

Welcome to the first edition of

marketing matters

..... your free update on everything that's important in independent school business from the UK's leading educational business consultancy.

Each term we will send you a new issue with news and commentary on the business of running schools, information on new services from **mtm**consulting, ideas for sharpening up your strategic and marketing thinking, invitations to conferences and seminars, and regular surveys of the things that matter to school decision-makers.

Marketing DOES matter. Never more than now, with market conditions about to become worse than they have been for decades.

Let **mtm**consulting keep you in the know.



Do you know how many of your school's prospective enquiries come through your website? **At least a quarter of schools simply have no idea.**

New research from **mtm**consulting suggests that, in more than a third of schools, at least 50% of enquiries now originate from their websites. But an

mtmRESEARCH

alarming number of schools responding to our survey did not know how many vital leads their sites were generating.

This is one of the most striking findings of **mtm**consulting's first-ever online survey of the state of school marketing now. To find out more about how much schools spend on marketing, how they staff their marketing departments and what they think are the priorities for school marketing, see the full story on page 3. ♦

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DON'T MISS -

Practical Strategies for Challenging Times

the annual strategy conference organised by **mtm**consulting and Veale Wasbrough Lawyers

Tuesday 15th September Institute of Directors London SW1

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Numbers up for schools or are they?

Melanie Tucker comments on conflicting evidence in the media

Well, who do you believe? In January, the Daily Mail reported "Cash-strapped parents desert private schools for the state system." The Telegraph weighed in with "Private schools 'face cutbacks to survive.'" And London's Evening Standard gleefully picked on a comment by Tony Little: "Fee-paying schools will close, warns Eton head." In its relentless search for news to terrify the readers, the media seemed determined to prove that the independent sector, like the economy, was heading off a cliff.



Independent schools were angered by coverage like this, not least because it didn't chime with many schools' experience. Within weeks, the sector hit back: HMC produced a survey of 90 members claiming to show that most were experiencing growth, or at least no reduction, in demand, despite the recession. The media, taken by surprise perhaps, reported the figures positively.

Soon afterwards, the GSA surveyed its own members and released similarly optimistic figures about prospects for September 2009. By this time, the media had recovered its sceptical poise. The Evening Standard, faced with figures showing that 76% of girls' schools were expecting stable or increased numbers, reported that "Demand drops for places at a quarter of girls' schools!"

It's easy to see why the associations acted as they did, even if, as everyone in schools recognises, any forecasts for September must be provisional at this stage. Confidence breeds confidence, and confidence above all is what parents need when committing themselves to several years of very expensive education for their children.

All the evidence from the 1990s recession suggests that it may take a year or more for the full effects to be felt in recruitment and retention of pupils. But it's rare to meet anyone in independent schools these days who—whatever September 2009 brings—isn't expecting 2010 and 2011 to be a much tougher environment.

Which means it is critical for schools to get their strategies right now. Recessions have a brutal way of finding out the weaknesses in any business strategy. Schools which have coasted for years, sustained by their reputation alone, by a benign and prosperous market, and by a relentless attack—in the same media—on the condition of the state education sector, will find themselves ill-equipped to cope.

So ask yourself some hard questions. How will we manage if pupil numbers fall by two, or five or even 10 per cent? Is every section of the school sustainable? What reductions in fixed costs can we make without damaging the school's central nervous system? Have we a realistic and achievable marketing strategy for the next three years? Being able to an-



swer these questions positively will put your school in a strong position to profit from the upswing in demand which will surely follow.

Because one other thing is also certain. The factors which have driven rising parental demand for high quality independent education in the recent past—standards, discipline, a holistic school education, individual care—have not changed, and are not likely to in the foreseeable future. ♦

Practical Strategies for Challenging Times

The fourth annual strategy conference organised by **mtm** consulting and Veale Wasbrough Lawyers

Tuesday 15th September
Institute of Directors London SW1

A must for all school leaders—heads, bursars, governors and marketers.

