

Engage Your Community

COMMUNITY MARKETING AND
EVENTS GUIDE FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS



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Charters**

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Even in our digital-centric world, community marketing and events remain crucial.

In enrollment marketing, these strategies are called “ground game”—encompassing everything beyond digital efforts like websites, SEO, and online ads. This includes flyers, postcards, banners, billboards, and promotional items that help reinforce your school’s brand and message.

These tangible materials play a key role in visibility and engagement, tailored to your school’s specific needs and audience. This guide provides tips for creating clear signage, engaging flyers and mailers, and organizing impactful events.

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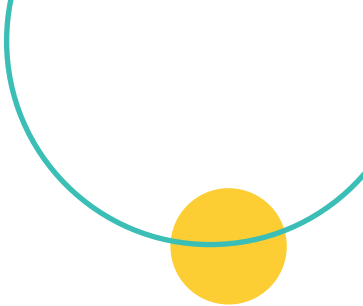


Table of Contents

Introduction

The Power of a Strong Brand02

Part One

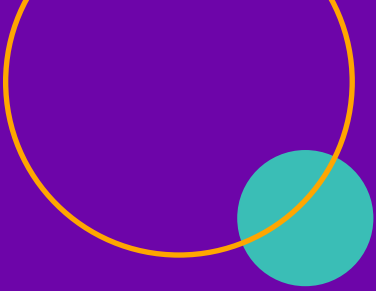
Community Marketing05

Part Two

Impactful Events.....10

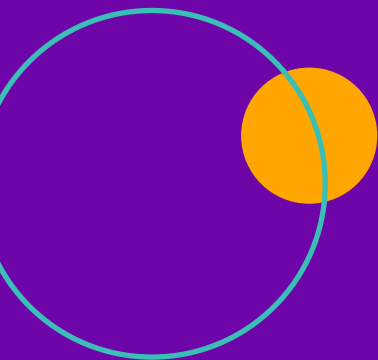
Conclusion

Building a Lasting Impact14



Introduction

The Power of a Strong Brand



The Power of a Strong Brand

A strong brand can bring a variety of benefits to your school, including increased enrollment, an positive reputation in your community, and the chance to differentiate your school from competitors. The elements of your brand are the building blocks for enrollment marketing—whether through bold, clear signage or eye-catching mailers. If you're a new school or are looking to overhaul your enrollment marketing efforts, start by examining your brand—you'll want to make sure it points to your mission and that it resonates with your community.

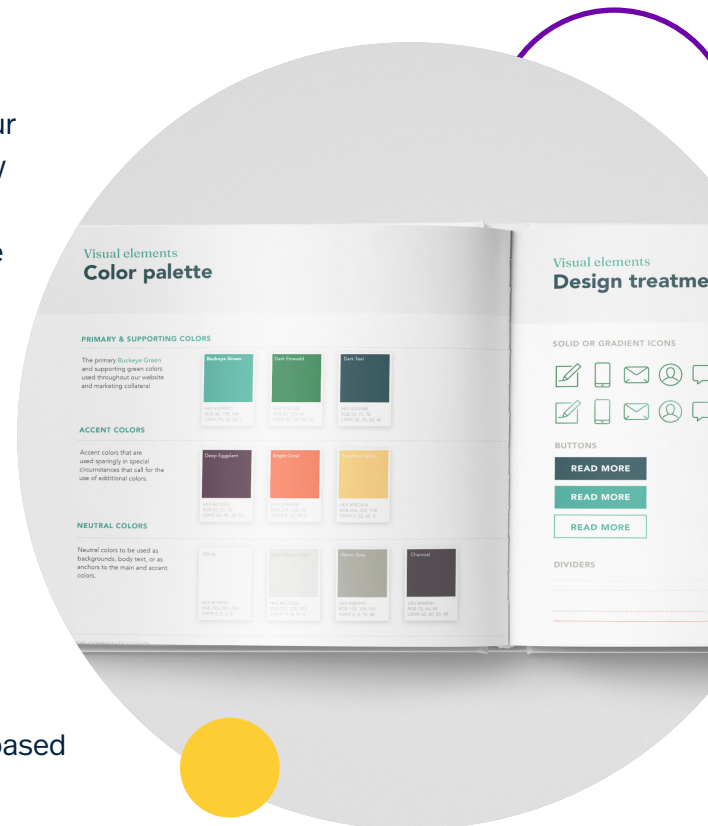
DEFINING BRAND IDENTITY

Your school's brand serves as its identity—it encapsulates your mission, values, and objectives, conveying to your community who you are and what you stand for. By crafting a compelling brand narrative, you can establish your school as a distinctive presence amidst a myriad of educational options. Ideally, your brand is easily identifiable and portrays your school as trustworthy and reliable—the perfect place for families to envision their children growing and thriving.

