

BrightEdge Industry Focus: Education Marketing

In a [survey of college-bound](#) high school juniors and seniors found that over three-quarters of them reported college websites making a difference in their ideas about the institution.

The digital revolution has permeated virtually every business sector, including higher education. Today's students have come of age dialed into the power of the digital ecosystem, and they expect the colleges and universities they consider to do the same.

Shifts in Digital Marketing for Higher Education

As institutions of higher learning begin to take advantage of the potential found in the digital world, we have begun to see some transformations and emerging trends. This includes shifts towards a more digital-focused business model; the incorporation of technology throughout the educational experience and the rise of analytics and greater personalization in learning can also be seen.

As schools become more focused on becoming successful digital enterprises, they demonstrate a greater understanding of user intent and an ability to enhance the student experience throughout their educational journey. This begins from the moment when the student first begins to explore educational options through their graduation day and beyond as an alumni and potential donor, building loyalty and appreciation for the school.

Education marketing teams will need to examine their content, channels, sites and the pages within them. Expanding the number of pages to provide greater information and points of entry and insight for prospective and current students, optimizing images, and looking at Quick Answer opportunities will become essential. In other words, SEO needs to be a priority for successful education marketing programs.

Key Trends Emerging in Higher Education and Education Marketing

Digitization

Textbooks and classwork have gone digital, which makes it far easier to keep material current. Digital also offers free and nearly-free access to the top teachers and classes around the world. Digital work submission also reduces manual paper grading and should allow teachers more time to focus on teaching and motivating students.

Personalization in Education

Personalization trends can be seen throughout the higher education experience from marketing efforts to recruit students to efforts to engage existing students and encourage retention.

Once students have entered the college or university, personalization can bring their experience to the next level, encouraging them to engage more with the institution and gain more value. This engagement and nurturing of the relationship will encourage retention and loyalty.

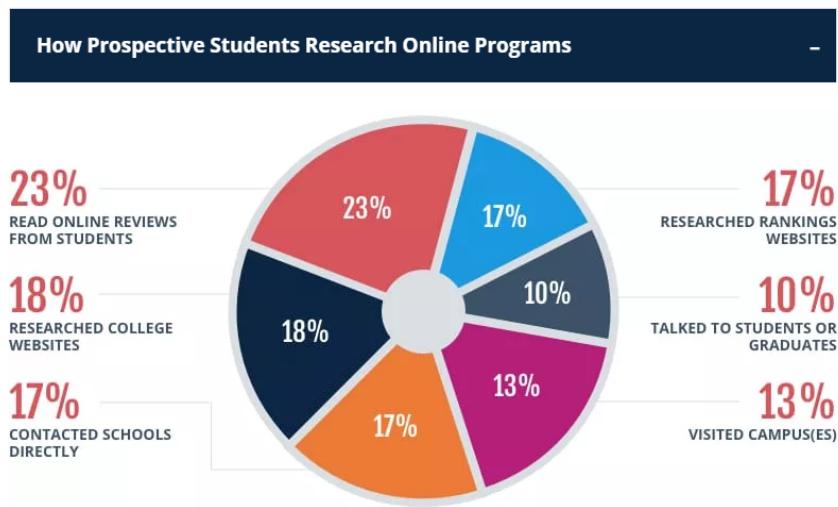
Microcredentials

A movement towards microcredentials has also started to appear in some sectors. These quick-program credentials allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and qualifications without the time and money needed for a full diploma. These courses, including Massive Open Online Courses, can allow students to engage with the university on their terms, earning the credentials they need in the moment to advance their knowledge and career opportunities.

Adaptive Learning

Within the university, adaptive learning, where the information presented is tailored to the student and their learning styles, keeps students better engaged, improves outcomes, and builds a stronger relationship with the school. Students become more prepared for success and feel as though the school has their best interests in mind.

Online Is Dominant Channel for Online Program Discovery by Students



* Source: Bestcolleges.com Annual Trends in Online Education

58% of information sources are online with college website being #2 most popular. BrightEdge research shows that organic search provides on average 61% of the traffic to education websites.

