OCTANE

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT
REMARKABLE TOPICS

Brought to you by enrollmentFUEL

VOL. 2, ISSUE 2 2018

INSIDE

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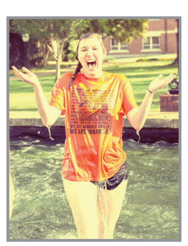
Disrupt Your Campus Visit

Fish in the Right Ponds

Letter from the President

Every time *Octane* comes out, I pause to think about what is going on in your life. I reflect on what your day looks like, what your staff is doing, and what challenges you may be facing.



enrollmentFUEL would like to extend our gratitude to **Hendrix College**, an enrollmentFUEL client, for allowing this photo to be featured on the cover of our magazine. If your institution wants to be highlighted on a future issue of *Octane*, let us know.

Octane the 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" search strategies. Adding ***Octane*** to your thinking fuels creativity and releases positive energy among enrollment professionals.

Reading season. It's over, and another summer of planning for travel season will be upon us. FUEL has been busy since our last edition of *Octane*, working with our 27 clients on Student Search, professional development training, collaborative presentations at conferences, and designing some new and exciting training material for our Brainstorming Kit. Like you, we have been busy.

Every time *Octane* comes out, I pause to think about what is going on in your life. I reflect on what your day looks like, what your staff is doing, and what challenges you may be facing. The FUEL team then talks about those exact things. We are with you, as a partner in all things enrollment, valuing your work and choosing topics to help you achieve your goals.

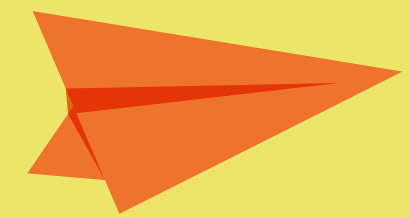
In this edition, we tackle why things fail, re-imagining the campus visit, preparing for a photo shoot, tactical marketing for parental communications, and how to re-energize enrollment offices.

We welcome input from you on future articles. If you have an idea for a topic that could help you, your institution, or your office, please feel free to reach out to me. Our goal for *Octane* is to provide you with content that moves the needle. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in collaboration,

Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.
President

inside OCTANE



Why Things Fail in Enrollment Offices

By Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.

I have been thinking a lot lately about the notion of why things fail. I don't know why. I am an optimistic, positive person, so failure is rarely on my personal radar. I like to succeed. I know enrollment is challenging, which is why I do this for a living—I don't like to be bored. No fear of that anytime soon, right?

Over my past almost thirty years working in enrollment offices, I have noticed some key things that do seem to have an impact on whether or not an office is successful in meeting its enrollment goals. Some of them we cannot control, but some of them we can, and must. While there are many smaller things I believe cause offices to flounder, such as lack of a CRM, a less than robust communication flow, not conducting a Student Search, too few staff, and facing an unrealistic enrollment goal out of the gate, I have decided to focus this article on the top five items I see as the major culprits of failure. My intention is to get you to think about these topics, many of which we take for granted, and perhaps, be audacious enough to tip over the apple cart and turn the apples into steaming hot pies with big scoops of ice cream.

When I sat down to distill what these five categories would be, they all hinged on three topics—people, communication, and systems. I guess that isn't a big surprise, since Taylor, Fayol, and Weber presented many of these same notions in their research surrounding organizational structure and work theory. However, what I will focus on is specific to enrollment management. What are the five areas I think cause failure in enrollment shops?

1. Executive turnover
2. Turnover in the lower ranks
3. Change—either too much, or not enough
4. Labor is not distributed
5. Reward systems are broken, or do not exist

These are exciting topics to discuss, and I am almost betting as you read them, remembrances or experiences had you shaking your head in agreement. So, let's dig in.

First, executive turnover can be a real killer. It can happen on two levels—either a new president or a new vice president is placed at the helm. I am not saying all executive turnover is bad. In fact, sometimes change is needed—sometimes badly. Even when change is for the better, executive turnover creates angst, disruption, wonderment, and nervousness. Executive turnover, in my experience, almost always diverts critical energy and focus away from the aspects that need attention, because valuable time is spent defending, explaining, protecting, and shielding.

Sometimes, analysis paralysis sets in when the new leader is overwhelmed with information and does not make timely decisions. Of all the areas within a school that depend on timely decisions, it is the enrollment division where speed is often crucial. Our selling cycle has an expiration date. We can't wait for a decision to come down while the milk spoils on the shelf.

Executive change often expedites turnover further down the organization chart. When a new executive leader arrives, vice presidents (or associates) are often replaced with members that the new leader trusts. I find this can be an unfortunate situation, because it adds another layer of disruption, especially when the sitting vice president (or associate) is getting it done. There are times when people need to be replaced—and that is when the person **isn't** getting the job done.

The second dangerous type of turnover to an enrollment shop's success is constant turnover at the counselor and assistant director level. To be honest, I have never understood why institutions place junior people in what I would argue to be one of the most critical roles to the lifeblood of the organization—sales (bringing in tuition revenue). I think most of you reading this article would agree that the most critical aspect of any institution's budget is its revenue generation, and that for most schools, it would be tuition. However, since the dawn of time, admission offices have hired recent graduates with no full-time work experience, no real sales experience, and then paid them poverty level salaries. I guess that must be the perfect recipe for increased enrollment and loyalty to the organization, since that is the model we use.

