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Institutional Accountability in International Student Recruitment: Working with Agents

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Outline for this session:

- Rigorous Agent Management
- Strategic Planning: Shaping Your Intl Recruitment Goals
- Types of Recruitment Agents
- The Contract/Agreement: Tips
- Selection of Agents
- Training & Supporting Agents
- Performance Analysis: Qualitative & Quantitative

Rigorous Agent Management

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Brand

- An agent representing your institution abroad can hurt or help your efforts.
- An authorized agent is often the first and main brand cue, from which inferences on your institution will be made.
- If part of your brand predicates on professional responsiveness, do agency counterparts advance or undo this branding?
- Are admission criteria being well communicated and strictly followed?

Legal

- Can it be said that your agency selection is supported by a record of diligence?
- Has your institution reviewed compliance with Canadian legislation (e.g. Section 91, IRPA)?
- Are your agents in legal compliance in their countries of operation?
- Are contracts current, fully signed, and address risks to the institution?
- FOIPOP issues

Enrolment

- What is the ROI for the work done by agents (revenue less costs and commission)?
- Are you tracking diversity? How are you defining diversity?
- Are systematic growth targets/plans per region in place?

Strategic Planning: Getting Started

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Model?

- Agent Only
- Staff Only
- Hybrids of varying kinds e.g. Different models for different markets, such as using only travelling staff in some markets, only one agent supported by staff in others, and multiple agents and no staff visits in still others.

Define Success

- Diversity - make definitions clear (COO / Citizenship)
- Brand Awareness
- Leads/Apps/Bums in Seats
- Partnerships/Articulations
- Relationships (schools/High Commissions/etc.)
- Time to develop a market?

Parameters

- Max % intl enrolment (do you have adequate campus resources)?
- Which countries (carefully define what works with your plan/model)?
- How many agents can you adequately support?
- What is your budget for agent training/support (travel, materials, time)?

Are all Agents Equal?

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Types / Specializations

- ▶ Undergraduate
- ▶ Graduate
- ▶ High School
- ▶ College/Vocational
- ▶ Study Abroad
- ▶ Student Travel
- ▶ Language

Infrastructure

- ▶ Field Offices?
- ▶ Methods of Reach (schools, events, digital)?
- ▶ Payment Structure
- ▶ Number of institutions they represent (competition)?
- ▶ Types of services (program advising, visa support, cultural readiness)
- ▶ Local brand, access to key opportunities, contacts

The Contract: Be Specific

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Institutional Role

- What are your responsibilities to agents and students they attract?
- What field support and training will you provide?
- What materials will you provide and how often?
- How will you assist with conversion?

Agent Role

- What services do they offer in the field and with leads/applicants?
- What screening are they responsible for?
- Verification of Documents
- Pre-departure prep?
- Reporting to institution
- Can they provide support to your reps when in region?
- Sub-agents?

Terms

- Remuneration plan:
 - Flat fee
 - % Tuition
 - Incentivized (bonuses when targets reached)
 - Higher for Target/Problem Areas?
 - Same for All?
- Marketing (Who and How)
- Exclusionary regions?

Agent Selection: Picking the Right Brand Ambassadors

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1. Define recruitment regions and number of agents you can support (understand risks of 'more the merrier approach').
 2. How to find them? Agent Fairs, recommendations, conferences, visa officers.
 3. Things to consider:
 - Who else do they represent (competition/poor fit)
 - Canadian expertise
 - Do they charge students (on top of commission from institution)?
 - Interview several for each target region / check references
 - Consider formal interview
 - Can they deliver your target numbers? When?
- * Be cautious of 'rogue agents' advertising they represent your institution (beware of photo requests/requests for stacks of brochures).

Training: Two Way

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By agent

- ▶ Education system(s)
- ▶ Translating admission requirements
- ▶ Fraud/Risks in region
- ▶ Visa success rate
- ▶ Financial ability / loan options for students in region
- ▶ Customs/cultural sensitivities
- ▶ Services required on campus (e.g. food selection, prayer rooms)
- ▶ Political/health challenges of region
- ▶ Recruitment opportunities
- ▶ Calibre of local education
- ▶ Agent site visits: Integral

By Institution

- ▶ Thorough knowledge of institutional programs, values, selling features
- ▶ Campus visits (where feasible)
- ▶ Clear understanding of admissions and fees
- ▶ Regular updates (new programs, selling features, admission changes)
- ▶ Understanding of scholarships
- ▶ Familiarization with collateral and online resources (e.g. virtual tours, videos, applications, social media)

Ongoing Collaboration

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Communications

- Dedicated liaison(s) to support recruitment agents (expediently)
- Coordination of leads from region
- Regular status reports
- Expedient admission turnaround for pre-screened apps from trusted agents
- Regular site visits (where possible) – modeling/relationship building

Advertising

- Social Media (agent & Inst)
- Event ads
- Regional mediums (digital, billboard, websites, schools)
- Joint events and school visits in region (where possible) – enhance credibility of agent

Materials

- Ensure agents have ongoing supplies of relevant (updated) materials
- Consider local printing
- Consider providing banners, table cloths for regional events

Performance Analysis

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Qualitative

- ▶ Are students receiving a high quality of service?
- ▶ Do offices/practices meet your values?
- ▶ Is there strong 2 way communication?
- ▶ Have applicants been strong (quality)? Trends to note or catch?
- ▶ Have there been issues with fraudulent docs?
- ▶ Does the agent support your needs in region (travel, advertising, printing)?

Quantitative

- ▶ Has there been development/growth?
- ▶ How many initiatives does the agent partake in on your behalf?
- ▶ Leads evaluation: quantitative analysis
- ▶ What is conversion from applicant to registrant?
- ▶ Do students pay tuition in a timely manner?
- ▶ Do students stay/graduate (retention)?