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SOLUTION BRIEF

Appsian Messaging Center

Helping institutions maximize student engagement

Challenges

As new communication channels continue to evolve (mobile, social media, etc.) email is steadily losing ground as the undisputed "king of digital messages." Present day students prefer lean, mobile methods of communication and are becoming less engaged with email – especially their campus email. Unfortunately, campus administrators still rely on email and physical mail to drive their most critical engagement strategies. These communications reference time-sensitive tasks that are necessary for degree completion, but are unfortunately being missed by students at an increasingly high rate.

Solution

Messaging Center plugs directly into your PeopleSoft web server and allows you to send contextually intelligent messages that are designed for maximum engagement:

- Provide specific account details in messages, along with customized calls-to-action
- Use preset distribution lists and templates for effective message segmentation
- Send notifications directly to a student's mobile device via push notification and SMS
- Leverage a dedicated queue for messages that is separate from a student's email inbox
- Measure communication effectiveness using real-time engagement metrics to audit if additional follow-up is needed

Abstract

A 2016 survey from Bowling Green University stated that 54% of students do not read emails from university administration or academic departments. As other large colleges and universities report similar numbers, it would appear these studies have uncovered that the blame lies with the email's effectiveness as a primary communication channel. As this trend of "disengaged email readers" goes up, the effects can be felt campus-wide. While students are prompted via email to execute critical, time-sensitive tasks such as: enrolling in classes, applying for graduation, managing financial aid, and resolving holds - a disengaged campus can have a negative impact on campus administrators' key performance metrics. If 4-year graduation and overall student retention rates continue to be an administration's beacons of success, then an evolution in strategy is necessary.

As campus administrators look to evolve their strategies, they should not be focused on making email better, but looking to make their communications smarter. For example, personalized messages, providing contextual details and a clear call to action perform better than a generic message that was designed for broad consumption. That, and the ability to deliver notifications through channels that have the highest engagement rates are the best combined strategies to ensure your message is not only read, but the desired action is taken.

So how do you go about evolving your engagement strategies?

Challenges

The constraints of traditional communication methods

In addition, given email inboxes function as a "catch-all" for whatever your student may be subscribed to - official campus messages are constantly competing for a student's engagement based on arbitrary criteria like delivery times and subject line content. Messages from administrators and advisors need a way to grab a student's attention because a missed action by a student could be the difference between graduating with their peers and watching their peers graduate.

Email lacks the essential nudge

Email inboxes function as a "catch-all" for whatever your student may be subscribed to. Unfortunately, messages from administration and advisors are constantly competing for a student's engagement based on arbitrary criteria like delivery times and subject line content. When an email from the campus Registrar is followed by an email abut discounts at the university bookstore or interesting campus event, the former is likely to get overlooked. Messages from administrators and advisors need a way to grab a student's attention because a missed action by a student could be the difference between graduating with their peers and watching their peers graduate.

Solution

Appsian Messaging Center

Appsian has built a robust two-way communication framework called 'Messaging Center' for PeopleSoft. Messaging Center tightly integrates with the native PeopleSoft application as well as the institution's respective campus mobility platform. Using Messaging Center, various departments can send notifications to students through multiple communication channels:

Email

Push notifications

SMS

These notifications can prompt a student to take a specific action such as: paying an overdue fee, visiting their academic advisor, or enrolling in a class. In addition, a notification can provide a student with information that could be critical to their degree completion like: a hold on their account, academic reminder, task progress, drop count warnings, etc.

Messaging Center is a formal yet modern communication hub for various departments across the institution: Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Financials, Advising Center, Career Center, and more.

How does it work?

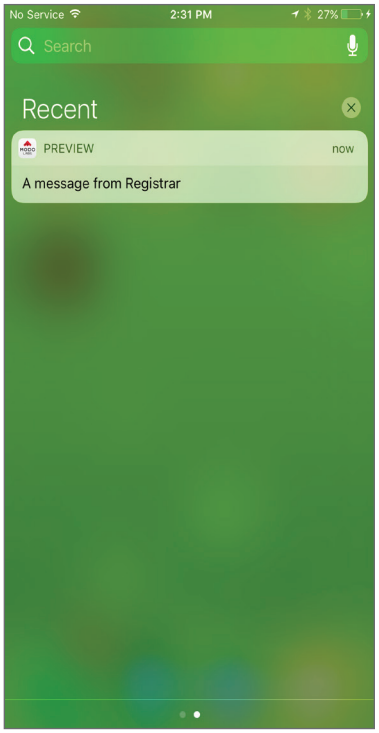
The primary goal of Messaging Center is bringing visibility to specific performance barriers (like holds, overdue fee, excessive drop counts, etc.) in a timely manner. The heightened visibility helps remediate the adverse impacts posed by negligence or accidental overlooking of important messages.

