

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Managing First Impressions: Customer Service and Tailored Tours

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Kathy Link



- 10th year of consulting to Catholic schools on issues of sustainability
- Former Senior Director of Schools for the Healey Education Foundation
- Extensive experience in enrollment management, advancement, governance and work planning
- National presenter on recruitment and retention

Why this topic matters:



Question

What would be some of the things that people might experience as their first impressions of your school?



How do families
first encounter your
school?

What impression
are you creating?

- Social media
- Website
- Print materials (including ads, postcards, etc.)
- Phone experience
- Email response

Now that they're coming to visit...

- The lead up to the visit
- What do you send in advance?
- Do people know where to park?
- Do people know where to enter the building?
- How are you making them feel welcome/special before they even encounter a person?
- Be honest: how's your curb appeal?

What do people *see*?



Ring the bell and look at the camera

- They arrive at the front door...
- “Ring the bell and look at the camera...”
- What is your internal signage like?
- When they enter the main office, how are they greeted (“Manager of First Impressions”)?
- Do you focus on hospitality?
- What’s on the coffee table?
- If they’re early, what do they do?

What do people
feel?



The visual audit

WHAT	An objective, quick walk through of the building
WHY	To gather first impressions of things that you might not see
WHO	Preferably someone who is not familiar with the facility (a real estate agent is ideal!)
HOW	A clipboard, a pen and 90 minutes – write it down
WHEN	For best results, at the end of a typical school day (early November)

The Tour

Before you leave the office...

THE THREE C's

- Conversation
- Connecting
- Committing

Conversation...

- Get to know each other
- Develop a common ground
- Help them relax
- Set timeline and outline the meeting

Ask Questions to Find Family Needs

- Open Ended/Close Ended
- Branching Questions
- Double Click Questions
- Content-less Questions

Listen for their Needs

- Remove Barriers
- Don't Problem Solve

Connecting

Summarize what you heard (did you get it right?)

Use the parents' (and student's) words

Focus on benefits

How does what you offer meet the family's needs?

Committing



Who does what and when



Next Steps

Phone call
Follow visit/appointment
Open house
Additional call – principal, K-teacher, ...



Guide though the funnel to the next action



Control the process



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