



September 2007

## *Catholic School Enrollment Talk*

ISPD is your Catholic School Enrollment Solution for maintaining and/or increasing the quantity, quality, or diversity of your elementary or secondary Catholic school enrollment.

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### **What is Your School's "Brand"? How Do Audiences Differentiate Your School from the Competition?**

**By John Cooper, ISPD Enrollment Specialist**

The "**Four P's**" of brand differentiation are price, product, place, and promotion. Your success can be determined by how well you articulate the importance of these "Four P's" to your school's prospective students/families.

#### **P = Price**

There is a lot that can be said about the challenge of addressing the issue of price (more than I can cover in one edition of Enrollment Talk), but here are some things to consider:

- **First, realize that you must ease "sticker shock" for potential school families.** Many school secretaries tell us how difficult it is for them to move a prospect (who calls on the phone) away from the issue of paying for tuition. One of the simple things we encourage them to do is break the price of tuition down into a more manageable amount. An elementary principal in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles recently shared that she had her tuition broken down by the hour. Yes, she told prospective families that they were looking at paying \$1.58 per hour!
- **Second, understand that the goal is to create a brand image that invites dialogue.** Don't shy away from engaging people about financing your school. Two or three short sentences in your school's brochure relating to the "nuts and bolts" of paying tuition are not enough. You need to send bolder messages that tackle the issue head-on. Use parent testimonials that affirm that your tuition is

affordable. Profile in easy-to-understand charts and graphs how you have been able to help with institution grants/scholarships in the past.

- **Third, analyze the wins and losses you have had in the past with families.** This analysis will help you to better leverage your tuition assistance. In a recent Enrollment Talk on-line survey, only 7.7% of respondents indicated that they knew the average or median income level that they were most successful in recruiting and only 15.4 % knew what income level they were least successful recruiting. The better you know your pricing elasticity, the better able you are to brand it.

## P = Product

Most schools can tell you about the features of their product, but many struggle to articulate the benefits of these features. Any educational entity can claim academic excellence as its brand. Catholic schools must go beyond tired and overused marketing jargon to hard-hitting benefits that differentiate.

- For example, let's look at spiritual development in an elementary school. **Simply stating that your Catholic school offers daily religious education (a feature) or weekly school Mass (a feature) might not be enough to persuade a Catholic family to enroll in your school.** A more convincing argument might be made by noting that students in your school receive 180 hours of religious education (calculated at one hour a day, five days a week, for nine months) each year as opposed to 36 hours (one hour a week for nine months) in the parish religious education program. Taken a step further, the school should spell out for the family just what the benefit of 180 hours of religious education instruction is going to mean for their child. Ask your students to describe the benefits they receive from attending school Mass and then share those benefits as part of your brand.
- **Catholic schools can also use strong data to make a convincing brand argument.** For instance, a 2005 survey conducted by the National Catholic Reporter statistically pointed out that Catholic students who attend a Catholic high school go to college more, earn more, can explain the faith more, remain in the Church more, go to Mass more, and even pray more than Catholics who don't attend a Catholic high school. This is hard hitting data that you rarely see included in the brand message of Catholic schools.

## P = Place

Your school's brand needs to help students/families see themselves as part of your school. Here are a couple things to think about in communicating the "place" of your brand.

- **First, your promotional material (including your web site) needs to convey a sense of community.** Parents and students both list a strong sense of community as key factors in why they choose to attend a Catholic school. One of the pages we recommend for your web site is a "Who We Are" page. On this page you explain how large your school is, who attends, where they come from, and what contributes to a home-like feeling. Don't assume that parents and students will automatically know there is a dynamic community in store for them at your school.
- **Second, given the world we live in today, it is important that you reinforce how your school is safe.** Give some examples of safety which

reinforce your school's nurturing brand image. Use testimonials to strengthen your school as a safe, caring, loving environment.

- **Third, the best way for prospects to experience your "place" is for them to visit.** Sit down with your faculty and staff and script out the optimal campus visit for a prospective parent and student. Discuss how you are going to respond to prospects who just show up unannounced. If you know they are coming to visit, make sure that you welcome them by name with a sign on the entry door. Have refreshments available to offer them. Keep a box of toys handy for young children who need something to do while you speak to their parents. There are many aspects of establishing your school's brand image that you have less control over. This is one area of brand imaging that you have more control.

## P = Promotion

Your school's brand image is directly impacted through both internal and external promotion. Internally, you need to make sure that you have done everything possible to satisfy your students, faculty, staff, and alumni so that they are promoting you every day. You need those closest to you to be your strongest promoters. Your external audience will expect it.

