



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT
REMARKABLE TOPICS
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VOL. 3, ISSUE 2 2019



INSIDE

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Letter from the President



Your leadership makes a critical difference for your institution and team.



enrollmentFUEL would like to extend our gratitude to Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, VA for allowing this photo to be featured on the cover of our magazine.

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

Dear Octane Booster:

Springtime is yield season, and deposits are on everyone's mind. Financial aid calls are being made, the team is abuzz with planning for yield events, and the "special deposit countdown board" has been made. Counselors are racing toward the finish line.

With all that is going on, I cannot help but think about how your leadership makes a critical difference for your institution and team. For that reason, my article discusses how enrollment management professionals can use the information presented in Bolman and Deal's book, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, for your own personal development.

Along with this topic, you will find insight on countering melt, when to consider a pricing reset strategy, content marketing for enrollment, and tips to get the best results from your copywriter. Special thanks to Dave Detar at Rosedale Technical College for an idea for two-year schools coming to an upcoming edition.

If you have an idea for future topics, please feel free to reach out to me. For our team, creating *Octane* is truly an exercise in empathy. We work hard to understand your world and your challenges, and to provide you with information that helps move the needle. Thank you for being a part of the *Octane* community.

Yours in collaboration,

Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.
President



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APPLYING FOUR FRAMES OF LEADERSHIP TO SEM



By Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.

I bet if you have been through any higher education graduate program, been to a conference in the past five years, or been part of a leadership development class, you are familiar with Bolman and Deal's book *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*.¹ In this book, the authors highlight the four frames of leadership as structural, political, human resource, and symbolic.

In this article, my goal is to explain each of the four frames and then apply it to the work we do in strategic enrollment management, and for fun, give you a chance to take the assessment² to see where you fall in each of the four frames.

Structural

The structural frame is mainly task-oriented. Those with strong skills in this frame are good at setting measurable goals, clarifying tasks, identifying responsibilities, and creating systems and procedures.

Political

The political frame centers on groups and individuals and the conflicting agendas or interests that exist, particularly when resources are scarce and difficult choices must be made. People who are skilled in this frame excel at coalition-building, conflict resolution, and building a strong power base to support their own initiatives.

Human Resource

As you might suspect, this frame places more emphasis on people's needs. Leaders in this frame focus on empowering employees, personal

continued on next page

1. Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2017). *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*.

2. Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. (1988). All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission. This survey is based on ideas in Bolman and Deal's *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991, 1997, 2003).

ASSESSMENT

This questionnaire asks you to describe yourself as a manager and leader. For each item, give the number "4" to the phrase that best describes you, "3" to the item that is next best, and on down to "1" for the item that is least like you.

COMPUTING SCORES

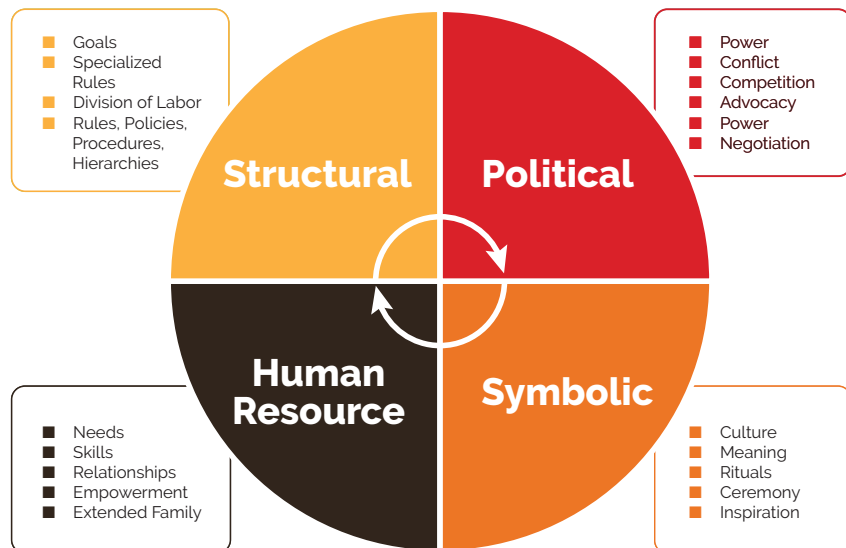
Compute your scores as follows:

$$ST = 1a + 2a + 3a + 4a + 5a + 6a$$

$$HR = 1b + 2b + 3b + 4b + 5b + 6b$$

$$PL = 1c + 2c + 3c + 4c + 5c + 6c$$

$$SY = 1d + 2d + 3d + 4d + 5d + 6d$$



growth and job satisfaction. This frame embraces the need to provide staff with the resources to do their job well and perform to the best of their abilities.

Symbolic

The symbolic frame is often the most confusing but has great power. It addresses people's need for a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. The central theme is the way humans discover and create meaning in an ambiguous and chaotic work environment.

Consider the diagram to visualize the frames and begin to envision where the many roles within the enrollment division fall within the categories.

Interpreting Scores

Structural leaders emphasize rationality, analysis, logic, facts, and data. They are likely to believe strongly in the importance of clear structure and well-developed management systems. A good leader is someone who thinks clearly, makes the right decisions, has good analytic skills, and can design structures and systems that get the job done.

Human resource leaders emphasize the importance of people. They endorse the view that the central task of management is to develop a good fit between people and organizations. They believe in the importance of coaching, participation, motivation, teamwork and good interpersonal relations. A good leader is a facilitator and participative manager who supports and empowers others.

Political leaders believe that managers and leaders live in a world of conflict and scarce resources. The central task of management is to mobilize the resources needed to advocate and fight for the unit's or the organization's goals and objectives. Political leaders emphasize the importance of building a power base: allies, networks, coalitions. A good leader is an advocate and negotiator who understands politics and is comfortable with conflict.

