



Closing the Gaps: *Meeting the Preferences of Prospective Students*

Presented by:
Andrew Gansler, President
Prospecting Services, EducationDynamics
Distance Education Training Council
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About EducationDynamics

- A marketing services company exclusively serving the higher education sector
- Web-based products and services focused on student prospecting, enrollment, and retention
- Our leading consumer brands, connecting more than 3 million students to education providers
 - eLearners.com
 - EarnMyDegree.com
 - GradSchools.com
 - StudyAbroad.com
- Have recently added the capabilities of The Aslanian Group to our organization
- We collect a lot of data

Objective and Purpose Of Study

- Objective
 - Identify current and emerging preferences in prospective students seeking (primarily) online, post-secondary higher education
 - Better understand ways that schools of all sizes and types are being effective in their enrollment and retention practices
- Purpose
 - Help the schools we work with improved their success rates in enrollment marketing and retention
 - Provide valuable information to help us improve our products and services

Scope Of Study

- Surveyed prospects who inquired at eLearners.com and EarnMyDegree.com between (approx.) January and November, 2008
 - More than 2,000 Respondents
 - Mix of 'for-profit' / 'not-for-profit' inquirers
 - Mix of enrolled, non-enrolled, and 'stop-out'
 - Mix of degree levels (A/B/M/D = 28%/32%/32%/8%)
 - Multi-path survey, free-form responses permitted
- Performed 'Secret Shopper' investigations on select schools to compare perceived vs. actual performance
- Interviewed representative institutions to ascertain best practices in varying size/composition institutions

First, a Video



Defining a Lead

- For our purposes, assume a ‘lead’ or ‘inquiry’ is an individual that:
 - Is searching for education opportunities
 - Has (somehow) found a specific program offered by a specific school
 - Has indicated interest in your program by completing an inquiry form
 - Wants (and expects) to be contacted
- A lead is NOT:
 - A name or contact from a large list you’ve purchased
 - Someone who has expressed general interest in education
 - A name that has been sold to you and other schools without student’s explicit selection

All Roads (Should) Lead to Leads

...Irrespective of the type of advertising you use...

- CPA/CPL - Cost per Action/Lead (inquiry)
- “Free”* (e.g., via Search Engine Optimization or ‘type-in’ traffic)
- Flat-fee - Cost per Ad/Subscription
- CPM - Cost per 1,000 Impressions
- CPC /PPC - Cost per Click / Pay Per Click (e.g. Paid Search)

