

# THE CURIOUS CASE OF TALLYTRACE — THE RISE OF “PAID TO ANSWER” AFFILIATE MARKETING FRAUD

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## INTRODUCTION

*Why is online lead quality getting worse despite the maturation of numerous lead quality technologies?*

That is the key question I set out to answer when I founded iDatafy® in December 2011. Numerous higher education marketing executives would ask me that question during my tenure as Co-Founder and Chair of the LeadsCouncil. The best answer that I could muster at the time was to cite the proliferation of mobile phones as the primary communication device for most consumers. Mobile phones make it more difficult in most cases to accurately verify and/or score the provided attributes of a given lead.

I was partially correct. There were also other forces at work in the affiliate marketing sector that had figured out a nearly fool proof way of creating and selling bogus leads as well. Leads that passed every verification and scoring test. Leads that actually responded to outreach by higher education institutions, but leads that had no intention of ever starting a higher education degree program.

After reviewing nearly 15,000,000 “bad” online EDU leads over the past 20 months we have uncovered a new type of affiliate marketing fraud that the industry needs to be aware of and proactively fight against. We call it “Paid to Answer” (PTA) affiliate marketing fraud and the poster child of this type of fraud is a woman named Vanessa from New Orleans, Louisiana. She has too many last name aliases to accurately guess which one to accurately use, so we will just refer to her by her primary email alias name of “TallyTrace.”

The purpose of this white paper is two-fold: (1) document how easy it was for one woman to act like an interested potential student and get paid to answer phone calls from higher education institutions for five years, and (2) demonstrate how both higher education institutions and education inquiry providers can work together to not only easily eradicate this type of fraud but, in so doing, also significantly improve the overall value proposition of online inquiry generation.

In short, you will never look at your “new” online leads/inquiries the same way again. For the first time you now have the ability to purchase far more inquiries from aggregators or affiliates, not less, since you can ‘iDatafy’ and shield yourself from the “TallyTrace” records of the affiliate marketing underworld and focus on genuinely interested new student inquiries.

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM — THE RISE OF “PAID TO ANSWER” AFFILIATE FRAUD

“Paid to Answer” affiliate fraud is when either an affiliate themselves, or a paid accomplice, fills out online inquiry generation forms and engages in dialogue via either email or over the phone with a higher education institution and pretends to be interested in enrolling at their school. In reality, this fraudster is most likely talking to dozens of different schools and telling them all the same story and has no plans to attend any of them. The sole reason they are doing this is to make money, either directly or as a paid bounty, as schools will pay marketing partners for “interested” inquiries.

This type of fraud has flourished for five key reasons:

1. **Money.** For-Profit schools are willing to pay between \$30-\$100, even more in some cases, for potential students that they believe are interested in enrolling in their programs. That is a lot of money for a simple name, address, phone and email.
2. **Lack of communication.** The lack of information sharing between most schools and their marketing partners is well documented. The lack of information sharing between schools themselves had been even more non-existent prior to our iDatafy® consortium. This has allowed fraudsters until recently to sell the same bad lead to multiple aggregators, who in turn, unknowingly sold the same bad lead to multiple schools.

3. **Antiquated fraud detection.** The advanced affiliate fraudsters know how to beat most lead verification, scoring, origin and IP based fraud detection methodologies because their use has increasingly shifted to the lead aggregator/agency side. Leads can easily be manufactured to meet requirements, and they frequently are.
4. **Duplicate lead window manipulation.** Schools and agencies should take this as a wake-up call. The affiliate fraudsters know that they can sell you the same exact “Paid to Answer” manufactured lead as soon as your specific “dupe window” opens back up again. Typically every 90 days. In most cases, even the most sophisticated schools that we work with have been willing to purchase the same exact lead again after 90 days in the hopes that the inquiry is now interested.
5. **Industry focused on answering the wrong question.** These fraud rings have been robbing schools and agencies of their marketing budgets because the fraudsters know that schools define quality by a modeled score or a code to see if they can reach the potential student with the given contact data. The question that schools should be asking themselves isn’t “Can I reach Bobby on this phone number?” It should be: “How many other schools have already spoken to Bobby, and is he really interested?”

