

## CASE STUDY:

# PREMIER EDUCATION GROUP

## Career College Takes Control of Inquiry Vendors, Improves Conversion Rate with Sparkroom Technology Platform

### OVERVIEW:

In an effort to improve inquiry conversion rates, reduce manual tasks, and optimize overall marketing efficiency, Premier Education Group (PEG) turned to the Sparkroom Enrollment Marketing Automation platform. Since implementing this technology, the marketing team has seen the following improvements:

- **Real-time insight into affiliate inquiry performance** allows PEG to negotiate with vendors, resulting in improved cost-per-start rates
- **Improved data accuracy and full integration with CampusVue** eliminates manual entry, saving valuable staff time by enabling greater strategic focus
- **Improved conversion rates** from better decision-making with real-time dashboards and “slice-and-dice” capabilities

### COLLEGE PROFILE

Premier Education Group is one of the nation’s fastest growing privately owned career-training organizations, offering professional career-focused education at twenty-five campuses throughout the northeastern United States, from Maine to Delaware.

### CHALLENGE: Improve Inquiry Volume and Maintain Solid Conversion Rates

Like many for-profit schools, PEG is heavily reliant on pay-per-inquiry (PPI) sources to sustain and increase their enrollments. In fact, more than 80 percent of their inquiries come from online sources, making it the largest and most effective source of new admissions for the school.

After noticing conversion rates dropped when inquiry volumes increased, the PEG marketing team wanted to maintain their strong enrollment growth. However, given the limited transparency from inquiry vendors, they could not identify when and why some inquiries were converting, while others were not. In addition, they had no way to monitor the performance of inquiries at the affiliate level.

“The conversion rates from our PPI vendors weren’t as high as we wanted, but we had no real basis for questioning the inquiries our vendors and their affiliates were sending,” said Tony McPeck, Vice President of Marketing at PEG. “We reviewed our inquiry vendor performance on a quarterly basis, but by then it was too late to make constructive changes.”

The team also faced ongoing issues with inquiry accuracy. They relied on a manual process to enter inquiries into the Student Information System which was not only error-prone and time consuming, but it also required daily reconciliation. The team at PEG knew they needed to find better ways to manage their inquiries and inquiry vendors, reduce inefficiencies, and ultimately gain critical conversion points.

## **SOLUTIONS: Sparkroom Enrollment Marketing Automation**

After spending a year reviewing different inquiry management options, Tony and the team at PEG selected Sparkroom's Enrollment Marketing Automation platform.

"A number of technical features tipped the scales in Sparkroom's favor—the in-depth reports, the real-time data, and the fact that it fully integrated with CampusVue," said McPeck. "But most importantly, Sparkroom showed a level of interest in our existing procedures and team members that made us confident they would be a real partner—not just a service provider. We aren't dealing with an individual at Sparkroom, we're dealing with a whole team of people who are dedicated to ensuring our success."

With *Sparkroom Connect*, PEG can capture inquiries from all of their online sources, screen for invalid or duplicate inquiries, and deliver the scrubbed inquiries in real-time to PEG's internal systems. *Sparkroom Discover* also provides PEG with real-time dashboards and ad hoc "slice-and-dice" capabilities that enable the school to measure performance across a broad number of dimensions.

"The daily count in the dashboard feature is critical for us—it provides a real-time snapshot of how many inquiries by vendor, by affiliate, by campus, or by school group have come in across any timeframe," said Kim Charest, Executive Marketing Associate at PEG. "Seeing the Sparkroom reports in real-time gives us a level of control and insight that we never had before, allowing us to make better decisions based on real data, which supports our ongoing marketing and enrollment initiatives and provides evidence to back new ones."

## **RESULTS: Real-time Insight and Control**

Since implementing Sparkroom, the team at PEG has experienced multiple improvements, including fast, automated inquiry capture resulting in greater accuracy. Sparkroom's analytics dashboards enable real-time performance monitoring of each inquiry source and each affiliate, giving them greater control over vendor relationships and allowing PEG to optimize their marketing spend against the best performing inquiry sources.

"We used to feel like we were in the dark in terms of inquiries. If a vendor increased volume, we had no idea where they were getting those additional inquiries," said McPeck. "Sparkroom has put us in the driver's seat, giving us far more control. Not only can we see trends immediately, we can react to them. If a source isn't converting over the course of a week or two, we red flag it, and if that trend doesn't reverse, we can go back to the vendor to renegotiate costs or eliminate the inquiry source altogether. The opposite is true too—when we see strong conversion levels, we're able to negotiate more inquiries."

Sparkroom also provides useful, real-time feedback to the inquiry vendors, sending auto response messages that allow them to automatically see what inquiries are being returned and why.

"Having Sparkroom in place has been very eye opening—we recently noticed that we had purchased 80-90 inquiries from a single affiliate over a two-month period, and not one of those inquiries had converted, which was bringing down the overall conversion rate of that vendor," said Charest. "With the data from Sparkroom in hand, we contacted the vendor and worked with them to eliminate that weak spot. Without having that insight at the affiliate level, we might have mistakenly questioned the overall conversion rate of that vendor."

The team at PEG has also eliminated the tedious task of manually entering inquiries one field at a time. This gives them more time to focus on more strategic tasks, while improving the accuracy of the inquiries. In some cases, that time savings has allowed team members to take on additional tasks, while shifting their focus from tactical issues to more strategic ones.

**"Not only can we see trends immediately, we can react to them. If a source is not converting over the course of a week or two, we red flag it, and if that trend doesn't reverse, we can go back to the vendor and enter a discussion about renegotiating costs or eliminating the inquiry source altogether."**

**Tony McPeck,**  
Vice President of Marketing