Okay, truly, I am not trying to sound snarky. But, I have to admit, I remain puzzled about this formula. I do not think it's a good one. Fortunately, I have been able to get the ear of presidents and boards in the past, and change this at the schools where I have served. Our focus has been on hiring young graduate school alumni, or workers in their mid to late 20s, who are a

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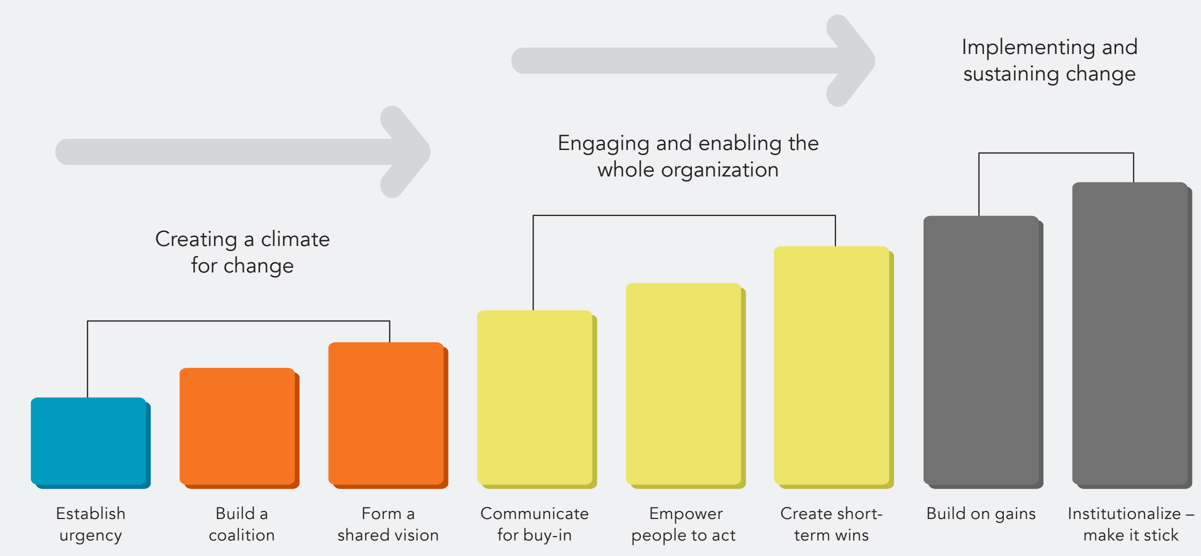


Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

little more mature (work better with parents), generally have a bit more work experience, and then hire them at a higher pay rate. Our goal is to hire people without assuming they will leave in two years (because all admission counselors do), but instead, to invest with the goal of hiring long-term employees of the institution and support them with a system that aids professional development and growth. (More on that in number five on my list.) The longer people stay, the more experience they gain, the better they know the product, and the less training is required. This all adds up to more sales for the institution.

I think the adage that it costs more to recruit a student than to retain one also holds true for the hiring of staff. I hate the notion of losing all that experience, and then having to train every year, because we just accept that as the natural rhythm of the enrollment ethos. We can change that. We have that power!

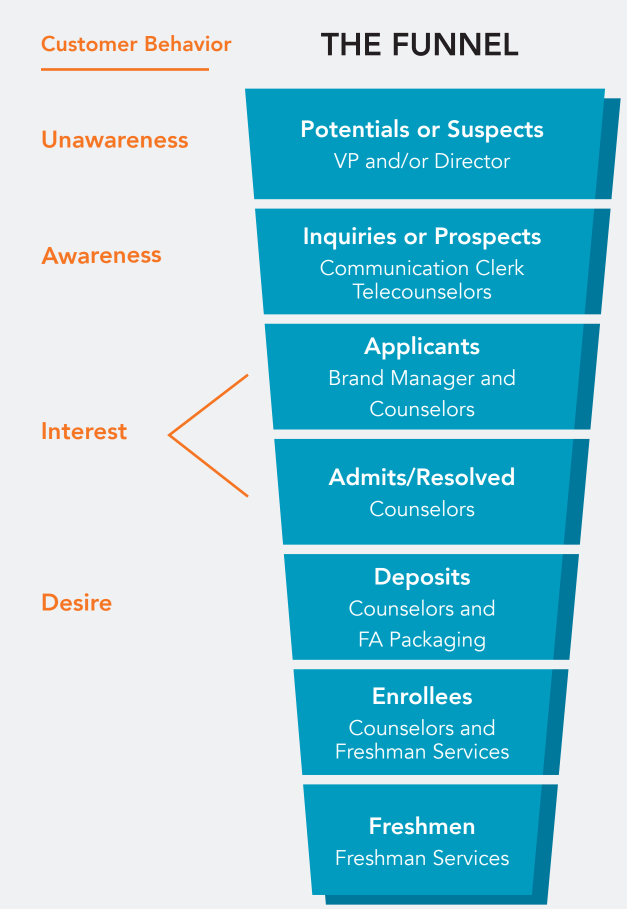
Speaking of change, this is also a big reason why things fail in enrollment. We have either too much of it or not enough. When I consult with clients across the country, I hear two common statements. "We are overwhelmed. We changed these three things this year, all huge and so time-consuming, I have not been able to focus on my job tasks." Or, "We are stuck in the past. We need to get onboard with modern ways of doing things, or we will never meet our goals."

Why does this happen? How can change be moderated? One of the most important things I did when I went to a new school in a leadership role was to talk to the people who got things done, had institutional history, and were opinionated, stubborn, or were perceived as hard to work with. I spent the first four weeks in 30-45 minute interviews with all sorts of constituents to find out what worked, what was broken, and what the resources were. I did this across all divisions. I invited voyeurs to be present and part of the process. I asked questions to determine where the potholes were. No one needs to fall into a pothole during their honeymoon period because someone forgot to put out the "watch your step" sign. But, let me tell you—a lot of people won't put out the sign, on purpose. It is our responsibility to discover and learn before trudging down the sidewalk on the way to change.

I am a huge fan of Kotter's change management model[1] because it makes sense. His 8-step model is built for those of us in the trenches. It is easy to understand, and with energy and dedication, easy to implement. I never present the steps to my staff. I just follow his plan

and execute the steps in small increments. That way, my staff takes baby steps along the path to bigger and better things. The goal is to reach the finish line and strike a power pose, without being out of breath or sweating. My personal goal is for my staff to reach a major milestone without ever feeling overwhelmed by change. Instead, when they reach the finish line, they feel good, and maybe even a little surprised at their accomplishments, because the small steps made the entire journey manageable.

