Adventus *DRIVE*

How to optimise your
STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the wake of a drawn-out pandemic that saw international borders shuttered, the global education market is at last returning to its former strength, with student numbers rebounding positively and institutions experiencing a much higher pool of applicants than in the past year.

Despite a much more positive outlook, many institutions are still facing recruitment challenges. In this helpful guide, we will explore the top pain points for educational institutions, how agent management is evolving, and offer tips to diversify your student-recruitment strategies.

Armed with this knowledge, you will be able to attract more students to your institution and take advantage of technology and data as you embrace the digital future.

Adventus io

Top student recruitment challenges for institutions

The international–student market is bouncing back after a challenging few years, but institutions still face three key recruitment challenges. How can your institution tackle them?

1. Quick conversions

The feeling of being snowed under by applications is an all–too–familiar scenario for many institutions. But according to Davorin Vrdoljak, Partnership Director APAC at Adventus.io, volume isn't always the issue.

"For lots of institutions, the issue is not so much the lack of applications," he says. "It's more about, 'What do we do when we get the application? How do we move them through the pipeline as quickly as possible and convert them?'"

The solution to managing admissions while boosting conversion rates comes down to your recruitment channels. Consolidating those recruitment channels can support institutions that are seeking quality over quantity. Namely, institutions need to be judicious around which partners they work with.

Adventus io

2. Student retention

When it comes to student retention, another recruitment pain point is around how you can guarantee a student won't change their mind when they are six months into a course.

"You would hope if students are making a massive purchasing decision – their tuition fees – they would have researched it fairly well and understand what they're entering into. But it's not always the case," Davorin says.

Working with trusted and vetted recruitment partners can help mitigate this risk, as they can ensure students are getting the right information to make the best choice for their circumstances. Communicating effectively with the agent network is also critical to make sure your message gets out there.

SECTION 1 – Top student recruitment challenges for institutions   Adventus io

3. Getting visibility into student pipelines

For years, parts of the student-recruitment pipeline have remained untapped resources for institutions, but technology is changing the game. Tech solutions are increasingly giving institutions greater visibility into their student pipelines.

With more metrics to work with, such as how a recruiter is performing and how your institution stacks up against its competitors, it enables greater control and precision marketing – for example, the ability to promote a particular course to target markets and increase numbers for a selected course.

Additionally, streamlining your reporting processes – particularly in a highly regulated country like Australia – can eliminate unnecessary paperwork, according to Davorin.

"Regulators will look at details like the performance and behaviour of the agent – that's indicated by things like visa rejections and attrition," he says.

Having this data available through a consolidated recruitment channel can save a huge amount of time for institutions.

The evolving nature of agent management

The pandemic has created some fundamental shifts in how institutions approach their agent networks. How will this influence the future of the industry?

How technology is driving new efficiencies

Anyone working in international education understands it's no easy feat managing an agent network, especially one spread across multiple cities and countries. Just managing the agents' requests and questions can be extremely resource-intensive, and it's often exacerbated by agents not using technology that allows for efficient communication.

The good news is that greater adoption of technology across the industry is driving new efficiencies for institutions. Indeed, many are finding that having a single process and point of access to communicate with their networks is a total game-changer.

"Imagine a world where, instead of working with 100 agents, you work with one channel management partner, and all of those applications are going through the same process and the same platform," says Patrick Whitfield, Chief Commercial Officer at Adventus.io.

"The reporting that you then use with that channel management partner is one report – and it shows you every single application and their status. It cuts down on hundreds of emails and back-and-forth with different partners." he says.

The Value of transparency

Tech is also giving institutions more visibility into their networks. Many universities are exploring channel consolidation – such as working with a master agent or aggregator – because it's a scalable way of attracting more students. However, this can come at the expense of transparency.

"It's at the cost of not knowing how things are done – not knowing where the students are coming from, and which agents are actually selling their institution within a partnership," Whitfield says.

