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Mario Tabarini

Head of Guidance and Recruitment,
Bocconi University

A Multi-channel Approach to Reaching and Converting More Candidates During Unusual Times

Mario Tabarini, Head of Guidance and Recruitment at Bocconi University in Milan, Italy, had an edge over other schools. Though the school is young by Italian standards (founded in 1902), it was the first in Italy to grant Master's degrees in economics and management. It was also one of the first in the world to set up an international exchange agreement (with New York University in 1974), which has resulted in a very diverse student population.

Like many graduate business schools, in-person events that built trust between candidates and the school's brand were key to their recruitment strategy. When the COVID-19 pandemic erased all opportunities to have in-person, one-on-one conversations, Mario's team was facing a monumental challenge.

A successful multi-channel approach

Mario moved quickly to reshape Bocconi's recruitment strategy, shifting it to a fully digitized, multi-channel approach. Even with the absence of in-person events, the school was able to convert more candidates during a highly unusual time.

Bocconi was aggressive in its approach. During 2021, the school delivered around 600 recruitment activities—almost all of them online. Partnerships were critical to the success of these events. "We set up lots of collaborations with strategic providers, such as GMAC," Mario noted.

Their new strategy included a mix of GMAC Media Solutions products to reach, engage with and recruit business school candidates. Mario worked closely with BusinessBecause to produce articles and videos, social media and webinars that showcased students, staff, faculty and alumni; he and his team participated in the Virtual MBA Tour; and they bought leads through the GMASS Search Service.

Lead nurturing via email

Mario's team continually improved internal processes to successfully nurture leads from these three channels. Email automation allowed them to deliver high-quality content about the school and its offerings *and* help them improve lead tracking.

Three new online activities were also so successful, they will continue in the future:

- Hosting master classes
- Setting up one-to-one meetings with admitted students
- Holding webinars for admitted students

Going forward, "we envision a blended recruitment format that will gradually reintroduce in-person activities while keeping an extensive offering of online events," Mario said.

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Significant success

Prior to the pandemic, Bocconi held an in-house Open Day for their Master's programs; 98% of attendees were Italian, mainly from the Lombardy region where Milan is located. During the school's first blended Open Day (held in-person and online) in 2021, 40% of the participants were international.

The overall success of this multi-channel online strategy was significant:

- Leads increased 128% in 2021
- Master's of Science applications increased by 15%
- International applications increased by 18%

"Overall, it has been the highest increase in terms of leads and applications," Mario added. "It was really a successful year, and we look forward to working in this new environment."

To hear Mario's full 15-minute solution story visit:

<https://www.gmac.com/reach-and-recruit-students/gmac-connect/marketing-advice-and-best-practices>