

MAGNET: Migrant Attraction Programme

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NEED/OPPORTUNITY / New Zealand Immigration (INZ) is a division of New Zealand's Department of Labour, and as part of this government body, one of its tasks is to expand the workforce via the attraction of skilled migrants into the country.

Since 1991 New Zealand has seen a net loss each year of its population.¹ As a consequence, New Zealand's unemployment rate as a percentage of the total population has fallen dramatically since 1998, and is currently one of the lowest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at under 4 percent in 2007 (around 4.2 percent today).

Globally, workers are far more transient today than 20 years ago, which means there is now global competition for the same skills and talent. Today Canada, Australia, the U.S. and Western Europe are all looking internationally to fill their own talent pool—and with far bigger pay packets and incentives to offer than a small country of just 4 million people at the bottom of the world, which ultimately disadvantages New Zealand in the global war for talent.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that new jobs are added to New Zealand's total job stock (122,480 have been added each year from 2004 to 2007) regularly.² These jobs are in categories critical to New Zealand's economic viability, and without the skilled workforce to meet this demand, New Zealand's economy will suffer drastically. For example, information communications technology (ICT) shortages are at their highest level in New Zealand since 2000, 100 percent of ICT job titles are now on the long term skills shortages list, and the total ICT advertised job vacancies grew by 22 percent in 2007.

These shortages are monitored, and if deemed "critical" or "severe" by the Department of Labour, are then placed on the Long or Short Term Skills Shortages Lists. The severity of the ICT shortages prompted government/ministerial intervention, and a NZ\$300,000 budget was set aside to test an innovative approach to international recruitment, the *MAGNET* programme.

INTENDED AUDIENCE(S) / The *MAGNET* programme's primary audience is highly skilled potential migrants. However, as the world is a big place, the search was narrowed first geographically, concentrating on the U.K. and the U.S., due to the abundance of skills meeting New Zealand's shortage needs.

As the team tested their advertising media and techniques, and learned to attract significant interest, they refined their targets, looking to register interest from people with specific talents to match

¹ *Migrant Trends*, Dept. of Labour Report, 2006/2007.

² *Job Vacancies Monitor*, Dept. of Labour web site.

the government's Long or Short Term Skills Shortages Lists—particularly those in health, education, engineering, ICT and finance—from the U.S. and the U.K., who are between the ages of 18 and 55.

For potential migrants, research indicated that choosing to move to another country, whether temporarily (i.e., a year or two) or permanently (i.e., seeking residency or eventually citizenship) is a life-changing decision. It may involve uprooting a family, selling a home, putting children into new school systems and so on. Communications had to make New Zealand and its job opportunities sufficiently interesting in order to entice prospects to register. Further, as there are many sources of information about New Zealand, the team needed to make certain their communications reflected that of a trusted government source.

All communications were developed in consultation with the New Zealand consuls, particularly the London and Los Angeles offices.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES / Essentially, *MAGNET* is a lead generation programme, whose primary objective is to register interest from prospective migrants. The team wanted to see if, first, they could find interested prospects, and second, gather enough information to determine if these prospects had the skills and experience needed to help manage New Zealand's skills shortages.

A benchmark cost per registrant was set at NZ\$1,000 each, assuming an average recruiter's fee for a mid-level job placement would be upwards of NZ\$20,000.³

As *MAGNET* was born out of a government-mandated initiative, it was imperative that the programme measure and analyze results for required reporting—a first for an Immigration New Zealand marketing campaign.

The communication objectives were then:

- ▶ Create advertising that would drive interested prospects (from specific international markets) to a web site.
- ▶ Convert that online traffic into completed registrations of interest.

Create a registration form that captures enough demographic data to allow the team to:

- ▶ Tailor and make communications relevant.
- ▶ Prioritize registrants based on their skills and the needs of New Zealand.
- ▶ Provide electronically-generated responses (to keep costs and resource needs to a minimum).

All these objectives were to be measured by the number of completed registration forms.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW / The solution to Immigration New Zealand's need to attract skilled labor was a strategic communication programme called *MAGNET*. At its heart, *MAGNET* is an approach loosely based on proven advertising logic: AIDA or awareness, interest, desire and action.

³Hudson Global Career Link reports, Drake Recruiting White Paper, et al.

The idea of obtaining the names and e-mail addresses of “interested” potential migrants was originally voiced by the marketing manager in the Los Angeles consulate. It was then developed into a strategic approach, with budgets and time lines, and directed by the marketing manager at New Zealand’s Department of Labour (who also serves as marketing manager for Immigration New Zealand worldwide).