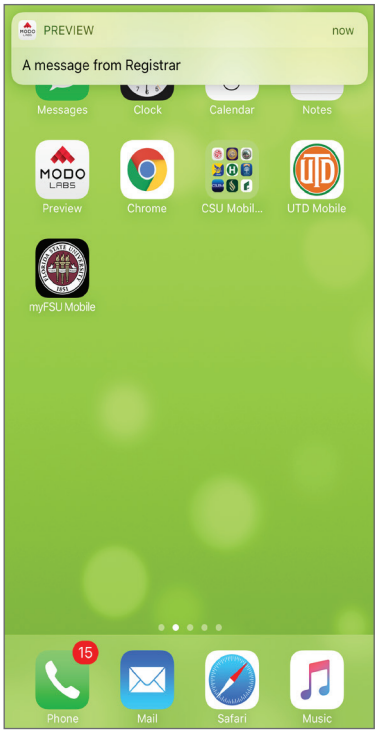
A notification is sent to a student's mobile device, indicating there's an important message that requires their attention. This notification directs the recipient to a mobile-friendly interface that provides more contextual details and a designated call to action (if applicable.) Lastly, all notifications sent to a student are queued together to ensure they are not overlooked and can be revisited with ease.

While Messaging Center acts as a centralized repository of information for students, it also enables campus administrators to track notification delivery and engagement. Students can revisit communications and administrators can monitor whether the information has been received an acted upon as desired.

Contextually aware notifications

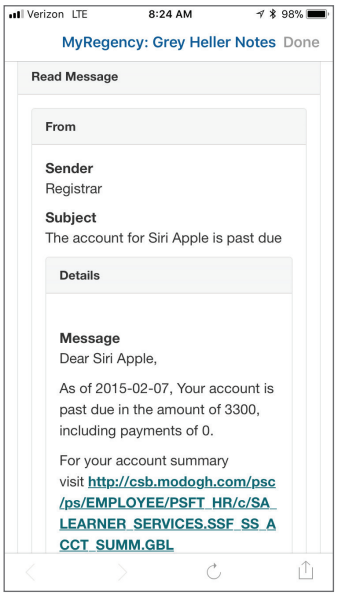
Because Messaging Center is integrated into PeopleSoft, the notifications are personalized for the recipient and enriched with information from the individual's records in Campus Solutions. Based on the conditions applied within PeopleSoft, the notifications are automatically triggered to make students aware if they are falling behind in fulfilling criteria that can potentially hinder their learning or degree progression. Having an efficient (mobile) method of notifying students that their academic status could be at risk (due to holds, drop counts, grades, attendance, etc.) increases the likelihood that an at-risk student will take action in a timelier manner. Thus, allowing campus administrators to better address these students' individual needs.

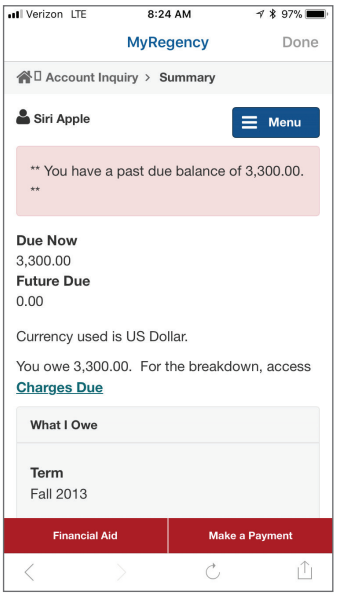


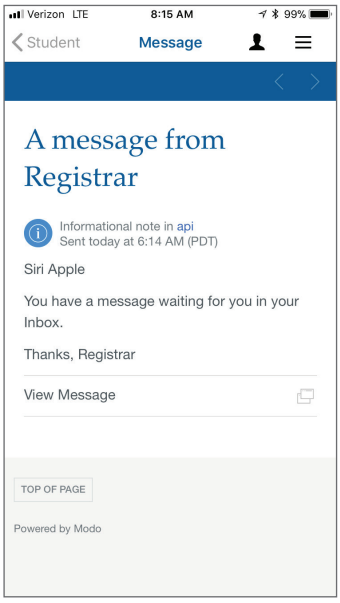


Segmented messaging groups

Campus administrators can use built-in distribution lists (defined by roles in PeopleSoft) to send personalized messages to relevant student groups. They can also format targeted communications with pre-set templates to send out immediate notifications or schedule messages for upcoming events, deadlines or milestones. Institutions can also build custom rules that can be established through PeopleSoft query, SQL objects, or user lists to target students or groups better.







Activity logs

Campus administrators can follow up and measure the engagement of the communication sent to students. The notifications or messages and their subsequent delivery statuses/read receipts are logged in PeopleSoft's database. This data can be accessed to measure a student's engagement with a specific communication, as well as for audit, reporting, and analysis purposes.

FERPA compliance

Messaging Center maintains FERPA compliance for institutions. The notifications sent to students on their mobile device only display previews that are aimed at prompting attentiveness. Once the notification is accessed, the student is guided into the Messaging Center interface where the contextual details are provided.

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