

It's What's Inside That Counts: Everyone's Role in Advancing Your School's Mission

Mike Connor, President, Connor Associates Strategic Services © 2016 UPDATE

The Case for the Internal Partnership Paradigm

Stratospheric tuition. Escalating costs. Shifting demography. Expanding choice. The need to assure families of the value of an independent school education and its benefits and outcomes is essential if your school wants to remain a relevant and compelling option in your market.

Effective educational marketers recognize the power of partnerships among key internal stakeholders, including the trustees, head of school, financial and operational officers, divisional and departmental heads, educators, the admission, marketing, communications, development functions, and your alumni outcomes (literally your walking value proposition!)

While many may equate marketing with external promotion, public relations, or advertising, making the most of these external initiatives begins with a cohesive and collaborative *internal marketing* effort. Up to 80% of all new enrollments will come to you from positive word of mouth in addition to other sources. That begins *inside the school*.

By listening and looking for internal opportunities to collaborate, by listening carefully to those you seek to serve externally, and by making sure all stakeholders understand their interdependence, a school can maximize marketing and advance its mission.

Marketing Matters

Competition across all forms of education is on the rise — from home-schools, public magnet and charter schools, and parochial schools. The most recent emerging hybrids and new educational approaches are described in *The 2015 SSATB Report: Sizing Up the Competition*, a seminal and sobering look at the enrollment challenges independent schools face. Expect these schools to draw heavily on our traditional enrollment: *Academically Rigorous Schools; Deeper Learning Schools; Online Education; Personalized Learning Schools*, and many others.

It's also a great incentive and rallying cry for independent schools to refocus on our value, and welcome improvements that will increase our resilience and sustainability.

Parents are understandably value-conscious and deserve hard evidence that *proves* your school is *worth what it costs*. Donors demand similar information to justify their investment. The message is loud and clear—to thrive in this environment you must differentiate your school from the ever-increasing array of alternatives and demonstrate your value. Confidential market research is essential to demonstrating value.

This effort — the hard work that goes into differentiating your school and demonstrating why its outcomes justify the considerable investment — should be a part of everyone's job in an independent school. Although only a few employees in your school may actually have the word “marketing, admission, retention, or communication” in their titles or job descriptions, stakeholders across the organization play critical roles in conveying a credible, positive, unified message that is compelling to those you serve, and those you seek to serve.

The Critical Role of Collaboration

Good marketing begins inside an organization and relies on deliberate, systematic, collaborative action. *Learning research tells us that connections across the curriculum and collaborative efforts among students and teachers increase learning.* Ironically, even today, many school leaders need encouragement to apply this approach to the way they manage their schools, and how they go about recruiting and retaining teachers, families, or raising philanthropy.

One of the biggest traditional gaps has been between enrollment management and development officers, who have seen their roles as separate. Teachers often don't understand the important part they play in enrollment, retention and in reinforcing to donors the value of their philanthropic investment in the school. Business officers, who oversee many of the customer service aspects of the school, often aren't consulted by development and admission officers, or see this role as secondary to managing finances.

We seem to live in different tribes and don't always focus on what unites us: *the achievement and continual advancement of the mission.* When each office considers its impact on advancing the mission rather than working to its own separate objective, everyone wins.

As an educator prior to becoming a consultant to schools, I still have the blood of a former teacher, coach, dorm parent, director of studies, admission director, communications director, development director, and director of advancement coursing through my body and brain. It's enabled me to develop a nearly 360 degree perspective. And if I've learned anything, it is that success in one's *own* job depends on others being successful in *theirs*. *The success of our mission depends on recognizing that we're all interdependent.* But how do you get everyone to buy into such shared responsibility?

Everyone in the school must own advancing the mission. Essentially, everyone markets, everyone recruits, everyone fundraises, and everyone at the school is a teacher. Why? Because all whom we seek to serve — from prospective families, to our alums, to our wider communities — experience us as a whole. Great marketing, *like effective learning*, occurs when there is a structure and an expectation for collaboration and cross-fertilization.

