

Top seven ways to connect with the class of 2014. Now!

They are the holy grail of youth marketing; the 5-million-plus American high school students who will be leaving home for the first time this fall, building brand loyalties and buying habits that will last a lifetime.

By [Matt Britton](#) 10 May 2010

During student orientation before my freshman year at Boston University, I signed up for a Bank of America credit card. Eighteen years later, I am still a customer - as a dad, homeowner and entrepreneur. Talk about the lifetime value of a consumer...

As students are about to leave the nest (and the influence of parental purchasing), they will have the freedom to build their own "best of" roster of preferred brands that will make this tenuous transition just a little easier. Their choices now will likely affect their loyalties for life, proving that there is no more critical time for brands to connect with consumers than that first step from adolescence to adulthood.

How can your brand seize this crucial market opportunity? Here are the top seven ways to emotionally connect with the class of 2014 ... right now.

- #7: Facilitate connections: Most seniors are still strangers to their future roommates and classmates and have burning questions about the people and things that will shape their college experience. "What kind of music will my future roommate like?" "Where is the best place to grab late-night sushi at my new campus?" Create social connections between classmates and their new college town between now and September to get students talking early on.
- #6: Talk dollars and sense. Most kids leaving high school have no clue how to balance a chequebook, apply for a credit card or even start building credit. Provide resources that educate (and make their lives easier) to build brand equity and trust.
- #5: Give them the goods: Whether it is a coupon, VIP event access, or just a free slice of pizza, incoming freshman appreciate every edge they can get. If you really want to win the hearts of inbound college students, help them get the clothes they need to rock those first days on campus.
- #4: Help them domesticate: When Mom is doing the laundry and making sure things don't get musty, teens don't have to think about home care. Now, it's their turn to be the head of the household (or don of the dorm room). Show them the way and your brand can "clean house."
- #3: Embrace school spirit: School spirit is at its peak during freshman year. Can your brand leverage the momentum of the football team, harness the heat of homecoming, or take over the tailgate? Create a national effort with local ties that tap into the power of school spirit, and your brand will never look back.
- #2: Create a pipeline to the Bank of Mom & Dad: Parents don't know what their kids need at college, and students often don't know how to ask for it. Brands can bridge this gap by helping students understand their needs and leveraging the growing 55+ age group presence on Facebook to ask for the right stuff in creative ways.
- #1: Help them hook up: Facebook was developed to help guys and girls meet each other and hook up. Period. Incoming freshman will "like" anything that allows them to meet more members of the opposite sex. It is a premise as old as the dear old but remember: only certain brands can get away with this (and you know who you are).

Article courtesy of [MediaPost](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Britton currently serves as founder & CEO of New York-based social marketing agency Mr Youth. Since 2002, Mr Youth has worked with some of the world's leading brands, including Pepsi, Staples, Kellogg, JetBlue, T-Mobile, J&J, and Nestle, to help them connect with this rapidly evolving and highly elusive consumer. The agency was recently named one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies in Advertising/Marketing.