As you establish your brand, you'll want to ensure that what makes your school unique is front and center. Highlighting your school's offerings, whether that's STEM, language immersion, or performing arts, will differentiate you from your competitors. And, it's not just about what you teach—it's also how you teach it. Emphasize the powerful approaches your school takes, such as hands-on or project-based learning, to reach your target audience.

FINDING YOUR VOICE

Your voice is the unique personality of your school that permeates all communications with stakeholders—from families to students to teachers and even your greater community. It's how you articulate your brand identity through language, resonating with your audience on a personal level. Whether it's a friendly and playful tone for an elementary school or a formal and inspirational tone for a college prep high school, your school's voice should align seamlessly with your brand. Consistency is key here; maintaining a strong, unified voice across all communications fosters trust and credibility.



PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR BRAND CONSISTENCY

Consistency is the cornerstone of a strong brand. Every touchpoint—whether it’s your social media channels, website, or face-to-face interactions—should reflect the same core identity. Here are some tips for keeping your brand consistent and identifiable:

- Craft a unified message. Keep your messaging simple, clear, and consistent across all platforms. Decide upon the language and phrasing you will use to highlight your school’s offerings and stick with it.
- Empower advocates. Encourage current families, students, and faculty to be ambassadors of your brand.
- Word-of-mouth recommendations not only carry weight, but they are also free. Sharing a brief “elevator speech” with your ambassadors can help align them to your brand and voice.

Managing your school’s brand is an ongoing journey—one that requires reflection on your school’s mission, values, and community. By honing your brand identity and establishing a consistent voice, you can build a foundation for growth and success for your school and the community you serve.

EXPERT TIP

Don’t underestimate how impactful word of mouth is. It might be the strongest marketing tactic available to your school.

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THE CHARTER SCHOOL USER EXPERIENCE GUIDE

In partnership with Shaina Rozen and Niki Blaker

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Getting you the money, resources, and know-how to create thriving schools.

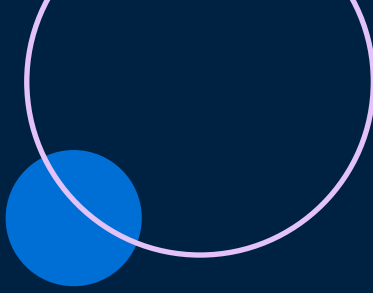
FREE DOWNLOAD

The Charter School User Experience Guide

Want to learn about bringing your brand online with an engaging website? The insights offered by experts Shaina Rozen and Niki Blaker will help you develop your brand and transform your website into a hub of information that’s not only functional but easy to use—and that drives enrollment.

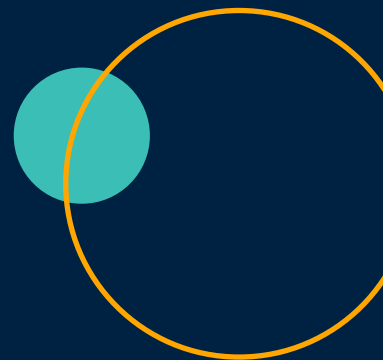
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Part One

Community Marketing





Community Marketing

Even in the digital age, traditional (or offline) marketing remains a powerful tool for charter schools seeking to make a tangible impact on their communities. Leveraging community engagement strategies helps schools create a strong, memorable presence that complements their online efforts. By incorporating methods such as direct mailers, flyers, and signage, schools can engage with prospective families in meaningful ways. This approach not only enhances visibility but also builds lasting connections within the community, driving enrollment and fostering a sense of belonging among new and returning families.

