

TOOL BOX

10 BEST MARKETING PRACTICES FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

by Christina Drouin

Working together, boards and top leadership of independent schools most likely to succeed in the practice of strategic marketing planning will:

1. *Demonstrate collaboration* between board and top administration in the shaping and testing of strategy.
2. *Adopt a campus-wide marketing mindset* that is consumer-centered.
3. *Create and fund an organizational structure* that supports the strategic marketing effort.
4. *Rely heavily on research* and relentlessly review it regularly and rigorously.
5. *Use a marketing portfolio approach* based on research to create roster of opportunities and alternatives that include where to grow, where to stand pat, where to retrench, and where and what to innovate.
6. *Focus first on targeting opportunities* that can be supported through school resources, would have the most impact, and are most likely to succeed.
7. *Establish a core marketing strategy* that consists of three main elements defining how the school will tackle its marketing challenges in order to meet its institutional goals. This is expressed in a written strategic marketing plan that includes strategies for markets, institutional position and the marketing mix.
 - Markets: segmenting, targeting and prioritizing the most promising according to those with whom the school is most likely to enjoy superior competitive advantage
 - Position: using a differentiation strategy to uniquely position the school based on how its brand promise fulfills the needs of the school's target markets as compared to the brand promises of competitive offerings
 - Marketing mix: coordinating a bundle of benefits consisting of product offering, price, place, and promotion and aimed at attracting and retaining those whom the school wants serve
8. *Give bottom-line importance to creating relationships* that have long-term positive impact.
9. *Adopt practices of recalibration and adjustment* to keep the marketing plan relevant and on target.
10. *Steward the brand*, protecting it and building it by delivering on its promise of benefit.