



## COVID-19: Recruitment and Retention

A discussion of how to navigate Recruitment and Retention during COVID-19  
For additional support, reach out to [amya@prizmah.org](mailto:amya@prizmah.org)

### Welcome and Introductions Field Work Update – Debra

#### Amy- Introduction

- This is our final webinar in this series
- We recognize that each of these topics could be their own workshop that could be a full day or even week course.
- Right now, today, and in this point in time, we need to laser focus on what our parents and communities need right now and how you can use these tools to connect your community.

### Retention

#### Planning

›Mapping out the next 12 months

›Survey parents:

- this is your opportunity to gather data from them about what they need right now. Review and consider seriously their feedback and pivot as necessary and anticipate, as much as you can, their needs. This is high-touch and top shelf customer service.

›Customer Service

›Touchpoints

- Different divisions have different needs
- Summer
  - Typically we use the summer to plan for the upcoming year, finalize events, communication, content, marketing campaigns, etc. We need to pivot
  - We must create content that keeps the connection strong from our parents to our

school community.

- With families at home, they be looking for content, things to do with their kids of all ages
- Opportunities to bring your families together, care packages, teacher story times
- Partnerships with camps?
- Science camps, art camps – we need to get creative
- Teacher office Hours

## Communication

Communication – Aligned, clear, proactive and strategic

- A collaborative relationship across the school is critical - staying in sync and flexing as you need to.
- Continue to keep the following:
- Overall positive marketing and communication – Keep the school's visible
- Communications planning needs to be adjusted from what you might have planned to do this spring.
- Ensure that your communication today continues to reflect your school's mission, values, and philosophy.

Empathy/Kindness in Approach

- We are all feeling it, and we are all feeling this differently
- Compassion and kindness a key part to this equation
- Personalize (and humanize) your communication as much as you can – dropping video messages and recording for your families

Consistent Messaging

- The goal of effective communication is to eliminate misunderstand.
- This means we have to adapt and flex to our community's needs.
- Messaging is quality work – Be consistent and transparent

\*Example

- I received a communication from a school yesterday that sent the most informative and thoughtful email to families. Addressing a lot of big questions that families are having. It clearly articulated the plans they currently have in place or are working on

Sample Areas you could consider covering in a letter to your families – make sure you think through what your families need to hear and address them head on in a clear and transparent way.

- Year-End Ceremonies
- Tuition and Financial Aid
- Early Childhood
- Enrollment Deadlines
- Development Campaigns and what giving looks like

Retention: Talking Points

- Identify the key messages and anticipated needs for each of these groups.

- Parents
- New Parents (newly enrolled families)
- Prospective Parents
- Donors
- Community
  - How are you sharing your school's success in the community?
  - Partnerships
  - Local newspapers? News stories? Highlights of student success or activity that is impacting the community in a positive way? There is a need to share the good stories
- Be authentic. Informative. Proactive with your communication.
- If you don't know- It is ok to say, "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you."
- Amidst this COVID landscape, WOM remains a powerful tool
  - Parents are sharing experiences, stories about how their school is moving through this – this is a fantastic opportunity for schools
  - Creates a positive *buzz* and decreases negative *buzz* about the school.
  - WOM has a broader reach and builds parent trust & loyalty
  - WOM affects purchase behavior
  - 50% of purchase decisions are influenced by WOM
  - 89% of consumers believe customer testimonials
  - Empowers people to share their experiences.
    - WOM is a long-term and continuous endeavor
    - Cost effective
    - Example: Parents seeing what schools are doing and wanting to join the school now. We are hearing from many schools that are seeing a uptick in inquiries for admission.

**Let's hear from you- what are you doing? What has worked? What is not working?**

- Adding new families to current families mailing list so that they feel part of the community
  - need for connection, feeling blessed to be part of the community
- Had evenings of fun for parents- e.g. cooking demo, talk with social worker on supporting teens, art class, etc. while also respecting that people are overzoomed
- town hall meeting- inviting parents to hear from social worker and hospital rep on ramifications of covid on kids
- calling every single family in the school- each admin person calling 20 families
- car parade on campus- did one for yom haatzmaut, and now doing one for all new families- leaving gift bags
- sent a survey to check in about elearning
- we held an applicants and accepted families zoom with our HOS, K-8 principal, 9-12 principal, and our head of Jewish Studies. Introductions of admins and families followed by an open Q & A. It was well received

**Recruitment**

**PLANNING**

**Short Term**

- Admission Calendar
- More touchpoints, consistent and frequent

- Flexible
- Plan for virtual and in-person (modified)
  - \*example, a open house or coffee, you may need to limit the number of people you have, allow for spacing, distancing, and the costs associated with running the same event multiple times....you need to evaluate what is best plan for your school, for time allocation and budget
  - Individual Stewardship Planning for families, target, plan and execute, track progress
  - Communication and Planning

