

SURVEY SAYS!

MEASURE WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS;
KNOW THE STRENGTH OF YOUR BRAND
WITH CAPTURE RECRUITMENT INTELLIGENCE

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“Your reputation precedes you.”

We've often heard this phrase in the movies. Though often referring to a person, by now we know that everything has a reputation — Yosemite National Park, Starbucks Coffee, Paris in spring.

REPUTATION PRECEDES NEARLY EVERYTHING.

In regards to reputation, I often think of colleges in 19th century America. In upstate New York, there are a number of small universities — Colgate University, for example — located in what urban New Yorkers frequently call “the country.” Colgate, founded in 1819, is located in Hamilton Village, which boasts a population of just over 4,000. There are nearly as many undergraduates attending the college. Despite its remoteness, *U.S. News & World Report* recently ranked Colgate No. 12 on its list of best liberal arts colleges in the country.

This ranking, not to mention name recognition (William Colgate, one of the original trustees, was the founder of the soap company we all know) lends itself to the school's reputation. Congressmen and Pulitzer Prize winners have graduated from Colgate. It is a Division I school.

For someone in New York, if not the Northeast, Colgate is a college worth considering — nearly 3,000 students certainly did, and that's only the ones who were *accepted*. It's easy to see why one might consider Colgate University — its alumni, its Anthropology Museum, the

Picker Art Gallery, and perhaps also their acceptance rate. For the incoming 2015 freshmen class, a full 8,722 students applied but only 27.3 percent were admitted.

Even their \$889 million endowment attests to their reputation. It's easy to see why one would want their child to carry a Colgate diploma. In college, as with everything else, there are choices. And with each choice comes an accompanying *brand*.

IN A WORLD FILLED WITH CHOICES, HOW DOES ONE CHOICE STAND OUT BEFORE ANOTHER?

Let me tell you about my new love: photography.

I am certainly interested in photography as an art form. I am aware, when I'm out prowling for a good shot, that I need to hone my "eye," literally and figuratively. Having a "good eye" in photography is essential but so is having a good camera. Perhaps more so.

If there's one thing I've learned about photography — besides the "rule of thirds" and lighting and such — it's that the entire art rests on investment, which is to say, buying things. I shoot film ... so which film should I buy? Is Kodak better than Ilford? Well, I use both, but I don't think anyone will argue that Kodak is synonymous with photography.

And then, of course, there are the cameras. Granted, I use the old SLRs: Pentax, Minolta, and Canon. But, in the long run, I'd like to buy a professional digital camera. Now, in the photography world of 2017, I'm going to hazard this statement: when it comes to DSLRs, the whole argument comes down to two names: Canon and Nikon.

I confess that one of the big reasons I think about "Nikon" is its mention in Paul Simon's song, "Kodachrome" (which, naturally, also puts Kodak in my head). I'm sure Nikon was pleased with that ditty. At the same time, the ubiquity of the Canon Rebel has glued that brand to my head, too. And there's that word again: *brand*.

To be a photographer is to be a consumer: I have to make choices between brands. I can experiment with film — it's cheap, relatively, so I can try out lots of brands. But with the camera body itself, that isn't so. It's common wisdom that one has to choose the brand of camera and stick with it; lenses, after all, are not interchangeable between brands. A Canon 5D Mark IV is going to cost pretty much the same as a Nikon D850, as much as \$3,500. Choose wisely.

It's the same with college. The sticker price is, obviously, much higher. And the investment, as with a good camera, can make or break the future. But here's an important point: I am under no circumstances going to choose a camera without research, and that research will be based on my own concerns and values. How many pixels does your camera have? How ergonomic is the body, and how much does it weigh? How accurate is the viewfinder?

I'm saving up for a DSLR camera and, in the meantime, I'm doing the research. High school kids are doing the same when it comes to higher education. And as those in higher education are realizing, colleges have their own brand.

You can list off any number of heavy-hitting colleges, of course. Harvard. UCLA. Yale. Michigan State. But if we can carry the analogy a bit further, consider the Sony camera. In 2006 — not that long ago, really — Sony acquired Konica Minolta and immediately rebranded its line of cameras. In 2005, Sony's market share for digital cameras had fallen to 9 percent. They are now third behind (you guessed it) Canon and Nikon.

What we are talking about is institutional brand awareness. What do students know about your school — or think they know? And more importantly, how can you find out?

You start with asking a student, naturally. And that means formulating a survey.

Today's students are in the market for a college education. I don't use that term lightly — "market," that is. In the increasingly competitive college admissions market, and in light of the power of the Internet in a student's college search, every college needs to understand how to market themselves most effectively.

