OCTANE™

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT
REMARKABLE TOPICS

Brought to you by enrollmentFUEL

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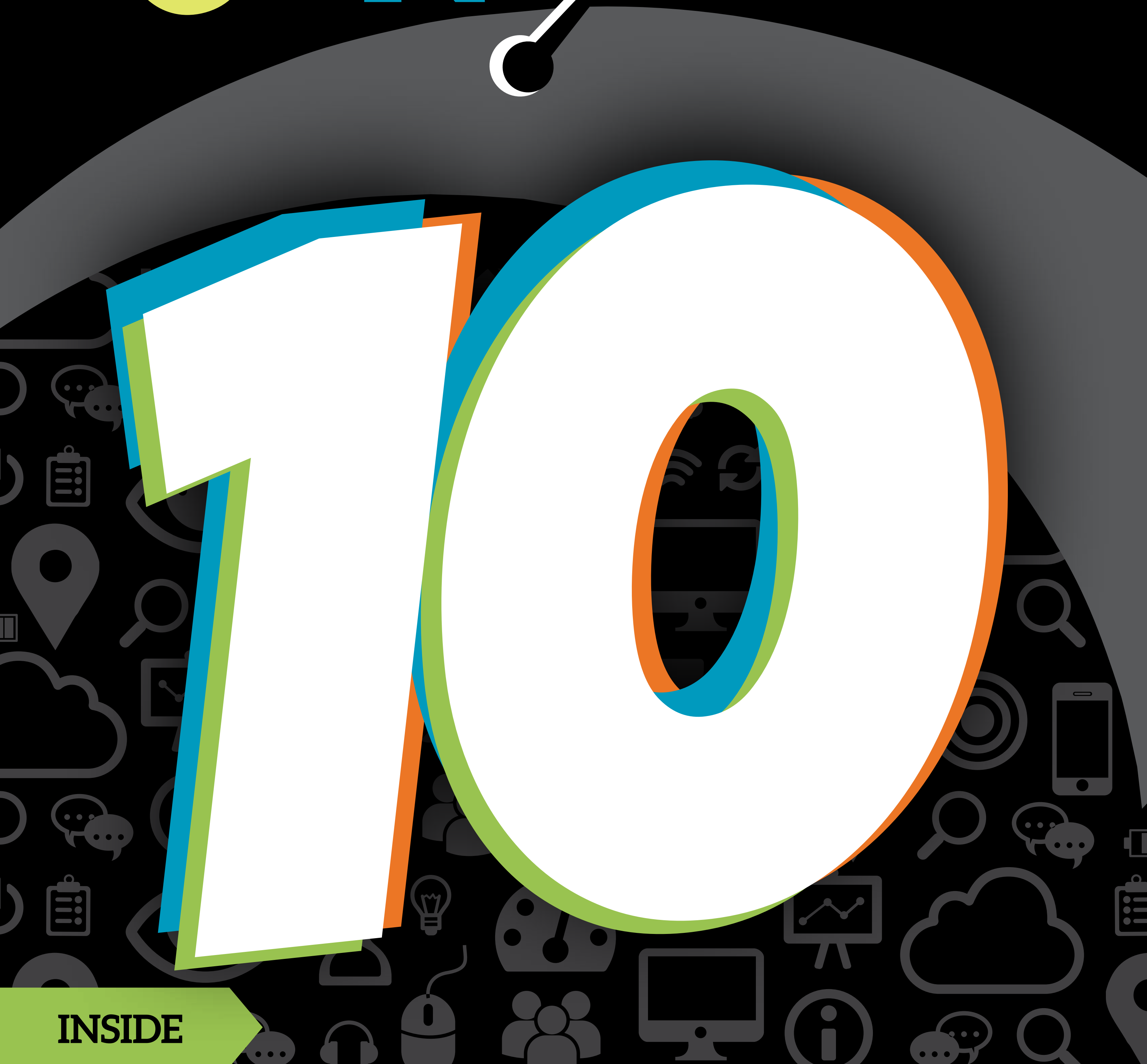

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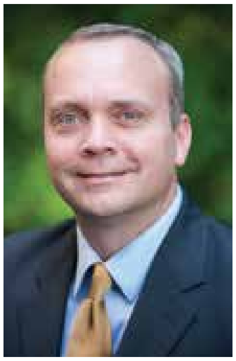
Letter from Our Founder and Chief Imagination Officer

Dear Octane Booster,



Thank you for being a part of celebrating ten issues of *Octane*! Thanks also to the many people I have met during my travels, who told me that they enjoy our magazine, carry it with them when they travel, and have shared stories about using the content to improve their approach to SEM.

From the beginning, we knew we wanted *Octane* to ignite conversation among leaders who understood the power within our community. So, we created a publication celebrating and promoting big ideas. In 2017, our first issue was mailed to 1,800 people. Now, in 2020, this 10th issue will be mailed to 5,000 enrollment leaders in schools ranging from small private colleges to large regional research universities.

From the beginning, we wanted *Octane* to ignite conversation among leaders.

Octane is produced by our in-house marketing and creative team, led by our Atlanta-based marketing strategist, Linda Bishop. We do not solicit advertising for our magazine, but we do solicit ideas for articles and shared best practices. While we look at traditional SEM topics, we also like to expand and sharpen thinking, by highlighting ideas outside of our industry.

We are working on other ideas for the future, including an *Octane Ideastorm Conference*, and I look forward to sharing more about that as it develops.

As I travel, please keep showing me your dog-eared copies. It lets me know that we are doing something good for you.

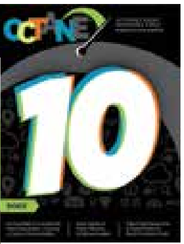
All my best,

MIKE

Mike Wesner
Principal and Chief Imagination Officer

Thank you to all the institutions nationwide who have allowed us to use their photography on *Octane*'s cover. If you would like to be featured in the future, please let us know.

Octane Magazine: A publication of enrollmentFUEL
A collection of innovative thoughts from a team of people bonded to clients in a way to prevent the knocking that comes with the "one size fits all" Student Search strategies. Adding Octane to your thinking fuels creativity and releases positive energy among enrollment professionals.



inside OCTANE™

Our Annual Holiday Giving Campaign Shines Brightly

To see the wide variety of participants' locations, check out the map at: PayForward.enrollmentFUEL.com

We are happy to report great participation in enrollmentFUEL's annual "Pay It Forward" holiday giving campaign. Members of the FUEL team selected five charities. This year's charities were:

- American Lung Association
- Heifer International
- St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
- SAGA - Save A Golden Abroad
- USO

When a participant selected a charity, we donated $19 to that charity in their honor. Their choice lit a light on the giving tree, reflecting the participant's location.

enrollmentFUEL contributed more than $2,000 from this campaign and more than $20,000 in total charitable giving this year.

