

# TOP 10 PAY-PER-INQUIRY MISTAKES YOU ARE MAKING

A Thruline Marketing eBook

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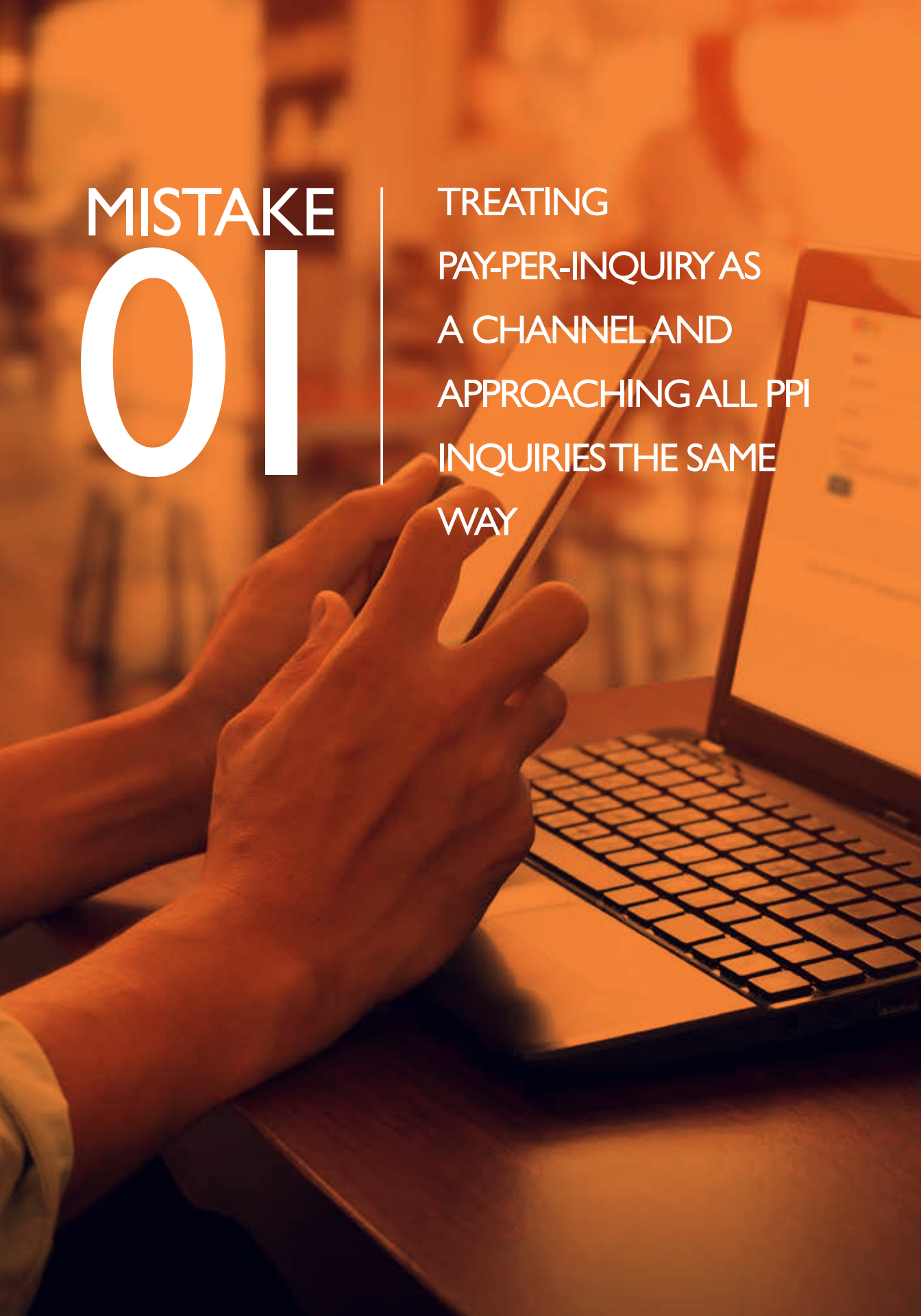


Education marketers have been on a roller-coaster ride the last few years, navigating changes in the way prospective students interact with institutions, coping with increased government oversight and regulations, and dealing with a significant evolution of the media landscape. These changes have had a major impact on pay-per-inquiry (PPI), an inquiry source many schools leverage.

As a PPI pioneer in the education space, we have decades of experience working with schools to maximize effectiveness of their PPI buy within a larger marketing ecosystem. These 10 mistakes are based on our experience and learnings.

