



# SCHOOL MARKETING:

## 5 top tips to Make Your School Budget Work Harder

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**As competition between schools continues to increase, it's never been more important that schools market themselves effectively. It's essential that schools communicate what truly sets their school apart from other schools and convey why parents and staff should choose it over another. There can be many repercussions from a school not marketing themselves - student numbers can easily dip for example, or a school's reputation - a school's most valuable asset - can start to fall down.**

Marketing is often viewed as lower on the priority list when school budgets are being carved up however and many schools experience challenges around conservative marketing budgets and knowing how to spend their marketing budget effectively. These budget restrictions can lead to a 'make do' attitude towards refreshing marketing collateral, yet ironically, this reluctance to spend will inevitably lead to a loss of income through a shortfall in students.

The good news is, whether a school's budget is significant or meagre, with good planning, you can maximise it and get a good return on your marketing investment. Below are 5 tips that will help your marketing budget work as hard as possible and will support your school in achieving its objectives:

### 1. Create a marketing plan:

The backbone of all successful marketing - a marketing plan. A good marketing plan outlines all the important elements needed to market your school consistently and successfully. It will outline when, where and how to invest your school's budget, typically across a 12-month period.



A marketing plan doesn't have to be lengthy or complicated. To create a simple marketing plan, you will need to:

- Define your objectives
- Define the activities to achieve those objectives
- Plot those activities on the marketing plan along a 12-month timeline
- Add cost estimates for each activity

The plan will act as a framework to guide efforts and keep everyone focused on end goals.

**2. Ensure the marketing solution matches the issue you're trying to solve:**

As communication and design experts, a school may come to us with a specific requirement, for example to boost attendance at an open day or to increase engagement with parents. The school may have preconceived ideas about what they'd like e.g. a new prospectus or a newsletter. Rather than diving straight in however, it's important to fully define the objectives and desired outcomes as it usually turns out that there's a slightly wider requirement, for example to boost awareness, and that a different solution will be more effective to meet your particular need.

**3. Optimise every opportunity:**

When trying to make your school marketing budget work as hard as possible, it's important to maximise every opportunity. If you're having to have an Ofsted-compliant website for example, then why not make your website into something that something really impressive! Ensure it's beautifully designed, rich in functionality and easy to navigate to form a powerful tool that will both attract new families and communicate effectively with existing parents.

Or if you're hosting an event, consider tactics to target prospective parents. One school had great success with a simple activity of tying a branded, helium-filled balloon to the wrist or pram of toddlers and

babies at the event. Attached to the ribbon of the balloon was a small school brochure. The balloons were all in the school's colours and were printed with the school's name and crest. It proves that with a dollop of creativity, good ideas can work hard for you and need not be expensive.

**4. Think digital-first:**

For some schools, traditional marketing tools like print advertising are still widely used. In isolation however, these older marketing strategies are increasingly less effective compared to digital options, and don't always offer the best return on investment. More and more schools are turning towards digital marketing strategies (SEO, social media advertisements etc.) to make their budget work harder by reaching their target audiences effectively and efficiently and achieving their



objectives - whether those are to drive website traffic, create awareness or engage with parents. It is advised however that you partner up with a professional company to ensure you make the most of your expenditure.

**5. Think ahead.**

Thinking ahead can help your marketing budget work harder in a couple of ways. If investing in new marketing collateral...school photography for example, think ahead to how those photographs might be used across other marketing channels in the future e.g. social media, banner displays and more. Or if you have an event coming up, plan ahead and consider what skill sets or connections are within your parent community that may benefit the event. For example, if you have a parent with print connections, and you need a banner or a flyer to announce an upcoming event, think ahead and ask that parent if they're able to source the items at cost price.

In summary, whether your budget is large or small, it's important to make it work as hard as possible. And remember, a big marketing budget spent badly may not be as effective as a small budget spent with flair and imagination so get sharpening that pencil and pushing those boundaries.



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