

# Case Study

## *Montserrat College of Art*



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# Montserrat College of Art

As a case study, Montserrat College of Art (MCA) represents a unique blend of SEO, social media, and public relations successes. First, consider that MCA, with only 400 students, is small. It has a history of relatively rapid new president turnover and a student body with tuition funded, in a large part, by scholarships and grants. In the past, the college has had issues filling classes, attracting out of state students, and gaining visibility online.

When we began working with MCA, prospects, recruits, students, faculty, staff, and the general public were – as they continue to – judging colleges by the quality of their website and presence in search and social media. Unfortunately the MCA website was dated, there were no rankings other than branded search terms, and social profiles were weak, at best. In addition, public relations efforts had been largely for hyper local events attracting only hyper local media.

Before moving forward, we met with the President and Marketing director, as well as a dozen other key people to make sure we truly understood their brand, business, and marketing needs. We quickly realized that the brand message was unclear and suggested some brand strategy research by our partner at Arnold Advertising. We did interviews with faculty, staff, students, and parents. We then created a mission statement and a tagline (“See What You can Do with an Art Degree”) which we presented to the board.

## *The Challenge*

When we initially began working with MCA, the college had almost no visibility in the search engines (outside of branded organic search terms), no social media presence, no PPC, and no major public relations successes. More importantly, the college was not filling all classes and was only attracting regional students. Our goal was to not only increase visibility – online and in the media – but to sign up more non-scholarship students and to reach more funders in the art world. Additionally, we wanted to position MCA as a thought leader in the elite art community

## *The Strategy*

Our belief is that Internet marketing is most powerful when businesses use a variety of integrated tactics that feed on each in a symbiotic way.

## *SEO*

We started with SEO because, given the incredible number of searches for topics related to art, we felt that nationally- and locally-focused search engine optimization was an essential activity. First, we focused on the site itself to ensure that it had clean URLs and search engine friendly site architecture. Next, we attacked keywords ranging from art colleges and art schools to phrases related to majors and careers like animation colleges and graphic design careers. At the same time, we optimized large volumes of individual course areas with local geo targeting (e.g., Beverly, MA, Massachusetts, etc.). We also optimized the long tail keywords in blog posts.

## *Social Media*

Initially, we redesigned the college’s blog and transitioned it to an on-site URL at <http://www.montserrat.edu/blog/> to take advantage of the SEO boost and to grow the overall size of the website, with the eventual goal of releasing a series of blogs on various topics to attract links and social media attention. The next step involved setting up MCA’s Facebook brand page – which became a high priority action item after we discovered that they were using the community page format. We then embarked upon a course of content creation that included SEO-friendly blog posts, infographics, photos, and videos – all of which were shared on various social destinations to create social buzz.

## *Graphic Design*

We created a new look for just the home page while a budget was being created for a site redesign.

## *PR*

Starting with the 2010 Annual Art Auction, we provided information, materials, and access to all local (North Shore) media outlets, consisting of daily and weekly newspapers. Only two weeks into the initiative, when the Auction was held, we had generated so much coverage that at least 150 people walked in who only knew about the event through publicity generated by McDougall Interactive. By consistently pushing out news releases ranging from local events, thought leader segments like the Encaustic conference, and wild stuff like Gorilla Girls, we sought to gain traction in a wider variety of art communities nationally.

Throughout the next year, we focused PR efforts on exhibits in the College’s gallery and had MCA news repeatedly covered in the Boston Globe, the region’s largest daily newspaper, as well as all local dailies and weeklies. During this phase of our PR efforts, we suggested that the College use the phrase “See What You can Do with an Art Degree,” positioning the school as an important avenue for young people to understand and join the “creative economy.”

## *Conversion Optimization*

The online applications and continuing education areas were optimized and new calls to action on the home page were tested with Google Website Optimizer.

## *Paid Search and Facebook Ads*

Google Adwords and Facebook Ads were effectively used in small, cost-effective doses to drive traffic to summer workshops.