Symbolic leaders believe that the essential task of management is to provide vision and inspiration. They rely on personal charisma and a flair for drama to get people excited and committed to the organizational mission. A good leader is a prophet and visionary, who uses symbols, tells stories, and frames experience in ways that give people hope and meaning.

Applying the Frames

The goal, of course, is to use skills within the four frames interchangeably as each leadership situation would dictate.

The first time I took this assessment, I discovered I was evenly balanced in all my frames, except political. That realization helped me begin to work on those skills in an intentional way. Perhaps the most important thing I learned was that using the political frame helped strengthen my human resource frame. How? Because it allowed me to position myself in a way that benefited my team for resource allocation and in the way our work was perceived institutionally.

Being adept in all four frames will help you lead your team across the finish line in terms of meeting numbers, office efficiency, employee job satisfaction and performance, and the ability to celebrate all those things in meaningful ways.

It is easy for enrollment managers to grasp the **structural frame**. Clearly, you can see how data, policy, process, and systems apply to the work we do every day as enrollment leaders. The magic here is that exceptionally adept leaders in this frame rarely miss their goals and are more likely to be strategic enrollment managers. Leaders who excel in this frame are:

- Constantly looking at ways to divide the labor into manageable parts of the whole
- Creating systems that keep the operation going regardless of gaps in human resources
- Thinking about ways to use resources across the campus (not just in their own office)
- How to set up multiple layers of reports—and then, use the data to make decisions.

I love working in this frame because it helps my staff know the expectations, sets them up for success so they have measurable outcomes (or gets them back on track when they slide off) and gives them a sense of purpose. For me, personally, this frame is where my skill sets naturally lean.

The **political frame** interests me because this is the frame where scores are the lowest when looking at everyone in a management role. I have my theory

about why, but it is only that—a theory. I think many see the word *political* and immediately think of it in a negative sense. We think “manipulative” or “agenda riddled.” If you want to improve your score, the best tip I can offer is to start by changing your point of reference, because *enrollment leaders need this frame*. When we excel in political skills, we:

- Garner the support of others (cabinet support for policies, faculty support on visit days, board support for realistic goals/tuition pricing)
- Win when requesting strapped resources (think more money for Student Search, print material, staff hiring, digital campaigns)
- Create coalitions that advance the needs of your team (facilities staff to ensure the campus is listening for open houses, financial aid to help with the close of the sale, faculty to meet students during their individual tours)

The list could go on and on. For me, this was the frame where I had to do the most work to get my scores to level out.

While the structural frame is where my skill sets are the highest, the **human resource** frame is where I have the most *passion*. I love people, love my teams, and love mentoring and nurturing people. Wow, there was a lot of love there, but that's okay. It illustrates what's in my leadership DNA. For enrollment leaders, what makes this frame so important is we are generally working with two types of people—both who need an HR-framed leader.

Either, we have junior staff right out of college, or we have seasoned folks who have worked for the institution a long time. Seasoned staff need your skills in this frame because they may feel overlooked, underpaid, and overworked. They need you to love on them, show them how important they are to the outcomes, and that the role they play is super valuable. They need to know they still matter, and you trust them. Our young staff, on the other hand, are hungry for you to teach them the ropes.



For many of them, this is their first job out of college, and YOU are setting the tone for their success in future roles. Mentoring, training, and care are essential to them. I often got ridiculed by other cabinet-level staff about how I used my precious time with these junior staff members. There were layers between them and me—why didn't I just let my directors do it all? People questioned why I would spend an entire week as the VP with my new entering admissions counselors in various forms of training.

What they didn't realize was that week I spent in training did two things. First, it energized me because of my passion in this frame—and second, it ensured my new staff knew me, my expectations, and were given the skills to be empowered to meet their goals. *They were trained!* After two years of doing this, I never had to spend that week in training again, because the team I assembled stayed with me six years without turnover. Training and empowering create an

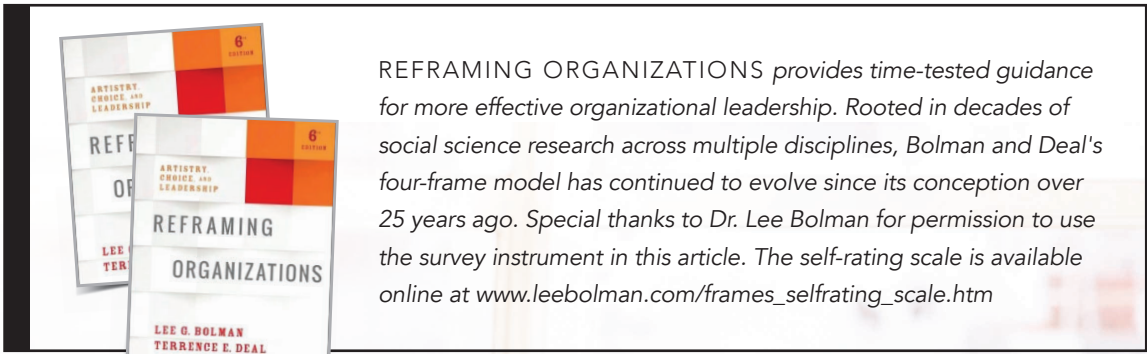
environment where people want to come to work. As Mike Wesner (the owner of FUEL) says, "Let's create a wave people want to ride."