Speakers at this year's conference include:

Sir David Bell, Chair of Council, Roehampton University and director of Pearson, the world's largest educational publisher

Robert Fletcher, Director, Saatchi New York

John MacGregor, Head of Specialised Commercial Banking, Coutts & Co

Practical seminar sessions on:

- ♦ Business strategies in a cold climate
- ♦ Maximising your assets
- ♦ Fees and affordability
- ♦ Managing cash flow
- ♦ Controlling costs
- ♦ Public benefit and public relations

Book your place before 30 April and get a 10% discount on admission.

Contact: office@mtmconsulting.co.uk or call 01502 722787

mtmconsulting School Marketing Survey 2009

The first **mtmconsulting** School Marketing Survey was undertaken during March 2009, using the online survey facilities used for undertaking research for client schools, associations, companies and organisations (see story below).

A total of 200 responses were received from schools. In the range of size and type, respondent schools represented a characteristic cross-section of the UK independent sector.

The results give a valuable snapshot of the state of independent school marketing at a critical stage for all schools, with the effects of a deep recession beginning to be felt.

Amongst the findings were the following:

Half the schools spend 1% or less of annual fee turnover on marketing activities. Overall, the estimated average spend per school was about 1.1% of turnover. Larger schools appear to spend proportionately less of their turnover on marketing.

Even in today's highly competitive environment, one school in ten has no member of staff responsible for marketing but four schools out of ten (39%) have a full-time member of staff responsible for marketing.

Approximately a quarter of schools had an integrated marketing and admissions department, but six out of ten schools still handle admissions separately from marketing.

Only four out of ten of those responsible for marketing were members of their school's Senior Management Team.

Four schools out of five said they had a marketing plan; 21% did not. Just over half had no measurable targets set within the marketing plan.

Almost all schools said they had conducted some form of research amongst parents, although 15% said they had never done so or not done so within the past three years.

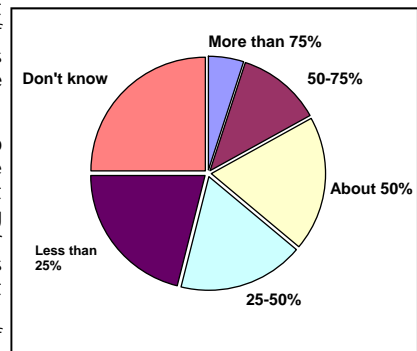
One school in five had not conducted any form of catchment area or market potential research. A further 29% said they had conducted catchment area research themselves,

mtmconsulting's Mandarin service was used by 18% of respondents, twice as many as had used the ISC Catchment Area Analysis service and more than three times as many as had purchased bureau services direct from CACI or Experian.

Schools update their websites more frequently than their prospectuses. Just under one-third of the respondents had renewed their prospectus within the last year, while nearly half had updated their websites in the same period.

More than a third of schools (36%) reported that they now received half or more of their enquiries via the school's website. But a quarter of schools did not know what proportion of their enquiries came via the website.

Asked to identify the three greatest marketing challenges for their schools over the next 12 months, more than half identified maintaining the school roll at its present level.



Enquiries originating from school websites. Do you know how many yours generates?

Significantly more schools identified the need to recruit more boarders from within the UK (24%) than to further increase overseas recruitment (11%). ♦

To receive a copy of the **mtmconsulting** School Marketing Survey 2009, contact Barbara Badrick on 01502 722787 or email: office@mtmconsulting.co.uk

Parental Surveys Better than Ever

In difficult times, schools need more than ever to listen and respond to parents' needs and desires, writes Joe Faulkner, Senior Consultant, **mtmconsulting**.

One positive facet of the current climate is that it should underline for all schools the need for effective, two-way communication with parents.

As the sacrifices that par-

ents make in order to pay school fees continue to increase, the added value that the independent sector offers should be made clearer to them. Listening to parents' opinions, attitudes and gripes is a fantastic means of showing how much a school values them and their children.

mtmresearch has carried out quantitative online and

postal surveys with tens of thousands of respondents, as well as many hours of qualitative telephone conversations, interviews and focus groups with parents.

