



INSTITUTE OF SCHOOL & PARISH DEVELOPMENT

*Bringing People, Process, and Ministry Together to Build the
Kingdom of God.*

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Enrollment Talk

By

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“Four Jab Punches” Your Enrollment Program Needs to Throw

At a recent diocese-wide enrollment management workshop, I looked out over the large crowd and I could see a woman who didn't look happy. She had attended the workshop to find THE answer to what ailed her school's enrollment. After a while she raised her hand and asked, “All this stuff you are sharing with us is all well and good, but I want to know how to get more students in our school!” I interpreted that what she wanted was the one “knock-out punch” solution. What I was giving her was an enrollment management boxing lesson on the importance of landing as many jab punches over the course of an enrollment fight.

Here are the jab punches that your Catholic school's enrollment management effort must connect with in order to win in 2010.

Jab Punch #1: Right Audience. Is your school connecting with the right market? Is your market responsive to the product your Catholic school produces? Is the market that is responsive large enough to sustain the enrollment required to balance your school's budget?

For example, if your parish has 1000 families and your school is only enrolling 40% of the eligible families with children, then your school's right audience is the 60% of eligible families with children that are not choosing to attend your school.

Jab Punch # 2: Right Message. After targeting the right audience, your school must then turn to connecting with the right message. Remember that the message must tell the story of your school's unique brand so that the audience...

- Identifies themselves as wanting what you have to offer;
- Aspires to be invested in your school's unique mission and vision;
- Anticipates receiving the benefits of being enrolled at your school;

- Experiences in a very profound way evidence of your school delivering on its promises.

For example, what message(s) would resonate with those 60% of parish eligible families in order to help them identify, aspire, anticipate and experience your school in such a compelling way so as to move them to enroll?

Jab Punch #3: Right Communication Medium. Once you have discovered the message(s) that must be conveyed, what is going to be the mode of delivery? The answer is that your school has to establish a multi-layered use of communication medium. You must systematically use a combination of highly personalized regular mail, email, telecounseling, website and social media. Given tight school budgets, we rarely recommend traditional advertising mediums like print ads, radio spots and bill boards.

For example, parish bulletin announcements directed to the 60% of parish families that are not choosing your school is probably not going to work. How about a hard-hitting, personalized letter that goes out to these families? After the letter, a phone call is made to each family. While on the phone, your telecounselor asks for email addresses that you don't have already. An email campaign follows that drives these prospective families to your website and social media.

Jab Punch # 4: Right Frequency and Timing. With right market, message, and medium covered, your school must now turn to frequency and timing. Frequency correctly implies that one-time efforts normally don't work, especially with tough to sell audiences. Whatever the education level of your market audience, one thing always holds true. People tend not to read, listen, or communicate like we wish that they would. The secret is to not communicate with them less; the solution is to communicate with them more frequently. It's kind of like a process of "chipping away" at points of objection. In all cases, timing reigns supreme. Just try calling your prospects on the Sunday evening of the Super Bowl.

For example, with the exception of those families entering school for the first time, most of the 60% of parish eligible families have already chosen not to enroll. If your school is going to have any success at all in its attempt to penetrate a market that has already rejected you, then frequency and timing of your messages are going to be extremely important.

A Test to See How Your School is Doing

Directions: Answer each of these statements as true, false, or maybe. Have each of your enrollment team members take this test and then discuss the results in an upcoming meeting.

True False Maybe Our school's enrollment team strategizes for ways to more deeply penetrate the current market while looking to enter new target markets.

True False Maybe Our school's product message has been tested and it resonates in a compelling way within our target markets.

True False Maybe Our school's product message is delivered through varied communication mediums that capture our markets' attention.

True False Maybe Our school's message is delivered with the right frequency and timing.

Score Card

If you answered true to all of these statements, then your school should be able to overcome the greatest obstacle to enrollment which is tuition. An honest answer of false or maybe to any of these statements means that your school's enrollment team has its work to do. All of these marketing related job punches are necessary in order for your school's enrollment program to be successful. Weakness in any of these punches will allow the opponents' counter punch (propensity to gravitate to a free education) to take your school's enrollment down for the count.

Google Fight

Have you ever wondered how key word searches for your Catholic school stack up to other school's key word searches? Well, go to <http://www.googlefight.com/> and make a key word fight. It's fun. It will help you to discover the most popular key words to use in your website. And best of all, no one gets hurt!

Spiritual Thought

With all these references to fighting, I thought I better end with the words of St. Paul in 1 Timothy 6:12. "Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."