



October 2007

## *Catholic School Enrollment Talk*

ISPD is your Catholic School Enrollment Solution for maintaining and/or increasing the quantity, quality, or diversity of your elementary or secondary Catholic school enrollment.

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### **Direct Mail Marketing - ISPD's Top 10 List**

**By John Cooper, ISPD Enrollment Specialist**

Direct Mail Marketing is a strategy that employs postal delivery of media messages in order to surface prospective student leads. It is a lead generation tool that quantifies and tracks responses. It is a strategy that should move the prospect lead closer to enrolling in your Catholic school. Here's a top 10 list of factors that you need to consider to maximize your next direct mail campaign.

1. **Good mail lists are key to the success of your mailing.**
  - o **Key to Success:** Know your target audience and where to capture their mailing addresses.
  - o **How to do it:** Mail address list brokers employ "AND" logic in querying addresses for your target market. For instance, if you are an elementary school, you can ask the list broker for Catholic households and the presence of children ages 3-6 and within a 10-mile radius of your school's address. As a high school, you can ask the list broker for Catholic households and an income of over \$\_\_\_\_\_ and the presence of children ages 12-14 and within a 10-mile radius of your school's address.
  - o **Cost to purchase address list:** The cost will vary depending on the company. One company that I work with charges a fee of \$25 per thousand with a minimum order of five thousand. This means that you will pay at least \$125. When you request specific segments of the population (Catholic with children) be selected, you will generally pay an additional \$10 per select. These prices are for one time use. If you want to purchase the addresses to use multiple times over the course of a year, your purchase price will generally be doubled.
  - o **Free lists that don't cost anything:**
    - Your own internal database of prospects that have contacted your school

- Parish and neighboring parish's membership records
- Feeder school addresses
- Lists of new homeowners in the area
- Ask area businesses to stuff employee paychecks with information about your school
- See if you can't obtain addresses of home school families from a home school association

**2. Follow-up mailings using a list that has been successful will normally produce an even better response.**

- **What should my response rate be?** You may have heard that for direct mail to have been successful, you should receive a 10% response rate. My experience is that you don't have to have a 10% response rate for direct mail to outperform other forms of marketing. Diligently track your response rate to newspaper advertising and you will find out how ineffective it can be compared to direct mail.

**3. Headline is important.**

- When using a personalized letter as your direct mail piece, your opening sentence is extremely important. You only have a matter of seconds to capture the attention of the reader. The opening sentence should focus on the main benefit that the child/family receive by enrolling in your Catholic school. This assumes that you know your school's #1 selling point.

**4. Layout should be tailored to the reader who will scan your direct mail piece before deciding to read the fine print.**

- The layout of your letter should not look like a "cookie cutter" form letter. Always indent paragraphs. Sales types of mailings you receive use under lining, bold typefaces, and bulleted copy for a reason. It works in helping to draw the reader's attention to what is most important. Photographs can make your letter more interesting, but you should always have a caption underneath the picture so that they know how it relates to the overall message of your letter.

**5. Personalize the language in your direct mail piece.**

- Stay away from words like "I", "me", "mine", "us" "we" or "our." Use words like "you" and "your" as much as possible throughout the content of your piece. Use the name of the reader several times throughout the body of the letter beginning with the salutation and continuing throughout the letter.

**6. Use excitingly descriptive language.**

- Use your thesaurus to come up with descriptive words like "wonder", "sensational", "remarkable", "amazing", "startling", "revolutionary", etc. Don't be humble in your direct mail pieces. You need to peak the interest of a prospective family so that you can convey and teach the value of humility when they enroll in your school.

**7. Highlight and lead the reader to do something to take that next step toward your school.**

- Be clear as to what the next steps are for the reader to act on your offer. For that matter, never leave out a "call to action" in any of your marketing efforts.

- **Step 1** - Return the enclosed business reply card or envelope (see your local Post Office for fees associated with setting up a business reply permit).
- **Step 2** - Call (xxx) xxx-xxxx to schedule a visit or RSVP for the Open House
- **Step 3** - Email [admissions@stexampleschool.org](mailto:admissions@stexampleschool.org) to ask a question about our school.
- **Step 4** - Visit [www.stexampleschool.org](http://www.stexampleschool.org) to discover the opportunities that await your child

**8. Prospective families want to hear from current school families, faculty, and alumni.**

- Don't waste your time and money by having the person they expect (president, principal, pastor, admissions director) deliver the message. Use people who the prospect will deem most believable. Remember the reader is more interested in the benefit to him or her so the messenger needs to tell the story of their experience in the way the prospect wants to hear it told e.g., what's in it for me.

**9. How to get an envelope opened.**

- If you are sending your piece bulk rate, use a live non-profit stamp to give that "split second" scan effect of a first class mailing (see your local Post Office for how to purchase non-profit stamps they come in increments of 500).
- If you send a "self-mailer" so as to avoid the need to open the envelope remember that it can convey a less personal message and one that provides less information for the prospect to act upon.
- Avoid using address labels like the plague. They are the kiss of death when it comes to encouraging someone to open or look seriously at your mailing. Instead, print the address on the envelope. For smaller mailings where you are wanting to convey personalization, you can hand write the address. A window envelope is acceptable, but it is still not the best way to give it that personal touch.
- Use teasers on the envelope such as "Do you remember your kindergarten teacher?" On the inside of your mailing your kindergarten teacher tells the reader all the reasons why their child will not forget her. Another good teaser is "your personal invitation is enclosed." People are curious. Using "good taste" play upon that curiosity.
- Send envelopes and self-mailers of various sizes. The size of the package can cause someone to give your piece a second look.