Sometimes, the change I implemented was a strategic division of labor. While the division of labor goes back to the early philosophers, I generally hang my hat on the early research of Adam Smith[2] who believed in assigning levels of tasks to individuals, so they became experts while improving efficiency. I believe one common mistake in enrollment and admission offices is no clear division of labor. If a counselor is a counselor, they all do the same thing. I believe workers enjoy having something for which they are solely responsible.



Dr. Jacquelyn D. Elliott's SEM Division of Labor and Accountability Model

(I realize territory management is the sole responsibility of that person, but with limited room to maneuver.)

Upon my arrival as a new VP, or during performance evaluations, I always asked people what parts of their jobs they did or did not like. One example comes to mind. Aaron hated doing folder reviews. Becky hated doing campus tours. I allowed them to share those responsibilities across their two territories to test how this system worked. Becky did the folder reviews for both territories while Aaron did the campus tours. In our trial year, campus tour ratings went up, and we had higher yield from the tours Aaron gave. We also discovered Becky completed folders faster, thus, getting acceptances and financial aid out more quickly. In my book, that was a win. And, in the second year, this system became standard in their territories.

The funnel is the other area where you discover opportunities for a better division of labor. Since the funnel has distinct stages, this is the best place to simply ask the question, "Who should do this?"

As the VP, I made different team members responsible for specific parts of the funnel. This decision made it easier to hold people accountable for their work and eliminated finger pointing. When completed application numbers were down, the counselors were held accountable. When the deposit numbers were starting to drop, financial aid was questioned about the speed of packaging.

Finally, remember when I said I would get back to the reward system? We have arrived. My fifth point goes hand-in-hand with both the division of labor and the turnover of counselors. What I often notice in my consulting with clients, is that a reward system is broken, or it simply does not exist.

Let's tackle the first one—the reward system is broken. In many ways, this is almost worse than not having a system, because with the lack of such a system, at least people's expectations are not crushed. Reward systems come in all sorts of packages. Some are about benefits, while others are about salary. There are also some systems that are in recognition of a job well done. What I am referring to here are the formalized systems at an organizational level. When the staff is told about the pay raise schedule, how to move up the career ladder, and the amount of a retirement match,

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expectations are in place. These expectations often drive the worker to strive. When the system is broken, and expectations are not met, the staff is dejected. They feel overlooked and unimportant. They often feel you are taking advantage of them. This does not create an environment for winning. It actually leads to slow decay and failure. Staff members resign, and you are back to hiring untrained people who have to earn the trust of the team.

If there isn't an organizational system for reward, I recommend you create one. One of the questions I always asked when interviewing for the Vice President's position was, "Do you have a system to grow and promote admission staff with both pay and title?" If the answer was no, I recognized this as an important point for negotiation.

I will not take a job as a supervisor if I cannot reward my staff for their hard work. I will not take a job where I cannot professionally develop those who work alongside me. You would be surprised how often I have been able to negotiate for this before signing a contract. I get the word of the president to do both salary and title changes, on a step system based on staff work and outcomes. Having a reward system in place creates an environment where people work hard, are loyal, and feel appreciated. Numbers are met!

I realize there are no easy answers to solve the problems I present. However, my goal, as always, is to share honest thoughts and get you thinking about your apple cart and new ways to tip it over. I want to see you make those pies, scoop some ice cream, and then serve your staff, as a leader should.

1. Kotter, J.P. (1195). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from https://www.gsbcolorado.org/uploads/general/PreSessionReadingLeadingChange-John_Kotter.pdf
2. Shafritz, J., Ott, S., & Jang, Y.S. (2016). Classics of organizational theory. Cengage Learning.

Dr. Jacquelyn D. Elliott is President of enrollmentFUEL. Her admissions, retention, and financial aid strategies have led multiple institutions to reach record enrollments. She can be reached at jacqui.elliott@enrollmentfuel.com.

STRATEGIES

Disrupt Your Campus Visit Experience

By Jeff Kallay

Shakeout. Turnaround. Disruption. Paradigm Shift. Choose your favorite business cliché and hop on board, friends—the college visit needs you, desperately.

I am officially calling it: the old model of campus visits is dead. RIP, long info session, with your alienating, "talk at," death-by-PowerPoint presentation. So long, exhaustive walk of campus, led by a backward-walking, scripted tour guide. We had some good times, didn't we?

Savvy enrollment managers take heed: you have a new breed of guests coming to campus, and they could not be more different from the Baby Boomer parents and civic-minded Millennials who created the industry we know today.

Over two decades ago, Millennials and their parents upped the visit ante and spawned the beloved "college search/family road trip" so often referenced (and spoofed!) in TV and film. However, things have evolved. Your audience has changed. Prospective families visiting colleges these days don't necessarily think they need you, the admissions professional. They have online communities, a short list of priorities, and even shorter attention spans. More to come on them later.

The time has come to throw out the traditional format of the campus visit. Nobody is having fun—not tour guides, not parents, and definitely not prospective students. I cannot stress enough that the "one visit fits all" approach simply does not connect for Gen X parents and their college-bound Gen Z offspring.

So, what's next? **To start, colleges must reformat the visit and make it more "agile."** They must do less talking and more listening.

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PHOTO BY RHETT NOONAN ON UNSPLASH

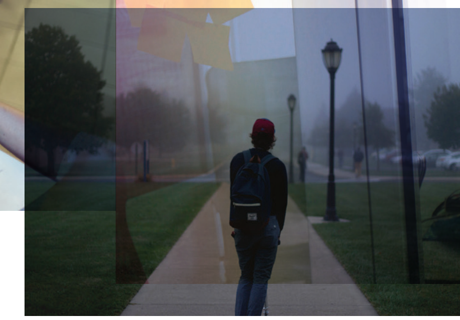


PHOTO BY ALEX JONES ON UNSPLASH

Most importantly, they must make the visit relevant again, by introducing the flexibility necessary to meet the specific wants and needs of this audience.

Know Your Audience

Nationwide, admissions professionals on campuses have questions about the families walking through their doors on a daily basis. How well do we know the traits of Gen X parents and Gen Z students? How do they influence the college search process? The answers may surprise you.