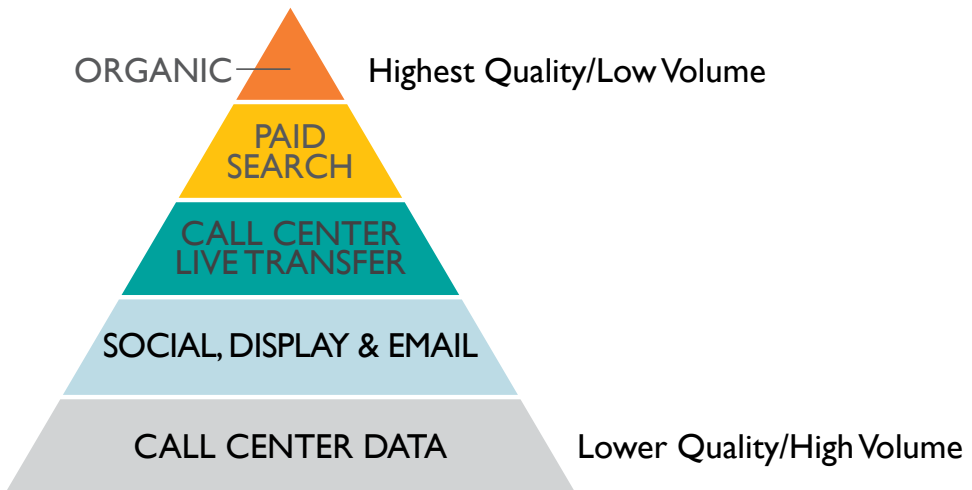
# MISTAKE 01

TREATING  
PAY-PER-INQUIRY AS  
A CHANNEL AND  
APPROACHING ALL PPI  
INQUIRIES THE SAME  
WAY





is not a channel; it is a pricing model. PPI inquiries come from a variety of traffic sources – online display ads, website inquiries from forms, social media, emails, call centers, etc. In addition to different sources, these inquiries have differing levels of intent, varying quality, etc. Smart marketers will have a specific strategy for working each type of inquiry. Employ a portfolio management philosophy when evaluating your PPI buy.



A woman with short dark hair is looking down at a tablet device. She is wearing a dark green jacket. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting with lights.

# MISTAKE 02

UTILIZING A LEAD  
SCORING MODEL THAT  
DOES NOT ACCOUNT  
FOR INTENT OR  
SOURCE

We

often talk with schools that are using lead scoring models without taking into account the lead's source or intent level. This is a missed opportunity. Data shows that the most predictive variable is a prospect's intent/interest level. Additionally, intent and inquiry source are highly correlated.

For example, inquiries that come from Facebook News Feed ads will often have lower intent than those from organic site traffic, where the inquiry was specifically searching for education-related terms. These organic site inquiries need to be valued differently than the higher intent inquiries because they are further along in the buying process.



Intent should be a measure used within your lead scoring and response strategy. We recommend requesting the intent/inquiry source information from your PPI vendors.

# MISTAKE 03

NOT REQUIRING  
TRANSPARENCY AND  
DISCLOSURE FROM  
YOUR VENDORS





If

you are being reticent in asking for more transparency and information from your PPI vendors, don't be! Quality vendors should provide you with any information you ask for, including

- Where the inquiries are coming from
- Whether they are generated in-house by the vendor or purchased and resold from affiliates/subvendors
- Types of marketing and ads being used (job sites, online display, PPC, etc.)
- What the marketing creative looks like

The more informed you are about your PPI inquiries, the better decisions you will be able to make.



A dark, top-down view of a meeting table. In the center, two hands are shaking in a firm grip. The table is cluttered with various items: a laptop, a coffee cup on a saucer, a glass of water, a plate with lemon slices, and some papers. The background shows the arms and hands of several people sitting around the table, suggesting a collaborative meeting environment.

# MISTAKE 04

NOT HAVING  
TERMS OF  
ENGAGEMENT  
FOR PPI

# You

must be your own advocate. Have policies and guidelines for your PPI vendors, including

- The use of subvendors and affiliates – which will you accept
- What types of call centers you agree to work with
- How your brand name is utilized
- What your compliance standards are
- Whether or not you will accept shared inquiries

All of these factors can have a significant impact on your PPI strategy and outcome. Be assertive with your vendors, and work together to build a program that works for your school. A vendor that is not willing to be cooperative should be a red flag.