With online surveys starting at just £500+VAT, it's easier, and more affordable than ever to show your parents that you are listening.

jfaulkner@mtmconsulting.co.uk

Mandarins now easier to digest!



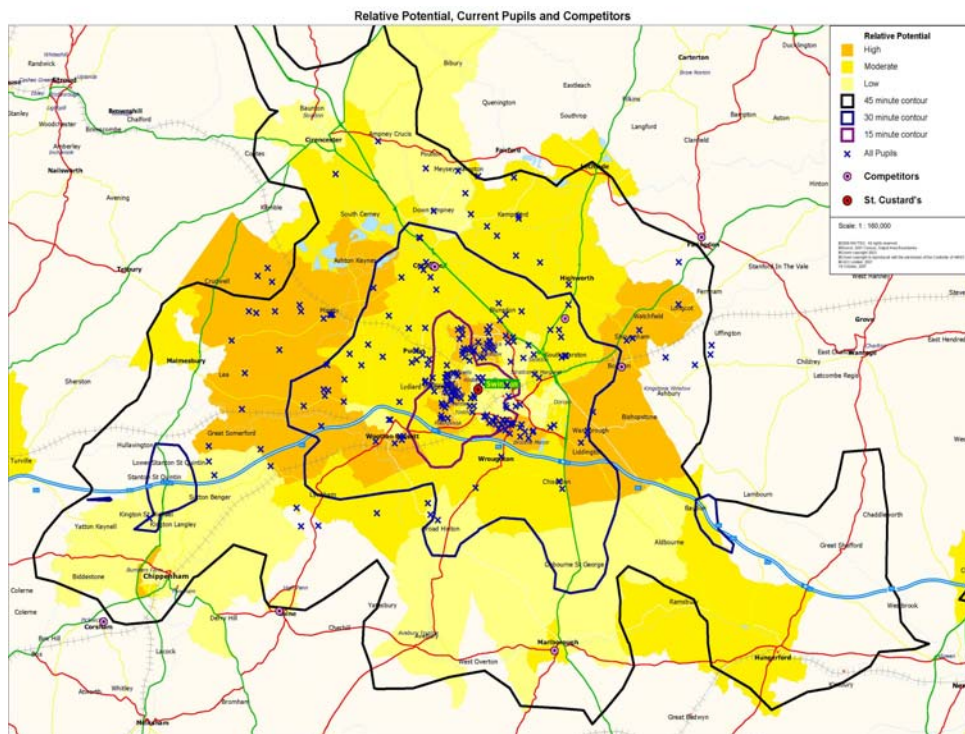
mtmconsulting has recently streamlined and improved its Mandarin[®] Market and Area Intelligence research services, making it easier to access our catchment area research at a more palatable price.

Fifteen years ago, Mandarin was the first catchment area analysis package available to schools. It remains the most accurate and effective tool of its kind and is now even better! New features include a clearer executive summary, easier to read maps, and a lower price tag, making it the best-value research on the market.

In compiling Mandarin research we first look at your school's current students, where they live and their postcode's

socio-economic classification using CACI's Acorn data. We refer to census and consumer database information to find similar families with school age children and provide you with details of your potential market, the best areas for recruitment, competitor influence, and media coverage of the catchment area.

Jane Davies, Research Analyst at **mtm**consulting, (pictured) said, "Clients who invest in Mandarin are able to better inform their decisions about how and where to focus their marketing budget and resources, saving time and money. Now that Mandarin is even easier to unpeel, the findings can be appreciated and implemented more quickly!" ♦



Mandarin's easy to follow mapping shows where your school's target families are concentrated and plots your current pupil distribution, making it easier to plan your marketing strategy and target your resources effectively. ♦

mtmconsulting is the UK's leading business strategy, marketing and communications consultancy for schools.

With a multi disciplinary team, we can help you plan your school's future with confidence.

Contact us at Portland House, 43 High Street, Southwold, Suffolk, IP18 6AB
Tel: 01502 722787 email: office@mtmconsulting.co.uk