There are three things you should know about Gen X parents:

1. **They are pragmatic. In many cases, this generation of "latchkey kids" virtually raised themselves.** They do not tolerate hype or spin (just get to the point, thank you). They've essentially reduced the college search to "How much does it cost, and what do we get for it!?" The key is not to be afraid to lead with cost, but make sure you boldly reveal what they get for it. Remember: outcomes matter more than costs.
2. **They don't trust you.** Well, not you specifically, but institutions in general. The campus visit is the single most trusted source of information in the college search, but it only connects with Gen X if it is authentic and honest. Is your campus visit earning or losing their trust?
3. **They tend to scare Millennial staffers and tour guides.**

Three things you should know about Gen Z students:

1. **The Great Recession seriously impacted Gen Z during their childhood.** As a result, they are more frugal and fiscally literate than previous youth generations.
2. **They are more entrepreneurial and "resume-minded."** The parts of your tour, and those with whom they interact while on campus, will be increasingly important.
3. **They bring with them hyper-connectedness and high levels of anxiety.** Everyone knows that modern teenagers are hyper-connected. Do we put enough emphasis on the fact they have been raised in an economy of experiences and mass customization?

The Case for Disruption

As campus visit consultants, our team began noticing that parents' tone and tenor was changing about two years ago. We realized they were flipping Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Boomer parents trusted institutions and wanted to know how your school was going to make their bumper sticker-worthy one-of-a-kind child all the more special. They wanted to know how attending your school would increase their student's self-esteem and self-actualization.

Suddenly, the new wave of Gen X parents doesn't put as much emphasis on those higher levels of the hierarchy, favoring more pragmatic questions about cost, internships, and outcomes. Having raised their children in a post-9/11 culture of fear, they don't trust

you have the basics covered: things like food, shelter, safety, and security.

As a result, here are the most frequently asked questions we hear on campus tours:

- "How safe is it?"
- "What are the dorms like?"
- "How is the food?"
- "What about internships?"

And, the popular Gen X flip of the spin and hype: "So, what is it that you don't like about this place?"

Ask your tour guides and your admission counselors: "Where are families most engaged and animated during the tour, and what questions do they have?" You'll most likely get confirmation of our point that they are primarily concerned—at least at first—with housing, food services, transportation, and safety.

Safety isn't a statistic, and it is not just about having blue lights on campus. Safety is a sense of well-being. We like to remind campus colleagues that "services are the new amenities." Gen X parents want to see front and center those things that will keep their child "well" and employable after graduation: counseling centers, career centers, and health centers. They want a deeper understanding of housing and food services, than their Boomer counterparts do.

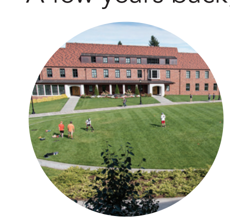
As for the Gen Z students, they get caught up with basics like speed and reliability of the Wi-Fi on campus. Don't underestimate the importance of these seemingly small factors that Millennials tended to overlook, or forgive.

To better connect with today's audience, we recommend you disrupt your campus visit in three ways:

1. **Show them the basics first.** Lead with housing, food, and services that offer support. This is counter to years of recommending to clients, "You're a university, lead with academics!" Show them what matters to them most, and don't bury the lead. You'll earn their trust with the basics and help them relax, so you can move up the hierarchy into academics.
2. **Shorten or place your information session, in the middle.**
   Don't make prospective families wait in the presentation room. Get them out on campus to see what they came to see.
3. **Mix it up to keep their attention.** Break up your tour into "agile" segments. Have each part delivered by a different guide or admission staffer.

Here are some best practice examples:

University of Puget Sound, Tacoma WA
2500 Students on 97 Acres
A few years back, the University of Puget Sound



changed from the standard format of a lengthy information session followed by a 90-minute walking tour led by one guide. (This made the total time on campus about 2-2.5 hours.) Families are now given a sheet with fast facts and statistics at check-in and

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asked to read/review it while they wait. A senior intern will then take five minutes to set the expectations of the visit. Next, a "Campus Life" student guide (usually a sophomore) takes the group through the student center, first year and upper-class housing and the fitness center. (About 40 minutes). The group returns to the admissions office for a bio break and about a 20-minute info session. An "Academic" student guide (usually a junior or senior) then leads an academic-focused walk. This includes a sit-down in a classroom and several stories about the academic experience. The new visit format uses the same amount of time as a traditional visit, but it is now portioned into digestible nuggets. "Families are smiling more since the format is livelier. They get to engage with more current Puget Sound students," says Laura Martin Fedich, Vice President for Enrollment.

Furman University, Greenville SC
2970 Students on 750 Acres
Consistently ranked one of the most beautiful college campuses, and with a four-year housing requirement, Furman wasn't revealing enough of student life, nor showing the value of the institution. The information session could take up to 90 minutes, followed by a 60-minute campus walk that revealed only about 30% of the student experience. The visit now starts with a lively 20-minute information session. Families then either hop on people movers, where they get to see the outer parts of campus (first-year housing, upper-class apartments, the iconic bell tower, and the athletic facilities), or, they take the 40-minute walk of the academic core of campus, which also includes Trone Student Center. (The number of visitors determines the order of visit for families.) In the middle of the two walking/riding segments, is a bio break back at the welcome center. This agile format is revealing and yielding more, according to Brad Pochard, Associate Vice President for Enrollment and Dean of Admissions. "We now show more overall value. Before reformatting, we converted 51% of visiting students to application; this current cycle it's 87%!"

Widener University, Chester, PA
3427 Undergraduate Students on 108 Acres
A metropolitan campus between Philadelphia and Wilmington, Widener has a traditional campus setting with robust internship and co-op opportunities in a nearby three state area.