Technology can help build more visibility and trust in the network, such as by identifying unethical or poor-performing agents.
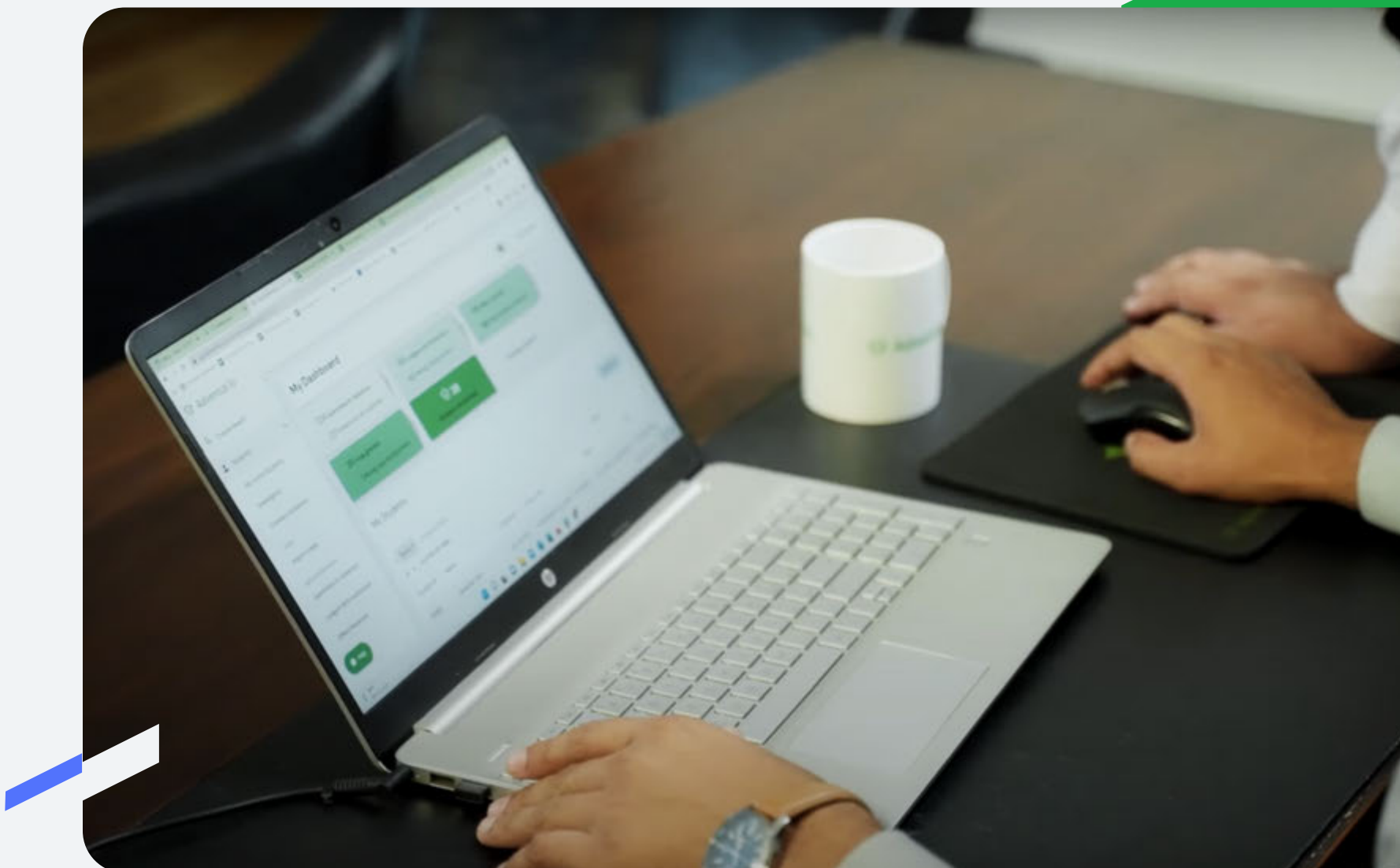
How control and precision mean better recruitment opportunities

Ultimately, institutions need the capability to maintain more control over their networks, and technology is enabling them to adopt command-and-control-style recruitment.