Thanks to all who participated and helped make FUEL's annual giving campaign shine brightly in 2019!

No Snowflake in an Avalanche Feels Responsible

Creating a Culture of Accountability in Enrollment Management and Admission Offices

By Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.

I was recently on two campuses within the past week, and both visits were illuminating—well, maybe reinforcing is a better adjective. At the first school, I was working with a group of new admission counselors. When I say new, I mean all have about three months of experience. While we were at lunch, one of them asked me, "What is the most difficult thing to overcome in admissions?" I paused and said, "There are two frames from which I could answer that question. One is external, and one is internal." The external is limited operating budgets (we rarely control those—hence, external to our office), and the internal is individual counselor areas meeting their set goals. While the real focus of this article is on counselors meeting goals and building a culture of accountability, please indulge me for a brief moment for a comment or two on the external bucket.

During that conversation, I talked with these young counselors about what I see shaping the landscape of enrollment management. Leadership (presidents, CFOs, and boards) often set up admission leaders to fail by hamstringing budgets. Though this is never their intention, it can happen, which leads me to the second school I mentioned in the opening thought of the article.

While visiting a newly appointed VP at this second school (who has many years of experience), he was showing me a PowerPoint he had prepared for his first Board meeting that weekend. Researched data showed his operating budget had declined over the past six years by a grand total of 49%. YES, you read that correctly! Almost half of his operating budget had been slashed. Yet, he has been tasked to slightly increase enrollment.

When I hear stories like this, I am baffled. It is not realistic to bring in more students with better qualifications when the budgets for direct mail, postage, printing, name buys, and open houses have dwindled. Let me make an analogy. A family of four with two working parents has an income of $109,200. After taxes, retirement, and health insurance, they bring home $7,000 a month, which is their "operating budget." Now, let's assume that one of the parents loses his or her job, dropping that budget to around $3,570 a month. (This is the equivalent of that 49% operating cut in admissions.) Can you feel the pressure just to keep doing what you have been doing? I bet so. Now, let's say you have been asked to do more with that lower budget. What if health insurance costs rise, fuel increases at the pump, and the landlord raises the rent by $100 a month? How realistic would it be to do the same things you have always done? I would bet you are saying, "not so much!"

The interesting fact is that when we are handed this reality at work, we continue pushing ourselves, our staff, and our mental health in an attempt to meet the goal and prove we can do it. (Maybe our egos get in the way?)

What I am proposing is that we eventually must have difficult conversations with leadership (backed up with data) about the financial resources necessary to successfully recruit incoming classes, just like that newly appointed VP did with his Board.

If you are a current VP or Dean, and you are not invited to the table to help set your operating budget, net tuition goal, or financial aid discount rate, my one action item for you is to insert yourself into the process, so you can impact the course

of that conversation in the future. As the leader of your division, you are *accountable* to set realistic expectations for you and your team with your cabinet and Board. Without you involved, there is a vacuum.

Okay, thank you for that sidestep. It was an important discussion leading up to the main part of my article, which is helping your admission counselors to be *accountable* for meeting their goals. It was important because your team is counting on you to set them up for success and to provide the necessary resources.

After almost 30 years of admissions and SEM work, I have learned that the smallest misstep in a single territory can derail the best-laid plans of an entire goal. Without a culture of accountability, everyone can take a "snowflake" perspective, and in an avalanche, no single snowflake feels responsible for the disaster.

So, how does one help ensure a culture of accountability so that these goals are met? It can be accomplished in four steps. First, and most obvious, goals must actually be set. Second, work on sharpening your feedback skills. The third step is taking time to review progress toward goals in an open environment. Fourth, if you are off track for the goal, or have an underperformer on your team, don't wait until it's too late to take action.

Over the years, I have worked with nearly 200 campuses across our great nation. You might be surprised to hear this, but it is not unusual for me to be training counselors in November and ask, "What is your goal?" only to get a deer-in-the-headlights response.

I pause and say, "How many students do you need to bring into the freshman class this year as a team?" Still, no response—and a lot of fidgeting. Then, I say, "Okay—that's alright; let's just talk about your individual goals," confident that they will at least know their goal, even if the big picture hasn't been shared. And still—nothing. I bet some of you are sitting here thinking I am exaggerating, but I assure you I am not!

The first step in creating a culture of accountability is to **set a goal**, so you can hold your team responsible. Share the budget goal with your team as soon as you are able (but definitely before travel season starts). Also, explain their individual territory goals. (And, it never hurts to build individual goals based on your stretch goal, so the budget goal is met.) Hopefully, as the leader, you sat at the big table and had a voice in setting a realistic goal. Unrealistic goals never help to create a culture of accountability because people go into the cycle already believing they can't hit the target.

Once you and your team have a *realistic* budget goal (that you helped shape), the next phase in creating a culture of accountability is **sharpening your feedback skills.** For your team to meet goals, you have to *direct* and provide daily feedback. You are the captain of the ship, constantly communicating with your crew to safely reach your destination while routing around obstacles, bad weather, and shallow water.

Often, young admission counselors are in their first-ever "real" job. They need mentorship, direction, and help to understand the nuances of meeting a territory goal. A two or three-day orientation is not sufficient. Onboarding is a year-long process, whereby the cycles of admission are *taught* and learned. Letting folks figure out the job on their own does not help to create a culture of accountability.

Feedback comes in many guises. It can take the shape of praise, mentorship, leading by example, constructive criticism, affirmative positioning, and *directing*. **Additionally, to create a culture of accountability, feedback cannot only be summative. It must be formative.** At the end of the day, you don't want to have a Code Oscar (person overboard) as the captain of your ship! You want to get to the destination with everyone safely and happily onboard.

The schools that never miss enrollment goals have sharp people *directing* the team every day on what tasks should be done right now to meet an incremental *goal*. At the beginning of the year, each recruiter is given their territory goal broken out by month, so they can take r*esponsibility* to create a plan to achieve it. Notice that I said the recruiter is responsible for creating a plan, with you directing. To create a culture of accountability, and to ensure that admission counselors are vested in their plan, they should be taught to plan. Giving your team their goal as soon as possible (preferably in summer) is helpful because it allows them the time to process, think, and plan.

