

Marketing & Enrollment

You have identified “marketing & enrollment” as an area of weakness in your school and one that needs improvement.

We find that most schools explain who they admit by declaring that they are either: (1) a “covenant” school (admitting only students from Christian homes or older students who have made a profession of faith), or (2) a “missional” school, which, along with Christian students from Christian families, admits students who are not Christian and/or students from families that are not Christian with the hopes of bringing them to Christ.

The problem with this dichotomy is that we have found few, if any, schools that are purely covenant or missional. There are undoubtedly parents and students who do not answer accurately on the faith portion of the application and “missional” schools who do not just take anyone from a Christian home. We believe that it would be much better to have a well-developed and proven strategy for how to evaluate and admit “mission appropriate” students—namely, students who would benefit from the school and the school would benefit from having them in the school. In developing its criteria, the school should aggressively look to guard against negatively impacting its desired culture. An uncommon Christian school should be in alignment with its mission, vision, and values as incarnated by the teachers it hires and the student it admits. Students and families that do not appreciate or support this resulting culture are not mission fits.

To be able to attract the “mission appropriate student,” the uncommon Christian school must have a well-established marketing plan that successfully articulates the school’s value proposition, differentiating it from others. The marketing plan should also comprehensively use different channels including word of mouth (e.g., parent ambassadors, raving fans), digital marketing, social media, and website. The channels should identify and develop relationships with a pipeline of students, parents, and families that want to be a part of the school community. Marketing campaigns should be targeted, matching different programs and different customer personas to their value proposition. All marketing should be grounded in the school’s mission, vision, and values. Marketing and enrollment processes should be well designed for prospective families based on their individual persona and stage of enrollment.

How to –

The following detailed suggestions will assist your school in establish uncommon Christian school marketing and enrollment policies and practices:

1. Shift to a "Mission-Appropriate" Admissions Approach:

- Move away from the dichotomy of being purely covenant or missional and adopt a policy of admitting "mission-appropriate" students—those who would benefit from the school's offerings and actively contribute to its culture.
- Develop clear criteria for mission appropriateness, considering factors such as alignment with the school's values, a commitment to cooperative engagement with the mission, and a willingness to contribute positively to the school community.

2. Diversify Admissions Targets:

- Broaden the scope of the admissions target beyond faith declarations to focus on recruiting students and families who resonate with the school's culture and are

likely to thrive within its educational environment. This strategy, carefully practiced, has even brought seeker students and families to faith through the work of the school.

- Utilize demographic research and community engagement to identify and attract families who may not initially fit the traditional Christian school mold but align with the mission and values.

3. Implement a Comprehensive Marketing and Recruiting Plan:

- Develop an aggressive marketing and recruiting plan that encompasses various channels, including word of mouth, print materials, social media, community events, and website.
- Tailor marketing messages to highlight the unique aspects of the school's culture, academic offerings, and the transformative impact on students' lives.
- Establish an annual enrollment calendar that strategically schedules marketing campaigns and recruitment events throughout the year.

4. Empower the Admissions Team:

- Empower the admissions team with the necessary tools and training to effectively communicate the school's mission, vision, and values during the recruitment process.
- Ensure that the admissions team has a clear understanding of the mission-appropriate criteria and can articulate this to potential families.

5. Use Storytelling for Impact:

- Use storytelling as a powerful marketing tool to share success stories of students who have thrived in the school's environment, showcasing the transformative impact on their lives.
- Feature testimonials from parents and alumni who can attest to the school's unique culture and the positive outcomes experienced by students.

6. Proactively Plan Admissions:

- Proactively plan for admissions, considering both short-term and long-term goals for building a diverse and mission-appropriate student body.
- Conduct regular assessments of the effectiveness of marketing strategies and adjust the plan as needed based on enrollment trends and community feedback.

7. Integration with School Calendar:

- Integrate marketing and recruiting activities into the annual school calendar, ensuring a strategic and consistent presence in the community throughout the year.
- Align marketing efforts with key enrollment milestones, such as open houses, application deadlines, and admissions events.

The above provides background and some suggested steps for improvement in this area based on best practices. To make more detailed and specific suggestions, we would need to know more about your circumstances. Please contact us if you would like to discuss your unique circumstances or would like assistance in facilitating the above steps.

Resources:

Scorners and Mockers: How to Dampen Their Influence in Your School by Rick Horne

Disclaimer

Once again, we emphasize that these ideas and suggestions may or may not address your school's specific needs as they are based on your responses to the survey. The feedback is limited to the questions asked and your responses. There is a whole lot more to every school.

We pray that God will lead you in your journey to becoming an uncommon Christian school and we do hope the input is helpful in this journey. If you want more detailed feedback, have questions, or would like assistance in any of these areas, please don't hesitate to contact us.