As consumers become savvier and expect great customer service from all businesses, they will also expect evidence of service and educational outcomes. *Quality, value, and measurable outcomes are expected.* A decade ago, during an *External Image Audit* we conducted, a family who left an independent school commented, “At these prices, you expect something *extraordinary.*” And with tuition and fees at today’s levels, they have every right to *expect the extraordinary!*

Busting the “Silos”: Three Steps to Building Strong Internal Collaboration

So how can we get everyone working together across the organization to advance the mission? Taking these three steps makes it much easier to do so: 1) Look and listen internally: Assess your school’s internal congruence and marketing opportunities; 2) Listen externally: conduct the marketing research necessary to ensure your mission’s viability; and 3) Combine these two perspectives to find new ways to innovate in your market, and explore ways for key internal stakeholders to support one another to present a strong and unified front.

Step 1. Assess internal marketing and collaboration.

- A. Is there congruence among major administrators and faculty leaders about the school’s identity, mission and direction?
- B. Do the school’s trustees, head and divisional directors, teachers, and the admission, development, communications, alumni relations, and business office functions work in concert to maximize enrollment, reenrollment, and marketing? Is there an intentional effort to bring all of the school’s human resources to bear on enrollment management and fundraising goals, and to continually improve the curriculum? (Evidence of great educators and great learning is what attracts and keeps families).
- C. We know that our prospective “customers” need to understand who we are, why we matter, what we stand for, and where we are headed. Do we make sure that same information is on the lips and in the hearts of our internal audiences? Particularly faculty? Staff? Parent leaders? Alumni leaders? Students?

Cohesive internal marketing and a coherent internal image are equally as important as external promotion. The foundation this provides ensures the success of external marketing initiatives. The credibility of a viewbook, Website, public relations, and social media campaigns (or any other external promotional tools) depends on whether *what it describes is what is actually experienced.*

Word of mouth, a school's most powerful promotional tool, originates internally and moves outward. An internal environment of collaboration, coordination and collegiality is critical to enrollment, retention, public relations, and philanthropic goals.

Step 2. Conduct external marketing research.

Get a clear and objective sense of your school's identity and value from the perspective of those whom you seek to serve. An Internal Image Audit and Marketing Assessment reveals who *you* think you are and whom *you* think you serve; an External Image Audit reveals who *they* think you are and whom *they* think you serve. How similar or different are the two perspectives?

Ensuring congruence of mission and image internally and externally is the goal of market research. If conducted by neutral third party, this research will raise awareness and aid recruitment, retention and philanthropic goals. Why? Because an objective and confidential perspective of your school from the viewpoint of constituents, referrers, donors and the external community will let them know you are always seeking to improve what you deliver. It raises the esteem of your school because it transmits that you are relentlessly self-assessing.

The messages and themes generated by an External Image Audit and an Alumni Survey to demonstrate return on investment and outcomes provide data to recalibrate programs and may include testimonials for letters, viewbooks, magazines or newsletters, social media, Website, email campaigns, open houses, and other events. The data form the foundation for a communication and marketing plan, admission and development office organization, new content, and feedback on programs and services. Quantitative research, not simply internal surveys, is necessary. Neutral, third-party, confidential qualitative research does a better job of revealing candid factors that influence decisions to enroll, reenroll, and donate.

There are literally dozens of constituent groups and segments that you should systematically monitor. Who you listen to will depend on your needs and goals. Among the most fundamental groups are the larger community of referrers and potential referrers, those in your admission process, current parents, young alums, and significant major donors and new donors.

Because the population of a school moves upward and out of the institution, periodic and systematic research is advised. Change research tells us it often takes 3-4 years of continual effort to move the needle of perception. In addition, perceptions of quality are subjective and constantly shifting. *Stay ahead of what people are saying behind your back* (a good definition of brand!)

Step 3. Maximize everyone's role in marketing and promoting the school through collaborative relationships and mutual support.