Huddles also help you meet goals. These meetings **provide feedback in an open and encouraging environment.** Start every month with a quick 30-minute kick-off meeting. The director reviews the number of applications, acceptances, and deposits each counselor needs for the upcoming month so the team can collectively stay on track. Every day after the first meeting, meet for a 15-minute huddle. Counselors report on their goal for the day, and what *actions* they plan to take to push toward the final goal. Huddles, combined with an open and encouraging environment, allow stronger counselors to help and push those who may be struggling. It also helps individuals assess and self-correct; letting someone know they are lagging gives a person a chance to step up performance.

> **To win the game, people need to know the score. Your huddles will be even more productive if you create a chart to serve as a visual aid, and have the counselors mark off goals each day as the numbers come in.**

Finally, please don't wait until it's too late to **take action.** The daily huddle allows counselors to share ideas on what is working, what isn't, and what problems they see on the horizon. Sticking our heads in the sand, defining current conditions as a "passing phase," or making statements like "it will get better," is hoping things will get fixed on their own. *Hope is never a strategy.* Counselors look to their leader to keep stress levels in check with proactive problem-solving. Generating solutions, marshaling resources, and helping solutions get implemented is directing. It also helps to create a culture of accountability because counselors learn that doing something to move the needle is the only acceptable option.

To create a culture of accountability, everyone must be responsible, so don't delay in dealing with chronic non-performers. If a counselor is not performing, put them on probation, or release them. Throughout my career, I have asked over 100 *performing counselors* how they feel about this. Those who perform say they would rather divide an underperforming territory early in the game rather than have an underperformer drag the team down. The salary of the released individual can be used to give remaining counselors a one-time bonus, rewarding them for the extra work.

When leaders appear to ignore poor performance, it creates an "I can get away with this, and nothing will happen," mindset. Hard workers can be demotivated because they don't see their performance rewarded (Why am I working so hard when my failing teammate is being treated the same as me?), and they start to slack, too. We cannot afford to have staff performance diminish down to the weakest denominator.

No snowflake in an avalanche feels responsible. It only takes that one little snowflake to create a major catastrophe. Creating a culture of accountability starts with helping each individual understand the ramifications of missing his or her goal. It only takes *one territory* to miss the goal and to undo the hard work of the others.

Creating a culture of accountability is necessary to meet goals. Set realistic goals, both at the overall level and the counselor level. To direct progress, sharpen your feedback skills, and review it in an open environment. Swiftly act to implement new ideas when necessary. Finally, deal with underperformers. Don't put one person ahead of the many, because one underperformer can undermine a culture of accountability, and put the goal – and even your job – at risk.

Dr. Jacquelyn D. Elliott is President of enrollmentFUEL. Using a variety of training and brainstorming methods, she had developed strategies that led multiple campuses to record enrollments. She can be reached at jacqui.elliott@enrollmentfuel.com.

7 Seven Habits of Highly Effective Enrollment Leaders

By Mike Wesner, M.Ed.

I've always been a student of leadership. As a kid, I played sports and had some great coaches who knew how to lead a team. Great coaches had a plan, and they knew how to put it in place. They wanted to win, and they made me believe that winning was possible. They tried new things, never blaming people, when ideas didn't go as planned the first time around.

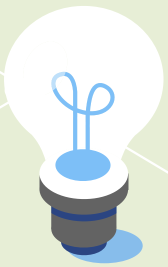
As a young officer in the Navy, I participated in leadership training. During these sessions, I began to get a clearer picture of what good coaching and leadership was. As my understanding grew, I started to see how much difference a ship's captain could make for the success of the entire crew and the operations of a ship at sea.

Poor captains, like poor coaches, tended to be poor communicators, often showing inconsistency in their actions. They lacked empathy, were quick to assign blame, and slow to adapt to changing times.

Over time, I came to see good leadership as defined by Peter Drucker, who said, "Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations."[1]

Recently, on a long flight, I penned a list of every enrollment leader I have had the good fortune of helping with enrollment growth. There were almost 100 names on the list. Some were outstanding leaders, and others had leadership styles that puzzled me.

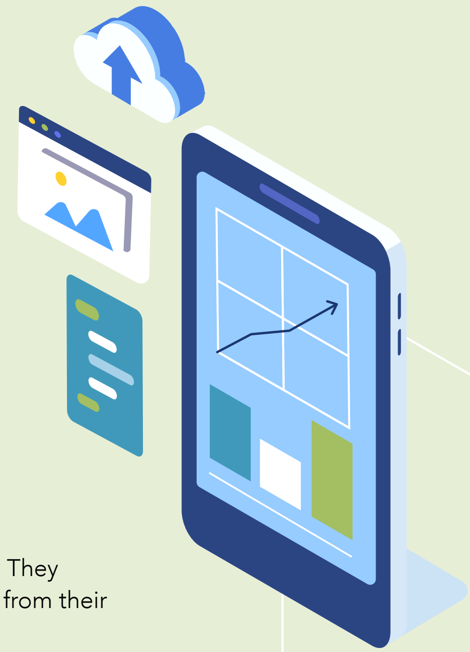
Those at the top of my list have many traits in common. I thought it might be helpful to share my list with aspiring enrollment leaders and see if you agree with my assessment.



1. Try New Things

Great leaders do not let the fear of failure stop them from trying new things. They do what minister, speaker, and best-selling author, John Maxwell, advised in his book, *Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success.*

Maxwell points out that you can't have multiple successes without some failures. He says, "The difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and response to failure."[2]



The best enrollment leaders don't waste time mourning the past. They constantly experiment, searching for the next BIG thing out there. Some ideas succeed. Some don't. They are resilient. When they fail, they fail forward. They pick themselves up, learn from their mistakes, and adjust.

They are restless, entrepreneurial, and venturesome. It's an enrollment innovator's mindset that inspires teams by making people feel like they have a leader who is charging toward the future.

2. A Love for Data

A friend of mine, who is a dean at a university, says that at his school, they say, "In God we trust, all others must bring data." This saying has been attributed to several people, including productivity expert, W. Edwards Deming.[3]

Data helps us combat cognitive biases. For example, without data, we may rely too heavily on historical precedent, even though the environment has changed. We may only see aspects of a situation that confirms what we wish to believe.

Great leaders love A/B tests. They understand that data helps them solve problems, assess performance, and improve processes. It helps them determine if they are on or off track to meet goals, which helps them lead their team in the right direction.