If the structural frame was where my aptitude was, the political where I needed work, and the human resource frame where my passion was, the symbolic frame was the one that created some mental sparring in my own head. This frame pushed me mentally and challenged me in a fun way. While I had a fairly high score here, it wasn't my "go to" frame. This frame was a latent skill I rarely used. The great thing about the symbolic frame in higher education is it is probably one of the most natural places for symbolism (other than religious organizations/associations) one can find. Think of the symbols in higher education—the cap and gown, diplomas, the mace, the mascot, the logo, the crest, tassels, or even that special architectural feature on campus such as "old main," the bell tower, the arch, etc.

In the **symbolic frame**, the strategic enrollment leader will rely on the history of certain disciplines to help develop new courses. They will weave stories about the institution into the campus tour (not just facts and figures and finger pointing at buildings), and use the vision of the strategic plan to motivate and inspire others to achieve it. They will draw upon the traditions of the campus to impact retention and help prospective students "feel" your school is the "right" place for them. The symbolic frame is the essence of what we do...convey stories of success, history, and outcomes, so students and families enroll.

I hope my depiction of the four frames has given you some ideas, inspired you to think about how you apply the four frames to your leadership architecture, and maybe even presented an opportunity for training with your mid-level staff. This would be a great topic for a retreat as you continue to mentor your team.

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.



REFRAMING ORGANIZATIONS provides time-tested guidance for more effective organizational leadership. Rooted in decades of social science research across multiple disciplines, Bolman and Deal's four-frame model has continued to evolve since its conception over 25 years ago. Special thanks to Dr. Lee Bolman for permission to use the survey instrument in this article. The self-rating scale is available online at www.leebolman.com/frames_selfrating_scale.htm





Summer Melt

MEETS ITS MATCH

By Mike Wesner

Ahh, summer!

The clear blue skies. The breezy poolside chatter. The pitter patter of accepted college students disappearing into the ether. For those of us who work in college admissions, it wouldn't be summer without the melt.

What you had hoped would be a robust fall freshman class filled with enthusiastic young minds has unfortunately dwindled by 20%, or more. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the summer melt phenomenon can be felt at institutions across the country, with melt-rates topping out at over 30%.¹

While some admissions departments throw their hands up in a symphony of c'est la vies, others dig deep into their bag of tricks to find solutions to keep melt at bay. Before we talk strategies, let's look at some reasons why "sure-thing" scholars fade into the summer haze.

Hi, Nice to Melt You

If we wrap our collective admissions' experience around the stories of melted students, we're able to see patterns emerge, such as:

- **Financial aid fallout.** For many students, the acceptance letter is only part of the reason to celebrate. If the financial aid falls short of what they hoped, and in many cases, needed, that is reason enough to look elsewhere.
- **Second fiddle syndrome.** Sometimes, you're a student's backup school, and there's not a whole lot you can do about that. First choice is first choice, plus the other school may have offered better financial aid. The only way to know for sure is to ask the student, if you get the chance.

- **Just not that into you.** The excitement fades, and kids lose interest, particularly if you're not engaging them regularly. More on that later.
- **Major changes.** Some students, after acceptance, may have a change of heart about what they want to be when they grow up. When a quick online review of your course catalog doesn't mention the right major to make their dreams come true, they are on to the next school.
- **It's personal.** A student may have simply lost the courage to "go away" to school. Life may have also taken a dramatic turn, and plans have changed. This reason is difficult to predict or pinpoint. The only thing you can do is keep lines of communication open with the student and their family.

First Generation, Second Thoughts

For first-generation students, the chances of showing up on your campus in the fall are far less. While they face many of the same hurdles as their peers from degree-holding households, first-gen students' journey to campus can be significantly more complicated. In a 2018 NPR interview, University of Pittsburgh education researcher, Ben Castleman, said, "If students are the first in their family to go to college, their parents may not have the experience with or confidence in completing financial aid paperwork or completing various tasks on time."²

Castleman also points out that first-gen students don't typically have access to professional help in the enrollment process. Complicating matters even further, most high school counselors don't work in the summer. In the meantime, questions and deadlines continue to mount, building a wall between where a student is and where he or she wants to be.

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Master the Melt

Summer melt is a problem for institutions, but it's not insurmountable. Take a step back, align objectives with expectations, and confront melt with consistency, creativity, and compassion. Often, the challenge presented by melt is simply the need to build community among your incoming class.

Map it Out

Even before those acceptance letters go out, you should have an anti-melt plan in place. It starts by gathering the gang, counselors included, and going through your enrollment process with a fine-toothed comb. Look for fail-points, those places in the process where you know students drop off the radar. What will it cost you—from a staffing and/or marketing perspective—to plug the biggest holes? Ask yourself: Is it worth it?

Paperwork-a-Rounds

Let's face it—the mountain of paperwork alone is enough to have skittish students running for the hills. Tossing a list of deadlines to a student on summer break is not how you keep them engaged. Instead, find fun, unique ways to remind students about what's due, and when.

That may mean emails, text messages, or old school phone calls. There are ways to turn these traditional touchpoints into memorable moments, with prizes and giveaways. For example, students could earn points for each deadline they meet. These points could then be used to purchase school-branded gear.

Of course, the surest way to solve the paperwork problem is to do an extensive audit of all the required forms and find ways to eliminate or consolidate superfluous requests for information and signatures.

You're Hired! Maybe.

It's no secret that admissions counselors are spread too thin. Many struggle to focus on everything that's required of them to lock down the leads in their territory.

Counselors often get the deposit and mentally "move on" to pushing the next accepted student to deposit. They neglect to keep engaging the "one already in the

bag." Therefore, be sure new counselors understand that combatting melt is an important part of the process.

Let it Flow

Anti-melt communication works best when draped in transformational language and messaging. The purpose is to engage the student to envision his or her best future at the school. However it isn't just what you say. It's how you say it, where you say it, and when.