With a solution like Adventus Drive at your fingertips, you can manage your entire agent network from a user-friendly dashboard. This allows for more precise recruitment, and enables institutions to respond to key questions, such as:

"Where do you want to drive more conversions? Where do you want to put scholarships? Where do you want to increase your commission? Where do you want to start recruiting?" Whitfield asks.

When deployed appropriately and effectively, technology enables greater control and transparency over how you manage recruitment.

5 tips to build longer-lasting relationships with partner agents

Plan: Once you understand your partner's expectations and needs, you can work together to create targets and align your incentives.

Engage: Take the time to educate your partner about what makes your institution a standout. Because if they don't know what makes it special, they can't sell it genuinely.

Respond: Swift communication is key to conversions.

Support: Think about ways you support your partner to promote your brand and increase your reach. Could you co-design a marketing package that supports mutual growth?

Review: Every year, conduct an annual review with every partner and then take the time to discuss what worked, what didn't and how you can improve next year.

Diversify your student recruitment strategies

Institutions everywhere recognise the importance of diversification, but how can it actually be achieved?

Define what diversification means to your institution

When you think about diversification in the context of student recruitment, you probably focus solely on the source country. But there are multiple layers of diversity, such as the variety of disciplines. In Australia, for example, business and commerce degrees make up almost half of international-student enrolments, which means there's a big opportunity to increase enrolments in other disciplines.

One way institutions can attract students to a wider range of courses is through targeted fee discounts, says Roberto Souza, Regional Director LATAM at Adventus.io.

"Latin America is a very price-sensitive market," he says. "So if students decide to study overseas, they will always take into consideration the tuition fee."

Scholarships or fee discounts could make certain courses more attractive, especially in price-sensitive regions.

Source top recruitment partners and leverage data

Deciding who to let into your recruitment ecosystem can be challenging. A valuable recruitment partner must have local knowledge, be trustworthy and ethical, and deliver quality applications. On-ground regional expertise is also critical, but it can be hard to generate. To achieve this at scale, institutions can consolidate their recruitment channels and integrate recruitment tech platforms.

Strong diversification strategies also require a deep understanding of the source country, student appetite and channel partners. And this is where leverage valuable data insights can be so powerful.

So when forming an international student recruitment strategy, here are the key questions every institution must ask itself:

How can we build a trusted channel partner network in a new country?

How do influencing factors and decision-making behaviours differ between source markets?

Who are my highest-performing channel partners and what percentage of their total volume do they send to my institution? How can I increase penetration?

Which courses are popular among students from specific countries, and how can we best market to them?

How is my institution performing against competitors in terms of volume, conversion and product mix?

Be genuine

According to research on how racially and ethnically diverse students respond to higher-education recruitment marketing efforts, students who discover an institution isn't as diverse as it claimed to be often end up feeling intentionally misled.

The author wrote that deceptive practices could include "overrepresenting racial and ethnic diversity through imagery in recruitment marketing" or "inviting students of colour to special diversity recruitment events".

By contrast, institutions that invest resources into building genuine on-campus communities and make sure students are properly catered to are enjoying more long-term success than those that mislead for a quick win.

Adventus io

Final thoughts

There's no denying that institutions are facing common paint points around the world when it comes to student recruitment.

The good news is that technology is helping to solve many of these challenges, and forward–thinking institutions that are adopting valuable recruitment platforms like <u>Adventus *Drive*</u>, are becoming more precise in their recruiting and unlocking greater potential in their student pipeline.

If you want to attract quality applications, diversify your student cohort and meet enrolment targets, find out more about <u>Adventus *Drive*</u> and get in touch today.

Adventus io