#### Long Term

- Now that people are spending more time online, this is a great time to work on your school's website. Investing time and thought and money in your website is an investment in your school that can impact the short term and the long term. You want to use this time to thoughtfully plan and get your school prepared when schools is on campus again.
- There are many instruments that can evaluate your site, such as [website.grader.com](http://website.grader.com). They give you an overall rating and break down your site's performance, mobile interface, SEO, security, and more. Additionally, enlist select parent ambassadors to look at other schools' websites and identify features and functionality. Give them a list of key things to look for, rate and report back to you.
- This is a great time to review your web analytics, looking at traffic on admission pages, time spent on pages and click-throughs, and compare them to previous months and years. Use these data points coupled with your web research to inform any changes to your site.

## MARKETING TOOL BOX

### Virtual Open Houses and Information Sessions

- If you had a spring open house or an information session planned, don't cancel it! Keep the same date, and simply shift your in-person open house to a virtual open house. You may want to consider a summer open house if school districts offerings are limited in the fall if school is not physically in session.
- Keep the day's structure the same — but shortened.
- Instead of cancelling ads, change them to promote the virtual event. Promote them on your website, social media channels, ads, and other standard mediums
- Involve a diverse group of community members
- Keep it personalized and human by using video and authentic content as much as possible
- Offer additional takeaways, such as guides, videos, or an FAQ document
- Virtual events make it possible to include community members that may not normally be included at an open house or visit day — namely alumni. Invite your school's alumni to host a speaker series for prospective families. This will also be greatly beneficial for families on the fence about the financial investment during this time.

### Parent Coffees

- With your HOS, leader, parent ambassadors, learning, school counselor, community experts, topic driven courses for parents
- These can be more casual

### Open Classes for Non-JDS enrolled students

- Bornblum, Memphis TN

*The biggest advantage is that while many students are lacking instruction or connection from their current schools, our students are not. We anticipate (as has been the case already) for parents to reach out and discuss potential new enrollments. We are using this advantage as recruitment potential. This week we began offering classes to non-enrolled students (30 minutes a day of live instruction with one of our teachers and a bank of resources and videos for additional instruction).*

### **Social Media - Keep it Active**

- Your prospective and current families are craving a sense of community and normalcy, and you can use social media to help provide that.
- Continue your normal posting cadence
- Keep your ads running but update them to promote virtual events.
- Share content about distance learning and how your community is staying connected, engaged and inspired. Being transparent during this time will help with admissions.

### **Conversion Copywriting**

- *“Conversion copywriting is exactly what it sounds like: writing copy that is aimed at converting the reader to take a specific action. All content on a page or in an ad is working together to prompt the reader to do the one thing you want them to do, such as:*
  - *Click a button*
  - *Submit their information*
  - *Share something on social media*
  - *BUY SOMETHING*
- *It’s about understanding what will persuade your audience to take action, and then crafting content that leads them to take that action. It involves lots of research, technical know-how and testing ... but the intense effort is worth it.’ – Emily Cretella, cursive content*
  - *You must know your audience first*
  - *With all storytelling you need a deep understanding of the needs and wants of the families you are trying to attract. (to gather data and deep understanding, conduct VOC research, surveys, interviews, etc)*
- *Writing Copy that converts – (excerpt from cursive content)*
  - *1.You have to know how to HOOK your reader — to draw them immediately into the page.*
  - *2.You have to prove that you UNDERSTAND them — their hesitations, their skepticism, their concerns.*
  - *3.You have to address all of their pain points and make them TRUST you.*
  - *4.You have to convince them that what you are offering will really BENEFIT them.*
  - *5.You have to offer them PROOF.*
  - *6.You have to make it EASY to take the next step.*
- *Adapt this approach to your website landing pages, ads, email campaigns website content*
- *Check out more copyhackers.com – for a tutorial that can be useful for conversion copywriting.*
- *A common thread is that that your copywriting (and entire ad) must demonstrate a deep understanding of your audiences, and they commitment/promises that in some way will make your prospective families and their child’s education better.*

Source: *Emily Cretella, cursive content*

- \*example – Masterclass ads – “Learn from the best in the world.”