Previously, "Logistics drove the campus visit, and we had to flip that to the visitor experience driving logistics," according to Courtney Kelly, Executive Director of Admission. Families checked in at admissions and were then walked to a cramped presentation room in an historical museum/archive space on campus. After about a 30-minute information session, families walked a tiring 90-minute loop around campus. Families are now given a simple fact sheet, and a map of the tour route (explaining the what, where, and why of the walk). They are immediately taken into University Center (food), first-year housing and walk into the heart of campus. There is a bio break in an academic building, where they then get to sit in a theatre style classroom and have a senior intern present a well thought out information session for Gen X and Z. During the last part of the visit, a second guide walks the group through the academic facilities and even offers a signature moment photograph at the mascot statue. Kelly explains, "We reframed to connect with Gen Z at the core of every campus visit detail and to collaborate for a campus-wide buy-in of support for the visit and visitors." Prospective families have three student points of view and a break in the middle of the visit. Families appreciate this, and express it in positive evaluations. According to Kelly, "Evaluations show that 99.2% of visitors respond that interest in Widener has increased, or remained the same following the campus visit."

So what about your visit? Is it relevant to today's prospective families? Is it agile, delivered in "digestible nuggets"? If not, then it's time to disrupt and reformat. Otherwise, you might be boring your guests and negatively impacting your enrollment cycle.

Jeff Kallay is Principal and Co-founder of Render Experiences, the campus visit consultancy that has worked with 250+ client campuses in the past eleven years. He began his admissions career immediately after graduating from Lee College (TN), served as the new business guy at Mindpower, Inc and a Vice President at TargetX. He has taken over 2000 campus tours in the span of his career. jeff@renderexperiences.com

THE FAST 4

ACTIONABLE IDEAS

By Mike Wesner

Like you, enrollmentFUEL has a travel season. Ours starts in March. Jacqui and I crisscross the country, meeting with campus leaders. I always return from my travels FUELED by new ideas. As you plan for next year, I wanted to share a few things to try as you head into the next recruiting season.

1 Shake things up!

New seasons bring new energy. Clean up your office. Get rid of clutter. Try a stand-up desk. I have a stand-up desk, as well as my regular desk. Although I sit most of the time, I like to use my stand-up desk for Googling, brainstorming, and jotting down big ideas.

2 Revisit mail.

At enrollmentFUEL, we believe in direct mail. We're fans because:

- Direct mail reaches your audience.
- An email is seen and read. A direct mail piece is seen, touched, *and read.* The haptic element of touch promotes higher levels of interaction with information, which can spark interest and increase mindshare.
- An article from *Scientific American* titled, "The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper versus Screens," presented research showing we are more likely to retain printed information over digital communications.[1]

3 Take a Cold Shower!

Dutch researcher, Geert A. Guijze asked 3,000 volunteers to douse themselves at the end of their showers with cold water from 30 seconds to 90 seconds. After this self-induced shock therapy, twenty-nine percent of the study group missed fewer workdays and claimed they felt better.[2]

What is even more amazing is that two-thirds of the group continued the practice after the study ended, because they thought the showers provided a physiological or psychological benefit.[3]

Try it to start the day. First, you will hate it. Then, you will love it.

4 Look for a QR Code Renaissance.

Built into Apple's iOS 11 native camera is a QR Code reader.[4] This is also available to anyone who upgrades their phone or software. By including a QR code reader, Apple eliminates obstacles. Apple phone users will no longer have to install an app or fumble around opening an app on their phones.

If the QR code was dead, Apple wouldn't have made the effort. Look for new QR code uses in the future.

In the world of enrollment management, I never stumble across magic formulas or miraculous potions that instantly improve results. But, I do meet plenty of smart, talented people who work hard and try new ideas – or old ideas in new ways, and consistently bring in their class.

Mike Wesner is the founder and Chief Imagination Officer of enrollmentFUEL. He loves to visit enrollment leaders and share big ideas. He will be traveling to your area soon and would love to say hello. Email him at mike.wesner@enrollmentfuel.com.

1. Retrieved from: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/
2. Retrieved from: https://hbr.org/2018/03/cold-showers-lead-to-fewer-sick-days
3. Retrieved from: https://hbr.org/2018/03/cold-showers-lead-to-fewer-sick-days
4. Retrieved from: https://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/ios-11-qr-code-scanner/

MARKETING

Fish in the Right Ponds:

The Science of Geodemographic Research and How it Can Help You Grow Enrollment

By Tim Dodge

Each year, the challenge to meet enrollment goals seems to require **MORE**.

More purchased names, more inquiries, more applicants, more communication, more telephone calls and more expenses for publications and direct mail, postage, and admissions travel. Yet, even when schools do more, many still find it increasingly difficult to fill the class, achieve the goals of academic quality and stay within the budget of institutional financial aid awarded.

To meet goals, College Marketing Technologies would assert that you do not need more inquiries – just more of the "right" inquiries. You do not require more applicants – just more of the "right" applicants. The right inquiries and applicants are those who mirror your historically enrolled students.

The Admissions Funnel Doesn't Work Any Longer

For years, the solution for schools who wanted to grow their applicant pool has been to purchase more names, travel to new markets, and develop new strategic marketing initiatives. When an inquiry was received, the "more is better" logic meant sending more communications and doing more follow-up, with the hope that more inquiries would increase the applicant pool. Schools waived application fees and moved to the Common App, yet yield rates continued to plummet.

Due to these shifts in the funnel, we would all prefer the admissions "cylinder." If you need 1,500 new freshmen, what you really require is 1,500 good inquiries and 1,500 good applicants. It will never be this easy, but the goal is to work smarter, not harder. Do less. Get more.

Congruence Improves Yield

Vincent Tinto, Ph.D. is a Distinguished University Professor Emeritus at Syracuse University and the former Chair of the Higher Education Program. He is also the author of *Leaving College*. Dr. Tinto is a subject matter expert on student retention and learning communities.

In his 2016 essay published in *Inside Higher Ed* titled, "How to Improve Student Persistence and Completion," he stated, "While the institution's interest is to increase the number of applicants to the institution, the student's interest is to complete a degree without regard to the college or university in which it is earned."[1]

To put it another way, for an institution to fit a student, there must be a high level of congruence. Your school must fit the student's motivations and needs for you to win. High school students who read *The Fiske's Guide*, visit web pages, review direct mail and make campus visits, are looking for a place where they can achieve their goals and feel comfortable over the next four years.