3. Building Strong Relationships

Whether by nature they are extraverted or introverted, great leaders bring positive energy into a room. They are uplifting, putting other people first, and willing to invest in helping individuals on their team reach their leadership potential. Before they see employees, they see people. This empathetic view fosters loyalty. When they yell, "Charge," all these qualities make others willing to follow the boss up the hill.

1 Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2012/10/16/quotes-on-leadership/#6a85ad02feb8

2 Maxwell, John. Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success, 3rd Edition. E-Book. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2000. 113.

3 Retrieved from https://quotes.deming.org/authors/W._Edwards_Deming/quote/3734

When talking about outside vendors, these leaders generally prefer to use the term "partner." Over the years, these leaders often made me feel like I was part of their team, inviting me to look behind the curtain and view their operations. They valued my input and recognized that high levels of transparency would allow me to help them more.

4. Great Leaders are Inversely Paranoid

This expression is a fancy way of saying that great leaders wake up each day, bursting with optimistic confidence and wondering about the next GREAT thing that will happen to them. It's not that bad things don't happen to great leaders. They do, but great leaders don't dwell – they deal. When bad news rears its ugly head – applications are down, deposits are lagging, and the department is down two people, AND the provost just announced a hiring freeze – the best enrollment leaders don't sink into the black bog of defensive reasoning. You don't hear these leaders say, "That's just the way it is around here," or "There's probably nothing we can do to fix this."

Great leaders are not hopeless optimists, but they do have an extra dose of Teflon coating overlaying their thinking. It ensures that they don't get mired down with worry or negative thinking. They don't complain or overly explain. Instead, they tackle problems and turn situations around.

The vibe that comes from all this positive energy tends to be contagious. Leaders know how to develop momentum and create a wave that others want to ride.

5. Excellent and Persuasive Planners

When you want to climb a mountain, great leaders start at the top. They visualize the pinnacle of success, but don't stop there.

They know they need to take a mental walk down from the mountain top and identify intermediate goals. Once they have mapped the path, they share their vision of the journey with their team and are wise enough to ask for input, take constructive criticism, and follow good advice.

6. Life-Long Learners

People who successfully reach enrollment goals year-after-year have an insatiable desire to learn new things. They invest in themselves (and their team), encouraging their employees to both fortify their current skills and upskill in preparation for the future.

They recognize that learning for everyone on their team can serve as an anchor for purpose, passion, and job satisfaction. As a result, leaders who believe in lifelong learning often experience lower rates of turnover and higher levels of employee loyalty.

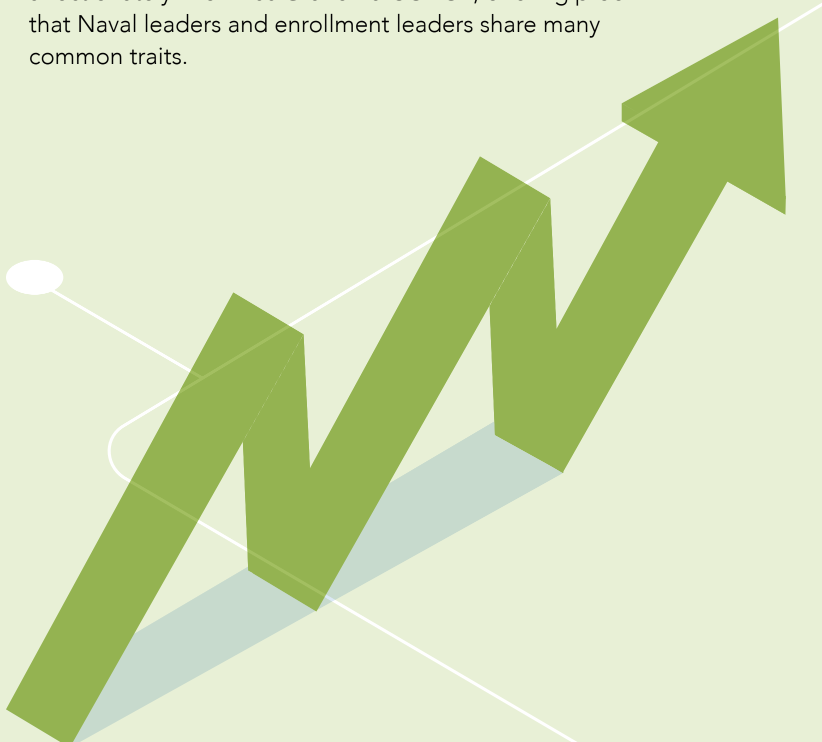
7. Uber-Competitive

One of the best traits of effective enrollment leaders is they want to win, but not as a selfish desire. They want to win for their school and team, as well as for themselves. As the commander on the frontlines tasked with bringing in revenue, they know the stakes are high.

To ensure they win, they keep score on everything. The points of comparison are many. Benchmarks from the previous year and this year's goals are two of the big picture numbers they track. They look at how individual players on their team compare, so they can take action to help get strugglers and stragglers back on track.

Uber-competitive does not mean obsessed with winning. Great leaders, like great coaches, know there are always factors outside of their control. Self-esteem comes from their intrinsic sense of self-worth, not solely from external results. As the cycle progresses, with all its highs and lows, they stay balanced and focused, concentrating on playing hard and ultimately winning the game.

As mentioned, my time in the Navy helped shape my thoughts on what makes a good leader. Perhaps no one embodies these leadership principles more than a woman affectionately known as Grandma COBOL, offering proof that Naval leaders and enrollment leaders share many common traits.



Great enrollment leaders see the truth in these words. They understand that you can't just tell people what to do and expect them to perform. To meet and exceed goals, you must serve as a beacon, an example, and a catalyst.

Grandma COBOL's Story

Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper was a Naval officer. Born on December 9, 1906, she was a mathematical wonder woman who earned her Ph.D. at Yale. During World War II, she tried to enlist in the Navy but was rejected, in part, because she was 34 and considered too old to enlist.[4]

Undeterred, she joined the United States Naval Reserve. Her background made her the perfect fit for the Navy's computing projects. She rose through the ranks, led teams, and was instrumental in integrating the computer language, COBOL, into the Navy's computer programs – which earned her the nickname Grandma COBOL.[5]

Rear Admiral Hopper, as proven by her track record, was not afraid to try new things. She was a mathematician, so you know she saw value in data. She succeeded in an era when it was rare for women to get a Ph.D., join the military, and lead teams to pioneer new technologies. To do all of that, she needed the drive to win.