## VIRTUAL TOURS

### Virtual Tours

- What should you showcase?
  - Mini-Videos by Division
  - Telling your story and show your schools personality/uniqueness
  - •Parents or Student Docents
  - Refine your messaging
- Think Creatively
- Virtual Tours
- Hiring a company vs. doing it yourself
- What are other schools doing?
- Capture information for people who visited your site – *a pop up with a place to enter your email address*

### What should you showcase?

- Mini-Videos by Division
- Telling your story and show your schools personality/uniqueness
- Parents or Student Docents
- Refine your messaging
- Can you access your campus? Take your phone (many phones have camera settings to do panorama images and/or video capability), or if you have a 360 camera and equipment, and record the tour on your camera or video recorder.
- There are dozens of resources online that can give you tips and tricks for doing it with little to no budget. Not comfortable on camera? Consider hiring a company to take the 360 pictures to make a virtual tour. (Check what is available in your area; many small businesses are still open despite COVID-19.).
- If you don't have access to the school, take time to go through pictures you do have of your classes and activities and build the tour with photos. With this approach, there are programs that you can find online that can help you build a video with photos and adding your voice, or better yet a student's voice can be great way to showcase your school.
- A virtual tour is your opportunity to give prospective students and their families a look inside your school.
- You can provide visuals of your learning spaces accompanied with a story and examples of what learning looks like in your school. - Do you want to narrate, the HOS, a parent or a student docent? Or break it up in different sections by area or academic content.
- It is important to showcase the uniqueness for each division and related stories and messages. Keep in mind, when you design a virtual tour it will be as important as the tour you typically give in person.
- So many of us have kids at home, and hours are shifted as you are caring who are you as a parent, thinking through how you are going to work through that.

## WEBSITE

Review and update your website

1. Adding a page pop on your homepage or within your admissions section that directs prospective families where they should go.
2. Landing Pages or Pop up for virtual events you want families to know about
3. Focus on Financial Aid – be clear and transparent (tuition calculators, Financial Aid Scenarios) put it out there – get your messages in order, how is your school handling requests and questions. These are big questions that parents have, be ready to answer them.
4. Share Testimonials or video clips of your students

## Questions and Ideas from the Chat Box

15:06:18 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : What do you hope to gain from this webinar today? Drop your responses - quick answers - here in the chat.

15:06:34 From lweiss : How is everyone facilitating new families feeling a part of the community when the community is socially distanced?

15:06:41 From jprosen : what does virtual recruitment look like if our buildings are now closed?

15:07:34 From deborahrapoport : How do we recruit and retain preschool families if we are going to be in and out of the buildings? Virtual learning for preschoolers is not the same value as that of older students.

15:07:57 From Sara Kohen : Something that I've been coming up against is, with parents worried about the pandemic forcing us to continue eLearning in the fall, they are reluctant to pay for private school if (1) their kids won't be learning in person anyway and (2) they have to pay for a nanny or babysitter and are concerned about paying tuition. We've been trying to communicate how we're doing eLearning better than the public schools and how we're willing to work with families regarding tuition, but I'd be interested in hearing how other schools are addressing this.

15:07:58 From Batsheva Oberstein : discussions regarding conversations with families who continue to be on the fence given the uncertainty of next year, especially for preschool families.

15:08:16 From Linda Glickstein The Hebrew Academy, NJ : I actually conducted a FaceTime tour with a prospective family this week

15:22:23 From pattybloom : We are calling every family in the school. The admin team divided the list. Each of us is calling about 20 families. Asking "How are you?" "How are things going for your children." "What is going well?" "What adjustments do you suggest for the last 4 weeks of school?"

15:23:10 From ariella.shaffren : patty-that is such a great idea!

15:26:27 From Sara Kohen : We sent out a survey after the first couple of weeks of eLearning to ask for feedback. I also am regularly texting families to check in and see how they're doing.

15:27:05 From sarahschultz : I'm also calling every family as the administrator to check on how they are, what they need, any concerns, etc. This seems to be working well and families are very appreciative.

15:27:07 From deborahrapoport : Our admin team and board have been calling all of our current families. Families are so appreciative.

15:27:50 From Tamara Lawson Schuster : we held an applicants and accepted families zoom with our HOS, K-8 principal, 9-12 principal, and our head of Jewish Studies. Introductions of admins and families followed by an open Q & A. It was well received

15:29:43 From cortney stark cope : Very curious to hear thoughts on the surveys. Have responses been productive?

15:30:17 From Sarah Glass : Lots of activity on social media sharing all the amazing learning happening, the appreciation of families, and some fun things like a virtual spirit day.

15:30:32 From Chani Okonov : Survey responses were VERY helpful and MUCH MORE POSITIVE than expected

15:30:40 From Julie : yes! Survey have been incredibly helpful for us. We have student survey and parent surveys and we have incorporated their feedback

15:32:06 From Chani Okonov : The question of how to answer questions about what's uncertain is important for both retention and recruitment. As was mentioned earlier, many parents are concerned about paying tuition for online school vs. in person school -- how to differentiate?

