Let's talk about sex ... finances!
Danielle Coe, University of Hertfordshire

If talking about finances were sexy, we'd all be at it, right? Over the years I've had numerous conversations about money, debt, hardship, financial support, benefit support.

Creating honest and transparent narratives with students and parents about money and what it means during and after University is something I've advocated over the years; educating students to manage their money better and accessing the support they need.

Do these conversations happen early enough? Absolutely not! Student finance professionals balance providing information/education before arrival to ensure informed choices are made and support those whom find themselves in trouble during their studies.

We need to be brave and honest in internal conversations about money and finances. These conversations need to be with ALL staff across the University, ensuring resources reach as many students as possible. However, facilitating earlier intervention, such as having realistic conversations before students arrive on campus may not make you the most popular with marketing!

The solution includes multiple channels of communication; weaving financial education and skills into the overall experience of their university journey is key.

So, how do we improve the narrative externally and internally? By exposing the stories which are not always told or heard – its not always about success stories, but true examples of good and poor financial decisions and/or lack of understanding. Allowing individuals to have the space to speak, to have their voice heard. It is these narratives which need to sit alongside any data you get about support services.

Whilst talking financial capabilities isn’t sexy, it’s a necessity. So, understanding how universities and support staff find ways to make financial conversations relevant and useful. Looking at how we can drive engagement and ensure we are measuring the outcomes to know we’ve done the job. Measuring different outcomes – not simply data!

Learning outcomes
- Strategies to start to address financial issues faced within Higher Education.
- Looking at how to engage students before, during and after University in relation to finance.
- Creating conversations internally about financial education and issues – how different staff/departments can help.
- Weaving financial education into the overall experience of their university journey.

Presenter
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Having worked within Higher Education in the UK for the past 15 years in international offices, accommodation and student finance and support roles; I have now moved into the financial education space working with Blackbullion to help Universities educate all of their students (and staff) to get money smart!