Creating a meaningful team retreat takes planning and effort. As an enrollment leader, you want to ensure that the time you spend away from the office will have a positive impact on your goals for the school year. I love approaching things in different ways and having a meeting theme to ground our work.

At Trinity College School, we have weekly meetings throughout the year and a summer retreat of some sort annually. Sometimes, we have a mid-year retreat to look at practices, protocols, anything that’s shifting, particularly if we’ve taken on a new initiative that year (like a new database).

For a while, COVID halted our travel and turned many of our practices upside down, so in March 2022, we thought it was time to dig deep into where we wanted to land post-pandemic. We also introduced a new database mid-pandemic and had new staff to bring on board. We wanted to reflect a little and celebrate making it through the last two years with the full school.

As I debated the theme for our meeting, I saw *The Yield* magazine with all these wonderful words: reflect, rebuild, reconnect, recommit. I thought, “That seems like a really fun and creative way to put the lens on how we talk about what we do on a daily basis and how we go forward from here.”

They were good words. Recommit—that’s a great word. It’s like, “We do this well and we need to lean into it more; we need to recommit to it fully.” I found fun graphics and created signs with each of the “re-“ words to put around the room. We had sticky notes and colored markers. It was tactile engagement, which is more interesting than just sitting around a table.

We went through two exercises to think about those words and what we do on a daily, monthly, and annual basis. First, we followed the customer journey, walking through the steps they would take, how they would engage with us, and things they might encounter during their process. Ultimately, admissions is about ensuring that we meet and support our families as they move through the process of learning about our school.

On the other hand, we understood that by only looking through the customer lens, we would miss a lot of the behind-the-scenes work that isn’t part of the customer journey but influences that journey, like retention, data collection, event planning, and marketing. Collectively, we worked through our individual job responsibilities and used the same framing to evaluate the work we do in service of the mission.

Having the theme gave us a positive spin on our work and helped us see the process differently. It gave us a lot of ideas to work through in the days ahead and was a good team-building opportunity. The work we did in March helped to meaningfully populate our weekly agendas for the next four months as we continued our focus on being reflective enrollment management practitioners.

I highly recommend creating a meeting agenda around a theme so you can be more authentic and intentional during your conversations. Also, get away from your usual workspace and set guidelines, like no computers or technology during the meeting. This sets the tone and allows for more creativity. It makes it feel different from an ordinary day.

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