Cracking the Code: Making Psychographic Data Work for You

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You have been trying and trying to crack the code on your messaging strategy. WHO am I talking to and WHAT do they care about?

And then the A-ha moment comes. Your eyes light up. Could psychographic data be the missing key? But then you aren’t even sure where to begin, nevermind how to use it. Find the information you need in these top six FAQs about psychographic data to better understand why it’s important and what to do with it.

#1 So, what exactly is psychographic data and why should I care?

Psychographic data is the “why behind the buy.” If demographics describe WHO the buyer is—their income, age, and so on—psychographics fill in that outline to help us understand customer motivations, opinions, lifestyles, and values. If you only pay attention to demographics, you only understand one dimension of the buyer. Psychographics inform your messaging and outreach strategy in a much more nuanced way.

This data is available for purchase and by gathering in more qualitative ways, such as focus groups and surveys, which are great ways to understand your audience. It then can be applied to your specific school situations.

#2 How are data companies getting the information?

Basically, every time we do something financial, our data is bought and sold. This is why, for example, when you buy something at Banana Republic, you receive mail from Anthropologie, or when you purchase a home, you start receiving mail regarding home insurance. This is legal, although it’s a little uncomfortable!

#3 How can the information be used?

There are so many ways! Once you understand what your buyer cares about, you can massage your messaging to appeal to the people you want to attract. This is extremely detail-oriented, creative work that allows you to speak to your audiences in the ways that work for them. It might be like direct mail, digital advertising, event planning, topics highlighted on a blog, thought leadership positioning, parent ambassador training, and so on.

You can try to find more people like the ones you already have or look for the people the school is not currently attracting. You can also use it internally for retention purposes. Once you understand what the people inside your community care about, you can tailor communication that resonates for them.

This is NOT about changing your school. It’s about getting very specific in what is shared and how so that it reaches the audiences you hope to attract. It’s an exercise in empathy.

#4 What if competitors do it too?

When you only look at the areas around you and haven’t studied your current families, it is possible that your messaging could end up sounding a lot like your competitors since they are looking at the same information you are. However, when you learn what segments your current families fall into and you look for more (or less) of them, you will naturally create tailored messaging, as other schools will have either also done that work with different results since they are a different school, or they won’t have done this work and their messaging will be more vague.

#5 What kind of results are achievable using this data?

There seems to be a borderline obsession with getting more families at the top of the funnel—and I get it. You want to fill your school, or you want to be more selective. However, I would argue that you need the RIGHT people.

We’ve seen schools achieve a 46% increase in applications, 4% increase in enrollment, 100% yield, a 50% decrease in pay-per-click costs on Facebook…these are results born from targeting the market where the school has opportunity and then talking to their potential audience in ways that are appealing to them.

#6 Can I do this work myself?

There is a lot you can do yourself. The major players in this space have free resources to the analysis.

Regardless of how deep a dive you do, we highly recommend exploring psychographic data as a tool to help you identify key audience motivations and values.