College Recruiting Microsite - Creative Brief

Name: College Recruiting Microsite
Date: June 30, 2005
Version: 1.0
Business sponsors: Rob Schreibman, Lloyd Sargeant, Greg Lumsden
Business manager: Steve Brent
Creative manager: Jon Samsel

Why are we communicating?

Countrywide is thinking about creating a microsite targeting the college student/grad audience – people who may be looking for a fast-track to a management career.

Why? We need to rapidly grow our sales force to keep up with increased demand. We are growing way too fast and current recruiting methods are just not enough. We are looking for outside the box ways to reach out to new recruits.

One way to do so is to study what others are doing - who are today’s leading recruiters of college grads looking for management careers? What companies are top-of-mind? Enterprise rental car is one of the best at doing this.

http://www.erac.com/recruit/default.aspx#

How did they do it? Beside a rigorous sales training program tailored to the college graduate, they created a unique online experience as one way to reach out to new recruits. The microsite has worked well. They link to it from their corporate site and it stands on it’s own as a unique microsite. To drive traffic to the site, they have an entire online marketing campaign devoted to linking traffic to the site and they promote this microsite on all handout literature.

Goals

• Showcase how Countrywide Home Loans’ FSL division is a great way to fast-track a person’s management career goal
• Make Countrywide (FSL) “the employer of choice” for College Grads. Currently neither CW nor FSL have websites targeting college grads
• Establish ourselves as a hip, desired employer
• Launch by 9/1/05, so that when our dedicated recruiters hit the campuses, they can refer the potential hires to this new microsite. We will be at career fairs, etc, beginning this fall and grads are looking for opportunities
• The site being interactive, fun and effective would define a successful site launch
Who are we talking to?

• College students and recent college graduates looking to fast-track a career in management
• Age: 18-25
• Sex: Men & women
• Geography: All states

What insights do we have about our audience?

• Surveys:
  - Collegenews.com article “Annual Survey Finds...” (attached)
  - http://www.csufresno.edu/ir/csxq.htm
  - http://docs.yahoo.com/docs/pr/release1242.html

• Feelings & Perspectives:
  - Impatient (want to fast-track their careers)
  - Need cash (money may be more important than long-term career goals)
  - Security (benefits and job security may be important to some)
  - Entrepreneurship (need to feel they can be independent, may have unique choices)
  - Need advice, but not preachy
  - Actionable (need to be able to do something productive or fun while online)
  - Attention deficit (short attention spans, need to hook ‘em early)
  - Community (A sense of community may be important)
  - Trust (Is Countrywide a brand they will trust, need to establish trust) with this audience

What is the one idea we need to communicate?

• Countrywide is one of the first companies that college grads think about if they are looking to fast-track a management career.

Why is it believable?

• Countrywide is the largest independent mortgage company in U.S
• Countrywide is America’s #1 Residential Lender *Inside Mortgage Finance January, 2005
• Funded more than $435 billion in 2003, $363 billion in 2004
• Founded in 1969, our roots are in the FHA/VA business, and the vast majority of our business today is still FHA, VA and Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac eligible financing
• Countrywide is the largest mortgage lender to African Americans and Hispanics.
• This year, we set a goal of funding $1 trillion in targeted home loans to minorities, low-income families and in low-income communities by 2010
• Making the dream of owning (and keeping) your own home has been our mission from the beginning
• Countrywide entered the non-prime market in the mid-90s via the corporation name Full Spectrum Lending
  o Entered the market very carefully and deliberately
  o Start-up-like environment/entrepreneurial spirit
  o Responsible, ethical sub-prime lender
  o Ready access to capital, ability to invest & grow
  o Ability to offer unique products to broad range of customers
  o Specialize in providing “cash out” for current homeowners (not trying to be known as a rate & term lender)
  o Large, national sales force (Account Executives)
• While non-prime production still represents less than 10% of our overall volume, today we find that we are a top ten non-prime lender
• The non-prime sector is critical to Countrywide’s ongoing effort to put people historically outside of the mainstream mortgage markets into their first homes, to help them build equity, and to help them use that equity to send their kids to college, start a business and otherwise manage their finances
• Countrywide originates non-prime loans through its retail subsidiary, Full Spectrum, and through its Wholesale Lending Division and their network of mortgage brokers
• We are hiring like crazy because we are growing fast
• We lots of people right out of college and train then to be home loan experts
• Our salary, bonus and benefit plans are generous and fair – and Account Executives have the ability to make a lot of money and have a solid career with us

What market place factors need to be considered?
• In today’s moderate growth economy, the home loan market is still doing well
• Countrywide is part of elite group of financial service firms that is growing ahead of most of America’s companies

What aspects of the brand’s personality do we need to consider?
• Desired Brand Identity under the company umbrella:
  o Expert, ethical, trustworthy, honest, smart, competent, friendly, courteous, supportive, efficient, enthusiastic, consistent, pro-consumer, hip/cool/fun place to work
• Countrywide Brand positioning statement
  o Countywide, the home loan expert, enables all Americans to fulfill the dream of home ownership and realize confidence in achieving their financial goals. Our goal is to own the emotional territory of security through home ownership
• Countrywide Brand Values/Attributes
  o Functional: We have experts, a fast/easy process, and a wide range of products.
  o Emotional: We’re friendly, courteous, timely, accountable, consistent, and ethical
• Style guides (not – new site doesn’t have to look and feel like Countrywide or FSL)
  o CFC brand guidelines can be downloaded on Countrywide brand central Web site
What legal or mandatory considerations are required? (if any)
• Standard Countrywide legal footer required

What do we want them to think, feel and do?