** Is anything in life truly ever ‘free’?*

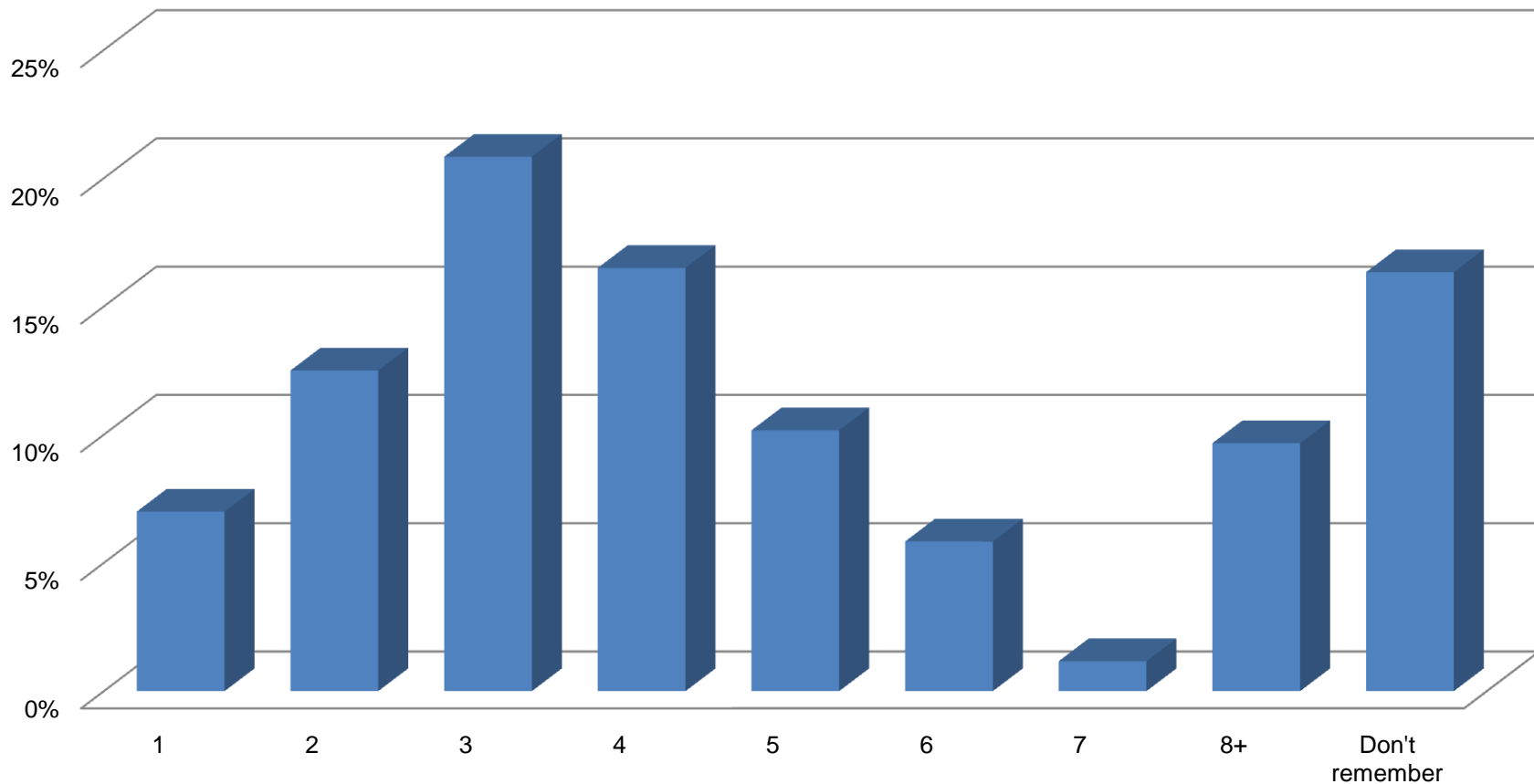
Overview of 'The Gaps'

- Speed and Consistency of Contact
- Quality of Contact
- Method of Contact
- Web-Based Prospecting

