

Intervention 2: Peachjar Email Marketing

Technical Assistance Guidance Brief

Overview



PURPOSE:

OCSE- sponsored demonstration to **explore the impact** of using digital marketing to increase child support enrollment



INTERVENTION GOAL:

Increase new voluntary (non-assistance) support and modification enrollments



ADVERTISING MEDIUM:

Peachjar, a School-to-Parent Email Distribution Platform



ADVERTISING OBJECTIVE:

Drive traffic to *Enroll for Child Support Services* and *Modify Child Support* webpages



ADVERTISING CONTENT:

Three creative messages in advertising flyers embedded in emails to parents from participating schools



INTERVENTION DATES:

September 29 – December 31, 2019



REACH AND EXPOSURE:

Three emails sent to 51,142 parents (**152,230 total emails**)



LEARN, INNOVATE AND IMPROVE STRATEGIES FROM FIRST INTERVENTION APPLIED:

Updates to the *Enroll for Child Support Services* webpage to update terminology, simplify instructions on applying for child support and improve navigation to application forms

Key Results



RESPONSE

Emails generated **2,407 clicks or interactions** with the advertising flyers



ACTION

Emails had an **open rate of 46%**, more than double industry standards



BEHAVIOR

Website visits on *Enroll for Child Support Services* were longer than average sessions on page



VISITORS

Attracted mostly new visitors to Division of Child Support website



CREATIVE COMPARISON

Two flyers performed similarly; one had lower interaction metrics. The two that performed better asked probing questions, were parent focused and featured a picture of a mother and child or children by themselves.



RESULTS

The rate of enrollment in targeted zip codes decreased compared to the previous year, while enrollment increased slightly statewide



LEARN, INNOVATE, IMPROVE RESULTS

Simplification and clearer navigation on the *Enroll for Child Support Services* webpage results in increased downloads of applications and less use of the Frequently Asked Question page.

The DCS website includes a callout box directing viewers to the *Enroll for Child Support Services* webpage. The word "Enroll" replaced a previous version with the word "Apply". There was no discernable impact from this change.



Background

Washington State Division of Child Support (DCS) establishes paternity, locates noncustodial parents and establishes and enforces child support orders. DCS serves over a million parents and children in Washington. Like other child support agencies, the rate of enrollment of new clients has declined in recent years, and DCS sought to test digital marketing's potential for encouraging new voluntary client enrollment.

DCS partnered with marketing consultant Spearca Communications and evaluator Center for Policy Research to design, implement and evaluate three digital marketing interventions.

Eight counties in Washington, representing a mix of urban and rural communities with lower service use rates, were selected for participation in the digital marketing project.

Approach

Peachjar is an email distribution platform used by schools across the country. Peachjar partners with schools to tailor regular email messages to parents that include school news as well as information on services and activities of interest to parents and their children. The platform provides free flyer distribution to program providers that are promoting a free program or event that does not entice participants to join a fee-based program or purchase products or services.

Individual schools distribute Peachjar emails once a month and this intervention spanned three months. Different versions of child support flyers were distributed to parents at 100 elementary schools each month. One flyer encouraged enrollment, another described the range of child support services provided and the third suggested a child support order review when life changes. The first two flyers included a call to action with a direct link to a webpage, along with a telephone number. The third flyer included an email address with the telephone number. The flyers were optimized for use across all device platforms.

Each Peachjar email was also posted on individual school websites for the month of distribution.

The creative content of the Peachjar flyers was influenced by strong engagement with the first digital marketing intervention, Facebook sponsored advertising. Similar stock photography and Infographic styling accompanied by straightforward, positive and approachable messaging was incorporated into the Peachjar flyers.

