

Consistency is key

Charles Sturt University earns a 56% reduction in cost-per-start of application using an always-on, full-funnel strategy on LinkedIn



Charles Sturt University

Location: New South Wales, Australia

No. of Employees: 1,001-5,000

Industry: Higher Education



“A prospective postgraduate student can take over 250 days to make an enrolment decision. By bringing our data-driven marketing strategy onto LinkedIn, we’re assured that we’re engaging the right audiences and giving them relevant information at each stage of this journey—from brand awareness to consideration and conversion.”

Cathy O'Shannessy

Digital Performance Manager, Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university with campuses in six regional centres across New South Wales. It is ranked the country's most experienced and largest online university¹ and is #1 in Australia for graduate employment² but, enviable standing aside, Charles Sturt is fully aware that it is operating in a highly competitive and increasingly crowded industry. For its marketing team, getting to the bottom-of-funnel objective of converting interest into applications begins at the top of the funnel with brand building.

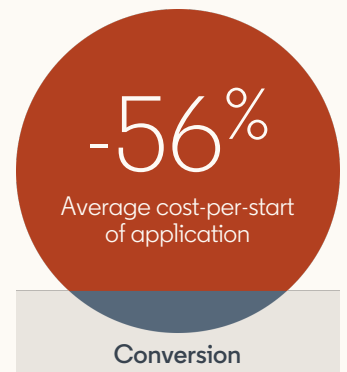
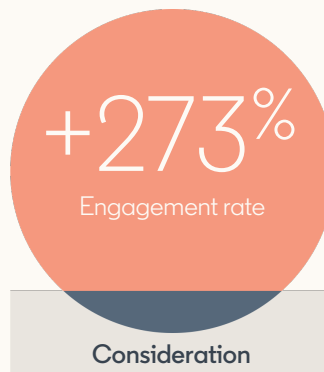
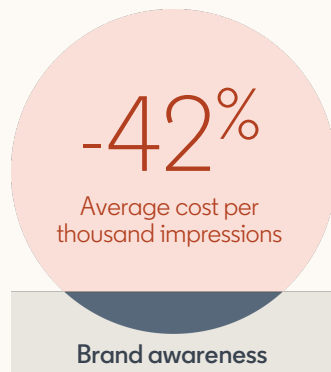
“It's very important to us that we are really clear and specific about what makes Charles Sturt unique and why it is the 'right' choice for our audiences. We need to stand out

from the crowd, cut through the noise and journey with them every step of the way. LinkedIn Marketing Solutions helps us do that,” shared Cathy O'Shannessy, Charles Sturt University's Digital Performance Manager.

In early 2019, after several years of marketing on LinkedIn, Charles Sturt made the shift from standalone, tactical campaigns to a strategic, university-wide marketing approach that spans the entire prospective student journey. This always-on, full-funnel strategy, which nurtures audiences from brand awareness to consideration and conversion, has contributed to a dramatic improvement in results in just 18 months.

Results

In the 18 months since Charles Sturt University shifted from tactical campaigns to an always-on, full-funnel strategy on LinkedIn:



¹ Australia Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment Higher Education Statistics 2020

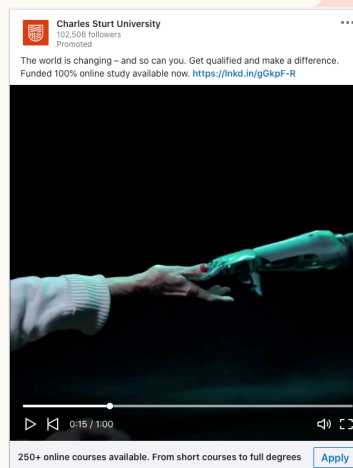
² The Good Universities Guide 2019/2020

Building a brand connection

The Charles Sturt University ethos comes from an indigenous Australian Wiradjuri phrase: *Yindyamarra winhanganha*. This means the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in. Its mission of developing and spreading wisdom to make the world a better place starts by ensuring that quality education is always accessible, so that everyone has the opportunity to make a difference through study and impactful research. This brand message is clearly and consistently articulated in all marketing campaigns, but takes two forms, for two different audience personas on LinkedIn.

Because these two audience personas have different needs and priorities, Charles Sturt is ready to engage them with tailored messages but, first, it needs to reach them. To this end, the university relies on LinkedIn's robust targeting capabilities to create audience segments based on their profession, time in the industry, as well as specific areas of interest.

"LinkedIn allows us access to audience targeting options that just aren't possible on any other platform. The ability to target with that level of granularity and accuracy, and without having to generate a custom audience, really helps us stretch every marketing dollar," said Cathy.

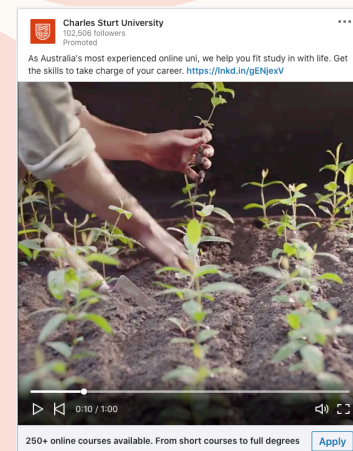


"Charles Sturt University fits me to a job"

This has been crafted to resonate with audiences seeking specific qualifications to achieve a career goal, whether through upskilling or reskilling.

"Charles Sturt University fits with my life"

This speaks to audiences who need their studies to fit with their lifestyle and existing commitments to work, family and community.



Charles Sturt University leverages LinkedIn data to stay close to its 200,000-strong alumni community as well. LinkedIn's first-party, member-provided data is more likely to be updated than Charles Sturt's own alumni database because LinkedIn members are incentivised to keep their profiles fresh for their own business, networking and career opportunities.

Driving impact from data

Charles Sturt University's data-driven marketing strategy enjoys a boost on LinkedIn, thanks to the platform's deep audience and campaign insights. Its full-funnel campaign setup on LinkedIn is supported by the LinkedIn Insight Tag, which is a lightweight piece of code installed on its website. Together with LinkedIn Campaign Manager, Charles Sturt benefits from full visibility over how audiences interact with its ads and webpages across the funnel. This feedback is valuable because it informs marketing optimisation at each funnel stage and helps Charles Sturt identify audiences who are primed for retargeting.

For example, in consideration-stage, course-focused campaigns, Charles Sturt uses landing page views as a key metric. By driving this action through its LinkedIn campaigns, it builds a high-intent audience segment for retargeting in the conversion stage.

At the conversion stage, audiences are served ads that have been designed to encourage them to start the application process. About 72% of all applications started and completed now come from this segment, proving that retargeting audiences on LinkedIn is a powerful way to drive conversions.

In the 18 months since Charles Sturt has adopted this approach on LinkedIn, its cost-per-start of application has fallen by a significant 56%. This is an important measure of success for Charles Sturt's marketing team as the start of the application process triggers other actions within the university's systems to support final conversion in the form of student enrolment. The fact that Charles Sturt is consistently achieving a low cost-per-start of application is giving it the confidence to continue its marketing journey with, and increase its marketing investment on, LinkedIn.