At this point, it is important to point out that while lead aggregators are typically the ones selling most leads directly to a school, we have found in our research that they are not the source of the “Paid to Answer” problem. It is clearly an affiliate problem. While there are definitely some rogue lead aggregators out there, we are not seeing many examples where an aggregator is selling the same lead an excessive amount of times. What we are seeing in some cases such as “TallyTrace” is that the lead is being sold by at least 45 different lead aggregators, but each of these aggregators are only selling it 2 or 3 times on average. That most likely goes to show that there is an affiliate out there supplying all the aggregators with the same bogus inquiry and the aggregators had no idea that the same lead had been sold to multiple other aggregators for re-sale as well.

## WHAT ARE THE TELLTALE SIGNS OF THIS NEWLY DISCOVERED FORM OF FRAUD?

This type of fraud has been so difficult to identify for not only the five reasons listed previously but also for the most basic fact that these fraudsters are pretending to be interested in attending a given school. If you are a lead aggregator running a call center and someone tells you on the phone that they want to immediately start at XYZ School, your first reaction is going to be to transfer them to an enrollment counselor at the school. If you are XYZ school and you receive that hot transfer and the inquiry says they want to start at your school, you most likely will believe them and not want to question them.

But it is not that simple anymore unfortunately.

We are well past the days of screening out the obviously bogus cartoon email names and phone numbers that ring but don’t connect.

We now live in a world full of people like [TallyTrace@----.com](mailto:TallyTrace@----.com). This one individual alone has been able to defraud schools of tens of thousands of dollars, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, in marketing expenditures over the past five years by simply saying she wants to attend school. As long as she said she was interested, most schools kept/keep buying her as a lead.

Despite her past successes, she probably doesn’t know it yet, but her money making scheme is about to quickly come to a close.

With the help of leading higher education institutions and top agencies such as Datamark and Plattform Advertising we have been able to identify for the first time the simple signs for iDatafy® clients to look for to help shield themselves from these PTA fraud rings.

Here are the telltale signs:

- Fraudster typically resubmits their contact information every 90 days or as soon as a school’s “dupe window” lapses.
- Fraudster is speaking to multiple different schools at the same time and over a long period.

You may be thinking to yourself that the first bullet above is easy enough to check against and stop internally, but how could you ever spot the more valuable second bullet. Enter iDatafy®.

## HOW DO YOU STOP “PAID TO ANSWER” AFFILIATE FRAUD?

iDatafy® has developed the only proven solution to identify and eradicate this type of online marketing fraud through our proprietary LeadReview® platform.

LeadReview® is our patent pending lead quality assurance platform that combines our contributory LeadLockup® master bad lead database with a one of a kind LeadVelocity tool.

Schools simply contribute information just about their recent bad leads to our LeadLockup® and then in return we let them, and lead sellers, pre-screen their “new” leads against the same database to see if they have previously been reported bad for one of our seven LeadLockup® code reasons:

Code 1	Consumer said they never filled out a lead form
Code 2	Consumer said they were not interested
Code 3	Consumer said they were incentivized (e.g. Wanted free iPod)
Code 4	Consumer was impossible to reach (minimum of 5 attempts)
Code 5	Consumer provided bad contact data
Code 6	Duplicate Lead
Code 7	Other/Bad (no specific reason available)

We only allow verified higher education institutions, or their certified agency of record, to contribute bad lead information. All data contributions and queries are anonymized by iDatafy® so no future schools or lead sellers can see which school reported a previous lead as bad. None of the data may be proactively shared or used to form any type of blacklist. The only way that someone can see if a lead has a bad history is if they themselves have received the lead in question and then checked it against our system. See Figure 1 below.

Report Date: 11/15/2012

Email	LeadLockup Reason Code							Totals	LeadVelocity-Sellers (Days)				LeadVelocity-Buyers (Days)				Verification Engine	
	Code 1	Code 2	Code 3	Code 4	Code 5	Code 6	Code 7		Past 365	Past 30	Past 7	Past 2	Past 365	Past 30	Past 7	Past 2	Duplicate?	Reachable?
1947@HOTMAIL.COM	0	0	0	1	0	8	8	15	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	1		
IGMAIL.COM	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
IMBOURG@GMAIL.COM	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
IV@YAHOO.COM	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1		
IV2001@YAHOO.COM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
ELL373@GMAIL.COM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
I@GMAIL.COM	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	11	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
JYD@GMAIL.COM	1	1	0	2	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
YRON57@AOL.COM	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	14	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
FGMAIL.COM	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
KEED98@EXCITE.COM	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
@YAHOO.COM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
GMAIL.COM	0	0	0	0	2	2	13	26	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1		
IINGTON61@YAHOO.COM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
YAHOO.COM	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
HOTMAIL.COM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
@HOTMAIL.COM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		

Unable to reach consumer due to bad phone number or email.  
Email: BOB@GMAIL.COM  
Report Dates: 03/07/2011, 08/08/2011, 12/06/2011

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FIGURE 1

While our LeadLockup® database is the master repository of known bad leads for the industry, we also have a LeadVelocity counter that can help our clients get a better grasp of how often a “new” lead has been checked in our platform to provide coverage for leads that have not yet been reported as a bad known lead or may never be reported as a known bad lead.

