



EDUCATIONAL ENDEAVORS

Combining the power of outdoor and a vanity-800 number, Pennsylvania's Cambria-Rowe has boosted its attendance and its reputation as a big school and a credible institution.

by Christina Ward

Over two years ago, Cambria-Rowe Business College in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, upon the advice of their Lamar Outdoor Advertising representative, started using an 800-vanity number to increase student enrollment and streamline incoming calls for both campus locations. But the college never thought it would be so successful.

Although Cambria-Rowe opened 115 years ago, school officials claim that they have had the best two years in school history following the deployment of a new vanity number for marketing purposes, 1-800-NEW-CAREER. However, the school wasn't always keen on the idea. Chris Foster, the account executive at Lamar Outdoor Advertising in Duncansville, Pennsylvania, recalls that he'd been with Lamar for nine years before finally convincing this client to try billboards.

800response, the largest supplier of vanity-800 numbers since 1989, partnered with several outdoor companies to educate them on the benefits of using vanity numbers. Lamar approached 800response and asked the company to come up with an 800 number for Cambria-Rowe. "The Lamar office in Pennsylvania, one of our advertising partners, pitched the idea, and challenged us to come up with an easy-to-remember number for the college that would send a great message and put people on a new career path," says

Laura Noonan, vice president of marketing and corporate communications at 800response in Burlington, Vermont.

According to Noonan, vanity numbers boost calls and keep ads on customers' minds. "Admissions saw an immediate increase in calls, reduction in response time and a shorter application process," says Noonan.

After receiving the school's vanity-800 number, Mike Artim, executive director of Cambria-Rowe Business College, began cross-marketing it with other media, including radio and TV. Lamar's Foster reports that the first time the college displayed the number on a billboard, it was too busy creatively. By cutting down on the visual clutter, Foster suggested travelers would remember the number more easily. He suggested a plain billboard with just the vanity number.

Cambria-Rowe's 800 number appeals to people looking to enter or re-enter the workforce and advance their careers, and those searching for a career change. Artim comments that their new number was a perfect match.

Since the launching of the new 800 number, Cambria-Rowe has seen a substantial difference in calls and number of applications. According to Artim, "We have instant recognition with the number. The number also shows that we're a credible organization."

Because Cambria-Rowe has two campuses serving the Pennsylvania area, they have two different direct line numbers with different area codes; however, the 800 number

solves some of those challenges. "The 800 number gave the college the ability to use a top-line branding tool, significant brand organization and advanced routing tools to rout customers to one number," Noonan comments. The number can ring to either campus, which allows the school to direct customers to the campus they want to reach without having to recall the correct 10-digit direct line.

Noonan reports that 800response recently conducted a survey, which showed that vanity numbers will double the recall rate by using simple numbers, streamline routing and top-line branding to build brand equity. "If you combine a good 800 number that's an extension of your brand with careful selection of your advertising placement, you'll be successful," she says.

However, 800 numbers can prove difficult to acquire. Because they convey a level of credibility and stability

with long-term firms, most 800 numbers belong to older companies, Noonan acknowledges. Fortunately, 800response's custom number service allows other companies to use the same number. "We work with colleges all over the country, and we're able to rout this number to the specific area where the student is located," Noonan mentions.

In the past, Cambria-Rowe has conducted several positive advertising campaigns. "We've used other means of advertising, including radio and TV, but this campaign has by far been the most successful," Artim comments. "It's the recognizability factor of the number that has made it such a great success for us."

Cambria-Rowe has received relatively little negative feedback from the campaign as well. "I recently received a phone call from someone wanting to buy our 800 number, but I wouldn't

give it up for anything," Artim reveals. "It's a great service, and we love it."

When deciding to use a vanity-800 number, Noonan recommends advertisers choose a number with a strong link to their company's identity, one that ties directly into their call to action and is as relevant as possible. She cautions that words are generally easier to remember than numbers so an ineffective number could cost the company in recall and branding ability.

According to Foster, vanity numbers are great because they're easy to remember, even after you've passed the billboard. "It's simple, you can cross-market it and use it in mixed media, and it's consistent," Foster comments.

With its new number, 1-800-NEW-CAREER, Cambria-Rowe is well on the way to offering higher education to students for another 100-plus years. ■