

VMP Case Study: StudentCity.com

Case Study Snapshot: <i>StudentCity.com</i>	
The Challenge / Opportunity	How to achieve growth and return to profitability in a seemingly mature category (Student Travel) within the battered, post-9/11 travel industry.
The Solution	StudentCity.com worked with Paul O'Malley Associates and its <i>Value Management Process</i> to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redefine and refocus on its core business;• Achieve superior execution through a disciplined planning and goals process;• Build the talent level and capabilities of its management team.
The Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revenue and net income increased significantly over a two year period.• <i>The company was acquired in July 2004 for \$42.5 million by First Choice Holidays, PLC., a leading British travel company.</i> StudentCity.com is now poised for continued growth, backed by its new parent organization.

Background

We first met with StudentCity.com's management team in the summer of 2002, following a very difficult, post-9/11 year for the travel industry. StudentCity (SC) was an online provider of Spring Break travel packages for college students, and graduation trip packages for high school seniors. Beyond the industry-wide slump, SC's target segments did not appear to offer much growth potential, and the competition among rival student-travel operators was intense. Management was considering changing the fundamental direction of the company, in search of sustained, profitable growth, and in search of a path to an eventual liquidity event for the owners. As part of that search, SC engaged Paul O'Malley Associates to provide our **[Value Management Process](#)** (VMP), which offers a structured process and tool-set for improving business results along with supporting coaching and consultation.

As the following table illustrates, the **VMP** delivers short and long-term benefits in three high-leverage areas: Winning Strategies, Execution Excellence and Teamwork/Interpersonal Effectiveness. Each of these areas became a major contributor to SC's success.

The Value Management Process from Paul O'Malley Associates			
	Winning Strategies	Execution Excellence	Teamwork & Interpersonal Effectiveness
Short Term Benefits	We help the client develop a more powerful strategy: to <i>Create, Communicate and Capture</i> superior value.	We help the client execute the strategy in a disciplined way.	We help the client further develop the management team and put the right people in the right roles.
Long Term Benefits	We build the strategic thinking capacity of the management team.	We help the client establish a sustainable process of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Goal-setting; • Open communication; and • Reward-sharing that leads to a high-performance culture.	We build the interpersonal effectiveness of the management team, helping individuals understand their own strengths and stretches, and how they can work most effectively: with the team; with customers; and with outside partners and suppliers.

Results

After working with our Value Management Process for two years, during which it enjoyed breakthrough gains in growth and profitability, SC was acquired by First Choice Holidays, PLC for \$42.5 million.

StudentCity.com was a well-managed company when Paul O'Malley Associates began working with them, having a talented, experienced and highly motivated management team. They would likely have eventually achieved a significant level of success without our involvement. However, the *VMP* process leveraged the SC team's strengths and addressed its weaknesses, thereby accelerating both the time frame and the magnitude of the success the company has enjoyed.

“Paul O'Malley Associates played a major role in helping StudentCity develop and execute our growth strategy over the past two years. They helped us define our core business with much greater clarity, and then focus on it like a laser, using tools like their Operating and Asset Goals process . We look forward to continuing to work with them and the Value Management Process, now that we are part of First Choice Holidays.”

--Mario Ricciardelli, CEO StudentCity.com