When your internal team is aligned with the mission and vision, and when you have external *evidence* of the viability of your mission, return on investment, and validation for how you deliver it, ensure that everyone in the school is moving the mission forward. Everyone has a role to play.

A. The Role of the Board of Trustees

It's the Trustees, and the Trustees alone, who are ultimately responsible for securing your children's children's school. The Head is their only employee. The buck for a school's success or demise rests with its Board.

The market-savvy board must not only secure the sustainability of the school through its fiduciary responsibilities; its ambassadorial role has now become *critical*. Trustees should be cultivated not only for their financial resources but the reach of their networks and respect in the community. They should manage their collective contacts to encourage new leads and potential families. They should help build partnerships with businesses and non-profits to raise visibility, relevance, public purpose, and create innovative programs to identify your students as an asset to the greater community.

A good starting point is to look at the Board's collective network. Ask each board member and potential trustee, (as well as current parents):

1. On what **other boards** do you serve?
2. To which **professional associations or non-profit service organizations** do you belong?
3. In what **youth interest or sports organizations** are you involved?
4. With whom do you have relationships in the **media**?
5. With whom do you have relationships in **government**?
6. With whom do you have relationships or affiliations within **schools or local colleges**?
7. Please list your memberships in **organizations and clubs** in the area.
8. Is there anyone in your network (individual or organization) whom the School should encourage as a **referrer of students**?
9. Is there anyone in your network (individual or organization) who should be approached as a **potential supporter or funder**?
10. In what way might you be most effectively engaged as an **ambassador** for the School?

Of course, other leaders in the school should do this too. But the Board must set the pace by leveraging their collective network, encouraging objective market research, expecting positive outcomes for graduates, looking for innovative strategic partnerships that will raise relevance and visibility as a community asset, and helping the school they hold in trust stay on top of fast-moving trends.

Back in the old days, a trustee was only expected to show up with a handsome check when summoned by the Head of School. While that's still expected, a *singular* focus on "deep pockets" is long gone.

B. The Role of Head of School, Divisional, and Department Heads

Interdepartmental and interdivisional cooperation and communication are mandatory if marketing efforts are to pay off. The single biggest influence on this is the Head of School. His or her personality, approach to leadership, values and attitudes about relationships, sense of professionalism, collaboration, and style of decision-making set the tone.

- **Model Marketing.** If a head of school constantly asks, “*How can we make this better? How can we be more responsive? How can we anticipate challenges? How can we reinforce all the positive things we do?*” he or she is modeling marketing, and others will know it’s a priority. Keeping these questions at the forefront of every administrative and faculty meeting helps everyone focus on keeping the mission viable and the school responsive to changing needs and shifting perceptions of quality.
- **Articulate the vision at every opportunity.** There are six statements every leader needs to be able to address repeatedly in a variety of ways until they are embedded in the culture: “*Who we are, who we are not, what we stand for, what we will not stand for, why we matter, and where we’re headed.*” The answers need to be simple enough for everyone to embrace, and, like the mission statement, should serve as a pivot point for all decisions. These statements reflect the heart of your identity, define your value, and give the mission momentum. All administrators and faculty should express and own these statements.
- **Define — internally and externally – the “mission appropriate” student.** This helps families self-select your school and supports the work of admission. The more publicly bold you are in taking stands and charting where you are headed, the more likely you will attract families who will resonate with that boldness and want to go there with you.
- **Expect cooperation** among all departments that interface with students and their families, including admission, business, academics, counseling, residential life, athletics and development. Do not overlook the importance of administrative and support staff in marketing because they are often the first contact for prospective and current families, donors and referrers. They must be kept informed.
- **Get a grip on Reality! Endorse and fund market and image research and expect the data to be interpreted into a strategy!** Base your programs, services, and publications on the research. Recognize that your promotional tools should not be a mirror of administrators’ values; rather, they should reflect what your constituents value about your school, in their own words. And that means listening frequently and objectively, and using that perspective to continually redesign your approach and delight them.