4 Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Hopper

5 Ibid.

One of her quotes has always stuck with me. She said, "You manage things; you lead people." [6]

Great enrollment leaders see the truth in these words. They understand that you can't just tell people what to do and expect them to perform. To meet and exceed goals, you must serve as a beacon, an example, and a catalyst.

Like Grandma COBOL, enrollment leaders push ahead with a positive spirit and can-do attitudes. Working with them, such leaders inspire my enrollmentFUEL team to be better, do more and become a model of what a Student Search company must be in today's challenging, competitive environment.

They also inspire me to think about my own leadership skills, and always, always find ways to improve.

6 Ibid.

Mike Wesner, M.Ed., is the founder and leader of enrollmentFUEL. He loves seeing how great coaches take average teams and win championships, and how great enrollment leaders bring in their classes and set enrollment growth records. Reach out to Mike at mike.wesner@enrollmentfuel.com to compare notes and share your stories of how inspirational leaders have changed your life trajectory.

Digital Advertising:

How to Spend Dollars to Reach Enrollment Goals

By Lisa Branson, M.Ed.

Twenty-seven million dollars.

That is how much the University of Phoenix spent on online advertising between August 2016 and January 2017, according to data published by Kantor Media, a data insight and consulting company.[1]

You may read that number and wonder how you can compete, and if it makes sense to use scarce budget dollars on digital advertising as part of your Student Search strategy.

Digital advertising **can** help you reach your goals, and here are a few ideas to help you spend wisely.

Brand Activation

Marketing guru, Seth Godin says, "A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another."[2]

While every school has a brand, only a few have brands that are universally recognized, like Harvard. Most other institutions must activate their brand as part of their Student Search effort. Brand activation follows brand awareness. It is the moment in time when a potential student makes the transition from passive viewing of advertising (which creates awareness) to interest.

A few years ago, IP targeting and social advertising were considered optional add-ons at enrollmentFUEL, but that is no longer true. Today, almost every Student Search campaign contains digital advertising, because digital advertising "primes" your audience for future communications.

By repeatedly exposing students and their families to digital ads with images of your logo, campus, and students, you gain the benefit of the "mere exposure effect," first brought to the attention of the academic world in 1968 by Robert Zajonc, Ph.D.[3]

Dr. Zajonc conducted experiments to determine if there was a link between repeated exposure to a stimulus and how much the test subjects "liked" the stimulus. His research, published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, showed a direct correlation.[4] Other research studies followed, also supporting Dr. Zajonc's conclusion.[5]

1 Retrieved from https://www.kantarmedia.com/us/thinking-and-resources/blog/adg-university-of-phoenix-leads-online-education-advertisers-in-paid-search
2 Retrieved from https://seths.blog/2009/12/define-brand/
3 Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Zajonc
4 Zajonc, Robert B., "Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology Monograph Supplement, Vol. 9, Issue 2, Part 2, (June 1966): 1-27.
5 Retrieved from http://socialpsychonline.com/2016/03/the-mere-exposure-effect/

By repeatedly exposing students and their families to digital ads with images of your logo, campus, and students, you gain the benefit of the "mere exposure effect," first brought to the attention of the academic world in 1968 by Robert Zajonc, Ph.D.

Simply put, the more we see something, the more we like it. By exposing your leads to digital ads, you prime them to be favorably disposed to future campaign communications. For example, students and parents are more likely to open an email or respond to a direct mail call-to-action if they have seen the web or social media ads from your school.

Retargeting to Aid Conversion

Retargeting, also known as remarketing, is a specialized type of online advertising, where the visitor has already made an initial visit to your website. Code, in the form of a pixel, is added to your website. During a visit, the code drops an anonymous browser cookie, which allows website visitors to be served ads at a later point in time.

Is this effective? According to research published in the June 2019 edition of the *Journal of Marketing Research*, retargeting gets results.

The research was conducted by two professors at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Dr. Navdeep S. Sahni and Dr. Sridhar Naryanan, along with Dr. Kirthi Kalyanam, the Executive Director of the Retail Management Institute at Santa Clara University. Their jointly published article is titled, "An Experimental Investigation of the Effects of Retargeted Advertising: The Role of Frequency and Timing."

They conducted a large-scale randomized field experiment in partnership with a Canadian company called BuildDirect.com that sells to U.S. customers. In random testing, some website visitors were served retargeting ads for up to a month, while others did not get any ads. They found that following the initial visit, those who received retargeting ads returned to the website, increasing visitor traffic by 14.6% within four weeks.[6]

In their article, the team states that their research has the following implications for advertisers:

- Retargeting with simple, generic creative (meaning it does not have to specifically recall the visited webpage) attracts users back to the advertiser
- The effects of retargeting start immediately, within a day of leaving the website
- Approximately 50% of the total effect of advertising in the first week occurs within the first two days – a finding which emphasizes the role of immediacy in retargeting campaigns

There is one downside to retargeting pixels. When you use one, you serve ads to **everyone** who visits the tagged webpage, creating a level of unnecessary expense.

However, there is another remarketing option. You could:

6 Sahni, Navdeep S., Narayanan, Sridhar, and Kalyanam, Kirthi. "An Experimental Investigation of the Effects of Retargeted Advertising: The Role of Frequency and Timing." Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), Vol. 56, Issue 3, (June 2019): 401-418.

This option is more targeted, which means you focus precious budget dollars on students who are more likely to take the next step and convert.

There are several ways to identify website visitors. Some schools have technology in place linking their CRM database with their website, allowing them to identify website visitors. For schools that currently don't have this capability, enrollmentFUEL has developed matchBACK™, a solution that allows us to identify a significant portion of website visitors by matching their IP addresses with home addresses to pinpoint web visitors within your inquiry pool. Armed with this information, you can remarket to a more select group to increase overall campaign ROI.

In this type of campaign, we often recommend that our clients invest a few extra dollars in identifying ad clickers, and add those clickers into your standard commFLOW for inquiries. For example, if the inquiry clicked a "Visit Us" ad, it makes sense to send communications encouraging a visit.