Let's look at some of the results...*

Students are Shoppers

of Information Requests to Online Schools

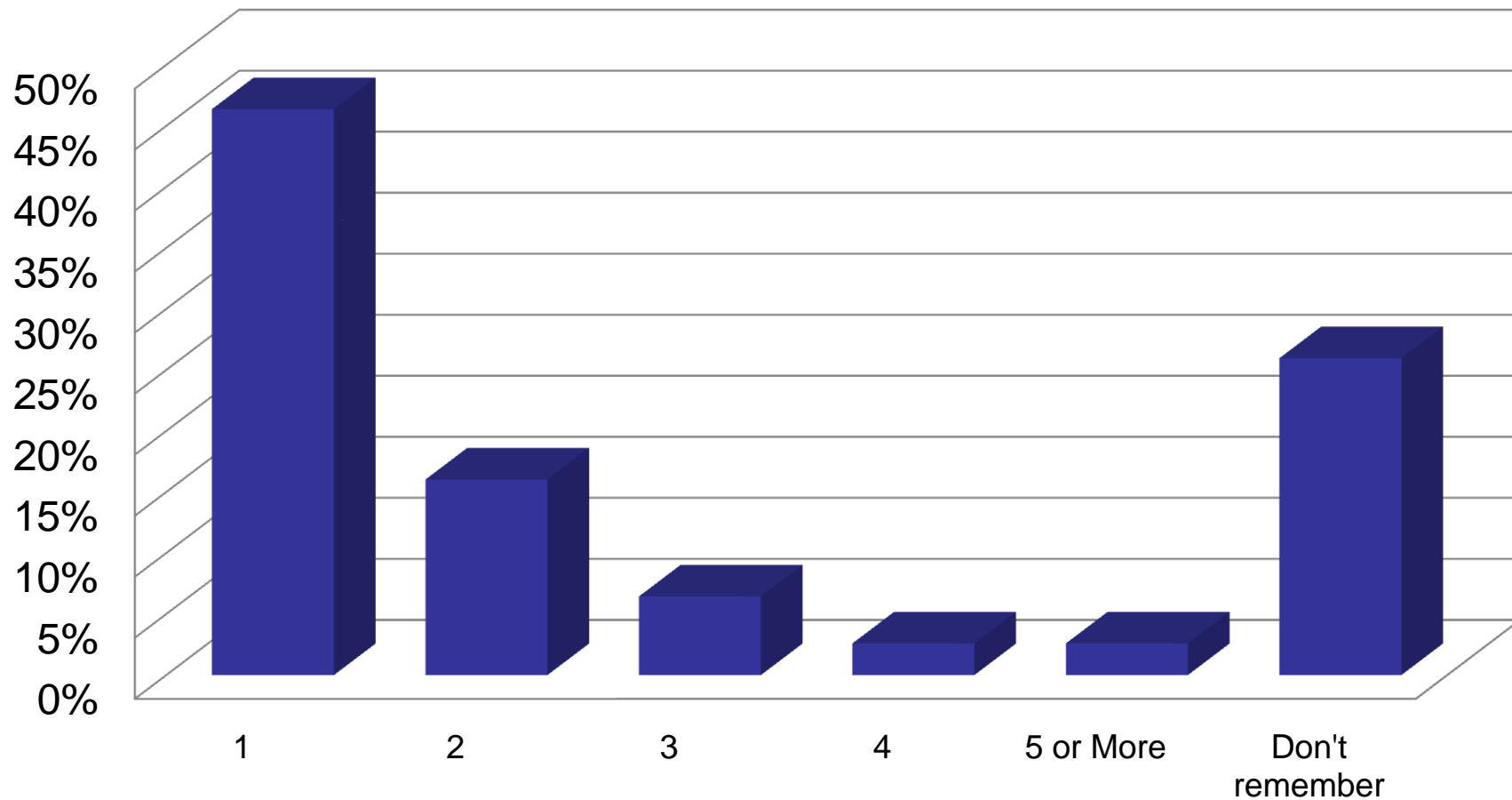


- 7% of students requested information from only one school
- More than 64% requested info from at least three schools