Technology Takeover

Do you remember everything you see online? Probably not, particularly over the course of a month or longer. The same is true for students. Effective and unobtrusive, IP targeting lets you get in front of students and their parents, by serving up ads directly to their phone, computer, or tablet. Summer is the best time to tee up a targeted "What's New?" strategy. Think about using YouTube video links combined with accepted student-specific click-thru destinations.

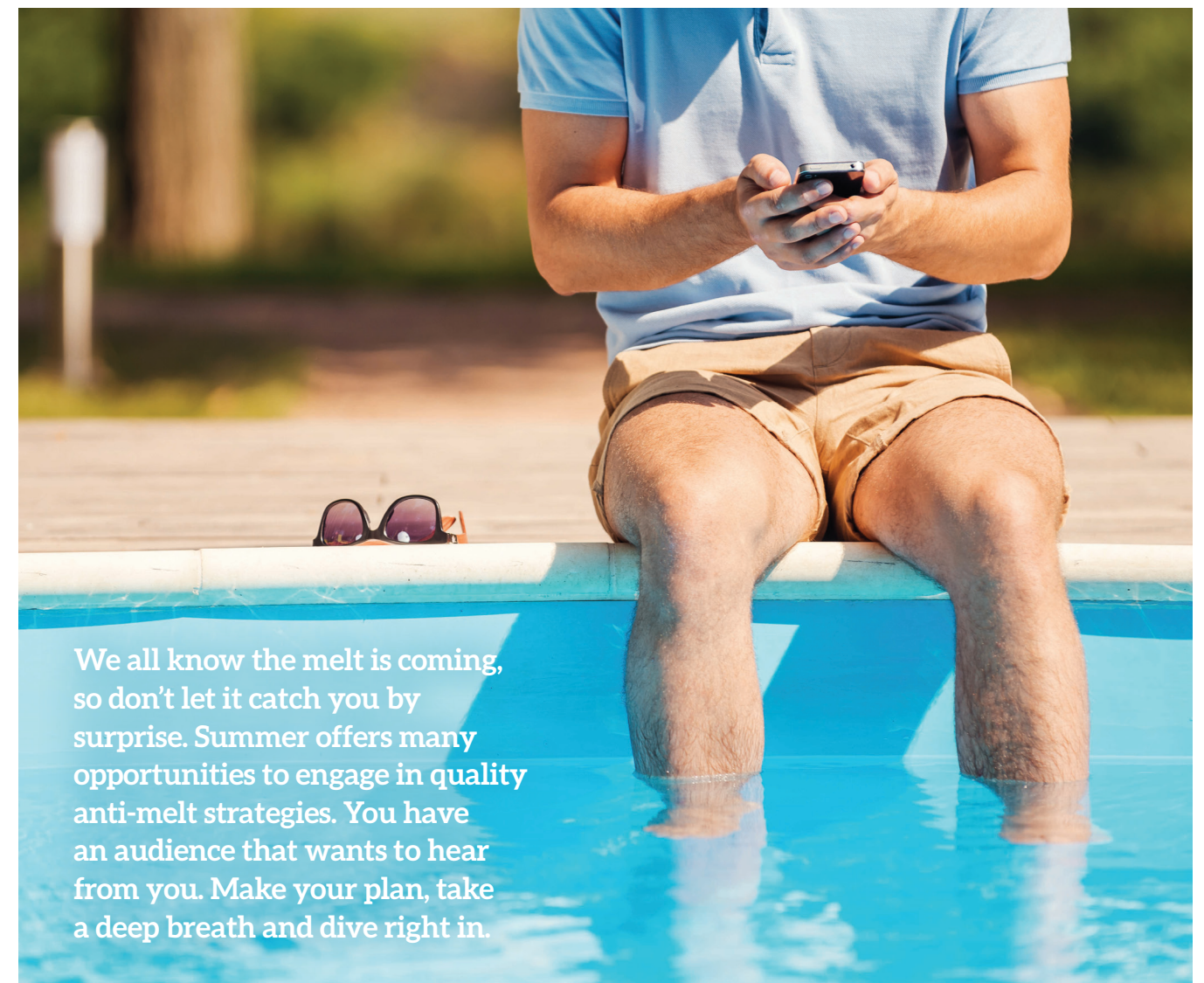
It's also always good to know who is visiting your website. It is especially beneficial to know which of your accepted students have been clicking around. Repeated visits indicate deep interest. It's also useful to know which students aren't visiting. At enrollmentFUEL, we use matchBACK™ technology to help discover who is visiting a client's website. We also use matchBACK™ code to trigger specific mailings.

Print it Proudly

The power of print can't be understated, particularly when it's personal. Chances are you're sitting on a heap of information about your accepted students. Why not use that intel to create personalized direct mail campaigns? Using variable copy that speaks to specific student interests and goals, you can inform future freshmen about majors, housing, campus life, deadlines and more.

Text Lightly

It's summer, and students will be on their phones. Get in front of them with fresh, friendly text messages. A simple "I'm here for you" can go a long way to keeping students engaged.



We all know the melt is coming, so don't let it catch you by surprise. Summer offers many opportunities to engage in quality anti-melt strategies. You have an audience that wants to hear from you. Make your plan, take a deep breath and dive right in.

About that Social Media

Accepted students are likely to have eyes on your Instagram account. Keep the pics and posts fresh and fun all summer long. A well-timed giveaway or drawing with branded hashtags will send the right message to your bright-eyed hopefuls. For a master's class in how to make a feel-good feed that engages all audiences, check out Colorado State University on Instagram.

Iceberg, Right Ahead

We all know the melt is coming, so don't let it catch you by surprise. Summer offers many opportunities to engage in quality anti-melt strategies. You have an audience that wants to hear from you. Make your plan, take a deep breath and dive right in.