Look-Alike Modeling Combined with IP Targeting

Look-alike modeling is a way to find potential leads by analyzing demographic data from past enrollees and using it to find people who have similar characteristics. This technique can be effective in markets where it's difficult to find prospective students, e.g., adult and graduate school markets. The cost of running a 30-day test is relatively low, so it may be something to consider. It works like this:

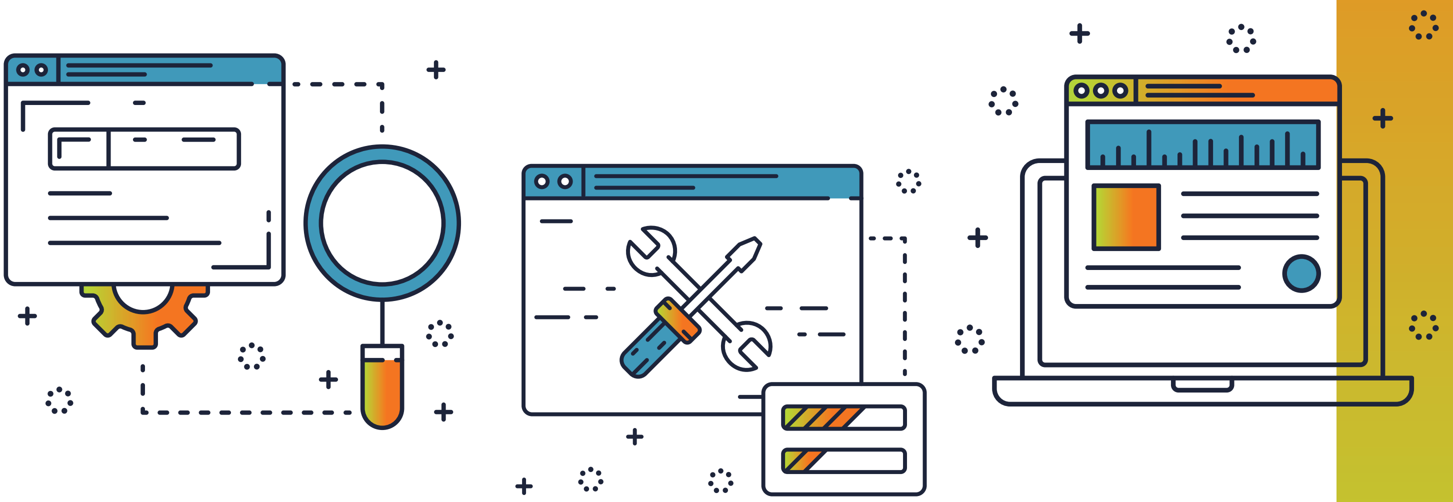
- You provide a list with 500 to 1000 past students who matriculated at your institution
- Students are run against a database to identify similar households
- These households are served ads for 30 days
- Track to see who clicked on the ads

Improvement often starts with an experiment, so there is value in considering how this could work for you.

Last Thoughts

No matter what the size of your ad budget, it pays to team up with your marketing department to be sure your website is optimized. Well-optimized sites get more organic search traffic, which reduces the need to advertise.

Digital marketing is important. However, the best campaigns use a variety of strategies to *meet your students where they are*. Digital marketing works best when it is used in conjunction with other methods, like emails, mailers, social postings, and personal phone calls.



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WHO IS JAY BAER, and Why Might You Care?

By Linda Bishop

If you're looking to grow enrollment, then it's worth thinking about an idea from Jay Baer. Baer is not an expert in enrollment management, Student Search, or financial aid packaging. He is a recognized thought leader on digital marketing and the customer experience. Jay is also a *New York Times* best-selling author, who has written six books on these topics. He has consulted with a diverse group of corporate clients, such as the Grand Old Opry, Cisco, and Comcast, and has worked with multiple schools, including Arizona State University, Indiana University, Oregon State University, and Central New Mexico Community College.

Baer believes the marketing strategies used by enterprises and educational institutions are becoming less effective. He thinks organizations need to rethink their approach. He makes a compelling case for creating change in his book, *Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help, Not Hype.*

Media Fragmentation

In 1977, Americans primarily watched three channels: ABC, CBS, and NBC. In *Youtility*, Baer reports *Happy Days* on ABC was the number one television show in the country that year. It had a 31.5 rating, so 31.5% of all Americans living in a household with a TV watched that program.[1] Mass media advertising made it relatively easy for advertisers to push their message out through the limited number of channels and reach their audience.

Today, it is a different story. The number of available channels has proliferated. In addition to television channels, people now get information from social channels and on mobile phones. According to Baer, "the fracturing of the media landscape" is responsible for a disconcerting new reality that reduces the effectiveness of traditional marketing, which relies on mass media to

1 Jay Baer. Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help, Not Hype (New York: Penguin Group, 2013), 10.

push messages out. As he puts it, "**You can't promote to people you can't find.**"[2]

Reaching Potential Students

Enrollment leaders who want to market to high school students are lucky, because this pool of leads is easy to identify. They are at a common stage in life. By taking the SAT or ACT, students self-identify as having an interest in attending college, and generally consent to allowing their contact information to be purchased by schools for marketing purposes. They also agree to allow test companies to license (buy) their contact information to schools for marketing purposes.

Even with this identifiable pool of leads, some schools struggle. In the future, demographic shifts could create even more challenges. In *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*, Nathan D. Grawe reports the results of research by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). The study predicts growth in the number of high school students until mid-2020s. "Following this run-up, the aftershocks of the birth dearth will create a sharp nine percent pullback," Grawe writes.[3]

Birth dearth could be compounded by another factor. According to The National Center for Fair and Open Testing: FairTest, over 1,000 schools do not require a standardized admission test, and that number is growing.[4] As more schools become test-optional, fewer students will take tests, resulting in more lead pool shrinkage.

If, in the future, it becomes harder to identify and reach a shrinking pool of easy-to-purchase leads, what action should you take to grow enrollment? According to Baer, you must move from over-dependence on marketing for top-of-mind awareness to an approach that creates a new state of mind he calls "Friend-of-Mine Awareness.[5]

Awareness

Baer says this about top-of-mind awareness: "The idea is that you need to have a sustained level of marketing and messaging, so when a customer is ready to buy, they think of your product first."[6]

Billboards, radio and TV ads, digital display advertising, email blasts, and direct mail all contribute. Baer does not recommend abandoning any of these. He writes, "Top-of-mind awareness isn't inherently flawed, but it isn't very surgical, and it hasn't evolved much despite changing technologies."[7]

Friend-of-mine awareness adds an additive layer to your marketing mix. It is a happy state of affairs that occurs when your inquiries have a question, you have the answer, and the inquiries find the answer online. At a critical moment, you bring value. Instead of acting like a marketer, you act like a friend and trusted resource. Being there for people when they need you, and bringing useful information, creates **Youtility.**

The Zero Moment of Truth

It is Wednesday night. Dylan is stretched out on his bed, watching his YouTube feed. He's a high school senior, and college is on his mind.

