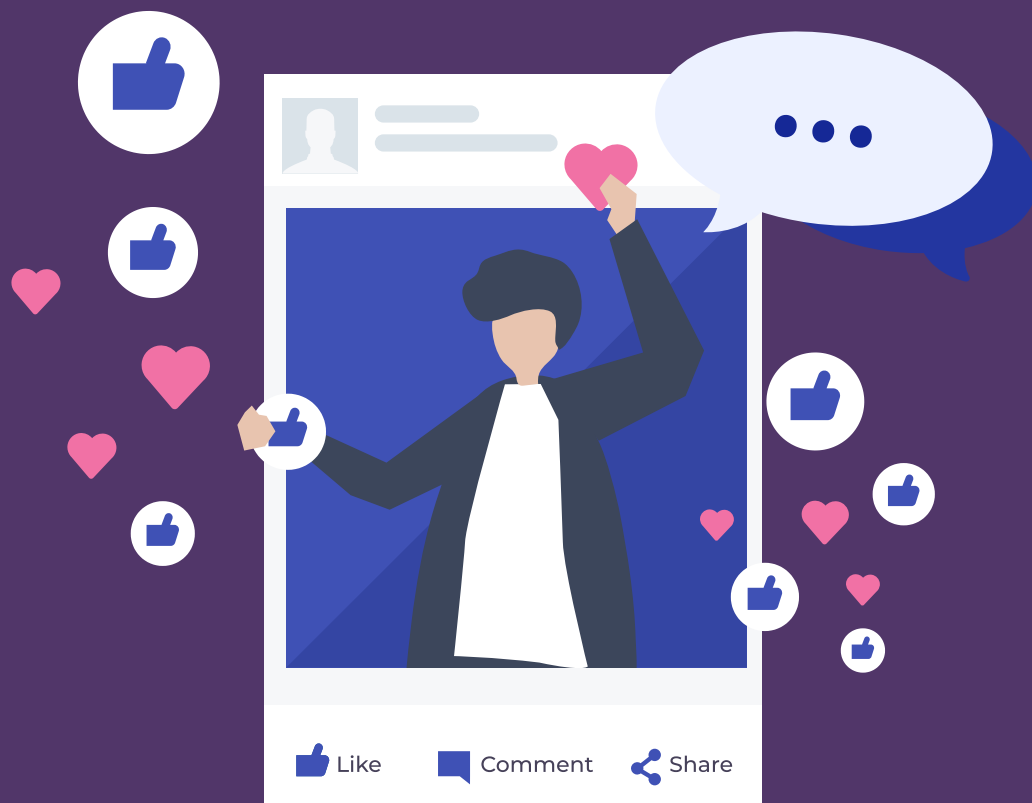


GUIDE *to* SCHOOL *marketing* in the UAE



7 proven school marketing
strategies for 2023

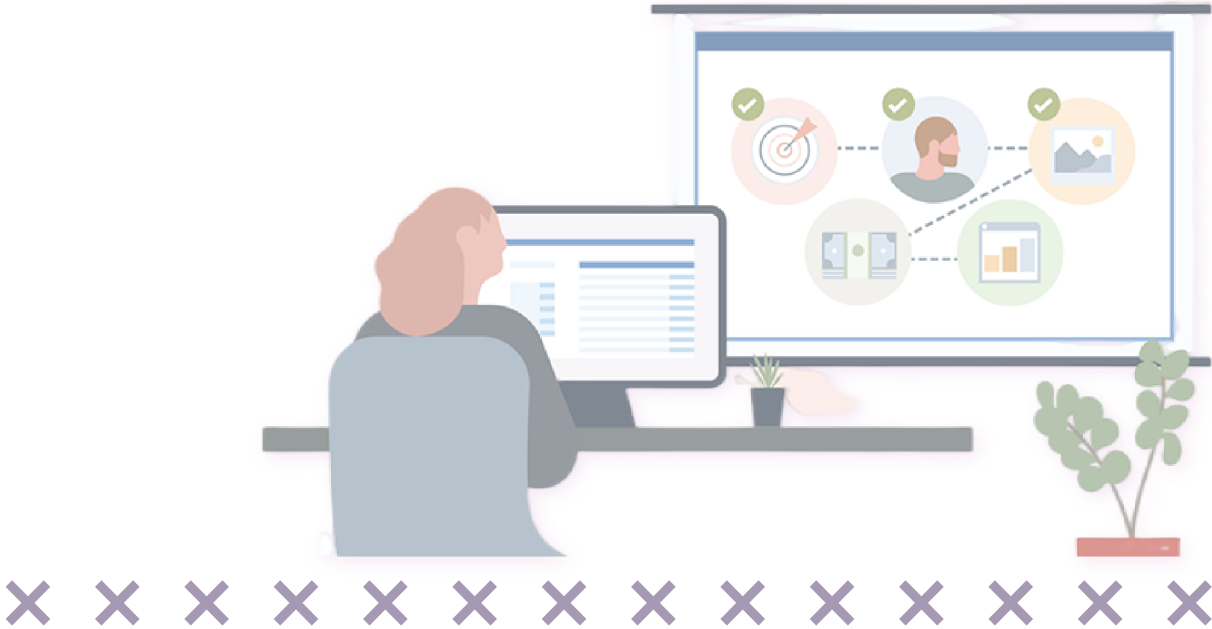


e-Book series from the School Agency



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About the author

Peter Caush

With 10 years of experience in marketing, advertising, and communications, Peter provides strategic direction to schools, helping them connect with parents in the UAE.

Raised in UK he graduated from Teesside University with BA Hons in Product design and moved into advertising working as an Art Director in London for several Ad Agency's before moving to the middle east with Saatchi & Saatchi then BPG (Bates Group).

Eventually starting The School Agency specialising in communications for Schools in the UAE .



Introduction

Covid 19 changed the world for ever, from staying at home and ordering things online, we became a remote workforce, working full days, sitting in front of computer screens at home. This has become the new “normal” and changed the future of marketing products and services. Which will now impact the way you promote your school.

The landscape has changed beyond recognition, in 2023 to meet the expectations of your new clients and customers, communications have to be extremely focused, they need to adapt to the new way of working and in some cases scrapped.

Regardless of how you look at it, potential parents expect more from online encounters. They're harder to engage than at any time before- and your school's communication materials need to reflect that.

As we look forward to this year and what's to come, it's important for schools to take time, planning budgets, creating assets and having them ready to roll out across a proven effective marketing strategy.

The following 7 stage strategy is based on 10 years of experience in UAE. The School Agency has been providing School marketing services in the region since 2007.



Strategy#1

Review, Revise or Re-design your website

We can probably agree a School's website is its business/calling card and when parents (and their children) begin researching online, a poor website experience is not good. Weak UX/UI will turn users off and probably push your site to the bottom of their shortlist.

If you need further convincing webpage analytics will likely show a decrease in engagement, less site traffic, lower conversion rate, and higher bounce rate. A poorly designed 'old themed' website will become the weakest link in the communications chain, and no amount of investment in other comms will compensate for a poor performing site.

Free URL Health checker

There are now a number of online website auditors that can run diagnostics on your URL to review SEO performance and other metrics. It's worthwhile testing a couple of these online tools to get a performance Health check report.