But what does marketing mean to a small university, one without, perhaps, the reputation of a Colgate? For one, it means branding. Every college needs to ask itself: how is this school perceived in the market? For that matter, is the institution being perceived at all?

CAPTURE RECRUITMENT INTELLIGENCE (CRI) CAN HELP ANSWER THOSE QUESTIONS.

CRI, in its simplest form, will tell you what's important to kids as they're making a college decision. CRI is a state-of-the-art student survey platform that offers both your marketing and enrollment teams actionable intelligence on your institution's brand in your highest priority markets. Our pre-recruitment survey targets your institution's pre-senior inquiry population so you can optimize your marketing efforts.

A brief web search revealed a survey by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, utilizing Survey Monkey no less, "to gain insight into attitudes towards Nikon cameras and consumer behavior." Aside from asking about camera usage, the survey importantly asks after "perceptions regarding the Nikon brand." There is another Survey Monkey page set up to do the same for Canon; one of the questions asks what one looks for in a Canon camera; besides functions and design, another choice is "brand recognition."

Another question asks: "Do you think Canon cameras are affordable?" No surprise that students are asking the same thing of a potential college. CRI works to learn more about students in the same way as any other product survey.

CRI's pre-recruitment survey, the **National Survey of College Awareness (NSCA)**, is sent to more than 50,000 inquiries, targeting high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors. Our team of data analysts, Capture Labs, provides a written report on findings. Information like: what's important to students, demographics and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) root words that can be used to compare your institution to competitors. This can help you drive SEO and keyword strategies and understand what students care about when researching a school online.

Next, we survey admitted students with the **Yield Engagement Survey (YES)**, targeting your institution's entire admitted pool so you can directly address the needs of admitted students who are making their final selection decisions. YES provides a detailed understanding of positive and negative brand attributes, which can be used to help increase your school's yield.

Both NSCA and YES utilize the Capture Brand Positioning Scale (CBPS) to measure your brand across several key dimensions and focuses on student demographics, allowing you to update your records with detailed results.

In short, CRI measures two broad components: what's important to students and how strong your brand is. It quantifies your brand, exposing potential weak points, but also demonstrating what is working. Like Capture's other efforts, we aim to drive higher yield for your institution, and CRI directly asks students how schools can best do that.

One of our partners in the northeast commissioned both student surveys. The college got good response rates to both. What did they find out? A lot. CRI helped the school identify the key strengths and weaknesses around its brand:

- For pre-senior inquiries, students indicated affordability to be the most important factor when selecting a college but did not feel the school communicated its affordability effectively enough.
- Inquiry students were asked what factors were most important to them when selecting a college, and those importance factors remained consistent throughout the recruitment process. Both pre-senior inquiries and admitted students indicated the same factors as being important when choosing a college.
- It's very important that students can imagine themselves attending a specific school. We call this the "simulation heuristic" (how easily someone can picture a particular outcome). Admitted students who indicate that they could see themselves attending a school like this partner were four times more likely to deposit.
- The "representativeness heuristic," in which we tend to judge the likelihood of an event occurring based on finding similar situations and assuming the probability of occurrence will be the same, is also important - i.e. "if students like me attend, I'll attend also." Students who responded this way were two times more likely to deposit.
- Students who were higher quality (academically) were more likely to show skepticism about the school's brand.

The year that this school utilized CRI's yield survey, it saw a 2 percent increase in yield — even when admitting fewer students — than the previous year when it didn't utilize student surveys. We can attribute that growth to many things, and CRI, which helped the school identify students primed for enrollment, is one of them.

This partner's success speaks to both the predictive power of student response on CRI and the value of its near real-time data transfers: The school utilized daily data feeds from Capture, which highlighted individual admitted student needs and concerns about the school and admission process, and the school was able to act quickly and precisely using the data we provided.

Speaking of data, and in explanation of my title, consider *Family Feud*. Being old enough to remember, I watched this show in the '70s. Here at Capture, we have been known to spend lunch watching the new version.

Imagine the contestants approaching the host, their hand held over the buzzer. The host asked, "Name something important to high school seniors when choosing a college." An admissions officer ought to be able to hit that button quick, then blurt out an answer. When the host says, "Survey says..." your answer needs to be on the board. CRI gets you those answers.

Whether it's buying an expensive camera or enrolling in a college, potential investors have concerns. Knowing those concerns helps you shape not only your brand as an institution, but the experience for the customer and, ultimately, the student.