## *The Results*

For the first time in its 40-year history, MCA has a waiting list of applicants, and we have generated leads from states such as Colorado where the college has never had enrollment before. Below are just a few of the media highlights:

- WGBH-TV, Boston and nationally
- Cover and features in ArtScope, Art New England and Art News
- Boston Business Journal
- The Associated Press
- Boston Globe (frequently for exhibitions) major FRONT PAGE coverage of “For The Record.”

There was a strong increase in visits to the MCA website and SERPs penetration for targeted keywords. Through SEO, we had a 1,454% increase in top 50 results of Google organic search engine results pages. Rankings in the first six months included #1 in Google for the keyword “Art Colleges” For a local art college to beat RISD and the rest of the national / larger schools, we feel this was a phenomenal success.

Furthermore, PPC successfully drove a significant increase in enrollment. We used Google Analytics to track all of the sources driving traffic to the application pages and summer workshop pages, and we’ve tracked major increases in goal conversions. With shared management, we increased the college’s Facebook engagement to over 700 likes with a large increase in page visits.

More specific SEO/Social related analytics details are as follows:

#### *Visitor Evaluation*

Identify the number of visitors obtained from SEO in 2011 originating from world, US and local areas.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DATA

Visits - Non-Paid Search Traffic			
	USA	Non-USA	World
2010	113,947	4,208	118,155
2011	127,869	5,856	133,725
YOY Increase:	13,922	1,648	15,570
YOY Delta:	12.22%	39.16%	13.18%

Visits - Non-Paid Search Traffic Localized								
	New England	Other USA	MA	NH	CT	RI	ME	VT
2010	89577	24370	74928	4717	4181	1941	2420	1390
2011	101454	26415	87064	4830	4634	2016	1776	1134
YOY Increase:	11877	2045	12136	113	453	75	-644	-256
YOY Delta:	13.26%	8.39%	16.20%	2.40%	10.83%	3.86%	26.61%	18.42%

**Positioning**

Review our Search Engine Result Page (SERPs) penetration for targeted keywords and groups of keywords (buckets).

Keywords with Top 50 Google Ranks			
Year	# of Top 50 Keyword Ranks	YOY Delta	All Time Delta
2009	22		
2010	231	950.00%	
2011	342	48.05%	1,454.55%

Unique Keywords - Non-Paid Search Traffic						
	All		Branded		Non-Branded	
	Visits	Keywords	Visits	Keywords	Visits	Keywords
2010	118,155	15,084	82,651	3,779	35,504	11,305
2011	133,725	19,417	84,365	4,628	49,360	14,789
YOY Increase:	15,570	4,333	1,714	849	13,856	3,484
YOY Delta:	13.18%	28.73%	2.07%	22.47%	39.03%	30.82%

Keyword Buckets - Non-Paid, Non-Branded Searches						
	2010		2011		Delta	
Keyword Bucket	Visits	Keywords	Visits	Keywords	Visits	Keywords
College/School	7,483	2,490	8,217	3,152	9.81%	26.59%
Art	8,637	3,302	10,849	4,464	25.61%	35.19%
Design	700	238	806	401	15.14%	68.49%
Photo	665	292	864	458	29.92%	56.85%
Animation	106	85	288	194	171.70%	128.24%

