Strategies for Recruiting Adult ESOL Learners

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Adult education programs in the U.S. only serve approximately **10%** of the population in need.

Florida Enrollment	2015-2018
ABE	-29%
GED	-24%
Adult High School	-45%
ESOL	+6%

Student Recruitment
FLC Market Research Project

- Conduct 3 focus groups with ESL students at the Adult Learning Center of Osceola, Brevard County Adult & Community Education, Orange County Public Library.

- Exploring key messages, terminology and communication methods that may be more or less effective in recruiting adult learners.

- Explored motivations, concerns and assumptions that factored into decision making.

Thanks to Florida Department of Education

Motivation

- Learn English.

- Motivations related employment, family, community.

"I think I'm trying to improve my English to write, read and speak fluently English to get a better job. To have a relationship. Everything really. You need to speak English."

Concerns and Barriers

- Time, schedule, levels for classes
- Location
- Transportation and child care
- Cost
- Eligibility/Document requirements

"They afraid to come here. Some of them ask me why - what needs to (be) shown in the front office."

Cost

- Cost is an important factor for many.
- What they are paying is a good bargain. "$30 It's basically free"
- Some aware of higher cost private schools.
- Some people may have concerns that since it's low cost it may also be low quality.

"Cost important. But some people think if it's cheaper, it's no good. Poor quality. People need to know the Government pays."

Use of Internet and Technology

- Almost all students use the Internet and have access to at least one device.

- Smart phones, tablets and computers were all referenced.

- They search in English and their native language.

- All use Google Translate

Learning About Program

- Word of mouth was most often referenced. Friends, family and community referrals.

- Most looked at program website before enrolling.

- Students looking for qualified teachers.

- 83% had studied English before enrolling.

- The group with highest level of education were;
    - A. most likely to find the program online (6 in 10)
    - B. more likely to have studied online via subscription based English programs.

How to Get the Word Out

- **Social Media** – Common response, especially with younger students.

- **YouTube** very popular with all groups.

- **Signs, posters, flyers,** buses, Latin restaurants, churches, mosques. Where people speak the same language.

- **Newspapers/TV/Radio** – No one mentioned newspapers. A few mentioned TV and radio.

- **Internet Search** – Those who searched the Internet for more information.
  - Free English class
  - English courses near me
  - Orange County English courses
  - Beginner English
  - English for Latin people
  - Conversation class
  - English cheaper and close to home

Public and non-profit programs may not show up on page 1 of Google search. SEO is often worth the investment.

Terminology

- They don't connect word **Literacy** with learning English. And many weren't familiar with the word.

- Prefer **Adult Education** to **Adult Basic Education**.

- **ESL vs. ESOL**. Most didn't know the difference or what the letters stood for.

- Few were familiar with either term prior to coming to the US.

- Students preferred ESL and ESOL spelled out on website/promotional materials. i.e. English as a Second Language (ESL)

Terms	Like	Dislike
Learn English	6	1
English for Speakers of Other Languages	7	4
English as a Second Language (ESL)	11	2
English Language Services	4	2
ESL Classes		5
English Classes	7	1
Study English	4	2
English Language Learning	6	
Educational Opportunities for Adults	4	3
Learn English (ESL)	4	2
Adult Education	3	6

Student Testimonials

Very positive reaction to student video and the concept of using student stories and testimonials.

[Aliana video](#)

1

2

3

4

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www.gencenter.org

Website Design and Navigation

- Easy to read, understand and navigate.

- Relatively simple, clean design with authentic images.
- Include a webpage translation feature.

- Share cost, program location, schedule of classes and levels, required documents, how to enroll.

- Liked step by step checklists

- Telephone seemed to be preferred mode of contact.

- Consider including FAQ and introductory video.

Websites (continued)

- Clearly distinguish ESL programs for adults & children.

- When possible, content should be no more than two or three "clicks" down.

- A number of the students sought out good reviews or other indicators of quality regarding teachers and instruction.

- Recommended videos to be around 1-4 minutes.

"When I see more letters, I think there's more complication."

Adult Learners are a Great Resource!

Involve your students in developing and implementing a program marketing and recruitment plan.

[If You Build It, They Will Come. Think Again.](#)
Results of a Market Research Project on Student Recruitment in Adult Education and Literacy