SIGNAGE

Charter schools are often located in nontraditional spaces, which means that banners and yard signs are essential to attract the attention of your community—to let them know that you’re a school and that you’re enrolling. Here are some tips for effective signage:

- Be clear. Putting your school’s name on a sign isn’t enough—people might look at it and wonder, “Is it a school, or is it a church, or is it a youth center?” Consider adding what grades you serve, and that you’re a free public charter school.
- Keep it simple! Consider using a simplified version of your logo along with the grades you serve or your specialty (STEM, Spanish immersion, etc.) Make it clear, use popping accent colors, and use fewer words. Don’t worry about your website or phone number—you want the name of your school to be prominent so people will google you!
- Think of other questions families might be asking, like: Where’s the entrance? Where’s the parking? Where’s the front desk? Where can I find somebody to talk to? All these things are important as far as getting more kids into seats at your school. This is why directional signs are important. If you have a tough parking situation and no one knows what direction to go, a prospective family might think, “Well, I don’t want to have to deal with this at drop off and pick up every day.”

EXPERT TIP

Make sure you have an SVG logo! SVG is a fancy term for an image that you could make as big or small as possible, and it looks clear and crisp regardless if you’re on a website or on signage.



YARD SIGNS

One of the simplest yet most effective ways to spread the word about your school is through yard signs. Whether they boast a proud “Bulldog Parent” or celebrate special milestones like “Congrats, Grad!” or “Future Kindergartner,” yard signs can generate excitement and build community pride. When parents place signs in their yards, they’re sharing their support for your school with the neighborhood—and no one promotes their school if they’re not happy with it!

UNIFORMS AND SCHOOL MERCHANDISE

Uniforms and school merchandise worn by students, teachers, and even families can serve as moving advertisements for your school. Consider providing branded clothing that families can be worn to events and in the community.

EXPERT TIP

Get creative with seasonal designs or create signs that highlight specific school values or achievements. Encourage families to display them during back-to-school season, graduation, or school events.

DIRECT MAILERS AND FLYERS

Make sure your flyers match your digital marketing and have a simple design that includes your school name, purpose, grades, address, phone number, website, and the dates and times of your regular open houses. Here's what to consider as you design them:

- Think like your prospective parents and get an idea of where they hang out. Can you hang a flyer in the local coffee shop or library to catch their attention? Would the local dentist be willing to put one of your newsletters in their reception area? It can also be a good idea to drop those flyers off at churches, community centers, health clinics, and grocery stores.
- When people move, the U.S. Postal Service sends a packet of coupons and advertisements—the Welcome Packet. Getting your charter school in the local Welcome Packet can be a great way to get in front of families who are new to your town.
- If your area has a high proportion of rental properties or a lot of turnover, direct mailers or flyers sent out in advance of an open house or informational meeting can be another great awareness tactic.
- If your area includes large populations of non-English speakers, remember to provide information in your audience's native language.



EXPERT TIP

If you print only one piece of promotional material, make it a postcard. Include quick facts about enrollment, who you are, where you are, and that you're a free public charter school. Include your website and contact information, and design it with bright, eye-catching brand colors. Send it in the mail, hand it out at events, or give it to someone who pops into your office with questions about enrollment.

MALL ADS

Shopping malls, whether indoor or outdoor, are another high-traffic venue that can amplify your school's visibility. Malls offer various advertising options, from banners and signage to mall directories and floor stickers.

If there's a movie theater on-site, you can pair your mall ad with a cinema campaign to further boost engagement. In some cases, the mall might even let you host a table to interact directly with shoppers.

TRANSIT CAMPAIGNS

If your community relies on public transit, using bus shelters, bench, or subway ads can be an affordable and effective method to raise awareness about your school. Ads placed near major transit lines or in areas where families frequent are likely to grab the attention of potential parents and students.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MALL AND TRANSIT ADVERTISING

When planning your mall advertising strategy, consider including your website and QR code in your ads to facilitate easy access to more information about your school. It's crucial to choose a mall location that aligns with your target audience's shopping habits. Aim to place your ads near stores or areas that attract families and children, such as toy stores, family-friendly restaurants, or play areas.

This strategic placement ensures maximum visibility to potential students and parents, increasing the effectiveness of your campaign.

EXPERT TIP

Hosting back-to-school campaigns or event-specific promotions around key shopping dates like holidays or weekends.

EXPERT TIP

Transit ads have a long-lasting impact. They are cost-effective, which often allows for longer campaigns and wider coverage across multiple locations.





Part Two

Impactful Events



Plan, Attend, and Sponsor Impactful Events

In-person events can be a great opportunity for the community and your potential students and families to understand your school and really picture themselves as part of your community.