1. Retrieved from <https://blog.ed.gov/2018/06/summer-melt-why-college-bound-students-dont-make-it-in-the-fall/>
2. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=621023537>

Mike Wesner is the founder and Chief Imagination Officer of enrollmentFUEL. His father was a Polish immigrant, with little experience on how to advise Mike. In 1983, he entered college as a first-generation student. Back then, he had never heard of the melt phenomena, but today, he recognizes how fortunate he was that his dreams and ambitions did not evaporate after completing high school. You can email Mike at mike.wesner@enrollmentfuel.com.



PRICE RESET

Considerations, Concerns, and Implementation Tactics

By Lucie Lapovsky Ph.D.

Many schools have been concerned about how high their published price is and how much higher their published price is when compared to the average net price that their students pay.

Historically, published prices were related to the cost of providing the education, and only lower-income students received financial aid. In recent years, that has changed. Financial aid has been used to shape the class and to provide merit and need-based aid. It has become the largest expenditure for many schools, since their discount rates have been increasing. According to the most recent NACUBO data, the average discount rate is 50% for new freshmen at private colleges.

This situation has resulted in much, if not all, of the revenue from tuition increases being directly rebated to students as institutional aid, rather than going to support the operations of the college. This situation has led many schools to consider a reduction in tuition, because they hope a lower published price will encourage more students to look at the college and consider applying. It is a strategy worth considering because several studies show that more than 60% of students will not consider a college if its price is above a certain dollar amount.¹

The goal of a price reset is to increase the number of students who inquire about the school and apply. **A price reset impacts the top of the enrollment funnel; it is not a strategy to increase the yield of applicants who have applied.**

Most schools that think about reducing tuition have five main concerns about taking that step, which are:

- Fear that it will change their perceived competitive position, relative to their peer institutions
- Concern that people believe that price and quality are related; and thus, a price reduction will be perceived as a decrease in institutional quality
- Concern they will be perceived as desperate to improve their financial position
- Concern that students and parents are more concerned with the size of the financial aid award than with the net price they will pay
- Concern about their ability to project the impact of a price reset with any certainty, because institutional projections of student enrollment responses are based on historical data and a price reduction disrupts the trend line

These are all legitimate concerns. They do present risks, which must be assessed relative to the desired results. Survey work on these issues always results in ambiguous findings. Each school must decide how its current applicant pool (and future applicant pool) will react to lowering tuition.

For most colleges, the major overlap schools are public institutions. These schools have much lower tuitions than private colleges, so they're already competing with lower-priced institutions. They often enroll a higher headcount of students with more ability and wealth than the competing private institutions. In most states, the average income of the students at the four-year public institutions is higher than at private institutions.

If schools experience shortfalls in the number of desired/required enrollments, and in the net tuition revenue necessary to support the institution, it is time to explore other pricing strategies, including a tuition reduction. A change in tuition and the discounting strategy is not likely to be a panacea by itself. However, it can be a valuable tool to help move the institution to its desired state when packaged with other changes the institution is making or considering.

There are six situations when it is reasonable to consider a tuition reduction, or a "reset" as it is often referred to:

- When the institution's inquiry and applicant pools have been declining
- When the institution's enrollment has been decreasing
- When the institution has the capacity to increase enrollment
- When the institution has relatively high tuition, and when its tuition discount rate is above 50%.
- When the institution is providing aid to almost all its students (i.e., when there are few, if any, students who are paying the published tuition price)
- When many of its competitor institutions have lower tuitions and lower net prices

With a tuition reduction, the institutional aid for both continuing and new students should be adjusted, so the net revenue per student is the same as before the tuition reset. Some schools assume a lower net tuition revenue per student and expect to make up the loss in net tuition per student by the increase in numbers of students. I recommend working to hold the net revenue per student the same and working to grow the enrollment. Over the long-term, it may be possible to increase the net revenue per student, slowly. In the short-term, the goal is more likely reached if the focus

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is placed on growing total net revenue through enrollment. Growth should occur because the price reset should lead to a larger applicant pool. If you can maintain your yield, enrollment should increase.

If you do a price reset, you should continue awarding aid to all students. For those students (and they should be very few) who were paying a price greater than the new lower price, you should award a minimal amount of financial aid—\$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00. These awards are important because research shows that all students and parents value them. They show that the institution wants the student—which gives bragging rights to both students and their parents!

In addition to the minimal financial aid award, the award letter should include special items that will be made available to the student, such as dinner at the president's house, meetings with guest lecturers in small groups before a lecture, or other things that parents can brag about. These perks will not cost the institution anything. It is also wise to name your awards, since this will give additional prestige to the award and greater bragging rights to the student and his/her parents.

Decision and Announcement of a Price Reset

The decision to do a price reset should be made between February, and no later than May, of the year prior to implementation. For example, you would make an internal announcement in the spring of 2019, if implementation

was planned for fall 2020. This allows ample time to develop the marketing strategy for announcing the price reset, and to adjust the admissions recruiting strategy and discounting matrix.

The public announcement of the price reset should be made in August or early September of the year prior to its implementation, so that the entire admissions recruitment cycle can occur with the new price being known. When planning to announce the price reset, all other institutional changes should also be discussed. This is because pricing is just one part of the overall strategy to appeal to students.