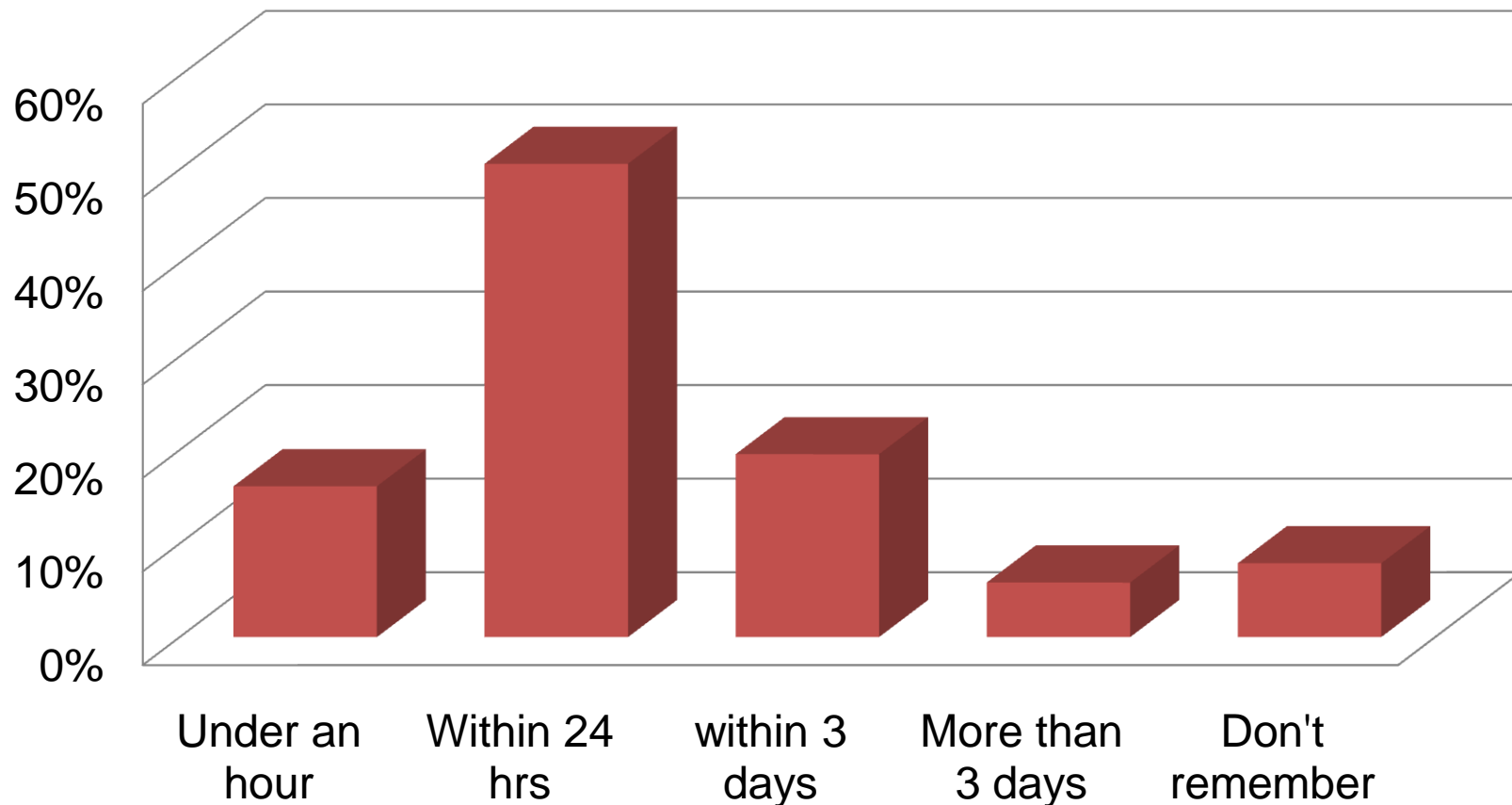
Source: EducationDynamics 2009 research

Number of Schools Applied To

...But a lot can happen between initial inquiry and application



Response Time to Initial Information Request (Enrolled Students, School of Enrollment)

