

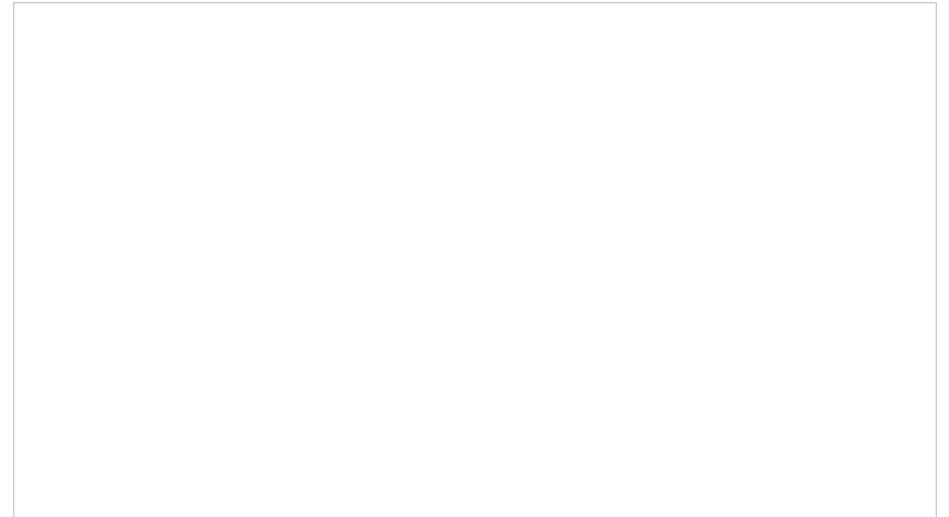
# Considering a Branding or Admissions Project for Your School?

## 6 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 a guide for heads of school, staff, and board members who are evaluating whether or not your school honestly has the time, funding, and commitment to undertake a strategic communications initiative.



Click on the above image to play the video. You may need to update your Flash Player, or you can 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**  
as 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 those were intentional or not. But is the brand you have the brand you want?

Let's face it: So little of your brand is really under your control. Your reputation is built as much by the informal chats between parents in line at the grocery store as by your current website. Each interaction someone has with your brand—deliberate or not—contributes to their overall impression of your school and affects its reputation. A thoughtful branding process, including the development of key messages and visual cues, such as a new admissions campaign or a website, will help you build the 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 have among the families who matter most to your continued success?
- Are families confused about who you are, or, worse, failing to distinguish you from other schools?
- What reputation do you need to cultivate in order to be better understood by new families and more deeply valued by 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 some examples of questions Mission Minded will help you work through during the branding process:

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

# 3 Should My School Undertake a Branding Project?

If you can, yes. Building a clear brand takes a lot of thought and time, though, so many schools shy away from committing to the effort. Other schools make the mistake of thinking that they don't need a brand or fail to see how a formal branding effort will pay off. Still others think that they don't have the staff time to devote to branding or mistake an attractive viewbook and a nice logo for a strong brand.

Even if your school is clear internally about what you're in business to do, chances are that your target audiences lack that same motivating clarity. 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**

as Director of Admissions and Financial Aid  
Marin Academy



# 4 What Does a Branding Effort Involve?

Whether your school needs to reposition its misunderstood or outdated brand, refresh its relatively strong brand, or create a new brand altogether, Mission Minded has a clear methodology for steering 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 roles in promoting it.

We have deep experience in independent school branding, so we know how to help a school draw attention to its strengths and stand out from the crowd. And Mission Minded doesn't take a cookie-cutter approach to this; we customize our work with you to meet your specific needs and to clarify the unique benefits your school provides.

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

**Erin Wright**

as Director of Advancement  
San Francisco Day School



## Phase I: Brand Strategy Development

**This is the heavy lifting, right up front. Mission Minded studies your school using a variety of means and then leads you through a series of activities to articulate your new brand strategy—how you want to be known in order to attract and retain right-fit families.**

It's fun, exciting, engaging, and sometimes takes courage, too. The goal is not to rearrange the words you already use to describe your school or to change your institution's identity; it's to emerge with a bold new framework for thinking about and positioning who you are—and who you are not. You'll emerge from this phase of work knowing your school even better than before, and able to communicate proudly what you offer students and families that no other school does.

## Phase II: Minute Message Model™

Once your brand strategy is set, you're ready to create powerful new messages to bring your brand to life. We'll come back together to lead you through our Minute Message Model™, another fun and interactive session that's half-training, half-treasure hunt. Then, blending your insights with our experience, we'll draft new language for your review, which you'll help polish in preparation for its use in printed, digital, and spoken communications.

At the end of our work together, 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 equipped with clear and concise messages and the confidence to tell your school's story in a new, more effective way.

## Phase III: BrandActivation™

Great brands come to life in how they look, how they sound, and how they act. To keep everyone and everything at your school in brand alignment, we'll help you see how you can take advantage of opportunities large and small to reinforce your new brand strategy.

