

7 Keys to Building an Irresistible Brand

Gregory Campitelli
February 2019



EnquiryTracker
An essential lifeline for every school.

Introduction

Although schools are able to brand themselves like never before, keeping up with ever-changing marketing platforms and new channels is a maze to be reckoned with.

I have spent 36 years in the education and not-for-profit sector. Many of those as a teacher and Director of Development at a private secondary school. From a governance perspective, I have served on several Boards.

Over the last decade, I have had the privilege of working with some major schools, not-for-profits and large sporting organisations across Australia: and the best ones have all had champions, people who can really move the brand forward. One of the best ways to create champions of your brand starts by capturing key data when your prospects are looking at your organisation. For schools, this typically happens at open days, tours and prospectus requests – then nurture the relationship over time with a goal to build raving fans whether or not they eventually enrol at your school. Because fans make amazing brand ambassadors.

So, to show you exactly how to do this, I've put together these seven tips that will deliver real impact! I've only scratched the surface, but if you master these I guarantee you will get positive results.

Let's go.

1. The Prospect Pipeline

The lifeline of every institution is *future* enrolments. Yet as a sector, we do little to monitor or capture future enquiry data. We are great at managing the current student body and immediate incoming cohort, but when it comes to the longitudinal forecast, not so. Ironically, this is the very data that Boards, Principals, Business Managers and other key decision makers need at their fingertips.

They want to know what the big picture looks like 2, 3 or even 5 years out. They want to understand how the metrics are performing compared to prior years, how diverse we will look compared to our goals... You have to know about the 'prospects in the pipeline'.

Takeaways: Longitudinal forecasting is the very essence of [Enquiry Tracker](#), a cloud-based product that tracks every enquiry and delivers an easy-to-understand forecast for you in one integrated platform. The most important aspect is to be sure you are asking the key questions and capturing the information that matters. Enquiry Tracker does this for you.

2. Lifetime Value

When marketers are trying to assess impact, one of the best measures of success is the value derived of one enrolment. Let's say St Trinian's (7-12) Year 7 fees are \$10,000 p/a. A new enrolment is for *six years* not one year. So, factoring in Years 8-12, the figure is now \$60,000. Additionally, very few children are a single enrolment. One or two siblings generally follow. Further, a happy family will recommend the school to perhaps three others. The real worth of one successful enrolment could therefore be the equivalent of **six** enrolments – \$360,000! This does not include the per capita Government funding. This is the true value of one enrolment. Gained or lost.

Takeaways: Often there is push back on the marketing dollars spent to promote the school. My advice is to talk about the real value of securing one new enrolment over the length of their likely stay at your school. The decision to spend \$5,000 or \$10,000 for an ad campaign for Open Day can then be placed in context when compared to lifetime value of an enrolment. Further, argue for a dedicated Marketing budget you can be directly responsible for and not be forced to go cap-in-hand every time you need money. The beauty of a product like Enquiry Tracker is it will track the success of these ad campaigns so you can demonstrably show the decision you make is working – its worth is measurable and, in business, measurability is everything. Also, when people are visiting your school always be sure to ask, "How did you hear about us?" then compare the results.

3. A Paradigm Shift

There is no doubt a paradigm shift has occurred: the client has become the customer. Who has not heard the cry of the aggrieved parent: “I am the customer here!”

‘Customer’ implies a transactional relationship and a product purchase. Education is not immune and is now being viewed through this same lens – education, whether we like it or not, is a business.

This shift has given birth to another phenomena – the rise of the ‘Helicopter Parent’ – the parents who hover, close to the school. When things go awry at school, the helicopter parent swoops and may threaten “to pull them out”; a particularly disdainful expression. This is not surprising because we are constantly hounded to switch. Change your insurance, mobiles, TVs, hotels – easy. Not surprisingly this same pressure permeates the education sector. Brand loyalties are under threat.

Takeaways: Never before has customer service been so critical in managing the relationship with future and current families, the key is clear, transparent and positive communication. For future families, it’s about keeping them informed. So, make sure you have regular email correspondence with them; make it relevant and invite their child to key events that they may be directly interested in. Even better, if most of this can happen automatically and, better still, be documented so when the family calls you know instantly what the historical relationship is, then you have crucial information at your fingertips. Thankfully, Enquiry Tracker maintains a centralised activity log to track all interactions between the school and the prospective family.

4. Our Enrolments Are Full = No Marketing Required

I shudder when I hear the claim, “Oh no, we don’t need to market or advertise, our enrolments are solid.” That’s exactly the reason to market! You need to make sure brand space is strong and demand remains high. It is infinitely easier to market yourself when you are at the top of the wave than at the bottom – and no-one is at the top forever, no matter how good. The landscape will ultimately change. (Think fax machines, film cameras and video shops.)

Furthermore, school enrolments are like any business pipeline and are dependent on the goals for your school over time. For example, if your goal is to increase diversity, whether it is by gender, faith, or across disciplines, such as sports, arts etc., you need to know what the picture looks like years out, and how to achieve this goal.

Takeaway: Have a clear set of goals and a plan to track the data so you are on the road to success. Measure often, take action and fine tune as necessary. Compare data over time – is the proportion of children of alumni increasing or decreasing? Has there been a geographic shift as to where our enrolments are coming from? Are our local primary schools or early learning centres increasing or decreasing in terms of the number of students coming to our school? Capturing and analysing trends is the key. Analytics are at the heart of Enquiry Tracker, whether you need to know your funnel metrics or comparative trend data – we have you covered.

