

Increase Student Enrollment for Cybersecurity Courses



Well, here you are - You've clicked on another link to yet another article titled "Creative ways to Increase Enrollment" or "Increase Student Engagement With These 10 Tips," desperately hoping that one of these articles somehow will spark a solution to help you fill up college/university curricula for cybersecurity.

You endlessly doom-scroll through the same repetitive articles, knowing deep down that you're not going to find that one article that holds the key to success. You read tips like "hold swag contests" or "work on targeting student engagement". But here's the thing: you, like every college, already have invested money into targeting student engagement.

See, your problems aren't vague issues that can be solved with vague platitudes or generic advice. Modern problems require modern solutions. You have cybersecurity classes you need filled, and you have no idea how to reach that audience. No amount of swag is going to help plug you into the cybersecurity community, and furthermore, it won't solve the painful reality your campus is facing: declining enrollment.

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Declining Enrollment

Colleges and universities across the country are seeing a decline in enrollment. The factors causing this are largely out of your control. You can't control the number of people who graduate high school. You can't control today's environment as many in-class schools transition to remote learning.

But what can you control? Many colleges and universities have to resort to the worst-case scenario; cutting programs and classes. However, these cuts cause a ripple effect through the university as a whole; they affect school pride and demoralize the community. How can a university function when staff fear lay-offs and students fear the college may cut their classes or even their entire major? When programs are cut, a whole section of students are alienated from your university.

With the workforce gap in the cybersecurity industry, which is estimated to reach upwards of 1.8 million unfilled positions by 2022, your classes are the first step in solving the crisis. But if your institution cannot reach the cybersecurity audience and fill up the cybersecurity programs that you offer, you won't be able to be part of that solution.

Colleges and universities cannot function at their highest potential when they are treading water. The learning environment you want to foster cannot flourish when your resources are stretched thin, and the cybersecurity culture that you wish to tap into won't be drawn to a college that is dwindling down their budget.



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Solution: Increased Enrollment

Increased enrollment for cybersecurity programs is the goal, and the only thing that will help you achieve that is a solid strategy to target the cybersecurity community with content they find valuable. The promotional fluff and “practical tips” offered in the articles you’ve doom-scrolled through aren’t going to solve your main problem. The dream of increasing enrollment rests exclusively on your ability to communicate what you can offer to the people who are truly going to be interested. You need to make those potential students trust you, and eventually follow your calls-to-actions.



How to Find and Engage Your Audience

Publish Relevant Content To Engage Potential Students

Did you know that Millennials and Zoomers broadly distrust traditional paid-marketing? Broadly speaking, they are more likely to be turned off of a brand that appears to be “hard selling” them. So what do they respond to? In short: Content Marketing.

Many universities already have a blog, but most don’t take advantage of it. Audiences love content; they are hungry for it. Content is at the center of the digital market and is one of the easiest ways to get your message out to general audiences. People are savvy and are able to spot an ad almost immediately. However, if the ad is couched in content that they care about, they won’t care if they are being advertised to! Getting an audience’s attention isn’t about your brand, it’s about what your brand offers. Reach readers with content that uses your own university to illustrate a larger point your audience finds interesting. These articles will plant your university in their minds as a source of reliable information, and a source they can trust.

An example of this type of content is the article, “Starting a Career in Cybersecurity” that we wrote for the University of San Diego (USD). The article starts with introducing the problem of how to break into the cybersecurity field. Throughout the article, we pose suggestions on how to narrow down the options, including Capture-The-Flag ethical challenges, figuring out what aspects of cybersecurity appeal to you, and finally, making the case for getting a cybersecurity degree.

During the third section, in the second paragraph, we soft-pitch the University of San Diego as an example of a school that offers a cyber degree. The pitch isn’t long, just a quick overview of what a master’s program in cybersecurity looks like, options of what roles are in the cybersecurity field using USD as the example, and a final few sentences to wrap up the article at large.

These kinds of articles are effective - they contain helpful information crafted specifically for their target audience. The ad is obvious, but it doesn’t



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detract from the article itself, but rather boosts the article's thesis. The verbiage is kept vague and illustrative - we never explicitly ask anyone to register for USD. We simply use them as an example, while including a landing link for their institution.

Email Audiences Multiple Times a Month

Don't underestimate the importance of Email Marketing. Students often find that email is a very non-intrusive way to be contacted. Email marketing is one of the most essential ways to find an audience and update potential students in real time. Email marketing can help raise brand awareness, bring traffic to your most important timely links, and help fill the gap of interest in new class registration opportunities.

But remember, just because you've captured someone's information doesn't mean you can just send out mass emails and expect good results. Delivering the right content to the right audience is essential for turning email opens into clicks, and clicks into conversions.

To visualize what one of these emails could look like, we present you the CyberExtra! Newsletter we released for Virginia Tech's Master of Information Technology. The letter starts with an announcement that Virginia Tech (VT) has launched three new online graduate certificates in cybersecurity. The newsletter describes the certificates and includes follow-link buttons where they can "Learn More".