**Value or Cost Savings | SEO & Social Media**

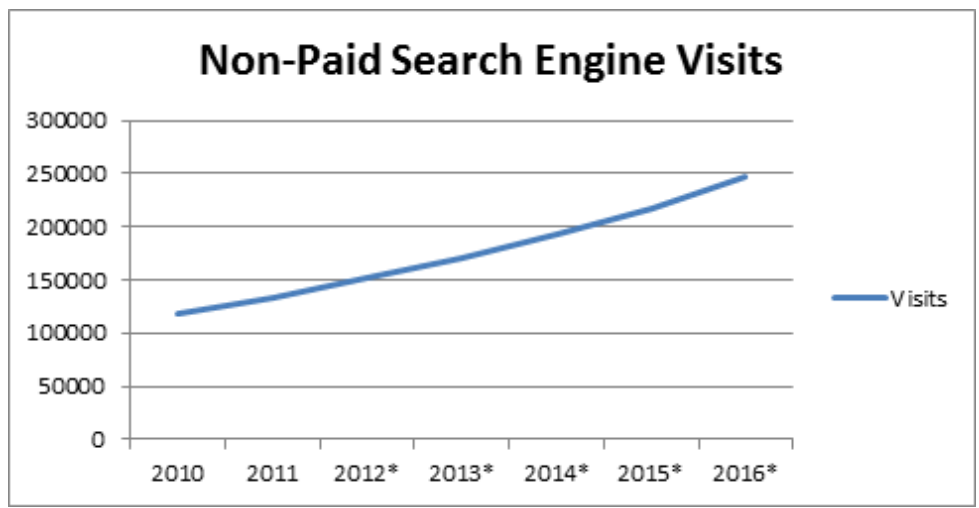
Establish a measureable index for the value of each visit delivered from SEO or Social Media channels.

Average Cost-Per-Click - Google Paid Search Traffic			
Keyword	CPC	Keyword	CPC
Art College	\$7.30	Photography Schools	\$12.42
Art Colleges	\$7.62	Photography Universities	\$9.69
Art School	\$6.52	Photography University	\$8.71
Art Schools	\$8.54	Animation College	\$13.78
Art Universities	\$7.29	Animation Colleges	\$13.28
Art University	\$4.28	Animation School	\$12.81
Design College	\$11.91	Animation Schools	\$12.67
Design Colleges	\$14.34	Animation Universities	\$10.88
Design School	\$13.01	Animation University	\$12.85
Design Schools	\$15.63	Creative College	\$6.76
Design Universities	\$11.78	Creative Colleges	\$7.53
Design University	\$9.28	Creative School	\$3.08
Photography College	\$10.98	Creative Schools	\$5.88
Photography Colleges	\$11.53	Creative Universities	\$9.15
Photography School	\$8.88	Creative University	\$6.19
	<b>Average Cost-Per-Click:</b>		<b>\$9.82</b>

Value or Cost Savings - SEO and Social Media				
2011 Traffic Gain		SEO	Social Media	Combined
	2011 Cost	\$19,800.00	\$19,800.00	\$39,600.00
	YOY Visitor Increase	13,856	7,504	21,360
	Average PPC Cost-Per-Click	\$9.82	\$9.82	\$9.82
	Cost for Traffic	\$136,065.92	\$73,689.28	\$209,755.20
	Cost Savings	\$116,265.92	\$53,889.28	\$170,155.20
	Value Calculation	<b>587.20%</b>	<b>272.17%</b>	<b>429.68%</b>
2011 Traffic Total				
	2011 Cost	\$19,800.00	\$19,800.00	\$39,600.00
	All Visitors	133725	12769	146494
	Average PPC Cost-Per-Click	\$9.82	\$9.82	\$9.82
	Cost for Traffic	\$1,313,179.50	\$125,391.58	\$1,438,571.08
	Cost Savings	\$1,293,379.50	\$105,591.58	\$1,398,971.08
	Value Calculation	<b>6532.22%</b>	<b>533.29%</b>	<b>3532.76%</b>

**Forecasting - Projected 5 Year Organic Search and Facebook Traffic**

	2010	2011	2012*	2013*	2014*	2015*	2016*
<b>Visits</b>	118,432	133,716	151,099	170,742	192,938	218,020	246,363
<b>YOY increase</b>		13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%
<b>Increase over 2010</b>		13%	28%	44%	63%	84%	108%



	2010	2011	2012*	2013*	2014*	2015*	2016*
<b>Visits</b>	5,265	12,769	30,968	46,452	69,678	104,518	156,776
<b>YOY increase</b>		143%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
<b>Increase over 2010</b>		143%	488%	782%	1,223%	1,885%	2,878%

