Managing Demand in UG Admissions: a case study

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SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

Sheffield Hallam University

- Sheffield Hallam is one of the UK's largest universities with around 31,000 students
- Centralised admissions:
  - All UG applications (including international) approx. 49,000 applications in 2009/10. Majority non interview courses have deferred offer making
  - Approx. 80% of PGT applications (including international) approx. 9,500 applications in 2009/10. Majority deferred offer making, mostly international

Pre-enrolment Services

Sheffield Hallam University

- Four faculties responsible for 'recruitment to target'
- Admissions provide service, support, advice and ensure consistency and good practice
- Each faculty has a Head of UG Recruitment
- Faculty Recruitment Managers employed by faculty, based in Pre-enrolment Services

Context 2009/10

- UCAS applications + 27% by deadline
- UKBA changes
- Admissions to issue ALL CAS for current student visa extensions as well as new students
- No additional staff resources…. but need to maintain / improve student experience

Challenges

- Recognising the market change was not an early 'blip'
- Moving from recruiting to selection
  - Process changes where possible
  - Psychological change for staff
- Rejecting more applicants than ever before
- Key change: significant reduction in aspirational offers
- Managing relationships with local schools and colleges
- Managing possible insurance conversion outcomes

What we did

- Continued to build on collegiate approach to strategic recruitment decision making
- Strengthened decision and communication structures in particular risk analysis
- Improved information and monitoring against targets
- Communicated change and reasons to local schools and colleges

Doing more ….

- Regrouped admissions staff into faculty teams
- Cross team working within Pre-enrolment Services
- Gained quick wins through process improvement and efficiency
- Maintained service levels

Result

- Large number of courses closed after the Jan deadline
- Confirmation controlled with central corporate decision making
- Confirmation to offer only - with a few exceptions for EC's, COMPACT and ASN areas
- Insurance conversion increased
- No HEFCE courses in clearing
- Clearing used for 4 courses / 30 places for DoH and TDA
- Increased volume of appeals

Outcomes

- For the first time admissions became about managing risk…
- Recruitment to cap: close as we could get without a significant risk of going over
- A lot of hard work and some luck!

2010/11 (for now…)

- Continued review of entry requirements
- Begin offer making very cautiously - greater use of top slicing and gathered field
- Offer targets
- Focus on course areas needing extra support managing recruitment to target
- Continue to support key local schools and colleges
- Plan to use Clearing to 'safely' top up numbers on a student by student basis

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