C. The Role of the Enrollment Management Professional

To a prospective family, the admission office *is* the school. To create a strong positive impression, assist your colleagues in other offices, and help the faculty succeed:

- **Manage expectations. Be specific about what you can and can’t do.** Make sure a prospective family’s subjective expectations are aligned with what your program delivers — *and what you expect of them*. A clear and helpful discussion about expectations builds confidence in the institution.

Defining, managing and fulfilling expectations is the best way to develop a positive lifelong relationship with your school. With the input of faculty and other administrative offices, describe as specifically as possible:

1. *Profile of a successful student/family.* They are all different, but what traits do they have in common that can help ensure a successful experience at your school?
2. *Profile of a student/family who would be at risk.*
3. *Learning expectations by grade or division.*
4. *The skills, attitudes and values a graduate is expected to attain as a result of his or her experience at your school. (Profile of a graduate).*
5. *Parental partnership and behavior expectations.*

The more specifically you describe expectations, the more easily families will be able to determine whether your school is appropriate for them. In your literature, in the interview, in all communications—confidently define and manage expectations.

- **Build a culture of philanthropy during the admission process.** Admission directors can do much to increase the awareness of the critical importance of philanthropy, but they are often reluctant to do so because they may be concerned that mentioning the annual fund or capital campaign during the admission process will be a “deal killer.” But the damage done from perceptions of a “bait and switch” from families not so informed can be far greater.

Beginning with your promotional literature and continuing with admission events, as well as in the interview, tour, and school visit, educate each prospective family about the school's structure of finance and governance, the importance of annual fund participation and opportunities for volunteerism. Explain specifically how philanthropy supports the mission of your school and, most importantly, the *benefits it creates for each student*. New families benefit from the philanthropy of those who came before.

- **Treat mission-appropriate inquiries and your referrers as if they were major donors.** In terms of tuition income, philanthropy, and referrals of new students, the value of the right inquiry over a lifetime relationship with your school is enormous. Admission Directors can learn much from development professionals about the art of “moves management”—how to move someone from being a disinterested outsider to an evangelist for the school.

In enrollment management, there are at least 16 formal contact points between the admission officer and a prospective family and student from the time he or she inquires until they become an “attending” student. Do you have a communication plan for each step for your appropriate inquiries? How do you move them through the funnel? Once they enroll, have you developed a strong retention plan with other school administrators, faculty members, and the development officer?

Personalized communication and *value-related* information are more important than ever to prospective families. These trends have put an incredible burden on both admission offices and school administrators, who not only must educate, *but prove that the education will produce the desired outcomes to justify the investment.* Therefore, tracking alumni/ae outcomes is critical. It is in the school's long term interest to make sure that the admission office and alumni relations work hand in glove.

- **Involve the entire institution in the recruitment of students.** *The impression gleaned from the first visit is the most influential factor affecting enrollment.* The visit needs to be planned to ensure a proper match between the student host and the prospective student, as well as to ensure that a student and family's interests and concerns are addressed by the appropriate people *before they get to campus* and while they are on campus. Adults on campus, current parents, alumni, students and others who follow-up with prospective families should be highly organized, trained and responsive. Events designed to link current and new students and family-to-family pairing programs need similar care and continuing evaluation.
- **Stay connected with the business office and other school administrators to ensure a smooth transition for new families into the school.** Ensure that the personal, welcoming experience you create in the admission process is reflected in the follow-up processes of the business office and in the handoff to the head and division directors.

The admission process is focused on incoming families and is based on nurturing a relationship into commitment. The moment an individual commits and signs the enrollment contract and the handoff to the business office occurs, the tone of the conversation can sometimes quickly do a damaging "180." Sometimes the business and registrars' offices can become assertive to ensure compliance with the contract, receipt of permission forms and other registration information.