So we agree, your homepage needs to make a positive impact, starting with a fast loading (2-3 sec) followed by great imagery and text on the header carousel or even a micro clip/video. Scrolling down, keep the home page simple and uncluttered resist the temptation to overload it content, that could be otherwise placed on another page.

Modern websites have dual purpose; Front end it should provide good navigation making it easy to find information, and the backend (SEO) should be optimized for search engines to crawl.



If you site has 2 or more of the following issue then it's time to consider a new site

In 2023 all websites should be 'responsive' adapting to different device types. You can be sure audiences use a combination of desktop/Mobile/Tablet. Therefore, you have to make sure that your websites' functionality responds to desktop, tablet and mobile devices.

Write webpage content relevant to your target audience persona (parents), focus keywords, and school's USP's.

Data from several studies shows that:

1. Approximately 80% of people who don't find what they were searching for on a website, will go click on another link.
2. People are 5 times more likely to abandon a search if a site wasn't properly optimised for their mobile phones.
3. 40% of website visitors bounce if a webpage takes longer than 2-3 secs to load. (50% of users expect a loading time to be 2 seconds).
4. First impression count, 94% of first impression relates to how well designed your website is.

If you site has 2 or more of the following issue then it's time to consider a new site –

Home page Load time over 3 secs?

Is not responsive and doesn't respond to Desktop, Tablets and Phones

Navigation is not simple and intuitive

Site looks the same as competitors' school and lacks uniqueness?



Strategy #2

To optimize your pages, and make your site ranks in organic searches. You should match your content with target keywords for all webpages (including blog post/pages).

A search engine strategy comprises 4 main elements:

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) For example on page meta description
- Pay Per Click (PPC). For example, Google, FB and IG Ads.
- Online Reviews (Google Reviews, testimonies).
- Link building on page and off page (backlinks)

Let's take a deeper dive into these 4 SEO areas

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is a long distance marathon that many School' avoid because they do not have the time or resources and short term goals. SEO requires keyword research and implementation across your all meta-descriptions.

The biggest challenge is to convince school management to allocate a budget to something they have to wait several months to see results. For this reason, marketers tend to put SEO at the bottom of the list or worse ignore it completely.

However, building and implementing an SEO strategy is becoming more and more important for a school's survival and online presence.