The button leads to VT's desired landing pages.



Throughout the rest of the newsletter, we include recent articles from Virginia Tech's blog that are related to cybersecurity. The inclusion of these articles tie directly into the "Publishing Relevant Content" section above. Emails are an effective platform to push articles you've written. We also include a pitch for their Master of Information Technology program with links to a registration form, an opportunity to attend information sessions, and links to VT's social media pages.

Individualized newsletters are the perfect vessel for your institution - they let potential students know who you are, they present them with your content, and they inform them of your most pressing developments. In addition, they give ample opportunities for those interested to sign up for your specific programs, as well as keep in touch via social media.

Find the Future Students That Fit in Your College

The cybersecurity programs you offer are what makes your college unique and specialized. There is an audience for these programs, you just need to find them.

Who is your audience? What age group are they? What programs do you need to push in your marketing? When do you need to deploy these programs and in what medium? Questions like these are important - you need to know exactly what kind of person will be interested in your programs. But these questions are irrelevant if you are unable to get in front of the audience you've identified.

For example, if you are trying to announce a new cybersecurity program, a grocery store would not be a lucrative place to put flyers up. A computer store, or a hacking event would yield a higher amount of relevant inquiries. Reaching a quantity of leads is important, but the quality of leads is arguably more important. Therefore, a combination of email marketing, social media presence, and web advertising localized within relevant websites are all necessary to find the right students.

Omnipresence

Omnipresence is the ability to seemingly be anywhere and everywhere at all times. Think about something like Coca-Cola or McDonalds: It's impossible to move through American society without encountering both brands. The thing the most successful colleges and universities all have in common is their ability to become culturally significant. When you have true omnipresence, a cultural ubiquity where people will casually name drop your college, half of the marketing is done for you, for free! Your intention should be for your college to become part of someone's day to day life.

The key to maintaining omnipresence is by viewing your potential students holistically and realistically. A non-realistic view of potential students would be for you to contain your advertising and messaging exclusively to your website. Only people who are specifically on your website will know what you offer. It's a common adage that the average customer will see an advertisement seven times before finally deciding to follow a call-to-action. An efficient omnipresence streamlines that process to expose people to your content/ads on every platform.

For example, a store without omnipresence will merely have a website that they hope visitors will find through Google. However a store with omnipresence will have a website



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and will send emails to customers that have expressed interest in their content via funnels (surveys and subscriptions that capture their info etc). They'll see the website mentioned on other websites, and they'll feel like the store must be good, because otherwise they wouldn't hear about it so much. This is omnipresence in action!

People often confuse omnipresence with multi-platform marketing, but the key difference is that omnipresence doesn't simply send out the same message on every platform; it works to send different messages through different mediums based on customer engagement. For example, the information you send those who have voluntarily signed up with you to receive your email marketing will be different from the information you send out on your public social media pages. Neglecting adaptive marketing keeps your presence stagnant and one-note. Omnipresent marketing ensures that your content and presence is dynamic and engaging.

Engage Your Audience in a Way That Demonstrates Your Value

An audience doesn't like to be exclusively sold to. People aren't going to sign up for your classes just because you told them to. But if you build trust with a potential student, they are more likely to hear you out when you're offering a class or a program. Releasing content that demonstrates what's special and unique about your institution goes a long way in establishing a relationship.

In addition, it's important to release content that illustrates you have an understanding of the subject that students are interested in. If you release a cybersecurity article that is very surface level, they aren't going to respond very well to your brand as a whole. Why would they take a class from someone who can only tell them things they already know? However, in contrast, if you present thought provoking articles with content that adds immediate value to their life, they will appreciate it.

Some of these value points could be:



The article taught the reader something about cybersecurity they didn't know before.



The article provides a solution to a cybersecurity related problem that the reader had.



The article gives a solid perspective on how to deal with developments in cybersecurity on a human level.



The article is simply interesting to read and enjoyable for someone in the cybersecurity community.

The quality of your content is important. Cybersecurity articles often simply explain basic cybersecurity concepts to a broad audience of laymen. However, your audience already knows the basics of cybersecurity.

There's thousands of articles, for example, with titles like "How to Protect Your Password" or "8 Different Types of Malware." These articles are fun and light to read. They're accessible to a wide audience. For all intents and purposes, an article like this does well for a general audience. However, you aren't trying to target a general audience for your cybersecurity programs and classes. You want people who have an active interest in cybersecurity to register with you. Frankly put, no one within the cybersecurity industry is going to click on an article that simply tells them information that people with a passing understanding of cybersecurity can easily grasp. These articles are the mental equivalent of popcorn, meant for quick consumption, but not filling.

In contrast, we published an article in our 2019 Winter issue of the United States Cybersecurity Magazine entitled "Evaluating the Operational Technology Environment: Improving DHSs Cybersecurity Evaluation Tool (CSET)." This article did very well in regards to circulating around the cybersecurity community. This was in part because the content had a fresh perspective on a pressing cybersecurity issue. However, the larger reason for success was that the information was not immediately present in 50 other articles and the content was aimed at people within the cybersecurity industry. It was relevant and unique, rather than simplistic and generic. The articles you put out need to follow suit.