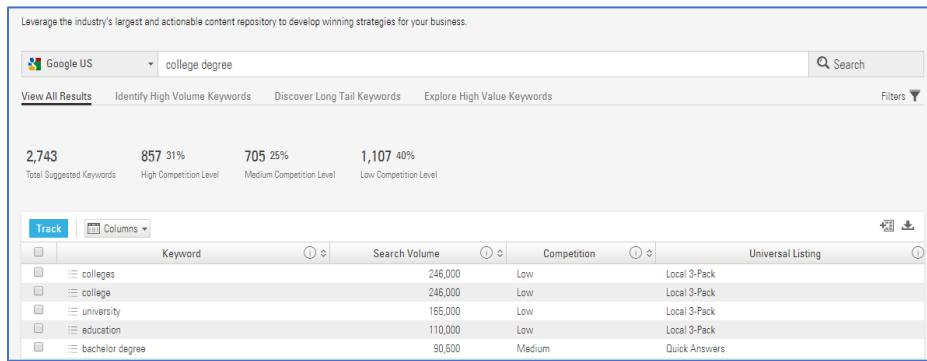
Importance of Channel Integration

Across all sectors, people have begun to expect an integrated user experience, and this expectation also extends to education. [Sixty percent of seniors](#) and 55 percent of juniors state that they give colleges and universities that employ digital strategies, such as email, text, and social media, greater consideration. At the same time, 40 percent of seniors and 45 percent of juniors also state that they prefer receiving communication from colleges and universities in the form of print and phone communications.

The importance of taking marketing strategies across channels also extends to mobile. The majority of college students use phones--particularly smartphones--on a regular basis. Among college students, [43 percent report](#) using their mobile device for all of their web browsing while 68 percent say that they have at least looked at a college website while using a mobile device.

Colleges and universities need to prioritize creating marketing strategies that engage and communicate with prospective and existing students through all of the major channels, including organic, social, paid, email, and paper.

Search Query Activity in Higher Education



BrightEdge Data Cube shows over 2,700 relevant keywords for “college degree” with a fairly even split on the competitiveness of the keywords with 32% High, 25% Medium, and 40% Low.

Search queries related to education and colleges are often treated as local queries by Google with a Local 3-Pack showing up in most cases. Among the organic listings, the national programs with strong online offerings, large sites, and robust content are prominent.

Channel Marketing Mix in Education

At BrightEdge, we have examined how the education industry fares across various marketing channels. Our research indicates that this sector shows an above-average share of organic at 61 percent, a near-average share of paid search at 12 percent, and a slightly below-average share of social and other at 22 percent.

In higher education, social media can provide useful information about the needs and desires of prospective clients. It can answer questions and engage with those considering the school, tapping again into the power of user generated content and personalization.

When social media helps these schools better engage their students, they build loyalty to the institution. They can help students remain updated about the events happening across campus, which boosts engagement and the relationship between the students and the school. When the schools combine social media with the ability to detect where students are on campus, they can even personalize event suggestions.

Although campuses have not seen the levels of success on social media that other brands have, they have begun to use this channel in their efforts. Over [two thirds of U.S. colleges and universities](#) have some type of official school blogging activity. Forty-one percent of officials also believe that they can credit social media for an increase in their enrollment numbers.

Channel Marketing Mix in Education Industry

Using our proprietary data sets we have looked into the prevalence of Organic channel share vs. other marketing channels. The industry shows a normal proportion of Paid traffic at 11% and therefore the SEO average traffic is higher at 62%.

Education Industry SEO BrightEdge Content Benchmark Stats

Although students have high expectations from colleges and universities, many of these institutions are still in the early days of organic content implementation. According to BrightEdge research:

BrightEdge Data Cube Metrics		Avg for Edu
The average Data Cube score for higher education is:		108,367
The average number of position one listings is:		381
The average page 1 listings is:		2770
The average total universal content results is:		478
The average number of images is:		44
The average number of Quick Answers is:		89

