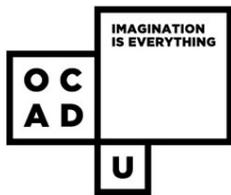CASE STUDY |

Collaboration with Vocantas Leads to Flexible IVR Solutions Geared Toward Student Success

Ontario College of Arts and Design University | Vocantas

OCAD University is the oldest school of arts and design in Canada. In striving to be one of the most significant specialized universities in the fields of art, design and media, OCAD U looks for ways to improve the student experience and increase retention and ultimately graduation rates. OCAD U connected with their students in the fall of 2013, the winter of 2014 and the fall of 2014 using Vocantas' interactive voice response solution for colleges and universities, Scaller™. The results of the outreach campaign helped OCAD U to develop practical strategies to help students connect with the resources they need to succeed. Representatives of the University have been asked to present the successful results of the Scaller solution at Ontario University Registrar's Association conferences two years in a row.

Photo credit: Ehren Seeland/interiorimages.ca

> Both students and staff report that Scaller provides a much needed conduit for interaction and collaboration so that students can ultimately be successful at OCAD U.

Scaller Results

In the fall of 2013, 68% of OCAD U students connected with the outbound automated call. Of those 644 students, 345 or 54% identified one or more areas of need in which they asked for help. In the winter of 2014, 59% of OCAD U students connected with the outbound automated call. Of those 544 students, 271 or 51% identified one or more areas of need in which they asked for help.

This compares to an overall average found across all higher education organizations using Scaller of 60-70% average connection rate and 40% of students asking for help in one or more specific areas. The next year, deploying a slightly altered list of survey questions, Scaller reached 64% of students; of the 600 students reached by Scaller, 412 or 69% identified one or more areas of need. This information is helping OCAD U to pinpoint areas of greatest need.

Scaller Campaign Follow Up

Having the data and reports from Scaller helped OCAD U to modify its processes to adapt to student needs. The first time calls were made in the fall of 2013, student success facilitators representing different program areas contacted students who identified areas of need. OCAD administrators found that this strategy was somewhat daunting for students; many students had identified more than one area of need, so received multiple calls from each area trying to connect with them. These students identified call fatigue, and

found it confusing to share their story with many different administrators. However, the information received from the calls was extremely valuable to the school in terms of identifying the most pressing needs of new students and clarifying student expectations with respect to the outreach calls.

In the winter of 2014, OCAD U followed up with the same cohort of newly admitted students, armed with a little more information about how the students were doing – their marks from the fall semester – as well as their self-reporting to the outreach survey about their areas of need. The survey itself was slightly revised based on the feedback from students in the fall, but maintained the focus on the original six support areas. The University's response in the winter to the students with needs was handled differently from the fall – two areas collaborated to return the calls from a centralized call centre, with both areas providing information on other student support units. One of the areas returning the calls was the Student Advising Centre whose mandate it is to provide referrals to on-campus partners, so the staff returning the calls were well acquainted with both the academic needs of the students and support programs. The University felt that in addition to providing students with timely advice and referrals to supports, the relationship building with the students through these two outreach campaigns was extremely valuable.

The third deployment of Scaller in the fall of 2014 was handled differently. A team of senior students representing the key support areas and working under the leadership of

the Student Advising Centre made 80 follow up calls a day (two student callers per day, 40 calls each) to students that asked for help in the automated outreach campaign; in some cases students were far more willing to open up about their experience at OCAD to their peers – although this was not always the case. The student success office also deployed two email campaigns- one, a "thank you for participating" email to all students who took the call, and another to students who did not take or did not receive the call asking if they had any concerns. Creating a culture of caring and lines of open communication have already demonstrated positive results at OCAD U. Both students and staff report that Scaller provides a much needed conduit for interaction and collaboration so that students can ultimately be successful at OCAD U.

Collaboration

Vocantas and OCAD U continue to collaborate effectively to improve retention and student satisfaction. Scaller is a flexible product, and OCAD U is able to change survey questions, add new prompts or change existing prompts as the needs of OCAD U students change. Vocantas offers its expert advice to help OCAD make the best choices when it comes to choosing questions, selecting prompt voices, and establishing follow up procedures. The Scaller web portal is easy to use; uploading student files is a simple process and the responsiveness of the Vocantas team was noted by OCAD U. The relationship between Vocantas and OCAD U is an ongoing partnership entirely dedicated to the success of OCAD U students. ▲

> " OCAD U is a specialized school of art, design, and media; we want to challenge and stretch our students to cultivate their talent to its full potential. The Scaller solution has helped our administrators pinpoint ways to alleviate some of the stress that can compromise the focus of our students. The easy to use web portal and guidance from the Vocantas team in terms of survey questions and follow up has helped us reach out to students who may be struggling and get them back on the road to success. "
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> – *Kelly Dickinson*
> *Manager, Student Advising*