

Re-thinking International Educational Marketing in Japan

Lessons learned from the revision of the Ritsumeikan University English Home Page

In 2008, Ritsumeikan University began a project to revise the entire English homepage in a more coherent, user-friendly, and attractive manner. Although it took nearly two years to become functional, the benefits to staff and students of the new page became immediately apparent. Statistics showed an increase of users and website hits, contacts from partner universities responded with positive comments, and staff members found it easier to provide coherent information to visitors more efficiently. Moreover, the building process itself became a two year thought experiment about the needs of university members and partners, and the need for effective international communication.

Despite the increase of international initiatives and competition for the best students worldwide, Japanese universities have not fully utilized the modern, global communication tools and marketing expertise commonly seen among universities in other developed countries. While recognizing that the international education industry in Japan is still very young compared to elsewhere in the developed world, the need to communicate with the world more effectively will nevertheless become more important over time. This presentation therefore attempts to argue that Japanese universities must communicate more effectively at a global level by shifting towards greater reliance on digital media that is clear, concise, consistent, widely available, and skillfully managed. Therefore this presentation focuses primarily on three issues: the content creation process, the advantages of digital media, and project management. Additionally, this presentation offers a brief summary of commonly held rules in the industry about how to create professional marketing materials.