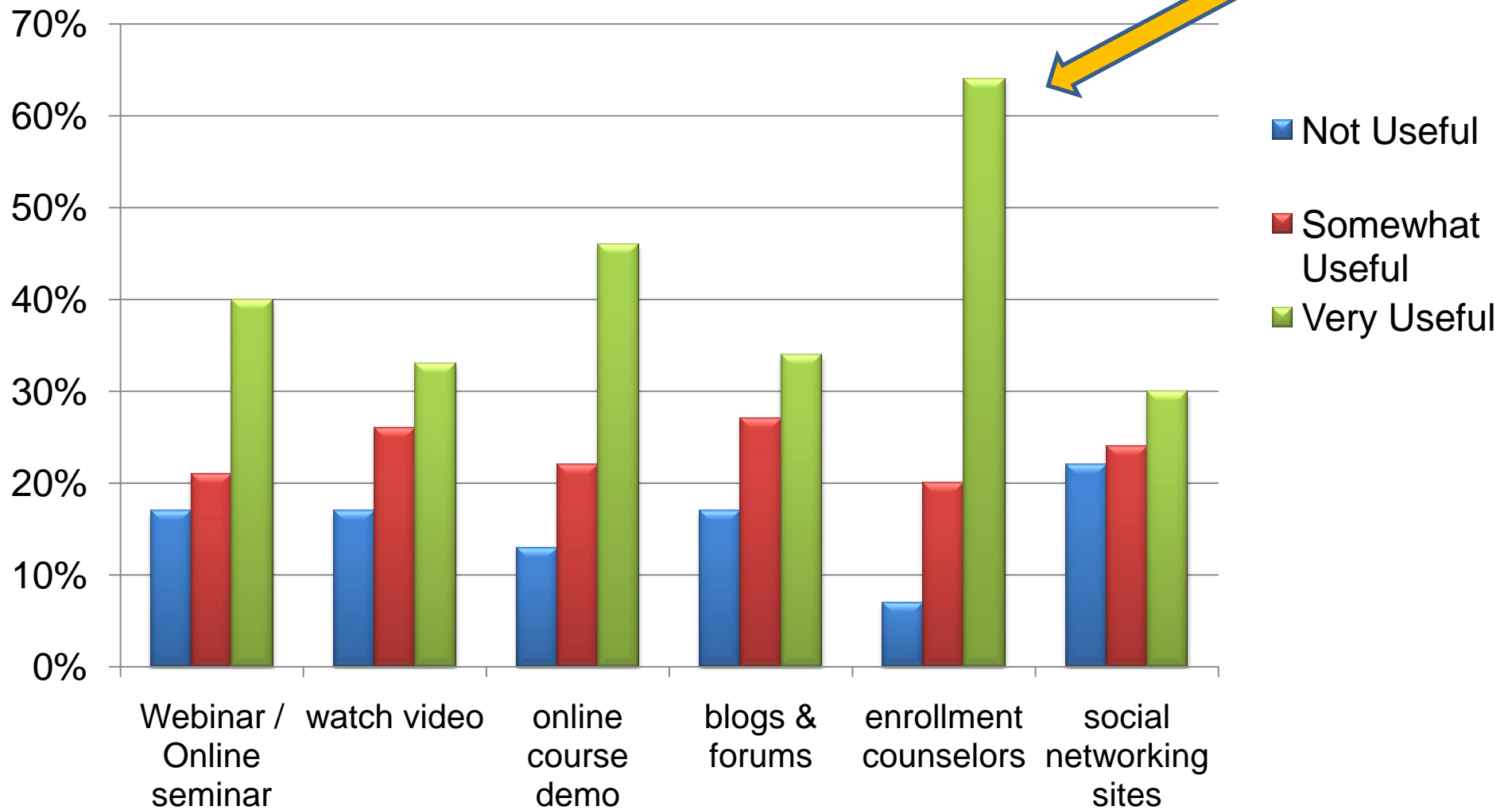


- 67% Contacted within 24 hours
- 86% Contacted within 3 days
- Surprisingly, only 16% reported attended the school that contacted them *first*

A Gap: Speed and Consistency of Contact

- *Secret Shopper inquiries revealed that*
 - *20% of institutions responded after two weeks*
 - *23% of institutions never responded*

