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Graduate
Management
Admission
Council™

Jose Soto
Rice University

The MBA Tour Fuels Massive Increase in Applications

The admissions team at Rice University participated in numerous virtual events during Fall 2020 to connect with prospective students around the world. Jose Soto, Director of Recruiting, wasn't sure what to expect. The results exceeded even the rosiest outlook – they reached new students in new markets, which led to a massive increase in applications.

400% increase in applications

In past years, Rice has focused its East Asian recruitment efforts on China. The MBA Tour's virtual events opened the door to countries they hadn't physically visited, and this drove the increase in applications. "We saw huge turnout and interest from prospective students in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand," Joe said. "We hadn't considered traveling to these countries because of the cost."

Though the 400% increase in applications didn't only come from those three countries, they were responsible for most of it. For a relatively small program like Rice, that was a huge win for Joe and his team.

Engagement strategy helped boost ROI

The admissions team had a plan going into The MBA Tour, and they expanded on it based on need. "We had a strategy to reengage with folks within two weeks after we officially met

"Once you figure out the best allocation of your resources, then you can trim your outreach and focus on the markets with the best ROI."

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virtually," Joe remarked. "I think the interest is reflective of that. We also adjusted our standard hours of operation so candidates in Southeast Asian countries could reach us. And we created a WeChat account so candidates could contact us there."

Variety of communication methods fueled connections

Joe and his team took advantage of The MBA Tour's features to connect with students in different ways. They met prospective students in meetup sessions, one-on-one meetings and MBA Talks, and they used the platform's chat function to connect and answer questions.

"We do realize that students are Zoom-fatigued, so we used the chat feature to engage with folks," Joe said. "The MBA Talks actually brought us in contact with a lot of students that weren't on our radar for a variety of reasons." Joe's suggestion to other schools: Choose the markets that look enticing.

On average,

49%

of attendees said they are now considering schools that they had not explored before the tour

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