Since our LeadReview® service is primarily fueled by known bad lead data it was even difficult for us to uncover TallyTrace’s exploits, as we didn’t initially have any school partners that knew they were being defrauded by her. We just had a lot of schools (50+) saying that [tallytrace@----.com](mailto:tallytrace@----.com) was either a duplicate (Code 6) for them or they eventually said it was just a generic bad lead (Code 7).

These school partners had no idea that 50+ other schools had independently been trying to enroll TallyTrace themselves until we made our contributory bad lead database available for them to check each new lead against.

## HELLO MS.TALLYTRACE... OR IS THAT TALLYTRYCE, OR SALLYTRACE, OR YALLYTRACE?

In doing dozens and dozens of data reports for new clients evaluating our service we kept coming across the same initial record on every single file — [tallytrace@----.com](mailto:tallytrace@----.com). At first we didn’t think very much of it because it primarily had benign LeadLockup® codes assigned to it such as the fact that it was a duplicate or just a generic bad lead for some of our schools. We were more focused on helping our clients spot the leads with specific bad histories such as “Consumer Never Filled Out Form” or “Consumer Said They Were Not Interested.”

But as we got more and more clients we noticed that almost all of them were reporting TallyTrace as a duplicate or bad lead. We started to do more research. When looking at several specific files we started to see the first few red flags.

For starters, she started using a different last name as seen in Figure 2 below (pixelated — but take our word for it):

5648529	5/30/13		11/2/12	Vanessa L	"New Orlean	504525	TALLYTRACE@
5692878	5/30/13		11/7/12	Vanessa L	"New Orlean	504525	TALLYTRACE@
5829732	5/30/13		11/20/12	Vanessa N	"New Orlean	504525	TALLYTRACE@
5829979	5/30/13		11/20/12	Vanessa N	"New Orlean	504525	TALLYTRACE@
5832248	5/30/13		11/20/12	Vanessa L	"NEW ORLEA	504525	TALLYTRACE@
5846915	5/30/13		11/22/12	Vanessa L	"New Orlean	504525	TALLYTRACE@
5871448	5/30/13		11/26/12	Vanessa L	"New Orlean	504525	TALLYTRACE@
5896968	5/30/13		11/28/12	Vanessa N	"New Orlean	504525	TALLYTRACE@

FIGURE 2

As our database grew, so did the questionable reports about her. In Figure 3 on the following pages, you can see that she has been reported as a bad lead to our database over 200 times by our school members. Over 45 different lead aggregators have unknowingly sold her lead as evidenced in Column G. It is worth noting that none of the lead aggregators listed here did anything wrong in our opinion. In cases where you see the same aggregator name numerous times, they were just trying to provide a lead to a school that wouldn’t be a duplicate for them. Little did the aggregators know that 40+ lead sellers were trying to sell the same lead. At the time they sold TallyTrace, none of the aggregators listed had access to the LeadLockup® data that we have today on her. Today, they can verify that their leads are clean of such bad lead reports.

TRANS. ID	DATE	LL REASON EMAIL	LL REPORT CODE	LL DATA SOURCE DATE	LL DATA ID	SOURCE
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	4	12/6/11	99	Other
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	4	1/14/12	90	Underground Elephant
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	4	4/29/12	42	Campus Explorer
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/10/11	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/16/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/29/11	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/29/11	72	My Foot Path
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/7/11	32	Adchemy
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/5/11	260	Tribal Fusion
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/16/11	48	CUNet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/16/11	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/11	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/11	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/11	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/11	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/11	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/11	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/11	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/14/11	95	Mediaspike
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/14/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/16/11	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/16/11	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/16/11	86	Vergo Marketing
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/16/11	86	Vergo Marketing
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/24/11	89	YourDegree
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/24/11	89	YourDegree
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/25/11	155	First Impression Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/3/11	32	Adchemy
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/3/11	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/4/11	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/6/11	38	ClassesUSA
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/6/11	38	ClassesUSA
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/8/11	48	CUNet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/8/11	48	CUNet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/14/11	69	LeadGenuity
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/14/11	69	LeadGenuity
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/25/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/25/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	8/6/11	38	ClassesUSA
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	9/1/11	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	9/1/11	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	10/12/11	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/19/11	77	PMA Media Group
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/19/11	77	PMA Media Group
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/19/11	77	PMA Media Group
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/21/11	95	Mediaspike
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/28/11	79	RC Interactive