2 Ibid.
3 Nathan D. Grawe. Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2018), 15.
4 Retrieved from: http://fairtest.org/actsat-testoptional-list-tops-1000-colleges-univer

5 Baer. Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help, Not Hype, 24.
6 Ibid. 7.
7 Ibid. 8.

He's been doing a lot of online research lately, trying to decide where he wants to apply. Dylan has visited several campuses. During one tour, the student guide talked about how she had studied abroad and how meaningful it had been for her. That got Dylan to think that he might like to study abroad.

Since the tour, he has watched twelve YouTube videos posted by college students, where they shared information about their study-abroad experiences. After three days of watching, Dylan decides he wants to study abroad. However, he is worried that his parents can't afford it. A new question forms in his mind. *How can I pay for study abroad during college?*

Dylan returns to the website of the school, where he met the student guide who talked about study abroad. Their study abroad web page has two sparse paragraphs on the topic, and Dylan doesn't see information answering his question. He jumps to a different school's website. Once more, the study abroad page disappoints him.

In rapid order, Dylan visits five websites before hitting pay dirt. A school he is considering has in-depth information about their study abroad programs, including how students can pay for the experience.

Dylan soaks up all the available information. He decides this school is a good fit for his goals, jumps on the Common App website, and applies that night. Google has labeled the point in time when online research can influence a purchase decision as the "Zero Moment of Truth," or ZMOT.[8]

As students move forward in their journey to select a college, they have many questions, including:

- **Does this school have the degree I want?**
- **Will I like living in this location?**
- **Can I afford this school?**
- **What kind of activities are available?**
- **Will this college prepare me for a job?**
- **Will this college help me get a job when I graduate?**

Often, your future students research in stealth mode, looking at your website without actively responding to your marketing. While interest exists, students aren't at the point where they are willing to identify themselves. During this crucial period, Youtility matters, because information shapes perceptions.

8 Retrieved from: https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/micro-moments/zero-moment-truth/

Friend-of-mine awareness is an additive layer to your marketing mix. It is a happy state of affairs that occurs when your inquiries have a question, you have the answer, and the inquiries find the answer online. At a critical moment, you bring value. Instead of acting like a marketer, you act like a friend and trusted resource. Being there for people when they need you, and bringing useful information, creates **Youtility.**

Here is a quick exercise to assess Youtility at your institution. Choose one broad topic that matters to your inquiries. Then, select a commonly-asked question as the starting point to frame a conversation. If your goal was to persuade the inquiry to apply, how would you answer the original question? What other questions would follow, and how would you answer those?

Now, look at your website. Does it thoroughly answer all the questions that came up in your mock exchange? Does the content contain enough real information to create trust? Does it make a compelling case for choosing your institution, or are there information gaps?

While it would be great if students reached out to recruiters for answers, it is far more likely they are going to look at your school's website. However, at many schools, websites provide minimal information on important topics. All too often, enrollment and admissions teams are not even involved in website content planning.

Recruiting success is affected by content decisions and depth, so it is important for the enrollment team to be part of the content development process. If the team in charge of the website grumbles about a lack of resources for a content upgrade, don't let that derail you. Start somewhere. As the old saying goes, "If you have to eat an elephant, do it in bite-sized pieces."

For schools who see the value in building more Youtility into their marketing, Baer recommends starting with three cornerstones[9]:

1. **Give people the opportunity to inform themselves how and when they wish, instead of providing information funneled through contact mechanisms determined by your institution.**

2. **Think in terms of radical transparency. Provide answers to every question a student or parent could ask – before they think to ask it.**

3. **Be relevant in real-time by providing "self-serve" options for information.**

We talked to Jay Baer about the challenges he has seen at the schools where he has consulted. He said, "The schools that succeed best are those that seek to assist the potential student and her/his family in making the best possible decision, regardless of the outcome of that decision. Helping beats selling!"[10]

At enrollmentFUEL, we agree.

9 Baer. Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help, Not Hype, 44.
10 Jay Baer. Phone conversation. November 11, 2019.

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BE PREPARED FOR TWO AREAS OF ANGST

Generation Z has arrived on college campuses. The group, born in the mid- and late-1990s and early 2000s, is bringing new expectations and new anxieties to their college experience.

Economic angst is prevalent, especially regarding student debt. The average student debt load per undergraduate student for the 2017-2018 school year is $14,790, while the debt load for grad students sits at $27,230.[1] A recent APA survey found that personal debt, including student loans and credit cards, and housing instability were "a significant source of stress" for more than 30% percent of Gen Z members.[2]

Angst is often compounded by the student loan application process, which can be intimidating, to say the least. Students and parents have to submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, to the federal government to become eligible for federal loans and grants. FAFSA asks 108 questions about demographic and financial information, including income, untaxed earnings like child support, retirement contributions, as well as queries about other assets.[3]

In theory, the student is supposed to fill out the FAFSA forms. However, in many middle to upper-class homes, it is more likely to be the parent. This puts low-income students at a disadvantage when the parent is as intimidated as the student. This is compounded when English is not the parent's native language. It gets even more challenging for a low-income student when they are selected for "verification," which is like a tax audit, with requirements for additional information to corroborate FAFSA submissions.[4]

Keep in mind that sending people to a page on your website with a link to government information about the FAFSA may not be viewed as particularly helpful by people who are struggling to complete the form.

Worse yet, the push to a website could be viewed negatively. In a Harvard Business Review blog post titled, "Why Anxious Customers Prefer Human Customer Service," doctoral candidate, Michelle A. Shell, reported on research conducted in the financial services industry. The research sought to determine how anxiety affects the way customers feel about service providers. Experiments compared a pure technological solution, where customers were on their own to figure out the best decision, with a hybrid approach combining technology with an option to receive personal assistance. People who

1 Retrieved from: https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/student-aid/highlights
2 Retrieved from: https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2018/stress-gen-z.pdf
3 Retrieved from: https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/improving-the-fafsa-for-low-income-families/

4 Retrieved from: https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/improving-the-fafsa-for-low-income-families/

were offered the pure technology solution reported lower levels of satisfaction and trust with the service provider than customers who received the hybrid solution. When customers had the option to connect with a person, satisfaction and trust increased, even when the customer did not take advantage of the offer to help.[5]

Many schools offer webinars, which give students and parents a chance to talk to financial aid experts. For an even more personal approach, recruiters could invite inquiries to a FAFSA information session at a local coffee shop. Even a simple email, offering encouragement and letting inquiries know they can reach out for personal assistance, is a smart way to keep people moving through the funnel.

