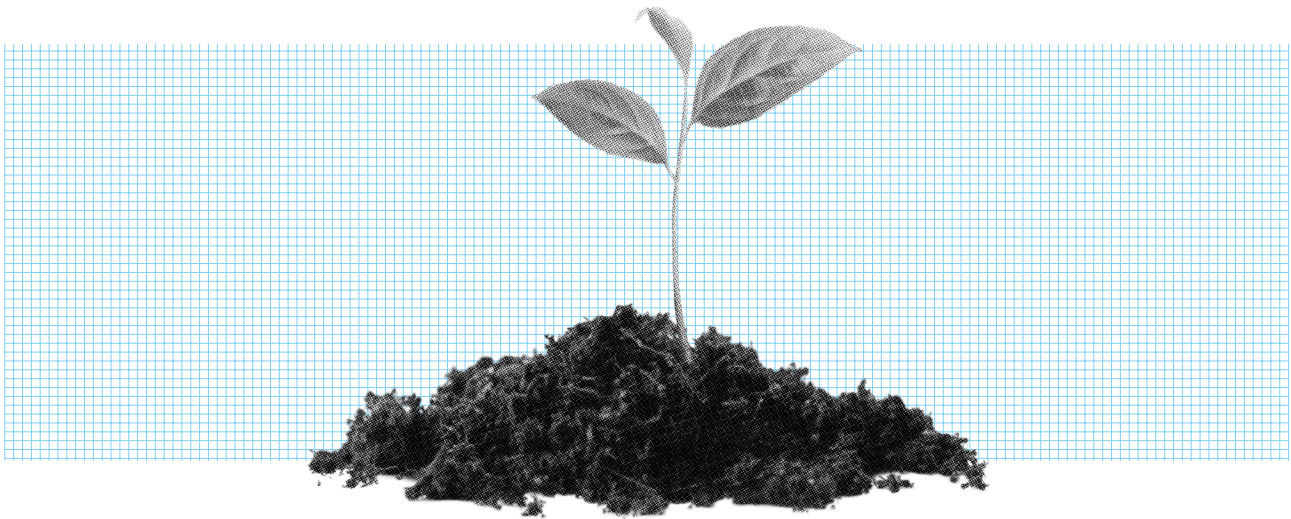


# **Your school's marketing health check**



# How healthy is your school marketing and communication?

Let's be honest. Marketing and education are often not good friends. In fact, they usually don't play together very well at all.

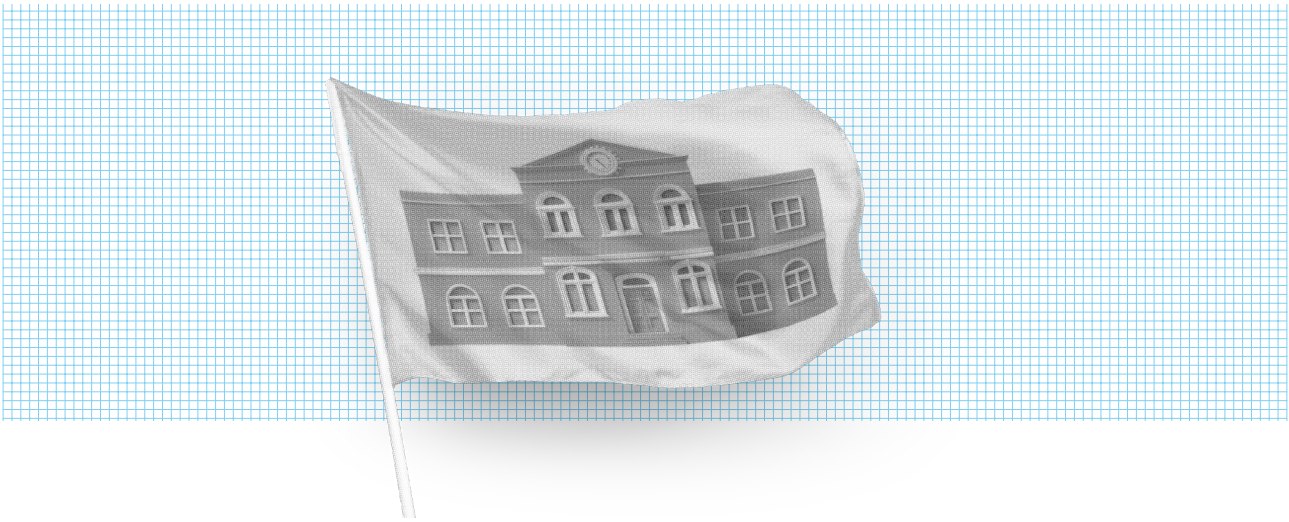
Classroom teachers can view marketing as a waste of resources that could be better spent on improving educational outcomes. Marketers, on the other hand, are prone to blow a fuse when asked to deliver a steady stream of quality enrolments with resources that are a fraction of their commercial cousins. You – as a leader – end up squarely between a rock and a hard place.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Firstly, let's be clear about the reason for marketing your school. The long-term success (educationally, financially, socially and spiritually) of a school is dependent solely on a sufficient intake of mission-fit students at an acceptable cost of acquisition. It's the cold hard truth.

With such a specific measure of success that sits quite apart from the core services of a school, the fact is that school marketing is different than marketing in other industries. At imageseven, we've identified 12 key reasons why it's different to our commercial cousins.

We suggest reviewing the 12 questions with your team asking yourself if you all understand these differences, and have strategies in place to address their impact on your goals and activities.



# 12 reasons why school marketing is different

1.