The challenge in admissions is to focus recruiting efforts on the geographic markets (ZIP Codes) with the highest potential, **and invest your limited admissions resources in the identification of prospects and recruitment of inquiries who are most likely to enroll.**

When you accomplish this, you fish in the right ponds and catch more.

Geodemographic research helps you identify where to fish. To use this tool, colleges and universities start with historical data, and analyze it geographically and demographically/behaviorally.

The PRIZM market segmentation model, developed by Claritas Corporation, is used by most of the nation's Fortune 500 companies. It collects over 8,000 demographic variables and 10,000 lifestyle behaviors. They are assigned at the individual household level to more than 126MM U.S. households allowing each address record to be assigned to one of 68 different market segments or PRIZM Clusters that are defined by likes, dislikes, purchase behavior and lifestyle data.

Data sources for the model include:

- Credit card transactions
- Auto and truck sales
- Warranty card and survey data
- Magazine and newspaper subscriber files
- Real estate transactions
- 800 Number respondents
- Direct mail respondents
- Internet data collection

Schools who use this solution will develop their own distinct PRIZM Profile over time.

Years ago, targeting was performed at a large level geography – Designated Market Areas, which are generally Nielsen's geographic definition of television

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1. Retrieved from: https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/09/26/how-improve-student-persistence-and-completion-essay

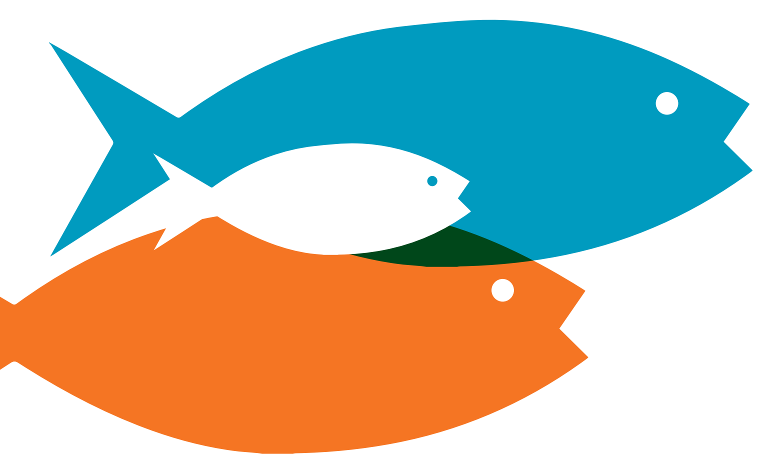
markets, and then more recently, ZIP Codes. Data collection and targeting is now performed at the ZIP+4 (9-digit ZIP Code) and ZIP+6 (11-digit ZIP Code), which is household specific.

Once the school has constructed a PRIZM Profile, it can be overlaid on any geographic area to identify the highest potential geographic markets (ZIP Codes), in the home state, in nearby states, and other areas in the U.S. that hold concentrations of the school's highest potential students. Identifying the most likely prospects for conversion allows the admission team to work smarter and invest resources where there is the highest potential for a positive return.

Armed with ZIP Code level information, admission counselors can target high schools in geographic markets with the highest potential. Name purchases can be made differently. Instead of using a state, county or EPS market as a geographic select, selecting at a ZIP code level allows you to purchase fewer names with higher potential.

As colleges seek to target specific sub-populations (males, students of color, students who bring with them a greater ability to pay), those cohorts can be profiled, separately. To assist in identifying those students with the greatest ability to pay, it is also now possible to assign a household-specific income to each inquiry list and applicant student name and address record.

This same PRIZM geodemographic profile can also be used in developing a predictive model. Your model allows you to score purchased names and identify the students who are most likely to enroll. It can also help you to weed out students where there is minimal potential for enrollment.



Geodemographic modeling can also help you improve communications. Students on inquiry lists come from a myriad of different geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, most colleges and universities routinely communicate using generic letters. Armed with profile information, you may find it helpful to present your school differently for segmented cohorts, by changing a paragraph or two in the text of the communication. For example, students/families who do not plan to file the FAFSA do not need to hear about the percentage of students receiving need-based aid. These students may be more interested in international study, internships, or other unique opportunities.

As an enrollment professional, you must be able to answer three basic marketing questions:

1. Who are my most likely prospects and inquiries?
2. Where do I find more of them (and more like them)?
3. How do I most effectively reach them?

The starting point for higher yield is to build a better prospect list in the most likely geographic locations and to understand who fits the profile that defines a high-quality inquiry. In this way, you can shift away from the "more" model (more names and more resources) to a better model where time, money and resources focus on the students who are more likely to convert.

Tim Dodge is the Founder and President of College & Applied Marketing Technologies, and a strategic partner for enrollmentFUEL. He is a subject matter expert on higher education geodemographic research and predictive modeling. Prior to founding his company, Tim served for two decades as the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid at Augustana College. Tim can be reached at Ttdodge@cmtamt.com.

MARKETING

Is it Time to Fix Photo Fatigue?

By Jessica Lanning

Do you have overused or out-of-date photos? Are you using pictures that just don't tell the right story at your school? For enrollment leaders who are tasked with ensuring that student-facing communications are relevant and effective, photo fatigue is a real problem – and one that a pretty design or a trendy paper won't eliminate.

Whether it's time for a complete visual reset, or you need a small-scale photo shoot to fill a few gaps, here are the top five variables to consider when updating your image library.

1 The Scope

As with most projects, the scope of completion for new photos is primarily dependent on your budget. Once the resources are determined and allocated, making strategic decisions in two areas ensures the biggest return on that amount.

How much camera time is available?

Ideally, there will be enough hours to balance priority location scheduling, as well as opportunities to capture content, organically. Camera time during popular campus events and candid student activities, often return the most authentic content.

How long do these photos need to last?

Do you have a three-year cyclical photo budget, or an annual update budget? Lifespan and shelf life determine how your content themes are prioritized. For example, if the photo budget is limited, niche photo needs should take a back seat to content priorities.

2 The Brand

Photos are not just a brand supplement — they are an integral part of the brand story. They establish tone and imagery synonymous with the written components. When planning for new photos, consider

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the brand pillars to ensure that every image works to reinforce brand features, benefits, and differentiators.

