they have to deal with. If we're getting the phone to ring, but they're having a tough time with financial aid assistance, enrollments and starts are still a challenge. So while it's better than average from our perspective, it is a challenge for schools and it will likely remain so for awhile. We still need to be very creative in every aspect of advertising.

Local cable seems to be an increasing challenge these days, I suspect because the ADS penetration continues to rise. So, we have been recommending dedicated phone numbers by network on cable. There was a time when one dedicated phone number for all cable networks was sufficient and it was cost-prohibitive to have one unique number per network. But if you want

to have a better sense of what your ROI is with cable and know where changes could or should be made, then the recommendation is unique 800 phone numbers for each individual network. It makes you smarter and gives you better leverage with the cable stations.

CER: Anything in particular you're seeing now as opposed to before?

TQ: We are implementing a number of initiatives either for very low-ball costs, or strictly for added value. For example, we had a new campus launch where we did a fabulous promotion for local baseball teams. We had scoreboard advertising, 250 promo mentions that occurred prior to the event, and we had a table at the event where they gave away Koozies and brochures. The campus director was there and had the opportunity to throw out the first pitch at the game, and we had a radio interview live before the game—it was just a huge, huge promotion. Did we get people calling in to that radio station right then and there to show it was a direct, quantifiable lead to that promotion? No. But very likely this promotion, in conjunction with several others, was a huge contribution to a successful launch for that campus.

The bottom line here is that the direct response media buy is no longer simply a unique phone number direct response media buy; it's the added-value components that make all the difference.

CER: People often underestimate the power of radio, don't they?

TQ: They do; radio is not only a fabulous lead generator, but also an absolute support to the TV buy. If you have a good budget to negotiate with,

the added value and promotional opportunities you can have with radio are phenomenal. I would say whether your TV usage has been maximized or not, you should start dipping your toe in the water and use your top two or three radio stations for your target demo. We see consistently among all of our clients that the call-in, walk-in and organic Internet prospects show a good, solid uptick every time radio is on the air. It's excellent for event marketing and we're continuing to see better and better response from it.

There are a couple of other things I want to mention before wrapping this up for the quarter:

In the last three or four months we've not received a big push from stations about video pre-roll on their websites. That's the 15 seconds of advertising people see when they try to access a news story or video on a website and they can't opt out of it. There was a huge push for that at one time, but that seems to have dissipated. We're looking into this further, but my immediate thought is perhaps they aren't selling it like they once were or it's not as effective. This could be an opportunity for added value. It doesn't cost anything and gets you a little extra exposure, as long as you have the carrot of the media buy and/or addition you can place with it.

Finally, we all need to be very cognizant for the upcoming 4th quarter of the huge rollout for the *Affordable*

Care Act. Spending for these ads is expected to kick in at the onset of October and the anticipation is that the majority of this money is going to be on a local, rather than national, level, and we're talking about one billion dollars being spent by the end of the campaign. So if people aren't booked for 4th quarter, they should get booked ASAP and if they have any reservations about their budget and what kind of frequency they want to book, they should err on the side of caution and book heavily. They can always cancel, but if they wait and the *Affordable Care Act* money is already on the books, they're going to find themselves in a dilemma if they want to add money—and it could require two or three times the rate. The demand will be up and the supply down. It's already occurring in a number of different states across the country, specifically Colorado, Illinois and California. So wherever someone's school is they will want to check into their local anticipated spending.

CER: Final thought?

TQ: Like we've said before, at the end of the day, with the right creative, the right buys, and the right media mix...***TV and radio still work!***