Targeting



29 zip codes in 6 counties

(Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Yakima)

Zip codes with more single parents than current DCS clients and where schools used Peachjar platform



100 schools in
13 school districts



Serving a combined
48,034 students



Average parent email
distribution list of
51,142 recipients

Peachjar and Google Analytics Metrics

Click	Clicking on the call-to-action button or other interaction with an advertisement
Reach	Number of unique email accounts reached
Click Through Ratio (CTR)	Number of clicks relative to open rates
User	Each unique internet protocol (IP) address visiting a website
Sessions	A group of user interactions with your website that take place within a given time period.
Landing Page	The starting page of a user's website experience
Referral Source	External source linking to webpage
Average Session Duration	The average length of a Google Analytics session in a period

Peachjar Intervention Outcomes

GENERATED



2,407 interactions



115 referrals to the *Enroll for Child Support Services or Modify Child Support* webpages

ATTRACTED



Mostly new visitors (79%) to the DCS website



Visits and interactions longer than average visits to the webpages

WERE DISPLAYED



51,142 parent email accounts



152,230 total emails

PERFORMED

46% Email open rate

.05% Click rate



No Paid Advertising Cost!

Enrollments in Child Support

Enrollments in child support within the targeted zip codes during the intervention period were compared to a baseline period to examine if the Peachjar flyers contributed to an increased rate of enrollments or modification applications. On a statewide basis, the comparison between the two periods shows new voluntary applicants to child support increased slightly, at 1.5%. In the area targeted for the Peachjar intervention, enrollments decreased 4% from the baseline to the intervention period. The role and influence of digital marketing on enrollment rates is difficult to isolate with the data available, so no conclusions can be made about the impact of the Peachjar flyers on enrollment rates.

STATEWIDE APPLICANTS



1.5%

INTERVENTION TARGET AREAS' APPLICANTS



4%



Opportunities and Challenges

Peachjar provided a terrific opportunity for DCS to utilize email marketing. Security and privacy concerns limit DCS's ability to directly communicate with potential clients via email and Peachjar was a great alternative.

Not every school district utilizes the Peachjar email distribution platform, and each district has its own process and criteria for approving the flyers distributed with its emails. These issues prevented the inclusion of Thurston and Whatcom counties in this intervention, two of the originally targeted digital marketing counties.

Peachjar's internal interaction metrics were somewhat limited and vague in scope and did not translate well to tracking activity in Google Analytics. Tracking was enhanced for this project after the first email flyer by adding a UTM tracking code within Google Analytics, a work-around that improved results.

The number of impressions, reach and website activity produced by the Peachjar email intervention were all much smaller than those produced through the Facebook sponsored advertising in the first digital marketing intervention.

However, indications on the duration of website visits and application download activity suggest the Peachjar-referred interactions were more productive.

The Peachjar email intervention relied on the same geographic targeting strategy as the Facebook intervention – zip codes with high numbers of single parents and fewer current DCS clients as a strategy to reach populations that could benefit from services. The high percentage of new users to the DCS website from both interventions validates this outreach to these areas. However, further analysis of DCS data illustrates higher rates of enrollment in areas with a greater proportion of current clients. The existing targeting strategy appears effective in reaching individuals new to DCS, but this may not translate to actual enrollments.

Conclusions and Applying Lessons Learned



Peachjar's **high email open-rate** proves its effectiveness in reaching and communicating with parents of young children.



The platform's offering of free advertising is an **unbeatable resource for cash-strapped agencies**, making Peachjar a go-to resource for digital marketing.



Peachjar flyers can be saved in an email account or downloaded as a PDF file. This allows them to become an **enduring resource**, enabling viewers to revisit and decide when and how they visit a website, leading to enhanced and more productive website visits.



Parent-focused advertisements posing probing questions are more compelling than those with a broad message about children's best interests.

Photos featuring a mother and child, or children, prompt more responses for the target audience than a photo of a father and child.



Webpage updates to improve clarity and navigational ease on *Enroll for Child Support Services* increased application downloads and decreased viewers' need for more information.



Targeting digital marketing to areas with lower uptake rates of DCS services is **effective in reaching individuals new to services**, an important first step to potential enrollment in services. Marketing intended to impact actual enrollment rates, however, may be better served by targeting to areas with higher uptake rates. **A test comparing these two targeting strategies in the next intervention would be useful.**