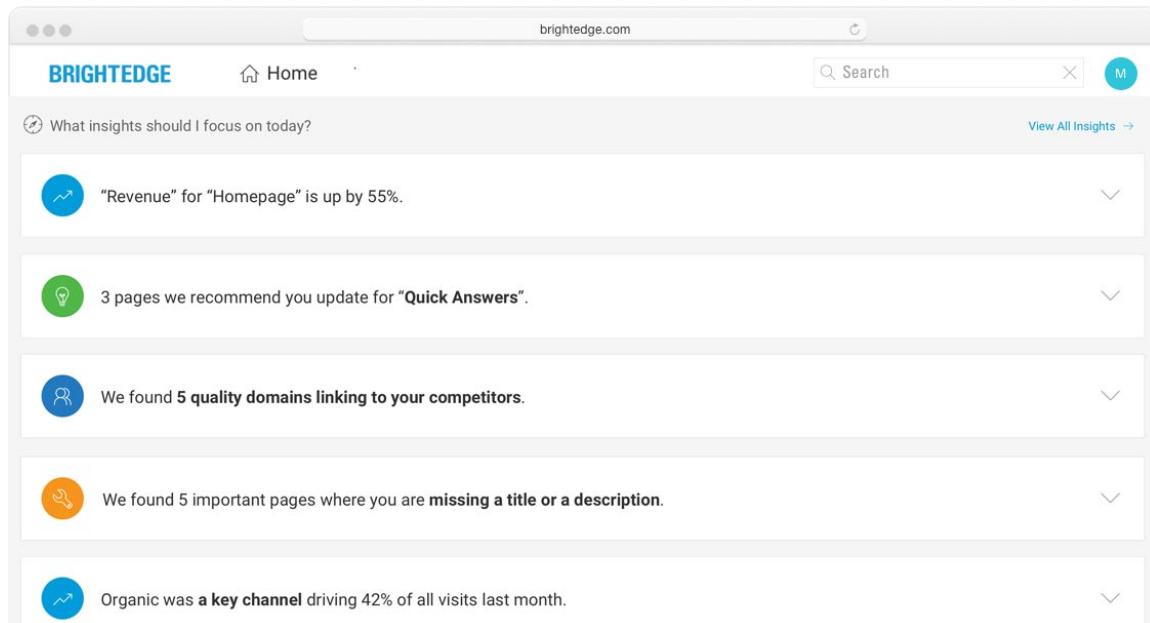
These numbers fall well below the median of all sectors, indicating that those in higher education have considerable room for SEO and content growth. For the brands that capitalize on this opportunity, however, the chance to step out in front of the rest of the field is immense.

BrightEdge Education Industry SEO Click Curves for Mobile and Desktop

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Mobile	18.4%	12.6%	7.9%	4.4%	3.0%	2.6%	1.6%	1.4%	1.2%	0.9%	0.7%	0.9%	2.1%	1.7%	3.0%
Desktop	28.8%	14.0%	10.6%	6.5%	4.0%	2.5%	2.0%	1.8%	1.6%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	2.5%	4.2%

These click curves indicate the average performance in various search result positions. These numbers help understand and forecast the traffic that should and is coming in from the organic search channel.

