MARKETING GUIDE

Your Digital Campaign Plan
8 Steps to Creating a Successful Campaign for Your School

mission minded   amplify the good

In a time when so many of us depend on the Internet for communication, information, and action, the power of your school's digital platforms cannot be underestimated.

If you're not marketing your school digitally, you may be missing out on significant opportunities to engage your target audiences and attract the support you need to reach your goals. Whether you're looking to increase alumni participation for your capital campaign or boost enrollment, a digital campaign can make the difference in whether you meet your goals—or miss them.

Any digital campaign should be a coordinated effort with specific goals, target audiences, precise calls to action, and a deadline. We've summarized the 8 steps you can take to make sure your school's digital campaign is successful.

Digital Words to Know

Digital Platforms/Channels: A summary term for the tools in your digital marketing toolbox, which can include social media, email, and your website.

Digital Ecosystem: How the digital platforms mentioned above work together as one "whole" to cohesively communicate with audiences across all relevant platforms.

1 Establish Realistic Goals

Great digital campaigns have 1–2 goals that center on clear and timely calls to actions aligned with your school's internal priorities.

These should be realistic and attainable based on your internal team's bandwidth to launch and manage this campaign. It's exciting to envision a huge mass audience of deeply engaged families and alumni, but don't set goals that are completely out of reach.

Examples of Clear Goals

- Raise X funds for capital campaign in two months
- Increase alumni event attendance by X% in the new year
- Increase qualified admissions inquiries by X% December–February

Exercise

My specific digital campaign goal(s) are:

1. _____

   _____

2. _____

   _____

2 Identify and Understand Your Audiences

Who do you need to engage to reach your goals?

- Think about your audience's demographics (age, gender, education level, etc.) and psychographics (beliefs, motivations, online behavior, etc.). Take the time to create profiles of representative members of your audience, including what matters most to them.
- Remember that not all of your key audiences use digital platforms in the same way. How do they use the Internet to stay up-to-date on news and other updates relevant to your school?

Example

Alum Alex is 45 and married with two kids. He works for a tech startup and commutes 1.5 hours from his home in Oakland to Silicon Valley each day. Alex is constantly on his phone, which he's proudly set up to sync with apps and other devices that he has at home, in the car, and at the office. He checks Facebook a few times a day to see what his family and friends are doing; he posts to Instagram once a month. He believes in the power of relationships and is keen on spending one-on-one time with each of his children; he goes out with his wife out on weekly date nights; he makes a point to have lunch with his old high school teacher (and now family friend) every other month. Alex loves the personalized approach teachers and staff at your school provide students and families. He knows this helps people like him grow up to be the very best version of themselves.

Exercise

My target audiences are:

1. _____

   _____

2. _____

   _____

3 Choose the Most Effective Digital Platform(s)

Which digital platform will be the most effective in moving your audiences to action?

Although there are a variety of digital platforms out there, you'll want to prioritize only those that your audiences are most active on first. This list from Finalsite has a great breakdown of your options.

If you are unsure of your audiences' behavior online, ask! Interviewing key audience stakeholders can help you get answers on their go-to digital sources for information. Also keep in mind how your audience accesses digital platforms, whether via mobile, desktop, tablet, or some other device.

Example

- Alum Alex googles everything and seeks online advice and reviews from his friends and family mainly through email, Facebook, or Instagram. He's constantly on his phone, which is the easiest way for him to engage with others.
- Based on our knowledge of Alex's social platform usage and his demographic information, we can craft a profile of his digital activity that can help us better connect with alumni just like him.
- For example, we know that Alum Alex (Audience) is most active on Facebook and Instagram (Platforms).

Exercise

Considering the above information, along with the other research I've conducted, the best platform(s) for reaching my audiences are:

Audience 1: _____   Platform 1: _____

Audience 2: _____   Platform 2: _____

4 Create a Powerful, Compelling Campaign

A compelling campaign must tell your brand's story cohesively across all platforms in your digital ecosystem, strategically connecting them as one whole.

It should:

- Have a theme that is both brand-centered and aligned with the timely "ask" of the campaign
- Move people to action through this formula: Urgency + Emotion + Rationale = Great Campaign
- Utilize consistent visuals and powerful headlines, relevant hashtags, and clear calls to action

Take a look at an example of a great campaign theme:
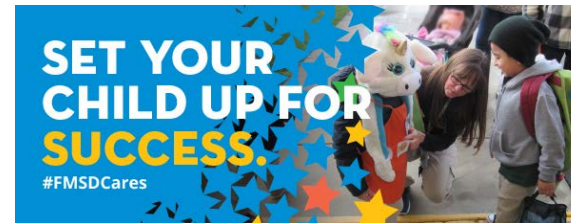
Franklin-McKinley School District Digital Campaign

5 Allocate the Proper Resources

Be realistic about your resources and capacity to implement a campaign.

Consider:

- Who will create the campaign content (e.g., copy and design for paid ads and posts, etc.)?
- Who will oversee your campaign?
- Who will implement, monitor, and adjust your campaign?
- What's your budget for paid media (e.g., Facebook and Google ads)?
- What visual assets do you have available (e.g., in-house video and images vs. stock)?

Did you know?

Digital campaigns typically include some paid ad promotion. Although campaigns can also include unpaid or "organic" posts, paid posts tend to have a further reach, helping you achieve your campaign goals.

6 Adjust Using Real-Time Analytics

The beauty of digital platforms is that you can maximize your campaign's performance and reallocate funds to the tools that are working best during the campaign in real time.

Don't wait to analyze results until after your campaign is done. Staying on top of what's working and what isn't allows you to fine-tune the campaign for stronger results now, not the next campaign.

Exercise

What tools will you use to analyze your campaign (free vs. paid)?

_____

_____

What key metrics will you track to understand if your campaign was a success? (reach, click through rate, conversions, etc.)

_____

_____

Who will analyze the data and recommend adjustments?

_____

_____

Did You Know?

Each digital platform has its own analytics that enable you to review your campaign's performance. This guide by Social Media Examiner can help you understand these metrics.

7 Reflect

Following the conclusion of your campaign, you should review your tactics to summarize what worked as well as areas of improvement for future campaigns.

Consider:

- What worked well in moving your audience to action?
- What didn't work?
- Did you allocate enough budget, resources, and time to your campaign?
- Did you meet your goals? If not, were they unrealistic or did other factors come into play?
- What else can you learn to improve?

Marin Horizon School Digital Campaign

8 Repeat

Remember to keep going! The more campaigns you create, the more opportunities you have to share your inspiring work with your audiences, learning more about what effectively engages them each time.

The best time to start planning for your next campaign is when insights are still fresh and relevant. To make your next campaign even stronger, consider everything you've learned about your audience, digital platforms, the design and writing of posts, and your campaign's performance.

To learn more about creating compelling campaigns, check out these resources:
- How to Replace Your Biggest Event with an Online Campaign
- How to Blog (And Why it Matters)
- The Ever-Changing Digital World: How to Feel Less "Arghh" and More "Ahh"
- Seven Secrets to Creating Compelling Digital Content

Learn More

Mission Minded is a branding firm that works exclusively with nonprofit organizations and independent schools.

We believe that a brand that sets you apart is essential to a school's success. Everyday we guide our clients to uncover the big, bold idea that will attract more people to their work. Because in today's world, a worthy mission is not enough. You've got to communicate what makes you unique at every opportunity.

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.