# MISTAKE 05

POOR SYNERGY  
BETWEEN MARKETING  
AND ADMISSIONS



Marketing and admissions need to be integrated for you to achieve optimal return on investment (ROI) from your PPI inquiries. An example of this is how warm transfers (live inquiries passed from a call center directly to the admissions team) are worked. Before going live with a campaign, work collaboratively with your admissions counterparts to ensure they have the appropriate infrastructure in place to handle the inquiry flow.

Then, educate the admissions team on where the inquiries are coming from, what to expect and best practices for working different types of inquiries. A quality PPI vendor will work with

your marketing and admissions teams to provide insight and information about the process. Some may also be willing to provide training. This will ensure that your teams are responding to inquiries in the ideal way and you are maximizing your dollars.





# MISTAKE 06

ANALYZING PPI  
RESULTS ONLY AT  
A VENDOR LEVEL



is a complex product that requires time and analysis to accurately analyze the details of what is performing well and what isn't. This includes analyzing your PPI buy by source, geography and program, among other variables. A vendor may be performing very well for your business program and poorly for healthcare programs. You may miss out on valuable inquiries and enrollments if you cut the vendor completely; first try to find ways you can improve your results as a team.

A quality vendor that has your best interests in mind will do this type of analysis for you if you ask. Request a level of granularity so you can make smarter decisions for your school.



# MISTAKE 07

NOT EVALUATING  
PERFORMANCE  
AGAINST OTHER  
PAID MEDIA







any education marketers have been shifting dollars from PPI sources to others such as pay-per-click (PPC). In some cases, they may have moved too many dollars to paid media. We have seen many cases where a vendor's previous agency was not evaluating the incremental cost-per-start (CPS) performance of paid media against CPS of specific PPI traffic sources, some of which were actually lower. It is all about evaluating where pockets of opportunity are.

Use the data to guide your decision-making. You may be missing out on opportunities for more total enrollments from your marketing dollars.



“ IT IS ALL ABOUT EVALUATING WHERE POCKETS OF OPPORTUNITY ARE. ”



# MISTAKE 08

NOT SHARING  
PERFORMANCE  
TARGETS WITH  
YOUR PPI VENDORS

A

good PPI vendor wants to be your strategic partner – we want you to succeed! True success means working collaboratively toward your short-term and long-term goals. Being transparent with your vendor(s) about your goals, spend and other vendors you are

using will motivate your vendor(s) by giving them a target. You may be surprised at how much this will incentivize them because they will know what to focus on.



Consider requesting price discounts in exchange for a longer-term, multi-month commitment. Many vendors will jump at this opportunity. There is a strategic way to be more transparent without losing the upper hand in the relationship.

Your ultimate goal should be to improve results. The more information you give your vendors, the more they are able to develop strategies to optimize performance. You may be surprised at how a more strategic partnership can ultimately benefit you and your bottom line.

# MISTAKE 09

HAVING A  
STEREOTYPICAL  
VIEW OF CALL  
CENTERS AND JOB-  
SITE INQUIRIES



# Not

all call centers and job sites are created equal. There are many call center operators in the education space to choose from. You hold the upper hand in deciding whom you will work with and what your standards and guidelines are. A job search and an education search are related, and it IS possible to generate quality enrollments from both.

A high-quality call center vendor will provide you with complete transparency and approval for data sources, processes, scripting, etc. Leveraging this information can add significant value to your PPI strategy while mitigating your compliance concerns. It is critical to ask questions and clearly outline your expectations. Also, major progress has been made in the last year, industrywide, to improve the

consumer experience through a job-site registration process. Consequently, the quality of school inquiries originating from such a process has improved significantly. For many consumers, their job search and interest in education are inextricably intertwined. When executed by a quality-conscious vendor, inquiries from a job-site/call center process can be high-converting, compliant and plentiful.





# MISTAKE 10

UTILIZING MULTIPLE  
THIRD-PARTY  
TOOLS WITHOUT A  
UNIFYING STRATEGY



any useful third-party tools are available to institutions to help improve inquiry pool quality. Some identify fraudulent or duplicate inquiries while others help with compliance, etc. It is important to be strategic and thoughtful with how these tools work together to support your goals.



We often see institutions purchase these types of tools and simply dump them on top of their campaigns. That is not an efficient or effective use of your dollars or time. Be thoughtful about selecting tools and vendors. Develop a framework to extract insights and make them actionable. Ongoing monitoring and analysis are critical. Taking a more intentional approach will ensure they're set up in the optimal way and are enhancing your ROI.



**WE OFTEN SEE INSTITUTIONS PURCHASE THESE TYPES OF TOOLS AND SIMPLY DUMP THEM ON TOP OF THEIR CAMPAIGNS.**