**10. Make sure your direct mail piece answers the main questions a prospect has.**

- How do you know if you have answered these questions? Test your piece with prospects before launching it. My son is in the 6th grade and recently received a nice mailing from a Catholic high school. He is always asking me what it is that I do with Catholic schools so I decided to use this direct mail piece as a way to educate him on some of what I do. Here are the top three things that he said when I asked him about the impact the mailing had on him.
  - Dad, why would I want to go to this school as opposed to our local high school? The mailing did not differentiate its product in a way that was clearly evident to him.
  - Dad, how can we afford to go to this school? All he saw was the

sticker price without any message about how his parents could afford it.

- Dad, we live a good distance away from that high school, how could I get there and back everyday? For some reason schools, particularly high schools just think that families can figure the transportation issue out by themselves.

One last thought. You always want to make sure that you produce the best quality mailing for the money that you can afford. If you are using a direct mail house, call around and get quotes from several mail houses. Direct mail houses will often compete against one another. The mail house that you use doesn't even have to be in your area. Through email and fax you can work with direct mail houses anywhere in the country. I have been using the same direct mail house for over 12 years and they are hundreds of miles away. Let me know if you have any questions about direct mail.

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## This Month's Survey Question

ISPD would like your feedback in the form of answering an enrollment related survey question. Our on-line survey question is powered by [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and results will be shared with you next month.

Here's this month's question:

***"How much direct mail do you currently send out each year?"***

- *More than 20,000 pieces*
- *15,000 to 20,000 pieces*
- *10,000 to 15,000 pieces*
- *5,000 to 10,000 pieces*
- *1 to 5,000 pieces*
- *0 pieces*

***Where do you obtain your direct mail address lists?***

- *Purchase from list brokers*
- *Parish membership roster*
- *Feeder schools*
- *Feeder parishes*
- *Other (Please specify)*

***How much do you typically spend (yearly) on direct mail e.g. postage, printing, purchase of list?***

- *More than \$20,000*
- *\$15,000 to \$20,000*
- *\$10,000 to \$15,000*
- *\$5,000 to \$10,000*
- *\$2,500 to \$5,000*

- \_\_\_ \$1,000 to \$2,500
- \_\_\_ Less than \$1,000
- \_\_\_ \$ 0

[Click Here to take the survey](#)

## September Survey Results

*When it comes to your Catholic school's brand, how does your school differentiate itself from its main competition?*

- 4.4% Price
- 4.4% Promotion
- 17.4% Place
- 73.9% Product

*Who do you consider your school's main competitor?*

- 73.9% Public schools
- 17.4% Other Catholic schools
- 4.4% Christian schools
- 4.4% Charter schools
- 0% Home schooling

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## A Catholic Archdiocese Web Site to Watch Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Office of Catholic Education [www.keepingfaithinmind.org](http://www.keepingfaithinmind.org)

Often times Catholic school web sites don't have good search engine placement. There are many reasons for this. I have an entire workshop that focuses on best web site practices, including search engine optimization. What I do find is that Archdiocese/Diocese Catholic School Offices can greatly assist their schools by creating web sites that feature all their schools as well as provide persuasive information about the value of Catholic education in general. These web sites typically have terrific search engine placement, especially for the person who searches uses key words like Catholic school education XYZ city. Recently, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Office of Catholic Education launched a new site to showcase their schools. It is a wonderful example of how an Archdiocese/Diocese can assist their schools in the area of enrollment. Take a look at the site. It is impressive. It is evangelization at its best!

- [Click here to visit the site of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.](#)

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## Spiritual Thought

As All Saint's Day is upon us, we should spend some time pondering the wonderful teaching we have regarding the Communion of Saints. Those of us in Catholic school education are connected to a long line of educational leaders that have gone before us. We should take time to reflect on these official and unofficial saints. We can learn from how they faced challenges. We can pray to them for assistance in addressing our struggles today. By virtue of our baptism, we are all small "s" saints in the making. Like the saints who have gone before us, may we strive to be a little better today than we were yesterday. Our students depend on it!

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## Fall 2007 Workshops for Schools

*Dynamic presenters share proven strategies and discuss Catholic school enrollment issues during one and two day seminars. These workshops are conveniently held across the country at an affordable price of \$69-\$250 .*

*We hope you'll join us soon!*

[Register on-line](#)

*or call us today at 1-800-299-2393*

### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Catholic School Enrollment Solutions - Strategies That Deliver Immediate Results
- Best First Steps to Take in Beginning Your Catholic Development Efforts
- Best First Steps / The Annual Fund
- Capital Campaigns That Produce Results
- Long Range Planning
- Customer Service in Your Catholic School
- Catholic School Enrollment Solutions - Strategies for Catholic School Enrollment Growth

### **ISPD Also Conducts On-Site Workshops**

Offered to Catholic schools and parishes within a single diocese, these workshops are designed to meet your specific needs.

- [Check Here for Fall 2007 Schedule and More Information on ISPD Development Training Workshops](#)

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