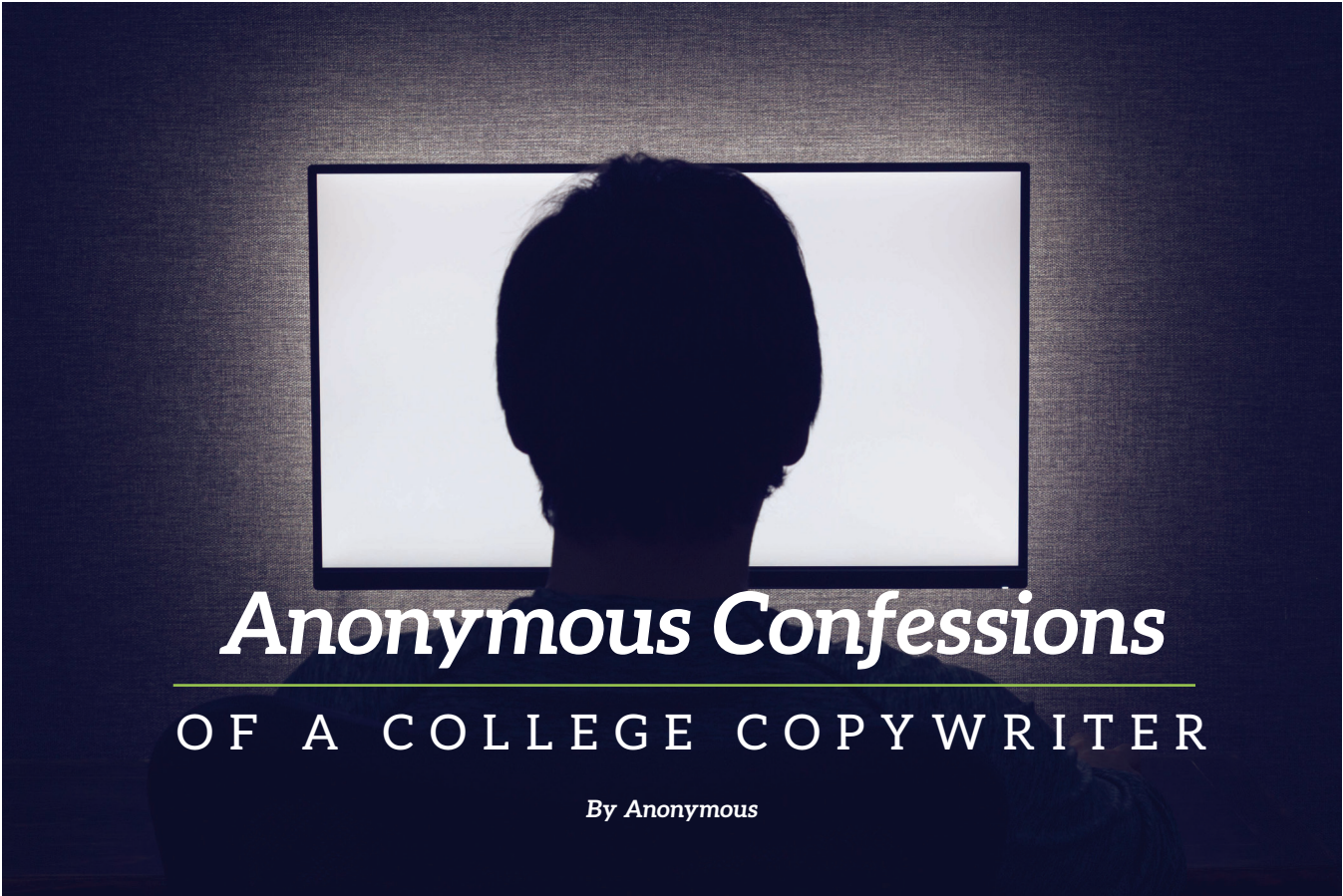
At the time that there is a public announcement of the price reset, you should send personalized letters to current students and their parents. This will show them exactly how the price change will *not impact* the net price they will pay. If the announcement is made after students return to campus, consider having an open meeting, so all students can ask questions.

When year-after-year enrollment numbers drop, and discount rates climb, schools must look at strategies to correct the situation. A price reset is one option to consider—particularly if a school has excess classroom capacity.

While changing the pricing and discount structure can help a school improve its competitive position at the top of the enrollment funnel, this is not a cure-all strategy. It is one piece in a bigger strategic puzzle, where multiple factors combine to create a competitive advantage in the market.

1. Retrieved from <https://www.salliemae.com/research/how-america-pays-for-college/>

Lucie Lapovsky Ph.D. is an economist, the Principal of Lapovsky Consulting, and an expert in strategic financial issues in higher education. Before consulting, she served in many roles in higher education, including the president at Mercy College and the vice president of finance at Goucher College. She is a regular contributor to Forbes, and has also written more than 200 chapters and articles about higher education finance. Contact Lucie at lucie@lapovsky.com.



A good copywriter should deliver fresh, effective content that captures the voice of your school. Here are some tricks and tips to help you get the most out of your hired scribe or your in-house team.

Your feedback is fuel to a writer. Positive or negative, the more specific your comments, the more likely you are to get the copy you want. If you're worried about hurt feelings, try phrasing your edits in the form of "what if" questions. A few good probing questions about the copy can prompt a whole host of new ideas.

First draft equals big picture. Does the copy accomplish its purpose? Does it evoke emotion? Will it engage your audience? Is it interesting? Playful? Current? Cohesive? That's all first-round stuff; use the second draft to sharpen focus and for any, gulp, grammar gaffes. Don't forget to note things you like about the copy: word choice, phrasing, imagery, stats, CTAs, etc. This lets your writer know what you'd like to see more of in the future.

Writers like knowing what has performed well in the past. If you have the data related to past performance, then share it. This is particularly important for email campaigns. Which subject lines prompt higher open rates? Which links are getting kids to click? This information is crucial to informing future writing assignments and improving outcomes for you.

