

SBDC expertise helps alum launch enrollment/retention marketing Biz

by Jo Ann Di Maggio May
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EDWARDSVILLE - Who better to launch a company equipping universities with targeted outreach to current and prospective students than a recent Southern Illinois University Edwardsville MBA graduate?

Chris Arceneaux's company, Active Group Solutions Inc. (AGS), assists universities in their communication strategies for reaching, recruiting and retaining students. Personalizing the messaging that students receive and turning a robocall into a message directly from the admissions director, counselor or even university president is an example of the creative messaging AGS offers higher education institutions.

The business idea originated as Arceneaux was working in SIUE's admissions office. "I was an admissions counselor and worked for SIUE's largest feeder schools in the Metro East area," Arceneaux said. "While at SIUE, I also initiated a program called Telecounseling, which creates an opportunity for prospective students to connect with current students to get their questions answered and receive admissions information from their peers. Many schools with limited resources are trying to find new ways of attracting, retaining and engaging students in a competitive marketplace. This is where AGS services are a value-add for universities."

Arceneaux's major focus at AGS is keeping the admissions-based phone calls and text messages automated, yet personalized, and targeting the messaging to increase the prospective student response rate. "Putting a voice to your admissions counselor's name and your director's name is so much more meaningful and impactful," he said. "In communicating with students and their parents, it's a way to embrace a common, targeted message as well."

"For example, the message may say, 'Good afternoon. This is (name), your admissions counselor calling to congratulate you on being accepted at SIUE. Here are the next steps in your admission process, but if you'd like to speak with (counselor's name), please press 1 now. To speak with financial aid counselor (name), please press 2 now.' The benefit is being able to produce campaigns, at scale with consistent and targeted messages. This technology is not solely about higher education, but can be cross-utilized in multiple industries for internal or external communication."

The Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center worked directly with Arceneaux to help fine-tune his business plan and gear up to launch his business. Jo Ann DiMaggio May, Metro East SBDC interim director and small business specialist, provided expertise at no cost.

"The return on investment from the SBDC is amazing," said Arceneaux. "Jo Ann helped create my roadmap and offered a wealth of foundational assistance. She spent quite a bit of time one-on-one with me on the business plan and on considering all the accounting, legal and other aspects of the business."

May said it was a pleasure to work with Arceneaux, because he took her counsel to heart and enthusiastically followed up on her suggestions.

“Chris is extremely business savvy and understands the value of networking with others,” said May. “He is constantly making connections. Active Group Solutions is a company built on these personal relationships and the need to have ‘active’ communication in this digital age. I look forward to Chris’ success and am always happy to assist him.”

For more information about AGS, contact Arceneaux at info@activegsi.com.

The IL [Metro East SBDC](#) assists new ventures like Active Group Solutions Inc. as well as existing businesses headquartered in the nine-county Metro East region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is a service to the community supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, and [Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#).

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining jobs and encouraging capital investment. It enhances the region’s economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large. To learn how the SBDC can help your small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at [\(618\) 650-2929](tel:6186502929) or sbdcedw@gmail.com.