A second type of angst is brought on by the simmering debate about whether a college degree is even worth obtaining. An internet search for "Is it worth getting a college degree?" returns over 350 million results.[6] A recent report by Inception, a division of the National Student Loan Program, found that Generation Z students are demanding more from their college experience, including preparation for a career. If they can't find what they are looking for, dissatisfied students may choose to skip college altogether.[7]

While skipping college works out well for a lucky few, according to *Forbes*, for most people this is a bad idea. Even if the process of choosing a college and deciding how to pay for it is stressful, a university degree is worth it. *Forbes* determined that the unemployment rate for college graduates is lower than that of people without a college degree. Millions of "middle-skill" jobs—like sales supervisors, office managers and assistants, support specialists, and clerks now mandate that the employee has attended and graduated from a college or university.[8]

You can't remove the angst about the value of a degree, but you can be the school that is best prepared to address it. One starting point for framing that conversation can be found in a recent blog post from Peterson's. This educational services company is well-known for preparing students for standardized tests. Their blog offers five reasons why it's important to get a college degree.[9]

1. **College grads make more money.** According to the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, high school graduates earn about $30,000 annually, while bachelor's degree graduates earn about $50,000 a year.
2. **College gives students an opportunity to expand their knowledge base.** A college student's skills and knowledge won't be limited to one area. College exposes students to a broad array of topics, including writing and critical and abstract thinking.
3. **College graduates get better career opportunities.** What you study in college matters less than earning the degree, because having a degree is a baseline requirement for many entry-level jobs.
4. **College grads have better job security.** A college degree makes a worker more valuable to your employer. It also makes it harder to get laid off. This is especially true during recessions, since academic studies show that a college degree makes a worker less prone to layoffs.
5. **College grads can weather economic headwinds better than those without a degree.** College graduates make more than their counterparts without a degree, so they'll have more money socked away for a rainy day.

Once you get past the FAFSA angst and worries about whether a degree is necessary, you can finally move on to the all-important task of helping students and their families understand why your institution is the right fit for them.

If you would like practical tips on presenting your school's value within a decision-making framework, read "How and Why College Students Select an Institution," by enrollmentFUEL's president, Dr. Jacquelyn D. Elliott, printed in the first issue of *Octane*.

Scan this QR code to read the article.

5 Retrieved from: https://hbr.org/2019/04/why-anxious-customers-prefer-human-customer-service
6 Retrieved from: https://www.google.com/search?q=%E2%80%9CIs+it+worth+getting+a+college+degree%3F%E2%80%9D&oq=%E2%80%9CIs+it+worth+getting+a+college+degree%3F%E2%80%9D&aqs=chrome..69i57.938j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
7 Retrieved from: https://www.inceptia.org/PDF/Inceptia_AdaptingGenZ_ResearchBrief_031518.pdf
8 Retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/dereknewton/2018/12/16/please-stop-asking-whether-college-is-worth-it/#1d8c3f5430d2
9 https://www.petersons.com/blog/the-right-choice-5-reasons-to-pursue-a-college-degree/

EVERY SCHOOL NEEDS AN OUTCOMES BROCHURE

Longmire and Company researched factors impacting college selection. Two factors of importance are job placement rates for graduates and whether a college prepares a student for graduate school.[1] Both factors reflect the importance of sharing information about outcomes at your school.

An outcomes brochure "sells" your institution's value. It offers proof that a degree from your institution leads to post-graduate success, either with a fulfilling career by gaining acceptance into graduate school.

1. **Collect Data and Compile Lists**
   Statistics and lists help students understand the opportunities awaiting them at your school. Lists to consider are places where students interned, alumni employers, and institutions where students were accepted for post-graduate and professional degrees.

2. **Creative Design Matters**
   An outcomes brochure is a hard-working selling piece, helping to persuade students to apply, deposit, or attend your school. Investing in creative design positions you to win in a competitive market by putting your best foot forward.

3. **Offer Proof with Stories and Testimonials**
   By sharing stories about major life accomplishments and personal testimonials, you offer real-world proof demonstrating that your institution transforms lives. Beyond career and graduate school, you can find human interest stories by looking at travel experiences, attendance at conferences, and awards.

4. **Don't Skimp on Printed Quantities**
   Produce enough brochures to hand out freely. Give them away at events. Include them in your commFLOW™. Mail them to counselors and independent educational consultants who can refer students to your school.

5. **Use It Online**
   Increase the return on investment spent on copy and design by placing the outcomes brochure in a strategic place on your website. By linking with video testimonials or audio recordings, you can turn your online outcomes brochure into an interactive experience.

6. **Slice and Dice for Social**
   Individual elements can do double-duty when you slice and dice stories, testimonials, statistics, and pictures into social posts.

7. **Get Emotional**
   People want to be part of something that matters. A good outcomes brochure connects to people emotionally, as well as intellectually. Convey what you stand for and why people chose your institution with energy and passion.

1 https://www.longmire-co.com/documents/studies/Value_Proposition_Study_Report.pdf, PP 12.

If you don't have an up-to-date outcomes brochure, maybe 2020 is the year to create one. If you would like to know more about how our team can assist, please contact enrollmentFUEL's Chief Imagination Officer, Mike Wesner at **mike.wesner@enrollmentfuel.com.**

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enrollmentFUEL helps enrollment management professionals grow enrollment. We are a boutique-style Student Search company providing concierge-level services to our client-partners. Here, you will find no templates or canned responses. Regardless of our assignment, we take the best approach to fit your specific needs, because **partnering for your success is always our number one focus.**

Student Search
Customized solutions and compelling campaigns to showcase your institution's distinctive benefits.

microSEARCH™
When you have a specific enrollment goal and a limited budget, microSEARCH is the perfect solution.

smartSEARCH™
Improve your prospect name purchases by analyzing geodemographic market data to develop better Student Search profiles.

bannerDIRECT™
Comprehensive digital advertising solutions, including IP targeting, retargeting, and social media advertising.

matchBACK™
Identify stealth inquiries to your website through IP address matching.

slateEDUCATE™
Consulting and coaching for all levels of Slate users, including implementation support.

ghostVOICE™
Expand your messaging options with ringless voicemail messages to mobile phones.

teleCONNECT™
Call center, text, and telecounseling solutions designed to help enrollment management professionals meet budget goals.

commFLOW™ Solutions
We create high impact collateral, including viewbooks, travel pieces, direct mail, and more.

Consulting and Training
Let us help with name buying, financial aid strategies, talent development, and all things SEM.

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