Look who's talking. There's plenty of qualitative data to be gleaned by asking current students what they think about new (and old)

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Nobody reads ads. People read what interests them. Sometimes it's an ad. —Howard Gossage

Copy is a direct conversation with the consumer.
—Shirley Polykoff

On the average, five times as many people read the headlines as read the body copy. It follows that unless your headline sells your product, you have wasted 90 percent of your money.
—David Ogilvy

Decide the effect you want to produce in your reader. —Robert Collier

Make it simple. Make it memorable. Make it inviting to look at. Make it fun to read. —Leo Burnett

In writing good advertising, it is necessary to put a mood into words and to transfer that mood to the reader. —Helen Woodward

copy. These don't need to be formal focus groups. You can tap those campus ambassadors who are hanging around the office. They'll tell you exactly what they think. Food goes a long way with students, so a bag of snacks or some cookies can get them talking. Of course, a gift card is even better! Then share the intel with your writer. A good copywriter will learn, grow, and use the knowledge.

More than a number. There are only so many stats a student can take. They want stories. So keep a running list of timely, inspirational anecdotes about students, faculty, and campus happenings. Things you hear in the hallway. In staff meetings. From counselors. Just jot down a few words in a notebook or on a whiteboard and let your writer flesh them out in future emails, invites, and brochures.

Last Thoughts. Professional copywriters want to do a good job and are heavily invested in their creative craft. With minimal effort on your part, you can give your writer the resources necessary to create copy that crushes it for your school.



Does Enrollment Marketing Need Its Own Content Strategy?

By Linda Bishop

Marketing's goal is to build a school's brand and promote that brand in the marketplace. Enrollment's goal is to bring in the next class and meet revenue goals. At the early stages of a student's "buying journey," content alignment happens naturally between marketing and enrollment. Both departments are focused on providing basic information to position their institution as the best alternative for students seeking the school's unique set of benefits.

The website works as the main content "library" and holds the answers to basic questions asked by students, such as:

- Where are you located?
- What does the campus look like?
- What majors do you offer?
- What is student life like?
- What is the cost of an education?
- What resources do you offer to help students get a job?
- What study-abroad programs do you offer?
- What are your athletic programs like?
- How do I arrange to visit your school?
- Where would I live?

Imagine this situation. Mallory and her parents have a long-standing tradition on Wednesday night when her dad makes spaghetti with meatballs. During dinner, the conversation turns to where Mallory wants to go to college. Mallory confesses that she loved her visit to **your school**, but she is worried that she will struggle academically. Her dad tells her he is confident she can do anything. Her mom then encourages her to go ahead and apply if that is the school she really prefers. Mallory hears them, but she is still not confident about applying.

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To get answers, they might reach out to an Admissions Counselor, but the odds are better they will look online for information. In these moments, a content strategy specifically designed to support the enrollment management process can help you win the hearts and minds of future students.



There are many different ways to present content—pictures and snack-sized posts on social sites, videos on YouTube, and online articles that can be found on campus blogs are just a few of the options.

After dinner, Mallory goes to her room. She finishes an essay for her AP class in American History. Before she shuts down her laptop, she decides to look at your website and goes to the page called “Academic Support,” providing information about resources available to students. There, she spots a link with the title “How I dropped the mic on microbiology.”

Mallory clicks the link. It takes her to your school’s Instagram page and a highlight story. She is introduced to a student named Jayden. He loved English and history, but had always struggled with math and science. He was interested in microbiology and decided to take an introductory course, even though it scared him a little.

The class wasn’t easy, but his professor helped him map out a plan to be successful and take advantage of all the resources at your school. Jayden passed the course with a solid B. Best of all, he gained a new measure of confidence about trying new things that would stick with him for his entire life.

Learning about Jayden made Mallory feel like she could also succeed at your school, and that night, she sent in her application.

As the student moves down the path and through the stages of applying, acceptance, depositing, and ultimately matriculation, many questions pop

up after conversations with parents, friends, and trusted advisors. They include:

- How will I make new friends?
- What do I do if I am undecided about my major? Or find out I don’t like a major once I start taking classes?
- What happens if I have trouble understanding a course, or worse yet, I am failing a class?
- Will I like my professors?
- What if I get sick and miss class?
- What if I hate my roommate?
- Is it hard to get an internship?
- How will I find out about clubs and organizations that I might want to join?
- What will it feel like to be so far away from home?

Dr. Weinschenk recommends presenting important points early on, because most online readers only read 60% of an article.

In his book *How We Decide*, Jonah Lehrer digs into the research on decision making. In his chapter “The Brain is an Argument,” he states decisions are reached after the brain engages in a series of sharp, internal arguments. Lehrer writes, “While the cortex struggles to make decisions, rival bits of tissue are contradicting each other. Different brain areas think different things for different reasons. Sometimes this fierce argument is largely emotional, and the distinct parts of the limbic system debate each other. Although people can’t always justify their feelings, these feelings still manage to powerfully affect behavior.”¹

Uncertainty is stressful for students. To get answers, they might reach out to an Admissions Counselor, but the odds are better they will look online for information, like Mallory did. In these moments, a content strategy specifically designed to support the enrollment management process can help you win the hearts and minds of future students.

The Content Marketing Institute defines content marketing as “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”²

In many ways, content marketing is like advertising. In *What Sticks: Why Most Advertising Fails and How to Guarantee Yours Succeeds*, authors Rex Briggs and Greg Stuart state that for an advertising program to be effective, you must know why customers hire the category of products, why customers choose a specific class of brands, and why customers ultimately choose a specific brand.³

It is their third point—knowing why customers ultimately choose a brand—where enrollment management professionals should take an active role in ensuring available content helps convert inquiries into matriculating students.

