

Duke University sees sky-high conversion rates with Sponsored InMails

“One of the extraordinary things about this InMail campaign is that we have two students starting in August who had never heard of this program when they received our InMail in March. In the history of my marketing experience at this school, I’ve never seen us convert that quickly.”



Elizabeth Hogan
Associate Dean, Global Marketing
Fuqua School of Business, Duke University

Marketing a unique MBA program

Duke University's Cross Continent MBA program offers a unique value proposition that can be difficult to convey through traditional ad formats. “Recruiting working professionals into our global programs has always been a challenge, because our concept is that you continue in role while earning a world-class MBA,” says Elizabeth Hogan, associate dean for global marketing at Duke. “Yet when high-potential professionals in emerging markets think about business school, they assume it involves quitting their jobs to do an MBA program in another country, or attending a local school in the evenings or on weekends.”

The majority of applicants to the program in the past have come in from word-of-mouth referrals. However, Duke wanted to promote the program to new prospects in diverse global regions who would not have learned about it otherwise.

Challenge

- Identify qualified prospects in target global regions including India, Russia, and Latin America
- Educate prospects on program’s unique value proposition
- Encourage email signups to request more information

Solution

- Sponsored InMails targeted by seniority, geography, and degree

Results

- **68%** open rate
- Cost per lead **10%** less than other channels
- **400%** increase in conversions compared to 2013 campaign
- Sales pipeline closure speed increased **300%**

Duke's marketing team knew that LinkedIn could help them target their ideal candidates all over the globe. "LinkedIn is a professional network for people who are interested in furthering their career, which is a natural fit for people who are interested in developing their careers through an MBA program," says Hogan.

LinkedIn's InMail solution provided an ideal method for delivering a detailed email message that explained the program's features, which included a call-to-action where prospects could sign up for information. Duke admissions counselors could then follow up with qualified prospects to encourage program applications.

"This campaign gave us an opportunity to target the right people and make them aware of this program, and it was phenomenally successful," Hogan adds.

Next-generation Sponsored InMail tool

Duke is a longtime LinkedIn customer, and had used Sponsored InMails successfully in the past. But the performance of the school's most recent campaign far surpassed all of their expectations.

In the most recent campaign, Duke benefited from numerous upgrades to the Sponsored InMail tool, including:

- Real-time delivery - prospects only receive Sponsored InMails when they are actively using the LinkedIn platform, increasing open rates
- Optimized mobile design features - a "sticky" call-to-action makes it simple for prospects to click through
- Uncluttered, personalized native inbox experience

These changes have made a substantial impact on Duke's campaign performance, resulting in a 400% increase in conversions in certain regions. In 2013, Duke spent \$10,000 on an InMail program in Russia, which delivered 150 leads. "This time, we're spending half as much in that region and have had twice as many leads," says Hogan.

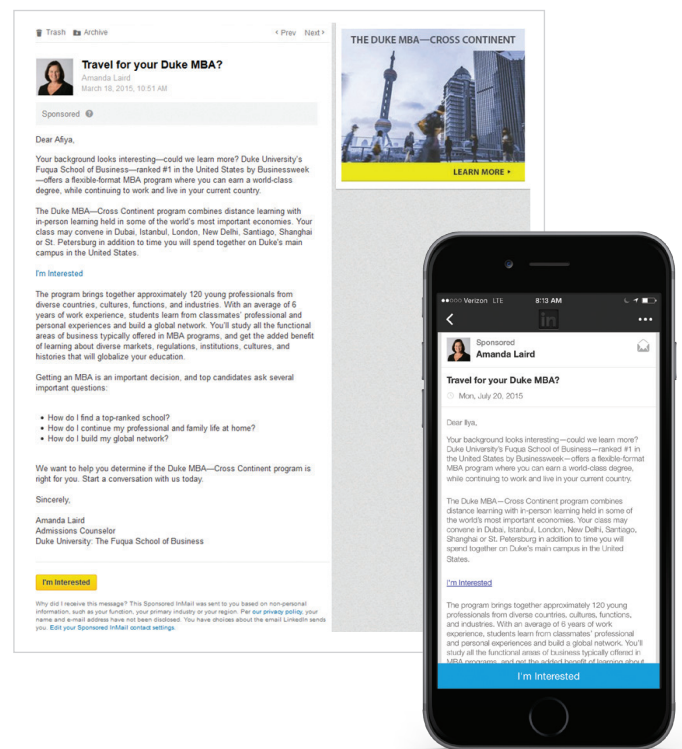
A shorter sales pipeline

Typically, for this MBA program, the time between when a prospective student expresses interest and when he or she enrolls is approximately 18 months. But thanks to the recent InMail campaign, says Hogan, "we have two students starting in August who had never heard of this program when they received our InMail in March. In the history of my marketing experience at this school, I've never seen us convert that quickly."

While Duke had experimented with different types of ads in the past—Sponsored InMails included—to promote the Cross-Continent MBA program, they'd never seen such stellar results before. While Hogan believes the improved results are partially attributable to the LinkedIn Sponsored InMail platform's upgraded delivery and optimization features, she also credits her team's focus on continually analyzing results to optimize messaging and targeting in order to improve outcomes.

"My mantra is that whatever experiments you run, be rigorous in tracking them so your organization can learn lessons from year after year and campaign after campaign," says Hogan.

Sponsored InMail



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