**In terms of external promotion, you should consider the following:**

- How much of what you are promoting about your school is unique to your school? In other words, are you promoting the same features and benefits as your competition? What would be your most unique benefit and/or selling point that you could put on the front cover of a brochure or view book that would cause someone to open it up?
- Is your message consistent? Have you mapped out your institutional messaging to the point that everyone is on the same page in highlighting your brand?
- Do you have enough frequency of contact build into your promotional efforts? Don't sacrifice frequency of your promotion for reach. Frequency wins over reach more often than not.

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## This Month's Survey Question

ISPD would like your feedback in the form of answering an enrollment related survey question. Our on-line survey question is powered by [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and results will be shared with you next month.

Here's this month's question:

***"When it comes to your Catholic school's brand, how does your school differentiate itself from its main competition? (select the best answer)***

- ***Price***
- ***Promotion***
- ***Place***
- ***Product***

*Who do you consider your school's main competitor?*

- \_\_\_ *Public schools*
- \_\_\_ *Other Catholic schools*
- \_\_\_ *Christian schools*
- \_\_\_ *Charter schools*
- \_\_\_ *Home schooling*

[Click Here to take the survey](#)

## August Survey Results

*"Does your school record enrollment related data? If so, what types of data does it record and maintain? Does your school take the time to evaluate and analyze this data?"*

93.2% of respondents indicated that they record enrollment data. Here's the type of data and the percent of those who record it.

- Number of Prospects - 23.1%
- Number of Inquiries - 46.2%
- Number of Applicants - 46.2%
- Number of Placement Test Takers - 30.8%
- Number of Accepts and Denies - 30.8%
- Number of Enrolled - 100%
- Number who applied for tuition assistance - 76.9%
- Number who were offered tuition assistance - 76.9%
- Number who were denied tuition assistance - 53.9%
- Average or median Tuition Assistance Awarded broken down by income and number of dependents - 38.5%
- Average or median income level where you were most successful - 7.7%
- Average or median income level (including other variables) where you were least successful - 15.4 %
- Retention rate by grade - 53.9%
- Completion rate - 23.1%

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## Roll Out That Red Carpet!



During August in-service workshops that focused on the role of faculty in enrollment, ISPD encouraged Catholic schools to make the opening of school exciting, uplifting, and special. ISPD wanted positive launchings to immediately boost internal promotion. Strong enrollment management programs work best from the inside out rather than the outside in. With this in mind, Ascension School in Los Angeles decided to literally roll out the red carpet for its students on its first day. One student asked the principal if the school was going to roll out the red carpet again when her birthday came around!

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## A Catholic School Web Site to Watch

Lehman Catholic High School in Sidney, Ohio

[www.lehmancatholic.com](http://www.lehmancatholic.com)

Content, content, content is what web site visitors desire the most from your school's web site. Next to content, visitors want ease of navigation. Your site needs to speak directly to the various types of visitors: prospective students/families, current students/families, and alumni/friends/community. Lehman Catholic High School recently re-designed its web site to possess all these important features. It is this month's featured web site.

- [Click here to visit Lehman's site.](#)

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## Spiritual Thought

As Catholic educators, our Trinitarian tradition tells us that God loved us into being. Jesus came to witness the depth of that love and the Holy Spirit empowers us to share that love with the world. Our Catholic schools follow this action of the Trinity. Students, faculty, and staff witness the depth of that love each and every day.

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## Fall 2007 Workshops for Schools

*Dynamic presenters share proven strategies and discuss Catholic school enrollment issues during one and two day seminars. These workshops are conveniently held across the country at an affordable price of \$69-\$250 .*

*We hope you'll join us soon!*

[Register on-line](#)

*or call us today at 1-800-299-2393*

### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Catholic School Enrollment Solutions - Strategies That Deliver Immediate Results
- Best First Steps to Take in Beginning Your Catholic Development Efforts
- Best First Steps / The Annual Fund
- Capital Campaigns That Produce Results
- Long Range Planning
- Customer Service in Your Catholic School
- Catholic School Enrollment Solutions - Strategies for Catholic School Enrollment Growth

### ISPD Also Conducts On-Site Workshops

Offered to Catholic schools and parishes within a single diocese, these workshops are

designed to meet your specific needs.

- [Check Here for Fall 2007 Schedule and More Information on ISPD Development Training Workshops](#)

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