5. Unique Selling Proposition

Educational institutions are only beginning to articulate point of difference. As Steven Spielberg famously stated, “If a person can tell me their idea in 25 words or less, it’s going to make a pretty good movie.” Institutions have a rich tapestry to sell, yet we always hear the same clichés trotted out, “Here at St Trinian’s we are special, we teach the whole person, the intellectual, the emotional, the social, the physical, the cultural, and the spiritual...” This is not unique or special, all schools do it.

Your potential customers, the parent of your future students, are interested in what’s in it for them. Always ask yourself, “So what?” when you write a bullet point or benefit statement about your school or program – meaning, what would the parent say after reading it? Is it compelling and powerful? Be sure to address the “So what?”

Takeaway: Work on describing all the extra programs you offer, (robotics; dance; drama; STEM; Duke of Edinburgh etc.) *especially the ones others don’t have*, and weave this into a powerful narrative that invites the response, “Wow! That’s interesting, tell me more...” Sit down with the entire staff and ask them to note the five things that make your school extraordinary – watch out for the generic catch-all statements like, “We have dedicated teachers” – what schools don’t? Instead, focus on the compelling. A product like Enquiry Tracker, allows you to capture specific data around the programs you offer along with the interests your future students may have – thus allowing you to build outstanding relationships and a great brand.

6. Word of Mouth

“I chose your school because of your cool website... um no, it was your uber fashionable prospectus... No wait! It was the billboard I saw on the freeway.” Sounds ridiculous? Of course it is. No one chooses a school based on these factors.

When schools ask their parents why they chose the school, the most popular response is invariably, ‘Word of Mouth.’ This is usually followed by a shrug and a ‘What to do?’ by the school. We see everything we do and say as marketers (billboards, prospectus, website) shaping ‘Word of Mouth’. Instead, view ‘Word of Mouth’ as the *outcome* of all of your work.

Takeaway: Current and future families are your greatest marketing asset. What family wants to think they made the wrong choice in sending their child to your school? And then compounding it by sending their other children, or even worse, withdrawing them all. No, they want to be vindicated, so give them the easy facts to help the ‘water cooler’ and ‘car park’ conversations. Why not produce a fridge magnet every year with the top 10 quirky facts about your school – the ones that are very easy to remember. What about engaging parent ambassadors to act as welcome hosts on Open Day to mingle with families and share their story of why they chose your school? What about tracking the **prompters** for visiting your school (billboards, prospectus, website etc.) rather than seeing these as the **factors** in choosing your school. Enquiry Tracker can be easily integrated with Google Tag Manager and Analytics to track all metrics against your campaigns, so you are empowered to make informed decisions.

7. Hey! Come in close. Sssh...The key factors are not controlled by Marketers. What?!

For me, the biggest factors affecting a parent's decision are actually not controlled by marketers. What? Heresy! Let me give you some inside info: parents' decisions are controlled by a 'big five' set of factors and here they are:

1. **Customer Service:** this is a non-negotiable so adopt the concierge hotel model. Place your admin staff through regular professional training. Ensure every person arriving on site is greeted with a smile.
2. **Quality of the facilities:** the environs and facilities must be beautifully presented and tidy. Conduct an audit every semester and note all the easy-to-deliver changes that can make the environment sparkle.
3. **Year 12 Academic Performance:** this is core business of every school yet so many shun the results. Celebrate them – look at trend data; talk to university placement; use the facts to your advantage.
4. **Professionalism of the Staff:** the staff set the tone and culture of your school. Conduct professional development so they can understand their role in marketing the school: this starts with the language and structure of emails and dress code. Ensure you have a documented brand and style guide they must follow.
5. **School Uniform:** students are mobile billboards. Let's say you are a school of 1,000 students. This equals 2,000 movements a day as they travel to and home; which equates to 10,000 per week; 40,000 per term and 400,000 per year! How often have you heard the phrase, "Oh, that school is not good, look at how the students dress." Put in place systems to improve the pride in which students wear the uniform. Introduce a fair and easy to monitor system and make it a non-negotiable with the staff (as that is where the problem usually lies – staff not enforcing the rules). Lastly, why not flip and also have a rewards-based system for those who do wear the uniform with pride?

If any of the big five factors above are 'off', then it makes what we do infinitely more challenging.

Takeaway: Get these the 'big five' right and the job of marketing can thrive.

Conclusion

As I stated earlier on, our company **Enquiry Tracker**, offers a solution that is anchored around many of these principles. We have purposely involved many educators in the formation of this product and taken their input to build what we think is a one of a kind solution. Our goals are simple:

1. Make incredible easy to capture data consistently available on the school website – whether it be a general enquiry, an open day request for a personal tour or an ask for a prospectus.
2. Engage future families early via newsletters and emails on topics that interest them and keep track of it all in a central place.
3. Get the insights you need – Monitor your Prospect Pipeline years out & access key demographics about potential students in real-time.

Nothing comes close to how easy it is to manage future students in one solution. Beyond the intuitive event registration and email communications are the insights it provides us about our future families - there is nothing like it.

Patrick Kelly

Blackfriars Priory School



Learn more about Enquiry Tracker: [visit our website](#) or simply shoot us an [email](#) and we will get back to you.

Cheers,

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to read 'G. Campitelli', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Greg Campitelli