Usefulness of School Resources in Decision Making Process



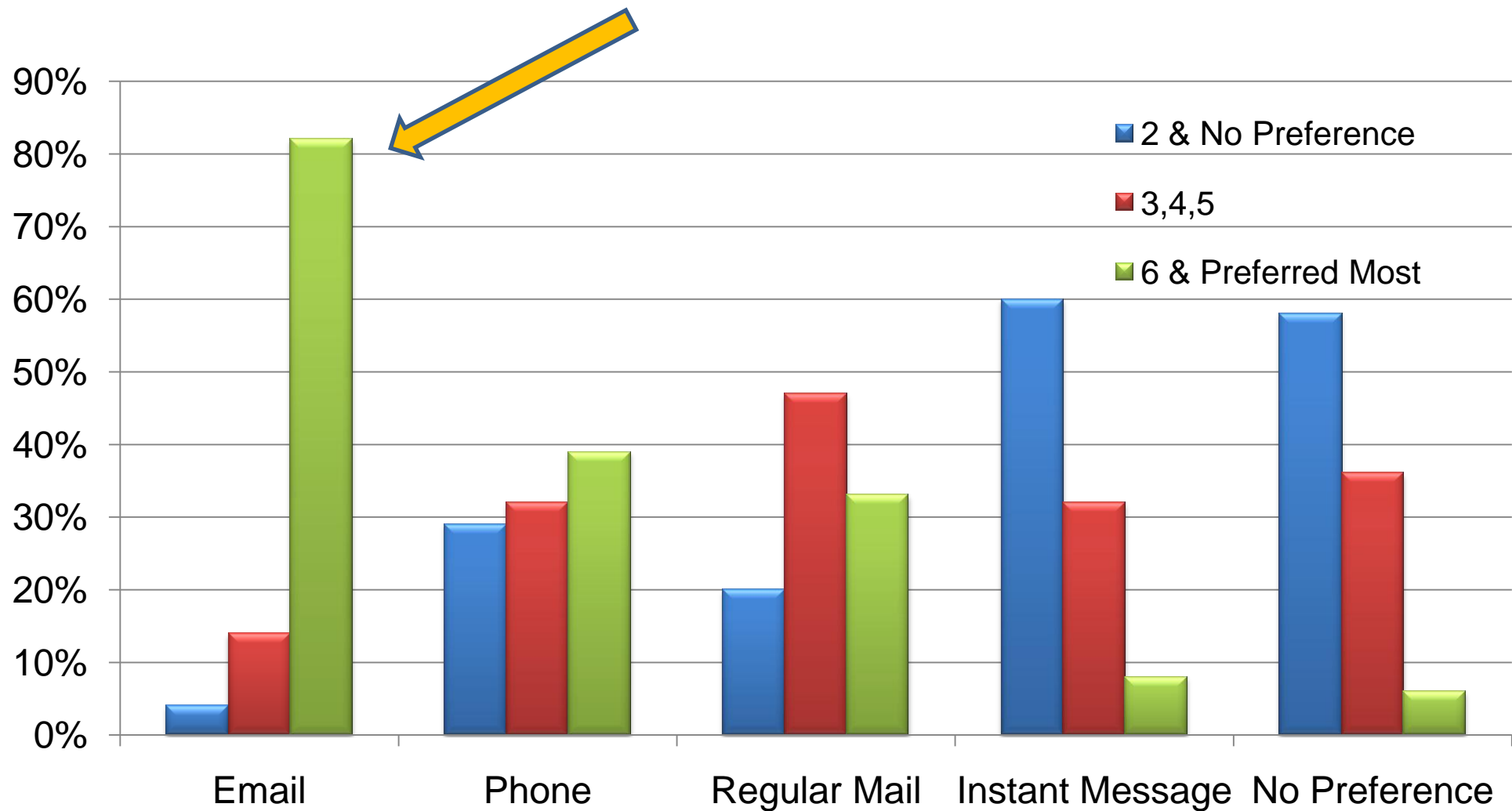
Source: EducationDynamics 2009 Research

Gap 2: Quality of Contact

- Most useful reported school-sponsored activity:
 - Interaction with effective enrollment counselors
- Comments about enrollment counselors Assertive but:
 - Honest,
 - Caring
 - Knowledgeable
- Common practices to avoid
 - Overly scripted, non-personalized outreach
 - Polite but not engaging
 - Lack of knowledge regarding specific program information and educational financing options
 - Outreach occurring at a time other than that designated by the prospect
 - Follow-up by multiple points of contact from an institution vs. establishing a meaningful connection through a main contact

“Any successful enrollment campaign should hinge on the following principle: Communicate something meaningful.” –University Business