How Universities Use BrightEdge for SEO

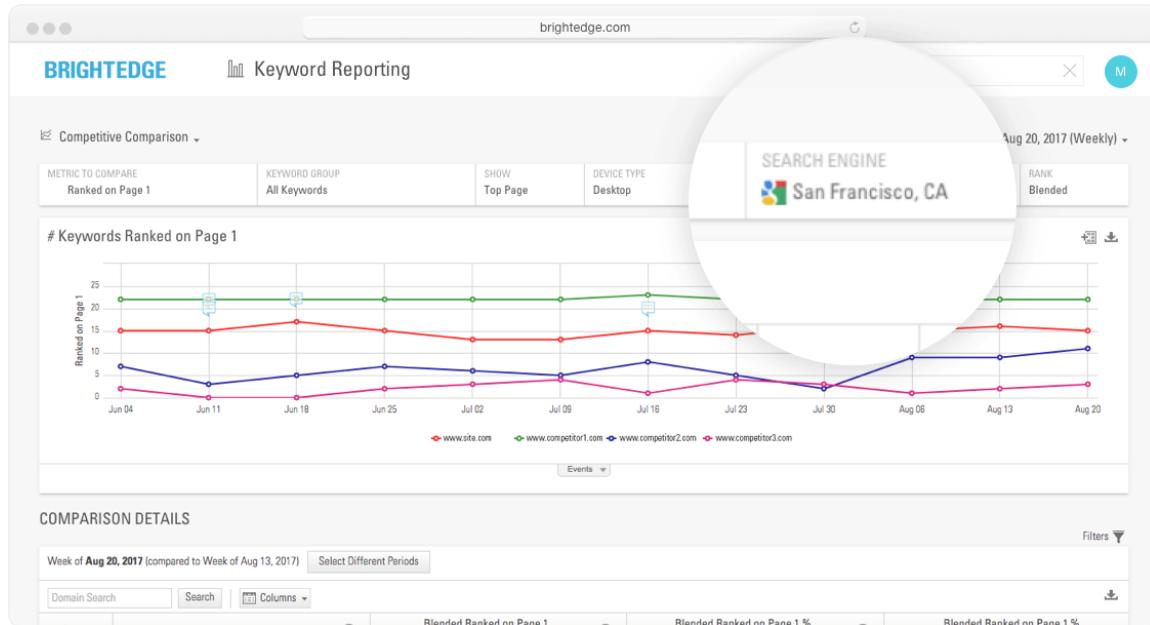


The screenshot shows the BrightEdge homepage with a search bar and a 'View All Insights' button. Below the search bar, there is a list of five SEO insights, each with an icon and a brief description:

- "Revenue" for "Homepage" is up by 55%.
- 3 pages we recommend you update for "Quick Answers".
- We found 5 quality domains linking to your competitors.
- We found 5 important pages where you are missing a title or a description.
- Organic was a key channel driving 42% of all visits last month.

Insights

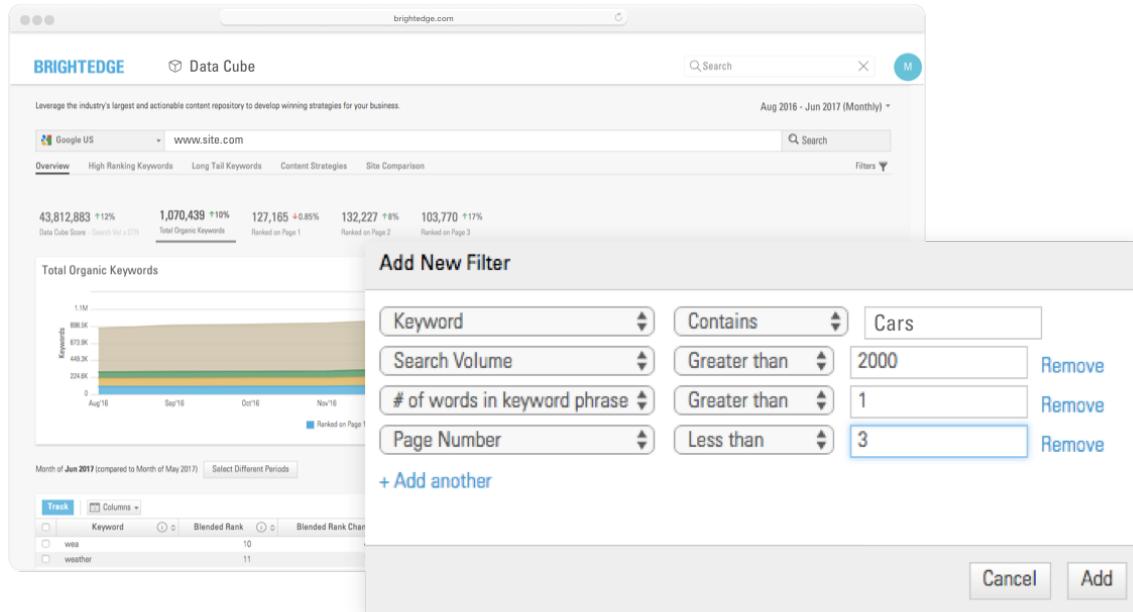
Insights automatically applies BrightEdge machine learning and artificial intelligence to help universities monitor their site for opportunities and errors. The automated nature of the feature is particularly helpful to small university marketing staffs that do not have a dedicated SEO specialist.