FIGURE 3

TRANS. ID	DATE	LL REASON EMAIL	LL REPORT CODE	LL DATA SOURCE DATE	LL DATA ID	SOURCE
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/28/11	79	RC Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/6/11	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/6/11	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/6/11	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/10/11	32	Adchemy
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/16/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/16/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/20/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/20/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/8/12	38	ClassesUSA
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/20/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/21/12	89	YourDegree
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/21/12	155	First Impression Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/23/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/13/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/13/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/14/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/16/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/16/12	53	eCollegeFinder
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/17/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/17/12	24	Online Degree Navigator
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/20/12	57	Ed Soup
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/27/12	95	Mediaspike
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/27/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/28/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/1/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/7/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/8/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/8/12	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/10/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/14/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/20/12	45	Becker Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/20/12	45	Becker Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/22/12	38	ClassesUSA
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/23/12	32	Adchemy
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/2/12	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/5/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/5/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/5/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/5/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/5/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/7/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/7/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/10/12	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/22/12	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/26/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	4/29/12	42	Campus Explorer
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/2/12	85	Triad Media Solutions

FIGURE 3

TRANS. ID	DATE	LL REASON EMAIL	LL REPORT CODE	LL DATA SOURCE DATE	LL DATA ID	SOURCE
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/2/12	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/9/12	41	World Web Partners (Americolleges.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/9/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/18/12	76	Plattform Advertising
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/23/12	76	Plattform Advertising
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/24/12	51	Tree.com (DegreeTree)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/27/12	38	ClassesUSA
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/29/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/29/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	5/31/12	76	Plattform Advertising
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/2/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/5/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/5/12	49	DegreeProspects (BestNursingDegree.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/5/12	49	DegreeProspects (BestNursingDegree.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/5/12	49	DegreeProspects (BestNursingDegree.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/5/12	41	World Web Partners (Americolleges.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/7/12	61	Geary Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/11/12	83	Tightrope Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/14/12	41	World Web Partners (Americolleges.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/23/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/23/12	82	Vantage Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/23/12	82	Vantage Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/24/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/26/12	45	Becker Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/27/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	6/28/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/2/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/3/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/4/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/7/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/18/12	41	World Web Partners (Americolleges.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/20/12	31	Action Lead Solutions
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/20/12	32	Adchemy
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/20/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	7/24/12	66	Lead Media Partners
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	8/21/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	8/22/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	8/26/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	8/27/12	32	Adchemy
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	8/27/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	9/14/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	9/14/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	9/19/12	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	9/25/12	41	World Web Partners (Americolleges.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	10/2/12	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	10/15/12	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	10/17/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	10/27/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)

FIGURE 3

TRANS. ID	DATE	LL REASON EMAIL	LL REPORT CODE	LL DATA SOURCE DATE	LL DATA ID	SOURCE
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/2/12	42	Campus Explorer
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/7/12	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/20/12	33	Alloy
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/20/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/20/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/22/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/26/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	11/28/12	76	Plattform Advertising
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/10/12	77	PMA Media Group
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/11/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/11/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/11/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/12/12	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/12/12	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/15/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/18/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	12/22/12	76	Plattform Advertising
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/2/13	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/2/13	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/3/13	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/18/13	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/18/13	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	1/18/13	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/5/13	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/5/13	76	Plattform Advertising
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/16/13	76	Plattform Advertising
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/25/13	89	YourDegree
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/26/13	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	2/26/13	26	AcademixDirect
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/3/13	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/3/13	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/14/13	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	6	3/14/13	41	World Web Partners (Americolleges.com)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	3/8/11	260	Tribal Fusion
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	5/16/11	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	5/23/11	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	11/21/11	7	Quinstreet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	2/17/12	83	Tightrope Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/2/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/2/12	68	Lead5 Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/4/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/7/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/12/12	31	Action Lead Solutions
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/14/12	62	Higher Ed Growth
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/21/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/21/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/25/12	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	4/26/12	7	Quinstreet

