



INSTITUTE OF SCHOOL & PARISH DEVELOPMENT

*Bringing People, Process, and Ministry Together to Build the*

*Kingdom of God.*

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## *Enrollment Talk*

# Excellence Demands Change Enrollment Management As Change Process

*By*

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In the Development Workshop Series with the Diocese of Madison, WI, earlier this month, we were discussing ISPD's *Seven Pillars of Excellence for Catholic Schools* (see below for the seven pillars), and the need to embrace change. To summarize this fascinating exchange of ideas, I simply stated, "*excellence demands change.*"

Schools of excellence embrace change as a constant opportunity to improve.

For many Catholic schools, the Enrollment Management (EM) Process *IS* change process. It represents a new way of thinking, a new set of standards and practices. The educational marketplace is crowded with many choices and the purpose of the Enrollment Management Process is to create a plan that will strategically attract and retain families – from prospect to active alumni. Enrollment Management must be *deliberate, strategic and intentional*. There are clear goals, a daily and monthly plan, specific roles and accountability. We must position our school as the best choice!

The EM process forces the school to confront itself – an examination of its mission, personnel, academics, student life, facilities, etc. Quite simply, the Enrollment Management process requires our very best.

In our Catholic schools, the Enrollment Management Process is perceived as change because it is new. The fact that Enrollment Management is identified as new is a

misperception. It is not new. The day your school opened its doors, it was involved in marketing, customer service and projecting an image of quality.

In fact, for too many schools, the notion of customer service is often met with resistance by administration, board members and faculty. The truth is that every member of the school community is a customer service agent -- an ambassador for the school. If the concept of customer service and this language is a barrier, let's break it down. You have customers and they must be served.

Your ability to serve the customer – to exceed their expectations and make their day – will translate directly into living your mission, success or failure, excellence or mediocrity, not just surviving, but thriving. The profound mission of Catholic education is service.

The truth is that the ministry of service comes to life every day in your building through the commitment and caring actions of your faculty and staff.

Let's examine the dynamics of change process.

Referred to at ISPD as the most mission-critical group to your Catholic school, how do you get the faculty and staff to embrace this change – the need for Enrollment Management? I would invite you here to think about the *culture* of your building.

When I reference the culture in the building, it is who you are. It is your location, the way you operate, policies, procedures, how you treat students, the spirit of the school, the way you make decisions, communicate, solve problems, your personality and reputation – the overall school environment. An understanding of your culture is the first step in embracing change.

Thus, some critical questions emerge here: How do you confront change? What are the top five challenges facing the school? What is the process to solve these challenges? Are new ideas encouraged and respected? Do we foster an environment of innovation and creativity?

In navigating the waters of change process, here are some considerations:

- Resistance is normal. This is an opportunity to communicate.
- Understand that navigating change is a process – not a program.
- The leadership of the school must lead the transformation.
- Establish an environment of respect, creativity and innovation.
- Illustrate the need and rationale.

- Highlight the benefits.
- Answer the question, “What’s in it for me?”
- Understand motivations and create incentives.
- Engage the stakeholders in the creation of the action plan.
- Embrace the “What if...?” questions and encourage brainstorming.
- Create benchmarks that are specific, measurable and realistic.
- Determine the best three options – by consensus-building.
- Execute an implementation plan that engages everyone.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate – a monthly mix of marketing strategies – with a personal touch.
- Share the vision with everyone.
- Celebrate and reward all victories and milestones.
- Conduct ongoing evaluation and invite expertise.
- Make excellence a habit.

*Excellence demands change!*

*Author’s Note: ISPD’s Seven Pillars of Excellence for Catholic Schools are:*

- 1) *Visionary Leadership*
- 2) *Strong Catholic Identity*
- 3) *Financial Stability*
- 4) *Quality Academics*
- 5) *Effective Marketing & Communications*
- 6) *Enrollment Management*
- 7) *Vibrant Student Life*

## **Spiritual Thought**

*Gratitude and Thanksgiving: Loving God, I am so grateful of Your loving presence in my life, I am filled with gracious thanksgiving.*

*Thank you, God for Your love and abundant strength in my life. Your spirit flows through me and energizes me. With every beat of my heart, Your love surges through me and I give You praise.*

*I am thankful for ... our Catholic school, the support of our parents, the commitment of our faculty and staff and for our bright future.*