Preferred Method of Communication With Schools

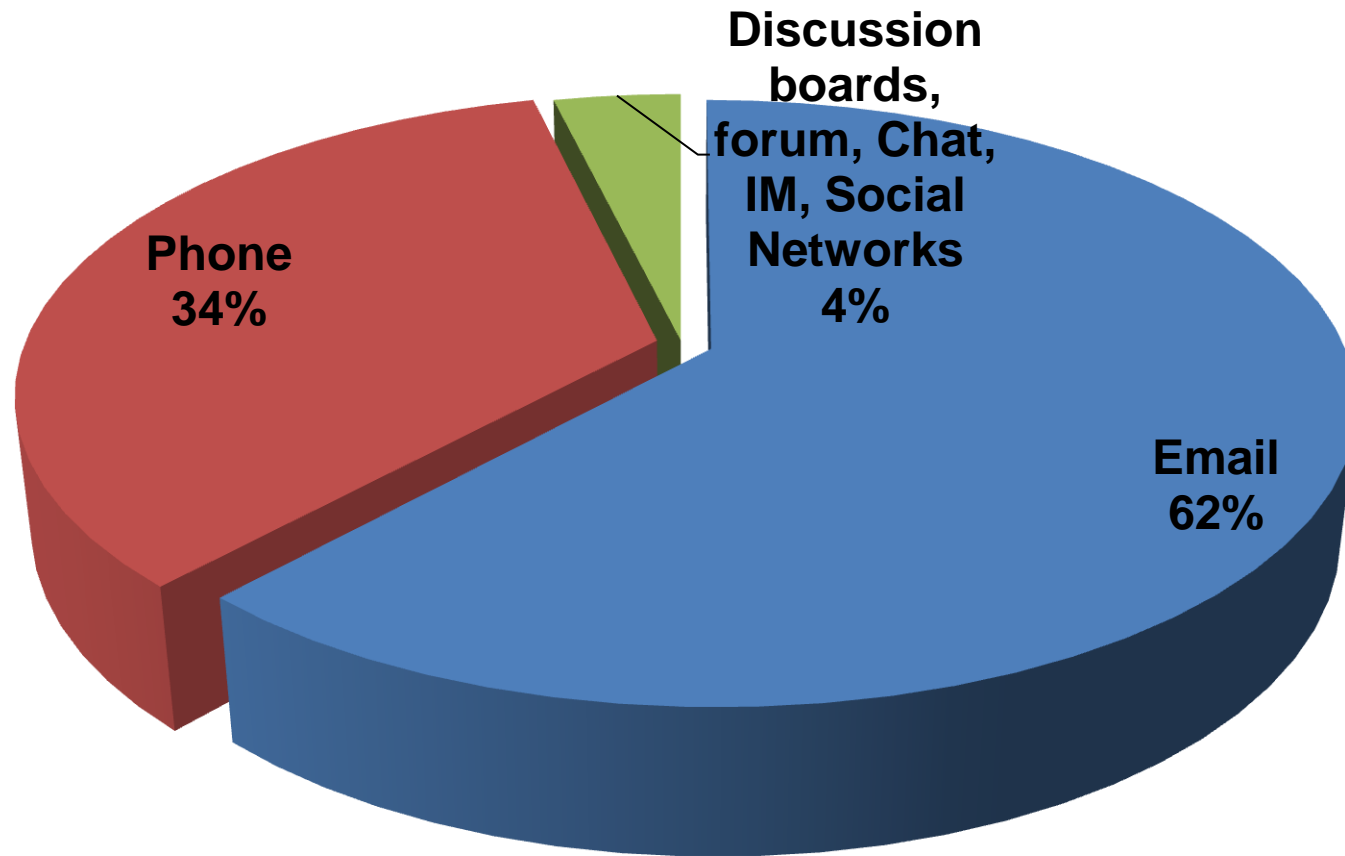


Source: EducationDynamics 2009 Research

Gap 3: Method of Contact

- Conflict: Prospects prefer email, but phone has been shown to be more effective
 - Use phone, but use it appropriately
- Persistence is also key, i.e., multiple follow-up contacts
 - 60 percent of enrollments close after the fifth contact
 - 50 percent of disqualified leads become qualified within 12 months of the initial inquiry
- Secret shopper research revealed many schools seemed willing to conduct aggressive initial post-inquiry follow up, but then virtually abandoned attempts at contact thereafter in favor of 'hot' leads