FIGURE 3

TRANS. ID	DATE	LL REASON EMAIL	LL REPORT CODE	LL DATA SOURCE DATE	LL DATA ID	SOURCE
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	5/1/12	226	Zeta Interactive
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	5/2/12	85	Triad Media Solutions
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	5/2/12	85	Triad Media Solutions
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	5/24/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	5/29/12	62	Higher Ed Growth
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	6/5/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	6/18/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	6/19/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	6/24/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	6/27/12	43	CollegeBound Network
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/5/12	31	Action Lead Solutions
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/5/12	175	Clash Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/5/12	175	Clash Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/7/12	37	Education Dynamics (eLearners, Education Connection, etc.)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/13/12	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/16/12	82	Vantage Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/19/12	42	Campus Explorer
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/24/12	66	Lead Media Partners
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/24/12	66	Lead Media Partners
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/27/12	34	Ampush Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/27/12	34	Ampush Media
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	7/28/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	8/26/12	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	9/2/12	29	Avenue100(CourseAdvisor)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	9/13/12	95	Mediaspike
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	1/7/13	31	Action Lead Solutions
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	1/15/13	30	All Star Directories
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	2/9/13	48	CUnet
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	2/16/13	90	Underground Elephant
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	2/24/13	18	OneOnOne (1on1)
6937423	6/26/13	TALLYTRACE@	7	2/26/13	119	Directory of Schools

FIGURE 3

Column A is our transaction id; Column B is the date we tested the lead; Column C is the email address we queried against our LeadLockup®; Column D is our specific LeadLockup® code associated with the lead; Column E is the date it was reported as bad by the school; and Columns F & G are the immediate lead sources when a school reported the lead as bad to us.

Our immediate reaction after seeing all these bad lead reports on just one lead was that it was a simple bad lead that had been harvested by a number of affiliates. But what we learned next caused us to quickly reassess the severity of what was going on.

In our discussions with one of the top inquiry providers in the industry, we asked them if they had the TallyTrace lead record in their own database. They said they did have it and several times actually. But, and here is the kicker, they said one of their call center agents just spoke to TallyTrace on the phone three weeks earlier and “she definitely wanted to choose a school” so they transferred her to one. Upon deeper inspection, this partner found that they had transferred TallyTrace numerous times over the past couple of years, each time free of established duplicate window times for their partner schools.

We heard rumors in the past that some affiliates were engaged in this practice but no one could ever prove it. We now had a verified case going back to at least Spring, 2011 of this woman engaging in this type of behavior. But it gets even worse...

Upon learning that TallyTrace had a history of telling schools verbally that she was interested in enrolling in their program, and coupled with all our bad lead data accumulated on her, we went back to some of our top school partners and notified them of her behavior. Five of our largest school partners each said they bought TallyTrace as a “new” inquiry more than ten times each and only rejected her lead for duplicate reasons three or less times on average.

“ONE LEADING FOR-PROFIT SCHOOL TOLD US THEY COMBED THEIR CRM DATABASE AND FOUND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SPEAKING TO TALLYTRACE FOR FIVE YEARS, AND SHE KEPT SAYING SHE WAS ABOUT TO ENROLL.”

Five years! But still, it gets even worse...

Another of our school partners launched a major internal review of their lead purchases for the past three years and found that they had not only bought [tallytrace@-----.com](mailto:tallytrace@-----.com), but they had purchased all of the following inquiries, that now in hindsight, are obvious aliases of TallyTrace:

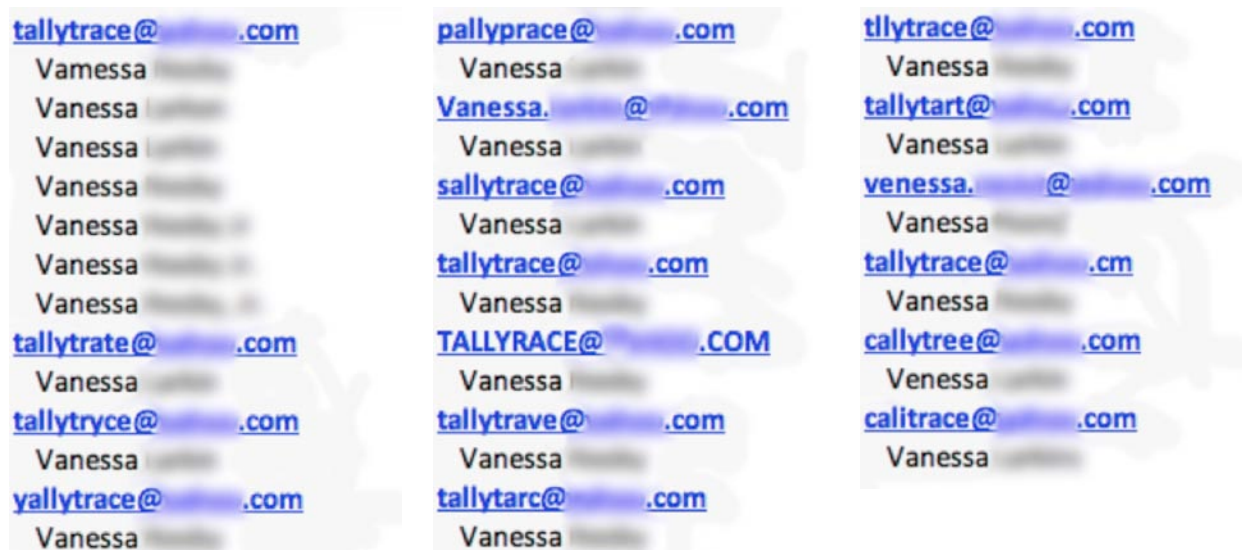


FIGURE 4

This one individual has at least 17 different email aliases. And yes, there are LeadLockup® reports on each of these other 16 unique different emails as well.

## DOING THE MATH

We believe that it is reasonable to assume, based on our data, that [tallytrace@-----.com](mailto:tallytrace@-----.com) alone has been getting sold up to 3 times per year over the past few years to 50 schools per year. Factor in a likely price of \$30-40 per lead then multiply it by even a small percentage of the 16 other email aliases she is using. Our best guess is that she has made more than \$100,000 for just filling out lead forms and answering phone calls, and that’s just one person.

## PUTTING THE AFFILIATE FRAUDSTERS OUT OF BUSINESS

Well TallyTrace, as the old saying goes, “business was good while it lasted.” Every customer of iDatafy® can now see in real-time what you and your cohorts have been up to (TEASER ALERT: Wait till you see our next white paper detailing the exploits of another PTA scammer named [jayzgirl@-----.com](mailto:jayzgirl@-----.com)!).

We don’t expect too many schools will continue to want to pay affiliates for the opportunity to speak with “new” leads that have a history of being reported as bad 10 times, much less 200 times like TallyTrace. By using a simple filter of our LeadLockup® data, our school members have the ability to easily shield themselves against such fraudulent leads.

## PURCHASING MORE INQUIRIES THAN BEFORE AND WITH CONFIDENCE

“WHEN DONE RIGHT, THERE IS NO BETTER TOOL FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF TRULY INTERESTED POTENTIAL STUDENTS THAN ONLINE INQUIRY GENERATION.”

The problem has been that, for too long, it has been too easy for affiliates to stuff in enough bogus leads to dilute the overall value for everyone. We feel that our LeadReview® service, along with a number of other trail blazing fraud tech services that focus on other aspects of quality control, have the ability to make online inquiry generation the most valued acquisition tool for every for-profit higher education institution.

## SUMMARY

We started this white paper, and our company for that matter, searching for the answer to a simple question:

*Why is online lead quality getting worse despite the maturation of numerous lead quality technologies?*

As with so many seemingly simple questions, the potential answers available to this question are not as simple. It is still difficult to ascertain how many “TallyTrace” like affiliate fraudsters are out there and the overall impact that they are having on our industry. But we now know that they are out there and that even one can have a profoundly negative impact.

More encouraging is the fact that we can solve this issue and reduce it to zero for those that choose to partner with us. If schools stop purchasing these inquiries, the fraud will go away. That much we know.

We welcome the opportunity to work with higher education institutions, their agencies, and lead providers to help not only eliminate this newly discovered type of fraud, but also to help ‘iDatafy’ your best inquiries as well through other techniques. Whether you think of our service as a “CarFax” type report, or my favorite (as described by a great partner) “LeadReview® is a Geiger Counter to detect radioactive leads,” we hope to have the opportunity to prove our value to you and to work together.

“LEADREVIEW® IS A GEIGER COUNTER TO DETECT RADIOACTIVE LEADS.”

Contact us via: [sales@idatafy.com](mailto:sales@idatafy.com) or toll free at (855) IDATAFY to schedule a free data analysis of your own leads to see how we can help you ‘iDatafy’ your best and worst ones.



SALES@IDATIFY.COM  
WWW.IDATIFY.COM  
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