15:32:25 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : Thanks for sharing those experiences with surveys, @Julie and @Chani.

15:33:41 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : @Chani, is your question about how to communicate that difference or how to address the value proposition question that is being raised?

- 15:33:44 From deborahrapoport : In what ways do we revise our admission calendar?
- 15:34:21 From Chani Okonov : @Debra, the value proposition question
- 15:36:12 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : Crowdsourcing question from @Chani: How are all of you responding to the question of whether paying in-the-building tuition ought to be paid for learning from a distance?
- 15:38:21 From cortney stark cope : Our response is that quality education is expensive, whether we are in the building or not. We still have expenses and educators or support staff who all enhance your child's experience. As always, if tuition is a hardship, we can work with you through tuition assistance to ensure that you can continue to send your child to our program
- 15:38:38 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : Bornblum is doing these open lessons for Math, STEM, and Language Arts.
- 15:39:20 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : Beautiful, @Cortney.
- 15:40:41 From Chani Okonov : Thank you @Cortney!
- 15:40:44 From deborahrapoport : Charging different levels of tuition for in-building versus virtual learning requires that our expenses are similarly adjustable. That would seem impossible if we are paying our faculty and staff an annual salary regardless of context.
- 15:41:35 From ariella.shaffren : ive been doing virtual tours, i took pictures of the entire building, invite the principal from the division and appropriate teachers, i cater the tour for the individual applicant and share screen and go through a powerpoint of pictures that i made
- 15:42:55 From Deborah Kleinman : Is there a concern about security when you show pictures/videos of schools?
- 15:43:05 From lzide : hard to do when campus is closed. What do you recommend?
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- 5:43:34 From amypolacek : Jewish Academy of Orlando Virtual Tour

15:43:37 From amypolacek :  
[https://www.jewishacademyorlando.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=843328&type=d&pREC\\_ID=1904622](https://www.jewishacademyorlando.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=843328&type=d&pREC_ID=1904622)

15:43:59 From sarahschultz : I had pictures of the school from before, so I took those pictures and created a virtual tour based on the route than I normally take families on in person. Then, I am on a zoom call with them, share my screen and "walk" them through the whole process.

15:44:01 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : Fantastic @Amy. Thanks for sharing that. Please drop links of your school's virtual tour in the chat as well.

15:44:01 From Tamara Lawson Schuster : our Jewish community's director of security suggests you don't show the entrance and also do the tour out of order so the layout isn't given away

15:44:20 From cortney stark cope : We don't currently have a virtual tour as I have seen during my college search with my kids. However, we refer them to our video which we think beautifully shows who we are as a school. When you land on any page in our website, you get a Covid message and encouraged to check out our video.  
<https://www.chicagojewishdayschool.org/>

15:46:40 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver : @lzide - Many schools have used photos from their archives to create the virtual tour.

15:47:54 From Rohan : Are there concerns about classroom size and ratio when and if we go back to campus'. Any ideas of how the enrollment can be managed??

15:48:34 From Debra Shaffer Seeman, Prizmah Network Weaver to Traci Stratford(Privately) : how many more slides?

15:49:28 From cortney stark cope : @rohan, yes! We are hearing all kinds of possibilities, including that classes can't be more than 12 kids which would have significant impacts on our educational budget because we would have to add teachers to the team.

15:50:20 From rfelszer : Early Childhood is a challenge....

15:53:50 From lzide : ECC is childcare and we cannot provide that off campus, so parents do not see the value of paying

15:54:23 From rfelszer : Agreed....this is an ongoing challenge since virtual learning

15:56:00 From cortney stark cope : I think we are at an advantage with Jk because we charge significantly less than K and beyond.

15:56:07 From pattybloom : If schools are reducing tuition, are they also reducing the salaries of the pre-school teachers? Hard to keep paying the faculty if we reduce tuition.

15:57:22 From rfelszer : The survey is a great idea to ask those questions....

15:58:46 From pattybloom : Love the survey idea. The challenge with tuition is greater in markets where there are strong public schools.

15:58:53 From Adele Yermack : Thanks all! Great questions and comments. Admission professionals are indeed the best! Debra, Amy, and Traci--great team work.

16:00:08 From ariella.shaffren : Thank you Amy, this was really great!

16:00:09 From cortney stark cope : I do agree with Julie. All schools are in the same boat. if we are forced to be home, I find that parents need their kids to have something vs nothing.

16:01:22 From pattybloom : Would be nice to meet over the summer for planning. Maybe put us in breakout groups to brainstorm ideas...