

# Meet Raptor, the student marketing agency creating brand loyalty and career opportunities

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to David Burgman, CEO and founder of student marketing agency Raptor about engaging with Gen Z. We discuss innovative campaigns, brand loyalty and what universities and brands can do to prepare university students for their careers.

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## Why is it important for brands to have strong relationships with students?

As digital natives, students have grown up in a world where their attention is constantly fought for. While this can make it feel like this generation is almost impenetrable when it comes to building brand relationships and engendering trust, it also makes them the most important audience to cut through to. They are an incredibly influential generation and are at the forefront of the newest and upcoming trends. Therefore, it would be a massive mistake for brands not to market to this generation and win over their trust, loyalty and attention. This is why we decided to launch *Raptor*.

While University students are eager consumers, they are often yet to establish solid brand loyalties so winning over their trust at the right time can potentially lead to a lifelong relationship.

It's far easier to market to a completely new demographic that is still figuring out what they do and don't like rather than trying to change the purchasing habits of a customer who has established brand loyalties. Building the affinity and allegiance of a new customer is proven to deliver immediate and long-term results and brands recognise this – that's why we have worked with 20 brands across 60 UK universities since our inception in 2015.

## How can brands engage with this generation?

At Raptor, we connect students with brands that we genuinely believe care about and want to understand Gen Z. Most students come to university with an open mind, living life independently for the first time, and with little or no ties with consumer brands – we form those connections through ways that speak directly to students such as live events and activations, competitions and of course – freebies!

We often collaborate with best-in-class production and tech partners to deliver bespoke campaigns for all of our clients that students are excited to engage with. They are the core of every activation we do. We recently worked with Nandos to discover the hottest student talent nationwide and gave them a platform to showcase that talent at our Nando's Yard – one of our students even got signed to WarnerBros Music following her performance! By tapping into the student market in creative, fun and cool ways like this, brands can build strong and trusting relationships.

## What are the biggest challenges university students face after graduation?

Our own research revealed that 86% of students believed that the pandemic had either somewhat or greatly impacted their chances of finding graduate employment. As a result, many students have delayed entering the workforce due to the current graduate market. Universities are not doing enough to help alleviate that pressure by preparing and providing them with the necessary skills needed to break into certain industries.

We need to be doing more to support students after graduation to give them the best chance of securing employment once they leave university. After completing three years of studying, they shouldn't be made to feel like their only option is to take unpaid internships. They should be given opportunities during university to upskill and gain practical experience that will enhance their CV and provide them with real-world insights.

All businesses need young people who bring energy and fresh new ideas. It's about making sure students feel valued and ready to take on a whole new world of work.

## You've just re-launched Raptor Academy for a second year, can you tell us some more about it?

We created the Raptor Academy to help our incredible student ambassador network gain a better understanding of the marketing industry and develop the skills they would need to pursue it as a full-time career. Research has also shown that there is an entrenched lack of ethnic, socio-economic and gender diversity within the wider marketing industry – we believe wholeheartedly in equal opportunity and are passionate about ensuring every student has the necessary skills and guidance on how to enter the world of Marketing.

Some students may be struggling to gain experience or graduate roles. The Academy aims to tackle this by mentoring them and helping to develop their understanding of marketing fundamentals, such as new business, social media and account management – something that University courses do not cover in-depth. They are also given the unique opportunity to pitch their own ideas to the brands they love.. We hope that by providing specific training and practical skills through the Raptor Academy, students will feel more prepared for interviews post-university.

This year, we have opened the Academy to 100 applicants, doubling what we offered last year, and we are pleased to be able to offer standout candidates a graduate role at Raptor HQ as well as our family of brand partners. Universities and brands have a responsibility to ensure our younger generations are given the opportunity to break into the industries they are interested in – after all, they are our future leaders.

David Burgman is CEO and founder of student marketing agency, Raptor.

