

MARKETING GUIDE

Considering a Branding or Admissions Project for Your School?

5 Questions to Ask

INTRODUCTION



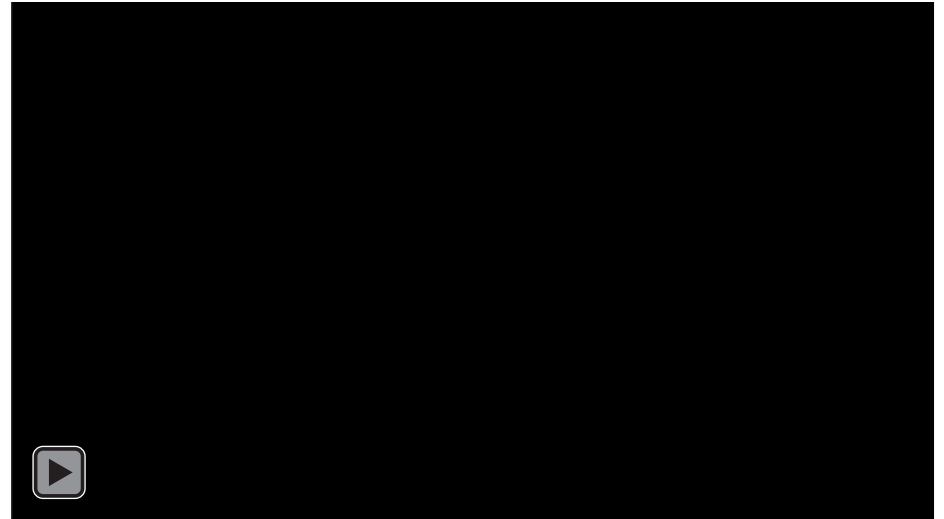
If you are considering investing in a branding, message development, or admissions materials refresh project with Mission Minded, these general guidelines will help you evaluate how well our approach meets your school's needs.

This document is intended as a guide for heads of school,

aurora
school



staff, and board members evaluating whether or not the time, funding, and commitment really exist within your organization to undertake a strategic communications initiative.



You may also view the video here: <https://vimeo.com/277326939>

“With Mission Minded, I felt like I learned more about my school than I knew before. And I’ve been Head of School here for more than a decade!”

Joel Weiss
Head of School
Crane Country Day School

1 To brand or not to brand?

Your brand is not your name, logo, or tagline.

Your school already has a brand. It's the reputation you've created through your past efforts, whether intentional or not. But is the brand you have the brand you want?

Let's face it: So little of your brand is really in your control. Your reputation is built by the informal chatter between parents in line at the grocery store as much as by your stunning website. Each interaction—formal or informal—someone has with your brand contributes to their overall impression of your school and its reputation. A thoughtful branding process, including the development of key messages and visual cues like a new admissions campaign and website, will help you build the right brand you need to achieve your goals. A branding project with Mission Minded will include asking and answering the following questions:

- What reputation do you really have among the families who matter most to your continued success?
- Are families confused about you, or worse, confusing you with other schools?
- What reputation do you need to cultivate in order to be better understood and valued among new families and to deepen loyalty within your existing community?

2 What does branding even mean?

Think of branding as the process of asking, answering, and acting on a series of questions.

Here are examples of a few:

- What is the current brand (reputation) of our school?
- Where is that brand strong and where is it weak?
- Who are our most important audiences?
- What words, phrases, key messages, and images must we use to bring our brand to life?
- How should we act, look, and sound to bring our brand into focus?
- What marketing, admissions, and fundraising tools must we create to publicize these messages so the brand can be authentic and clear?

3 Should my school consider a branding project?

Probably. Building a clear brand takes a lot of thought and time, so many schools have not committed to the effort. Some make the mistake of thinking that they don't need a brand. Others think they don't have the staff time to devote to making branding a priority, or mistake an attractive viewbook for a strong brand.

Even if your school is very clear internally about what you're in business to do, chances are that your public portrayal is not nearly as clear. And that's a missed opportunity for your school.

"We had an awesome year. Inquiries were up roughly 10% (round figures) and applications were up 22%. Additionally, our incoming 9th grade boasts a student-of-color percentage of 35%... up over 12% from this past year! Huge successes, thanks in large part to the amazing branding work you guided us through. Thank you!"

Trent Nutting

Director of Admissions and Financial Aid
Marin Academy



4 What does a branding effort involve?

Whether your school needs to reposition a misunderstood or outdated brand, refresh a relatively strong brand, or create a new brand, Mission Minded has a clear methodology for leading you to success.

Branding is the responsibility of everyone who works and volunteers for your school. So we help you involve all the right people at the right time. A good branding process results in everyone, from the receptionist to the board president, understanding the brand and their role in promoting it as they go about their duties.

Our experience in independent school branding is deep. So we know how to help a school bring out its very best—and stand out from the crowd. That means our approach is not cookie-cutter. Each engagement with Mission Minded is created to clarify the unique gift of that particular school, and meet its unique set of needs.