Almost 90% of all online experiences begin with a search engine. A good click-through rate (CTR) for search queries where your school appears in the first few pages of google (SERP) is what counts, but this requires time, money and effort and an understanding on the part of the Schools management team to appreciate the importance.

Pay Per Click (PPC) is still the most effective way to target and drive high quality users to your school's website. PPC although paid also helps with organic page ranking. Its most affective for getting immediate results, ideal for promoting events like Back2School, Meet the Principal, Open Day tours, special Community events.



Online Reviews

Wouldn't you like to know what parents who have children at the school really think about the school you are considering?

Approximately 90% of consumers read reviews before purchasing goods and services online. So it's really no different to a reading product review on Noon.ae or Amazon.ae, because we all like to hear feedback to get impartial, comments to aid our decision-making.

Reviews can be good or bad so tread carefully, make sure your school is operating at its best. Because it only takes 1 or 2 negative reviews to have a damaging affect on reputation.

A positive review can have a major contribution to peoples first impressions.

Studies show that even before the pandemic hit, reviews had a direct impact on a school's website traffic flow. Online reviews play a crucial role as:

Around 84% of the population trust reviews posted on a website almost as much as a personal recommendation. 65% of people believe online reviews are a reliable trustworthy source of information about any person place or product. Reviews instill a feeling of trust and play a crucial role in determining your impression.



Strategy #3

Build and Optimise your Email with AI

Email workflows - also, commonly referred to as an "email drip campaign" or "computerised/automated messages" – they are a staple of a school's outbound lead funnel. An email workflow is a series of emails that are automatically sent/published to a verified data base of subscriber's contacts.

Mails that you can set-and-forget-help save time. They can be pre-set to send when the following events occur:

1. Welcome new parents and students
2. Nurture and support prospective families who register
3. New onboard teachers and support staff
4. Promote upcoming schedule events

Schools can benefit from automated work processes emailer to deliver standardized messages and emailers to promote monthly news bulletins.



Strategy#4

Start a School Blog

A blog useful way of knowledge sharing on wider educational topics, such as changes to national curriculum, guidance on learning techniques, and thought leadership. It's a great place to store a lot of informative material and helpful for search engines to crawl through.

Like all content published online it must be properly managed (edited for keywords and indexed). Some experts agree a good blog page serves as the backbone to your organic ranking strategy, and complements your social media channels

With a school blog, you need to remember:

- Who will write the articles ?
- Who will optimize and post them?
- Who will link build ?
- Frequency of articles how many posts p/mth ?
- What will be the topics? (content calendar/planner)
- Do we have the resources to post consistently?



Strategy #5

Content calendar/planner

A content calendar with at least 6 months of information, helps senior managers approve in advance all marketing activities and allocate resources and budget. It also ensures all channels are communicating the right message at the right time.



Strategy #6

Invest in Consistent and Relevant Social Media Ads

Social media advertising has been made a lot easier with the introduction of 'Facebook Business (Meta Business) Advertising Platform.

We can now target new (broader reach) audiences with similar demographics to your existing community of followers. It's an effective way of expanding your audience base using look alike audiences.

As social media is part of the 360 Advertising Strategy and offers the following benefits:

- The average cost per click is less than Google or Linked advertising
- You can expand and diversify your reach with using browser data saved by Facebook + Instagram.

Social Media advertising helps strengthen other targeted efforts. For example if you Intend to run an event, then you can run the same campaign across all other channels.



Strategy#7

Dynamic content (Videos/Animations)... anything with movement.

Higher band width allows for heavier file transfer. This means uploading and publishing video content is easier and will engage up to 60% more than static content. We're not talking Hollywood production, just regular smart phone clips (60secs) for social posted 1-2 times per week.

A professional videographer can be budgeted at the beginning of the year to capture higher quality footage which can be used and reused throughout academic year.

Add video ideas to your content calendar and be prepared to do spontaneous shoots for extraordinary events. Generate of a list of film clip ideas such as new teacher joining, parents testimonials, tips from educators, interviewers with former pupils, raw footage from student's perspective.

Remember Google P/Max campaigns and Social media campaigns expect video assets for campaigns which rely on uploading video content to your YouTube channel.

Go live. Livestreaming events with sister schools of overseas branches make for great content.



#Tracking the right KPIs

- Overview Success metrics (Google Account)
- Call-to-action conversion rates - Are visitors responding properly to your site? Completing forms? Enrolling for events?
- Google Analytics monitoring your website's inbound traffic behaviour
- Traffic sources - Where are your site visitors coming from? organic search? Email outreach? Social Traffic? Paid Search?
- Social media engagement - Is your social media strategy working? Is your following developing and engaging?
- Automation and Management platforms:
- Social Media Management- Hootsuite
- Google Ads + Google Analytics GA4
- Social Media-Facebook for Business (Meta Business)
- SEMRush – SEO, keyword planner



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