If the business office and other divisional school offices work together with admission to ensure a smooth transition into the school, they will reinforce and enhance your newest constituents' trust that was engendered in the admission process. It is equally important, especially in a K-12 school, to make sure there is compelling evidence to keep families moving upward through the school from one division to the next. This becomes the responsibility of teachers and divisional directors

Ultimately the success of retention rests with the Head of School. Lower School faculty and staff should be expected to "sell up" to the next grade or division; Upper School faculty and staff should "reach down and scoop up" Lower School families. Keep each other informed. Admission needs to be focused on "incoming."

Remember that re-enrollment begins as soon as the new enrollment contract is signed. It's all about reinforcement and validation of value. *Pay as much attention to the marriage as you do the wedding.*

D. The Role of the Development Professional

Among the chief roles of the development office is to educate the adults in the school's extended community. Each fundraising event and communication is an opportunity to educate everyone about the school's value – *what you do and why it matters. Purpose is key.*

- **Cultivate and deploy all of your school's human resources for fundraising.** Everyone is a potential nurturer of donors and a communicator of the school's mission and vision. The most successful fundraisers know this and tap into all the school's stakeholders.
- **Work with your CFO to get ownership of the long-term financial health of the school.** Many development officers measure their success by reaching the financial and participation goals of the annual fund. But it is more strategic to consider at least a five-year plan for operations, the physical plant, the endowment, and capital needs. What net assets will be created over the next five years?
- **Help donors understand their role in increasing the school's net worth and advancing its mission.** A school's assets include its reputation, curriculum, human resources, as well as its financial assets. If donors insist on restrictions, help move them to the least restrictive gift. Allow the Board to do its job of determining how philanthropy can be invested for higher yields that will stretch the value of each donation.
- **Confer with administrators and teachers as you organize the fundraising process.** Discuss, recommend and facilitate appropriate cultivation and stewardship activities.
- **Encourage all administrators to meet at least annually to discuss shared messages and key themes** for the coming year's events and publications and to set both a communication plan and the head of school's schedule for outreach and cultivation.
- **Arrange joint travel plans with the admission office for receptions and alumni events.** Prospective families want to see the outcomes of your school's programs, so encourage cross-fertilization of potential, current and past families and alumni at your events.
- **Routinely meet with the admission office, business office, and academic leaders to discuss marketing.** Help set the school's research agenda, encouraging donor support for research that will keep your institution on the cutting edge. Based on the research, participate in establishing the school's key marketing messages, which often become the messages you use in development.
- **Identify and encourage positive alumni/ae and past parents to assist admission.** Make it easy for families in the admission and reenrollment process to communicate with alums and past parents. Their testimony about how the school or a particular teacher made a difference in their lives – their first-hand evidence of the benefits and value of the educational experience your school provided – can be the most compelling and credible rationale for enrollment and donor decisions.

- **Develop relationships with key faculty** members to ensure they understand how your role in the school can positively impact their effectiveness as teachers. Make sure the faculty — especially the faculty — understand the goals and rationale for fundraising.

E. The Role of Communications

Those who are responsible for communication (and that includes everyone) should concentrate their messages on the four key elements of an educational value proposition. These give you the structure that will support nearly all internal and external messages about the school. Remember: ***When value is not understood, price decides!***

You demonstrate value when you can ***prove*** you are:

1. Making a difference in those whose lives you touch (**ROI**)
2. Pushing the envelope of good practice (**Innovative and transformative teaching and learning**)
3. Providing unique solutions to an individual's needs (**Customer intimacy, connection, convenience**)
4. Stewarding resources and running an efficient organization (**Cost-conscious and stewardship**)

F. The Role of Faculty and Staff

Academic quality, the top reason families say they choose and stay in a school, is judged by evidence of inspiring teachers, inspired teaching, and excited, fearless learners. Good school marketing recognizes the critical role that teachers play in admission and development. Teachers need to know how influential they can be with prospective families and donors.

Why is their involvement in marketing critical? Because without faculty support, most external promotional initiatives will fail. Most of our families expect heads, development directors, and admission directors to speak positively about the school. But when a teacher talks about how good the school is, *that matters*. Teachers, staff, and delighted parents and students hold all the credibility cards.