“We are so grateful for your thought partnership, poise, and advice through this very enriching process—bravo!”

Erin Wright

Director of Advancement
San Francisco Day School



Phase I: Brand Strategy Development

This is the heavy lifting. Mission Minded studies your school through a variety of means and works closely with you in a series of activities to articulate the new strategy for your brand—how you want to be known in order to attract and retain right-fit families.

It's fun, exciting, engaging, and...sometimes takes courage. The goal is not to rearrange the words you already use to describe your school or to change who you are as a school. The goal is to emerge with a bold new framework for thinking about and positioning who you are (and who you aren't). You'll emerge from this phase of work knowing your school better than before, (Yes! It's true.) and proudly able to articulate what you offer students and families that no other school does.

Phase II: Minute Message Model™

Once your new brand strategy is set, you're ready to create powerful new messages to bring your brand to life. We'll come back together to share our Minute Message Model™, in another fun and interactive session that is part training, part treasure hunting. Then we'll draft new language for your review, which you'll help us polish in preparation for their use in printed, digital, and spoken communications.

At the end of our engagement you will not only know how to march mightily forward toward a stronger brand, you will also understand the principles of good communication and how they apply to your school. Better yet, you and your colleagues, including faculty, staff, and board members, will be armed with clear and concise messages and the confidence to effectively tell your school's story in a new way.

Phase III: BrandActivation

Great brands come to life in how they look, how they sound, and how they act, so we'll guide you to ensure you take advantage of every opportunity to reinforce your new brand strategy, ensuring everyone and everything at your school is in brand alignment.

We'll do a BrandActivation™ session with a small group of administrators, a training session for faculty, staff and board, and help you develop a brand rollout plan appropriate for your resources and community.

Phase IV: Admissions Campaign

Building a brand takes more than a branding and messaging framework. At this point in the process, you'll have the strategy—or goal—for the new reputation you wish to achieve, the key messages with which to start to do it, and a plan for activating your brand strategy. The time to create the first powerful tools for your new brand is now.

Your admissions efforts are a great place to start. This may include:

- (In rare cases) A name change
- A visual identity refresh
- A compelling admissions campaign theme, viewbook, and search piece
- An admissions video
- A reconceived website (We work closely with Blackbaud, FinalSite and other established platforms to ensure the right brand experience, not just functionality, for visitors.)

You may also need other external communication tools such as your fundraising case for support, capital or endowment campaign materials, annual reports, alumni communications, and presentations.

Our award-winning digital and print creative—all based on brand strategy—has resulted in record-breaking enrollment results for our clients.

5 What does it cost and how long will it take?

In general, plan to spend 12–16 months on your rebranding and admissions campaign development.

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"I love to talk about this work and our partnership with Mission Minded. It was an incredibly valuable process and I'm still very grateful every day that we took the plunge and did the work with your fabulous team!"

Mary DeNardo

Director of Communications
Prospect Sierra School

That means you'll start work in spring or summer of the year *before* you want to launch a new fall admissions campaign.

Phases I and II: Brand Strategy and Key Message Development

- \$40,000–\$55,000
- 6–8 months

Phase III: Brand Activation

- \$4,500–\$7,500
- 1 month

Phase IV: Naming (in rare cases)

- \$8,500–\$10,000
- 6 weeks

Visual Identity Refresh

- \$15,000–\$25,000
- 8–10 weeks

Admissions Campaign and Viewbook

- \$20,000–\$40,000
- 14–18 weeks, including print management

Video Production

- \$35,000–\$60,000
- 6–8 weeks

Website Design

- \$30,000–\$40,000*
 - 16 weeks, includes time for production by your platform provider
- *Platform provider fees not included

Annual Report/Alumni Magazine

- \$12,000–\$40,000 for writing and design
- 14–18 weeks, including print management

Annual or Capital Campaign Communications and Collateral

- \$30,000
- 14–18 weeks, including print management

Note that some phases can run concurrently and that printing and photography are additional, researched and priced based on your needs.

If your school has recognized that it will benefit from a stronger brand or that more clear messages are needed in order to be better understood and better supported, call us. We will be happy to develop a customized proposal for your school based on your needs, budget, and timeline.

Learn More

Mission Minded is a branding firm that works exclusively with nonprofits, independent schools, and foundations. We believe you only reach your highest potential if people understand the importance of your work—not just what you do, but why it matters.

Every day we partner with clients like Marin Academy, Crane Country Day School, Crystal Springs Uplands School, and Prospect Sierra School to help them determine the brand—or reputation—for which they want to be known. Then we help them bring that brand to life with key messages, admissions campaigns, capital campaigns, web design, videos, and more.

As a result, our clients successfully raise more money and attract the support they need to achieve their goals. To find out how Mission Minded can help your school, call us today at 415.990.9360.