



GradSelect

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How to Use GMAC™ GradSelect Recurring Searches and Lead Status to Nurture Prospects

Every month, Peter Glanville, Marketing Manager at Cornell University, runs automated GMAC™ GradSelect searches for its 12 graduate business programs, including the MBA, Specialized Masters, and Executive MBA. "Using the monthly GradSelect automated recurring searches has been a godsend for our 12-program strategy," he declared.

It not only saves him time, but their recurring search strategy gives them access to the most current leads in the GradSelect database.

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Of the GradSelect leads he purchased in FY22, 65 people, or 3% of the list, submitted an application or took an action lower in the nurturing funnel; nine matriculated. "Of the leads that were already on the GradSelect list but weren't first source (a new purchase for 2022), 166

people, or 7% of the list, submitted an application," Peter explained. "That number went up by a lot this past year; the previous year only 39 people from the GradSelect submitted an application."

The marketing team at Cornell evaluates and renames their searches each year for the next fiscal year. (Like many schools, it runs July 1 – June 30.)

Lead status informs Cornell's marketing and admissions strategy

Peter uses Pardot for marketing automation, which connects to Salesforce

for lead tracking. Each year, all new leads are entered as one list so the marketing and admissions teams can track outcomes. As Peter shared, "Leads enter Pardot as a prospect. All prospects receive the same series of emails. If they fill out a form, register for an event, or start an application, their status changes to nurturing."

"We also have sub-statuses under nurturing," Peter continued, "like pre-assessed (they reached out to admissions for a pre-assessment) or start an application. The final status is application submitted. Whether or not someone takes an action, they move into Salesforce for reporting purposes."

Lead status is key to the success of Cornell's email strategy. It helps the admissions team understand where leads are in the funnel and which leads to send one-off emails to.

Once a lead moves to nurturing status, marketing considers it a successful conversion, and ownership of that lead transfers to Admissions. Marketing remains involved, helping them pull lists, set up targeting, build automations, and measuring results.

Cornell segments and personalizes emails

The GradSelect lists include columns with intended industry and previous industry, which Peter uses to personalize messages or move to a program-specific email series.

"Every year, we add a little more personalization to the messages," he noted.

He also uses dynamic content to engage different populations. For instance, international prospects get a specific email at the beginning of the lead nurture email series. If they're international and from India, they get a different email; likewise, with China. Peter also sends specific messages to women, underrepresented populations, and veterans. "They receive the same email," he explained, "but with a different paragraph tailored to their population."

Finally, Cornell has set up splits in the automation. When a candidate takes a specific action, they will receive an additional e-mail.

If a lead fills out a form about their program of interest, they are moved into a nurturing campaign specific to that program. Of course, not everyone takes action. In that case, they are moved into the one-year MBA email series once the initial email series ends.

"Automation is great, but it's not set-it-and-forget-it. You need to personalize messages for each audience as much as you can. We spent a lot of time building out automation, and now we look at how to make the automation better and smarter."

Interested in new ideas for candidate nurture campaigns?
[Schedule time](#) with Paula McKay, Director of Client Success with GMAC Connect.