Events are one of the last steps a student or family will take before deciding whether to attend your school. Events are—by far—the most impactful marketing you can do. They create memories and leave long-lasting impressions in ways that no email or social media post ever could.

This is especially true for incoming grades like Kindergarten, sixth, and ninth grades. The transition to a new school is a significant life event, and families want to experience the atmosphere, meet your staff and teachers, and immerse themselves in your educational environment. Feeling like they are a part of your school community will strengthen their commitment to your school, leading to more steady enrollment over time.

STRATEGIES FOR HOSTING IMPACTFUL IN-PERSON EVENTS

Make them predictable and get the word out.

Schedule back-to-school night along with other regular open houses where families can explore your school, meet teachers, and interact with staff, which fosters a sense of familiarity and comfort. Make sure you get the word out in your newsletter when school starts so it's on your families' calendars!

Offer school tours and meet-and-greets.

Offer guided tours led by students or teachers. These personal interactions provide insights into daily life at your school and allow for direct Q&A. Involve current students in leading tours or sharing their experiences. This personal touch resonates with both prospective families and current ones.

Themed activities.

Incorporate engaging activities tailored to different age groups, like STEM challenges or interactive games. These activities draw people in, showcase your innovative programs, and spark their interest.

Tangible takeaways.

Provide informative flyers, swag, or other tangible items that families can take home. These serve as reminders of the event and encourage further engagement.

Staying in touch.

Establish methods for getting contact information from each member of enrolled families so they can receive announcement emails and newsletters. This can include simple sign-up sheets or digital forms.

Expert Tips for Events

- Support your events with email and digital campaigns to spread awareness.
- Open up plays, workshops, and concerts to prospective parents—this is a great reason to send out an email to your list!
- Pick great community venues with easy parking.
- Gather volunteer parents to talk to prospective parents.
- Test weekends and evenings.
- Post your event on your website.
- Publish your event on social media.
- Offer guided tours led by students or teachers.
- Incorporate engaging activities tailored to different age groups, like STEM challenges or interactive games.
- Provide informative flyers, swag, or other tangible items that families can take home.
- Have methods in place to get contact information from each member of enrolled families so they can receive announcement emails and newsletters. This can include simple sign-up sheets or digital forms.





ATTEND & SPONSOR COMMUNITY EVENTS

Beyond school-hosted events, getting involved in local community happenings is a key tactic for building awareness. Many charter schools successfully boost engagement by tabling, flyering, or sponsoring booths at places like farmers' markets, fairs, parades, cultural festivals, rodeos, and even local library story times. Essentially, any event where families gather is an opportunity to connect and promote your school.

EXPERT TIP

Focus on events that align with your school's values or mission. For example, a STEM-focused school might find science fairs or technology festivals particularly beneficial.

MOVIE THEATRE CAMPAIGNS

Movie theaters can be an excellent venue for family-friendly marketing. By placing ads during G and PG-rated films, you ensure that your message is reaching the right audience—families and kids. Additionally, many theaters allow schools to set up tables in the lobby, where you can hand out flyers and swag to moviegoers.

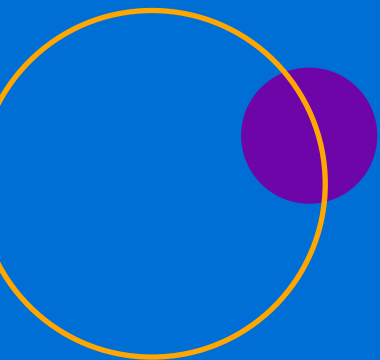
EXPERT TIP

Some theater ad programs even include digital retargeting, so families who see your ad in the theater will also see it online afterward, maximizing your outreach.



Conclusion

Building a Lasting Impact



Building a Lasting Impact

Crafting your school's brand is an ongoing journey—one that requires reflection on your school's mission, values, and community. By honing your brand identity and establishing a consistent voice, you can build a foundation for growth and success for your school and the community you serve.

Leveraging in-person events, promotional marketing materials, and a clear, unified brand identity will create lasting impressions that drive enrollment and foster a strong, supportive school community.



FREE DOWNLOAD

Reach Your Goals Through Digital Marketing

Want to know how to bring your marketing efforts online? This workbook will empower you to build and follow through on a simple digital marketing strategy for your school. You can use these pages to refine your messaging, set strategic marketing goals, make a social media plan, and more.

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