Tips for administrators to encourage faculty support:

- **Educate faculty to the fact that you can be true to your mission while also listening and responding to those you seek to serve – your market.** Explain that you agree that marketing objectives must support the mission and also be in line with the school's values.

Because marketing is essentially about connecting, building, and deepening relationships and shared values, help your faculty understand your goals and convince them of the role they play in securing the school's reputation.

- **See the world through their “lens.”** Spend time with faculty at school events. Ask what motivates them. Let them know you want to tell the world about what they do and why it matters. Ask how you can best communicate their goals for their students and what they want students to gain from having known them. What's the most important life-long lesson a student will learn from that teacher?
- **Encourage appropriate teachers to offer their perspective** on educational, ethical, and character issues. Offer these as interviews or as opinion-editorial pieces to social media, the journals, newspapers, and radio talk shows. Taking a stand on issues advances the public debate about education as it reinforces your core values. A school's recognized leadership in education validates enrollment, re-enrollment, and donor support. What can you do to be recognized as the leader locally? Regionally?
- **Share marketing research and Image Audit projects** with faculty prior to conducting the research. Then share the results, what the results mean to the school, and next steps. Help ensure faculty buy-in by including them from the beginning.

Tips for faculty to support administrators:

Admission directors are trying to fill the school with students who will benefit from the education that the faculty deliver. Development directors are trying to increase the school's financial assets — assets that will impact programs, keep tuition increases at a minimum, and attract and retain effective teachers and mission-appropriate students. Faculty, development and admission staff are natural partners.

Teachers can contribute to advancing the mission when they:

- **Provide school leaders with information and opportunities** to keep the school at the forefront of teaching and learning research.
- **Understand that retention of students is a shared responsibility.**
- **Communicate with parents beyond the formal communications.**
- **Welcome prospective families** into the classroom. Share what the class is doing and what students are learning.
- **Communicate public relations opportunities** to the appropriate people.
- **Alert the division director and the head** when they suspect a child is unhappy or possibly applying out to other schools.

G. The Role of Finance and Operations Personnel

For far too long, business officers in schools have been an overlooked and underappreciated marketing resource. Is the business manager or CFO only responsible for collecting receivables?

Years ago, the stereotypical business manager was an accountant who wore a green eyeshade and made journal entries. Today, he or she is evaluated on a wide range of responsibilities and securing the position often requires an MBA. In fact, the business office has an impact on customer service that can positively impact or derail the success of admission and development. Maintenance and grounds, housekeeping, food services, parking, signage, security, safety, and event management are customer service functions. Even behind the scenes, business managers and their staff play a major role with both prospective and current families, donors, and other constituents.

Business officers, COOs, or CFOs can advance the mission when they:

- **Understand the culture of schools and your school's culture.** Schools don't move as fast as the corporate world. More consensus, more collaboration, and more consultation with others is expected.
- **Equate the budget with the quantification of the mission statement and explain it to others that way.** Demonstrate how the budget fulfills the school's mission.
- **Help everyone achieve a sense of responsibility for the long-term financial health of the school.** Be a consultant to other offices to help them become more entrepreneurial. Provide them with the big picture and a long-range point of view. Meet with your budget centers proactively and provide them with monthly reports on their expenditures and expected revenue.
- **Work with the admission office to make the school as affordable as possible.** Help admission directors and their staff communicate affordability options. Help qualify families for financial aid to ensure they can cover their contribution to the tuition.
- **Be a supportive leader, coach and problem solver.** Pay attention and ask questions — not to interfere — but because you are excited about what others in the school are doing to advance the mission. Get involved in the school community by visiting classes and attending athletic events and performances. Change the stereotypical image of the CFO as the one who says “no” to the one who works with others to find alternative ways to say “yes.”