Think:
• I want a management career: Think Countrywide
• Countrywide is great place to start my career
• I can be compensated well for my tenacity and hard work
• I will learn a lot from experts who have gone before me and who are willing to train me

Do:
• Visit our microsite and interact with it
• Bookmark the site – because there is so much to see and do – they just have to come back time and time again
• Tell their friends and family about us / the site
• Visit our other sites (FSL.com, Countrywide.com, etc)
• Apply for a job, internship, etc
• Call us to explore career opportunities
• Visit one of our job fairs in a local area

Feel:
• This is a cool site – a want to tell others about it
• I feel confident that a Countrywide Home Loans is a company I should consider working for

What are the barriers to response?
• Other companies have already established themselves as “firms that can jumpstart your management career”
• Countrywide will have too limited a focus (only home loan careers) & won’t be objective (single company as opposed to college portal or job hunting sites)
• Students may not realize that a problem exists
• Some students don’t know what career direction they will go into (still be in the discovery phase) and may not be interested in visiting
• Online clutter may prevent our message from getting to the right people
• College students may not think Countrywide is cool enough – and may not be comfortable visiting our site or referring us to friends (create a new site URL and associate Countrywide with “cool”)
• What can we offer online that can’t already be found on other sites (points of differentiation)

Microsite features to consider
• This project is not a landing page – it’s really a 10-15 page microsite
• It does not have to look and feel anything like the current FSL or CW sites or LPs – in fact, to be effective it probably should look and function very differently
• It should have a unique name with an easy to remember URL
• A flash version and a non-flash version should be considered (to appeal to college students)
• Content may include:
  o Interactive demos of who we are and how the fast-track management process works
  o Case studies/interview with actual employees
  o Career opportunities
  o Internship, summer work, part-time opportunities
  o Ability to create/store/submit a resume into our job database (try to leverage what is already available on the Countrywide HR site)
  o Ability to sign up for a newsletter and receive complimentary promotional material
  o Promotion of career events in user’s area
• Gotta have a wow factor - some type of unique feature/functionality that compels users to tell others about this site (viral marketing)
• Regular mailing to our portfolio of current customers encouraging them to refer college-age friends and family members to this new site (consider other viral marketing opportunities as well)

Research to consider
• Corporate Recruiters Survey (attached)
• http://www.citi.com/us/cards/cm/student/spend02.htm#
• http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/management
• Sales & Marketing Salary Survey 2005 (attached)
• http://www.collegejournal.com/toolkit/calculators.html
• http://www.collegejournal.com/exams/
• http://www.collegejournal.com/toolkit/emailalerts.asp

Web sites to study
• http://www.youngmoney.com/
• http://www.mryouth.com/
• http://www.tkotour.com/
• http://www.nikefootball.com
• http://niketown.nike.com/niketown/home.jsp (click on Nike woman)
• http://www.worldchill.com
Natural search considerations

- Create an SEO site framework - specifically architected, designed, and coded to be optimized for Natural Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Paid Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is pay per click advertising on search engines allowing you to choose keywords you would like your site to appear under when a potential customer engages in a search. You decide how much you are willing to pay each time a person clicks on the search results. But it can be competitive – and expensive if you are trying to use keywords that are very popular.
- Natural or Organic Search is the non-biased, non-paid results that come up when you do a search. This can be influenced heavily by what's called “Search Engine Optimization” (SEO) – the complex and time consuming practice of ensuring that your Web site is doing all the right things in order to rank high for certain search terms. In this arena, smaller companies can out maneuver large corporations. Basic rule of natural search is to follow logical organization and categorization of content while avoiding tactics that might be recognized as spam (intent to deceive users - unscrupulous) resulting in sites being penalized by search engine rankings.
- Site must allow access for the business team to edit html (html, content, graphics) in order to optimize pages in an ongoing plan.
- Site must be built to FSL tech specs - Microsoft shop (dot NET/SQL/XML)
  - Follow w3 html coding standards
- Consider creating site with a skin format so as multiple designs may be applied to the same content by utilizing style sheets (css) and limited graphics
- Omniture code on each page

Natural Search Engine Optimization Best Practices

Below are high-level key best practices than an effective SEO site should take into consideration:

1. Domains
   - Create a domain strategy for Countrywide that groups sites into themes and creates unique sites for the business divisions to market to.
     - Dedicated IP’s for each site – No Virtual IP’s
     - Make sure IP’s are not on SPAM/block lists
   - Make sure redirects are not being recognized as spam and are taking full advantage of Search Engine’s capabilities
     - Use of IP-funnel approach to production sites
   - Internal Redirects
     - Avoid any internal redirects as the spiders do not follow them.
2. Servers
   - Make sure that the server set-up allows the spiders to access the site and begin indexing pages
   - Examples of items that cause spiders to stop:
- 500 Internal Server Error issues for FSL & CMD
- Robots.txt
  - Tells spiders what to do, where not to go, what not to read/index for the entire site
- Robots Meta Tag
  - Tells spiders what to do, where not to go, what not to read/index for a specific page

3. Content
- Create logical themes on the site
- Roll-Up the sleeves
  - Detailed work will need to take place. In order to effectively optimize, enhancements will need to be implemented in a rapid process -- days/weeks not months.
- The key elements for optimizing content on a page are:
  - Density - how much of the total text
  - Frequency - how often on the page
  - Distribution – placement throughout the page
- Avoid spam tactics that will penalize sites:
  - Disproportion of keyword density, frequency, and distribution
- Duplicate content
- Build content into logical subject matter themes with steps to more in-depth subject matter
  - e.g. - Refinance, Purchase, Home Equity, Calculators
- Edit pages in sentence form that is keyword rich and facilitates conversion but also caters to search engines
- Use 250 words as a guide for content on a page
- Be descriptive of where user will be going
- Try to avoid “click here” type copy- helps the users and the spiders more easily find the content
- Sentences help Search Engines
- Balance use of bullet points as these are not as friendly to SE’s but are to the users who scan
- “Research” type words are helpful in rankings
- Learn more, find, research, discover,
- Avoid duplicate content (Navigation, legal)

4. HTML
- The content must be easily found by the spiders.
  - A general rule is to display the content higher in the source code so the spiders can more easily find the content
- Make sure code is set-up with the most important information for a search engine to be at the top of the page
  - Optimized Meta-Title, Meta-Description, Keywords
  - Use “Official site” in Meta-Title where appropriate???
  - Headings
  - Comments
  - Alt-Tags
- Follow W3c coding standards as a guide
  - Concentrate on compatibility with IE, Netscape, IE-AOL, Firefox, Mozilla
- Create consistent File naming conventions
  - Short concise names, no hyphens or underscores
- Make sure java is clean and in an external file rather than in page source code
- Spiders get stuck in Dynamic content. Make links crawlable.
- Use “Site Map” link on Site Map page to index all pages of site.
- Plan how Interwoven can be used and not penalize ranking
- Avoid redirects within site
  - Redirects interfere with Search Engine spiders. Reprogram to direct links.
- Create a 404 recovery system

5. Avoiding Spam Tactics (penalize sites)
- Deceptive redirects (java or otherwise)
- More "garbage/unrelated" content vs. valuable content
- Disproportion of keyword density, frequency, and distribution
- Code that generates thousands of pages on a subject with slightly different density, distribution, and frequency
- Text behind an image
- Same/similar color text and background
- Site containing only inbound links
- Duplicate content
- Cloaking
- Doorway pages
- Deceptive coding in frames
- Avoid duplicate content

What are the deliverables?
- Response to this creative brief (approach, cost, etc)
- Cool name & available URL to use for this new, stand-alone site
- Microsite of 10-20 page deep (built to corporate standards)
- Three online banners concepts that can be used to promote this new microsite

How will success be measured?
- Lots of traffic to the site
- Site performs well in natural search results
- Average time per session on site increases over FSL's current time per session

Creative Brief Ownership
Countrywide owns this Creative Brief and considers the brief and all responses to be confidential.
Cost of Creative Brief Responses
Countrywide will not pay for any proposal generation effort or demonstration in conjunction with vendor responses to this Creative Brief

Right Not to Award
The issuance of this Creative Brief does not obligate Countrywide to negotiate, enter into any contract, or to undertake any financial obligations related to the requirements referred to herein. Countrywide reserves all rights, including without limitation the right to reject any quotation(s) received, not to award a contract, or reject without consideration responses that arrive late. Responses referencing terms and conditions other than the terms and conditions included herein may be rejected as being non-responsive.

Countrywide is considering a variety of solutions with regard to their online marketing needs. Various combinations of goods and services capabilities will be weighed during the decision process. These combinations could include reliance on both internal resources as well as external vendor resources. Countrywide reserves the right to unbundled requests for services and reward to multiple vendor candidates based on best of breed capabilities.

Right to Cancel
Countrywide reserves the right to cancel the Creative Brief process at no cost and with no obligation upon Countrywide.

Timeline
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative brief sent out</td>
<td>7/5/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses due</td>
<td>7/12/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review &amp; vendor selection</td>
<td>Week of 7/12/05 – 7/19/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire vendor &amp; commence project</td>
<td>7/20/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project deliverables due</td>
<td>8/15/05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Proposal Requirements

Please deliver responses to the Creative Brief in a Word document via email by no later than 7/12/05 to:

Jon Samsel
SVP, Internet Marketing
Countrywide Home Loans
35 N. Lake Ave., 3rd Fl, Pasadena, CA 91101
626-584-3572
jon_samsel@countrywide.com