Most Used Form of Interaction, After Initial Contact & Before Enrollment



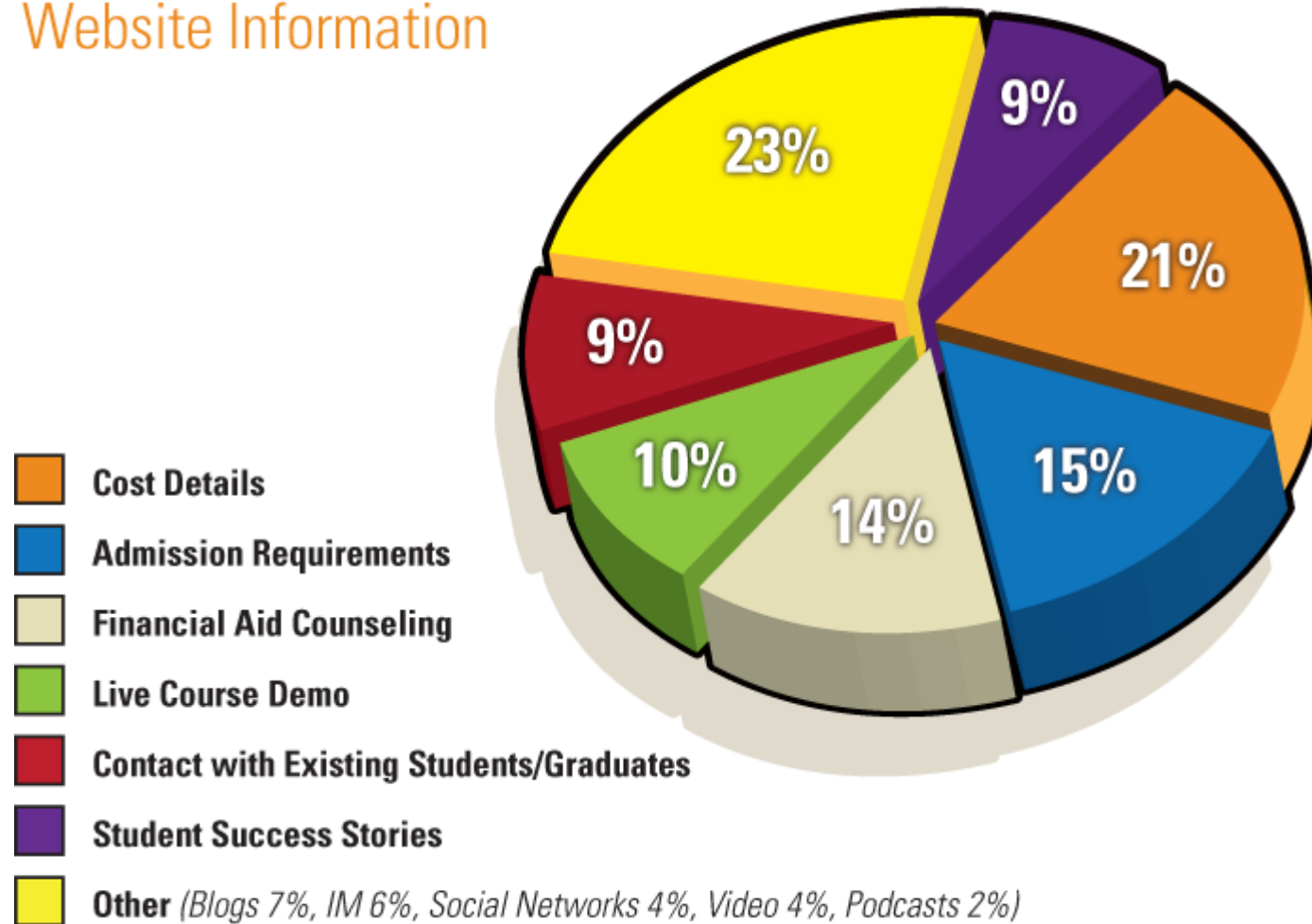
Source: EducationDynamics 2009 Research

Gap 4: Using the Web

- Is Your School's Website Helping or Hurting your recruiting efforts? Is it too many things to too many people?
- Most schools report having multi-purpose websites, targeting wide audiences including
 - Student Prospects who haven't inquired
 - Inquiries who have not applied
 - Applicants who have not enrolled
 - Enrollees
 - Alumni

Survey Results: Enrolled Students

Student Preferred Prospecting Website Information



Source: EducationDynamics 2009 Research

Gap 4: Using the Web

- Social media and/or Web-based initiatives are still in the early stages, several key points have emerged:
 - Provide as much “decision-support” information as possible
 - Career prospects for graduates of your programs
 - Welcome bios for all of your online teaching staff
 - Testimonials about the school and/or specific programs from current students or prospective employers.
 - Try social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, but also consider niche social networks and online communities that may resonate with specific programs you offer
 - Understand that this is all new ground for recruiters, so there are as of yet no hard-and-fast rules
 - The good news is that most adult (online) students are just as confused about Social Media as you are – for now.

Gap 4: Using the Web

- Consider using multiple websites or sub-domains for:
 - Organic/Natural search engine traffic
 - Content rich
 - Paid advertisements
 - Conversion (to lead) oriented
 - Inquired but not applied or enrolled
 - Differentiation and multiple calls to action
 - “Intelligent” if possible
 - Applied but not enrolled
 - Focus on the ‘last mile’ issues

What Did We Learn?

- Students are shoppers
 - Form initial engagement early. You don't have to be first, but you do need to be fast
- Accessibility to students is limited – use your time wisely and preciously
- Don't believe everything you hear – or say
 - Evaluate yourself
- There is no single correct formula for success
 - Understand that the wide variety of adult students may lead to a variety of customized methods
 - Test multiple strategies

What Did We Learn?

- Think twice before purchasing the 'Flex-Ladder'

Help & Resources

- Additional Questions: agansler@EducationDynamics.com
- Presentation slides: available online through DETC Website (www.detc.org), via Rob Chalifoux (Rob@detc.org)
- White Papers
 - Closing the Gaps: Meeting Emerging Student Preferences and Increasing Yield in the Post-Inquiry Enrollment Process
 - Best Practices in Enrollment Marketing Management
 - Stop by our booth, or contact Howard Mandel, hmandel@EducationDynamics.com
 - Visit <http://sharing.educationdynamics.com> (Research)

Age of Respondents