The screenshot shows the BrightEdge Keyword Reporting tool. The main interface includes a search bar, a date range selector (Aug 20, 2017 (Weekly)), and a 'RANK Blended' dropdown. A large circular callout highlights a 'SEARCH ENGINE' section for 'San Francisco, CA'. Below this, a line chart titled '# Keywords Ranked on Page 1' tracks the search engine ranking of four websites from June 4 to August 20. The chart shows 'www.site.com' (blue line with circles) generally increasing from rank 5 to 10, while competitors 'www.competitor1.com' (red line with squares), 'www.competitor2.com' (green line with diamonds), and 'www.competitor3.com' (pink line with triangles) fluctuate between ranks 1 and 20. A 'COMPARISON DETAILS' section at the bottom allows users to select different periods and columns.

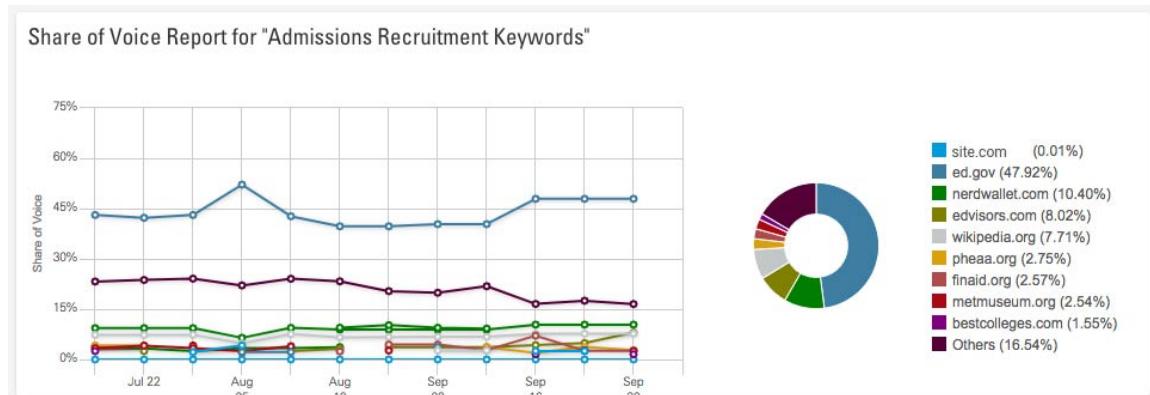
HyperLocal

Universities are extremely interested in recruiting in particular cities and even neighborhoods. BrightEdge Hyperlocal allows them to target down to the zip code or even GPS coordinate location.



Data Cube

The longtail opportunities are particularly attractive for universities as they can expose their research and course materials. BrightEdge Data Cube allows universities to identify the longer queries people use on these more specific topics.



Share of Voice

Since there are often multiple or even dozens of universities in the same city, universities use the BrightEdge Share of Voice feature to understand how much of the Google SERP each school has on particular topics.

BrightEdge Customer SEO Case Study



[Delta Education, a BrightEdge customer](#), was able to tap into organic potential. Using the Data Cube, they were able to better understand the needed keywords and content types that their intended audience sought. Combining this information with insights about people's progress on the buyer's journey allowed them to develop and optimize content tailored to their users. **They saw a 330 percent increase in the number of indexed words and a 230 percent increase in their organic traffic.**

BrightEdge Education Customer SEO Quotes

The relationship between Dream Center Education Holdings and BrightEdge has continued to evolve over the last three years, and we have been able to become increasingly complex with our SEO strategies because of the data that BrightEdge provides, especially the Ignite Analysis and tailored dashboards.

-- Tim Kane Dream Center Education Holdings

I spend about 90 percent of my time on Data Cube, it was basically the main reason we bought BrightEdge. It is very helpful. We use it in our strategies and find opportunities. It is critical in our content work and in competitive analysis.

--Adam Napolitan, UC Davis

About BrightEdge

BrightEdge, the global leader in enterprise organic search and content performance, empowers marketers to transform online content into business results such as traffic, conversions, and revenue. The BrightEdge S3 platform is powered by a sophisticated deep learning engine and is the only company capable of web-wide, real-time measurement of content engagement across all digital channels, including search, social, and mobile. BrightEdge's 1,500+ customers include global brands as well as 57 of the Fortune 100. The company has eight offices worldwide and is headquartered in Foster City, California.