The team’s initial task was to *attract* potential migrants interested in *working* in New Zealand. This was important as they were looking for a specific profile based on New Zealand’s visa and skills requirements. Landing pages were developed for an existing web site owned by Immigration New Zealand. The main purpose of the pages was to encourage those who landed on the home page to register their interest in learning more about living and working in New Zealand (separate URLs were created for the U.S. and the U.K., allowing language and design variations suitable to each audience). Mini-ads on the home page “sold” reasons to register, such as a free newsletter and job vacancy information. The registration form itself met initial resistance from consuls about asking personal questions. This was overcome through trial, showing that when people are interested enough, and given reasons why, they will provide personal data such as date of birth. The team asked about experience, education, family, interests and even a proposed time frame for moving to New Zealand.

Online advertising was the primary media used to attract people to the web site. Print advertising was tried in a number of U.K. and U.S. publications, but the results (based on measurement of registrations) were found to be ineffective.

The team tested search engine optimization, banner ads, pay-per-click advertising and sub site testing. More than 13,000 search terms and more than 300 pay-per-click ads were tested over a four month period—and all were measured based on the number of completed registrations. Language versions were also tested in Germany and Holland, but interestingly, English ads produced the highest response. This was a good indicator that the team was reaching the correct audiences, as fluency in English is a requirement to obtain a visa. All this testing enabled the team to learn how to refine their search, for example from U.S. citizens initially, to U.S. medical personnel, to nurses, to emergency room nurses—all within months.

Communication messages were built on the premise that while New Zealand cannot compete in the world market in terms of salary, it can compete in terms of lifestyle. For families, messages were created about the quality of the education and access to a wide variety of social/leisure facilities. For U.S. citizens in particular, emphasis was placed on the free medical and tertiary educational opportunities. By providing this type of information the team hoped to make the decision to move an easier one.

Interest, desire and *action* to move to New Zealand were maintained through ongoing tailored communications. Within 72 hours, each registrant received two customized e-mails: the first about New Zealand generally and the second with visa opportunities specific to their experience. A quarterly newsletter was e-mailed to all registrants, again tailored by job, age or even specific interests—approximately 80 versions were produced. Research has shown that in each issue, the highest read articles are about visa information and job opportunities, so the emphasis continues to be in those areas.

Likewise, desire was maintained via quarterly personal, job-specific e-mails. For instance, someone

with an engineering background would receive an e-mail entitled, "Several of New Zealand's top engineering firms would like to talk to you..." and the e-mail would begin, "We need experienced engineers—and we'd like to talk to you."

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES / The initial budget for *MAGNET* was NZ\$300,000 as set by the original ministerial paper, and based on a 1 October 2007 to 1 November 2008 time frame. The budget covered strategic development, communication recommendations, web site development and initial media costs. Planning began in August 2007, and the initial four landing pages went live 1 October in the U.K. and two weeks later in the U.S.

By December 2007 nearly 7,000 registrations had been received—far surpassing initial expectations and prompting an additional media budget of NZ\$250,000, paid for by Immigration New Zealand. By April 2009, a further 35,000 registrations were received. Analysis of the questions and needs of the first 10,000 registrants determined that a solo web site, with its own URL and dedicated content management system was required. An additional budget was approved for this.

BUDGET: 1 JULY 2007 – 1 NOVEMBER 2008

NZ\$25,000	Initial marketing and communication strategy and creative development of collateral
NZ\$80,000	New web site and content management system
NZ\$350,000	Media and testing (including print and online)
NZ\$150,000	Tailored e-mails, newsletters and ongoing communications (creation and delivery of approximately 400,000 e-mails)
NZ\$35,000	Management of web site (updating content) and of programme

NZ\$640,000 or less than NZ\$15 per registrant

MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION / Part of the success of *MAGNET* has been its ability to measure results along the way and provide complete transparency to governmental ministers on a weekly basis. The key fiscal objective was to attract registrations at under NZ\$1,000 each. *MAGNET* is now delivering registrants for NZ\$15 each, and as low as NZ\$9, depending on the campaign. As of 1 November 2008, there were 42,375 registrants.

As an international recruitment programme, the quality of *MAGNET*'s registrants is extraordinary, more than meeting the ideal target profile:

- ▶ Thirty-four percent are from the U.S., and 48 percent are from the U.K.
- ▶ Half of all registrants work in occupations on the Long and Short Term Skills Shortages Lists.
- ▶ The average age of registrants is 34.
- ▶ A total of 74.8 percent have a four-year degree or higher.
- ▶ The average readership of each e-mail is 55 percent.
- ▶ One quarter of those who read the e-mails submit resumes or apply for jobs.

More than 5 percent of *MAGNET* registrants have applied for work visas or residency in less than nine months. *MAGNET* has delivered approximately 300 new teachers, 200 ICT programmers, 50 engineers, and more.

While the purpose of the communications for *MAGNET* was lead generation, the programme has resulted in “sales.” A starting point of soliciting registrations from interested U.K. or U.S. migrants has developed into a successful recruitment programme delivering top-quality candidates from over 100 countries—all on the basis of a strategic, flexible and smart communication programme.