

Effective marketing

What you need to know about getting better results

A brand has one strategic purpose and that is to differentiate itself from competitors

Marketing budgets

- Marketing budgets are up to 3% of a school's annual budget
- Need to balance short term and longer term priorities
- Having realistic expectations:
 - recruitment of new students / parents takes time
 - need to keep filling up the funnel
 - many of this year's activities will not produce results until next year
- Many activities cost nothing other than people's time

Allocating responsibilities

- Staff can be a great resource for certain areas
- Right people, right roles - choose who is right rather than who is available
- Communication and staff involvement. Explain the purpose of activities
- Keep momentum

Top tips to maximise impact

1. Marketing agencies

- Use them to bridge the school's skills gaps
- Get fixed prices for work
- If using regularly, a retainer may save money
- Pay on output! It's a buyer's market

2. Website: your 24/7 prospectus

- Google your school description (ie. "Secondary school in Chester-le-Street"). Where did you rank?
- Can visitors see *why* they should choose your school?
- Your homepage is so important: Search Engine Optimisation
- Take control with your CMS. Don't leave it to an agency
- Use Google Analytics - it's free:
 - number of visitors / most popular pages visited
 - search engine terms used to find you
 - PC v mobile device use

3. Twitter – get involved or get lost

- You are all on Twitter even if you are not influencing what is said. Others are talking about you
- 20% posting means 80% responding! Engage
- That means a lot of replies and retweets
- If you decide to do things, do them well. Don't overstretch yourself
- Measure your exposure with tweetreach.com compared to your competitors

4. PR

- You have stories everywhere!
- Great way to reinforce your strengths and differentiation – every story should address these
- Good use of a marketing agency for getting stories published
- Set target for stories published in the press
- Online coverage is easier so less need for targets
- Photos increase the likelihood of publication
- Unfortunately, advertising influences PR coverage

5. Sponsorship

- Income generation, fund equipment, subsidise school sports trips, sponsor summer BBQ or fund its leaflets' production, etc.
- Parents, suppliers and partners are your core focus
- Think "free" as well as income

6. Enquiry management

- You've done the hard work and prospective parents are calling to visit the school – now what?
- Maximise conversions from the initial contact to students joining your school:
 - analyse! Record and measure drop off points and improve
 - what are the points of contact?
 - who manages such a critical area?
 - consider your "welcome cycle" - senior involvement early on to encourage prospective parents to visit

7. Setting targets

- Marketing is measureable
- Targets influence behaviour
- The more output focused your marketing is, the better your return on investment will be for money and time

Marketing myths

1. "Branding is marketing"

- Branding goes far beyond marketing
- The brand is everything:
 - marketing
 - culture
 - vision and values
 - teaching standards
 - students' behaviour, etc.

2. "Marketing is too expensive and we can't afford it"

- Decide what to do and do it well
- Creativity is memorable, rather than how much you spend

3. "Doing any marketing at all, is better than doing nothing"

- What a waste of money and time

4. "Schools don't need marketing staff"

- Education is increasingly competitive
- Make marketing specifically part of someone's job
- Involve other staff also

5. "Teachers aren't part of the marketing process"

- Nonsense – they are your best / worst promoters
 - so are the office staff who answer the phone
 - choose wisely and train if needed
- Some may need guidance and motivation

6. "This year's marketing budget is for this year's results"

- I wish! It can be a slow process with steady improvements over time
- Focusing on key times such as open days will help, but only if everything else is in place
- It's about sustained contact with your target audiences

7. "Marketing can't be measured"

- Most can be measured if you focus on the output
- What are your key objectives? Measure these

8. "The best schools will do better"

- What is "best?"
- Best for my child is not the best school. It goes far beyond league tables
- How are you different or what makes you stand out? Focus and reinforce marketing messages to 'own this space'
- Create a better perception

9. "Email marketing is spam"

- School emails are never spam. It's relevant communication
- Newsletters to parents are important because their children are precious
- Keeping parents informed reinforces your brand
- Do it regularly (weekly? monthly?)
- Get contributions from across the school

10. "Partnerships & alliances are for businesses"

- Never been as important as they are now and this will only increase
- Effective partnerships provide mutual benefits
- Businesses are willing but few schools ask
- Are alliances with feeder schools strong enough?
- Play to other parties' strengths to increase your offering

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