## Education marketing begins on the inside

In education marketing communication, a myriad of people from within your school – usually not the marketing people – will interact with parents and the community, your customers. All of those people need to understand your brand, live your brand and deliver your brand every day. The job of education marketing communication is to first market internally, to align the team and to create brand ambassadors.

Do all your staff, from the gardener to the receptionist to the teachers, understand their responsibility in representing the school to the greater community?

2.

## Your school's brand is important

School brands (while not always as well known outside of their target market) are extremely important to education purchase decision makers (usually parents). While it still remains true that intensely practical criteria drive school selections (think location, price and performance), the weighting education buyers place on the school brand drives and completes the actual purchase decision. "Can I believe in this college? Can I trust them? Will this school deliver what they promise?"

Can you clearly articulate the brand of your school? Can other, non-marketing staff?

3.

## Education products and services are usually complex

Education 'products' are typically complex and sophisticated. Many of the true benefits or shortcomings are not obvious. Education marketing communication needs to take the technical, the subtle and the intricate, and make it clear, understandable and persuasive.

Are you doing a good job of explaining your school's philosophy and offerings in a way all prospective parents can understand and be persuaded by?

4.

## Education markets have long purchase cycles

The education purchase cycle is a longer process, often lasting from several months to several years or more. Marketing to education purchase decision makers requires different approaches, depending on what stage of the buying cycle your prospect is in.

Do you and your marketing team have a clear picture of the enrolment cycle at your school?

5.

**Your education selling proposition is complex**

Your offer is complex and sophisticated; you must find compelling ways to present value-based differentiated solutions that support rational buying decisions. Gimmicks may get you attention and awareness, but that won't sway the purchasing decision if you haven't clearly and persuasively communicated why a prospect should choose. Your unique selling points must be articulated and delivered through well conceived and compelling messaging and communication strategies.

Can you articulate your value proposition – the reason families choose you?

6.

**There are fewer education buyers**

Potential buyers of education 'products' are difficult to identify ... and they are expensive to reach. There is only a small market for your school. From the entire population you must find and engage with prospective parents who have a need for education (they have children of school age), desire what your school offers, are geographically accessible and financially able. And that is just the first set of filters, if you are a faith-based school that requires parents to support your beliefs or ethos.

Have you defined a best-fit student? Do you have a realistic picture of how many of them there are within your target market?

7.

**Education is an emotional decision**

Education marketing communication is not 'rational'. Rational arguments will normally be used to support emotional positions. For example, alumni have a very clear emotional connection, but dig a little deeper and you'll also find the emotional connections associated with social aspirations and community values.

Through what techniques do you get audiences to connect with the emotional decisions behind joining your school?

8.

**Your prospective parents do their research**

The risk of making a bad purchasing decision is high for education buyers. Their answer is research. Purchasing decisions often begin online and buyers will usually seek the views of opinion leaders in their orbit, evaluate references and analyse statistics. It's also important to understand that they do all this work not just for personal benefit, but because they also need to 'sell' their decision to others within their family ... including the student.

How effective is your website, and other digital channels, at selling your school?





**... you must find compelling ways to present value-based differentiated solutions that support rational buying decisions.**

9.

**Education marketers have less research data**

If you're Nestlé or Unilever, you don't put a product on the shelf until you've spent millions to know that it will be successful. Very few schools enjoy that luxury. Many aspects of your 'product' are prescribed ... but the same restrictions apply to your competition. This makes success a lot more dependent on the experience and savvy of the education marketer.

Is your team utilising and analysing those data resources they have at their disposal? And are they building their marketing strategies around it?

10.

**Education deals with more people in the process**

There is usually more than one person influencing an education purchasing decision. Often there are many. Education marketers must identify and then reach multiple people across different centres of influence. Usually this will mean tailoring messages to resonate with each individual's interests and concerns.

Do you have a range of messages on hand you can customise to the individual?

11.

**Personal contacts make education sales**

Education marketing usually doesn't happen through tightly controlled, highly crafted communications like television commercials or other mass media. One-to-one customer relationship building, through personal interaction, demands sophisticated sales management and an educated, knowledgeable, trained enrolments team (read sales team) whose words and actions are aligned with school brand objectives. In the end, people make a sale, not strategies, brochures or websites.

How often do your enrolments and marketing teams meet? Are they regularly sharing insights to form a stronger overall strategy?

12.

**Outsiders have a significant influence in education purchase decisions**

Education purchasers often look outside their immediate connections to third party influencers for opinions, insight or referrals. Don't discount the most powerful marketing tool at your disposal ... word of mouth. A positive or reassuring word from an opinion leader is worth its weight in gold.

What is your reputation in the greater community?



# So, how does your school's marketing and communication stack up?

Ask yourself some key questions ... and be brutally honest with yourself:

1. What specific outcomes do I need from my marketing communication? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. With the current structure, expertise and resources is this realistic?  Yes  No
3. Can I clearly articulate the brand of my school? It is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Can I differentiate my school from the direct competition? If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



5. Do I have a predictable, sustainable and efficient lead generation system for enrolments?  Yes  No

6. In what ways is our marketing aligned (or not) with our overarching school strategy? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**The job of education marketing communication is to first market internally, to align the team and to create brand ambassadors.**

# contact us

## **imageseven**

1 outridge crescent  
subiaco wa 6008  
+61 8 6500 7777

**[hello@imageseven.com.au](mailto:hello@imageseven.com.au)**  
**[imageseven.com.au](http://imageseven.com.au)**

IM7\_1148009  
04/2026