



INSTITUTE OF SCHOOL & PARISH DEVELOPMENT

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

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Enrollment Talk

“A Good Letter is Still Important!”

By

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As your Catholic school embarks on a new recruitment cycle, remember that printed promotional materials are still important. Highly personalized letters that “POP” with how your school is going to meet your prospects wants, needs and desires remain one of your most important recruitment tools. Here are some tips to make sure that your letters cause your prospects to respond and move closer to enrolling.

Headline

- The first sentence of your personalized letter is the most important. You only have a matter of seconds to capture the attention of the reader. The opening sentence should focus on the main benefit or “What’s In It For Me” (WIIFM) message.
- Bad headline: St. Example Catholic School has offered quality, faith based education to children for 100 years.
- Better headline: St. Example Catholic School offers your child an exceptional, faith based education rooted in a 100-year tradition of excellence.

Layout

- The layout of your letter should not look like a “cookie cutter” form letter. Always indent paragraphs.
- Sales types of mailings you receive use underlining, bold typefaces, and bulleted copy for a reason. It works in helping to draw the reader’s attention to what is most important.
- Photographs can make your letter more interesting. Where possible, place captions underneath the picture so that the reader knows how it relates to the overall message of your letter.
- If you use a double-sided letter, make sure that you help the reader know that there is more on the back page.

Language

- Focus on the reader of your letter; try and stay away from words like “I,” “me,” “mine,” “us,” “we” or “our.” Use words like “you” and “your” as much as possible throughout the content of your mailing.
- Use the name of the reader several times throughout the body of the letter, beginning with the salutation and continuing throughout the letter.
- Save lengthy, sophisticated sentences for later correspondence once the reader has indicated more of an interest in your school.
- Use your thesaurus to come up with descriptive words like “wonder,” “sensational,” “remarkable,” “amazing,” “startling,” “revolutionary,” etc.... We would use words like those to describe the Gospels. Why not use them to describe your school?

Highlight

- Be clear as to what the next steps are for the reader to act on your offer.
- Use the prominence of your faculty and alumni by including them in your mailing. Include their picture, a lengthy quote, or a brief bio about how your school helped them to succeed.
- Give your carrier envelope a first class feel. If you are sending it bulk rate, use a live bulk rate stamp to give that “split second” scan effect of a first class mailing.
- You have to make it as easy as possible for people to respond to the mailing. Give multiple ways to respond like a 1-800 phone number, web site landing page, and business reply forms.
- Remember that you are leading the reader of your mailing. Move them through the letter in the way in which you want them to go. If you want them to attend an open house, direct them throughout the letter to that particular action.
- At the end of the letter make sure to restate the main benefits and/or advantages for acting now.

Caution

- Don’t ask questions in a starter sentence such as “Are you interested in a quality Catholic education at St. Example School?” On the contrary, you want to tell them that they are interested in the quality Catholic education that St. Example School provides.
- Stay away from using humor in your letter. You don’t want to make the mistake that the reader might not get the humor, or worse, that he/she might not appreciate the humor.
- NEVER use labels on your carrier envelopes. If you want to convey a de-personalized message, address the envelope with a label.

Always

- Personalize the name and address by printing it directly on the envelope.
- Never send out a letter that does not have a P.S. at the bottom. Readers will often go the P.S. section first.
- Err on the side of frequency over reach. Frequency refers to how many times to mail out to the prospect. Reach refers to the size, scope, and glitter that you include in the

mailing. If you can't afford to do both, then frequency will yield better results than the reach of your mailing.

- Use boring as the gauge of when your letter is too long. In other words, when you start to get boring, end the letter. If you can write more than one page and not become boring, don't be afraid of the length of the letter.
- You want to make sure that you produce the best quality mailing for the money that you can afford. If you are using a direct mail house, call around and get quotes from several mail houses. Direct mail houses will often compete against one another.

Spiritual Thought

Marketing advice for your Catholic School from Pope John Paul II...

“The question confronting the Church today is not any longer whether the man in the street can grasp a religious message, but how to employ the communications media so as to let him have the full impact of the Gospel message.”