You have a brief window of time to show exactly what your university brings to the table, and illustrate why a student should be interested in you, instead of the hundreds of other colleges they could choose from. If potential students are aware of your strengths, and are nurtured with content that gives them value, they'll be willing to trust that the programs or classes you're offering will have the same, or more value. The level of quality illustrated by your initial content sets the tone for how potential students will view your school as a whole.

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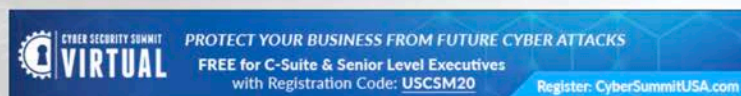
How to Get in Front of the Cybersecurity Community

To properly fill your classes, you need to be in front of the cybersecurity community. It's not enough to cast a broad, wide net. Cybersecurity is a niche community and it's a community full of bright and eager potential students prepared to play an integral role in solving your problem: declining enrollment.

We can help you reach that audience. We are the United States Cybersecurity Magazine and we will connect you to the cybersecurity community. The United States Cybersecurity Magazine is a quarterly web publication that publishes high-quality cybersecurity articles. Our content is solution-based and is targeted towards those in the cybersecurity industry.

Our magazine is nested in the hub of our Cybersecurity Multi-Platform Publishing Portal. Here, we regularly publish short-form content articles updating our followers to new developments within the industry, new solutions to new problems, new data breaches that have taken place, and any other relevant information that will be of interest to the cybersecurity community.

Our magazine has allowed us to build relationships with many people in the cybersecurity industry over the years. We have a loyal cybersecurity community who regularly tunes in to read our magazine, take advantage of our free resources (Ebooks, White Papers, etc), engage with our content, open our emails, and find relevant cyber events near them. We are the voice of the cybersecurity industry.



CYBER MAGAZINE



CYBER NEWS



CYBER CHANNELS



CYBER RESOURCES



CYBER DAILY

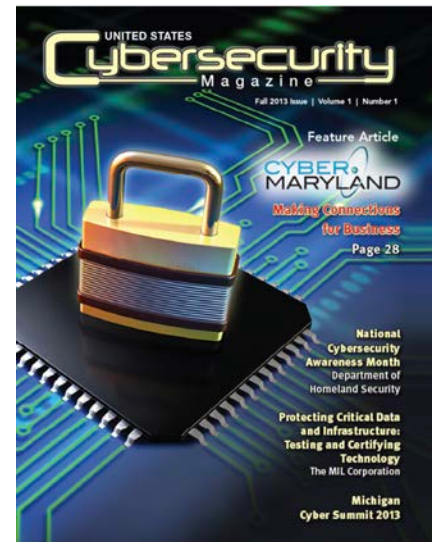


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Our History

In 2007, we launched a publication called the Armed Forces Directory for Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. The publication is targeted towards military, veterans, civilian employees, contractors, and their families. Shortly after that, we launched a second Armed Forces publication for Fort Meade in Maryland.

We were content working in the military sector, but in 2011, we were invited to an event held in Ledo's Pizza in Anne Arundel County, MD to discuss cybersecurity. A featured speaker from Booz Allen Hamilton was slated to talk on the necessity of cybersecurity in a pre-buzzword era. Almost no one came to the meeting, with only 5 in attendance. The speaker told us how serious cybersecurity is for everyone. They stated that within the next two years, we should pull our money out of banks and never use credit cards.



“Nothing will be secure and your money will be stolen” was the key idea emphasized in this during the meeting, at a time when most people didn’t know much about cybersecurity. This event was the impetus for us wanting to do our part in raising the level of awareness of cyber criminality with a magazine. A business plan was developed, which included a hard launch date of October 1, 2013. This date was chosen to coincide during National Cybersecurity Awareness Month.

The launch was held at the CyberMaryland Conference in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. We went with 3,500 copies of our magazine and people swarmed our table. We ran out almost immediately. Ever since then, we’ve been publishing cybersecurity solutions to the most pressing cybersecurity problems. By 2017, we evolved into a digital platform as the magazine transitioned into a web publication.

The United States Cybersecurity Magazine is run by entrepreneur Karen Austin. During 9/11, she was a Counterterrorism Security Equipment Specialist for a government contractor, serving in the U.S and its territories. Karen was also one of the first board members of the Cybersecurity Association of Maryland (CAMI). The United States Cybersecurity Magazine has held similar roles of importance, being the Executive Producer of the Cybersecurity Hall of Fame, as well as the regular host of Cyber Summit USA’s Online Virtual Summits. We have worked with many colleges and universities including the University of San Diego, Virginia Tech, Tiffin University, and many others.

If you would like to know how we can help you increase enrollment in your cybersecurity curricula, watch this video for the solution!

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