Are there any brand mandates to follow? Is there a designated photo filter for collateral consistency? Does the brand specify a common layout orientation, resolution, or composition? As you add to your library, seek brand consistency. When new photos are compatible with old ones, it is easier to update marketing materials without requiring a new design.

3 The Audience

Gen Z has never lived in a time without social media, so it's no wonder they are incredibly attuned to authentic, relatable content and immune to being sold on something. When developing plans for a photo library, consider the categories of content that receive the most activity and engagement in the places where student audiences interact the most – on social.

Visual media is fast-paced and ever-changing. Therefore, for budgeted photo projects that demand a longer shelf-life, it's important to strike the right balance. Fleeting audience trends should be relegated to more dynamic mediums, while classic, timeless photos (like happy students wearing caps and gowns at graduation) should be preserved in print.

Consider what feeling the photos engender and which moments visually encourage students on their migration from quiet observer to community engager. Working to define what these moments look like for your institution is a necessary exercise to target the right market and create photographic assets to match.

4 The Tone

To a certain extent, it is necessary to create a shot list when developing assets for a photo library. Are there new facilities to showcase? Is there an obvious underrepresentation of a certain student population? As a general rule of thumb, preparing for photos should be less about the shot list, and more about the style guide.

First, within the context of brand and audience, define the content themes that make the most sense for the photo library. For these themes, you should then explore the visual nuances that will best communicate the story through creating a mood or inspiration board. Jump on Pinterest and start building some categories or go old school with pushpins and a corkboard. Either way, the visual tone will begin taking shape in a more tangible way.

5 The Details

As project execution finally comes into focus, the priorities, shot lists, and photo categories should naturally unfold after every preceding step has been fully scoped, rooted in the brand, attuned to the audience, and categorically nuanced. Here are few more tips to keep in mind as ideas evolve into concrete plans.

- For staged shoots, take advantage of the opportunity to regulate variables, like time of day for optimal lighting or wardrobe for contrast.
- Candid settings and event-focused shoots may require extra permissions, so be sure to secure those in advance.
- In addition to the primary photo priority, have a prepared list of additional, usable content categories for each location that could still be accomplished, if there's a scheduling mishap or extra, unused time.
- Prepare the photographer in advance with collateral samples that detail aspirations for the project, as well as existing content categories with abundant options where new photos are not needed.
- Let current students contribute to the conversation – whether through providing samples of photos that they find engaging, or by giving feedback on the inspiration boards. It's a built-in focus group.

Gen Z is a visually driven generation. Photos make a first impression that enrollment leaders cannot afford to overlook or undersell. In step with every enrollment initiative, images must exist to capture student attention and spur funnel engagement.

PHOTO BY DOROTHY PUSCAS ON UNSPLASH

PHOTO BY BEN WHITE ON UNSPLASH

Great photo libraries capture aspects of culture, the passion and excitement for learning that permeates a campus, and the friendliness of students and staff. It shows broad slices of life, allowing future students to imagine what it would be like to be part of your campus community.

If photo fatigue is a problem for your school, updating your photo library is an investment that pays off by conveying moments that authentically represent your school and engage the prospective student audience.

Jessica Lanning began her career in higher education as a student tour guide. She now serves as the Director of Enrollment Marketing for her alma mater, Gardner-Webb University. Jessica is also an adjunct faculty member in the discipline of marketing and has worked as a copywriter and content strategist for private colleges and universities across the nation. Jessica can be reached at jessglanning@gmail.com.

MARKETING

3 Tactical Opportunities for Parental Communications

By Linda Bishop

Parents influence children in many of life's decisions, including the student's choice of a college. To reach your enrollment goals, you need to influence all types of parents. Some are helicopter parents, who do all the talking during campus visits, while others are nonchalant sideline sitters who say little, as their child explores multiple options.

Unfortunately, until they arrive on campus, you may not know what kind of parent you will be working with. Therefore, you need effective tactics for parent of all types.

The Buyer's Journey

Both students and parents take a buyer's journey to choose a school. The journey includes three basic steps.

- Awareness
- Consideration
- Decision

Parents enter the awareness stage well in advance of high school graduation. According to a study by Longmire & Company, nearly one-quarter of parents have discussed specific colleges before their student's freshman year in high school.[1]

College recruiting fairs, online advertising, billboards, radio, TV, and marketing to targeted students are common awareness-building tactics. During the awareness stage, parents open their eyes to messages they often have ignored for years. Let's look at the example of Molly and Dan, and their experience surrounding the buyer's journey.

Molly and Dan have two children, Hunter and Hailey. Hunter is a junior in high school. Hailey is in middle school. Molly and Dan met when they both attended a small private college in Maryland. They are both professionals – Molly is a CPA who works for a large corporation, and Dan is in IT. After graduation, they married and moved to Chapel Hill, where Molly had a job offer. They have been happy raising their children there.

When Hunter started his freshman year, Molly began to pay attention to news about local public and private universities. She spotted a billboard for an unfamiliar school and checked it out online. When the bi-annual publication arrived from her alma mater, Molly read it from cover to cover, and began to follow her school on Facebook and Instagram. Every time there was a news story about the challenges of financing a college degree, Molly stopped what she was doing to watch.

In Hunter's sophomore year, Molly started discussing potential colleges for Hunter with her family. The first discussions were broad-based. State school versus private school? Big or small? In-state or out-of-state?

When schools sent direct mail – letters, postcards, mailers – Molly studied the mailing. When she felt the school could be a fit for Hunter, she visited the school online.

Over time, more conversations began to focus on specific schools. Two of Dan's colleagues had attended the same private school in nearby South Carolina and convinced Dan the school was worth considering. Hunter checked it out online and was interested.

Hunter had a list of possibilities, including Molly and Dan's alma mater. Molly also had a list, based on her own research. After more discussion, the family

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selected a small group of campuses to visit.

Between Hunter's freshman and senior years, Molly, Dan, and Hunter moved from awareness to consideration, and ultimately, to evaluating alternatives.

