

Everyone does Admissions



Every school, whether small or big, has its own set of challenges in securing the targeted admissions. The probability of converting that enquiry into an admission, the widespread positive word of mouth (best advertising there is) relies heavily on the front face of the school which is the Admissions Officer.

If the Admissions Officer has a likeable personality, half the job is done. The important question is: Who will do the other half of the job? Well, my experience has shown that the entire school is responsible for a student admission: the security guards, receptionist, students, teachers, principals and every person associated with the brand can make a contribution. What are some of the things that you can do to ensure that the parent has a wonderful experience at your school and the impact is strong enough to move him from the stage of awareness to interest?

Several years ago in India, when we used to go to the cinema to watch a movie, a note always appeared on the screen: "No food or beverages

allowed inside." Now with our multiplex culture, a note appears on the screen – "Please order your food and beverage. We will serve you at your seat." A big change has occurred because the customer now wants more than just a movie in a multiplex. It is now all about the customer experience, not about customer service. Hence the experience you provide to a parent has to be unforgettable right from the moment they enter the gate till the moment they leave the school. Based on my 5+ years of experience working in international schools, I can make a few recommendations which could help a school improve its conversion ratio from enquiries to admissions as well as its image in the wider community:

1

First Impressions

A good experience starts at the entrance. The Admissions Officer can keep the school security informed about a parent visit and register his/her name. When the parent arrives, if the security is well-prepared and greets them with a polite 'Good Morning! Welcome to the Aga Khan Academy!', this makes all the difference. If the security guard is able to drop the parent off to the reception, it will be icing on the cake. Imagine if the guard stopped a parent at the gate or is a bit rude with them? If the start isn't good, the end can never be great!

3

Student Participation

Once the officer meets the parents and takes them on a school tour the parents are bound to have an encounter with students. If the students smile at them and wish them well, the impact is immense. If it is a feasible option, occasionally invite students to give a school tour to parents. They are after all ambassadors for the school and if the students have a free class, they can be invited to take parents around.

2

Hospitality

Similarly, if the receptionist greets the parents well, makes them comfortable and offers them tea and coffee before the officer comes to meet them, there is no doubt the parents will immediately feel welcome. Everyone should be treated as guests and not as visitors. Indians are known for treating guests like deities. Can the same culture not be replicated here?

4

Staff Participation

In order to create maximum impact, it is important for a visiting family to meet at least two individuals from the school. One of them is the Admissions Officer and if you can quickly work out who the second person may be, depending on the interests/questions of the parent, chances of conversion increase! Perhaps a teacher or a program coordinator can spend 10 minutes with the parents and in this way you can rest assured that the experience will be worthwhile for the parent and they will go back with no queries left.



About the Aga Khan Academy, Hyderabad

The Aga Khan Academy Hyderabad is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School and is the second in the network of Aga Khan Academies established by His Highness the Aga Khan.

The Academy features state-of-the-art facilities, a multicultural student body, and an experienced team of educators and staff. We provide students with education of the highest standard in order to prepare them for lives characterised by leadership and service.



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To conclude, what are we trying to achieve by providing stellar hospitality to a visitor? Is it just conversion or something else? Well, the answer to this question is: positive word of mouth. If you provide a prospective parent with a 'Rolls Royce' type of experience, be assured that the parent will leave the school and spread a positive message about you. You may lose out on converting the enquiry into an admission due to several reasons, but you will undoubtedly achieve positive word of mouth. There have been instances where a parent did not take admission in my school, possibly because of subject choices or transport limitations. However, the same parent has referred my school to all his friends and conversions did take place. Hence, it is important for you as an admissions officer to provide a great school experience to every visiting family to ensure positive word of mouth.