Even when schools have a lot of content distributed across multiple platforms, gaps can still exist. To identify content gaps, here are questions to consider:

- What decisions will be made by students?
- What information will be considered?
- What positive conclusion do you want the student to draw about your school?
- Where will they look for this information?
- Does this information exist in some

content form already? Or, will it need to be created?

- How can you be sure that they find it?

Once you have identified content gaps, you can work with marketing to implement a plan to fill them.

Three Factors to Consider When Creating Content

Susan Weinschenk is a behavioral scientist with a Ph.D. in psychology who uses brain science to understand and predict how people behave. In her book *100 More Things Every Designer Needs to Know about People*, the practical advice she offers can be used to improve content marketing programs.

First, the brain is more active when content is presented as a story. When stories have happy endings, the brain releases dopamine, making people feel optimistic and more willing to take action.⁴

Second, reading is not hardwired into our brain. It is something we learn. However, people are hardwired to pay attention to faces and to listen to the emotional nuances conveyed by speech. This helps to explain the popularity of videos and podcasts, and why they are a powerful tool for content marketing.⁵

The brain is more active when content is presented as a story. When stories have happy endings, the brain releases dopamine, making people feel optimistic and more willing to take action.

Third, there are many different ways to present content—pictures and snack-sized posts on social sites, videos on YouTube, and online articles that can be found on campus blogs are just a few of the options. When you are writing an article, Dr. Weinschenk recommends presenting important points early on, because most online readers only read 60% of an article.⁶

Summing It All Up

Most schools have a content strategy, though the sophistication of the strategy varies. As students journey toward matriculation, different questions arise. Effective content strategies help to build a brand and provide information to answer questions, educate potential



students on your value, and eliminate uncertainty. There is value in listing common questions and concerns and then evaluating where better content could help you win hearts and minds. Tell stories with happy endings and make people feel good about your institution. Create videos and podcasts, because we are hardwired to pay attention to faces and listen for emotional nuances. When writing longer-form content, be sure the most important points are presented early

on, since many people stop reading before reaching the end.

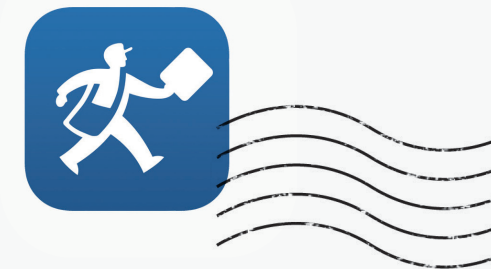
Content marketing has come a long way since 2004 when Merriam-Webster declared “blog” the dictionary word of the year. Channels come and go (remember Myspace), but the basic principles of sharing useful information to help students understand the value of your school is not a fad—it’s a strategy to help savvy enrollment management professionals achieve their goals.

People are hardwired to pay attention to faces and to listen to the emotional nuances conveyed by speech. This helps to explain the popularity of videos and podcasts.

1. Jonah Lehrer, *How We Decide*, (Boston, First Mariner Books, 2009), 198.
2. Retrieved from <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/>
3. Rex Briggs and Greg Stuart, *What Sticks: Why Most Advertising Fails and How to Guarantee Yours Succeeds*, (Chicago, Kaplan Publishing, 2006) 103.
4. Susan M. Weinschenk, Ph.D., *101 More Things Every Designer Needs to Know About People*, (San Francisco, New Riders, 2016) 106.
5. Weinschenk, *101 More Things Every Designer Needs to Know About People*, 99-100.
6. Weinschenk, *101 More Things Every Designer Needs to Know About People*, 90.

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A Quick Update on Informed Delivery®



Informed Delivery is a new service offered by the United States Postal Service (USPS). When a person signs up for the service, they receive daily digital previews of their incoming mail via email. The standard digital preview is a black and white image of a mail piece.

This service will create some interesting opportunities for marketers. There are three reasons to consider adding Informed Delivery to a campaign mailing:

- The opt-in email sent by the post office with images of mail pieces has a high open rate. According to the USPS, the open rate for an Informed Delivery email is more than twice the average compared to regular promotional emails. Images in an email will remain on the consumer’s Informed Delivery dashboard for 7 days after the image is first posted.
- Additional services, such as showing a color image of your mailing, can be added to the email for a small fee.
- Images can also be linked to online content for your school. For example, you could link all clicks to a promotional video about your school. All types of mail are eligible. An Intelligent Mail® barcode is required, and enrollmentFUEL (or your mailing partner) may need to fill out paperwork to participate.

enrollmentFUEL is testing this new tool, and we will share our research in the future.

If you have questions, please contact Mike Wesner, Chief Imagination Officer, at mike.wesner@enrollmentfuel.com.

What’s the downside? The number of people who are getting an Informed Delivery email is currently small. To receive Informed Delivery email notifications, a postal customer must sign up. That step is more likely to be taken by an adult than a teenager. The great thing is we feel that Mom is often the person in the home who has the most influence in a student’s college decision-making process. So, having Mom see your mail in this way is yet one more piece to the marketing puzzle.

Currently, approximately 15 million postal customers have signed up for the free service, but the USPS is promoting this option, and Informed Delivery is growing.





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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, retargeting, geotargeting, and social media advertising.

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.



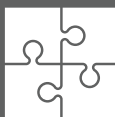
clickCAPTURING™

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.



matchBACK™

Similar to our clickCAPTURING™ solution, this emerging technology represents a futuristic way of identifying additional hand-raisers in your Student Search program without the use of tracking cookies. Enrollment leaders are often unaware of these leads, and by capturing this stealth activity, you're developing an additional and continuous flow of more qualified leads each month.

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