"Where would you like to go?" shifted to, "Where will you apply?"

"What do you have to do to get in?" shifted to, "Can you get accepted?"

"It's a great school to consider," shifted to, "What can we afford?"

In his senior year of high school, Hunter applied to five schools. One was public. Of the four private schools, one was Molly and Dan's alma mater. Another was the school recommended by Dan's colleagues. The other two schools had marketed to Hunter and his family.

This story illustrates a common approach families take when choosing a college. The internet is a common starting point for research and the first place to find a tactical marketing opportunity.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITY 1

Early in the process, parents and students research online. While every college has a website, a dedicated page for parents helps you ***win.***

Parents come to your website with their own set of questions. While they care about possible majors, they also want to know what will happen if their child struggles in a class, can't get along with their roommate, gets sick and has to miss a week of school, and whether it will be safe for their child to walk alone on campus at night. If their student is unsure of what to study, or is unclear about their future career, can your school help them? What about financial aid, scholarships, and loans? After graduation, are there resources to help them find a job?

Impressions form quickly during the introductory stage. A well-crafted, helpful parent's webpage can create a positive perception of your school, which positions your school as a contender. Good impressions are critical, as parents move from awareness to the consideration stage.

Think beyond the information dump, and instead, create a satisfactory user experience. What is the parent's goal when they visit your page? How can you make it easy to accomplish that goal? How can you showcase information that helps transition the parent beyond awareness to the consideration stage? Remember, your goal is to help parents gather information to form both emotional and data-driven impressions that will position you at the top of the consideration set.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITY 2

"So many options, but which schools are worth considering?" Molly and Dan want their child to thrive and succeed, so they often discuss this, privately and with Hunter.

Educating parents on the advantages of your school builds supporters. To educate, take a tip from Avinash Kaushik, co-founder of Google who said, "Content is anything that adds value to the reader's life."[2] Parent-centric email marketing, with a well-crafted flow of communications, adds value in a budget-friendly way.

To execute this tactic and educate parent-readers, you need the parent's email address. To get it, you can:

- Ask for it on the website. On your parent's page, encourage parents to sign up for your parent-specific newsletter.
- Give interested students an opportunity to share their parent's email address. Collect it on applications, contact cards, campus visit forms, etc. When you collect an email through the "student share" channel, your first communication should look like it comes from an actual human instead of an automated system. Explain how you got the email to the parent, and why you are sending information. To ensure you are CAN-Spam compliant, be sure to include an unsubscribe option.
- Make it a routine for your staff to request email addresses from parents when talking to them on the phone, at events, or when they visit campus.
- Every year, the children of past graduates investigate your school. Make it a best practice to run your Student Search database against the alumni database. If a student lives at the same address as an alumnus, modify your communication strategy to adapt to that opportunity.

Parents are hungry for information to help their student make the right choice and succeed in life. Emails with links to additional resources are helpful to parents. Click-through data permits you to capture another layer of behavioral insight to share with your enrollment/marketing team about what parents are reading, and at what point in the enrollment cycle.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITY 3

Molly looked at every piece of mail that came to Hunter. She scanned the copy and studied the pictures, imagining her son walking across campus, sitting in class, and spending time with new friends.

Direct mail is an effective marketing tool, but it also costs more per impression. Linking direct mail to online information is a smart way to improve the ROI on direct mail, and helps you in several ways. A video of the campus helps sell the campus visit. A parent page with a Frequently Asked Question section on finances helps a parent understand why your school has the best value and is an affordable option.

If your school has a parent's page on the website, and the resources to institute a reverse append strategy, you could use IP addresses of website visitors to identify physical addresses. When you find a match, send parents a triggered direct mail piece, following their online visit.

LAST THOUGHTS

From Hunter's freshman through senior years, the family had many conversations about college choices. When Molly and Dan liked a college, they talked

enthusiastically about the school's benefits. When they had concerns, they raised questions or pointed out potential disadvantages. Eventually, they all agreed where Hunter would apply.

The three influencing tactics – a parent's page on the website, email marketing for parents, and direct mail – would have provided value for Molly and Dan. Imagining Molly and Dan are looking at your institution, knowing what you know about their story, wouldn't you want them, and other parents who seek knowledge, to have access to the information they seek?

Parents are not the ultimate buyers who attend your college, but they do influence their children. By providing helpful information, you can earn the right to influence your future student's parents. Consider what you are doing now to communicate with this marketing niche and look for ways to improve tactics before the next enrollment cycle begins.

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1. Retrieved from: https://www.longmire-co.com/documents/studies/Parent_Study_Final_Report.pdf
2. Retrieved from: https://medium.com/@DpanshuGahlaut/50-evergreen-seo-quotes-to-inspire-your-marketing-in-2017-and-beyond-948b87c337cc

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About enrollmentFUEL

Reach your enrollment goals with **enrollmentFUEL**. We're on a mission to create a better Student Search experience—one that is more efficient and more effective. Using tools and creative thinking, we provide results and actionable insight to the **people who recruit people.**

enrollmentFUEL has extensive expertise in geodemographic research, predictive modeling and web analytics. We combine these techniques with creative design and messaging to tell your story to your target audience. Our approach amplifies your targeted message through intelligent integration of all communication channels, including email, direct mail, online advertising, IP targeting, remarketing strategies and social media.

If you're looking for innovative thinking, and new options to achieve success, **enrollmentFUEL** can help.

microSEARCH™

A smaller, focused Student Search campaign that is created to test new ideas or attack a very limited challenge, such as promoting a new program or fixing a deficiency that the school may be experiencing.

clickCAPTURING™

Learn which inquiries consistently return to your website with clickCAPTURING™ technology. By leveraging behavioral data with triggered communications, we can motivate prospective students to take the next step.

bannerDIRECT™

Research shows banner ads directly reach suspects and prospects at the top of the funnel. We can help you use this "billboard" strategy to create interest at the top of your funnel before and after sending mail and email.

meritBADGING™

Discover and identify the most active inquiries in your pool and provide them with the information they need to convert these super inquiries into student enrollment.

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