



BLOG ARTICLE

Advertising

Digital advertising for good at Kepler

How [Kepler](#) is using its digital ad capabilities to do more than sell a product.

For the people at Kepler, it's important to live their values by giving back. This manifests through the organization's own in-house education program, [Kepler Academy](#), and through partnerships with nonprofit organizations making real impact around the world.

Solving for a lack of diversity in digital advertising

Kepler Academy began as a response to the racial reckoning of 2020 in the United States. Looking for a way to improve diversity in the digital marketing talent pipeline and help close the opportunity gap for underrepresented groups, Kepler leadership decided to use the agency's strengths to solve an industry-wide problem. Kepler already had a strong employee training program — Kepler University — whose training modules they could repurpose to create a practical career education program for cohorts of students missing other pathways into the industry.

Kepler Academy offers an eight-week introduction to digital advertising led by Kepler employees who want to use their skills to develop new talent by serving as project leads, mentors and speakers. Students, including college seniors, recent grads and even career-switchers, learn the basics of digital advertising, then put their new knowledge to work on group projects through a Google Ads grant to provide zero-cost digital campaigns for nonprofits that wouldn't otherwise have the resources to advertise at that scale. Students also receive mentorship and education on career paths in the industry, so those who complete the program graduate prepared for entry-level positions in digital advertising.

Kepler's dedication to the program has made a measurable impact.

"We've had a great group of students," says Kierstin Anderson, the pro bono marketing manager who also leads Kepler Academy. "We've almost already doubled the number of

graduates even in the last cohort ... and we anticipate by the end of this year graduating 250 people total, which is mind blowing."

As of June 2023, Kepler Academy has graduated 228 students, and 85 percent of Kepler Academy grads are employed within six months of graduation. Of those employed, 78 percent are placed in the industry. Students have gone on to roles at companies like VaynerMedia, L'oreal, and even at Kepler, where they have the opportunity to volunteer as project leads for the next cohort.

"“I've learned more about digital media in 6 weeks than I did during the past 2 years,” one recent Kepler Academy graduate said. “And I’m a marketing major.”

Digital advertising for a purpose

Kepler Academy isn't the only way Kepler is giving back. The agency has partnered with fellow kyu company IDEO.org to execute digital campaigns for organizations supporting early childhood development and HIV testing in Kenya, birth control education for teens in Texas, and COVID-19 contact tracing in Texas and Florida.

Kepler and IDEO.org also partnered on an awareness campaign that promoted COVID-19 safety practices, like hand washing and social distancing, to underserved communities in East Africa and South Asia at the start of the pandemic. This campaign for [Alight](#) marked the beginning of Kepler's ongoing work with the organization formerly known as the American Refugee Committee, which provides aid to displaced people.

Kepler began working directly with Alight in 2022, providing digital marketing services to help the organization support Ukrainian refugees. One campaign targeted fleeing Ukrainians to help Alight connect them with housing credits from Airbnb & Hotels.com, and with companies providing visas to live and work in the United States. Another initiative raised an estimated \$90,000 for on-the-ground Ukrainian refugee relief by advertising Ukrainian art for sale to benefit both refugees and artist families.

"What haven't we done?" recounts Anderson of Kepler's wide-ranging work with Alight. "Every time there's a big world event, we just email them: 'You need a campaign.' And we stand it up within 24 hours."

Joyce Kim, Marketing and Communications Director at Alight, says her team has been "impressed with Kepler's ability to quickly react in emergency situations but also develop thoughtful strategies for long term success."

"Kepler has played a pivotal role in facilitating Alight's digital outreach efforts, effectively establishing connections with the Ukrainian population by disseminating crucial information regarding our comprehensive digital aid initiatives," adds Jilla Nadimi, Alight's digital and development impact lead.

Kepler has also worked directly with other organizations, like Campus PRIDE and Grassroots Grocery, to support good work addressing a range of social and economic issues.

Looking to the future

The only thing that could slow Kepler Academy's growth is the agency's size. Each cohort requires more employee volunteers and eligible pro bono projects, and as interest in the program increases, it becomes more difficult to find enough people with time to dedicate to the program.

"We've hit our numerical student capacity," Anderson says.

Likewise, the only limit to Kepler's pro bono work is the number of volunteers available.

"In the last year our pro bono work has tripled in size, maybe even quadrupled," says Anderson. "People who want to volunteer their time usually either pick pro bono or they pick Kepler Academy. So as Kepler Academy grows, it has almost a reverse effect on the number of people I can find for projects."

Anderson hopes that the more pro bono work Kepler does, the more like-minded employees it will attract, boosting the number of potential volunteers.

"Usually when people think of digital marketing, they don't think it can have that profound of an impact," she says. "So I'm hoping we can attract good people with it and continue working on more projects."