We'll lead a BrandActivation™ session for you and a small group of administrators, help you develop a brand rollout plan appropriate for your resources and community, and—if you choose—conduct a training session for faculty, staff, and board members.

## Phase IV: Admissions and More

Building a brand takes more than a branding and messaging framework. At this point, you'll have a clear goal, the strategy for building your reputation, the key messages with which to do it, and a plan for activating your brand. That makes now the perfect time to create one of your brand's most powerful tools: an admissions campaign.

This phase may include:

- A name change (in rare cases)
- A visual identity refresh
- A compelling admissions campaign theme
- Admissions viewbook and search piece design and creation (print and/or digital)
- A photo shoot to create a brand library
- An admissions video
- A reconceived website (To ensure your site visitors have an on-brand experience, we work closely with Blackbaud, FinalSite, and other established providers of platforms designed especially for schools.)

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

The award-winning digital and print materials our design team creates—all based on brand strategy—have 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.

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

*Please note that the fees below reflect estimated pricing as of November 2023 and that this may have changed. Any formal proposal prepared for you will be highly customized, so please contact us to begin a conversation on your specific project.*

## Brand Strategy and Key Message Development

- \$58,000–\$74,000
- 6–8 months, includes BrandActivation planning session

## Brand Launch Plan

- \$15,000–\$20,000
- 1–2 months

## Visual Identity

- \$34,000–\$48,000
- 4 months

## Athletics Logo Refresh

- \$28,000 and up depending on scope
- 3–5 months

## Admissions Campaign

- Viewbook: \$38,000–\$52,000
- Search Piece: \$18,000–\$28,000
- 6–8 months

## Video Production (Brand Launch, Admissions, or Fundraising)

- \$45,000 and up depending on your specific needs
- 5–7 months

## Photo Shoot

- \$5,000–\$15,000
- 2–3 months

## Website Strategy and Design

- \$38,000–\$52,000
- 5–6 months, includes time for production by your platform provider
- \*Your web vendor will have a separate fee for development

## Digital Strategy Roadmap

- \$18,000–\$25,000
- 1–2 months

## Admissions Outreach Communication Plan

- \$22,000–\$30,000
- 1–2 months

## Annual Report Brochure (Print or Digital)/ Alumni Magazine

- \$32,000–\$58,000
- 5–6 months

## Capital/Fundraising Campaign

- Case Strategy and Case for Support: \$38,000–\$45,000
- Campaign Brochure Development (Print or Digital): \$28,000–\$42,000
- Campaign Presentation Deck: \$18,000–\$24,000
- Campaign Microsite Design: \$15,000–\$25,000
- 9–11 months depending on scope

*Some phases can run concurrently. Printing costs are additional, researched and priced based on your needs.*



# PROSPECT SIERRA

*“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

as Director of Communications  
Prospect Sierra School

# 6 How Do We Get Started?

If you're ready to elevate your brand or have more families fall in love with your school, let's chat! We'd love to put together a great proposal that's perfectly aligned with your goals, budget, and timeline. You can call us at 415-990-9360 or email us at [amplify@mission-minded.com](mailto:amplify@mission-minded.com).

Or if you have a specific challenge that needs strategic insight, don't worry—we have a budget friendly option for you!

## Office Hours With an Expert

This option opens the door for you to consult with our experts, who are all eager to help you elevate your impact. We'll help you tap into our best practices, boldly break away from the expected, and fire up your supporters with magnetic ideas.

## Here's How:

1. You'll watch any of our free expert webinars on the topics that are relevant to your challenge. You can find the videos on this page: <https://mission-minded.com/events/>
2. You'll apply what you learned, perhaps collaborating with your colleagues, and then bring your draft work to our office hours with an expert.
3. A Mission Minded strategist will learn about your goals and audiences, and then provide you with strategic and creative input, inspiration, and feedback during your session. You'll bring your questions, ideas, and first drafts, and we'll help you make them even better. Want to build on what you learned and get a second round of expert feedback? Just book another session.

## Fees

- Learning from our Webinars: Free!
- 30-minute session with an Expert: \$1,600
- 1-hour session with an Expert: \$2,400

**So let's get started—we can't wait to help you amplify the good!**



*“We continue to appreciate the work Mission Minded did with us and on our behalf and continue to feel the positive, forward momentum that that work has generated.”*

**Nancy Hayes**  
as Director of Enrollment  
Carolina Friends School

## Learn More

Mission Minded is a strategy and creative firm that helps good causes have greater impact.

We believe the organizations and schools that make our world better need to be unapologetically bold.

Every day, we ask “what if?” — unlocking new ways to fire up your supporters.

Because when your community is united by magnetic ideas, they'll stop at nothing to help you achieve extraordinary results.

To find out how Mission Minded can help your school, call us today at 415-990-9360.