Lead by example by not allowing anyone to fall back on phrases such as, “It's not my job,” “That's not the way we do it here,” or “We've never done it that way before.” Encourage employees to stay with a constituent call until the problem has been solved rather than bouncing around the caller to other offices.

- **Make sure there is a communication plan in place to ensure that the business office is connected.** Work with the admission and development staff to help plan a master

calendar that itemizes production schedules, recruitment and fundraising events, enrollment and reenrollment events and deadlines, and other important functions. Use electronic calendars and shared databases when possible.

- **Promote marketing research** – institutional listening – as an investment in future revenue rather than an expense – that ensures the continuing viability of the school's mission and commitment to quality.

Conclusion: Pulling it all together

To make everyone's role in advancing the mission more than an aspiration, we need to think laterally rather than hierarchically. We need to encourage discussion about our various office's needs, expectations, and priorities. We need to listen to the pressures facing our colleagues. We need to be willing to pick up the balls others drop. We need to let our colleagues know that our objective is to help them succeed.

Collaboration requires institutional as well as personal self-confidence. We have to intentionally look for ways to make connections with our colleagues that will support and reinforce their efforts toward our common goal—the advancement of the mission.

Your school's "brand" doesn't live in a logo. It doesn't live in your viewbook or on your website. They help communicate your brand, but they are limited tools. Your school's brand, identity, and value live in the minds of those you seek to serve. Great word of mouth and pride of association, the best promotional tools ever, originate inside the school and move outward. They are influenced by the quality of relationships created by teachers, building and grounds personnel, division directors, administrators, trustees, parents, alums, and everyone in your extended community.

Ultimately, it's all about relationships. Families enroll and reenroll, alums donate, and foundations support us largely to the extent that we've formed strong personal bonds with them. A campaign or marketing program that conveys a desirable image to the public is fine, but it is nothing compared to how people *experience* your school. It's what's *inside* that counts.

Assess your potential for internal collaboration. Conduct marketing research to ensure alignment between what you intend and what your constituents experience, as well as to ensure the continuing viability of your mission. Using objective data, reinforce and recalibrate as needed to achieve or maintain a competitive, leading edge.

Most important, break down those internal silos and fiefdoms. Connect the marketing neurons. Ensure that everyone in the school understands his or her important role in advancing the mission. Our constituents – past, present, and future – expect nothing less than *extraordinary!*

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MICHAEL CONNOR, PRESIDENT



Mike Connor is the President of California-based CONNOR ASSOCIATES STRATEGIC SERVICES, LLC and is co-author of NAIS' book, *Marketing Independent Schools in the 21st Century*. He has presented keynotes and workshops nearly every year over the past two decades at national and international conferences. Connor Associates has worked with nearly 450 independent and private schools in the United States and internationally, in the areas of predictive psychodemographic modeling and forecasting for enrollment, competitive analysis, confidential external perceptual (image) audits, communicating value through brand and website development and messaging, and institutional strategic planning.

As a former practitioner of teaching, enrollment management, development, communications, and advancement, Connor is a vocal proponent for advancing a school's mission by getting the entire school community involved in raising enrollment, retention, and philanthropy. With an M.A. in Political Behaviour from the University of Essex, England, he has spent nearly 30 years in public, charter, and independent K-12 schools and colleges.

In addition to NAIS, ERB, and AISAP, his sessions and workshops have been featured at 40 conferences to date, including the European Council of International Schools (**ECIS**), East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (**EARCOS**), The Association of Boarding Schools (**TABS**), Secondary School Admission Test Board (**SSATB**), and at conferences and meetings of various international, state and regional Associations of Independent Schools, including those in South Africa, the Pacific Northwest, Central States, California, New England, Pennsylvania, Delaware Valley, Ohio, Virginia, Florida, Colorado, Southwest, Maryland, and St. Louis.

His articles on strategic planning, integrated marketing, and international programs appeared in *CASE Currents* and *Independent School* magazine. His work establishing the first international exchange program between private boarding schools in China and the United States earned the attention of the *Washington Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Education Week*.